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Lashing out Against the Backlash: Constructing a Queer-Timed Narrative in the Affective Space of the Kitchen in *Kim Ji-young, Born 1982*

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Recognized as a key text in contemporary South Korean feminist activism, the novel Kim Ji-young, Born 1982 *has been invoked in other feminist narratives as a means of "delivering both the revelation of collective trauma and the criteria for reinterpreting what had been experienced through new temporal alternatives to what had been the 'official' story' " (Lee 218). However, the novel's potential "to magnetize a mass awakening" seems to be limited to an endemic context (Lee 218). Though stimulating debate in East Asian countries (Yang 1558), neither the novel nor the film has received enough critical attention internationally. I aim to bridge the gap in current scholarship by analyzing the feminist narrative of* Kim Ji-young, Born 1982 *in a broader theoretical context. Drawing upon Susan Faludi's theory on anti-feminist backlash, I explore how the new temporal alternatives opened up by the novel further emerge through the spatial dynamics of the kitchen in the cinematic medium, thereby enabling Ji-young to lash out at the backlash against the film. I first examine, in the context of anti-feminist backlash, the mobilization of negative affect in feminist theory as a means of speaking out against patriarchal oppression. Then, engaging with queer feminist theory, I analyze how a means of openly expressing these negative affects is offered through Ji-young's mental breakdown, which constructs a queer-timed narrative that transforms the kitchen into a space of female creativity. While exploring the liberating potential of this transformation, at the same time, I reflect upon whether the queer narrative of* Kim Ji-young, Born 1982 *is effective by questioning the validity of applying a Euro-centric theoretical framework to a film set in an East Asian country.*

Introduction

At the kitchen table, a young man shows his wife a video of her sitting on the floor of their living room (*Kim Ji-Young* 1:23:09). Addressing him as "son-in-law", she tells him in the voice of a parental figure to put on more clothes, as the days are getting colder. Laughing, he replies that she sounds just like her mother. As if she did not hear her husband, the woman then calls out to her daughter to "come to Grandma".

Seeing this video of herself, the young woman puts her hand to her mouth in disbelief. She is Kim Ji-young, the protagonist of *Kim Ji-young, Born 1982* (2019), adapted "by female

Korean film director Kim Do-young" from the eponymous novel (Kiaer and Kim, *Understanding Korean Film* 192). In this scene, towards the end of the film, Ji-young finally learns why her husband has been imploring her to go see a psychiatrist: she sometimes behaves as if she is a different person.

What has caused Ji-young to suffer from this mental disorder? Ostensibly, her life is nothing but enviable: she lives in a nice apartment with her caring husband and lovely daughter. Some characters in the film, like Ji-young's husband, attribute her aberrant behaviour to postpartum depression (S. Lee 97). However, Ji-young's mental illness is not only attributable to the stress of bearing the burden of motherhood but is embedded within the larger social discourse of feminism in the eponymous novel from which the film was adapted.

Recognised as a key text in contemporary South Korean feminist activism, the novel *Kim Ji-young, Born 1982* has been invoked in other feminist narratives as a means of "delivering both the revelation of collective trauma and the criteria for reinterpreting what had been experienced through new temporal alternatives to what had been the 'official' story" (H. Lee 218). However, the novel's potential "to magnetise a mass awakening" is limited to an endemic context (H. Lee 218). Though stimulating debate in East Asian countries (Yang 1558), neither the novel nor the film has received enough critical attention internationally.

This article aims to bridge the gap in current scholarship by analysing the feminist narrative of *Kim Ji-young, Born 1982* in a wider theoretical context. Situated within the broader social context of the anti-feminist backlash, as theorised by Susan Faludi, which has been applied more recently to film, this article explores how the new temporal alternatives opened up by the novel further emerge through the spatial dynamics of the kitchen in the cinematic medium, thereby enabling Ji-young to lash out against the "massive misogynistic backlash against both fictional and cinematic versions of *Kim Ji-Young*" (Koo 2). This article first examines, in the context of anti-feminist backlash, the mobilisation of negative affects in feminist theory as a means of speaking out against patriarchal oppression. Then, this article analyses how a means of openly expressing these negative affects are offered through Ji-young's mental breakdown, which constructs a queer-timed narrative that transforms the kitchen from a space of confinement into a space of confrontation, and ultimately, creativity. Finally, this article further explores how the film enhances the liberating potential of the queer-timed narrative that has been mentioned only briefly in previous criticism of the novel,

notably Hye-Ryoung Lee's "From the Front Line of Contemporary South Korean Feminist Criticism". Ultimately, this article reflects upon whether the queer-timed narrative of *Kim Ji-young, Born 1982* is effective by questioning the validity of applying a Eurocentric theoretical framework to a film set in an East Asian country.

Theoretical Background

One of the earliest and most comprehensive studies of the concept of backlash is Susan Faludi's *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (1991). According to Schowalter et al., Faludi identifies popular cultural forms "as important sites and as particular manifestations of backlash discourse" in American society in the 1980s (7). Drawing on Faludi's scholarship in their work on misogynistic backlash against women-strong films, Schowalter et al. acknowledge that, thirty years after Faludi's "comprehensive study of the social, political, and cultural conditions of American women in the 1980s", the phenomenon of backlash against women-centred films with women in strong roles still prevails (7). While Schowalter et al., as was the case with Faludi, focus on women-centred Hollywood blockbusters, less attention has been paid to how backlash is also applicable in the context of East Asian cinema.

A central work in the discourse of anti-feminist backlash in East Asia is *Kim Ji-young, Born 1982*, which, though not as internationally acclaimed and popular as the Nobel Prize-winning *The Vegetarian* (2007), has, nevertheless, generated a much fiercer backlash, from the publication of the original novel to the release of the film adaptation (Song et al. 141). It has been recognised that, against male viewers' misogynistic backlash, female users of Korean online platforms adopt "strategic ambiguity" in supporting the feminist message of *Kim Ji-young, Born 1982* (Koo 6). While Koo's study was conducted using a para-textual approach, this article focuses on how *Kim Ji-young, Born 1982* generated backlash in the first place. On the basis of Faludi and Schowalter et al.'s studies on misogynistic backlash, I argue that negative affects serve as a crucial means of lashing out against the backlash in *Kim Ji-young, Born 1982*, which has previously not received enough attention.

If Schowalter et al. identify the "anxiety and the fear of emasculation" underlying misogynistic backlash as "a discursively performed ideological affect" (13), I suggest that the

affective responses of the male audience in the misogynistic backlash against *Kim Ji-young, Born 1982* can be understood in the light of the mobilisation of negative affects in the film itself as a means through which Ji-young lashes out against patriarchal oppression. In engaging with feminist affect theory as a critical lens for examining *Kim Ji-young, Born 1982* in the context of the misogynistic backlash that it generated, I identify Sara Ahmed's *The Promise of Happiness* (2010) as a crucial work of reference. Drawing upon Ahmed's description of the figure of the unhappy housewife, I examine how Ji-young's mental breakdown transforms the negative affects that have been pent-up in her as a stay-at-home mother into a means for her to confront patriarchal oppression.

I point out how the negative affects that cause Ji-young's mental illness can be construed as queer in that it does not conform to the social expectation of the happy housewife in patriarchal society, in the light of the affective queerness of Jack Halberstam's *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011), which can further be considered in connection to the queering of time as a means of resisting a life-course that is governed by social norms. On the basis of previous scholarship that has identified the narrative of the novel version of *Kim Ji-young, Born 1982* as a form of "queer-timed" resistance to patriarchal oppression (H. Lee 219), I examine how this queerness is further manifested through the affective space of the kitchen in the film adaptation. I ultimately aim to reveal how the queer-timed narrative of *Kim Ji-young, Born 1982*, constructed through the shifting spatial dynamics of the kitchen, can be understood as a means of enabling feminist voices to lash out at the misogynistic backlash against the film generated under the patriarchal oppression that conditioned the reception of the film.

Confinement

As the setting for the first scene in *Kim Ji-young, Born 1982*, the kitchen is invested with subtle spatial dynamics that constitute a visual metaphor for Ji-young's confinement as a housewife. Ji-young's hands first appear in the shot, turning on the radio, which she listens to while using kitchen utensils in the performance of domestic labour (*Kim Ji-Young* 0:0:44). The camera then cuts to a shot of Ji-young's face from a "high-angle camera position [that] creates a cramped space which casts pressure on the character" (Yang 1559).

This opening sequence of scenes, which does not present a clear shot of Ji-young's face, only the domestic chores that she engages in, implies that Ji-young, whose identity is established first through her capacity as a housewife, is reduced to an object "to be used for free domestic work" (Garcia 148). The domestic space of the kitchen is thus imbued with the negative affective atmosphere of confinement, which is symbolic of patriarchal oppression in the traditional feminist discourse of de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949). Ji-young's identity as a housewife who must perform the household duties dictated by society creates an invisible chain that shackles her to the domestic space of the house. Even when Ji-young seeks, in a later scene, to restore her emotional balance by stepping out into the outside world, she is again confronted by the limitations of social expectations, which pose a question to her very presence in the public space (*Kim Ji-Young* 0:02:22).

At first, the public space of the park, a place of leisure and relaxation, seems to offer Ji-young a temporary escape from the confinement imposed on her by domestic labour. Sitting on a bench with the perambulator beside her, Ji-young holds a coffee in her hands with a faint smile on her lips. However, Ji-young's sense of contentment is broken when she overhears a conversation between some strangers about how cosy her life must be as a housewife who can enjoy a cup of coffee bought with her husband's money. Specifically, it is a man who expresses his envy for Ji-young's relaxing life, to which his female interlocutor responds by telling him to go and marry himself off to someone. The man takes this as a joke, but when the young woman says she finds her work so tiring that she is also thinking about getting married, this subtly reflects the social norms that she has internalised.

The suggestion that marriage is more desirable for women than work stands in contradiction to the fact that Ji-young's "conformi[ty] to the guidelines which dictate that pregnancy signals the end, temporarily or permanently, of a woman's career" has deprived her "of a sense of fulfilment that constitutes mental balance" (S. Lee 97). The belief that marriage is a source of happiness for women evokes the image of the happy housewife, which, in Sara Ahmed's feminist affect theory, "erases the signs of labour under the sign of happiness" (50). The domestic labour that Ji-young must perform, as revealed in the opening shots of the film, and the emotional burden that such labour entails, are swept under the carpet by this supposition "that women are happy and that this happiness is behind the work they do" (Ahmed 50). Ji-young's personal struggles of having to conform to the norms of

womanhood imposed by a patriarchal society are thus "concealed and reproduced by the figure of the happy housewife" (Ahmed 79).

As Ji-young returns from the public space of the park to the domestic space of the house, the crying of her young daughter, whom Ji-young has to pacify, immediately reveals the blissful life that a housewife supposedly enjoys is merely an illusion (*Kim Ji-Young* 0:04:03). This "assumption that happiness [for women] follows relative proximity to a social ideal" is challenged by the negativity of such figures as the unhappy housewife (Ahmed 53). In this light, it is useful to further consider how, as Jack Halberstam argues, negative affects associated with the failure to conform to social ideals opens up liberating possibilities by "pok[ing] holes in the toxic positivity of contemporary life" (*Queer Art* 3).

A moment of nonconformity occurs when Ji-young's mental breakdown provides the means for expressing her negative emotions, which opens up the possibility of challenging the social norms that are imposed upon her. Just as Halberstam associates the liberating potential of failure with queerness, Ji-young's breakdown can also, in a sense, be characterised as queer, insofar as it offers "the potential to open up new life narratives and alternative relations to time and space" (*Queer Time* 2). Such an alternative narrative, which emerges through Ji-young's first mental breakdown in the film, transforms the kitchen from a space of confinement to a stage for direct confrontation with patriarchal oppression.

Confrontation

Ji-young's first breakdown in the film occurs in the kitchen of her in-laws' house (*Kim Ji-Young* 0:11:11), where Ji-young's "gender-and familial-based juniority requires her to work in the kitchen without complaint while her in-laws enjoy the festivities" (Kiaer and Kim, *Understanding Korean Film* 192). At first, the labour that Ji-young performs for her husband's family is not too strenuous, especially since her husband offers to do the dishes for her. However, after the arrival of her sister-in-law, "Ji-young finds herself being instructed again by her mother-in-law to prepare food" (Kiaer and Kim 195). By insisting that her own daughter "is no longer at her family-in-law's home and it is her turn to rest" (Kiaer and Kim 196), Ji-young's mother-in-law is implicitly shifting the labour entirely to Ji-young, who, as the daughter-in-law, must serve all members of her husband's family.

This shift of labour is indicated by the spatial dynamics of the house. As Ji-young's sister-in-law's family arrives, they enter the living room, which is separated from the kitchen by glass doors. These glass doors are a physical barrier which marks off the kitchen as a liminal space, thus signalling Ji-young's marginalised status within the family. In the shot where Ji-young's sister-in-law is greeting her family, the kitchen occupies a small space in the top left corner of the frame, creating the same visual effect of confinement that was prominent in the opening scenes of the film. Ji-young, wearing the apron that her mother-in-law has given her, which "signifie[s] housewifery and sexism" (Kiaer et al. 107), is squeezed into the cramped space of the kitchen. Ji-young's spatial separation from her husband's family serves as a visual reminder of the fact that, having to perform the domestic labour which ensures the happiness of her husband's family, Ji-young is unable to enjoy the festival herself.

As an outsider to the blissful reunion of her husband's family, Ji-young retreats further into the kitchen with a look of dismay on her face. Only her lower body, half-covered by the apron, can be seen in the background as her sister-in-law sits in the living room with the rest of the family. The burden of domestic labour that Ji-young must bear in the place of the other female members in the household is conveyed visually. Even in shots where Ji-young occupies the foreground, other characters intrude into the frame, symbolising Ji-young's in-laws' encroachment upon her life by depriving her of the right to rest.

However, as Ji-young turns away her face from the scene of domestic bliss that she is excluded from, a shot from the back finally liberates her from this visual impingement by other characters. The camera moves down to focus on Ji-young's hands as they untie the apron. Turning to face her in-laws again, Ji-young disrupts the scene of happiness, directly accosting her mother-in-law by assuming the voice of her mother. This is a moment of surprising transgression which leaves the family in silent shock, since in South Korean society "vertical relations" exist between the mother-in-law, who is "senior and in charge", and the daughter-in-law, who is "junior and therefore subservient and agreeable" (Kiaer and Kim, *Understanding Korean Film* 201; 193).

In the voice of her mother, who, though "play[ing] a more submissive role, agreeing with the mother-in-law's opinions" (Kiaer and Kim, "Voices of Korean Families" 80), is not in a directly subordinate status to the mother-in-law, Ji-young gives vent to the negative feelings pent-up inside her. No longer "compliant in her traditional role" as the daughter-in-law whose

"top priority is her in-laws", Ji-young reminds her husband's family that "after two days of working in the kitchen [she] is also awaiting her turn to be with her family and to be the object of care" (Kiaer and Kim, Understanding Korean Film 200; 196). The symbolic confinement imposed by "the domestic space of the kitchen", which is "particularly associated with femininity" (Fullwood 6), is thus challenged. By questioning the legitimacy of her in-laws' exploitation of her labour for their own enjoyment, Ji-young transforms, through her mental breakdown, the kitchen into a space of confrontation.

After her outspoken protest in front of her in-laws, Ji-young is led away by her husband, not only from the kitchen, the place where she finds herself confined by domestic labour, but also from the house where the performance of this labour is imposed upon her by the "systematic and institutionalised sexist ideologies" of patriarchy (Kiaer et al. 100). Spatially transported by a long drive to her childhood home, Ji-young is finally able to rest in bed (*Kim Ji-Young* 0:14:21). This change in locale also temporally transports Ji-young back to the past. The introduction of an alternative temporality is achieved through the map on the wall that Ji-young turns to look at. A change in lighting indicates the transition to another temporal framework: a much younger Ji-young is engaging in a discussion with her older sister about the different places around the world that they would like to visit. In the domestic space of the house, which is socially constructed as a feminine sphere, the girls, who are expected "to play quietly and help around the house until they are old enough to marry and be housewives" (Kiaer and Kim, "Voices of Korean Families" 69), express their longing for the outside world by projecting the destinations of their imaginary travels onto the map on the bedroom wall.

In the kitchen, Ji-young's mother is preparing food for the family, performing the domestic labour that Ji-young herself is to shoulder when she becomes an adult. A parallel between daughter and mother is established through the spatial dynamics of the kitchen, which, in both Ji-young's in-laws' house and her childhood home, is half-separated from the living room by glass doors. The fact that the oppression which Ji-young suffers from has been long ingrained in society, similarly affecting her mother before her, is revealed by the conversation between Ji-young's mother and grandmother, which hints at the burdens that the former had to bear in order to guarantee that her brothers received an education. As they are standing in the kitchen, a reverse shot reveals Ji-young's grandmother's gaze to be lingering on the scar on her daughter's hand. Tenderly addressing Ji-young's mother by her

name, “Mi-sook”, Ji-young’s grandmother tries to express sympathy for her daughter, who tells her to stop.

This attempted expression of sympathy is finally achieved through Ji-young’s mental illness towards the end of the film, when her mother comes to visit her (*Kim Ji-Young* 1:21:11). Calling her mother “Mi-sook” in the voice of her grandmother, Ji-young recounts, in a trembling voice, how pained she was when she saw the injuries that Mi-sook sustained while working to support her brothers. The negative affect that has long been pent up in both mother and daughter breaks out in this moment of emotional intensity as they embrace each other with tears rolling down their faces. The cathartic power of this scene, which derives in large part from the trans-temporal link that it establishes with the flashback to Ji-young’s childhood, solidifies the intergenerational bond between Ji-young, her mother, and, to an extent, her grandmother.

Having witnessed Ji-young’s symptoms, her mother reprimands her father for the “lack of emotional sensitivity [that] he has to his family members, especially to his female children” (Kiaer and Kim, “Voices of Korean Families” 69), which results from his partiality to his son (*Kim Ji-Young* 1:26:40). As is the case when Ji-young spoke out against her in-laws, this act of rebellion against the hierarchical relations that pertain in patriarchal society, where “the power and authority of the father in the household is unchallengeable” (Kaier and Kim 70), takes place in the kitchen, which is thus transformed into a space of confrontation. On the kitchen table is a box of medication that Ji-young’s father has bought for his son. Throwing the box to the ground, Ji-young’s mother reproaches her husband for paying attention only to his son when his daughter is the one who has been suffering from mental illness, before collapsing to the ground while sobbing. From the image of Ji-young’s mother weeping by the kitchen table, the camera cuts to a shot of her pensive father, who picks up the phone to order another box of medication for his daughter. The medication can thus be interpreted less as a remedy for an actual disease than as a symbol of the social malaise of sexism.

In this light, Ji-young’s illness should be understood as “a cultural and social phenomenon rather than a medical disease” (Cvetkovich 1), offering a means of expressing negative affects that emerge in the present as residues of the past. By providing a “special self-reflection and scrutiny about the past and present of women’s lives, both individual and collective”, Ji-young’s illness suggests possibilities for “new structures for articulating a

personal history contrary to preordained norms of how it should unfold" (H. Lee 219). The alternative temporal structure of Ji-young's personal narrative plays a crucial role in Korean feminism, which Hye-Ryoung Lee characterises as queer-timed, with reference to Halberstam (219). According to Lee, the queer-timed narrative of *Kim Ji-young, Born 1982* enables the voices of women from different stages in Ji-young's life to form a collective in lashing out against patriarchal oppression (222). These voices, which coalesce through the construction of queer-timed narratives such as that of Ji-young, empower South Korean feminism by providing the means for women living under patriarchal oppression to express what they "wanted to say, but could not" (H. Lee 222).

Of course, it must be noted that *Kim Ji-young, Born 1982* is not queer in the sense of conforming "to logics that lie outside of those paradigmatic markers of life experience—namely, birth, marriage, reproduction, and death" (Halberstam, *Queer Time* 2), as Ji-young's life trajectory conforms to the expectations set by the patriarchal society of South Korea. Instead, it is precisely Ji-young's conformity to patriarchal norms that throws into relief the liberating potential offered by a queer-timed narrative, through which even the kitchen, formerly a space of confinement where domestic chores are performed, can be transformed into the stage for direct confrontation with the everyday sexism experienced by women in a patriarchal society. This confrontation is successful in opening up the possibility for the further transformation of the kitchen into a space of creativity at the end of the film.

Creativity

Just as the kitchen has been transformed through the emergence of a queer-timed narrative, so has Ji-young undergone a subtle transformation. Initially, only the conduit for the voices of other women who speak out against patriarchal oppression, Ji-young now directly confronts her husband over why he is unwilling to let her go back to work, after which he shows her a video of her speaking in the voice of her mother. This crucial moment of revelation takes place at the kitchen table, which thus functions as a space for confrontation with not only patriarchal oppression, but also the negative "emotional responses inevitable in the face of a patriarchal society" (Chamberlain 9).

The negative affect that has been underlying Ji-young's experience of confinement in the domestic space, as well as her mental breakdowns, now fully recognised, can finally be channelled into a more constructive act of creativity. At the kitchen table, Ji-young opens a notebook and writes her name on the blank page (*Kim Ji-Young* 1:45:41). This notebook is then replaced in the final scene of the film by the computer, which, also placed on the kitchen table, Ji-young uses to type the first words of her autobiography (*Kim Ji-Young* 1:51:29). In contrast to the kitchen as a space of confinement in the opening scene of the film, in the ending, the kitchen table is transformed into a site of creativity.

This act of creation reveals the spatial fluidity of the kitchen, which acquires the different symbolic meanings of confinement, confrontation, and ultimately creativity, can further be understood in the light of the liberating potential of the queer-timed narrative constructed in the film. The kitchen acquires a temporal dimension through Ji-young's life narrative, the first sentence of which details the specific conditions of her birth (*Kim Ji-Young* 1:51:52). Through this creative act of narration, Ji-young is actively taking part in contributing to the construction of "new temporal alternatives" that offer a means of "reinterpreting what had been experienced" (H. Lee 218).

The fact that Ji-young's description of her birth also constitutes the ending reinforces the queer-timed narrative of the film. This reversed chronology retrospectively throws into relief the discrimination that Ji-young has experienced "throughout her life, in every facet of her socialisation—by her parents, in the workplace, professionally in respect to her career choices, and even by strangers" (Kiaer et al. 101). The temporal restructuring through the ending of the film thus underlines the temporal dimension of the title, *Kim Ji-young, Born 1982*. The transformation of the kitchen into a space of creativity towards the ending of the film manifests how cinema, "informed with lived temporality", has the ability to give "access to other temporalities" (Sobchack 146; Doane 2).

At last, Ji-young is able to reestablish her sense of self through engaging in the creation of a queer-timed narrative in the kitchen, which, constructed by patriarchal norms as a domestic space that confines Ji-young to the role of a housewife, had caused her to suffer from negative emotions that are eventually manifested during her mental breakdown. This ending has, however, been identified as "the familiar trope of creativity as a means of finding a voice and a level of autonomy", which "is a symbolic close as the possibility is only available

to a few, despite the high level of education amongst Korean middle-class women" (S. Lee 101). Indeed, Ji-young, who lives comfortably in a nice apartment, is, to an extent, privileged; as Ahmed observes, some women "are not even entitled to be proximate to the fantasy [of happiness]" which Ji-young's mental illness challenges (52). Moreover, Ji-young's university education provides her with the means of finding a sense of fulfilment through creative self-expression but the film does not offer an alternative solution to women for whom this is not a viable option. This contrasts with the more sobering ending of the novel: it is not Ji-young who writes her story but her male psychiatrist, for whom Ji-young's story serves as a reminder of the disadvantages of hiring a married female employee whose mental state might be similarly destabilised.

In this light, there is a fundamental difference between the film and the novel. While the queer-timed narrative of the film opens up the possibility for active expression through self-narration, that of the novel, written from the perspective of Ji-young's male psychiatrist, who reinforces the patriarchal oppression that causes Ji-young's suffering, implicitly calls out for action by revealing the plight of women under patriarchy. In a sense, it can be said that the narratives of the film and the novel complement each other, which attests to how cinematic adaptation harbours the potential to add an extra dimension to the original work.

It must also be acknowledged that, set in an East Asian society where traditional Confucian ideologies clash "greatly with 21st-century Korea, despite underpinning much of the customs and preferences that relate to gender" (Kiaer et al. 103), the film risks being too optimistic in its ending. There is something idealistic about presenting the creative construction of a queer-timed narrative as a solution for Korean women "who must balance the incompatibility of Confucian society and its patriarchal mindset with their positions in highly competitive professional environments" (Kiaer and Kim, *Understanding Korean Film* 192). In this light, it is useful to consider how these social conditions shed light on the cultural nuances that must be taken into consideration when applying a Western-oriented feminist framework to the analysis of an East Asian film.

Indeed, Ji-young does not make radical use of the time and space that feminism gives "to women's desires that are not assembled around the reproduction of the family form" (Ahmed 64). Instead, an alternative form of queerness emerges, one which, conceived of "as an outcome of strange temporalities," becomes detached from "sexual identity" (Halberstam,

Queer Time and Place 1). This is mobilised by Korean feminism in the construction of a queer-timed narrative for women living in a society where "Confucian ideals on the social construction of gender and sexuality" are deeply ingrained (Kiaer et al. 103). The effectiveness of such a narrative is attested precisely by the heated anti-feminist backlash against the film in South Korea, where "the current topography of cine-feminism" is complicated by the "deep-rooted sexism and gender discrimination" (Park 94). The "[f]ierce protest by male spectators" against a film with a relatively non-radical ending reveals the importance of constructing queer-timed narratives in feminist cinema that open up the possibility of restructuring confinement into confrontation and ultimately creativity (Yang 1558).

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