

# MULTICULTURAL BILDUNGSROMAN

## Coming of Age between *Han* and *Sana*

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### Abstract

The paper explores ways in which the contemporary refunctioning of classical literary and cinematic genres might continue to provide vitality and relevance in building multi-faceted border-crossing societies such as multicultural communities. In the case of Korean *hallyu* cinema, *Punch*, the sleeper-hit film of 2011 about a Korean-Filipino character (“Kopino”), the “coming-of-age” genre is located at the nexus between the key features of the *Bildungsroman* and the project of multiculturalism in dominantly monocultural Korea. In the process of refunctioning, the aesthetics of the film is reworked from a narrative structured by the integrative logic of an individual’s development (*Bildungsroman*) into a political site for negotiation of contentious tensions (multiculturalism). As a “hybrid” Korean film characteristic of many products of the *hallyu* culture industry, at its contact zone is the Kopino (Korean-Filipino), the main protagonist, Wan-deuk, at which the structure of the *Bildungsroman*, the Korean *han* and the Filipino affect *sana* become resilient and dynamic if not always visible features that textually coalesce and collide in the process of “generic translocality,” multiplying the tensions and reframing the narrative structure. The result is the emergence of a refunctioned hybrid genre toward what might be called the “multicultural *Bildungsroman*” in *Punch*.

### Keywords

*Bildungsroman*, contact zone, Filipino *sana*, *hallyu*, hybridity, Korean *han*, multiculturalism, refunctioning, translocality

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scholarly interests and publications include the exploration of the ways in which “Western” ideas and literary and critical categories like the theories of Bertolt Brecht, a major German theatre theoretician and practitioner, have been “refunctioned” in the Philippines and other non-Western contexts.

## INTRODUCTION

The growing number of trans/multinational co-productions of films traversing Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and China is said to have set the stage for the development of Korean cinema with a multinational character. In the midst of neoliberal globalization, a number of films have dealt with either “repatriated diasporas in Korea or Korean diasporas in foreign countries,” in the process, “re-nationalizing and de-nationalizing” what is referred to as “Korea”—that geographical, traditionally ethnocentric space. Described to be “ethno-socially centered and transnationally decentered” by cross-cultural processes, “inter-ethnic” dynamics have begun to mark its effort toward multiculturalism.<sup>1</sup> Such dynamics are set in motion by films that have refunctioned “forms and instruments of production,” resulting in their “functional transformation,” for continuing dynamism and relevance of Korean cinema in this age of the *hallyu* (“Korean Cultural Wave”).<sup>2</sup>

In this regard, the sleeper-hit film *Punch* (2011) is instructive.<sup>3</sup> This “coming-of-age” teeny-bopper genre is located at the nexus between the key features of the *Bildungsroman*, the novel of “formation” or “education,”<sup>4</sup> and the on-going project of Korean multiculturalism. In this exploration, *Punch* is not meant to represent the *hallyu* phenomenon in general; rather, it is taken to be an instance of *hallyu* in its multifaceted reception, which specifically addresses the issue of multiculturalism. In this regard, therefore, the choice of the film is to be mainly illustrative rather than representative of *hallyu* productions dealing with multiculturalism. However, the paper does not interrogate audience reception in detail except for critical articulations which are deemed instructive for analysis; rather it wishes to focus on the dynamic tension in certain conjunctural moments in the film’s production and reception owing to what is described as

a highly complex and multilayered formation that is composed of real, imagined, and hybrid cultural practice, a diverse range of lived experiences and sets of powerful discourses which exist at national, translocal, and transnational levels. (Lee Keehyeung 175)

It has been said that Korean cinema nowadays plays an important role in “articulating discourse about multiculturalism within Korea’s borders” (Jooyeon Rhee, “Gendering Multiculturalism” 1). However, Korean state-sponsored multicultural policy has been criticized in a number of films for the stereotyping of foreigners, ethnic groups, patriarchy, and assimilationism rather than representing an expansive full-fledged multiculturalism—two contradictory tendencies that *Punch* navigates delicately often productively yet sometimes unevenly.

*Punch* itself, for example, may be said to be illuminative of “postcolonial practice in South Korea that is, in many ways, complicit with dominant discourses such

as nationalism, patriarchy, and global capitalism” in which the Filipino migrant wife depicts “passivity,” exhibiting “a sense of belittlement and faceless subjectivity.” In addition, it has been analysed in terms of the plight of the young Kopino “in the context of a nation trying to advocate for multiculturalism yet still highly homogenous in the social construct of its people” (Taejun Yu; Sadorra).

Nonetheless, it has also been pointed out that “[d]espite their problematic representation of ethnically and culturally different Others, these films articulated issues that advanced the multicultural discourse in ways that engaged both migrants and Koreans” (Jooyeon Rhee, “Gendering Multiculturalism” 2).

Without being reductive of the film’s particularity in relation to the complex *hallyu* phenomenon in general in East Asia and beyond since the 1990s, this paper argues that the success of *Punch* lies not only in the inclusion of cultural content such as traditional values, topically, but beyond that, the constitutive role of ethos and affects play in its very framework. “Ethos” is generally understood to mean values and beliefs that constitute “a thread weaving through divergent social, economic, and political contexts rather than a static and essentialist norm” (Keumsil Kim and Williams 6). It is also understood to be the “characteristic spirit of a culture, era, or community as manifested in its attitudes and aspirations.”<sup>5</sup> “Affect” is a slippery term that often refers interchangeably to emotions, feelings, sentiment, sensation, intensities, and pathos such as the Korean experience of *han* and the Filipino *sana*. In Affect Theory, which continues its dialogues regarding its basic categories, affect is suggestive of the breadth and depth of concepts pertaining to individual and collective identity shaped by “lived experience” and is often concerned with the study of “subjectivity and its vicissitudes.” (Leo). Affects are explored in order to help understand experiences that are said to be excluded from cognitive and conceptual representations, like bodily functions and sensations, among others, generally. Brian Massumi defines Affect/Affection:

AFFECT/AFFECTION. Neither word denotes a personal feeling (sentiment in Deleuze and Guattari). *L’affect* (Spinoza’s *affectus*) is an ability to affect and be affected. It is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body’s capacity to act. *L’affection* (Spinoza’s *affectio*) is each such state considered as an encounter between the affected body and a second, affecting, body (with body taken in its broadest possible sense to include “mental” or ideal bodies). (xvi)

The concern for the “affective turn,”<sup>6</sup> in the case of *Punch*, is in its formal and structural inscription in aesthetic, ethical, and political questions involving multiculturalism in relation to a kind of generic transcoding through refunctioning (Clough 1-2).

It is perhaps due to this process of generic transcoding that the apparent “loose structure” of the film has been cited to be a “problem.”<sup>7</sup> Yet, it is this same structure that, in a sense, has allowed for the possibility of the telling of a multi-dimensional narrative of Korean multiculturalism within or alongside the conventional developmental logic of the western *Bildungsroman* as a genre. Although the film’s general arc remains recognizably compliant to the *Bildungsroman*’s major features, contrapuntal voices and virtual presences are inscribed in the scenes that try to flesh out its story arc.<sup>8</sup> From this perspective, it is assumed that the *Bildungsroman* offers a suitable space for the quite nimble negotiation of structural tensions.

This contrapuntal structure is reminiscent of the use of the *Bildungsroman* in the West, in which the larger narrative arc does not necessarily cohere with the story arcs of the scenes, such as the case, famously, of the *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad, as will be explained later. Specifically, in *Punch*, the intersectional and multilayered *han* structure disrupts *Bildungsroman*’s ideology of form underscoring the challenges and contradictions in multiculturalism, and uneven development, providing a counterpoint to the its linear development logic that culminates in narrative closure.

In this nexus, characterized as much by contradiction as by hybridity, what is explored is the process of “generic translucency” in which *Punch*, an illustrative *hallyu* text, may be viewed as a site of multiculturalism, which draws not only from various elements of the different generic traditions but also from the complex affects and ethos that animate them. Such conventions are rooted in the history and material life of the people—that is to say, the Korean *minjung*, which literally means “the mass of the people,” or the “masses” who have struggled against their long and repeated history of victimization. The *minjung* are those who have been politically oppressed, economically exploited, sociologically marginalized, culturally despised, and religiously condemned throughout Korea’s past of multiple colonialism, and the socio-economic inequities that persist in society’s interstices. In today’s neoliberal globalization, the *minjung*’s day-to-day struggles have cut across multiple dimensions including class, gender and ethnicity which are historically rooted in their ethos and affect, shaping and reshaping subjectivity and forms of collectivity borne out of the contradictions in Korean society. Multiculturalism is one such form.

## MULTICULTURALISM AND NEOLIBERALISM

Records indicate that the number of migrant workers, and foreign brides, since the 1990s, has increased steadily due to labor shortage owing to a “mass replacement of regular workers with temporary employees and day labourers” which resulted from the government’s stepping up of initiatives towards neoliberalization, creating a substantial number of low-income population who are unable to afford to buy their own homes and provide for the university education of their children (Rhee, “Migrant Workers”). Consequently, many people in cities remain unmarried for economic reasons resulting in low fertility rate and an aging population. These factors have contributed to the widening of the gap between the rich and the poor in South Korea. Research also shows that in 2013, over 1.5 million foreigners in South Korea were largely migrant workers and foreign brides. This demography has been said to be unprecedented since the end of the colonial period in Korea, exceeding Japan’s demographics where minorities and immigrants “make up only 1 per cent of the whole population.” The demographics show that

Most migrant workers are from the People’s Republic of China (PRC), Southeast Asia: South Asia, and Central Asia. These migrants come to Korea to take up employment in “3D”—dirty, dangerous, and difficult—jobs, and in small and medium enterprises (SME), whereas foreign brides arrive in Korea mainly from China, Vietnam, and the Philippines (Kim and Oh 2011, 1571–4). The shortage of young women able to marry has been a serious social problem since the 1990s roughly for two reasons: first because the rate of migration of young women in rural areas to cities has been increasing (Kim and Oh, 1564) and second, because many women remain unmarried until their 30s and 40s (Yang 2013, 303). (qtd. in Rhee, “Migrant Workers”)

With the inability of a number of Koreans to recognize ethnic and cultural differences with immigrant populations, especially with those who come from non-white and poor marginalized sectors, basic issues remain about multiculturalism. To enable them to recognize ethnic and cultural differences within South Korean borders and raise the level of public consciousness, changes are needed in the state’s multicultural policies in relation to racial discrimination, human rights, and the well-being of immigrant workers and foreign brides.

Problems remain to this day for the migrant workers and wives including social discrimination, human rights violations, and economic marginalization. Government policies have been criticized for making changes in the immigrants’ lives without changing the perception of the larger Korean society. While government support centers offer language classes for female immigrants, assist them with domestic violence cases, and support them financially to improve the quality of lives, the larger Korean society remains unchanged in their perception of migrants.

In fact, at bottom, government policy and its implementation have been criticized because of the use of “foreigners,” which has been deemed “problematic” because it also includes those who already possess Korean citizenship. Understandably,

some of the popular literature and cinema that deal with migrant workers juxtapose the issue of multiculturalism with the proletarianization of South Korean citizens. In short, the multiple problems on multiculturalism such as the regulation of the labour market, social discrimination against migrant workers and foreign brides, and inconsistent policies over the acquirement of citizenship, is intersected with the neoliberalizing process in South Korea. (Rhee, “Migrant Workers”)

*Punch* is one of such films that have dealt with the issue of multiculturalism in relation to the building of new forms of collectivity in South Korea.<sup>9</sup>

### **PUNCH AS A CRITICAL AND COMMERCIAL SUCCESS**

Kim Yoon-seok who plays the character, Dong-Joo, the teacher in the film *Punch*, won Best Actor in South Korea. Lee Han, who attributes the commercial success of the film to the fact that the actors “are present and active as members of Korean society” enabling them to portray their role with “the warmth and honesty” which “resonated with viewers,” also won Best Director. *Punch* was also invited to the 2012 Berlin International Film Festival for Generation 14Plus category for teens (Kwon Jungyun).

*Punch* has been sometimes called a sports film, drama-comedy, comedy-drama, or drama, or comedy or melodrama, perhaps in an effort to simply pin it down to a category. This, perhaps in order to mollify some unease due to its alleged structural shortcomings or in the hope of discovering the winning box-office formula that made it the sleeper-hit of 2011.<sup>10</sup> The film was based on Kim Ryeo-Ryung’s best-selling novel, *Wandeug-i*, published in 2008, which is structurally oriented toward the *Bildungsroman*. Also adapted into a play which had a successful run, as a genre, it traditionally traces a protagonist’s passage from childhood into maturity until he reaches the moment of recognition of his own face and place in the world.<sup>11</sup> The novel might be said to have laid down quite firmly the groundwork for this type of narrative development for the film adaptation, although the *Bildungsroman* novel has historically often lent itself accessibly to cinematic translation.<sup>13</sup> As the director of *Punch*, Lee Han, himself, has attested that the film adaptation adhered “faithfully to the novel” and that he simply added “cinematic touches.” Two such cinematic touches given to the film adaptation involved the decision to change Wan-deuk’s mother from Vietnamese in the novel to Filipina, and the addition of

the character, Ho-Jung, the love interest of Dong-joo, which is not in the novel. Lee Han, academically trained in theater and film, says in an interview, “I felt people would feel closer to him if he falls in love” (“Punch [HanCinema Review]”).

But by some surprising box-office logic, *Punch* is not only too intermittently dramatic to strictly belong to the genre of drama; in fact, it is so comedic in many places and succeeds critically and commercially for doing so (“Punch [2011 film]”). In a country where, as data suggest, domestic films are said to generate more revenues than Hollywood movies, filmmaking must, indeed, be an important mode of cultural expression. By even the most elementary type of quantitative reckoning, such as counting the number of comedic scenes versus the dramatic ones with the fingers and toes, viewing *Punch* would seem to be more about watching actors having fun at their tongue-in-cheek improvisation—which amuses the audience, of course—rather than actors gravely projecting their characters to emote some sad moment for “realism-effect.”<sup>12</sup> By most accounts, nonetheless, the actors in the film are said to have done very well, indeed.

It has been said that “the film’s popularity grew through word of mouth, with an unprecedented number of schools, government offices, and private companies arranging for group viewings,” a rare feat for any film today (“Jasmine Lee [politician]”). Just as importantly, it was a film that helped popularize Jasmine Lee’s advocacies with migrant women and made history for Filipinos in South Korea,

Since the film’s release, Filipina actress Jasmine Lee, a naturalized Korean, has become well-known for playing the mother of the young protagonist. The recognition of her performance as an actress has also brought publicity to her social activities as the secretary general of Waterdrop, a charity she formed for migrant women, and as one of the first non-Korean civil servants at the Seoul Global Center. Her connection to the film has increased recognition of the variety of services available for foreigners living in Korea. (“Jasmine Lee [politician]”)

Elected as a proportional representative in South Korea’s National Assembly in 2012, Jasmine Lee, who plays Wan-deuk’s mother, Lee Sook-hee, and for which role, as reports have it, she became famous in South Korea, is the first non-ethnic Korean and naturalized South Korean to become a lawmaker, after which she was often reported to have been a victim of xenophobic racist attacks (“Jasmine Lee [politician]”). This xenophobia is vital to the migrant woman’s marginalization in *Punch* and her pivotal role in the narrative. It is also from and against this position as a bearer of hope that the film’s structure is marked by the Filipino sense of *sana* in the face of adversities.

Yoo Ah-in, who plays the role of the main protagonist, Wan-deuk, had been known for the television series *Sungkyunkwan Scandal*. Since *Punch* (2011), however, he has made a really big name for himself as a leading actor playing major roles in *Secret Love Affair* (2014), action blockbuster *Veteran* (2015), period drama film *The Throne* (2015), and historical drama series *Six Flying Dragons* (2015-2016) (“Actor Yoo”). He is known to hold “radical” views because of his “controversial comments” about the Korean political scene in Twitter, for example (“Actor Yoo”). On June 6, 2012, just a year after *Punch* was released, he posted a comment openly expressing his support for the political party of the “Bernie Sanders of Korea” which has since made him quite a controversial figure:

I wish the progressive party were more progressive. Election isn't a war. I hope progressiveness doesn't rot away in the current political state ... I want to see what the party can do in a progressive way.... (“Actor Yoo”)

Moreover, Yoo Ah-in has proven to be a rare breed of a “Hallyu star” for being outspoken about his beliefs. In another interview, he was quoted as saying,

In the capitalist society, we say as long as I eat well I'm going to live well. However, it's not a good way for me to live a good life like that. The rich get richer, the poor get poorer. In that sense, having this attitude “I have the ability to live well, so I will just live well,” is so wrong and so ugly. Because, eventually what comes around goes around. So, I think we should cherish the feelings of others, give attention and affection to others. Here, the concern is not about our intolerable country, but our own good attention. I think if we do this, the world will become better too. (Furbabe)

## FORMAL FLAWS OR GENERIC TRANSCODING?

Although a critical and commercial success, *Punch*, as suggested earlier, has been criticized for its apparent structural weakness. As a coming-of-age story, a formulaic literary and cinematic genre, the film incorporates—like many *hallyu* films and television dramas characterized by narrative hybridity—conventions, scenes and elements retooled from drama, comedy, action, sports, suspense, detective, a teen movie, incorporated for comedic or melodramatic effects, alternating light and dark features that are all too familiar to the Korean television dramas' fandom. Yet, it also tries, for the most part, to keep away from melodrama itself, especially, from its stock sensationalism and black-and-white morality. However, for all the criticism, film commentators agree that *Punch* “succeeds through combining all of this with some well-judged social commentary, dealing with issues of discrimination and charting how Korean society treats immigrants and the mentally and physically handicapped” (Mudge).

As a coming-of-age film deploying the *Bildungsroman*'s formal features, it is posited that *Punch* may be more productively understood in terms of the conditions of its textual possibility enabled by Korea's colonial history and contemporary context (Boes 230).<sup>13</sup> In particular, it might be worth looking into the specificity of its formal features given the culture of the Korean *han* and the history of the *minjung*.<sup>14</sup> Broadly, *han* is associated with a gamut of emotions like deep and dark sorrow, spite, rancor, regret, resentment, grief, utmost suffering, injustice or persecution, an affect that, as often assumed, only Koreans can truly understand. It is supposed to be a "suppressed, amassed, and condensed experience of oppression caused by mischief or misfortune so that it forms a lump in one's spirit" (Sangyil Park 15).

Although not strictly a *Bildungsroman* in the tradition of the Victorian era in the West, indeed, the outline of the film's narrative—following the main orientation of the novel *Wan-Deug-i*—is largely about the "all-round development or self-culture" in which the main protagonist is "more or less conscious . . . to integrate his powers, to cultivate himself by his experience" ("The Victorian *Bildungsroman*"). The Stanford University's website extends the definition to describe Goethe's Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship (1795-6) which is "often considered a prototype of the *Bildungsroman*" ("The Victorian *Bildungsroman*").

The template for the protagonist is a young teenager who is "innocent, inexperienced, well-meaning, but often foolish and erring young man who sets out in life with either no aim in mind or the wrong one. By a series of false starts and mistakes and with the help from well-disposed friends he makes in the course of his experiences, he finally reaches maturity and finds his proper profession" ("The Victorian *Bildungsroman*").

Ostensibly, some literary or cinematic *Bildungsroman* are more "faithful" to this model than others, but to the extent that *Punch* is presumed to draw from the formal features of the *Bildungsroman*, the following elements might indeed be considered constitutive of its structure which have been generically transcoded into the film, *Punch*, namely:<sup>15</sup>

1. The main protagonist is a young adult, Wan-deuk (Yoo Ah-in), parentless—literally motherless, and symbolically fatherless; hence, in the film's primary narrative arc this is revealed by the earliest scenes establishing its complication.

2. The real or virtual absence or loss of a parent is associative of the main protagonist's feeling of alienation from family, the social values he was brought up with, and his subsequent quest for a substitute or alternative "parent" or way of life; hence, Wan-deuk's sense of alienation manifests in his apparent rebellion.

3. The quest that the main protagonist plans to undertake involves a journey away from home; hence, Wan-deuk considers being a run-away son, and plans to escape from home, school, his neighbourhood, and seek a new life, no matter how vaguely formulated the alternative is for him.

4. The main protagonist seeks economic independence, at least since he comes from a poor family, he plans to quit school so he can get a job instead.

5. The main protagonist of the conventional *Bildungsroman* undergoes a “journey” of transformation. In the film, Wan-deuk faces trials in his quest in which he is tested by unexpected new encounters with people and situations, namely, his temperamental teacher, Dong-joo, the sudden appearance of his Filipina mother who is said to have abandoned him when he was a baby, his first love interest, Yun-ha, his grouchy neighbour and his sister, Ho-jeong, his classmate, Hyeok-ju, and so on.

6. The main protagonist undergoes “epiphany.” In the film, Wan-deuk experiences clarity in his realization of what he is and his relationship with the people around him. A moment of reconciliation is experienced owing to a series of encounters that change him which apparently gives him inner peace and confidence with the people around him.

7. The structural ending takes the form of a harmonious closure in the narrative action in a (celebratory) reconciliation, but like many *Bildungsroman* texts, film’s ending may be considered hermeneutically “ambiguous, ambivalent, or lacks decisive closure” as if to open up a new narrative, a new beginning, a new episode.

Given the generic transcoding listed above, it might be said that *Punch* is a kind of re-reading of the *Bildungsroman* in the coming-of-age filmic adaptation. True to the letter and spirit of this genre, Marc Redfield in an epigram says, “To undergo *Bildung* is to identify with humanity that is itself an ongoing process of self-realization or becoming” (qtd. in Slaughter 86). At bottom, this is as true to *Bildungsroman* as it is to the coming-of-age filmic narrative.<sup>16</sup> But such rereading is not just a another re-reading but a contrapuntal hermeneutics.

## **BILDUNGSROMAN AND MULTICULTURALISM**

As may be inferred from the generic transcoding of certain features of the *Bildungsroman* in *Punch*, its classical structure follows a linear developmentalist narrative whose trajectory starts with a state of physical ambivalence due to the

absence of a parent or both parents and spiritual ambiguity due to the inability or refusal to integrate with the expectations of conventional society. As the narrative ends, it reaches a state of “epiphany” as the main protagonist overcomes obstacles until the completion of the maturation process. On one level, individually, this narrative arc evolves from the protagonist’s underdeveloped sense of self to maturity in the process of assimilation into the larger community. Such a shift is the result of the protagonist’s reflection of the situation and the internalization of experience, leading to the creation and understanding of desirable social and political structures in the process of his conversion to some form of mass consciousness along with the other members of the *minjung*. On another level, collectively, this transformation owes to a kind of development from monocultural to multicultural consciousness. In *Punch*, this transformation seems like a natural process of collective development into enlightenment from ignorance, akin to an individual’s growth from childhood to maturity; but the Korean *han* complicates the developmentalist narrative template, along with the Filipino *sana*.

Without going back to the novel itself in greater detail since *Punch* itself, the film, is the object of this exploration and not the novel, the above-mentioned criticism about the film’s structure might easily be explained away by its recurrent use of combinatory scaffoldings. Such crosspieces that traverse the narrative frame are fastened into the episodic plots by utilizing associated narrative modalities, or deploying constructional hybridities in an attempt at narrative fusion of or unity of otherwise disparate segments or filmic pieces of the plot, the way it often is the case in many *hallyu* productions, whether in film or television. But a fusion assumes a harmonious combination of elements into a seamless whole; in the case of *Punch*, such harmony is not always achieved nor even desired. For example, it may be inferred from some accounts critical of the film, that if *Punch* had kept strictly within the genre of (melo)drama, apart from the obligatory flood of tears, the requisite use of the climactic plot might have allowed for some degree of narrative streamlining, providing a clear structure to effect some level of convincing filmic realism—although it must be added by way of caveat that the realism of conventional melodrama as a genre is often suspect by conventional definition.<sup>17</sup>

The main protagonist of *Punch*, Wan-deuk, is a poor, 17-year old who excels in street fights but does miserably academically as a high school sophomore. His father, Gak-seol, who was a former tap-dancer in a cabaret before it closed down, is a hunchback who begins to sell trifles in the open-air Sunday markets for a living with his “Uncle,” Min-ku, a mentally challenged vendor, who was taught by his father how to dance. Wan-deuk is bored with schooling, alienated from his family, and determined to quit school. He meets Dong-joo, a teacher and a church minister, who is tough but erratic, whom he hates but gradually learns to befriend. Dong-joo makes it possible for Wan-deuk to meet and reconcile with his long-lost Filipina

mother and engage freely in his chosen sport, kickboxing. His initial difficulties cease to be a burden, and negative attitude turns into optimism, showing the character's endurance, resilience, and hope. Dong-joo builds a multicultural center in his church mainly out of his own pocket that enables enemies in the neighborhood to become friends. The film begins with the narration of Wan-deuk in the prologue and ends with his narration again in the epilogue.

With this narrative arc that begins with a prologue and ends with an epilogue, between which are individual scenes with their own story arcs, the generic transcoding is front-and-center.

### GENERIC TRANSLOCALITY OF AFFECT

Although a vintage genre in the western tradition, the *Bildungsroman* has also been shown to be a tool of postcolonial critique of the non-West, in the “minority struggles for enfranchisement.” As such, it “retains its historic social function as the predominant formal literary technology in which social outsiders narrate claims for inclusion in a regime of rights and responsibilities (Barnard 53).

Culturally, it might be said that *Punch* deals with the *han* of the Korean *minjung* (literally, the people or the masses) who are “politically oppressed, socially alienated, and culturally and intellectually underprivileged” as the members of the neighborhood in the film represent. It has been said that *han* is the spirit of the Korean *minjung*, “a deep feeling that rises out of the unjust experiences of the people” (Sangyil Park 15). An important feature of *han* is “the manner in which it captures the highly complex linkages between emotions and conflict” which are so intense that “they cannot be communicated adequately through external expressions, such as bursts of anger” for they consist of “unresolved emotions resulting from unresolved suffering.” However, *han* is said to involve “a complex mixture of negative and positive emotions, including optimism and humour.” *Han* undergoes a transformation, in which the narrative of “sorrow and introspection” evolves, “eventually transforming themselves into acceptance, empathy and friendship” (Bleiker and Hoang Yung-ju 248-69). This transformation is instructive as it is constitutive of the entire film's narrative arc alongside the affective arc of *han*.

As the story progresses, it begins to slowly move the hearts of its audience, and gives off a warmth that reaches inside, the film manages to mix the long-forgotten warmth of our neighbors and the meaning of our lives. (Lee JinHo)

Although the film is neither tormented by violence nor tortured by Korean *han* as stereotypes go, nonetheless, *han*, as a kind of invisible but palpable cultural thread, is woven into the film's formal fabric and its textual "substance" in the context of the Korean historical and cultural realities, interwoven, as it were, into the film's emotional affect and techniques in pursuit of realism-effect. Such interweaving, as the paper argues, allows for cinematic enjoyment but not at the exclusion of critical reflection. From this perspective, reading *Punch* in view of a number of key features of *Bildungsroman* is not diminished but enriched.

*Han*, as ethos, is affect and effect, at once a condition of possibility and result, and as such, affective and effective. In the film's cinematic visualization, it is both a "mental" and a "bodily" disposition (Burgett and Hendler 13-16), characterized by Gak-seul, a hunchback (in the film) and midget (in the novel) whose life evokes an individual's *han*: his is a mental suffering as a poor, lonely, single parent that is inscribed in his very physical disability. His silhouette altogether embodies the specificity of his *han* especially in the scene in which Ga-seul and Min-ku can only helplessly close their "store" after they have been forcibly driven out by the goons from their ambulant space in the market. This, in contrast to his young son, Wan-deuk, the brave and strong young adult, the would-be kickboxer, who, all by his lonesome, punched the goons to bits and drove them all away from their turf.

But above all, there is Wan-deuk's *han*. With every blow he throws at his opponent in every fight in the streets or at the gym is a nameless but oppressive sense of extreme isolation and loneliness, deep rancour, anger and frustration, and intense feeling of long, unjust suffering that seeks release or escape or revenge. The audience discovers what Wan-deuk's *han* is all about, finally, as it is reiterated toward the end of the film in the hospital scene in an argument with Dong-joo:

Wan-deuk: Why did you pretend to be poor?

Dong-joo: I am poor. You know where I live.

Wan-deuk: It's not the same. You didn't have a mother who had to marry for money. You never get tainted for having a disabled father. You've never starved, humiliated for taking home handouts.

Characteristic of Brechtian dramaturgy<sup>18</sup> that utilizes debates in the dialogues running through the film, this scene deploys this dramatic technique effectively because it is performed in a way that is also all too familiar to fans of K-dramas and films. Dong-Joo responds to Wan-deuk:

Dong-joo: You think you've had it so tough? Your father was just born that way. Is that his fault? He couldn't give you everything but did he ever starve you? You can't

handle humiliations when you are really poor! You idiot. [. . .] You'll see when you get older. The fact that you were ashamed by that is more humiliating.

Here, the “bodily” signifiers of Wan-deuk punching away in raging fights, jaws tightened, fists clenched, elsewhere shown in the film, finds expression in the mental image of a sad, anguished, aggrieved, and confused young man. This *han* finds release as Wan-deuk, later in the film, accepts the love of his mother and is able to express his love for her in turn, goes back to the gym determined to train hard to excel in kickboxing, works to reunite his family, joins the community in the launch of the multicultural center, and becomes a friend to erstwhile nemesis, Dong-joo. In the language of the *Bildungsroman*, he conquers his challenges; the initiation is over, and the protagonist moves on to join the world of the adults. In *Punch*, however, while the film ends in a light, comedic note, the collective *han* is not overcome or conquered; it is lightened by hope, a sense of the Tagalog *sana*—which means, wish, hope—as the film’s last scenes do not constitute a closure but simply imply a signifier for a new beginning of a yet to be experienced *han* with the establishment of the multicultural center.

#### INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE HAN

As such, although *han* is generally understood to imply a personal feeling of an individual, it is associative of the *minjung*'s collective experience of social disenfranchisement, conjoined by a shared meaning in view of Korea's many years of experience of colonial domination. Beyond grief or rancor, it suggests a deep sense of injustice and social inequality which the *minjung* suffer from in their everyday lives. *Han* is the sense that “something is deprived, denied, lost, failed, or absent in oneself, one's family, one's group, one's community and/or one's country” (Keumsil Kim Yoon and Williams 244). Elaine H. Kim explains that it is such a serious emotional condition so that to die of *han*, is to die of *hwabyong*, a disease of frustration and rage following misfortune (Kim 1).

By the same token, *han* is said to lead the *minjung* to be viable and sustainable in a constructive way; through *han* they endure pain, reexamine past experiences, set new goals, and regenerate hope for the future” (Keumsil Kim Yoon and Williams 44-45). Therefore, *han* is linked with a collective feeling of horizontal kinship based on a common sense of suffering and hardship, akin to an imagined community. Sangyil Park explains the interconnectedness between *han* and the *minjung* in which one may be understood in terms of the other. He says that “Koreans identify themselves with *minjung* regardless of socio-economic class” (Gangyil Park 16). Historically in Korean culture, shamans-like priests minister to the *han*-ridden

*minjung*, helping them resolve it in the process of *hanpuri*, a task that resonates in the role of Dong-joo, the church minister, toward the community in the film.

Whether individual or collective, the energy that propels *han* forward is oriented toward a reconciliation, resolution, unity or harmony as it also implies hope, even a kind of hoping against hope. In this sense, it is a passive and patient yearning for a resolution, a desire that is held close to the heart, a promise awaiting fulfillment. It is an experience of a patient quest for an end to an intense negative feeling. Like the quest for the epiphanic moment of the *bildung*, *han* is its own wish for enlightenment so that the hindrance to personal or collective progress may be hurdled. The “paradoxical conundrum” that is *han* is thus explained,

While *han* conveys a negative meaning in that denotes a feeling that no one wants to have, it also suggests a positive aspect. It is a driving force for reaching what one wants to achieve. In other words, it sets free a spirit of “hope” that allows its bearer to generate the inner strength necessary to continue striving, overcoming obstacles. (Keum-sil Kim Yoon and Williams 44-45)

In the light of the Korean socio-economic, religious, and historical context, *Punch* brings together the story of individuals and the story of a community—stories that are filled with *han* brought about by individual experiences and socio-historical forces. It has been noted that the Korean *minjung* have been marginalized historically in Korean society since the Joseon Dynasty’s *Silhak* movement. The *minjung* is also associated with the struggle for democracy in South Korea whose wellsprings collectively go farther back into the country’s history and deeper into its culture through shaman rituals. In the past decades, *han* was said to be a continuation of the anti-colonial struggles and the Korean War of the 1950s. In recent years, the *minjung*’s fight for justice and human rights in Korea since the 1970s is said to have left its mark on the people’s *han* (Sangyil Park 14).

## HAN AS CONSTITUTIVE OF NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

*Han* is inscribed in the story of *Punch*, carving out its structure in terms of both logical effect and emotional affect, a function as much by the cultural specificity of Korean cinema both as culture industry and as art form, and the requisites of literary and filmic narrative economy of the genre.

*Punch* operates structurally on at least two levels. The diachronic story that gives the viewers a sense of temporal progression involves the personal “development” of Wan-deuk through various personal challenges. It is in this aspect of the film that

the main protagonist comes of age in which scenes are framed “developmentally” but not always chronologically because temporality is broken by flashbacks and direct narration. On the other hand, the synchronic dimension encompasses the entire film itself, depicts a collection of memories in which the events in the community are rendered as an entire flashback that begins and ends with direct narration of Wan-deuk in the present. This type of story-telling that envelopes an entire narrative is another technique familiar to K-Drama fans but handled less obtrusively in *Punch*. As such, although the title of the film is “Wan-deuk” in the English language translation, the film is really as much about a community as narrated by the title character. Wan-deuk is not just telling his own story—although coming of age stories do tend to be first-person-autobiographically framed narratives—as he addresses the audience directly in the prologue and the epilogue. He is telling the community’s story to which his personal narrative is not only allegorically meaningful in itself, but that the story and the scenes are structurally related. Hence, with the overlay of the two narrative dimensions, the “loose” structure<sup>19</sup> produces less a thread of events constituting a chronology but a kind of a montage of *hans* that the film weaves together given the narrative’s social and historical resonances, a function of the film’s narrative economy.<sup>20</sup> After all:

The historical aspects of the development of *han* and its two-sidedness may be likened to a photo-montage, in that the phenomenon is similar to a composite image produced by blending multiple images to create a fully realized whole. One advantage of a photo montage is that it can be used to juxtapose or overlay images that need not be “real” or logical, adding a note of strangeness to the finished image. Likewise, while individual Koreans could have their own mental image of *han*, which may vary from person to person, they would agree that, collectively, those perceptions represent a sort of photo montage of the concept rendered in a sequence of episodes which interchange light and serious moments, each of which in almost self-contained, narratives. (Keum-sil Kim Yoon and Williams 44-45)

Between the prologue and the epilogue of the direct narration is mostly a dramatization of a series of events as remembered by Wan-deuk in his life in his encounter with the members of the *minjung*—each with his own *han* but bound in one way or the other by the shared feeling of oppression, poverty, resentment, anger, disenfranchisement, and injustice. Scenes shift from market to apartment to classroom to church to neighbourhood streets, to classroom again, to the open sports fields, to church again, to apartment again, to police station, to classroom, to church, to apartment, to classroom, to church again, to kickboxing gym, to neighbourhood, to faculty room, back to the gym, to school, to prison, to the plaza, to the gym again, to classroom, to Dong-joo’s apartment, gym and street kickboxing exercises, school, neighbourhood, apartment, hospital, restaurant where the mother works, faculty office again, market, shoe store, bus/train station, gym,

church, restaurant again, classroom, wet market, apartment, multicultural center, the streets with Wan-deuk exercising for his coming match, and finally, Dong-joo's apartment. Some scenes linger for a complete set of dialogues following through the narrative situation, while others just virtually flash in quick succession, producing the effect of montage of self-contained images, once an idea is established.

The *han* structure is intersectionally liquid in its hybridity rather than developmentally solid in its linearity. It cuts across levels, types, stages, and aspects, forming multiple axes rather than a singular, causal line. Following Keumsil Kim Yoon and Williams, the levels of *han* involve, for example, an “emotional state,” and “personality characteristics.” Quite apart from the question of levels, however, *han* is also said to have two sides, as earlier quoted, with each one enabling *han*'s “multiple images” to be juxtaposed or overlaid—as opposed to, say, temporally sequenced according to a logical or causal development—which “can never be seen together in real life, adding a note of surreality to the finished image” (Keumsil Kim Yoon and Williams 42). The intersectionality of the *han* narrative, in all its levels and aspects, evokes multiple axes which are all together congruent with the synchronic dimension of *Wan-deuk*, while its temporal stages, align with the film's diachronic dimension. Generally, the earlier scenes which revealed the tortured *han* of Wan-deuk and the sequences depicting the *han* of the other characters may be said to be consistent with the first stage, which is akin to the *won-han*, the type of *han* whose rancor is said to be so deep that it desires some form of release, escape or revenge. For example, the angry grimace of Wan-Deuk toward the beginning of the film as he punches the face of one of the gangsters in the market is a concrete embodiment of this type of *han*. The second and third stages of the *han* in the film could be the parts in which Wan-deuk must engage, internally and externally, with the fact that his mother is a migrant wife, the reality of his father's disability, the peculiarities of certain members of his neighborhood, his classmates, his teen-age love, and Dong-joo, his mentor and tormentor, and the complications arising from the events that connect them, as *minjung*. These stages may be said to point to the side of the *jeong-han* in which feelings are attenuated and suffering is blamed upon oneself or others. Finally, toward a reconciliation in which the characters reach a state of relative appeasement, the film reaches the fourth stage in the epilogue as it ends with scenes in the multicultural center, a quick series of sequences where Wan-deuk trains eagerly but contentedly for his kickboxing match, and the juxtaposed photos of the Filipino (mother's side) and Korean (father's side) families, all together constituting a montage of images—not a fusion—toward the end, enveloping the narrative structure that has opened with the prologue.

The framing of the film is a narration of memories unpacked in various scenes, now narratively continuous, now dramatically discontinuous, unfolding as if all takes place in the present. Moreover, the flashbacks connect the present here to the

past there, and the narration encompasses past and present, opening up into the future. This framing device distances the audience from the characters, including the narrator, allowing the spectator to see both the film's diachronic and synchronic dimensions of the structure as well as the story's thematic substance as intricately embedded in the intersectional dimensions of the *han*'s narrative structure.

To some extent, as might be apparent to students of the Western literary canon, this kind of an enveloping structure that cuts into multiple temporal dimensions famously evokes Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* as the novella is a frame-story, wonderfully spun by a narrative within a narrative, a flashback within a flashback, linked by a series of quotes within quotes. It is a *Bildungsroman*, an initiation into darkness and chaos, calmly framed by a prologue and an epilogue (Moore 183).

This is akin to the main protagonist of *Punch* as he takes the narrator's subject position in the prologue and epilogue, speaking in the present about the past. It is referred to as the final stage of the experience of the *han*: "A state free from one's own pain and uncertainty of life, achieved by positioning oneself as a third person observer; one appears peaceful, quiet..." (Keumsil Kim Yoon and Williams 43).

## BETWEEN HAN-LETTING AND UTOPIAN SANA

While *Punch* ends in a light, comedic note, the collective *han* is not overcome or conquered as the film's last scenes do not constitute a closure but imply a new beginning of a yet to be experienced *han* with the establishment of the multicultural center, and Wan-deuk's new-found identity. But as it is lightened by hope, a sense of the Tagalog *sana*, what transpires is a kind of translocal exchange of transnational desires.

The launching of the multicultural center in *Punch* is the moment of "han-letting," individually and collectively, in which everyone finds their own place in a society full of contradictions. Still, Hassan and his wife have been banished, and the Filipino migrant workers will continue to lurk furtively in the shadows bound by their own different *han*. Living in the margins of Korean society the Filipino migrant workers hope against hope in their everyday lives, slugging it out in the global neoliberal job market in foreign lands, alongside Indians, Vietnamese, Pakistanis, away from their own families back home. But the Filipino's *han* is indelibly marked by *sana*—a Tagalog linguistic expression which, like the Korean *han*, is contextual and situational in meaning and social significance. Yet unlike the Korean *han*, the Tagalog *sana* knows no revenge, nor rancor for all its range of overtones, including: impossibly wishful (I wish I could win the lotto.) or fatally romantic (I hope our love

will last a lifetime.) or fatalistically idealistic (My womanizing husband will change one day, and we will be together again. I just know it.), or normatively imperative (I should win the top award this time. I could have won it last time, you know.).

Still, both “*han*-letting” and *sana* are restorative and transformative moments, utopian yet open to possibilities. The episodic plot structure of the film leaves open its narrative arc, allowing possibilities for further episodes. The prologue with which the film begins and the epilogue with which it ends envelope the “loose” episodes looping around the story arcs, leaving open the question, “What happens then to the rest of the story and the rest of their lives?” In a sense, the launching of the multicultural center signals the beginning of another narrative arc in which to engage anew tensions left unresolved for the individual characters and for the collective community. The re-integration of the main protagonist into the fold of the family and the community and the apparent newly found harmony among the members of the community from different ethnicities do not resolve the tensions at their root. Hence, the trajectory of the film is both individual and social, and as such, both personal and political. It wishes to tell multiple stories of individuals even as it tells a collective narrative of the *han* of the *minjung*—as if to say, *sana*. From this perspective, the film seeks the common good given the convention and elasticity of the genre of the *Bildungsroman* and the logic of the ethos of *han*, propelling the narrative forward.

Such mobile subject positioning enables the film’s political commentary about Korean society to be articulated “outside” the narrative through the third-person description of an old painting as part of the school lesson for the day. In the film, a scene shows Wan-deuk interpreting Jean-Francois Millet’s famous painting “The Gleaners” (1857), showing three peasant women who are bent over, gleaning in the foreground, picking up corn ears after they have been found, and tying them into a sheaf. In the background of the painting, he also takes note of the foremen watching the women from a distance in his recitation. The classroom session on Millet’s painting in the film is replete with resonances that enrich the narrative structurally and symbolically. The historical allusion in the painting of the peasantry in French rural society was criticized in its time for its “radicalism” by the Parisian high society for its implied critique of the reality of social class division, and its thematic association with the European Socialist movement (“*Des glaneuses*”). Like a story within a story, the painting’s composition is well-known to be embodying a commentary on the historical sufferings of the masses from injustice, class division, and inequality in French society. The painting captures the *han* of the *minjung*: the self-worth of the marginalized people in the face of the age-old history of their oppression. The narrative of “The Gleaners” reflects back into the film like a story within a story.<sup>21</sup>

The echoes that reverberate from the painting thematically are not lost on Wan-deuk. Looking “compelled” by the sight of the painting, he is asked by the teacher what he feels about the painting. Wan-deuk’s answer is the longest dialogue he will ever deliver as a character in the story he tells:

What are you looking at? I think that’s what it says...They look like women sold into marriage from poor countries. So they needed to be strong in order to protect themselves. The woman on the far right, she’s about to make a fist to fight the farm owner. The one on the far left pretends to be working, but she’s going to throw that hay at her opponent’s face. The woman in the middle is a pro because she has a rock in her fist. It’s a dirty trick, but you fight to win. And those women... they received good education in their own countries.

At this point, there is the unity of *han*; the women in Millet’s painting and the story of Wan-deuk’s life become one, anticipating the reconciliation of Wan-deuk and his Filipino mother in that moment of recognition, as much by the character as by the film spectators. At this point, what is at work is a sense of Brechtian spectatorship—empathetic to a degree, but in possession now of a critical orientation of an unjust historical society of the past and an awareness of one’s place in that world of the present.

*Punch*, therefore, is oriented toward the inauguration of multiculturalism as a way of life and not just a policy on paper, as signalled by the establishment of the multicultural center. As a coming-of-age film, it is itself the coming of age of the Korean multicultural *Bildungsroman* in which the main protagonist is bi-or-multi-racial and whose complicated personal and multi-layered social struggles are imbricated in this reality. As a multicultural *Bildungsroman*, the film helps pave the way forward in the ongoing process of Korean multiculturalism by mainstreaming in cinema challenges to stereotypes of cultural otherness, opening up the question of “integration” in building a multicultural society. With knowing irony, it opens up possibilities for critiquing an educational system that is western-oriented, autocratic, and monocultural, and providing a counterpoint to the persistence of dominant western Hollywood narrative modes of the coming-of-age genre, or specifically a kind of Brechtian refunctioning of the structure of the *Bildungsroman*. In particular, the lineaments of the otherwise familiar episodic quality of the dramatic scenes of *Punch*, the developmental logic of the classical *Bildungsroman*, and the intermittent and not-always consecutive structure of contemporary melodramas in film like the action genre or K-dramas, together, lend dynamism and complexity to *Punch*.<sup>22</sup> The multi-layered unfolding of the personal and collective experience using memory as an enveloping framing device as *Punch* does, could have been problematic and unwieldy both from the perspective of production and reception in the context of a monocultural ideology. However, the “loose” structure allows for a dynamic

and flexible narrative economy which is by turns continuous and intermittent. The Brechtian refunctioning and melodrama provide a space for a multicultural subtext speaking polyvalently and multi-dimensionally, characterized as much by structural efficiency as by affective effect.

### REFUNCTIONING ACTING; ACTING AS REFUNCTIONING

Such refunctioning is evident, for example, in the almost improvisational quality in key moments of the actors' performance. Kim Yoon-seok's rich theater background, in particular, playing major roles that run the gamut of absurdism (*Waiting for Godot*), naturalism (*A Streetcar Named Desire*), and expressionism (*Equus*), among others, must have allowed him to experiment with his role as Dong-joo, the individually eccentric but socially committed high school teacher and church minister, exploring the individual and social axes of human contradictions.

The acting, especially of the highly-regarded Kim Yun-seok, a theater actor by training and profession before venturing into film, who plays Dong-joo, Wan-deuk's teacher and foil, delivers by no means the Stanislavskian sort of internalized naturalism, but more akin to the stylized gestures of German expressionism, albeit toned down one note lower so that "realism-effect" remains palpable. In performance parlance, this type of acting is loosely referred to as "theatrical," a description that is used negatively or positively, and in his case, to great positive effects. Wielding and waving a teacher's rod during his lectures, coming to work often dishevelled and scruffy and too informal in his behavior as a teacher, Dong-joo is critical of the Korean educational system, instructive if didactic in his "lectures," yet effective and powerful in his role as a teacher both for the "students" like Wan-deuk in the film and the spectators watching the film. His acting is dead-pan stand-up reflexive comedy—critical, not comical—in the best sense of "comic." In front of the class, he talks and moves about almost improvisationally, locating the spectators both inside and outside the film in a "performance," as if self-directed. It is as if he was given the absolute freedom to interpret his role by Han Lee, the director, in the way he tilts his head, moves his eyes, "hides" a half-smile—the minutest of gestures seem to be the result of his own acting experiments enacted in front of the camera—embodying both filmic character and Brechtian attitude.

Kim Yoon-seok successfully sets the tone and template upon which the rest of the acting in *Punch*, seems to have been based. As suggested, it seems to be based on the kind of acting method which is neither purely Stanislavskian nor purely expressionist; it is, it seems, by turns somewhat Stanislavskian for the realism-effect of key dramatic scenes (for example, Wan-deuk eating alone outside the rooftop

apartment overlooking the neighbourhood), and somewhat expressionist for many of the comedic parts (for example, the scowl on Wan-deuk's face as he is about to punch his grouchy neighbour). The effect is a kind of pivot from which the scenes oscillate between happy and buoyant and sad and serious moments while mixing elements of the different literary and cinematic conventions, sometimes allowing for empathy but always from a critical if sometimes didactic standpoint through a combination of melodramatic and comedic moments.

Kim Yoon-seok's theatricality is virtually a Brechtian performance in which he acts in a manner that creates ambivalence and incongruity, surprising yet amusing, at once passionate and cold, appearing alien to the spectator yet often convincing: His non-lecture lectures, non-teaching teaching, non-lesson lessons, even the familiar teacher's rod is wielded "strangely," calling attention to itself and its historicity and pastness-yet-presentness so that it becomes emblematic of Confucian authoritarian social practices rather than a passive portrayal of normal, commonsensical and "real life." In Brechtian parlance, he presents his character; he does not become him. This is acting that "alienates" the audience in its embodiment of "reality" so they can look at the scene critically in the context of Korean society. As Brecht says of his concept of *verfremdungseffekt* in his reflection on Chinese acting, acting is performance that is "pushed to the point of arousing surprise" (Brecht 131). The actor is able to achieve this kind of acting by seeing himself and his performance as alien and unexpected. In this acting method "the way the things he does becomes astonishing. By this craft everyday things are removed from the realm of the self-evident" (Brecht 131). As Dong-joo, in his performance throughout the film, acting is indeed a flexible system of signs through which both actor and audience become (critical) observers of the actions and arrive at a moment of recognition. The actor is able to communicate with the audience both about the character and about the actions being performed allowing for a richness of interpretive possibilities. As Brecht says, "The actor is not Lear. He shows Lear." His presentation of Dong-Joo drives a "wedge between actor and acting" in which the actor "does not live a role, he demonstrates it" (Martin 77-85).

Kim Yoon-seok, considered one of the top leading and character actors in South Korea today, is best remembered for other critically and commercially acclaimed films including *Running Turtle* (2009), *The Yellow Sea* (2010), and *The Thieves* (2012). Trained as a professional theater actor, he has played starring roles in major stage productions such as *A Street Car Named Desire*, *Waiting for Godot*, *Equus*, *A Long Day's Journey into Night*, among others. Interestingly, he earned a degree in German Language & Literature ("Kim Yoon-seok").

Other major characters of the film, apart from Dong-joo, generate the collective dimension of the film's narrative although the film clearly tries to delineate him

specifically as a character that has an individual story motivating his characterization and actions. Kim Yoon-seok who plays Dong-joo delicately combines mimetic and expressive acting through tone of voice and physical gestures. His (almost) gestic movements, virtually Brechtian delivery, and theatrical flourish are at once randomly crude and finely focused.

Yoo Ah In, who plays Wan-deuk, performs just as excellently, delicately balancing the need for “inhabiting” the role in order to achieve realism and “performing” the role, in a way that is both natural and improvisational, allowing the spectator both empathy for his character and critical understanding of his social situation. Unlike Kim Yoon-seok who came into film from a long professional history of stage-acting, Yoo Ah In became an actor by just watching films and television when he started acting professionally, although it is evident in his many interviews that he has always been conscious about his craft as an actor from performance to performance, presumably formally honing his considerable talents and knowledge further by earning a degree in Film Studies at Konkuk University.

The film virtually involves ensemble acting: With the quiet but steady performance of the character of the hunchback father, Gak-seol (Park Su-yeong), the spectator understands the multicultural experience brought about by an international marriage. In the case of the mother, Lee Suk-gi, played by Jasmine Lee, her competent acting treads all so carefully between being excessively melodramatic and explicitly remorseful.<sup>23</sup> Lee Ho-jeong (Park Hyo-joo) is a martial arts novelist who plays the grouchy neighbor’s sister. In her acting, she combines fragility and strength of character, even if her role as a writer must hide behind the pseudonym, Moonbow—presumably since martial arts is a masculine world. The “uncle,” Min-gu (Kim Young-jae), who is mentally challenged, acts like a child and adult at once, is wise in his humanity. Altogether, Wan-deuk and Dong-Joo, their families, neighbors, classmates and friends are the diverse faces of a multicultural reality of the *minjung* in which *han*, individually and collectively, is inscribed as the ethical trajectory of the film: the on-going project of Korean multiculturalism.

It is noteworthy that in the film, key factors in this trajectory are those played by Filipino characters whose interpolation of their own affects and ethos reframes this multicultural reality, as will be explained later.

## FILIPINO “SANA” IN DIASPORA

Wan-deuk is a “Kopino,” (Korean-Filipino), a bi-racial character of mixed Filipino and Korean descent, a product of international marriage in the growing multicultural Korean society. Originally, a Kopino referred specifically to a half-Korean, half-Filipino child living in the Philippines and abandoned by their fathers, but it has since been used more generically to emphasize the Filipino-Korean mix (Hyeji Yang). The development of his *han* as a character—given his own minoritized, “diluted” ethnicity and other experiences of marginalization in his life largely because of poverty, his father’s physical disability, mental and other challenges—are all traced along the diachronic line of the film’s narrative. But as scenes unfold, the spectator begins to discover that Wan-deuk’s experience of marginalization is a shared social, historical, and collective experience of the *minjung* as the film’s narrative turns “bifocal” in which one senses that one story can no longer be told without telling the story of the other. The individual experience of marginalization of Wan-deuk, as the spectator quickly realizes, is a collective one. Hence, the question of his individual identity as a bi-racial body, is part and parcel of the multicultural reality of the society, the body outside—at once Korean and Filipino, but neither purely one or the other. Wan-deuk is the embodiment of that society, and all the contradictions, confluences and discontinuities, conjunctions, and disjunctions it entails.

Still, the Filipinos in *Punch* constitute the narrative’s absence-presence in this multicultural project. Such oscillation may be partly due to the fact that Filipino women, as “foreign wives of Korean men are not counted as foreigners but as wives with Korean nationality,” including “former wives who ran away from their marriages” (Yukyung Chung 92). At the outset, the Filipino mother (originally a Vietnamese in the novel but played by a Filipina, Jasmine Lee, in the film) is virtually a non-character, as if a disappearing act. Such a role (virtually, cameo) is significant, whether Vietnamese or Filipina, against the backdrop of the reality of foreign wives in Korea who had been abused by their Korean husbands, resulting in the phenomenon of the “runaway brides.” It is paradoxical that Wan-deuk’s mother is never directly addressed by any of the characters by her own name because in the structure of the narrative, her role is a lynchpin to the unravelling of the other characters’ own *han* in the film. She has abandoned her son Wan-deuk as the story begins which explains her absence, only to appear halfway through the film as the story unfolds, spinning the narrative to a different direction.

While the role of the Filipino mother has been criticized for its apparent subscription to the Confucian patriarchal family ideal, her location in the structure of the narrative arc, for all her fleeting presence-absence in the film—which is interesting in itself—is key to the direction and inertia that the rest of the main

characters would take. Her presences shift the film's gear, from light comedy to heavy drama, for example, shifting the acting mode along with it. Jasmine Lee's "melodramatic" acting, in contrast to the comedic acting in most of the film, not only delicately balances the paradox of the Filipino mother's mixed and complicated emotion as she finally comes face-to-face with the child she had abandoned and for whom she had spent the rest of her life searching. Such emotional complexity is underscored not only by her being a mother but also by her being a poor Filipino migrant wife in a strange land. In this sense, it may be posited that the mixture of a Filipino mother's love and a sense of Filipino *hiya* (shame, reproach), on the one hand, and regret, wish, hope, longing, and dream, on the other hand, captured by the Tagalog expression, the adverb *sana*, all anxiously combine to manifest expressively her apparent "nervousness." Her acting performance is suggestive of a feeling of awkwardness and unworthiness in scenes with her newly discovered Kopino son which are emblematically captured in gestures of her "*hiya*" (embarrassment) or "*kahihiyang*" (shame)—hands clasped, bowed head, halting speech—before the child that she had forsaken.<sup>24</sup> Her body that seems to shrink smaller and smaller in his presence wants to become invisible and visible at the same time. Without the need for words between them, the son observes, understands, acknowledges and accepts—although initially with an almost inarticulate, cold, yet passive sense of anger—what he recognizes as her mother's *han* (if not her mother's *hiya*) when he tells her, "try not to be nervous next time." As a mother, her *han* consists of the complex mix of the excitement of meeting her son after many years of search in anticipation of a loving reunion in the future, and *hiya*, this deep sense of propriety and the highly valued sense of shame of the Filipino.

The melodramatic scene in which mother and son embrace tightly, lovingly, is a visualization of the *han* that binds mother and son, as the film takes its "affective turn" in which the characters find each other at last, "wherever" they might have been from. In this scene, *han* and *sana* are shared in a tight embrace in which the audience recognizes that the film was structured in a way that captures this moment before it could end. In the language of the developmental plot, the film reaches a point-of-no-return both for the characters and the narrative in this scene even before the epilogue because it is the structural effect of the film's narrative development and the culmination of performative affect in which *han* and *sana* are "acted out," by two very different affects in this epiphanic scene.

Jasmine Lee's expressive acting—I have heard a Filipino refer to it as "over-acting"—in playing a Filipino migrant wife in the film has been both praised and criticized. On the one hand, it has been criticized for playing into the trap of the role of the subaltern, affirming the dominant view in Korean society concerning minority people's so-called inferiority. On the other hand, her portrayal is exactly what has called the attention of the viewers to the issue of multiculturalism in

Korea today, without which, the film would have been more simply a private rather than a collective narrative, the story of a “troubled” young man rather than a monocultural society’s need to embrace multiculturalism. This is the scene, in fact, where, one imagines, the audience might say, in Brechtian thought-balloons, “Something is not right; this is terrible; this must be changed.” Located at the crucial melodramatic moments of the film—as opposed to the comedic scenes which often feature Dong-joo—Jasmine Lee’s acting evokes the contradictory aspects of multiculturalism: that the lines are drawn between the “native” and the “foreign” in everyday life, and that migrant wives and workers are welcome into the country, but the nation-state will not allow them to forget for a moment that once inside, welcome is not to be outstayed. Such is the case of Hassan, the Indian character, and his family who are deported for expired visa, and the Filipino migrant workers who live in Wan-deuk’s neighborhood whose dialogues are not even given subtitled translations in the film, only serving, as a result, as filmic background noise befitting a poor neighbourhood presumably in the outskirts of Seoul, for effect. Hassan’s own absence-presence in the film is key to the structural development of Wan-deuk, as he eventually achieves a much-needed confidence in kick-boxing with the help of Hassan. On the other hand, the Filipino migrant workers who speak in Tagalog highlight the affect—the *sana*—also suggested in the character of Jasmine Lee which marks the life of survival and endurance of the diasporic lives of Filipinos in South Korea, interrogating neoliberal globalization and its role in shaping state-sponsored multiculturalism.

The collective implication of an individual’s life is palpable when Wan-deuk’s father hints vaguely to his son that the experience of xenophobia in South Korea had caused the abandonment by the mother, tearing the family apart. But, as this moment of embrace suggests, Wan-deuk’s *han* is bound to his mother’s “*han*” which is tied to the Filipino’s *sana*. Theirs is a *han* that is joined in the womb. As the Korean poet Ko-Un says, Koreans are born from the womb of *han*, grow up in the bosom of *han*, live out *han*, and die leaving *han* behind” (Keumsil Kim Yoon and Williams 41). In the case of Wan-deuk and his mother, the *han* that binds them is characterized by the dynamic tension between familial and intercultural foundation upon which Korean multiculturalism may be predicated: the Korean *han* and the Filipino *sana*.

In other words, however ambiguous this arc of the story might seem, the mother’s role in the film is not a passive scaffolding of its structure but an active agency who has made a decision at a point in her life to leave the family, even upon the instigation of the husband for her sake, the decision which begins the main protagonist’s search and the narrative’s actions. The hint of her later decision to rejoin the family is also central to the final resolution of the husband’s *han*, and in turn, the whole family, and of the community, as an individual *han* is implicated

in a collective *han*. As the story ends, hers is a hopeful “*han*”—*sana*—that comes from and belongs to “the heart,” as she points to her bosom to explain how her love for her husband (even before she knew he was a hunchback) in response to her son’s question, was not circumscribed by material or physical limitations, but motivated by the hope for true love and presumed faith in humanity’s goodness. This hope, as embodied in *sana*, like *han* could have a positive and negative meaning situationally, expressing at once a lack and a desire. Filipino domestic drama and films abound with *sana* and all the emotive and cognitive associations that come with the adverb.<sup>25</sup> *Sana* is the operative word in the lives of the absent-present Filipinos in South Korea as implied in the film.

As suggested earlier, Filipino migrant workers were among the foreign migrant workers to fill in the 3D jobs in South Korea from the 1990s as the country steadily transformed into a developed country. In 2015, Filipinos in Korea numbered 63,000 (2015) which was roughly equivalent to 0.1% of South Korea’s population. In the midst of a combination of factors like the increasing urbanization, fast-paced industrialization, phenomenon of rural-urban migration, and the resulting population imbalance in which men outnumbered women, Korea witnessed the influx of Filipino migrant workers. Migrant wives also arrived, making up for a critical shortage of marriageable Korean women by luring foreign brides to the rural areas, through the Korean government-approved “rural bachelors get married movement” (H.J. Choi; Dong-Hoon Seol; Jiyeon Lee).

Filipino female immigrants, deployed by the government during the country’s drive for industrialization, perceive racial and social discrimination in work places, neighborhoods, public institutions, restaurants, banks and schools in an ethnically homogenous society like Korea whose long history of multiple colonization is said to have developed in the Koreans an antagonism to foreign immigrants.

Marriage migrants who have had access to Multicultural Family Centers benefitted from government support. With the success of these centers, the government has taken over to provide the migrant families education, language proficiency, skills training for employment. Since 2009, domestic violence in multicultural family settings and the rate of poverty in their households have been found to have decreased (Moon).

Jasmine Lee, a foreign bride, won the election in 2012 under the ruling party Saenuri whose platform included multiculturalism. Although a well-known social worker promoting multiculturalism and a media personality in her own right prior to her election, it is said that it was Lee’s appearance in Korean films, especially in *Punch* as the mother of Wan-deuk, that brought her new and wider popularity. Due to increasing number of tourists, migrant workers, and foreign brides in the last

two decades, Lee had been the target of racist media and social networking sites throughout the campaign, and in the wake of her historic election to the parliament, and throughout her term, she continued to suffer from persistent xenophobia in South Korea, which resonated in *Punch*.

In the film, Filipino migrant workers are rendered momentarily visible when Wan-deuk, early in the narrative, walks the streets of his neighborhood on this way home from his visit to the church for the first time. In the street, two Filipino men walk by while one man is talking on his cell phone. They greet each other while the man on the phone continues with his phone conversation. From the disjunctive and elliptical phrases that are barely audible in the background, it might be assumed that the men are migrant workers in blue-collared jobs in Seoul factories who live in the same neighbourhood, walking home from a day's work. The short, truncated lines are spoken in Tagalog, with absolutely no translation. Here is the brief scene:

Filipino men greet each other: Oy, pare! (The two men of working age walk on, while the third man continues to speak on the phone.)

Filipino man: Kalagayan...nakakapagod na eh...dalawa kong anak, *sana* masagip pa.

Literally, “kalagayan” in the context of the dialogue refers to the general condition and circumstances under which the Filipino speaker lives in Seoul as a migrant worker. He is exhausted and wary of working abroad to earn a living for his family, “nakakapagod na eh.” He is at once worried and hopeful that his two children may still be saved, “dalawa kong anak, *sana* masagip pa.” The word “masagip” (to save, salvage, redeem) is used to refer to saving people from disaster or near-death experience, or serious danger, as in saving people from drowning in floodwaters during strong typhoons or from fires in overcrowded places like squatter communities. Thus, spoken in these lines in Tagalog, kept untranslated (perhaps, the lines were adlibbed by the Filipino men who played extras which makes the Filipino dialogues all the more significant) is the “*han*” of the Filipino migrant worker speaking in the background about his life overseas who is worried about his children’s safety back home. This parallels the other characters’ *han*, the collective *han* of the Korean *minjung* as represented by the poor neighbourhood. But unlike the Korean *minjung* in the film, the Filipino migrant workers as background actors or extras, are supposed to appear only in a nonspeaking capacity in a street scene. But having spoken in Tagalog—albeit, untranslated—they speak of their “*han*” as Filipinos in a foreign land whose language they do not understand. But perhaps more importantly in this strange space they now inhabit everyday as OFWs, this “*han*” is nonetheless conjoined and juxtaposed to *sana* as the Filipino audience who recognize the word in that faint dialogue know only too well.

Migrant Filipinos' and working-class Koreans' solidarity is that of *han* in their experience of marginalization. Both the Philippines and Korea have suffered multiple colonization whose present culture and cultural forms are traces of their shared historical experience. From this perspective, it may be said that *Punch*, no matter how feeble or limited in the narrative, as often noted, attempts to be inclusive of the *han* of the other, of Filipinos who endure in their own experience of *han* in a foreign land—*sana*. But for Filipinos, lives are not only about *han*; in *Punch*, humanity shines through because of *sana*, for better or for worse, dreaming the dream of a positive outcome, no matter how impossible, possessing a pie-in-the-sky optimism even in the midst of starkest suffering or direst deprivation. From this perspective, *Punch* is an attempt at a multicultural *Bildungsroman* film in which the *Bildungsroman* is adopted in order to destabilize and critique dominant cultural stereotypes about minorities.

In the context of Korea's colonial history, *Punch* may also be said to be a postcolonial (melo)drama, and if it is indeed one, the film uniquely points to the possibility of building an ethical collective project for the *minjung* through what Sheetal Majithia calls "affective reason," a kind of rationality that is both affect and reason (2).

In combining the logical effects of realism associated with serious drama and the emotional affect of light comedy as shown by the use of interruptions of episodic arcs (daydreams, flashbacks, episodic sequencing, and temporal synchronicities, among others) with the overarching *Bildungsroman* narrative, what is created is not only a hybridity of forms but an overlapping of parallel narratives allegorically linked in which individual and collective stories mirror each other in the quest for a better world. In *Punch*, such a quest is paradoxically structured: the past for *minjung* is at once the reality today AND the vision of tomorrow—*han* is lived and imagined in synchronic moments. The film suggests a kind of superimposition of synchronic and diachronic temporalities in the everyday life of the *minjung*: on one hand, the apparent temporal diachrony of the narrative arc that deploys the enveloping structure of a prologue and an epilogue, on the other hand, the apparent synchronicity of the scenes consisting of a montage of episodes with no necessary "causal" and linear sequence. What unravels from prologue to epilogue is the unfolding of the *han* of the individual characters and the community as a collective. When the film gets to the scene in which mother and son embrace each other, the *han* that binds mother and son finds its moment of highest intensity in which narrative sequence and affective power come face-to-face, at once a tear-jerker and a cathartic one. In the textual overlapping of temporalities, the *Bildungsroman* structure in the coming-of age film is refunctioned alongside the *han* narrative in relation to the Tagalog *sana* in the lives of the *minjung* as evidenced by the film's ending.

**KOPINO AT CONTACT ZONE: HAN AND SANA**

The paper has argued that in the process of refunctioning, undergirding the film's hybrid narrative space is the Korean *han* which in the film functions as a disposition that refers at once to mental and bodily, involving processes involving both emotional and cognitive dimensions. What characterizes the "hybrid" narrative space is a structure of dramatization in combinatory processes and conventions of the *Bildungsroman*, the Korean *han* narrative and the Filipino *sana* while deploying the montage, collage and bricolage of scenes all together marked by a kind of *mixture*, a *halo-halo* of different features, events, genres, modes, elements or emotions in which the constitutive units remain, to a lesser or greater degree individually distinct.<sup>26</sup> This narrative strategy is familiar to *hallyu*, from television K-Dramas like *Winter Sonata* to K-films like *Punch*, including the mixing-in of what appears to be stock obligatory scenes associative of certain genres like an apparently stern-looking teacher waving a rod in the classroom. This is what the grumpy neighbor is trying to accomplish as he agrees to paint the multicultural center as the film winds down, combining colors of paints of his desired mixture while remaining very much his own grouchy self. Millet's painting and the story of Wan-deuk's life become one as colors, hues, foreground and background images uniquely combine to represent anew Wandeuks identity as a Kopino which is indelibly inscribed in his bi-racial body and the multicultural community in which he lives.

The mixture involves a number of transformations, from the literary to the cultural. *Punch*, as a coming-of-age film deploying the narrative features of the *Bildungsroman*, a space traditionally dominated by Western cultural and literary practices, undergoes generic transformations, triggered not only by global but also local dynamics. Its narrative structure which deploys the *Bildungsroman* tied together by the *han* narrative and the spirit of *sana* constitutes elements that are dynamically interconnected as translocal practices.

In the social sciences especially in migration studies, translocality, refers to a relational network of life space or locations in which individuals interact such as employment, hobby, religious practice, business, "home," or community work like migrants who live in more than one "space" literally and metaphorically, created through everyday practices. In a general sense, literary or cultural texts become such migratory spaces of transnational practices when they are refunctioned as in the case of classical western literary genres in the contemporary "vernacular" process of engaging with connecting textual and contextual processes of translocal literary and cultural practices.

The set of kick-boxing sequences is another case in point as allegedly illustrative of the apparent structural weakness of the film, making it at once thin and “strung together.” The self-awareness that Wan-deuk acquires following the structure of the *Bildungsroman* is underscored by his embrace of his biracial identity and his self-confidence in a new (kick-boxing) talent. All that destructive energy that once alienated him from his family and the society begins to transform into constructive knowledge and active participation in it.

While his Filipina mother is the source of his self-knowledge, Hassan, the Indian migrant, opens the door for his constructive participation in his community—Korea’s emerging multicultural society. The idea of a character’s “turning point” in a *Bildungsroman* is rendered visible by the crucial intervention of his multicultural reality.

As such, the film’s textual strength emerges out of the core of its very structural “weakness.” Rather than becoming a structural obstacle, it enables the film to address the serious and controversial theme of multiculturalism with the effect of the here-and-now, the force of the affect of the *minjung*’s “spirit” which is rooted in Korean culture and history, and the power of a vision of a community.

Understandably, the *han* of Wan-deuk’s mother, a Filipina, is associated with her multiple oppression as a poor migrant Filipina, and so is her wish for a better, more human existence as she lives in a foreign land—her *sana*. Her shoes, the old pair—basic, flat, old and shabby—were first shown in her initial encounter with her long lost son, as Wan-deuk gazes at them, knowingly. Later, with the son’s purchase of the new heeled pair for her, the shoes become the focus of scene’s story arc at the shoe store, when the shop-keeper asks, “How do you know each other?” as if they could not have been related at all. Wan-deuk responds, in this memorable scene, “She’s my mother. My mother.” The shoes, already embodying layers of meaning, additionally point to her own “*han*” as the wife in an international marriage, becoming the iconic image of both the society’s constraints (despite being highly educated back in the Philippines) and hoped-for possibilities in Korea, literally and metaphorically suggesting mobility, *sana*. This way, the aesthetic of melodrama built into the *Bildungsroman* narrative reaches its peak in the bus station in which they embrace for the first time on an individual level. But to the extent that the film is framed as memory of the *han* of individuals, families, neighbors, classmates, and friends, the entire narrative arc with its small episodic arcs among the scenes explicitly engages with both the affective and cognitive dimensions of the tensions in the project of multiculturalism in monocultural Korea. Such engagement makes for the power of the *minjung* as a collective framework that is energized by the spirit of the *han*, shifting the focus of “conflict resolution” from the individual to the collective” (Bleiker and Hoang Young-ju).

This undergirding helps transform the “coming-of-age” combinatory aesthetics of the film from a narrative structured by the integrative logic of an individual’s development (*Bildungsroman*) into a political site for negotiation of contentious tensions (multiculturalism), involving, on one hand, allowing the viewer to navigate through the narrative arc in anticipation of familiar dominant textual elements (such as Hollywood genres like comedy), and on the other hand, introducing “unfamiliar” features or emergent and residual ones, even as local ethos and affect underpin key scenes alongside the film’s thematic trajectory. Among the final scenes that include the launch of the multicultural center and a quick but close shot of two separate framed pictures of a Filipino family and a Korean one, interrogated is the genre’s conservative tendency for closure and unity in its developmental narrative of assimilation that is blind to difference and specificities. In this sense, the structure of the *Bildungsroman* in *Punch* does not become an “official narrative of integration” (Lowe 98). The outspoken Yoo Ah-in, who plays Wan-deuk, describes the rhythm that the film production tried to keep as one that was “buoyant” rather than “grumbling” in depicting the “tales of misfortunes” of poor, multicultural families in South Korea. Considering the significance of the theme of multiculturalism whose “essence,” the production tried to maintain, Yoo Ah-in wishes he could have gone “deeper inside Wan-deuk,” and believes that “there should be more films like that.” In the meantime, however, he felt “satisfied” that they found in *Punch* a “cinematic compromise” (“Punch [HanCinema Review]”).

Between *han* and *sana*, is the intimacy of the Other embodied by the Kopino; Wan-deuk as both One and the Other. Lee Han, the director himself says in the same interview referred to above, after directing the film:

I hoped people should feel some of the viewpoints of immigrants intimately. I feel those people are separated from us. I think the important things are hanging around, getting intimate, seeing each other and talking to each other, rather than being separated from immigrants. (Pratt)

## CONCLUSION

Wan-deuk as Kopino is the “contact zone,” in whose bodily affect and mental disposition lie the site of transculturation where different cultures, however asymmetrical due to the different cultures’ socio-historical realities, interface with each other, enriching each other’s cultures but also struggling with each other, informing each other (“Punch [Korean Movie]”).

Arguably a “Korean” film, at its contact zone is the *Kopino* (Korean-Filipino), *Wan-deuk*, in which the structure of the *Bildungsroman*, the Korean *han* narrative and the Filipino affect *sana* (hope/wish/if only/would/should) become resilient, mobile and dynamic if not always visible features that textually coalesce and collide. In this structure, scenes are dramatized “episodically” (as units that are virtually self-contained) and the narrative arc is suggested to move “chronologically” (in which past, present and future may be inferred) in the process of “generic translocality,” multiplying the tensions and reframing the narrative structure as a “translocal genre.” This border-crossing mode embodies the *minjung’s han* and the Filipinos’ *sana* into a hopeful if contradictory utopian future at once eliding and underscoring the social and economic asymmetries that continue to challenge Korean multiculturalism. The result is a refunctioned genre toward might be called the “multicultural *Bildungsroman*” that could tell new narratives of identification and belonging.

But if there is to be hope, as suggested by the last several scenes, there must be a passage that the film could have explored which is materially and metaphorically transformative. One that is the result of the historically dynamic tension between the uniquely individual (that is, Korean), and inclusively social (that is, multicultural). Asymmetrically, as *hallyu* (which is here understood as both an artistic product and business model), the film tries to traverse the “multiculturalism” underpinning the utopian ideology of neoliberalism’s “free markets” in the name of globalization and the utopian impulse toward human emancipation.

In that multicultural future, will the narrative continue to feature Filipino immigrant as extra and cook? *Hindi naman sana*. (We hope not.)

## Notes

1. Choi JungBong. "Introduction." *The Journal of Korean Studies* 16, no. 2 (Fall 2011): 170. 170. This is the introduction to *Unsettling National Cinema*. It enumerates films mentioned in this article. The films he cites that deal with "foreign/repatriated diasporas in Korea" include *Filan* (P'airan, 2001), *Never-ending Peace and Love* (Ch'andūra üi kyöngu, 2003), *Jongno, Winter* (Chongno kyöul, 2005), *My Father* (Aböji, 2007), *Himalaya, Where the Wind Dwells* (Himallaya, param i mömunün kot, 2008), *Bandhobi* (Pandubi, 2009), *Where Is Ronny?* (Roni rül ch'ajasö, 2009), *Banga? Banga!* (Bangga? Bangga!, 2010). On the other hand, among those that deal with "Korean diasporas in foreign countries," he cites Susan Brink's *Arirang* (Sujan büringkü üi arirang, 1991), *Kazoku Cinema* (Kajok sinema, 1998), *Iron Palm* (Aiön p'am, 2002), *Rikidozan* (K. Yöktosan, 2004), *Fighter in the Wind* (Param üi p'ait'ö, 2004), *In Between Days* (Panghwang üi naldül, 2006).
2. As generally understood, *hallyu* refers to the global phenomenon of entertainment and popular culture exported by South Korea, including pop music, TV dramas, and films.
 

Keehyeung Lee states that "Korean Wave" is "a highly complex and multilayered formation that is composed of real, imagined, and hybrid cultural practice, a diverse range of lived experiences and sets of powerful discourses which exist at national, translocal, and transnational levels." See "Mapping Out the Cultural Politics of 'the Korean Wave' in Contemporary South Korea," *East Asian Pop Culture: Analysing the Korean Wave*, Chua Beng Huat, Koichi Iwabuchi, eds. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008, p. 175.

Jeongmee Kim provides a caveat to the said definition, explaining that, "*Hallyu's* usage as a label has been employed to classify more and more products to the degree that in Asia it has virtually come to describe 'all things Korean' (Visser A23). Within Korea itself, *hallyu's* actual meaning is similarly hard to pin down other than to signify the perceived success of something exported from Korea, a brand applied to its cultural output similar to the 'Made in Korea' that is stamped on exportable merchandise. As discussed earlier, *hallyu* is not a term that is reliant on any particular notion of artistic quality, aesthetic principle, or generic content, but rather today is an evaluative term that relates to 'exportability'. It refers to an intangible concept and as a result there has been much effort made to materialize *hallyu*, to make it manifest and visible." See Kim Jeongmee, ed., *Reading Asian Television Drama: Crossing Borders and Breaking Boundaries*, New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2014. p. 255.
3. The film was based on the novel by Ryeo-ryeong Kim, *Wandeugi* (Seoul: Changbi Publishers, 2008). According to reports on the reception of the film in the domestic market alone, by its 20 October 2011 release, the viewership of *Punch* reached 5,309,98, earning revenues amounting to 38.53bn. "Punch sold over 5.3 million tickets to rank as the third best-selling Korean release of 2011, and throughout

its long run in theaters it was the one film that everyone was talking about.” See <http://www.koreanfilm.org/kfilm11.html>. Accessed on 15 July 2016.

4. Although not strictly a blueprint or a closed template, the *Bildungsroman* as a genre in the West is recognizable even today in the shape it first took in what is called “The Victorian *Bildungsroman*.” See Stanford University’s website, <http://web.stanford.edu/~steener/suo2/english132/Bildungsroman.htm>.
5. See [www.en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/ethos](http://www.en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/ethos)
6. The editors explain “affective turn” to refer to an expression of “a new configuration of bodies, technology, and matter, instigating a shift in thought in critical theory” brought on by transformations in the economic, political, and cultural realms.”
7. Criticism about the film’s structure—or the lack of it—is exemplified by these comments:
 

“Punch has its weaknesses: its story is rather loosely structured, and doesn’t come together to deliver much of a “punch” at its climax.” See <http://www.koreanfilm.org/kfilm11.html>. Accessed on 15 July 2016.

Elizabeth Kerr states, “Sadly *Punch* doesn’t hold up right to the bitter end. A scene near the end that represents an idealized Korea with all the antagonists enjoying a good meal is enough to make your teeth ache—and proves Lee hasn’t completely abandoned his mushy side. The director loses focus in the final few minutes, wrapping up on such a high note you’ll be looking for a bow.” See “*Punch*: Busan Film Review,” *The Hollywood Reporter*, 10 October 2011.
8. See Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (UK: Vintage, 1994). A “contrapuntal” reading is “A term coined by Edward Said in his book *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), referring to a mode of reading which reveals how some literary texts are deeply implicated in the ideologies of imperialism and colonialism. Borrowing the term from music, Said argues that such reading demands looking for what is not said and examining the significance of small plot lines and other marginal elements of a text. In doing so, the critic provides a counterpoint to the long-accepted reading of a text and uncovers its colonial implications.” See *Blackwell Reference Online*, [http://www.blackwellreference.com/public/tocnode?id=g9781444333275\\_chunk\\_g97814443332754\\_ss1-221](http://www.blackwellreference.com/public/tocnode?id=g9781444333275_chunk_g97814443332754_ss1-221). In this study, however, the reading of “Contrapuntal” is extended to refer to the marginalized presences and silenced voices which suggest an alternative articulation of multiculturalism. In the film, *Punch*, for example, the Filipino extras constitute the silenced voices of the marginalized Filipino migrant workers in South Korea whose brief dialogues, delivered in Tagalog in the background in the dark streets of a poor community, were the only lines not translated in either Korean and English in the film. The marginalized presence of minoritized migrant women, as pointed out by scholars and reviewers, is depicted by Wan-deuk’s Filipino mother.
9. Reports showed how *Punch* was an unexpected box-office hit in 2011, ranking #3 for Korean film ticket sales in 2011 for all films released in South Korea in 2011. See also “*Punch* (Korean Movie,” [http://asianwiki.com/Punch\\_\(Korean\\_Movie\)](http://asianwiki.com/Punch_(Korean_Movie)), accessed 10 July 2016.

10. Erika A. Hoagland, in her dissertation, examines “how a Western-based genre, the *Bildungsroman*, has been appropriated and reconfigured by postcolonial writers around the world, creating a new genre known as the “postcolonial *Bildungsroman*. Through critical readings of various texts, the study reveals how issues concerning postcolonial writers—decolonization, sovereignty, trauma, war, and identity—become integral parts of the genre’s “rewriting.” An examination of the critical history about the genre reveals that the cultural and ideological roots of the genre have been modified as well as contested as the genre is appropriated by writers who exist and write outside of the genre’s traditional pale.” In this vein, both the novel and the film may be said to be part of this tradition of what Brecht and Benjamin call refunctioning the western genre of the *Bildungsroman*. See “Postcolonializing the *Bildungsroman*: A Study of the Evolution of a Genre,” Purdue University, 2006, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/305265209>.
11. Yvonne Griggs, for example, discusses the adaptation of canonical texts and genre, including Western *Bildungsroman* novels, under the rubric of Adaptation Studies. See *The Bloomsbury Introduction to Adaptation Studies: Adapting the Canon in Film, TV, Novels and Popular Culture* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).
12. Realism is a literary technique that focuses on the description of “objective reality,” unlike Romanticism. The effect of realism in the use of stylistic technologies and formal devices in literary representation is what I refer to as “realism-effect” to distinguish it from the notion of the “real” or reality.
13. The term “*Bildungsroman*” was introduced to the critical vocabulary by the German philosopher and sociologist. Boes explains, “The OED credits the Encyclopedia Britannica of 1910 with the first English occurrence of the term, which then quickly entered into more common usage as a handy designation for any novel that ‘has as its main theme the formative years or spiritual education of one person’ (II. 188). The first English academic work on the subject, Susanne Howe’s *Wilhelm Meister and His English Kinsmen*, appeared in 1930.”
14. From a cultural point of view, the *han* of the Korean *minjung* have been closely associative terms because throughout Korean history, the experience of *han* has deeply marked the lives of everyday struggles of the *minjung*. See Sangyil Park, *Korean Preaching, Han, and Narrative* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008).
15. The features of the *Bildungsroman* are “refunctioned” by the film. Clearly, the plot of the *Bildungsroman* is easily adopted, paralleled, intertwined, juxtaposed or rendered interchangeably with *Punch*. See [http://www.revolvy.com/main/index.php?s=Kim+Yoon-seok&item\\_type=topic&overlay=1](http://www.revolvy.com/main/index.php?s=Kim+Yoon-seok&item_type=topic&overlay=1)
16. “The term “*Bildungsroman*” was introduced to the critical vocabulary by the German philosopher and sociologist Wilhelm Dilthey (1833 –1941), who first employed it in an 1870 biography of Friedrich Schleiermacher and then popularized it with the success of his 1906 study *Poetry and Experience*. Selections from Dilthey’s work were not translated into English until the 1950s, but the word itself made its way across the Channel as a part of the lexical infusion that arose from Edwardian interest in the writings of German thinkers such as Freud, Weber or Simmel. The OED credits the Encyclopedia Britannica of 1910 with the first English occurrence

of the term, which then quickly entered into more common usage as a handy designation for any novel that “has as its main theme the formative years or spiritual education of one person.” Quoted from “Modernist Studies and the *Bildungsroman*: A Historical Survey of Critical Trends” by Tobias Boes, *Literature Compass* 3/2 (2006): 231, Yale University.

17. Generally, “melodrama” is understood to mean “a sensational dramatic piece with exaggerated characters and exciting events intended to appeal to the emotions” or specifically refers to a play interspersed with songs and orchestral music accompanying the action. See <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/melodrama>.
18. It is widely known that Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin exchanged ideas on drama and theater. In particular, the concept of refunctioning was central to the productive engagement of two major 20<sup>th</sup> century German intellectual figures which would be incorporated in his *Organon organon für das theater*. See *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic.*, ed. and trans. John Willett, British edition (London: Methuen, 1964). This selection explores key dramatic theories of Brecht’s “Epic Theatre” like *verfremdungseffekt* (alienation effect or V-effect) in directing, acting, and writing, underpinning categories like refunctioning.
19. Pierce Conran has said, “It [story] can come off as a little strung together. Almost episodic.” “Udine 2012 Review: *Punch*.” *ScreenAnarchy*, 28 May 2012, <http://screenanarchy.com/2012/05/udine-2012-review-punch.html>, accessed 20 August 2016.
20. In narrative modes, the principle of “narrative economy” is generally understood to refer to the way a story is told that makes for maximum efficiency; that is to say, no excess, no unnecessary details and features hanging at the seams. Such efficiency moves the plot along in as straightforward way as possible with the efficient and skillful use of techniques and devices in a kind of “cost-effective” story-telling -- not one word or punctuation more or less on the page.
21. In view of the explanation of the painting by Millet and its socio-historical background, the social critique underpinning Wan-deuk’s interpretation of the painting in class is, indeed, inscribed in the painting:

True to one of Millet’s favourite subjects – peasant life – this painting is the culmination of ten years of research on the theme of the gleaners. These women incarnate the rural working-class. They were authorised to go quickly through the fields at sunset to pick up, one by one, the ears of corn missed by the harvesters. The painter shows three of them in the foreground, bent double, their eyes raking the ground. He thus juxtaposes the three phases of the back-breaking repetitive movement imposed by this thankless task: bending over, picking up the ears of corn and straightening up again.

Their austerity contrasts with the abundant harvest in the distance: haystacks, sheaves of wheat, a cart and a busy crowd of harvesters. The festive, brightly lit bustle is further distanced by the abrupt change of scale.

The preceding description of the painting by Millet is cited widely in art books and museum catalogues for example in the following titles: *Millet: Detailed*

*Paintings by Maria Tsaneva and Millet: 191 Paintings and Drawings by Narim Bender* among others. See also [https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/asset/GgHsT2RumWxbtw?utm\\_source=google&utm\\_medium=kp&hl=fr](https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/asset/GgHsT2RumWxbtw?utm_source=google&utm_medium=kp&hl=fr)

The slanting light of the setting sun accentuates the volumes in the foreground and gives the gleaners a sculptural look. It picks out their hands, necks, shoulders and backs and brightens the colours of their clothing.

Then Millet slowly smudges the distance into a powdery golden haze, accentuating the bucolic impression of the scene in the background. The man on horseback, isolated on the right, is probably a steward. In charge of supervising the work on the estate, he also makes sure that the gleaners respect the rules governing their task. His presence adds social distance by bringing a reminder of the landlords he represents. Without using picturesque anecdotes, merely through simple, sober pictorial procedures, Millet gives these certainly poor but no less dignified gleaners an emblematic value free of any hint of miserabilism.

22. Frederick R. Karl explains that "...the *Bildungsroman* is necessarily episodic – the structure of the novel follows a long development from childhood through success or failure, scene following scene in chronological order" (16).
23. On the other hand, Scott Higgins, explains the historical roots of the structure of melodrama, "The concept of situational dramaturgy, a form of narrative construction inherited from the nineteenth century theatrical melodrama, reveals continuities between classical narrative and the "post classical" action film. See "Suspenseful Situations: Melodramatic Narrative and Contemporary Action Film," *Cinema Journal* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008) 74.
24. Thus, a person who is shameless is called *walang-hiya*, literally, without shame, and all the negative connotations that are associated with the word in Philippine culture.
25. Tagalog Films with "Sana" in the title abound, especially romantic drama, like *Sana Dati* (If Only), is a 2013 Filipino romantic drama film written and the commercial and critical successful *Sana Maulit Muli* (I Wish it Happens Again) is a 1995 Filipino romantic film. For the Filipino audience, the emotional lineaments of the affect in *Punch* are basically recognizable.
26. The notion of mixture is akin to a chemical combination. "In chemistry, a mixture forms when two or more substances are combined such that each substance retains its own chemical identity. Chemical bonds between the components are neither broken nor formed. Note that even though the chemical properties of the components haven't changed, a mixture may exhibit new physical properties, like boiling point and melting point." This definition was drawn from Anne Marie Helmenstine, Ph.D. See <http://chemistry.about.com/od/dictionariesglossaries/g/defmixture.htm>.

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