

PARK CH'UL-SU'S RECIPE FOR ANORECTIC

REPETITION IN 301, 302

THESIS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Screenwriter, Suh-goon Lee, and Korean director, Park Ch'ul-su's 1995 film, 301, 302 has the potential to connect people with the psychological experience of eating disorders in a new way. The film, though difficult to categorize, enters the saturated genre of "foodie films" and the voluminous accounts of eating disordered women with a profound perspective. As a "foodie" film, with wide distribution in the United States, 301, 302 emerged in 1996 among an onslaught of ethnic culinary-themed films. In the 1990's, Soul Food (1997), Eat, Drink, Man, Woman, (1992), Like Water for Chocolate (1994) and Big Night (1996) were among the many "foodie" films that enjoyed wide public success. At the same time, 301, 302 enters into the discourse of eating disorders as the first Korean film to receive international release, garnering critical acclaim in the film festival circuit.

Critics lauded its shock value, the complexity of the story telling, and its stylish presentation, but tended to characterize its eating disordered subjects as springboards for broader connections between food, sex, and love. While this point is valid, it is significant that most critics do not specifically discuss the possibility that the film challenges outdated discourse about eating disorders. It seems that even critics are tired of the subject. Moreover, critics have not fully explored the idea that 301 and 302 represent two sides of the same person and what this may represent in a film about eating

disorders. In the context of a film that is constantly reminding us that it is more fantasy than reality (or that reality is fantasy), this avenue provides a rich potential. Leveraging this perspective, I argue that through the use of two doppelganger characters, the film simulates the interior experience of addiction in a way that brings new life to outmoded discourse on anorexia and bulimia, Korean cinema, and consumption itself.

Marya Hornbacher, in her 1998 book, Wasted: A Memoir of Anorexia and Bulimia, writes that when she started the process of recovery, she was shocked at her own boredom with her condition, and a close friend told her that anorexia was “totally passé. Totally 1980s” (277). In Grethen Papazian’s 2004 essay, “Anorexia Envisioned: Mike Leigh’s *Life is Sweet*, Chul-Soo Park’s *301/302*, and Todd Haynes’s *Superstar*,” she writes that her 2002 college students were uninterested in the topic of anorexia, regarding the anorectic with “indifference, and even disdain” as if “they’d heard it all before” (Papazian 147). It seems that the discourse on eating disorders has turned anorexia into a “folk term,” one that no longer captures our attention; our acute curiosity, especially in the United States, has turned to exhaustion. This discourse is in part created by the literary, television, and filmic representations of anorexia that have shaped our sensibility about the condition. Papazian finds that autobiographical and fictional accounts have formulaic plots and characters that fail to provide “significant insight into the interior world of the anorectic” (Papazian 147). This is partly because this interior world is still being excavated. Recent developments in the field of eating disorders have led to insight, but this has not been well depicted, at least not in the West. Moreover, eating disorders are now a global issue. As other cultures and developing countries begin

their relationship with this condition, they may be well situated to provide new perspective.

South Korea began its relationship with eating disorders on the heels of its advance into modernity in the early 1980s. Rapid economic changes brought astronomical upheavals in the fabric of its society during the economic boom, challenging a society that was only recently almost entirely rural. In 1994, in South Korea, “90% of high school girls who were of normal weight,..believed themselves to be overweight” (Efron 6). For a community that only twenty years ago struggled with widespread hunger and starvation, the emergence of eating disorders is especially disorienting. The historical situation of Korea may have encouraged the screenwriter and Park to create a compelling new look at the psychological constitution of eating disorders.

Though Park states that the main characters of his film, 301 and 302, suffer from the solitude of modernity, his film provides a significant and timely statement, by representing the conflicting psychological ideologies that govern the eating disordered mind. The film emerges in a time when the treatment of eating disorders has shifted from a solely psychotherapeutic to a combined behavioral and psychotherapeutic approach. Moreover, there has been a shift in the treatment of presenting conditions as separate disorders. Many programs now treat anorexia and bulimia as two sides of the same eating disordered condition, under the rubric “overeaters,” recognizing the impulse behind both as a compulsion for food. Moreover, anorectics are persons who have, “food addictive denial”; this is a person who is addicted to the illusion of control over food. Seeking a unified response to the condition, current trends in treatment adapt therapies

designed for addiction to address the cyclical patterns of behavior and thought that plague food addicts. Rather than solely addressing deep-seated pathology, this approach addresses the manifestation of contesting factions in the same eating disordered mind – equally compelling demands to eat and to avoid food. 301 and 302, played by Eun-jin Bang and Sin-Hye Hwang, embody food addiction and repulsion in a complex way that, when fully explored, may open discussion about the passé topic of eating disorders.

Moreover, the film defies formulaic conventions of story telling for film or literature, in America or Korea, creating an endlessly regenerating cycle that is, “cut off from reality” (quoted in Min 170), much like the experience of addiction to disordered eating. The film also reveals the family dynamics that led to the precarious condition of these two characters through the myopic and suspicious viewpoint of 301, who tells their story within another story. The film begins where it ends and concludes with a question. After several runs at the film, one is left with more questions and multiple interpretations. Park’s carefully construction illusion is particularly apt for the challenging work of depicting eating disorders in a meaningful way. Looking back upon her eating disorder from the position of so-called recovery, Hornbacher explains that it is like going down the rabbit hole into a world where things are not what they seem. This is the world that Park creates, a world where reality and perception are constantly challenged.

Therefore, starting with the abstract, in Section 1. I will examine the ways in which the film illustrates Louis Althusser’s fundamental framework for transference of repressive ideology and the ways in which the characters respond to this. The “always-already-there” layers of ideological entrenchment, which keep subjects from encountering reality, are Ideological State Apparatus (ISA), or dominant “...realities,

which present to the observer a distinct and specialized institution” (Althusser 143). These institutions are inherited beliefs that insidiously maintain sociological order, calling, or what Althusser terms interpellating, subjects to particular gender, culture, and family roles, among others. I will look at the ways that the characters 301 and 302 experience ideological state apparatus, how it contributes to their disorienting conditions, and also how they combat this. But I also look to a fundamental theory to address the significance of eating in our relationships to others, the prominent subject of the film.

In sections II., III., and IV., I look to Simone Weil’s theories to provide a foundation for examining the ultimate cannibalistic union of 301 and 302, as well as their opposing responses to desire and food. Weil’s writings establish the cosmically fundamental role that eating has on the human drive for connection with others. We desire an anthropophagous connection with others, a “paradigm of craving and consumption,” which “governs our world of relationships from within” (Irwin 4). Her theories help illuminate 301 and 302’s violent struggle and the impossible choices that lead them to a cannibalistic resolution. Moreover, 301 and 302 are vehicles through which Lee and Park examine broader issues surrounding consumption, both in Korean culture and universally.

Finally, I argue that the film’s depiction of eating disorders engages the personal with the political in a way that makes visceral the broad significance of our alimentary choices. Korea’s rapid modernization, history of oppression, and unique sense of personal accountability for the nation’s economic survival, have resulted in an acute precariousness in consumer habits. With capitalist concerns of excess replacing hunger, South Koreans face deep moral controversies with excess and modernity, and how to

mitigate consumption without squelching the possibility of hopeful progress. This context is significant to the battle between 301 and 302 as they struggle to find a compromise between unmitigated consumption and unrelenting denial. In the final section, I place 301 and 302 within the context of consumer anxiety in Korea. But the film offers an alternative to the binary choice of progress or stasis on multiple levels.

Korean director Park, who was “raised on television dramas,” intended a significant departure from conventional filmmaking in 301, 302, the first film produced by his independent film company. In section V., I propose that Park’s directorial rupture with conventional melodramatic cinema mirrors the rupture that the film suggests in its resolution to 301 and 302’s dilemma. This film defies convention to the very end, providing suggestions about the struggle of the Korean film industry, Korea itself, and eating disorders, within a spirit of regeneration of these problems. Ultimately, 301 and 302 are united, and the film offers a complex statement about what their union means. Park and Lee finally assert that the issues the film brings up, will, like the film’s plot, continue to run “in circles” (Min 170). However, they also suggest that this is okay, as long as we forego extremes and, instead, accept the balance between opposing factions of indulgence and austerity, recognizing these conflicting, even warring, contradictions within ourselves.

CHAPTER II

PATHOLOGICAL REPETITION ON THE MENU IN 301, 302

Louis Althusser, in his *Ideology and the State*, identifies an omnipresent, consciousness-forming ideological structure that calls us all into an orchestrated production, in which we all have parts before we reach the opening scene to life. These preordained ideologies manifest in our actions and habits, which, reciprocally, form or reinforce our ideas. As Althusser hypothesizes that “the category of the subject.... is the constitutive category of all ideology” (170), he fashions the subject with an enormous role in the transference of ideological inheritance, with very little agency to combat it. Judith Butler recognizes the performance-based aspect of Althusser’s theory and posits the possibility that subjects have choice in how they spin their interpellation. The film 301, 302 provides a canvas for exploring both Althusser’s theory and Butler’s expansion of it. The characters embody the violent manifestation of repressive ideologies of gender through food and sexual ritual and identify the female body women as both a victim of its cultural construction and an agency for control and transcendence, if only through brutal means. The scope of this film is far reaching in its exploration of two universal options for women as they negotiate desire: overindulgence or denial of corporeal desire. This section will focus on how the film’s microcosmic interpellation of two female subjects, who embody these seemingly incompatible choices, illustrates Althusser’s illusory lens

of ideology. Through the eerie vision of the camera's lens, the characters' pathological repetition and corporeal manipulation of repressive gender demands provide a glimpse at narrow and disruptive challenges to ideology.

The film produces a portal through which the characters, who share a compulsive relationship with food, mutually interpellate gender ideology, representing the eternal ideology that Althusser describes. Althusser asserts that interpellation is the process by which individuals recognize the fundamental relationship to the Other. Since "there is no ideology except for concrete subjects," we interact with ideology through each other (Althusser 171). The name of the film itself, sometimes written as "301-302," produces a binary structure extended through the two main characters, following Althusser's basic structure of subject to other subject(s). The hailing (interpellating) of the characters' ideologies drives the conflict in the film. These ideologies are uncovered through the film in pieces, allowing a multi-layered exploration of the characters' ideology-forming histories and a tight juxtaposition to their current pathology. The action of the film opens with a detective embarking on a missing person investigation for the disappearance of the woman who lived in apartment 302, Yoon-hee. The detective begins his interrogation with the woman now living in 301, Soon-hee. After the detective leaves, the back story of 301 and 302's relationship becomes the main plot of the film, encapsulated at the end by the detective's follow up meeting with 301. The arrival of 301 in the apartment across the hall from 302 marks the beginning of their ideological culinary war. What ensues is a contentious ideological and alimentary battle, which takes place primarily within their apartments and through flashbacks. The main conflict in the film is 301's sadistic

determination to get 302 to eat by whatever means (seduction, force, gentleness) necessary. The film concludes in a cannibalistic culinary act.

Before meeting, the characters play cat and mouse, viewing each other through the walleye view of the peepholes in their high-rise apartment doors. This viewing culminates in their crossing each other's paths outside their apartment building, where they hail each other for the first time. As they cross paths, the voiceover captures the exchange only through their thoughts. Here they share a hailing that indicates their entrenched gender ideologies. Yoon-hee (302) is depicted as an anorectic, who is portrayed as quite thin. Soon-hee (301), at this point in the film is wearing a fat suit because she is in the process of losing weight gained during an unhappy marriage. Soon-hee (301) describes Yoon-hee (302) as a "starving mannequin" who needs to be "supplemented with animal fat." At the same time, Yoon-hee (302) describes Soon-hee (301) as a disgusting "pig" who could "feed a nation with her breasts" (301, 302). In the scene, the voiceover does not make clear who is responsible for which voiceover thought, and the women do not acknowledge each other physically. This hailing is a violent interpretation of cultural ideologies about women and their bodies, suggesting that anything outside of an ideal is inhuman.

Cultural constructions of gender particular to South Korea are implicated in 301, 302 and provide a framework for gender ideologies at work in the characters' lives. The characters are both single (one divorced) Korean women living in an urban and obviously modern area. In Korea's recent history, economic changes have drastically modernized the landscape, facilitating the advance of women into the public sphere, challenging their ubiquitous domestic domain. Advances in Korean society with respect to gender

expectations, have led to a changes in traditional Confucian patriarchy that allow women more options while maintaining male dominion. For instance, in a study of upper-middle class South Korean women, Myung-hye Kim found that even though women overwhelmingly continue to become full time housewives, some by choice and others by force, their activities as housewives increasingly involve public work. Women meet with teachers, arrange tutoring for their children, shop, and often times work for the husbands part time. They participate in the real estate market and actively trade in the stock market, investing in the family's future success. Moreover, most marriages of upper middle class families are now love marriages instead of marriages arranged for advantageous kinship and economic reasons. In love marriages, educated women are prized for the ability to influence their children's education and for their social grace, which extends the success of the family as a unit. While women are critical to the success of the family by taking part in insuring economic and future success, their work is still considered subordinate and the distinct responsibility of women. Men do not participate in the education of children or any household chores. Moreover, though gender expectations obviously differ among classes, "Forms of patriarchy in upper-middle-class families are carried over into other classes, in the sense that these families perpetuate the image of dependent, non working wives as a role model for society" (Kim 9). Modernity has advanced certain women's roles in South Korea, while maintaining strict labor distinctions for men and women. In addition, modernizing forces play a role in the emergence of the modern gendered phenomenon of eating disorders, the film's main vehicle for expressing the impact of westernization.

The study of eating disorders in South Korea suggests a common theme: modernity presents contradictory expectations for women and is a determining factor in the emergence of eating disorders. In Korea, women, especially of the upper classes, are expected to pursue education, forge a career, and relinquish these goals to become wives and mothers in their late 20s. Modern women are depicted, and sometimes valorized, as sexually open and yet are expected to maintain chaste for marriage. These contradictory ideologies are difficult to negotiate, but without the added pressure of westernization, the global spread of eating disorders might not be so assured. That eating disorders have become an international concern is apparent. A 1997 article in the Los Angeles Times recognized the prevalence of eating disorders in “Women’s Eating Disorders Go Global.” The article explained, “Anorexia—a psychiatric disorder once known as “golden girl syndrome” because it struck primarily rich, white, well-educated young Western women....has spread to women of all socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds in Seoul, Hong Kong and Singapore,” as well as countries where hunger is still a problem. Moreover, the article singles out South Korea as the most interesting case study because until recently, “full-figured women were seen as more sexually attractive—and more likely to produce healthy sons” (Efron 7). Affluence may have contributed to the reduced emphasis on reproduction, however “standards of beauty [in South Korea] have changed dramatically in the 1990s with democratization as South Korea's government has decontrolled TV and newspapers, allowing in a flood of foreign and foreign-influenced programming, information and advertising” (7). The media brings the modeling industry, media images of (many western) women, increasing valorization of slim body images, and a desire to have it all.

The desire for a slim ideal is expressed through the character 301, who comments enviously on 302's slimness, embarks on a transformative diet, and sadistically fantasizes that she is able to seduce 302 into obesity with her cooking. Throughout the film we learn that both characters revere thinness, and in their muted exchange in front of their apartment complex, it is clear that both believe the following contradictions: women's bodies are food and yet must live in opposition to it; women should feed the world and, yet, deny themselves; and women should not be too fat or too thin, or they cease to be human and become a "pig" or "mannequin" (301, 302). However, all of this is conveyed within an illusory lens of the camera that calls into question the applicability of these ideologies to reality.

The film creates an ominously narrow vision that implies the characters' reality is distorted. Throughout the film, the realities of the characters are constructed primarily through the gateway of their apartments and their surreal experiences within them. Scenes flow in and out of linear time, and spectral images of 302 appear in the cabinets and rooms in her apartment as the detective searches for clues. In addition, there are no outside witnesses to 301 and 302's friendship. These factors contribute to a sense that the characters are mystical. They are both reacting to real trauma in a manner that seems restrictive, and yet they react defiantly, becoming somehow transcendent. For example, 301's powers in cooking are so exemplary, she takes on a mystical power. She develops and implements a diet for herself that she imbues with the power to return her to her pre-marriage innocence and beauty. A colleague of the detective recounts the story of 301 cooking her adulterous ex-husband's dog, to which he responds with a hint of fear mixed with further suspicion and awe. Here her cooking reaches a supernatural level through its

association with witchcraft. In the final scene of the film, 301 finally realizes her ultimate transformative, and even, sadistically redemptive power when she cooks and consumes 302. 302's perpetual fasting registers as miraculous in conjunction with her unwavering asceticism and rejection of all that is in the world. In this way 301 and 302 seem to float above a literal interpretation of their characters and situations, dwelling in a supernatural realm.

In addition, the director presents sequences that can only be interpreted metaphorically. In one scene, 301 seems to tap right through the sheet rock of an adjacent wall, causing an avalanche in 302's apartment, the fortifying layer of bookshelves tumbling recklessly down around her. This metaphorical penetration leads 302 to a memory sequence of her sexual abuse. These scenes are disorienting to the viewer and add a haunting element. And most significantly, in the last scene of the film, 301 actually consumes 302, leaving no trace of her existence at all. And as 301 sits down to eat what is supposed to be 302's stewed flesh, an image of 302 appears opposite her at the table. These scenes call into question the existence of 302's character, or at least suggest her metaphoric role in the film. In the larger picture, they contribute to a sense that the film attempts to represent these embodiments of gender ideology as omnipresent phantoms.

302's story and almost supernatural vigil conjures the piety of the innocents and connects her with a long history of the gendered expectation of asceticism. The mystical realm has long been associated with hysterical expressions of women and 301, 302 extends this phenomenon. Extreme dedication to religious beliefs also has a long history of association with women and hysteria or queer behavior. In Korea, where unsanctioned

religious rites are predominately cultivated and performed by women, men continue to dismiss and to fear overt expression or superstitious belief and prefer to perform their religiosity in private. Though Korea strictly adhered to Confucian philosophy until modern times, Christianity has a large influence in contemporary South Korea, where almost half of the populace professes Christianity (Chaibong 102 (add to Bib)). It is fair, then, to broadly consider 302 within the Christian theological expectations for women.

The foundations of Christianity helped to construct women and the female body as wanting and in need of control. The church fathers' writings asserted that women are diseased, argumentative, wicked, manipulative, greedy, and responsible for the fall of man. Good women should be silent submissive, virgins; in other words, they should be saints. Like 302, medieval female saints, who sought transcendence through the expression of extreme asceticism, were both valorized and regarded as hysterical or dangerous in their complete denial of patriarchal access to their bodies. They refused food and took only the consecrated body of Christ into their bodies. That they were negotiating within the extreme contradictions placed on women's bodies mirrors 302's plight. Women's bodies were considered the site of sin and the downfall of humanity. They were diseased and impure unless they completely closed themselves off to the world. Their options were carnal mother, who could never achieve peace or the purity required for spiritual perfection, or virgin who completely erased herself in the service of God. St. Catherine of Sienna, in her devotion to God, starved herself to death at the age of thirty. Some argue that this was a hysterical response to unbearable oppression and, sometimes, abuse.

Joan Kee, in her reading of the film 301, 302, maintains that the context of the film is not specifically identifiable as Korean so that she is able to examine the reactions of the characters in the context of Freud's definition of "hysterical" response to trauma. Within this theoretical framework, she pinpoints patriarchal scripts for women as a contributing trauma. Kee writes, "The inability of a young woman to fit neatly into the wife mother script written by the patriarchy leaves her susceptible to symptoms of hysteria and melancholy, " and, "hysteria has the unlimited potential to give women the voice to articulate the pain, rage, and emotional turmoil caused by extreme trauma" (2). The ambiguous modern setting of the film represents another layer of ideology mediating the characters' experience of reality and creating a space for the characters to battle patriarchal demands more generally.

Althusser theorizes that our worldview can only be a representation of an imaginary relationship to reality, which is always entrenched and distorted by ideology. In Althusser's discussion about the interpellation of subjects, he argues that ideology has, of course, always-already interpellated its individuals as subjects and that family has a particularly ominous role in this process. He asserts that children are born into expectations that preappoint them to determined roles and that the "family ideological configuration is, in its uniqueness, highly structured, andit is in this implacable and more or less 'pathological'... structure that the former subject-to-be will have to 'find' 'its' place" (176). Although Althusser is referring to the ways in which family structure interpellates us before birth, Althusser recognizes that the pathology of the family structure extends beyond this point, and the film 301, 302 is a good exploration of this. The characters' perceptions of their roles are based on emotional and physical abuse, a

perception which allows viewers to acutely experience distorted interpretations of real conditions of existence. This is not to suggest that people who do not experience abuse have an undistorted view of the conditions of existence. Althusser suggests that all interpretations of reality are distorted through a subject's interaction with preordained ideology. Who we really are is never clear, but through acute dysfunction, one can see that the family system is a part of a distorting ideology that can manifest in compensating rituals in relation to food and sexual behavior.

The film connects the disorders of both girls to ideologies about sex and food inherited from their families, corroborating Althusser's assertion that the family structure is a foreboding influence of ideological force. The film identifies a source of 301's preordained role as caretaker in the beginning of the film when she literally takes her mother's place in the kitchen. As we watch her standing on a step to reach the kitchen counter to chop vegetables, her voiceover states that her mother did not come home in time to make her something warm for dinner. It is implied that her mother's absence is a chronic problem. In this scene, she is metaphorically and literally taking the role of her mother and being hailed to her maternal and gender role. She becomes, then, one who is always-already her mother and caretaker to an absent partner, using food for comfort and food preparation as an act of love, even self-love, which we see taking various forms throughout the film. It is interesting to note that the church, the dominant ideological apparatus that predates capitalist society, sanctioned this activity as a necessary role for spiritual, i.e. good, women. Joan Kee argues that 301's obsession with superdomesticity in her marriage is a literal enactment of a gender script that is dictated by patriarchy. In her marriage, she is consumed with cooking and is unnaturally attached to her sets of

porcelain dishes and silverware and her husband clearly asserts that her position in the marriage is secondary and subordinate, even to their dog. The film exemplifies Althusser's theory that the family ideological configuration is one of the apparatuses that has continued the earlier role of the church as a state apparatus, one that establishes and perpetuates gender roles.

Joan Kee takes the idea of this hysterical repetition a step further. It is 301's lack of metaknowledge that reveals one of the most insidious problems with the construction of gender and ideology in general. The cultivation of ideology is taken on by subjects without recognition of its full impact on our minds and bodies. As Althusser explains, subjects are "interpellated as "free" subjects in order that he [she] shall submit freely to the commandments[and] freely accept his [her] subjection" (182). Ideological apparatuses work because subjects envision that they are freely acting within them.

As Judith Butler points out in her essay "Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire, "In effect, the law produces and then conceals the notion of a subject before the law in order to invoke that discursive formation as a naturalized foundation premise that subsequently legitimates that law's own regulatory hegemony" (4). 301's desperation seems to illustrate this idea; she is not aware that her need to fulfill the domestic script is based on something outside of her and did not originate with her. As Kee points out, during her marriage when she is continually asking for approval from her husband for her domestic skills, "She is deceived in to thinking that her mind is her own" (6). 301 has become a vessel herself for patriarchal ideologies and, as Luce Irigaray describes, "will not say what she herself wants; moreover, she does not know, or no longer knows, what she wants" (5).

302 has a more physically brutal hailing as a victim of sexual abuse. The film clearly connects the violence of the abuse and her abstinence from food and sex. In the beginning of the film, she talks of wanting soothing items in her refrigerator rather than red meat and then skulks into the meat locker, identifying her body with a piece of meat. In all of her memories with her father, the screen is flooded with red and red meat is ever-present. In a vision, she is waving a meat mallet violently as her father fondles her from behind, seeming to make a double analogy with her body as the interlocking piece, representing both meat and beast. These experiences form ideologies about her body that persist. She asks 301 later in the film, "How can I stuff my body with men or food?" In an important scene with her mother in her parents' store, her mother reasserts an ideology that reinforces 302's relation to the forces of power in her life. As her mother counts the money in the register, 302 tells her mother, "Ma, I'm going away." Her mother responds, "Your father provides you with everything you need." Her mother's complicity in the situation confirms 302's body as currency within the family economy and her position as Other in a larger sense. The context of the film may be ambiguous enough to universalize many of its themes, but 302's body is marked not only as a female victim of sexual assault but also as an Asian woman. This context adds another dimension to the perception of 302 as Other especially as the film reached American audiences.

The film 301, 302's unique positioning helped it advance its message about the impact of gender demands to a larger audience. 301, 302 won the Grande Bell Price in Korea in 1995 and the following year was one of the first films of the New Korean Wave Cinema to be distributed widely in the United States. In 2000, when the creators of the Korean Film Festival in New York went looking for Korean films in the New York

Public Library, 301, 302 was among the meager three that they found. The screenwriter of 301, 302, Lee Suh-Goon, studied film at New York University and, only 20 at the time of 301, 302s release, was the youngest woman director in Korea. 301, 302 was the first film produced by Park Ch'ul-su, who created his own film company in Korea in 1994. Park's films were known for providing a voice for the modern Korean woman before Korea's gradual inclusion of women directors in the industry.

Images of Asian women have been sexualized in the media not only in the United States but also in Korea, especially as the ideal modern woman has emerged. Images of Korean woman, according to L.H.M. Ling in "Sex Machine: Global Masculinity and Images of the Asian Woman in Modernity," have become a hybrid of Korean and Western ideals of the modern woman resulting in a hyper-sexualized figure that is always represented in subordinate roles. Moreover, the East as a whole, including men, in non-global communities, continues to be represented as feminine due to the shaping of the capitalist identity as hyper masculine, creating a double status of Other for images of Asian women in the West. 302's body, which is ransomed for the family's economy as we watch her mother counting the money from the till and stopping on a bloodied bill, presents multiple layers of exploitation. It is no wonder that she chooses, or that the director chose for 302, complete closure, denying all access to her body; she is cloaked in black in all but one scene of the film. 302's mother's sense of the inescapability of the situation, though enforced by the real threat of the father's violence and loss of economic security, predates 302. Moreover, the factors that contribute to a tolerance of family violence come from a bigger repository of ideology about family than we see in the film. The family thus becomes a very powerful apparatus for perpetuating and reflecting

repressive ideologies. But are there ways that these women challenge their repressive interpellations?

Although it seems that 301 is not able to escape her obsessive caretaking of 302 without the help of a violent act, I would argue that within the confines of her entrenched interpellation, 301 does refigure her ideology through sheer repetition. As Judith Butler describes in her essay, "Gender is Burning," subjects can maneuver within the trauma of ideological entrenchment that Althusser's theory identifies. Butler asserts that although Althusser mentions the possibility of subjects resisting their reprimand, he does not consider a range of possible ways that subjects can do this. Nor does he recognize that subjects also benefit from this recognition. For Butler, there is a distinction between the subject, which is the site of the intersection of interpellating calls, and the subject who looks at this situation and recognizes it as a construction or an ideological illusion. She writes, "To be implicated in the relations of power...is not... to be reducible to their existing forms" (382). Moreover, being the subject of this occupation of "messages implied in one's being" offers an opportunity for empowering repetition (Butler 382). She suggests, "Where one might understand violation as a trauma that can only induce a destructive repetition compulsion, it seems equally possible to acknowledge the force of repetition as the very condition of an affirmative response to violation" (383).

301's psychopathic wielding of her cooking seems to suggest an affirmative response to a violation. 301 cooks her husband's dog, fantasizes about seducing and subsequently engorging 302 with her rich cooking. When that does not work and she is made aware of 302's traumatic past, she insists, at first gently and then vigorously, that her food can sooth 302's affliction. Her use of her cooking as retaliation against 302 and

her husband, her blind insistence on its healing power, and her brutal demand for recognition of her undeniable talents imbues her position with a desperate power. 301, in an absurd, but ultimately convincing way, adds agency through sheer repetition to what might be only a reducing interpellation of the traditional, largely invisible, female role of domestic caretaker and divorcee. Moreover, her cooking is a technical skill, a weapon, and a source of history. She documents her abilities and her labor compulsively, asserting not only the frantic significance of cooking and feeding to 301, but also providing a history of that desperation and an accounting of her labor creations. In addition, the film depicts her in an aggressive and masculine way. She tames food. She beats, shapes, slices, and transforms it, often vehemently working out frustration and anger over her husband's emotional abuse or 302's incorrigible rejections. Moreover, the food is depicted in sensual ways. It is graphic and raw, submissive and vulnerable, and, at times, obviously meant to signify genitalia which she macerates in order to give life. Her frenzied demands could also be seen as an over determination of her interpellation, bringing to light the unrealistic nature of the perception of her relation to real conditions of existence. Thus, she answers Althusser's rhetorical question, "who are the authors of the great ideological mystification" (165). 301 participates in this mystification, while turning it on its head with hysterical reinforcement. But is 302 more successful in refiguring her ideological entrenchment by denying female gender scripts altogether?

302 is overt in her corporeal denying of gender scripts that have been brutally assigned to her. Kee argues that 302 evades patriarchal conventions more successfully than 301, emerging as ambiguous, unidentifiable, and unattainable. Her character avoids typical patriarchal cinematic patterns of female actualization that "retaliate against the

emergence of the independent young woman: by devaluing, punishing or saving the offending female presence or by representing the female figure as a fetish object” (3). One might argue in response to Kee that 302 does become a fetish object in the end of the film; she becomes a food object for 301, taking the place of 301’s sublimated emotional and sexual desires. But satisfying another woman’s voracious appetite for union is hardly a patriarchal cinematic pattern. It is this aspect of the film that led one reviewer to surmise that the film’s denouement “could reasonably be interpreted as sublimated lesbian discourse” (Hodges). Though 302 is punished and devalued by 301 before she understands her dilemma, 302’s trauma is examined and justified, and she does not overcome her denial of the world or appropriate proper gender scripts to emerge transformed. Instead she vomits up every dinner that 301 offers her, which symbolically represents a desire for men and penetration. 302 must become a closed circuit to avoid further abuse. In this way, her body represents the denial of further ingestion of abusive demands of female bodies.

Thus, 301, 302 provides an eerie vision of distorting ideology and its dangerous manifestation for two women. The families in the film hail each of the girls to pathological positions that, in turn, determine their ideologies about food and sexual behavior. The eerie vision of the film both asserts the ominous force of ideological repression and questions our ability to perceive it. 301’s character seems to lack the metaknowledge to perceive the ideological construction that has prescribed her superdomestic role and 302, who is aware of the violent forms of subordination for her gender seems hopelessly doomed within them. And yet, within this nightmarish world, there is evidence that subjects have some power to refigure the belief systems that we

inherit. 302's asceticism provides a new script for women in response to traumatic demands of the female body. And 301's pathological response to her role as cook and caretaker may provide an illustration of the ways in which subjects can slice away layers of ideological forces subsumed within the complexity of our social structure, and give it a name: violence.

CHAPTER III

CANNIBALISTIC UNION, THE ANORECTIC GLITCH

301, 302 engages viewers with questions. What happened to 302? Why does she not eat? Will the detective discover their secret? And significantly, what is 301 seeking in her unrelenting desire to feed 302? The film offers some deceptively simple answers. 302 does not eat because she was abused and 301 desperately seeks approval and connection. But why through food? Why such violence? In the genre of “foodie” films, especially ethnic food films, food is a means for transforming dysfunctional interpersonal dynamics, usually in extended families, who have been affected by modernity. Diane Negra explains that “the prevailing industrialized, alienated, and anxious relationship to food undergoes a fantasy conversion to an artisanal mode in which food becomes a powerful form of emotional capital” (63). In many ethnic food films, food unearths deep-seated issues and releases the potential for fulcrum. But a fulcrum is continually frustrated in 301, 302; food does not convert into emotional capital without violence. The audience is constantly frustrated and unsure of what answers are being given when the characters seem to spin their wheels incessantly. What does this suggest about the potential for emotional connection with others? What is the film driving at with its twisted resolution?

301's condition of using consumption as her sole means of connecting with others suggests an inevitably cannibalistic desire for union with the other. 301, who actively seeks sex, friendship, food, and products for her kitchen, represents the indulgence of ultimately cannibalistic drives and a preference for grave dominion over isolation. Her juxtaposition with the asceticism of 302 creates a binary response to desire which begs the question of whether harmony can be achieved in either state and whether a compromising union is possible. The cannibalistic resolution suggests a sadistic relationship to consumption illuminated by the theories of Simone Weil, who was a French philosopher, political activist, and a mystic.

A central concern for Weil is the dilemma inherent in the design of our human physiology: how to live ethically when we are designed for what Simone Weil describes as a psychological cannibalism. Weil, who, like 302, chose to live in a state of self-imposed food restriction, makes consumption a principal means for expressing her theory, but also believed that it was a central force in our relationship to the world. Though Weil did, like medieval mystics before her, express the mortal union with God in cannibalistic terms, "God wants to eat our flesh," Weil's philosophical idea of connection through consumption can be understood as more than a metaphysical notion applied to religiosity (Irwin 1). For Weil, our relationship to the world is a construction based on the structure of desire and satiety inherent in our alimentary drives and choices, the central theme of 301, 302. Weil's theory about eating as a primary agenda for the human condition is more base than other paradigms of the significance of our relationship to food.

For example, eating is more than an approach to the study of women's spirituality, as it is for Carolyn Walker Bynum. In addition, Weil's theories are important to the discussion of 301, 302 because they provide insight into the anorectic's decision to manipulate the body's encounters with food. This insight goes further than the assertion that anorexia is an alternate language of subversion in response to trauma. While it is certainly documented that dysfunctional family life is a significant factor in the development of eating disorders, as is the case for 301 and 302, the question of why a particular person chooses this outlet rather than another is not resolved. The film seems to imply that a causal relationship between sexual abuse and anorexia is a foregone conclusion. Though there may be some evidence of a connection, it is not statistically significant and would not provide an explanation for the many anorectics that have not experienced sexual assault. It also does not explain why some girls become addicted to disordered eating, rather than drugs or other obsessions. Hornbacher reveals the complication: "The question is really not *if* eating disorders are "neurotic" and indicate a glitch in the mind...but rather *why*; why this glitch, what flipped this switch, why so many of us? Why so easy a choice, this?" (Hornbacher 4) Hornbacher's question seeks a more fundamental explanation for the decision to become addicted to food, rather than something else. Food's significance in our lives may seem obvious, but Weil offers something closer to an explanation for its power. For Weil, eating or being eaten is the primary network through which human interaction, or the exchange or transference of human energy occurs, both metaphysically and interpersonally. In other words, food is "the irreducible" (Irwin 3).

As Alec Irwin, a professor of religion at Amherst College, suggests in, *Devoured By God: Cannibalism, Mysticism, and Ethics in Simone Weil*, Weil felt that humans are part of an economy of energy: “Man eats God and is eaten by God” (Irwin 8). Though Weil’s theories are theological, she applies them to human interaction, asserting that we act out this paradigm in our interactions with others, seeking power and dominion at times with leeching force. In other words, the vocation of the flesh is to eat and to be eaten. In fact, eating is so primary to our existence that we are able to ignore a primary aspect of consumption, which Weil brings to the surface – its brutality.

On the most basic level eating requires violence because it means the destruction of another organism – the ultimate resolution of 301 and 302’s battle – and this extends to inanimate and animate objects. We long for union with what we desire, be it food, art, or humans. We long to consume or possess it. We can buy things, desire and devour food, or possess the attentions of another. Weil’s point is that seeking and ingesting food is a significant part of the human psychological constitution, which implies an explicit violence in the way that we interact with our world. In other words, we desire with a hunger that seeks dominion, a domination that parallels actual metabolic ingestion and, therefore, destruction.

Therefore, the dynamics of greedy consumption guides our relationships with others, as we feed, psychologically, on the life source of others. Weil’s concept of psychological cannibalism is epitomized in passionate love or even friendship. Our hunger serves the purpose of binding intimate interpersonal relationships, but it also threatens to consume the other’s energy parasitically, a characterization that is apt to 301, 302. As Irwin put it, our “vocation” is to attempt to metabolize others, to become one

with them, and it is rooted in our own biological functioning. “The force in love is the rage of our own hunger,” Weil wrote. Irwin points out, “...the intoxication that we feel [in love] is evidence that we are metabolizing another being” (Irwin 6). But Irwin notes that this is not to say that humans have an evil appetite for each other. In reality this drive to consume the other flows from the construction of need within the self. We need each other to live, to create life and sustain ourselves, and it is driven by the ego, a part of the human condition that Weil sought to destroy. Weil describes the ego’s drive to connect with others as blood letting, “We love someone, that is to say, we love to drink his blood” (Irwin 6). It is union that we crave, but we crave it with cannibalistic intent.

What is unique about 301, 302 is that it makes salient the connection between seeking union with food and seeking union interpersonally, and reveals the cannibalistic urge as more than vengeance. The film deals with the violence of consumption primarily through 301’s character and relationship to food. 301’s sometimes brutal dominion over food and her sadistic characterization evoke a metaknowledge of the savagery of our sometimes violent impulse to connect with others that we don’t acknowledge easily. Her hostile food preparation and her aggressive consumption illuminate a violence in the desire to connect with others, which is visually represented as conversion of life source for metabolic consumption.

To establish 301’s intense use of food as a vehicle for relating to others, the film imbues her with a skill that requires the literal destruction of organisms, which pathologizes and legitimizes her at the same time. Her character is seen almost continuously engrossed in the gathering, preparing, and consuming of food. The fact that she is an amateur gourmet cook adds a level of engagement that is not uncommon for

artisans, but her efforts also present as excessive (she has no other activity in the film), which evokes a desire to indulge and suspect 301. In addition, her command and attention in the kitchen lend a sophistication bordering on a scientific involvement and skill. As we watch her shopping in the market or pivoting between pots and counter tops in the kitchen attending to her task, she is seen almost as chemist. Viewers understand that this task is of critical importance to her, beyond its artistic function, in her violent reactions to rejection of her food or lack of sufficient appreciation for it. We appreciate her skill, but also recognize it as a threat, in a way that a lesser cook could not achieve.

Park focused intently on her food preparation in order to use food solely as 301's mechanism for interaction with her world, establishing her as an active agent in metaphorical and literal destruction of organisms. 301's cooking style vacillates between sadistic aggression and loving indulgence, depending on the current dynamic of her relationships. She cooks aggressively in response to situations where her sense of control or opportunity for connection has been challenged. For instance, 301's second visit to 302's apartment, is particularly traumatizing for 301. 302 has again refused her food. This time she not only refuses the food, but unceremoniously gags at the (not accidentally) phallic sausage that 301 prepared for her. During her visit, 301 makes a crass attempt to probe 302's world, asking if 302 has been raped, while munching on the end of a sausage. In desperation, 301 instead begins talking about herself, revealing that she has started cooking again and that she craves sex. 302 leaves the room gagging, while 301 reads some of a sex column that 302 writes.

After this sequence, 301 prepares a dish of clams with antagonistic rage, beginning by cracking open the grey shells, metaphorically commencing their battle.

The camera focuses on the gelatinous matter inside the clams and muscles, which are beautifully vulnerable and slightly disgusting while 301 begins an angry rant about her visit with 302. It becomes clear that 301 misconstrued the situation when she begins talking angrily about their visit. “How dare you laugh at weight?” she says while uncompromising and efficiently gutting the tender muscles. This scene suggests a dialogue between 301 and the food in which the food takes the place of 302. She fantasizes about making 302 fat with her cooking and then returns to eviscerating the mussels. Focusing on the vulnerable slimy bilge of the mussels and 301’s taming of them into beautiful thin slices of vengeance, the director is able to convey a relationship that is representative of her real life. 301 will take a delicate matter, 302’s abuse, and pull all of the gory details from it in her desperate need for union. This scene especially is meant to show us what the detective learned about eating disorders in the beginning of the film, “Food is a tool for controlling love” (301, 302).

In another scene, it is obvious that director Park intends for the raw food to be viewed as lifelike to convey a dialogue between 301 and her cooking, evoking its metaphoric role. For instance, after seeing 301 lay an intact fish on a white cutting board surface, the camera focuses on the fish and then cuts to the upraised butcher’s knife in 301’s hand, as if in a horror film. After the knife knocks down on the fish and severs its head, we see the tailfin of the fish fan in slow motion, as if making a final gesture (remembering a flying leap, perhaps) before dying. In another scene, 301’s metaphoric relationship to others through food becomes homicidal.

One of the more brutal examples of 301’s transference of life source into food is the cooking of her husband’s prized Maltese, a symbolic murder of her husband for his

abuse during their relationship. Near the end of the film, 301 admits to 302 that if she had stayed with her husband she would have killed him. And when 301 and her husband meet with their divorce lawyer, 301's husband suggests that he was afraid of 301 and lived in fear for his life after the killing of his dog. The lawyer then holds up some severed vegetables and responds by saying, "Well you're still here," suggesting a close shave and implicating food as the third party in their dispute (301, 302). These insights imply that the Maltese was a misplaced murder at best, indicating that cooking, like other art, is an arena for processing intense emotion. Though clearly in the film, the act of killing her husband's pet and feeding it to him is intended to arouse revolt and to be a clear act of revenge, its juxtaposition with the final act of cannibalism in the film is interesting. This act of vengeance, rendered in enmity, is more brutal than the final scene in which 301 and 302 are united willingly. 301 and 302 forge a tenuous union at the end of the film. This only makes sense if the food comes to represent, not the actual substance (a cooked woman or pet), but rather the dynamic of the relationship which inspires the meal. A scene that epitomizes the connection between 301's relationship to food and desperate need to connect with others, through whatever means necessary, occurs when she first discovers 302's ongoing rejection of her creations.

301 discovers 302 in the process of taking out a garbage bag full of food, obviously disposed almost intact, that 301 created for her with artistic perfection. 301 reacts by dragging 302 back into her apartment. In a hysterical rampage, 301 hastily tries to reassemble the dishes from the debris and thrusts the food into 302's mouth. While 302 escapes to the bathroom to vomit, 301 slumps down in the chair and, wild-eyed, sadistically stuffs her mouth full of the disposed food. As we watch her chewing, mouth

open from a large wad of food stuck in her cheek, and shaking with rage, we understand that 301's desire to make 302 eat is not the point. 301's hysteria reveals that the human drive for connection is not merely benign. We fight isolation every day in more civilized ways. But extreme isolation, in the exaggerated form that the film produces through these two characters, evokes a violence that suggests Weil is right. Park Ch'ul-su stated that he sees the affliction of eating disorders as "the film's "symbol of modern people's solitude"." (Williams 83). In the increasing solitude of modernity, do we seek union with cannibalistic intent? 301 clearly does. Through 301, the director draws the viewer into a bird's eye spectacle of the skillful destruction of organisms that signifies in a new way the violence of our relationships to others.

It should be noted that the food in the film is both tantalizing and offensive at once, signifying 301 and 302's dilemma with desire. As Rebecca Bell-Metereau points out in her essay, "Eating and Drinking, Men and Women," the director uses, "key-lit close-ups of food that are at once exquisitely beautiful from a formal and aesthetic perspective and unappealing or even grotesque at a visceral level" (Bell-Metereau 103). 301 uses food of all textures, including delicate mussel fish, meats, eels, mudfish, crabs, octopus, fried chicken casseroles and noodles. She also uses human and canine flesh. The camera captures her interaction with the food allowing the viewer to see through her eyes. She cuts, dices, tenderizes, stuffs, boils, steams, purees, hand stuffs pasta, and fries foods of all colors and shapes. She dotes on her food and as viewers, we do too. The sheer variety of food is tantalizing in and of itself, but 302 reminds us not to get too comfortable with indulgence.

The film also carefully captures the sounds of her cooking. Though there is often a backdrop of the movie's ominous theme music, the dull knock of a kitchen knife on fresh fish, the sizzle of the juices as a fresh piece of flesh hits the frying pan, or the pressure of the gurgling of a pot of boiling stew is always captured. And 301's masterful engineering of each meal and enraptured consumption of it does more than illuminate her plight; it brings out the little food addict in all of us. And this is something that we may admit to, but not many of us are able to admit to the little *cannibal* in all of us that 301 signifies in the end of the film. Park clearly intends to convey the food as an extension of 301, rather than merely making it another star in the film, for 301 conveys hope through her cooking as well enmity.

The film evokes 301's nurturing response to food when her hope for connection with others is high. These hopeful moments of food preparation include: meals cooked at the beginning of her marriage; meals she cooks for 302 before she finds out that 302 is tossing her creations in the toilet; and food she makes as part of her restorative diet. Before the demise of her marriage, we see 301 cooking happily for her husband, preparing meals from her cookbook, shopping for colorful dishes to compliment her meals, and serving them with anticipation. She uses gentle methods of cooking. She boils eels that seem to writhe elegantly and greens that lift mouthwateringly out of a steaming glass pot. 301 does not seem to have to wield a desperate or violent control in these scenes. She is poised and leisurely. It is only when 301's need for union is thwarted that the viewer is exposed to the wrath of the cannibalistic economy of human interaction. Since 301's hopeful and nurturing attempts result in frustration constantly, the film's momentum is driven by the contention between 301 and 302, and 301's

personal battle for union. So, the central question in the film is whether or not 301 and 302 can resolve their problems. At the end of the film, the voiceover asks, “Is this the end to two women’s solitude?” Can they achieve harmony? Will this mean that 301 has finally sated her desire for union. If Weil is correct, it is only through an act of cannibalism that humans can achieve the ultimate union.

As Irwin explains, there is a contradiction at the heart of human desire: “We long to be united with objects and beings outside ourselves... Yet eating annihilates objects as independent entities,” thus defeating union (2). But is there another option? Do we have to participate in this black market of human energy? Weil believed that there were opportunities within this system to live ethically and to embrace the transformative powers of eating, but these ideas are a mystic’s yearning. To manage these drives, people need to be aware of the distinction between desiring and having. What we would call a desire and actually obtaining what we want, Weil called “looking” and “eating.” For mortals, looking and eating are two different operations. Consequently, humans are quite familiar with the frustration of desire. Not having or eating what we see is a constant struggle. But this is not the same in heaven. Weil explains, “Only on the other side of the Sky in the country inhabited by God are looking and eating one and the same” (7). Annihilation is not necessary for a complete union with the other in heaven. The only way to avoid participating in annihilating union on earth, however, is for the eater to become the eaten through submission to God, and to thereby transform physiological drives.

This is what Weil called decreation, a state similar to what 302 was seeking, and only achieved through the destructive act of cannibalism. If we apply Weil’s theory to

302's situation, we might argue that 302 seeks to remove herself from the human trade of cannibalistic drives that 301 represents. Though Weil believed that we cannot disentangle ourselves from the cannibalistic economy as long as we live, she also sought to transcend it. This condition is at the heart of 302's plight. Her question, "How can I stuff my body with men or food," resonates with more than merely the desire of a woman to be free of abuse; she wants to be free of the cycle of human feeding, psychological and physical, and the violence of this trade, which 301, and 302's father, embody with a vengeance. But can we remove ourselves from this plight, from the violent pursuit of union?

The film seems to suggest that the cycle will continue. After consuming 302, 301 lies sleeping on the bed peacefully. For the moment, it seems that she is finally sated. But 302 soon appears skulking behind her, while the incessant words of 301 come out of nowhere. We hear, "I will make a cooking diary for you," and "I will cook wonderful things for you." We don't know if harmony is achieved here. The question lives on and we recognize that 301's relationship to food may have been almost more primary than her relationship to the phantasmal 302.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONTENTIOUS EATING DISORDERED MIND

302 tells her mother in a scene following her father's attempted abuse, "Ma, I'm going away." "Ma, I'm dying." She repeats these phrases while looking directly ahead of her instead of at her mother, who is counting money from their cash register. It is a haunting moment in the context of the film, as 302 is resisting her abuse in the only way she can and we know she cannot escape. It is also a haunting moment because it foregrounds her later expressed desire to "disintegrate." Her mantra resonates with something deeper--a desire to become spectral, less corporeal. The film is full of haunting elements; elements not fully understood in the moment they are delivered. Park continually provides pieces of the puzzle that are only comprehensible in a retrospective examination of the film. This mimics the lived experience of the psychological trauma of an eating disorder. You have to emerge from the rabbit hole to gain perspective. In this scene, we are clued in to the director's technique when her mother responds, "Are you reading a book or talking to me?" Her words are meant to be symbolic. She does "go away" psychologically and a part of her dies after her last attempt to reach her mother. In the context of the full experience of 301 and 302, we also understand that 302 is speaking here with the omniscience of a parallel existence, suggesting that 301 and 302 are "doppelgangers, two opposing sides of the same coin" (Bell-Metereau 103).

Park establishes their symbolic parallel existence through suggestion and creative narrative style that is disorienting, evoking the complicated division of a disordered mind. Outside of the ethereal aspect of their relationship and the spectral presence of 302, Park provides clues in the film that 301 and 302 are the same person. In the beginning of the film, 301 states that her mother is a skilled meat cutter. Park takes pains to ensure that we see 302's mother slicing meat on more than one occasion. The film begins with a focus on 302's mouth talking and ends with 301's mouth chewing on 302, reflecting a symbolic birth and death. Moreover, the beginning of the film cuts back and forth between their young faces rapidly blending their words, making it impossible for a first time viewer to accurately distinguish between their thoughts. This happens again in front of their apartment when they first meet. And it is only with careful reviewing that I have sorted out whose thought belongs to whom. In the beginning of the film when the detective is searching 302's apartment, 302 appears everywhere he looks, but he cannot see her. After this sequence, 301 suddenly appears in 302's apartment, surprising the detective. This sequence suggests that 302 is truly right in front of his eyes, but he just cannot see her. Clearly, Park's intention was to muddle the distinction between the characters. To add to this, the representation of eating disordered behavior in 301, 302 is not realistic.

It is important to point out that 302's character defies a realistic depiction of an anorectic or a bulimic and this disconnect helps allow for a different reading of eating disorders. As Hornbacher explains, anorectics and bulimics do eat. Even anorectics eat; they just do so in a way that ensures the least amount of calories enter their body. Though 302 does try to eat a little bit at the end of the film, she insistently claims that it is

not that she does not want to eat; it is that she cannot eat. But anorectics *are* physically able to eat. Anorexia is not a loss of appetite or a physical condition, as many researchers have made abundantly clear, recently. According to the DSM, quoted in Jonathan Rosen's Eve's Apple, anorexia is characterized by "A. Refusal to maintain a body weight at or above a minimally normal weight for age and height..." and "B. Intense fear of gaining weight or becoming fat, even though under weight" among other qualities (Rosen 134). Significantly, neither refusal nor inability to eat is a diagnostic criterion. Neither does 302 fit the diagnostic criteria for bulimic or "binge-eating/purging types" of anorexic behavior. Bulimic tendencies are described as recurrent binge eating, where an individual eats, "in a discrete period of time" with a "lack of control over eating" and "self-induced vomiting" (Rosen 135). 302 most frequently purges after only consuming one bite of food and seems to do so against her will.

Though anorectics may seldom be satiated, they do certainly want to eat. As Eve's Apple's main character, anorectic Ruth Simone, attempts to explain to her lover, "Your body's going *food food food*, and your brain's going *no no no!*" (Rosen 213). As Weil illustrated, "The miser deprives himself of his treasure because of his great desire for it" (Thibon 66). It is the unfathomable depths of desire and emptiness that we are afraid of when we hoard and deny. But the point is that generally anorectics do eat some modicum of food almost everyday for various reasons, as they negotiate the strong desire to eat and a demand NOT to give in to this desire. It becomes part of a system of suffering and reward. It is a ritualistic behavior that helps to mitigate the burden of constant austere denial. One may offer to order and pick up food for the entire family,

but then refuse to partake in the meal. This is food foreplay and it is 301 who engages in this activity, representing the food seeking behavior of food addiction.

302, on the other hand, is never seen eating unless 301 force-feeds her. She keeps nothing down and she does not seek food. Food seeking is a major activity for most anorectics as we see in Hornbacher's memoir. Hornbacher describes late night outings where she simply walks by windows of cafes and restaurants, yearning for something but unable to allow herself any food. Instead she sits in bars all night and drinks black coffee to deal with the pit in her stomach and her body's somewhat involuntary food seeking behavior. And yet almost all reviews of this film label 302 as an anorectic, without any disclaimers. It hardly seems likely that a director who has dedicated a major portion of his film work to women's issues and a female screen writer would have missed the mark and unintentionally depicted an inaccurate vision of the modern condition of anorexia or bulimia. Since the film seems to use these characters in a more universal sense, another interpretation seems necessary.

Therefore, I propose that, to illustrate the acute dilemma of food addiction, the film uses two characters to represent the contentious psychological dialogue of one eating disordered mind. First, the director's stated artistic intent was to create a space that implies antithesis. The two main characters live in apartments that we may assume are about the same size, if not identical, but are used to help construct the opposing emotional and behavioral sphere of the characters and their condition. Director Park explained that the two main characters' personalities, which he describes as "active" and "passive," had to be reflected in the photographic style of the film. Park and Eun-Gil Lee, director of photography, custom built the two apartment environments to give them

their characteristic identities. Park explains, “301’s room was lit mostly with fluorescents and light bounced off the silver floor material. I tried to have the action of [actress] Eun-Jin Bang [reflect that] by being active with her movement” (Williams 83). But the film depicts 301, herself, creating this space, underscoring her position in the film as an active body.

Upon arrival at “New Hope” apartments, 301 remodels her apartment to be one large living area where she cooks, consumes and excretes. There are no walls except for what seems a waist high partition that supports and separates the toilet and bed from the cooking area. The cooking area is filmed at angles that promote the kitchen as the predominant space in the apartment. And 301 is filmed as active within this space. She is seen: directing the remodeling of her apartment to fit her specific design; cooking with great skill and determination; rearranging her space and the tools in her kitchen frequently; (force) feeding 302; documenting her cooking religiously; and finally killing, cleaning, cooking, and eating 302. Prior to all of this, she embarks on her own dieting journey. She has a party for herself in her apartment where she makes an elaborate last meal, has wine, and dances on the table celebrating in her pre-diet state. The space is also remodeled to indicate a masculine or technical space, in many ways. Her tools hang from the rack above the sink and the colors in the room are black, red, and silver. She does not have any soft furniture or traditionally feminine decor. There is no living room or other living space where one might relax or think of anything but cooking and eating. The floors are tile and gray much like the floor of an actual restaurant kitchen, the domain typically of a male chef. 301 has completely defined her space to represent her domestic obsession with cooking, a space that she is active within. There is no other

activity in her world outside of cooking, seeking food, and eating. This is one side of an anorectic or eating disordered mind.

302's space, on the other hand, is soft and white, a much more monochromatic aesthetic, with lots of open, empty space. The camera seems to accentuate this in many shots as 302 sits or glides about the apartment. There are no bold colors. The floors are hardwood and her bed has a thick, soft, white comforter on it. 302 seems to float about spectrally in this apartment, never moving quickly unless to vomit, with a long robe flowing behind her. Park explains that, "For 302, we used dull-colored flooring material and [set dressings, such as] bedroom furniture, books and her computer. I added to that dry image with sunbeams coming in through the windows" (Williams 83). She often seems penitential, while 301 is irreverent and purposeful in her movements. There is little furniture in 302, and the apartment retains its walls and small enclosures within the larger space. Rooms provide compartmentalizing opportunities, space for privacy and mystery that 301's open space room does not afford.

In the first scene, 302 appears hauntingly in the cupboards and in the bedroom, marking her union with the space that she inhabits. 302 does not occupy this space with command and her activities are defined more by what she does not do than what she does. She sits motionless in the open foyer, which houses her library and her desk where she neither writes nor reads. We see her expressionless not answering the phone. The answering machine picks up and a man implores her, as if he has on numerous occasions, not to regard the world as dirty and dangerous. 302 has a kitchen but she is never seen eating in the apartment, without 301's persistent and sometimes violent demands. If 302 does eat, then she must flee to the bathroom to vomit and expel the offending food. Her

most purposeful act is compulsory and out of her control, not the voluntary act of vomiting that is associated with bulimia. It is an involuntary explosive purging, and she slumps to a prostrate position on the floor afterwards. 302 does not command her space and becomes a silent presence, her body a burden, in her own spatial sphere. She is the mannequin that 301 accuses her of being.

This lack of movement underscores a distance from 302 that the viewer and 301 must fight to penetrate. We never see 302 enter 301's apartment, another way the directors create a distancing from 302, so that we are not completely engaged in her tragic story. The ability to disengage the viewer from the struggle of the characters and to avoid emotional manipulation and melodrama is considered an artist achievement, according to the People's Cinema Movement in Korea. 302 does not come to us and she is never seen looking straight into the camera, except through the mediating blue sheen of one of 301's glasses. Like most anorectics, we must negotiate her incredible economy of space. This is the other side of the anorectic mind. A mind that is afraid to take up space, and has disengaged, left empty her space at the dinner table.

302 is the character identified as eating disordered in almost all of the reviews of this film. 301 is mostly described as, "obsessed with cooking." There is a strong discourse about anorectics that is undaunted by new research about anorexia and bulimia. This research suggests that anorexia is an addiction to food, not a repulsion for it, and that it is only one side of the spectrum of eating disorders, the disavowed sister of compulsive overeaters. Perhaps another reason that critics identify 302 as eating disordered rather than 301 is because 301 follows more accepted pathways for modern women, embarking on yo-yo diets, struggling with the desire for sumptuous foods, and idolizing women who

don't seem to. These behaviors are part of modern discourse, especially for women. The response to 301 is interesting. She is identified as obsessive, but critics do not have words for 301's condition, suggesting again that these characters cannot stand on their own. It seems that 301 and 302's condition, whatever we may call it, can only be understood as a vehicle to address something larger.

Eizabeth Papaziata carefully couches her characterization of 302 as an anorexic by pointing to the director's authorial intent. This "version" of anorexia is Park's vision, and it is unique in the way that it visually captures the anorectic's dilemma. 302's anorexia and 302's obsessive cooking, then, are an envisioning of the psychology underpinning the condition much more than a realistic depiction. But, in truth, the general public probably has the perception that anorexics do not ever eat. 302 could represent what the public actually believes of anorectics, and the fasting girls and holy anorexics of past centuries. They are miraculous in their ability to sustain life without giving in to unwomanly and unholy desire. Like the saints, she claims no responsibility for her food refusal. This removes the agency of a subversive act and renders 302, like the holy saints, miraculous and pitiable. And to see 302 sneaking nibbles from a muffin, or allowing herself some reprieve from her fast would have muddled the martyr effect that we get from her character and belied 302's plight and her battle with 301. The use of two characters helped the screenwriter convey the duality of an eating disordered mind, especially the part of the mind that is not only obsessed with food, but uses it as sublimation for other needs.

301 is the side of the anorexic that we do not see in depictions or in life. 301's relationship to food has become primary to her tragic experiences with men, her mother,

and even porcelain dishes, which break and must be replaced. She eats with the relish of a woman who has imbued food with this level of significance. In one scene, we see her stuffing food in her mouth with an expression of absolute sensual enjoyment. She eats with her hands, guiding rolls of ham and carrot sticks into her mouth, picking up another without finishing the first. In this way, she is the little nymphomaniac glutton that anorexics are trying desperately to repress or control. But 301 is relentless. If she represents the anorectic's nemesis, her own desiring body, then her sadistic need to dominate 302 is apt and makes more sense than it might otherwise. Some critics do recognize that 301's obsession with cooking is a sublimation, but do not suggest that she may represent the addictive aspect of an eating disorder.

Modern approach to therapy for eating disorders treats the addictive aspect of the condition as primary. Support groups for anorexia and bulimia are treating the illness as an addiction and have developed literature appropriate for both bulimics and anorectics adapted from Alcoholics Anonymous material. The thinking is that eating disordered people of all varieties suffer from food addiction and a disordered relationship to food. This behavioral perspective removes a lot of muddled discussion about body image that never seemed to have a direct effect on the anorexic mind anyway.

Therefore, through the use of eating disordered doppelgangers, the film captures the relentlessly warring eating disordered mind and the behavioral milieu it breeds. The concept of creating two separate characters to understand the contentious nature of an individual mind is what makes 301, 302 such a brilliant expression of the problem. There are literally hundreds of memoirs written, but few present this duality better than the sadistic nymphomaniac food addict and the anchorite ascetic who ultimately become one

person. Part of the reason that Hornbacher's memoir, Wasted, was so successful, aside from being compellingly written, is that in her struggle with her eating disorder, she oscillated between two very dramatic extremes of anorectic and bulimic behavior. This oscillation of food seeking and food avoidance on such an extreme level reaches a large audience and encapsulates the range of emotion and behavior of eating disorders, even for those that present with only one end of the spectrum. Like 301, 302, her book belies the distinctions among eating disorders.

In the final scene of 301, 302, I am struck by a disturbing vision. While 301 sits and eats the stew she made with 302's body, she envisions 302 eating and nodding to 301 in encouragement. 302 is finally at peace. But 301 is not. She considers the peaceful 302 with tentativeness. Slowly she looks over in the direction of her pantry and refrigerator and sees the frozen severed head of 302. 302, horrified, drops her fork. As any eating disordered person can tell you, the thought of giving up that self made battle is terrifying. Her horror suggests that she has lost a part of herself, a compulsion that has kept her company, literally and metaphorically.

CHAPTER V

THE NEUTRAL SCREEN: DISAPPEARING GRAVITY AND GRACE

“If only I knew how to disappear... When I am in any place, I disturb the silence of heaven and earth by my breathing and the beating of my heart” (Weil 89). – Simone Weil.

Simone Weil, who died in part due to self imposed food restriction, struggled throughout her writings with the dilemma of corporeality. She wanted to disappear and become a “neutral screen” so that she did not interfere with God’s attempts to connect with the world through her. Weil saw herself as a mediator, or a medium through which God and the things and beings she comes in to contact with can experience the other. Therefore, to facilitate a pure contact between God and beings/things, she must withdraw and become a “neutral screen”. Her writings bring up the question of how to negotiate desire when our bodies are designed to hunger and to feed. 301, 302 seems to offer only two choices; eat or be eaten. Anorexia is in some ways a response to this ultimatum.

Michelle Boulous Walker explores the possibility that anorexia is, in part, an ethical act of ontological responsibility to the other, in response to the ultimatum to eat or be eaten. Walker bases her assertions on the interaction between Emmanuel Levinas’ theory of ontological social responsibility and Weil’s gravity and grace, which she argues reciprocally illuminates each other. Walker’s theory seems to emerge from an identification of Weil as an anorectic, without regard for the problem of whether Weil’s

food restriction can be applied to the modern experience of anorexia. Yet Walker's theory is illuminating as a philosophical basis for self-limit states, and may help us to understand those who choose to be eaten.

Walker points to Levinas' uniquely humane philosophical proposal that subjects have a pre-rational sense of union and responsibility to others that forms our consciousness and our sense of place in the world. Our obligation to the other is primary to even a relationship with God and establishes a precarious existence. "Because of our fear for the other we must necessarily respond to our right to be" (Walker 299). We are not here alone and our existence is part of a cosmic algorithm, experienced as a gravely self-conscious responsibility to the other. Levinas writes, "My being in the world or my place in the sun, my being at home, have these not also been the usurpations of spaces belonging to the other man whom I have already oppressed or starved or driven out into a third world" (298). Levinas believed that we have an "ancient devotion to others," as Walker puts it, based on fear of the confrontation of the mere existence of what the other represents (299). We fear because we don't want to be responsible for, or to be aware or party to, the violence necessitated by our very existence. We need to justify our own reason for being before taking the place of the other. Since we are not intentionally claiming the space or able to quantify our responsibility to the other, explaining our right to existence is problematic. But more than this, Levinas believed that this awareness of the other was a humane reaction, a reaction that implies the potential for self-imposed limitation. Walker argues that this theory illuminates Weil's concepts of gravity and grace, through which Weil grapples with the need to limit the self through detaching and transcending the weight of gravity.

Detachment for Weil involves limits in the sense of renunciation of material things, food, attachments of all kinds, including attachments to those that we love. Walker characterizes Weil's detachment as a "stepping away" that allows space for that great other, God. Weil's concept of decreating, or disappearing in order to allow God to be, includes the concept of stepping away to allow God access to others and to allow them to experience God. For Weil, this was an ethical way of living, not only stepping away but also using her corporeality to be a vessel through which beings and God could have communion. Her sense of obligation to others was strong, as Walker suggests. Weil wrote that she can only experience true gratitude if her helper wants what justice demands – that all people in her situation are equally helped, by everyone who has the power to help. But was Weil's concept of grace possible, or, as Walker would have it, *humane* ?

Weil's concepts of the spiritual states, *gravity* and *grace*, establish only two possible responses to desire, eat or be eaten, setting up an impossible dichotomy, which helps illuminate the fundamental issues at stake in 301, 302. One must choose to: completely accept the emptiness of what she called the "inner void" (*grace*, 301); or accept the pursuit of sinful attempts to fill the void (*gravity*, 302). This binary requires a choice that belies the potential for negotiation or compromise in a subject's quest to manage desire. Living ethically hinges upon the choice between austere denial, a requisite emptiness, and worldly indulgence - a sated self - a course of thought that ultimately kills anorectics.

Grace requires a self-limiting that recognizes desire as an opportunity to exhibit restraint, the, "key to contact with the divine" (Frost, Bell-Metereau 28). The delaying of

gratification is part of Weil's greater belief that one must not seek "closure" (in the sense of resolution) in any endeavor too soon because this will distort truth. The pursuit of truth, beauty, and love requires steadfast vigil and distancing. She expresses the cannibalistic nature of these pursuits when she writes, "We want to eat all the other objects of desire" (Frost, Bell-Metereau 61). However, she cautions subjects to have restraint, "We have to remain quite still and unite ourselves with that which we desire yet do not approach" (Frost, Bell-Metereau 61). For Weil, then, desire necessarily involves limits and appetite restraint for an ethical approach.

Gravity, on the other hand, is a sinful state of attempting to find satiation and comfort in this world. Being too convinced of the reality of this world, we use its resources to protect us from the suffering that can bring us a true interaction with reality. "When we seek to lessen on our own suffering....we weaken our inner and direct communion with reality" (Weil 23). Attachments to things of the world can only serve to pull subjects away from the transcending powers of God. In the context of 301, 302, 301's obsessive behaviors seem absurd attempts to fill a void, to avoid the suffering of reality, especially in comparison to 302's dedication to emptiness. In grace, a subject attempts to kill the self's drive to fill the emptiness of affliction, hunger, and insatiability. Thinking of Weil's concept of gravity as a state in which one has given in to corporeal desire, and grace as the denial of desire, her theory suggests a precarious dichotomy. But she is clear that the pursuit of grace requires the transformation of an eating, desiring, body into food.

Weil explains the process of transformation, or decreation, which is necessary to reach a state of Grace, in cannibalistic terms that evoke 302's ethical dilemma and

ultimate resolution. Eating is central to Weil's metaphorical expression of cultivating the "inner void," necessary for receiving grace. The concept of voiding or of "tearing out" to make space for spiritual fulfillment implies the cycle of consumption and even possibly of the restricting and indulgence of the binge and purge cycle of eating disorders. Walker writes, "the utter humility of the ego-less self moves toward a (metaphorical?) disintegration," which Walker suggest is a kind of spiritual purging. "Weil's language repeatedly draws on the play between incorporation and expulsion in its search for the supernatural grace" (Walker 314). Is this what Walker would call a stepping away?

To achieve an ethical life, one must be eaten and have one's ego destroyed, so that one may be a byproduct that can be used to fuel others. Weil argued that the ego, the part of the self that believes it is the center of the universe and fuels the cannibalistic impulses, must be devoured by God because it corrupts the "inner void." A person who successfully destroys the ego has the honor of feeling supremely duped for having believed in its worth in the first place and it can then offer its flesh to others through toil. Weil wrote, "Once one has understood that one is nothing, the goal of all one's efforts is to become nothing" (Irwin 7). For Weil, an ethical life begins with the refusal to eat people, and to instead offer to be eaten by them. Therefore, Irwin writes:

Consented self-sacrifice, offering oneself freely as food, is the paradigm of saintly action. And only a willingness to engage in such action, to nourish theirs from one's own substance and if necessary at the cost of one's life, can enable the space of an ethics to open up within the anthropophagic social universe. (8)

But her concepts go further than the benevolence of foregoing “the urge to impose our desires on others by violence” (8). Ultimately, Weil’s grace requires the denial of all agency, a mystic’s yearning. But Walker suggests something different.

Walker takes the admittedly risky course of asserting that anorexia may be an unintentionally ethical response to the sense of obligation to the other that Levinas describes. In other words, anorectics are responding to a basic fear of taking the place of the other, and are consequently refusing to do so, but not on a conscious level. So, anorectics do not make a connection between a need to assert social justice and their food restriction, but do so nonetheless. Walker asserts that the anorectic is actually loyal to what Levinas describes as a human “...capacity to fear injustice more than death, to prefer to suffer rather than commit injustice, and to prefer that which justifies being, over that which assures it” (Walker 299). In other words, the anorectic prefers to negotiate the right to be through self-limitation, rather than assertion, which implies violence to the other. Since Walker points out that this is an unintentional act on the anorectic’s part, it is a complicated prospect that seems to vanish as soon as it appears. Though Walker does believe that we have something to learn from the anorectic, she is also very careful to explain that she does not intend to valorize self-abnegation. So what are we to learn, then?

Walker’s aim is to point out that research about anorectic behavior has focused on the totalizing theme of a girl demanding control in a perverse attempt of self assertion; she takes the reins like a reckless tyrant, dragging her family and friends on a futile and grave battle of wills that she can win only by losing. Walker appropriately seeks a fuller picture of the anorectic’s plight. Anorectics do owe a portion of their condition to an

overdeveloped fear of taking up space, space that might be filled by others. To suggest that anorectics may be acting upon a pre-rational responsibility to others, or an inability to justify one's own reason for being seems narrowly possible. However, it is very risky to suggest that: 1) anorexia is a way of life; or 2) it is an ethical model. Walker does injustice to her great theory when she fails to recognize the ultimatum implied in Weil's concepts of Gravity and Grace. Grace is not just a "stepping away" to allow others. It is a complete renunciation of agency that can only result in self destruction.

Walker writes that her analysis may provide a way to think of the:

...anorectic as a subject hostage to the other, a subject who perhaps unintentionally or pre-rationally lives her responsibility for the other before living it for herself. Of course, it seems to many of us an inconceivable and illogical thing to live in such a way, and perhaps it is; and yet we may remain forever beyond adequate appreciation of anorexia if we fail to suspend our judgment long enough to entertain the possibility of a life lived (unintentionally) in ethical rather than purely calculative terms. (319)

The characterization of anorectics as purely calculative is far too complex to take on. Her analysis also suffers by presupposing that the modern anorectic has a similar experience to Weil's. Weil's act of self-denial was theologically and politically motivated, based on her writings. Though Weil may have been exposed to the culture of dieting in the United States during her short time there, she was not exposed to the constant barrage of media images available in the latter part of the 20th century. Also, in the U.S. the "centrality of dieting" as a form of "cultural expression" corroborates the construction of women's bodies as a barrier to so many things we aspire to in our culture: beauty, fashion, love,

self worth. As Braumberg explains, “In the modern world dieting involves a self conscious effort to reduce the body for the purpose of attaining an ideal of outward physical, as opposed to spiritual, beauty” (*Fasting Girls* 229). This is why Walker’s theory is somewhat off the mark.

What Walker is truly seeking is an ethical response to anorectics and other “limit-states.” It is certainly a noble pursuit to attempt to undermine a perspective of the anorectic as simply the act of an incorrigibly head strong teenager hell bent on sadistic self-destruction. But Weil’s and Levinas’ theories present only more binaries, options that refuse the possibility of compromise, in an ultimately cannibalistic worldview. We are still left wondering. Can we choose to partake in this world, to avoid the devastation of self limitation, without submitting to indulgence that threatens to violently take the place of the other? It is interesting to look at the concepts of Gravity and Grace and ontological responsibility, within the context of the film because 301 and 302 recreate this impossible binary, eat (301) or be eaten (302). It is important to ask, what the film suggests about the potential for compromise for gravity and grace, and how it reifies or departs from other characterizations of anorectics and bulimics.

The film does establish a fresh approach from other narratives about eating disorders. Again, the use of two women provides a unique leverage. The characterization of 302 is obviously created to be the innocent in the context of the film. In the juxtaposition of 302 and 301, we are more sympathetic to 302’s plight. 301’s pathology seems, in comparison, truly more sadistic than 302’s for many reasons. The sheer aggression of 301 is a characteristic that contrasts the sense of helplessness constructed in 302’s character development and life story. 301 fights back, and her anger and

bitterness are threatening, while 302's denial is penitential and reverent. 302's refusal to eat is frustrating, but 302's incorrigible obsession and drive to feed her overshadows and exhausts the viewer.

This is a departure from the common theme of the viewer becoming exhausted, instead, with the anorectic's refusal to eat. Moreover, the film sets out to link 302's abstinence from food or sex with her history of sexual trauma seeking to justify and provide insight to the limit state of the anorectic. 301's character represents violence in the sense that she claims her space aggressively and does not represent a "limit state" as explained by Walker. 301 claims not only more than her share of food, but does not limit herself in terms of other desires. Perhaps this is, in part, what is so offending and at the same time intriguing, about 301, that she represents an unabashed claim to her right to be, without seeming metaknowledge of the need to negotiate or limit that space. But it is also Park Ch'ul-su's unique vision that helped present yet another story about anorexia in a way that provides new insight to the condition.

CHAPTER VI

THE ANORECTIC IMAGE, DECONSTRUCTED

The international critical success of 301, 302 suggests it offers a unique vision, a feat difficult within the voluminous discourse on eating disorders. This has to do with more than merely the unique plot – the ultimate outcome of a cannibalistic act. Its critical success is a result of the combination of the use of film, a superior medium for presenting the visual aspect of eating disorders, the deconstructive cinematic vision of Park, and a screen writer who focused on the inveterate optimism of addiction. The sublimation of food for sex, love, family, and control, though experienced as hysteria in 301, 302, are ultimately revealed as plausible reactions. Addiction's incorrigible optimism is a necessary element in anorectic discourse, and yet literary forms have failed to address it.

Papazian, in, "Anorexia Envisioned," asserts that autobiography and fictional accounts of anorexia have failed to allow "significant insight into the interior world of the anorectic" (147). Even within the abundance of autobiographical and fictional attempts to uncoil its complexities, literature has had trouble depicting the multiple levels of distortion and the interpersonal, psychological, and cultural axis that leads to personal crisis of anorexia. Accounts of anorexia tend to be formulaic: "They focus on a good, middle-class white girl, beginning with either a diet (prompted by a comment about the girl's weight) or in the middle of the illness. They then provide, in spectacular detail, the

development of the disorder, including strange eating habits and exercise regimens.”

(148). These stories end at the moment of critical therapeutic intervention.

The neat packaging of the condition into narrative form belies the fragmentation of causes and the iterative process of recovery; assumes recovery, re-inscribing the “good-girl” image, and evades contributing cultural factors. The image of the doted-upon good girl who has no excuse to be ravaging herself seems a totalizing image. Along with the “white, good girl image,” according to Braumberg, the classic anorectic is upper-middle class, adored by parents, controlled by an overbearing mother, above average intelligence, overachieving, perfectionist, and sexually inhibited. Despite growing recognition of the societal influences on the condition and its connection with westernization, the decision to reject food is still a significantly blinding threat. We don’t want to deal with the issues that anorexia complicates, so it is easier to focus on the inexplicably privileged conditions of some of its heiresses. Obviously, the good girl image is not one that all anorectics can embrace.

Hornbacher’s memoir, stands out within the genre because she sets out to defy some of these conventions of literature and to challenge discourse on anorectics. She writes in the preface to Wasted that she was compelled to write her memoir because she disagreed with much of what she read about anorexia. Her family dynamic does not fit the standard classification. She was sexually active. Hornbacher’s mother was emotionally negligent. And yet, even in 1998, Hornbacher is compelled to express her indignation at the dismissal of eating disorders as “vanity, immaturity, madness” (Hornbacher, 5). She explains that she wrote her book to help dispel these contradictory myths about anorexia: 1) anorexia is a phase that can be cured with a pill and some

therapy; and 2) only the “hopelessly ‘sick’” and insane become anorexic (5). Part of what offends her about traditional thought surrounding anorexia is the assumption that an anorectic chooses suffering as a pastime or that girls who grow up with comforts do so in a vacuum and, therefore, must be insane and self indulgent.

Hornbacher’s memoir was an attempt to combat perception, to refuse formulas, and to provide the fragmented truth about eating disorders. This is why it worked. She writes:

I am not here to spill my guts and tell you about how awful it’s been, that my daddy was mean and my mother was mean and some kid called me Fatso in the third grade, because none of the above is true. I am not going to repeat, at length, how eating disorders are “about control”...It’s a buzzword, reductive, categorical, a tidy way of herding people into a mental quarantine. (4)

In other words, she does not seek to tidy up a messy problem. She delineates her story in all its contradictory glory. While Hornbacher’s memoir poignantly captures the mental anguish, the way that family relays contradictory cultural messages about food and body image, the sadistic compulsion to use food as a surrogate for real nurture and self punishment, and the complete ambivalence towards getting healthy (her book does not end with therapeutic intervention; and she is far from normal), there is something more that the filmic image offers, particularly in the case of anorexia.

Anorexia inherently involves a visual aspect. As Papazian notes, anorexia’s sorted affair with media images of women’s bodies contributes to the “misconception” about body image that characterizes anorexic thought, and this is best depicted visually. Though Hornbacher’s use of Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass quotes

help frame her story within the distorting reality of anorexia, film can simulate this fragmented and confusing wasteland, like the surreal world of *301* and *302*. The interaction with film is an intimate one and film is an appropriate medium for engaging with psychic trauma for many reasons. Film as a medium encourages a solipsistic level of engagement with images not possible in literature. More basically, Christian Metz has suggested that cinema “offers the pleasure of identification with perception itself” (Papazian 151). Moreover, he argues that it brings individuals back to a preconscious state, a time before we experience separation. Papazian summarizes, “Watching a film reenacts the (scary and pleasurable) moment when we recognize ourselves as individuals” (Papazian 151). *301, 302* evokes dual interpellation: on screen between characters and with its viewers. Drawing on these theories, Papazian asserts that *301, 302* is a more effective medium to convey the disjointed and disorienting experience of the crisis of anorexia than literature because it is visual.

I argue that director Park Ch’ul-su, who, like Hornbacher, set out to defy formula and convention, provides the appropriate deconstruction of anorexia, not only envisioning body distortion and sublimation through the lens of the anorectic, but also engaging with addiction on a new level. What sets *301, 302* apart from *Life is Sweet*, *Superstar*, and many films and literature about eating disorders, is that through the schismatic presentation of an eating disordered mind and the use of a cook, we are able to engage with the inveterate optimism of addiction, rather than merely its destructive ramifications.

Park’s focus on the hopeful aspect of addiction creates a medium for understanding eating disorders as twisted means of self-care, rather than merely masochistic insanity. Assuming that *301* and *302* now represent two sides of an eating

disordered mind, we find that 301 in many ways functions as the renewing aspect of the condition as well as the course of development of the disease. She is responsible for the incredible feats of negotiation in their relationship to food and its ramification for the body that are characteristic of psychological addiction to control over food. Hornbacher admits that even after a phase of eating better and almost convincing herself that she wanted to be healthy, she begins to restrict food again, but in a new way. She writes, “This often happens in eating disorders: caught, you change tactics, you change tempo or type of obsession” (Hornbacher 216). A close look at 301’s progress up to what is supposed to be fulcrum in the relationship between 301 and 302 reveals her dedication to infinite regeneration of tactics.

At first pass, it may appear that 301’s body completes a circle, beginning and ending svelte, gaining weight during her unhappy marriage and losing it during her restorative diet after her divorce. In fact, 301’s course is iterative and more indicative of the anorectic’s development. After her divorce, and fittingly while sitting on the toilet and flushing, she insists that she can still enjoy her cooking while losing weight. She pledges to no longer cook with butter, chocolate, and heavy creams. Many anorectics state that their disease began with a diet in which they chose particular foods to restrict. On the eve of her new diet, she toasts to herself, “To Song-hee’s new hope!”, proceeds to binge on food, get drunk on wine, dance on the table, and collapse in front of a picture of her when she was thin. Her revolutionary diet ensues, but after she loses 25 pounds, she loses heart. On her second visit to 302’s apartment, she tells her that she started cooking again because dieting is “no fun.” She is suited here to appear as if she has started to gain her weight back. Significantly, it is after this point that 301 develops a contentious

relationship with 302 - she begins a sadistic attempt to feed 302 and has a fantasy about making 302 fat with her cooking.

After creating dozens of breath taking meals for 302, still 302 maintains her steadfast refusal to eat. After 302 reveals in detail the abuse she has suffered which justifies her inability to eat, 301 still does not give up. Instead, she decides to renegotiate the antagonizing terms of her relationship to 302– she will only make tender food for her. 301 asserts, “No doubt you’ll enjoy my cooking. Also, I’ll write a cooking diary for you” (301, 302). At this point, even though the viewer is suspicious of this new direction, Park has so thoroughly exhausted the viewer with 301’s aggression that even her misguided tenderness is welcomed. After this point in the film, however, Park begins a process of testing viewer expectation that evokes the unmistakable psychological trap of addiction.

In the next scenes, Park establishes a new and gentle direction for 301 and 302, one that we almost believe. The following scene shows 301 in the supermarket shopping to music that is light and hopeful for perhaps the first time throughout the film. The brutal sounds of the meat carving machine, the blood red scenes we have encountered, the claustrophobia of their apartments and their battle, for the moment are gone. The music sounds like an *Enya* instrumental, ethereal and expectant, and 301 is in the market in natural colors. All bitterness and aggression have dissolved and this scene gently transitions to a cooking sequence, where Park helps 301 create a picture perfect comfort food experience.

The choice of ingredients for this casserole is mouthwatering and tender all at the same time, allowing the viewer to engage with this new, if brief, harmonious direction.

And Park creates the harmony not only through the music which continues throughout this scene, but by thoroughly presenting the meal's preparation to the viewer. An egg cracks and fills the screen with a glistening orange yoke, which sizzles almost happily, as 301 teases its side with a wooden spoon. She mixes a white sauce in a small black bowl, opens a perfect pot of steamed white rice, and places fresh green spinach in the blender with the white sauce and watches it purée with engaged attention. She adds cheese and peas to the top of the rice mixed with the spinach puree. The camera then goes inside the oven as she pulls a mountainous casserole from its womb. As she serves steaming spoonfuls of this creamy dish, the camera captures its glory as it seems to fall gently into place in a heaping mound of warmth and tenderness onto a non-threateningly small dish. Park cuts from this final shot of the delicate masterpiece to the dark steel of the inside of 302's toilet, obstructed only by 302's head, where she has vomited up the meal. This black humor reminds the audience that the director's manipulation is necessary for a balanced view of this disorder.

Park refuses to give in to viewer expectations of a reasonable response from 301, exhausting the viewers hope for a turning point, while engaging the viewer in the impossible entrenchment of addictive behavior. After 302 vomits even the tender food, 301 finds 302 prostrate by the toilet, and for the first time, helps 302. The next scene shows 301 cleaning a naked 302 with a shower hose. 302 is lifeless, indicating to the viewer that all hope for 302 is lost. Yet instead of recognizing the validity of 302's condition, 301 averts the issue claiming that she must have bought some spoiled food. 302 again explains that she just cannot take anything in to her body. 301 puts 302 to bed and tells her to rest. The viewer has entirely given up by this point and truly believes that

302 cannot eat. The viewer also has begun to see 301 as aggressive and absurd in her single minded pursuit. Yet, 301 handles this situation with strange aplomb. Her demeanor shifts, she pauses to consider 302's plight, and for the first time the viewer expects her to be reasonable. However, as 301 moves slowly away from 302, she pauses momentarily after telling her to rest long enough to surprise the audience with, "until you can eat my wonderful cooking" (301/301). The insane optimism depicted in this response, epitomizes the film's sensitivity to the anorectic's plight and the director's awareness of viewer expectation.

Moreover, through 301's regenerating optimism, viewers are able to share in the disconnect between thought and action, in the psychological schism that regenerates hope in the midst of entrenched denial. In other words, we share in the obsessive thought pattern and the contradictory expectations that govern an eating disordered mind. Though we know where this "tender" dish will end up, Park (and the screenwriter) take(s) us inside the anorectic's experience in a new way by indulging 301.

CHAPTER VII

PARK'S ANTIDOTE FOR KOREAN CINEMA'S HOLLYWOOD ADDICTION

Park was well poised within the history of the Korean film industry to use a deconstruction of the complex modern condition of eating disorders as a model for addressing the Korean film industry's crisis in its relationship with Hollywood. Park, who was trained in television drama and melodrama, made many feature length films before 301, 302. In the early to mid 1980's he began as a promising new wave Korean director, making commercial films that were well received by audiences. Later, he worked with a well known producer, Kisung Whang for many years, making films that garnered critical acclaim, with little commercial success. Though the films that Park made with Whang brought critical recognition to Whang's company, they were politically, if not creatively safe, despite their critical success. Park and Whang had a successful relationship, in part, because they both agreed to avoid controversy, in business and in film. Park steered clear of the People's Democratic Movement protests of the dictatorship at a time when doing so could make or break a career, at least temporarily. Min notes in, Korean Film: History, Resistance, and Democratic Imagination, that while Park's films looked serious, upon close examination, they "sophisticatedly" evade social realism.

But before the making of 301, 302, Park established his own film company, PARK CHUL SOO FILMS LTD., and it is clear that he intended a strategic departure in

filmmaking with his first solo film, 301, 302. The official website for Park Chul Soo Films, Ltd., expresses revolutionary optimism in the company's vision for rupture with the traditional model of filmmaking in Korea. The company's stated goal on the website is to discontinue making films designed solely for the national market, films that use big-budget "Hollywood" style film-making techniques that are a "burden" at the box office. Instead they envision films that are "suitable" and "meaningful" to an international audience, made with low budgets and skilled artistry. They also claim that they intend to "export culture" to help resolve, "the economic difficulties [their] country is faced with" (<http://www.parkchulsoo.co.kr>, June 6, 2006). This seems a grand mission for a film company, but the politics of filmmaking is especially salient in Korea. It is also a creative approach that seeks to resolve an impossible dilemma in Korea – the fact that quality national cinema cannot thrive without Hollywood's influence.

Within the larger context of the film industry and the national economy, Park's vision for filmmaking becomes part of a discourse on consumption. Films, after all, are cultural products which reflect not only the climate in which they are made, but the contesting forces of economics, policy, and art. They necessarily involve "the contradictory aspects of cultural production, that is the tension between culture and commodity" (Ming 10). In South Korea, the colossal dominance of Hollywood film has been a predominant force in shaping the film industry's goals. Korean cinema has developed within a complex web of national censorship, and in many ways as a response to U.S. occupation and the omnipotence of Hollywood-style cinema. Korea's ambivalence about dependence on the "first world" comes through in Korean film movements, in national film policy, and in anti American-sentiment in films. Though

Park returned to filmmaking in the 1980's during a period of enlightenment in the Korean film industry, shifts in the film industry in the 1980's brought only more tension between national cinema and international forces.

Changes in policy and liberation from some censorship during this period led to a crisis in national Korean cinema. The revision of Motion Picture Law in 1982 was a mixed bag for Korean film makers. It transformed licensing requirements for film companies into registries, which encouraged a boom in independent Korean companies. Though the revision lightened censorship, it did so primarily for overtly sexual content rather than social realism. Consequently, pornographic films and melodrama thrived and social realism continued to be oppressed. At the same time, it allowed American film agencies to open in Korea, which encouraged direct distribution of foreign film, a threat to an already struggling industry. In addition, the separation of motion picture and import companies encouraged greater distribution of foreign film and reduced quota requirements for Korean film production as well. The number of imported films shown in Korean theaters tripled between 1984 and 1987.

The independent film movement began the 1980s in part as reaction to these conditions and a reaction against commercial filmmaking, foreign or domestic, but increasingly took on an imperialist approach. A growing culture of resistance following the bloody Kwangju Uprising in 1980 united middle and working classes against the government's ever loosening controls on Hollywood's access to Korean markets. Anti-American sentiment also grew during this period increasing an isolationist response. This response is understandable in light of Korea's history of occupation and oppression by outside forces. A significant aspect of South Korea's heritage and national identity is

the experience or state of *Haan*, which, like the “blues” of African American suffrage, “touches upon the buried experience of collective suffering resonating in the hallowed space of the soul” (Min 9). *Haan* is thus a central theme in Korean art and the foundation from which South Koreans encountered modernity. If the Korean Film Industry rallies against the occupation of Hollywood cinema with the vengeance of the oppressed, there is good reason.

Nonetheless, the Korean film industry is entrenched in an imperialist response that does not seem to be the answer to its struggles. Even as recently as 1999, South Koreans rallied against South Korea’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade’s announcement that it would gradually dissolve all film quotas, which mandates the showing of Korean film 106 days of the year. Korean actors staged the symbolic death of their careers and producers and directors shaved their heads in protest. But still movie houses go empty because there are not enough Korean films produced to fill up the quota-reserved screen time. It is an impossible situation; national cinema is expected to produce, reflect, and appeal to Korea without Hollywood influence, but it cannot compete with direct distribution and an audience increasingly influenced by Hollywood-style cinema, which it cannot afford. Even though film censorship was ruled unconstitutional in 1996, the Korean Performing Arts Promotion Committee promulgates ratings that effectively restrict Korean film. But Park’s vision offers an alternative, and just like 301 and 302’s situation, a balance is required. By targeting an international audience, while refusing Hollywood style techniques, Park inverts the power dynamic, proving that 3rd world cinema can be invigorating and visionary, and relevant.

Park's desire for a paradigm shift is indicative of the 3rd phase of the Korean National Cinema Movement (1991 -1996), which the Seoul Cine Group characterizes as "the era of searching for new identity and direction" (Min 167). The overall goals or trends in filmmaking of the 3rd phase establish a philosophy of filmmaking that is conducive to deconstruction of perceptions of reality. Due to political changes, including a lifting of most censorship, independent filmmaking flourishes in 3rd Phase cinema, while collective efforts disperse. Filmmakers reevaluate the previous focus on anti-American sentiment and nationalism and find greater opportunity for individual vision and voice through a focus on the real lives of Koreans. The six main trends of 3rd phase cinema include:

1. Focus on psychological and social issues
2. Focus on the people, folk, and influencing factors in their lives
3. Challenge of every aspect of the "dominant filmic apparatus: language, modes of production, consumption, distribution, and aesthetics" (168)
4. Interest in feminist concerns and reordering of things
5. Shift in meaning of text toward the subject position of the reader, the interaction between cultural and individual subjectivity provide opportunities for polysemic text.
6. Discontent with the narrative form structure of mainstream cinema

301, 302 incorporates all of these aspects, lending itself well to the topic of anorexia.

The film focuses on psychological trauma that necessarily summons attendant social issues, and examines the critical influencing events in the lives of the characters. The film challenges patriarchal ideals. Women are its primary subjects, and the men in the film are implicated in the development of 301 and 302's psychological trauma. Although a male detective is the impetus for the retelling of the story to the viewer and his

penetration of their lives frames the film, he ultimately fails in his mission – 301 does not seem to reveal to him their secret, or at least his significance in the film is lost after the dramatic ending. Finally, the cinematic technique Park employs in 301, 302 confronts viewer expectation, challenging individual subjectivity, not only by implying the distorted perceptions of 301 and 302 and multiple interpretations, but by simulating this experience for the viewer.

Formalist poetic structure in film involves “long shots, tracks, and pans following the actors without interruption” (Min 170). It constructs a logical ordering events, a linear unfolding of time, and clues that guide viewers through the story. It is a controlled experience that does not disrupt the viewers’ expectation of time and space. The thematic structure of traditional Hollywood style filmmaking “serves to dissolve dilemmas” (Stanley 270). And viewers (though this may be changing in certain circles with the recent popularity of independent style filmmaking) continue to expect “familiar character types and conventional design patterns [to] guide us smoothly to a more or less satisfying denouement” (Stanley 271). Korean melodramas follow much of the Hollywood style tradition and are considered “blatant tearjerkers” (Min 53). This formula cannot represent the rupture with reality that occurs with anorexia.

Dedicated to a style that does not use special effect, Park accomplishes an aesthetic that is dynamic, rich in color and detail, and captures the excess of addictive optimism while literally defying excess in production. As Papazian points out, anorectic memoirs, “believe the limit state in their richness of description, their very excess. These texts are, not “lean,” but are rich with details (luscious descriptions of cakes not eaten; meals divided and subdivided on a plate... “ (Papazian 148). 301,302 constructs this

excess in more than just the alimentary sense. The perpetual stove and counter top view of the lens provides much of the visual feast, but the layering of plot, the cinematic techniques that capture the contours of the emotional experience of their brutal histories, and Park's myopic lens evoke a controlled feast for the brain as well.

Park uses multiply disrupting techniques to accomplish a sufficiently rich and fragmented experience, often creating more questions than it gives answers, much like the experience of eating disorders. Maintaining audience interest in a film with very little action was a concern for Park. He felt that if he "didn't have audiences interested from the start, they would shortly feel that it was dry and tedious" (Williams 83). The film hooks the audience by shrouding his characters in mystery. In the first scenes we see only 301 and 302's heads as they talk obscurely about the food in their refrigerators. This focus limits the viewer and requires attention to only the message the girls convey. He engages viewers on another level through the mystery of 302's disappearance and the implicating of 301. 301 is immediately a suspect and hence an unreliable narrator, which engages the audience further in the sleuthing. Since the film begins at the end, we encounter 301 and 302 independently, and view their back histories through the mediation of their present conditions. But the back histories do not necessarily provide resolution. The flashbacks intended to answer the central question of "What happened to 302?" lead to yet more flashbacks and it is often difficult to identify the transition from the past to present, "thus re-creating the embedded-ness of the anorexic experience" (Negra 156).

Moreover, failed art is a recurring theme in 301, 302. 301 yells with rage at 302 when she refuses to eat her meals, "But it's my creation! I'll kill you! You have to eat!"

(301, 302) 302 is a struggling writer who “cannot write what she wants to,” and instead must write sex columns. She received at least one phone call rejecting her script because it is a “personal story.” We have to wonder what is truly at stake here. It seems that it could be that age old adage. You cannot expect to get different results by doing the same thing. Park may be commenting here on the ongoing struggle of Korea’s film industry and Hollywood. Multiple interpretations are possible, but we might suggest that 301 and 302 represent the film industry’s impossible situation. Is 301 attempting to shove Hollywood excess down 302’s throat? In other words, does 302 represent Korea’s fledgling film industry that continues to try to create films, with out of date equipment (302 seems to sue an old computer), about out of date material that does not appeal to a wide audience (personal stories). The fact that she can only make a living by producing a sex column may represent the lifting of censorship on overt sexual content, but continuing oppression of stories that present the contradictory social reality of Korea. This created an environment in which only pornographic films and melodramas survived the raping of domestic market by Hollywood’s prominence. It seems likely that Park’s film is also pointing to this impossible dilemma. Since 301, 302 was produced after the lifting of almost all censorship in the late 1980s, Park was able to reflect on the film industry’s (and the country’s political?) issues in a new way, through the complicated reality of eating disorders. What the film suggests, in the end, is that neither approach works, for politics, art, or women. Korea should not espouse isolation and it should not mimic the Hollywood machine. It should seek a balance of commitment to national cinema and to innovation and style that appeals to a larger audience, which is what Park accomplishes in this film.

In summary, Park was well poised to create a film that could depict the fragmented reality of anorexia and to leverage his new directorial direction to break with traditional filmmaking on multiple levels. He defies isolationist responses to Hollywood's dominance while also encouraging Korean national cinema, by encouraging export culture that reaches an international audience.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GRAVITY OF KWASOBI (EXCESS) IN SOUTH KOREA: CAN HOPE SPRING ETERNAL IN LIMIT STATES?

Park's commitment to leveraging his position as a filmmaker to address the country's economic crisis (and concomitant economic crisis in the film industry) is a response to a dictate in Korean culture: Korean citizens are responsible for the well being of their country, and their economic choices have an impact on the entire nation. Because of the pervasive impact of rapid industrialization in Korea, the polarizing drives for modernization and retaining traditional culture are a constant concern in Korean contemporary film and art. Part of what 301, 302 proves is that Korea can create great art with a small budget, a critical feat for an industry that lost 90 percent of chaebol investment in the late 1990s. Korea's economy is controlled by chaebol cartels. Park recognized that Korean cinema must find a way to survive in this climate without disavowing their heritage.

For South Korea, extremes are a part of their recent history. With capitalist concerns of excess replacing hunger, South Koreans face deep moral controversies with excess and modernity. The fact that eating disorders are more likely to be present when food is plentiful is not an accident. In times of shortage, cases of eating disorders are not prevalent. Brumberg notes in Fasting Girls that despite the emerging diet industry, during the Great Depression, "women in the 1930's and 1940s involved themselves with

major external, collective issues of survival, protection, and work (246). It is instead during times of abundance that individuals must contend with, “an essential contradiction in our economic system –that hedonism and discipline must coexist” (257). In this context, 301’s battle with 302 can represent the attempt to resolve a moral dilemma of modernity – can discipline and hedonism be friends?

In the rapid modernization of South Korea, the establishment of limits for consumption represents a significant axis of anxiety. The intense changes in the economic and consumer conditions of South Korea in recent history and the government’s leveraging of consumer anxiety provide context to the alimentary war that 301 and 302 wage. 301, 302 was released in 1995, approximately fifteen years after South Korea opened its markets to international competition, leading to rapid consumer success. In the early 1980’s South Koreans also experienced changes in personal financial options. For the first time citizens could apply for personal loans, credit cards and other consumer credit. South Korea’s banks became international, and the elite were allowed to travel abroad. The opening of the financial market created vast changes in the landscape of South Korea, especially in Seoul. Affluent neighborhoods began a rush to be as appropriately luxurious as the next, and consumers were suddenly presented with an abundance of grocery stores stocked with food and consumer choices in material goods unheard of in the near recent past. The rapid rate of advancement can be measured in part by the quality of life at the most basic level. In the 1970’s, households spent 40.5% of their income on food; in 1990, households reduced this percentage to 32%. And from 1985-1998, households doubled their disposable income. Another important statistic is that by 1985, almost 100% of households owned a television, when in 1975

less than 15% owned one (Nelson, 87). This would allow almost universal access to media, including messages the government might want to parlay.

But by the early 1990's, the economic advances had slowed and the country was facing a recession. It is important to note that the economic successes of the 1980's were not met with universal acceptance, even during the boom period. With the successes came a more salient distinction between classes, a growing recognition that the advances were not fairly distributed, and a burgeoning unease with modernity's ugly sister, consumption and greed, or in Korean, Kwasobi. Kwasobi means excessive consumption and was the term used for the anti consumption movements waged by citizens in the 1980's, called the "clean living campaign." But it wasn't until much later that the government officially took up the cause itself inundating the media with the anti-kwasobi messages.

301, 302 was released on the heels of the government anti-consumption campaign that barraged the citizens of South Korea with messages aimed to instill shame at excesses, inspire moderation at all levels, and to tie individual lifestyle to national destiny. The campaign, officially entitled, "Correct Living Campaign," placed responsibility for national welfare squarely on its citizens' shoulders. The government leveraged a pervasive discourse of personal culpability for national well being already instilled in the universal unconscious of much of South Korea.

In Measured Excess: Status, Gender, and Consumer Nationalism in South Korea, Laura C. Nelson examines the roots of reverence for parsimony in South Korean citizens, which 302 represents in the film. In a section entitled "Historical Memory: Frugality as Patriotism," Nelson explains that during the Choson era (1392-1910), the elite were an

erudite group of men called the yangban. These men were scholars and landowners, but were not materialists. They were not concerned with trade because this was considered to be the purview of lower classes. Moreover, commercial activities were considered a violation of Confucian principles. This long period of rule by ascetic intellectuals coupled with the extreme poverty that defined South Korea's history, left an indelible mark on the national identity. During her second visit to South Korea in 1993, Nelson found evidence to suggest that this suspicion of the business of trade in consumer goods continues in modern times. In interviews with entrepreneurs, she found that they presented moderation as a social responsibility and the material aspects of trade as banal. They asserted, "Money is vulgar and filthy" (Nelson 109). And South Korea's history of oppression and occupation also contributed to a fierce sense of independence. For South Koreans anything foreign can be a painful reminder of war and its aftermath and represents a threat to their culture. Modernity and excess became that threat in many ways in the 1990s. Modernity also indicates loss of culture to westernization as the western hemisphere's domination of the global economy generates an influx of western products and influence. For Eungjun Min, in Korean Film, this leads to an "inner colonizing" of western values and an acceptance of one's own culture as inferior and archaic. This is especially true for Koreans who endured Japanese Occupation for more than three decades followed by the "overwhelming presence of the United States since 1953," when the Korean war ended (Min 11).

The Correct Living Campaign, administered by the Public Information Office (PIO), inundated citizens young and old with reproaches about consumption, waste, and the shame of their failing economy. What Nelson finds significant is the fact that many

of the messages included a sometimes coded and sometimes obvious warning that the world was watching them stumble, so Korean citizens had better start looking like they cared. The PIO used many forms of media to communicate the messages including: a series of posters, posted at train stations, newspaper ads, television shows and announcements, radio clips, subway broadcasts, short documentary style newsreels shown before feature films, and children's books taught in the classroom. The ads took aim specifically at consumer spending, the need for increased savings, renouncement of pleasure seeking, and longer working hours. The campaign's stated goal was economic revitalization by putting its citizens on a strict diet. Interestingly, the government was asking its citizens to live in what Walker would call a "limit state".

One of the first of these appeals was a poster that used a spin on Aesop's fables to give kwasobi a tangible image. The poster characterized South Korea as a Mother frog, who in her attempt to appear as powerful as a Bull (frog), the metaphorical representation of the United States, becomes bloated and falls off her lily pad. Many of the messages included statistics about the economic situation and provided recommendations for tangible tightening of the belt. Food consumption was not left out as a potential area of nip and tuck at that broadening waistline. One such message read, "Food waste [amounts to] approximately 8 trillion won. That is calculated to correspond to 10 billion dollars. Even if we cut this in half, that will have the effect of a 5 billion dollar reduction in our trade deficit" (Nelson 130). The campaign thus implicated food consumption directly as a threat or potential salvage to the ongoing welfare of the nation. With a recent history of oppression, occupation, poverty, and bloody war, the request to check one's individual

drives has a personally relevant impact. But the government did more than simply appeal to its citizens; it actually restricted excess through punitive legal means.

The government's attempts to curtail excessive spending through legal means began before the 1990's campaign, targeting personal accumulation of wealth or frivolous spending. The government introduced laws and initiatives that dictated: ceremonial expenditures (weddings, funerals); spending on extracurricular activities for children, including tutoring; and spending on any foreign product. In addition, foreign travel was outlawed until the late 1980's and people who traveled after this time were scrutinized about their travel expenses. The purchase of foreign cars was tantamount to putting a target on your forehead. Throughout the industrialization of South Korea, business owners who accumulated too much wealth were charged with the offense of "illicit wealth accumulation" and publicly shamed. President Park Chung Hee, who was in power from 1967-1986, put it this way, "our total effort put into achieving the historic task of modernization of our father land is not for the benefit of certain individuals, not of certain groups. You must be aware at all times of the fact that those who pursue immediate gains will be judged by the public as they deserve" (Nelson 113). The criminalizing of excess sends a strong message to citizens; the comfort of prosperity comes at a price and an obligation to moderation, and the inability to self-moderate is destructive to others. The anti-kwasobi initiatives, whether forged by the government or popular sentiment and literature, is salient to the discussion of 301, 302, especially in light of gendered aspects of kwasobi. Because excessive consumption is considered inherently immoral and even "vulgar," and the public view of consumption was inextricably gendered, the impact of the anti-kwasobi campaign is different for women.

The anti-consumption movement both developed and worked from gendered perceptions about consumption, and these perceptions help to contextualize 301's character, especially.

Public exhortation for frugality targeted pleasure-seeking on all levels, and affluent women, much like 301, came to represent the debauchery of excess. Affluent women were depicted as, "selfish, starkly contrasting "traditional" ideals of female chastity, and indulging in alien forms of leisure" (Nelson 147). The media offered "tales" of women fitting these characteristics, including television shows. Nelson found that popular discourse corroborated these characterizations. Citizens, especially in the poorer neighborhoods that Nelson visited associated affluence with hyper sexuality and lax moral value in general. Many of the women she talked with described women in the affluent district as promiscuous; they were said to have multiple affairs, to spend their time going to clubs in the evenings and frivolously spending money by day. Popular discourse promulgated wild accounts of the wanton ways of affluent women, such as a rash of rich housewives who became infected with HIV by the same young man. Modernity's marriage with corruption is not unique to South Korea, but the intimacy of the shared history of poverty in South Korea, the rapid rate of economic change, and the stark division between the classes may create a situation in which the extravagances of women marks them in a profound way.

Consumption is linked with women for many reasons, some real, some cultivated, and some a byproduct of other factors. As in America, the women of South Korea emerged as the major consumers in many ways. Nelson explains that the division of labor in South Korea, in which most women are discouraged from working except for

part time, contributes to a perception that women are the biggest consumers. Even if they are spending money on goods for their family, their visibility as consumers makes men's spending invisible. It also makes women appear as non-laboring consumers. Moreover, in South Korea there is a gendered expectation about the ability of men or women to self moderate or to resist temptation. Nelson writes, "The importance of restraining oneself for the larger good is deeply embedded in Confucian ideas of propriety, as is the sense that men are better endowed than women with the capacity for moral restraint" (Nelson 144). 301,302 directly challenges this view. 302's father sexually assaults her and 301's husband is unfaithful. Nevertheless, if women are constructed dually as salacious consumers and disallowed to work and contribute to the household income, it may help explain why women are expected to resolve this through ascetic abstinence, a limit state.

Moreover, women's participation in the real estate market is a condition of consumption unique to South Korea that contributes to the characterization of affluent women as greedy consumers. In the early years of industrialization of South Korea, when business leaders who accumulated too much wealth were charged with crimes of excess personal gain, women were not largely the targets of these charges. But as affluent families emerged, housewives were increasingly seen as responsible for their family's domestic prosperity. Women were responsible for the management of the domestic sphere at all levels. Myung-hye Kim found in her 1990 study of upper-middle-class South Korean families,

The values of the yangban sahoe (high-class society) from the Yi dynasty, are still prevalent among today's upper-middle-class families. The home is emphasized

as a woman's place, and the women's work is separated from men's work (Kim 5).

Moreover, many households in South Korea require more than a single source of income, but affluent married women had to be careful to maintain both their domestic role and ensure the prosperity of their family. Discouraged from pursuing careers, many working class and affluent women became proficient in increasing their family's wealth in the real estate or stock market. Nelson writes that most of the women that she interviewed were economically literate; all knew the current rate of exchange and knew how to play the stock market to increase investments. But their agility in these matters could work against them: "Women's active participation in the ballooning real estate and stock markets was well publicized: the image of the housewife as wheeler-dealer took on the quality of a hero or a monster, depending on one's viewpoint" (Nelson 146). The buying and selling of real estate property was blamed for increasing the real estate prices and for encroaching upon the opportunities of women in other classes. Two women whose extravagances gained the ire of the nation were President Chun's wife, a known and disliked real estate investor, and "Madame Chang" whose investments were estimated to account for 13 percent of the circulated currency before she was arrested.

More importantly, these activities were perceived as unearned income, and, people viewed women who dabbled in these pursuits as pushy and greedy. South Korea developed a vocabulary of disparaging terms to identify women of these pursuits; including "*pokbuin*," or Ms. Real Estate (Nelson 146). But the extravagances of affluent women in South Korea were most publicly condemned in an article published by Newsweek in November 1991. The article focused on outrageous examples of

expenditures including, most peculiarly, a woman who spent 500,000-won (\$650) on a pair of underwear. Nelson goes on to show that while these expenditures were viewed as outrageous, a bigger issue is the fact that this perception of affluent women leaves them vulnerable because they are seen as undeserving of compassion. Seen as both immoral in their pursuit of wealth, wantonly lacking in traditional female virtue, and corrupting traditional Confucian ideals of purity, they could never be perceived as victims. During the 1990s, when affluent women were victimized criminally, extravagance or wealth was implicated as a tragic flaw that made her culpable. It is out of this climate that 301 and 302 are created, a climate in which women's choices about consumption are critical on a personal, social, and national level. It is important to reexamine their construction within the context of contemporary history.

Though 301's character was not rich, and certainly not rich to excess, she was comfortable, and represents the characteristics of the pushy affluent women who eschew tradition for modernity. In her divorce we also learn that she is awarded a steady allowance or back payment for housework that she performed for her husband. In addition to being aggressively assertive in general, she does not exhibit traditional feminine ideals, and not only eschews asceticism, but also tries to exorcise it from her neighbor. Moreover, her consumption habits do not adhere to the frugal patriotism that South Korea was trying to establish. One example of her disregard for frugal living is the extravagant and modern makeover of her apartment following her divorce. This marks her as a woman of some means, and creates a striking contrast with 302's stark apartment. In fact, the modern apartment building itself is a conspicuous sign of modernity and the increasing division between rich and poor in South Korea, about which

the country was increasingly concerned. During the boom years, apartment buildings were erected so rapidly that structural problems were ignored by first-time apartment owners, excited about their new prosperity. Because of the intensity of the growth and the sense that it might not last, many people spent more money on decorating than on fixing minor repairs, acquiring as much as possible without regard for the long view. An apartment-owner that Nelson interviewed explained it this way, "Why spend so much effort on little repairs when everything could be lost in an instant?" (Nelson 106). In this way, 301 represents this ravaged hunger for short-sighted consumption that emerges from such a dearth of consumer choices in recent history. Her constant purchase of food and preparation of elegant meals, which largely goes to waste on 302, represents an extravagance of modernity that seeks to corrupt the ideals of abstinence, which are a part of the nostalgia and yearning for a traditional Korea.

302 seems to represent a complex yearning for traditional Korean asceticism and suffering that harkens back to a simpler time, especially apparent during the rule of the yangban. For South Koreans, the yearning for traditional Korea is intermixed with a memory of suffering as a unifying force that has been all but destroyed by the economic boom years. Despite an upheaval of yangban's Confucian ideals during the second half of their rule in the long *Choson* period, "the model of non-materialist *yangban* scholar endured" (Nelson 109). Unfortunately, the yangban slowly lost their stronghold as some of the lower classes began to accumulate wealth and the yangban experienced corruption among its ranks. Having the opportunity to choose asceticism, as the elite yangban did, and living in abject poverty seem distinct experiences, but the image of the penitent scholar still resonated with the masses. Yet, despite some peasant successes, South

Korea would struggle for long time before achieving economic dependence and before “comfortable” living would become available to all classes. In fact, in Nelson’s interviews with women as late as 1993, most remembered a time when poverty and hunger were significant aspects of their lives. In fact, women that she interviewed in poorer neighborhoods remembered when hunger was a “season” in their lives.

Interestingly, the women noted that their longing for simpler times and a return to a more pure Korea was always intermixed with nostalgic feelings about hunger. And though 301, 302 was written during a time when hunger was no longer widespread, the memory of that time was held in the minds of those old enough to have lived through it.

Moreover, the younger generation was exposed to ubiquitous representations of nostalgia for traditional Korea in artistic rendition. Television and film dramas depicted these times as a romantic ideal. As Nelson puts it, “through these media this sensibility is made available to people who are too young, or were too fortunate, to have shared in the privations of earlier decades” (73). Through 302’s character, we are introduced to this heritage of reverence for privations, which distinguishes the superficial extravagances of modernity from the scholarly pursuits of purity through self-imposed privation.

The intellectual’s struggle with modernity, depicted through 302, indicates the difficult choices for women facing rapid westernization of their culture. 302 is constructed to represent intellectualism with her short bobbed hair, glasses, and conservative dowdy black clothes that cover her from neck to toe in every scene but the last. In fact, her image is strikingly reminiscent of Simone Weil, especially in Weil’s latter years, when she is at her most gaunt and ascetic. 302 is a struggling writer whose apartment seems to revolve around her office and her library behind her desk. An online

article, *This Ain't Your Mother's Bul Go Gi*, points to 302's struggle with modernity in her writing. The author writes, "Unable to publish the writings about which she is most passionate, she must settle to sustain herself financially by writing the sex column of a Korean women's magazine" (available at: <http://www.epinions.com/mvie-review-78BD-3037FC4-3932A809-prod5>, May 4, 2006). Her career struggle directly implicates the sexualizing force of modernity as a powerfully destructive culprit in the demise of traditional ascetic pursuits. Min finds that the destruction of the capitalist agenda is a common concern of contemporary Korean film. He writes of the film *Black Republic*, "The power of capital ...also permeates the realm of sexuality" (Min 122). Capital is characterized in *Black Republic* as a demoralizing force of modernization for Koreans. In 301, 302 we see the impact of this force primarily through the domination of 302's father over their family. His business and his oppressive dictatorial relationship with his family directly connect him with capitalist ideals. Korean screenwriters are skilled at demonstrating the intimate affect of greed through tightly wound interpersonal tensions. 302's mother at first seems complicit in 302's agony, as we see her counting money from the register and treating 302's pleas to "disintegrate" with indignation. But later we see 302's mother attempt to advocate for her, only to be physically overpowered and threatened by 302's father. We now recognize 302's mother's plight more fully, the abuse she suffers and the unspoken financial control to which she is subjected. Abuse places individuals at the threshold of the violent force of power yielded via every avenue available, capital being critical among them. At this moment in the film, we understand the way that capital can penetrate the realm of sexual abuse and complicate the moral issue.

And, of course, 302 is not a successful sex columnist, so her career, and her capital, is threatened. As one who fears stuffing men or food into her body and has chosen to close her body to further penetration of any kind, her ability to write such material is understandably stilted. This situation is critical because it reflects the ultimatum at the heart of the film's conflict; one must choose a morally comprising position to some degree in order survive in the modern culture. This is especially true for Korean women, limited in their ability to participate either economically or patriotically, except through their consumer habits.

Even as anti-kwasobi ideals began to shift, and men and women challenged the true impact of consumption on the national economy, consumption remained a stressful issue for Korean mothers especially. Decisions about spending increasingly pitted family needs against national propaganda, as mothers struggled to provide the best possible life and education for their children. Nelson explains that the ongoing gendered aspect of consumption in South Korea has to do in part with this conflict between national pride and family, traditionally the mother's responsibility. In addition, consumer choices were critical for women because they did not have another outlet to express their patriotic values. Women that Nelson interviews about Kwasobi during her second visit to South Korea in 1993 express deep ambivalence about the subject. One well-to-do woman that she interviewed had been planning a summer family trip to California to visit friends when her son came home from school and told them that a school official had forbid foreign travel for their students. Suk-hi, who ultimately decided to take her family on the vacation anyway, expressed a shift from a previous desire to restrict expenditures in reverence to her country to a desire for personal independence. In the 1990s, Korean

media published many articles that admonished women, in particular, for their consumption habits. These articles brought about a change in Suk-hi:

I was reading these articles, and one day my anger grew bigger than my guilt and fear. If I think the best thing for my children is a trip to California, and if we can afford it, what right does the government have to threaten me? We live in a democracy. We have the right to travel now. We have our passports. Something shifted for me (166).

It is interesting that Suk-hi expresses the impetus for her previous tendency to restrict spending as “guilt” and “fear.” The shame associated with doing something that could be perceived as “excess” illuminates the moral struggle of Kwasobi for women of South Korea and underscores South Korea’s unique struggle with consumption. As Nelson writes, “South Korea provides an opportunity to examine national identity and patriotism as it was experienced through a specific gendered aspect of life that had become a part of the public discussion of nation responsibility: the act of consumption” (168).

Any analysis of this film would be incomplete without examining the impact of the layers of meaning that both contemporary knowledge about eating disorders and the history of South Korea’s struggle with modernity and consumption have on the film’s main conflict. In light of this struggle over consumption and the personal accountability that South Korean citizens have to their nation’s wealth, 301 and 302’s first voice over thoughts to each other take on a new meaning. 301, the “pig” who could feed an entire nation with her “breasts,” signifies excess of consumption and the pursuit of personal accumulation of wealth to the detriment of others. Whereas 302, who is called a “starving mannequin,” represents the limit state to which Walker refers, a state, however, that sets

up an impossible expectation of self restriction. Restriction, or delay of gratification, is a significant aspect that ties the theme of consumption to the pathological alimentary conflict between 301 and 302.

On the most fundamental level, the film 301, 302 is successful as an allegory about the consumer history of South Korea because decisions about consumption on all levels are decisions about how to manage desire while maintaining hope. This is especially evident in an environment where decisions about consumption are of utmost importance. The temporal place of consumption is a point to explore the intersections between consumer and eating disordered behavior as it applies to the delay of gratification or, as Weil would describe it, closure. Nelson explains the temporal process of consumption in psychological terms that starts with the hope for something and ends with loss. When we consume, we move through the phases of, “desire, resolve, acquisition, possession, loss” (Nelson 184). The itemizing of these aspects of the practice of consumption adds elements to Weil’s concepts of “looking” and “having,” and her directive to avoid premature closure. It is the loss in value in the acquisition and possession phase that underscores the ephemeral quality of desire itself. We are all too aware of the short life span of consumer fashions trends that seem to burst onto the scene of life and fade into obsolescence almost as quickly. The commodity is always “heralding life and death” (Nelson 185), which makes its construction as feminine troubling. Moreover, this ephemeral quality requires participants to embrace a capricious devil-may-care attitude. We consume to today and worry about our future at a later date. Such impertinence contributes to consumption’s association with immorality. This is why the delaying of acquisition is critical to a discussion of eating disordered behavior.

As I look back at my own experience with anorexia, I recognize a far broader pathological behavior that illustrates the painful negotiation of satiation and desire--the inability to make a decision. In my twenties I had a friend, not unlike 301 in her ability to consume without hesitation. She was comfortable with herself sexually and enjoyed spending lavishly. She was brash and had a healthy sense of entitlement. She told a story about me to almost everyone we met about our different consumer styles. Shopping one day at the outlet store for outfits to wear for an evening out on the town, she found a cute top and immediately purchased it and waited for me. After scanning almost every rack in the store, it took me over a half an hour or more (it got longer every time she told someone new) to make the decision to buy a dress, on sale for \$4.00. I agonized over this decision. But this isolated event extends to the biggest and smallest decisions in my life. And truly, it would seem that I prefer to remain in anticipation-land, forever. Perhaps, it is the knowledge that there is always an element of compromise when hope meets its material existence, when one tries to bring fantastical desire to fruition. Like a true anorectic I want to delay closure as long as possible. Any immediate decision, even, and sometimes especially, consumer decisions are subject to the drive to put off acquisition or consumption almost infinitely. But I am getting better. If I were to add to my preexisting fear of reaching acquisition or closure too soon, the additional pressure of seeing my consumer decisions--including the amount of food I might consume in a day - as an expression of my national duty, my difficulty would have been even greater. In fact, it might have been difficult for me to leave the house, as it was for 302.

When we make consumer decisions, we enter into a cannibalistic realm, where we must be willing to accept closure, degeneration, and our fleeting role in making the world

turn, in putting thought into action, and in taking our, “place in the sun,” as Levinas would assert . As with my experience, putting off these decisions is a hopeful act; it is the hope that our choice for denial means that we are in control for the moment and that we have some control over the future as well. Ultimately, Nelson argues that the anti-kwasobi campaign was a request to the South Korean people to invest emotionally and materially in a vision of the future, of what South Korea could be and not what it was. On a small scale, the anorectic acts out this little wish, in every decision about her eating. The delaying of gratification now, will lead to greater satisfaction later. On a basic level, anorectics are addicted to a manipulation of desire, all too aware of its evanescence, we toy with the means as an end in and of itself; we delay: the destruction of another organism: the taking the place of another being; acquisition and closure; the purchase and depreciation; the tasting and digesting; and the satisfaction that can be acquired in the present moment, so that hope springs eternal. It is the addict’s most intense desire.

What 301, 302 may reveal is that Korea was both addicted (dependent upon?) to the idea of progress and to a romantic ideal of isolationism, a denial that would unendingly promise progress without delivering. Most countries that view this film, especially the United States, can understand the dilemma between hedonism and self discipline, even if not to the extreme with which Korea experiences it. Therefore, the film’s comments on consumption can be felt universally, and Park seems to recommend a compromise: Korea (and countries beyond its borders) and the anorectic must give up both the austere denial of progress and the rock star’s short-sighted drive for progress and pleasure through unmitigated consumption. Either position of the extreme is frightening to disavow, but like 301 in the final scenes of the movie as she spots 302’s severed head

in the freezer, when we really examine the problem and recognize the addictive nature of both paradigms, we might all drop our forks in horror.

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