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Patriots behind Enemy Lines: Hyperreality and the Stories of Self and Other in Recent North Korean War-Theme Graphic Novels

Martin Petersen

Based on a study of North Korean war-theme graphic novels from the 2000s, “Patriots behind Enemy Lines” argues that the “behind enemy lines” theme walks a fine line between condemnation and becoming what it shows, between critiquing a hostile, foreign world and adapting its “art for art’s sake principle, antisocial fads (nallari’p’ung), and creative freedom.”¹ Like other cultural forms in North Korea, the message is firmly ideological, but the thematic—adaptable patriots temporarily transforming their minds and, in particular, their bodies into enemy Others—spins off images of Self as Other in excess, which makes for ambiguous interplay between entertainment and ideology. The radical alteration of spies in this theme allows the cultural workers to transcend the formula required for homeland patriots and provides entertaining images without transgressing regime politics. A key characteristic of this genre then is the adaptable heroes as they become heavily biased interlocutors between North and South in a disjunctured time-space. The mixed media negotiation of this time-space produces a characteristic go-stop routine—or rather circumscribed excess—in which borders of morality and self-perception are crossed only to be reestablished.

The *Hyōndae Chosŏnmal sajŏn* (Dictionary of modern Korean) published in North Korea explains the term “adaption to the circumstances” as follows:

In order to defend the revolutionary organization, the underground revolutionaries must be educated and prepared to paralyze the enemy intelligence service and

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composedly *adapt to the circumstances* no matter what unexpected situation they find themselves in.²

This definition aptly fits the protagonist heroes in North Korean, Korean War (1950–53) graphic novels (*kŭrim ch'aek*) from the 2000s.³ In these graphic novels, the North Korean government sends one North Korean patriot after another across the border into South Korean territory on undercover missions to fight the American aggressors and their South Korean accomplices. Here, the North Korean revolutionaries face the task of reliably passing as South Koreans to accomplish the mission. While many of these novels contain combat scenes, the graphic novels discussed in this article describe undercover operations and often emphasize the psychological aspect of the war (see figure 1).

Competence as a fighter is thus secondary to the competence necessary to adapt to enemy culture. Fluency in a foreign world and an ability to submerge and embody it so as to overturn it is in stark focus throughout these novels. The main educational objective in these graphic novels then is to show how particular patriotic endeavors by North Korean undercover agents contribute to the positive outcome of the all-out confrontation with the enemy. The undercover agent theme did not originate with twenty-first-century graphic novels. The theme echoes in the renowned twenty sequels of the North Korean film series *Unsung Heroes* produced in 1978–81. Spies and their undercover missions are also found in graphic novels produced in the 1980s. In the 2000s,



Figure 1. “The team members have all been trained to be able to adapt to the circumstances.” / “Training! Training . . .” Cho’e Hyŏk. *T’aep’ung chakhchŏn* (Operation typhoon), 46.

the undercover agent theme was still highly relevant and had been integrated into the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) Military First discourse.⁴ Whether stated in the extradiegetic level or not, these graphic novels thus underline that the endeavors of current readers are essential in protecting and strengthening the nation in its continuous confrontation with hostile foreign powers.

Foreign cultural products are, to a large extent, inaccessible to the majority of North Korean cultural consumers; therefore, domestic and officially sanctioned narratives on foreign culture, whether in graphic novels, films, news broadcasts, or schoolbooks become privileged gazes upon the foreign Other. As avidly demonstrated in this issue of *The Journal of Korean Studies*, the Korean War serves as a major window on the encounter with Otherness. In her recent work *Reading North Korea*, Sonia Ryang notes how "In a paradoxical way, the Korean peninsula during the Korean War may be understood as a time-space of adventure and excitement as well."⁵

This article focuses predominantly on graphic novels made for the young North Korean readership but also includes graphic novels published for a foreign readership able to read Korean. The majority of graphic novels dealing with the war theme and undercover heroes are published by Kūmsōng Youth Publishing House with young readers as its prime target. Other publishers include the Workers' Organization Publishing House, the Literature and Arts Publishing House, Korea Art Publishing House, and the Korea Publications Exchange Association. This article is based mainly on the following graphic novels: *Yoram ŭl chik'yō* (Guard the cradle, volumes 1–2 [2008–9]), *Kūdŭl ūn torawatta* (They came back [2001]), *Koyohan Chōnch'ojōn* (Quiet outpost, volumes 1–2 [2006]), *Yusōng chakchōn* (Operation shooting star [2002]), and *T'aep'ung chakchōn* (Operation typhoon [2003]).⁶ (See the appendix.)

Later, we will explore the mixed media (image/word) renderings of graphic novels of this particular time-space from two perspectives. First, what kinds of readings do these mixed media portrayals of Otherness facilitate when that Other is, in fact, embodied by a North Korean patriot in disguise during the war? Second, are North Korean undercover agents merely serving as models of self-discipline and sacrifice—symbols of how North Koreans can victoriously employ their adaptability in foreign, hostile settings? I examine and answer these questions by drawing on recent scholarship on North Korean cultural production and comic studies. First, I present the notion of "aesthetics of excess" as developed by comic scholar Julia Round's "Reconstructing Alice Cooper" and "Visual Perspective and Narrative Voice in Comics."⁷ I will not detail here the reception of graphic novels in the DPRK but focus on one affordance of this mixed media, which may help explain discomforts in the North Korean setting, whether these be parental, societal, or those of the authoritarian regime—namely, the novels' "aesthetics of excess" and creation of hyperreality.

GRAPHIC NOVELS AND THE AESTHETICS OF EXCESS

On stage, I'm this figure, this actor, who does things that people aren't used to seeing and I relish in that reaction. In real life, though, I play golf, I shop and I walk around with no makeup on and my hair in a ponytail. I may not be the typical middle-aged Joe, but I'm closer to normal than you think.

—Alice Cooper⁸

In the DPRK, the regime controls graphic novels similarly to how they control cultural works in general. Cultural art is to represent the view of mediating party and state values, and as such can be considered to be manifestations of regime intentionality. While North Korean studies in South Korea and in the West have almost unequivocally confirmed the political control exerted over cultural workers (writers, artists) and elucidated the historical trajectory of this cultural complex,⁹ a growing number of scholars have begun to question the hegemonic relationship between the regime, cultural workers, and cultural consumers (readers, spectators)¹⁰ and to explore methodological approaches to this question.¹¹

As I demonstrate elsewhere, the study of the graphic novel medium is useful in our attempt to give nuance to our understanding of the North Korean cultural system as a monolithic hegemony. Readers familiar with mid- to late-twentieth-century US and European debates and controversies over the comic medium as being closely interrelated with juvenile delinquency will recognize occasional hints of unease with the medium in DPRK cultural discourse and even within the medium itself.

In a discussion of the comic book representation of rock icon Alice Cooper, narrative comic studies scholar Julia Round discerns how the graphic novel medium congenially renders the gender-bending celebrity antihero Alice Cooper.¹² For all the obvious differences, there are interesting parallels between this “distorted and exaggerated reflection of society taken to extremes”¹³ in the Alice Cooper persona and his representation in US comics and the graphic novel renderings of North Korean undercover agents in the South during the war years. Round’s reading of Alice Cooper (and his comic book representation) as a subversive, performative act may be useful in guiding our understanding of the transformation of the rather one-dimensional North Korean heroes when they cross the border into South Korea to become one with the enemy. The agents’ transformation guides our understanding of how these graphic novels come to foreground identity as something improvised and performative. As we analyze the “adaption to the circumstances” theme, we may thus take cues from Julia Round’s identification of essential narratological features in comic medium such as its potential to create the hyperreal, the subversive, and an “aesthetic of excess” and to rely on reader involvement.

Hyperreality, Round explains, is created by “offering conflicting sensory information that contrasts with a strong sense of the reader’s own identity. It

results in what this scholar calls an ‘aesthetic of excess’—where plural possibilities, multiple voices, and multiple points of view are combined to interest and involve the reader.”¹⁴ Further, the “exploitations of the medium’s possibilities are used to undermine any sense of coherent reality (we cannot rely on a consistently heterodiegetic or homodiegetic voice or visual perspective).”¹⁵ Concretely, not only is this aesthetic of excess, subversion, and hyperreality created through visual/verbal tension,¹⁶ but it is also created through juxtaposition of incongruous elements against the expected.¹⁷ This occurs when incompatible visual and verbal strands combine with stylized art to create the knowingly false or hyperreal.¹⁸

THE HERO

Before I examine how the 2000s undercover agent war stories involve the reader through an aesthetic of excess, subversion, and hyperreality—a process of staging patriot bodies, minds, and discourse beyond enemy lines—we need to identify the typology of the wartime homeland hero and of the foreign antagonist, two polar opposites between which the undercover heroes stage their personae. We can conveniently begin this identification at the end of narrative in the 2000s war story—the point at which patriots in most cases die. The death of the patriotic undercover agent namely constitutes a dramatic, yet almost inevitable rupture, which keeps adaptability outside of the homeland. It is one thing to cross the border into the South. Returning North is an altogether different matter. The recurrent Fatherland sequences in which senior officers lovingly send the undercover agents into enemy territory at the beginning of the mission not only serve as a narrative vehicle for the tribulations ahead, but also underpin the strong, almost organic connection between the Fatherland and patriots abroad.

In a sequence in *They Came Back*, where Chief (*Pujang*) is about to introduce the two female heroes, Yŏngim and Sunim, to their undercover mission, another male comrade compares the two female scouts (*chŏngch'alby'ong*) to flowers. Yŏngim and Sunim, in jest, ask whether their comrade is giving them a philosophical lecture. He is not. Flowers bloom for a while before they wither. Scouts sacrifice their lives and gain immortality with the Fatherland (*Choguk*), he tells them.¹⁹ In a sense, the flowers are more real than the scouts in *They Came Back*. In the visual track, flowers serve as materializations of the organic connectedness between the Fatherland and the undercover patriots beyond enemy lines. The graphic novel thus employs focalization and metalepsis to further foreground the significance of flowers.²⁰

We see flowers in Chief’s office; they are his farewell gift to the scouts. Then, in the next scene, we find roses in Yŏngim and Sunim’s South Korean apartment. When the women recollect Chief’s words, his image materializes as if he is speaking from the flowers (see figure 2). In this manner, the two undercover agents’ connectedness is focalized in the visual track with the flowers when



Figure 2. “You must return. Looking at the roses in my room, I will ever think about you, comrades. Likewise, you will also have a flower pot with roses. If you do this, even though you may be far away, you will not be lonely.” Kim Yöngsam, *Kūdöl ün torawatta* (They came back), 120.

communication with the Fatherland is impossible. On the final page, Chief presents Chinae, a young girl who returns from the South as the sole survivor of the mission thanks to the self-sacrifice of the two female comrades, with a bouquet of flowers representing how the deceased patriots live on in the hearts and minds of the North Koreans. Then, in the concluding, wordless panel, Chinae holds the bouquet turned outward, as if in a gesture to the readers with solemn homeland officials in the background (see figure 3 and appendix). Young North Korean readers will not miss the moral imperative invoked by the employment of this ascending, rhetorical metalepsis. This gesture imposes upon the reader a responsibility to learn how the spatial connectedness between the North Korean headquarters and enemy territory, as mediated through undercover agents, should parallel the connectedness between then and now; between story world and reader realities. Plainly put, readers are asked to receive the flowers and internalize their all-encompassing signification. While, ultimately, readers may find



Figure 3. Chinae. Kim Yöngsam, *Kūdŭl ũn torawatta* (They came back), 178.

other aspects of *They Came Back* more engaging (something which I will return to), the significance of the wartime (re)constructed experience to the socialization of current North Korean youth is effectively foregrounded. The flower motif is part of a tightly orchestrated synchronization of the visual/verbal track present in this novel and the intended conflation of the story world and reader reality.

Although Kim Il Sung (Kim Ilsöng) is not depicted visually in the graphic novels examined here, he is another metaphor that, like the flowers, transcends spatial and temporal divides and unifies visual and verbal tracks.²¹ Kim Il Sung always “accompanies” the patriots abroad. In *The Women Scouts* (*Yösöng chöngch'albyöng*) and *Misty Island* (*Angae töp'in söm*), for example, patriots sacrifice their lives with a firm “Long Live General Kim Il Sung” on their lips.²² In *Operation Typhoon*, Chöngu, a South Korean translator working for the military, who has just been enlightened by an undercover agent, exclaims, “General Kim Il Song . . .” The speech bubble, with the letters for General in bold type, shines above the enlightened South Korean’s head like a sun (see figure 4).

These are excellent examples of how the authors of these graphic novels have harmonized their illustrations with the written narrative. The sun metaphor is further elaborated in *Operation Shooting Star*. Prior to leaving North Korea for his undercover mission, we find the protagonist hero, Söngmin, standing in



Figure 4. “The General Kim Il Sung . . .” Cho’e Hyök, *T’aep’ung chakchön* (Operation typhoon), 121.

an open window with fluttering curtains. He exclaims, as he looks at the rising sun, “Dear Comrade Commander in Chief! I will fulfill the mission.”²³ It does not take much effort on the part of the reader to cognitively link the visual and verbal tracks here. To the average North Korean reader, who is familiar with the metaphorical universe of the Kim family, this will be highly familiar terrain. In the final sequence of *Operation Shooting Star*, Kim Il Sung is compared to the sun and Söngmin, who prevents the attack by sacrificing his life to become a star of the Eternal Sun.²⁴

As can be clearly seen from this and the preceding examples, the Fatherland and undercover agents are linked in a firmly hierarchial, metaphorical universe. The agents are meshed in the almost mythic North Korean nation when they cross the border to go South and again at the end of the journey, when they cross the border between life and death. The visual and the verbal tracks simultaneously contribute to make this link clear and to neatly facilitate the conflation of the story world, the extradiegetic comment, and reader realities.

THE TWISTED REFLECTION OF THE HERO

Transcendental organic connectedness and a willingness to bring an end to the temporary enemy embodiment through self-sacrifice bestow the patriots with larger-than-life features—in hierarchical order as shooting stars are to the sun and the children of Kim Il Sung are to their *Father*. These themes are easily

recognizable parts of the North Korean ideological landscape and bear witness to the ambition of the North Korean government to instill in its young readers an ideological fervor by inviting the readership to participate in a ritualized reality of the wartime experience through graphic novels. To clarify, these are representative examples of North Korean narratives, examples that unify official North Korean and foreign scholarship in emphasizing hegemonic monolithism. With that perspective in mind, things begin to get more complex when we turn to the renderings of the enemy.

In both *Guard the Cradle* and *Quiet Outpost*, the fact that the reader does not know the enemy is an element of plot tension. *Guard the Cradle* keeps the suspense by suggesting to the reader that Ch'oe Oksŏn, a patriotic North Korean woman with a problematic family background, has turned into Vulture, the arch-enemy. Vulture is a mysterious figure who began organizing terrorist attacks against Koreans north of the border during the post-liberation period. The villain continues to cause havoc during the war and in the immediate postwar years. Toward the end of *Guard the Cradle*, the author discloses that Oksŏn has, in fact, remained faithful to the Socialist Fatherland, and that Yoko, a Japanese spy in American service, is synonymous with the Vulture.

At a key point there is a flashback sequence with extensive extradiegetic captions. The author exposes the identity of Vulture/Yoko to the reader (but not yet to the story-world hero). In this sequence, the images reveal how the Japanese hyper-villain gradually transformed through a series of cosmetic surgery operations. In the first series of panels, she changes from a colonial-period brutal murderer into an adoptee of a US secret service officer. In the next series of multi-image panels she kneels under the crucifix²⁵ as she enters the world of Christianity and espionage. The US pastor/spy/stepfather sends Yoko undercover to serve as a housemaid in Oksŏn's influential Christian family as a modest "native" Korean orphan clad in *hanbok*.²⁶ As if her Japanese physiognomy was not in itself uncannily adaptable to stage performances of Koreanness, the ultimate transformation of Yoko takes place in August 1945. While proper Korean nationals celebrate Liberation, Yoko undergoes surgery and is made into a virtual copy of Oksŏn, an evil ersatz. Japanese/American hostile intentionalities are hyper-potent in the amalgamation of ethnic resemblance, avant-garde medical technologies, and, add to that, female cunning.

Guard the Cradle significantly invests both visually and verbally in this eight-page protracted sequence to reestablish hero/villain dichotomies for the reader. The consequence, however, invites the reader to reconsider the multiple appearances of Oksŏn (as herself and as performed by Yoko) throughout the story. In retrospect, this twin figure of good and evil comes to a stand as a hyperreality. From the reader's perspective, whether the eight-page flashback plot solution does, in fact, level out the concomitant subversive realization that patriotic North Korean identities may, in fact, be an enemy performance is an open question.

Other war-theme graphic novels show how South Koreans have infiltrated the North to destabilize Socialist society. In the serene North Korean village during the war years detailed in *Quiet Outpost*, the kind and seemingly loving Myōngsil, who has been taking care of the young daughter of the hero, Kōnuk, is revealed to be a ruthless South Korean spy for the Americans and the daughter of a secret service officer who served the Japanese Empire. The illustrations suddenly reveal the enemy's true identity. Her facial expressions and bodily composure morph as Myōngsil, without hesitation, stabs Kōnuk's daughter, a child to whom Myōngsil has been like an adoptive mother (see figure 5).

This is a frightening reminder to young, impressionable readers that Northerners (Self) and Southerners (Other), with their shared ethnic homogeneity and history, are mutually transmutable. The possibility of hostile adaptation and infiltration is a two-way phenomenon. The enemy may be living in one's midst, a theme that also is occasionally dealt with in narratives on current North Korean society.²⁷ Contrary to Yoko in *Guard the Cradle*, Myōngsil does not need a facial operation to blend in seamlessly. She is Korean, even though her family background in the so-called hostile classes (as daughter of a national traitor) has rendered (and sundered) ethnic sameness as a deceptive signifier.

Thus, there is an unsettling message relayed to graphic novel readers about the emergence of enemies within the North. These enemies existed historically as political dissidents during the Korean War. These domestic enemies continue to exist in the present through family ties to "hostile" family backgrounds. Foreign readers may write this off as the xenophobic North Korean elitist mindset, which construes that the nation-building project must produce wartime narratives and thereby projects the wartime crisis into the present. It may also be read as a cynical, "rule by fear" maneuver to classify citizens into strata according to their family backgrounds based on the colonial period and wartime political leanings of their ancestors.

Certainly, these entertaining aspects may be written off as the graphic novel authors' sugarcoating of the messages for young North Korean readers, as prescribed by Kim Il Sung.²⁸ To reduce the social function of these graphic novels to undercover agents working for the Fatherland as merely a means to make manifest an ever-disintegrating regime's desperate attempts to cling to time-worn ideological formulae would leave out the sheer pleasure readers may receive through the suspense and action also at play here. For all the ideological messages that these sugarcoated narratives impose upon the readers, the war stories enable another type of reader involvement. Readers may read these graphic novels from a patriotic perspective, but they also have a choice and may go easy on the ideology and divulge in the presentation of excess. Later, I will pursue this theme as it is played out through the characters of North Korean undercover agents. Let us first examine another recurrent enemy encounter in these narratives, the US imperialist.



Figure 5. "Little red brat!" Kim Ch'ŏlguk, *Koyohan Chŏnch'ŏjŏn, Che-I pu* (Quiet outpost, vol. 1), 38–39.



Figure 6. Preparing for Attack: Syringes. Cho'e Hyŏk, *T'aep'ung chakchŏn* (Operation typhoon), 154.

The Americans contribute to the entertaining quality of the war stories told in North Korean graphic novels and belong to an altogether different category of enemy. They are different from the South Koreans, and, for that matter, the Japanese Other. Representations of Americans are, more squarely, radical and racial Others. North Korean graphic novel authors depict Americans as the driving force in the military confrontation. Americans often appear as leading military officers, pastors, and intelligence personnel. The Americans, in this capacity, bring with them harmful, decadent culture. An example of this moral decay is the sequence referring to the supply of drugs to American combat troops in *Operation Typhoon*. The image of a medical doctor with his syringe unleashing drugs into the outstretched arms of animal-like American special forces—and the Americans' subsequent high-on-Philopon (methamphetamine) predatory acts and ruthless murders are portrayed as the graphic union of organized capitalist imperialism and cultural barbarity (see figure 6).

The implication of this particular graphic novel and its cultural critique is not confined to historical representation of the US imperialist enemy, of course, but also reflects contemporary DPRK discourse on foreignness. For example, on the front page of the *Nodong Sinmun* on June 1, 1999, editors warned against the attack of imperialist ideological culture. The editorial detailed how the number of drug addicts, alcoholics, and depraved elements—which, in turn, pursue perverted desires—is constantly on the rise in societies that have been exposed to imperialist ideological culture.²⁹ This may be in response to what foreign observers of North Korea have reported regarding the increasing use of methamphetamine, in particular among young people living along the border regions.³⁰ While it should be evident by now that the ideological confrontation in these historical narratives encourages the formation of young readers' definition of foreignness, the question remains as to whether the radical and racial Otherness embodied by Americans, present across these graphic novels, also reflects transgression between Self and Other. The occurrence of narratives with underlying resonances of internal problems is also discussed by film scholar Hyang-jin Lee:

[I]n North Korean accounts, all the evils in its present-day society are claimed to be the consequences of the past wars against foreign powers. The representation of the other on the screen, therefore, can be considered as a symbolic scapegoat. It is blamed for all ills, through diffusing foreign ideas in the daily lives of ordinary people. . . . In this sense, the unusual manipulation of ideas of foreignness in contemporary films can be understood as a challenge to the prevailing norms of society.³¹

From this perspective, *Operation Typhoon* may seem to respond to or implicitly address an internal problem. To be sure the DPRK does not present disturbing images of North Korean youth addicts, but instead frames the issue as an effect of the ongoing American presence on the Korean peninsula. In this manner, through embedding the drug problem in the discursive repertoire of American

cultural barbarity, the internal societal problem may be addressed, even demonized by projecting the problems onto the American arch enemy. If Julia Round, in the representation of Alice Cooper, identified plural possibilities, multiple voices, and multiple points of view, these wartime graphic novels appear to pin down the American demon in singular possibility, a unitary voice and point of view. Yet, as I have sketched briefly above, this does not mean that the reader cannot read the novels as hyperreal and subversive.

PATRIOT BODIES, MINDS, AND TEXTS BEHIND ENEMY LINES

Patriot Bodies behind Enemy Lines: Perverted Sexualities

By far the most entangled rendering of Self and Other—the aspect with the potentially most subversive involvement of readers—can be found in the homeland hero/undercover persona figure. The illustrations of uniformed, self-possessed, and upright patriots dissolve the second the Northern patriots cross the border and voluntarily transform into their Southern stereotypes. The heroes disguise themselves as all kinds of enemies: South Korean soldiers, military officers, and intelligence personnel; the daughter of a South Korean industrialist and a translator; a small-scale industrialist miner and restaurant owner. As we have seen, bodily transformations are temporary performances meant to trick the enemy. The following three examples from *Guard the Cradle*, *They Came Back*, and *Operation Shooting Star* illustrate the extent to which these performances produce an “aesthetic of excess.”

In *Guard the Cradle*, the protagonist Kim Kukch’öl’s first mission as an undercover agent occurs inside a North Korean city during the post-liberation period. In order to infiltrate a terrorist band of South Korean reactionary villains known as the *Hwarangdan*, led by the aforementioned Vulture, Kukch’öl takes on the identity of the licentious mine operator Paek Chöngsu. He has shed his uniform for a leather jacket and high-top boots. His proper, composed North Korean self has become a brute (Other) complete with a mustached emotionless face and a whistle, which attracts the attention of women passing him in the street (see figure 7).

A female North Korean patriot, Kim Sönsim, has already infiltrated the *Hwarangdan* and plays the role of a meat house owner. In a staged encounter with Kukch’öl, Kukch’öl forces Sönsim into explicitly sexual situations with sadomasochistic associations. To attract the attention of the gang members, who hang out in the meat house, he tears open her shirt exclaiming: “You bitch, what’s packed into your swollen breasts? Let’s see.”³² (See figure 8.) In the logic of the North Korean undercover story world, the brute, lewd sadism performed by Kukch’öl and the vulgar presentation of sexuality executed by Kim Sönsim display the agents’ ability to adapt to enemy territory. This display merely bespeaks their



Figure 7. A patriot transformed. Chin Yŏnghun, *Yoram ūl chik'yŏ, Che-l pu* (Guard the cradle, vol. 1), 32.

loyalty to the cause and serves to further their transformation into the South Korean capitalists and reactionaries.

Things get further complicated in the ensuing fistfight between Kukch'öl and members of the *Hwarangdan*, who interfere when Kukch'öl starts beating Sönsim. The South Koreans knock out Kukch'öl, and the scene ends with Kukch'öl moaning in the lap of Sönsim, who thinks to herself: “Where was this weakling sent from?” (see figure 9).³³ The thought bubble, of course, may be read as if Sönsim is disappointed that Kukch'öl is not fully capable as an undercover agent. But it could also be read with a sense of humor and act as a bit of comic relief. In this scene—and preceding frames—the staging of perverted bodies and their delinquent behavior is blatantly ambiguous. From which perspective is Kukch'öl a weakling? As a failed Southern impersonator as seen by another Southern impersonator? As one Northerner evaluating the performance of another Northerner? As a man?

The renderings of the patriot body, exposed to (and exposing each other to) the flagrant excesses available in the South, are viewed through the DPRK's castigation of a debased Western and South Korean social universe with (un)intended facilitation of voyeuristic fantasies. Hollywood, Bollywood, and Ch'ungmuro have long since exhausted the theme. This sort of ambiguity, of course, also is a conventional feature in much comic production globally and part of the reason for parental and societal concern with the media. What is at stake in such sequences in a North Korean graphic novel, however, is nothing less than the temporal and spatial disjuncture between the Homeland hero and her/his adaptable persona—the disconnect between homeland “organics” and the hyperreality of enemy territory.



Figure 8. “Let’s see.” Chin Yönghun, *Yoram ŭl chik’yö, Che-l pu* (Guard the cradle, vol. 1), 40.



Figure 9. “Where was this weakling sent from?” Chin Yŏnghun, *Yoram ŭl chik’yŏ*, *Che-I pu* (Guard the cradle, vol. 1), 42.

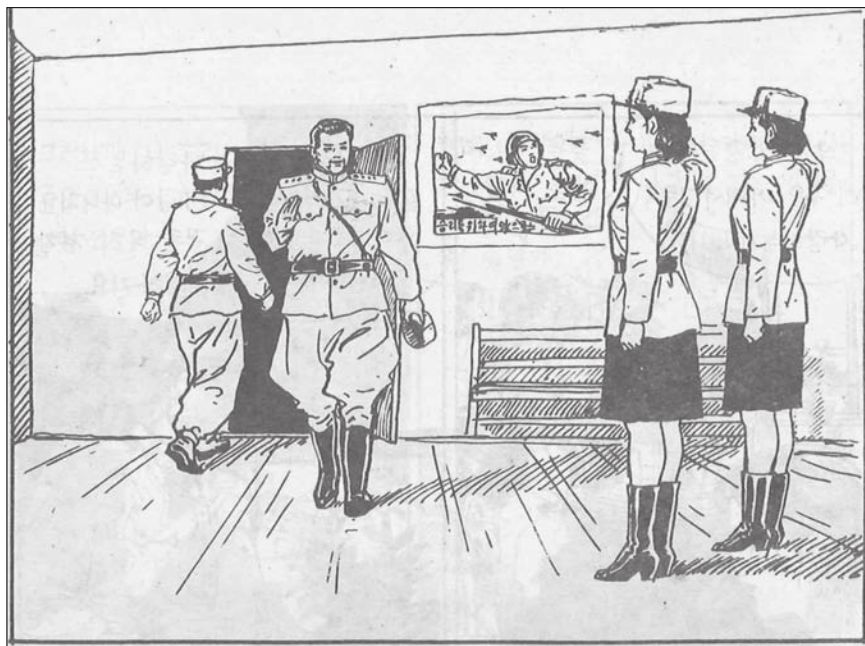


Figure 10. For victory, forward. Kim Yöngsam, *Ködül ün torawatta* (They came back), 116.

In *They Came Back*, the appearance and actions of Yöngim and Sunim, the two Fatherland flowers we encountered earlier, also change conspicuously when they go undercover in a town south of the border. Let us first, for the sake of clarity, consider their Homeland selves. In a flashback sequence on pages 116–77, a memory depicting the North Korean military quarters from where the spies first learned of their mission, the graphic frugality of the sequence effectively foregrounds their *typicality* as Homeland heroes.

From four different visual perspectives the author depicts the two women in fully synchronized postures, poses that emphasize the collective entity of the Northern heroes. In the first of these four panels, the women stand erect in their military outfits saluting their superior as he enters the room. On the wall behind them is a prop-art poster of a soldier, bayonet in hand, pointing toward the battlefield with the title: “For Victory. Forward.” This decorative background element blends seamlessly into the narrative and effectively establishes that their Northern selves are one in the same, “one narrative in one image,” as molded as the prop-art hero depicted in the wall poster.

The prop-art drawings of the two sisters dissolve once the women descend into enemy territory. Yöngim flirts with Ch’iguk, a South Korean military man whose deception is an essential key to the undercover mission. She entices him to go with her to the beach. She is, of course, merely using him as a convenient



Figure 11. Beach fantasies. Kim Yongsam, *Küdlil ün torawatta* ('They came back), 128-39.

tool and as a display of adaptability. In the next sequence, as the two speed toward the beach, a thought bubble appears as the South Korean officer fantasizes about how he, with his hairy chest, lifts Yŏngim, clad in a tight swimsuit, up above the water.

While in *Guard the Cradle* Kukch'ŏl, the North Korean male hero, paraded a chauvinist sexuality as part of his performance as a Southern small-scale capitalist, Yŏngim in *They Came Back* is not seen actively engaged in such behavior. The limits to excess for Northern heroes are differently gendered. Thus, the beautifully adaptable Northern female patriot is focalized through the fantasy of a South Korean male. As we have seen, North Korean readers were quickly awakened from such reverie in the "Where was this weakling sent from" sequence in *Guard the Cradle*. While in *They Came Back*, Yŏngim, with a contented look on her face as if she has read Ch'iguk's mind only too well (and the young Northern readers' minds for that matter), abruptly steps on the brakes, causing Ch'iguk to bang his head on the ceiling of the car. Yŏngim then goes on to reveal her true identity as a North Korean undercover agent and succeeds in bringing the mission to its next critical stage.

Ambiguously, these graphic novels broach erotic fantasies and cultural excesses, then subsequently castigate and ridicule them. The illustrations, however, through momentary focalization of the South Korean military man's fantasies, allow, for a moment, the North Korean reader to identify with the South Korean male gaze and its debauched sensibilities. In a sense, not only has the patriot allowed him- or herself to lose control of his or her tightly knitted prop-art self, but the North Korean graphic novel story world, through focalization techniques, temporarily *becomes* enemy territory. Herein lies its hyperreality and its implicit threat to homeland ontologies.

We have just reviewed how these North Korean graphic novels have presented women in more passive roles. On that account, it should be noted that the *Operation* series of graphic novels, written and drawn by Ch'oe Hyŏk—published primarily for a foreign readership and available from bookstores for foreign visitors to North Korea, as well as from China and Japan—displays the most obvious examples of agentive female sexuality. In *Operation Shooting Star*, undercover agent Sŏngmin reveals and disrupts American plans to stage a highly secret, full-scale attack on North Korea. Sŏngmin handles this situation by continuously and skillfully playing his American and South Korean military opponents against each other. In that sense, he incarnates the "adaption to the circumstances" prototype. There is a limit to his adaptability, however. This limit manifests itself as Mihyang, a former exchange student to the United States who is enrolled in the American intelligence service, G-2. Mihyang is visually characterized in a sequence where she is listening to a gramophone record in a short blouse, drinking wine with a Rodin sculpture in the background. The sequence goes on with drawings of her exchange student memories of the United States: images of the Statue of Liberty, her self-confident city strolls past a movie house, and a still from the movie *Mata Hari*, a film about an exotic dancer/double agent who was

later executed by the French during World War I (see figure 12). Attempting to seduce Sŏngmin, Mihyang whirls him into the following dialogue:

MIHYANG: I am not an English old miss. And you wouldn't be an ascetic.

SŌNGMIN: Hmm, your skills are out of the ordinary. Is this Cleopatra-style seduction?

MIHYANG: That woman seduced men to preserve power, but I do not have the slightest wish to make use of you.

And then taking off her blouse . . .

MIHYANG: In the final place, humans, too . . .³⁴

Sŏngmin responds by fiercely slapping her (see figure 13).

In the scene at the beach and in the car in *They Came Back* and at the meat house in *Guard the Cradle*, the patriot agent limits the amount of the excess he/she allows the reader to visit via the illustrations and then castigates the sexual “offender” and, in so doing, the engrossed reader. Yet again, the graphic novel presents explicitly gendered bodies and eroticized situations on the road to castigation. *Operation Shooting Star* builds up tension around this incident as Sŏngmin's response threatens to disclose his identity and thus ruin the whole mission. Sŏngmin, through inner criticism, further dwells on his failure.³⁵ He is aware of his limitations in the art of adaption when confronted with female desires. Sŏngmin's realization, in other words, is an example of the degree of excess he can expose himself to. He may be able to pass as a Southern military man, but the role of a Southern lover is beyond his adaptability. The graphic novels may be able to engage with a relatively wide range of subversive situations in the name of heroic adaptability, but they also make sure to undo these ambiguities. The North Korean authors construct a different aesthetic of excess and hyperreality than Julia Round's Alice Cooper examples. Strictly speaking, the clash present in North Korean graphic novels does not arise from any visual/verbal tension. Mihyang's performance only gives credibility to the rendering of the Southern enemy territory. This sort of behavior is reinforced in the narrative as the behavior of the decadent, capitalist culture. Hyperreality, then, is created through the tension present between the depraved world of the South as North Korean cultural production insists on portraying it and the particular affordances present in this print medium, which, in turn, threatens to turn the graphic novel, itself a symbol of excess—into what it criticizes. This interplay between excess and its castigation produces what we may call a “circumscribed excess.”

Patriot Minds and Texts behind Enemy Lines: Perverted Identities?

The illustrations of North Korean heroes adapting to life behind enemy lines are thus a mode through which war stories entertain the reader with a narrative that firmly condemns the depraved, Westernized culture of South Korea. From



Figure 12. *Casablanca revisited*. Cho'e Hyök, *Yūsōng chakchŏn* (Operation shooting star), 29.

this perspective, adaptability is nothing but a strategy—a means to obtain North Korean victory and independence. Arguably, however, the employment of the adaptability theme enables subversive readings. Alternative readings can occur through the visualized representation of excess (even when this excess has been circumscribed) when one-dimensional prop-art patriots enter the South, descend into performance mode, and toy with the cultural codes of the *depraved* Other. If the hitherto predominant focus of the graphic novels on the visual illustrations of gendered bodies and eroticized situations facilitates such subversive meanings, we need to focus more closely on the written aspect of the novel and how it involves the reader in the narrative—that is, how and to what extent the patriot hero has been staged to perform as the enemy.

The written aspect in the North Korean graphic novels examined here does not go into much detail. That is to say that undercover agents do not bring much subtlety into their enemy personas. Often, in fact, slogan-like utterances suffice. These superficial verbalizations of the patriot-as-enemy-mindset must be understood in the context of genre conventions and media affordances; these are, after all, graphic novels. The North Korean heroes are depicted as more humane, reflective, and ideologically versatile back home in the Fatherland, but they are not necessarily depicted in more depth. Indeed, these successive games the author plays of sameness and difference, and the superficial fluency in the performance of Other may facilitate ironic readings of the patriots as a construct, an act, that has to be learned, practiced, and performed as the embodiment of a true, inner Self. From this particular reader perspective, the temporarily staged personas become a prism through which the homeland identity—subversively—comes across as just as staged as the undercover performances.

Again, Ch'oe Hyök's *Operation* series is noteworthy in this respect. In a key scene in *Operation Typhoon*, the undercover agent Ch'inuk converts Chöngu, the wayward South Korean protagonist of the story. Chöngu is a devout Christian and the North Korean agent, Ch'inuk, makes the most of this fact. Ch'inuk counters Chöngu's skepticism toward socialism—superficially based on his Christianity experience with a capitalist world order—by packaging the version of Kim Il Sung's socialist ideology as something similar, but utterly superior to Christianity and capitalism. Ch'inuk employs Chöngu's familiarity with the rationale of Christian thought to undermine it so as to convert the South Korean. Readers follow a storyline that reconfirms North Korean ideological superiority, but at the same time the novel enables readers to consider the implications of the North Korean ideology being similar enough to Christianity to warrant conversion.

This Othering technique also manifests itself elsewhere in *Operation Typhoon*. Before it is revealed to the reader that Ch'inuk is an undercover patriot whose mission it is to transform the South Korean's mind, the author introduces Yumi to the reader. Yumi, a femme fatale and secret CIA agent (a female character similar to Mihyang in *Operation Shooting Star*), instinctively understands that there is something going on in the relationship between Ch'inuk and Chöngu.

Somehow she senses that Ch'inuk is a threat to her relationship with Chǒngu. She confides this suspicion to a South Korean military officer: "When he [Chǒngu] is together with Major Fatso [Ch'inuk], he is a different person. I mean they are just like homosexuals."³⁶

To be sure, in this scene Yumi reveals her debased Southern sensibilities and her inability to understand a male-male relationship beyond its physical implications.³⁷ Where Ch'inuk effectively transformed the core elements of Christianity into socialism and Korean nationalism, Yumi converts Socialist brotherhood into perversion. Arguably, however, this intradiegetic exposure of Yumi's ignorant mindset is a double-edged sword; it brings to the reader the Other's gaze and external perspective on Socialist comradeship as homoerotic.³⁸

While the undercover theme of these North Korean graphic novels may be seen as a frame through which authors and readers can construct and engage in slightly deviant fantasies—a circumscribed excess—it also focuses the attention of the reader on the South Korean perspective of North Korean body and mind. In the above sequence, artist and author Ch'oe Hyōk subtly toys with foreign (mis) conceptions of North Korean comradeship as homoerotic and engages with this misconception by exposing its absurdity. The estrangement, however, provides the Northern reader with an externalized gaze on possible sexual implications of comradely relationships. Within a few pages, Ch'oe Hyōk has managed to create a hyperreality where Christianity, socialism, brotherhood, and homosexuality are all tangled up together.

We have already seen how in *Operation Shooting Star* the Southern belle Mihyang used her femininity in a manner that destabilized her fellow patriot undercover agent; Mihyang's male counterpart, Sōngmin, ends up slapping Mihyang to avoid staging himself as a Southern lover. Equally challenging, however, is Mihyang's discursive performance. Mihyang, acculturated in the dim light of Hollywood-style *Mata Hari* screenings, returns to the Korean peninsula and talks about the world around her portrayed as being mildly postmodern. In one sequence, she playfully compares her life with the movie *Casablanca* as seen in her dialogue with Chiyōn, the female undercover agent posing as Kangsōk's girlfriend:

MIHYANG: Is this a joke of destiny? . . . misfortune seems to have brought us together. I have just been watching a movie. *Casablanca*! It's a movie about separation. About war and peace. You should see it sometime. We are amazingly similar.

CHIYŌN: I do not understand what you mean.³⁹

To be sure, Chiyōn's response merely implies that she prefers not to know what Mihyang is talking about. Mihyang is suggesting something seductive and twisted—a depraved narrative, which North Korean patriots had better turn a deaf ear to. As such, *Operation Shooting Star* engages the North Korean agent

with challenging mind games and puts his/her ability to simulate a Western/South Korean mindset to the test. In the narrative logic of the undercover theme, heroes must prove their worth in this complex situation—where adaptability is simultaneously an act of patriotism and an impossibility.

CONCLUSION

The graphic novels examined here project a spatio-temporality in which patriotic identities are negotiable, and their social framework is a flirtatious engagement with decadence, that is, with South Korea and the West. This staged performance is foregrounded through the medium of the graphic novel, which incorporates both illustrations and written text. The border crossing represented in these graphic novels, however, while arguably, in part, a “distorted and exaggerated reflection of society taken to extremes,”⁴⁰ does not have the queering and transgressive qualities of Alice Cooper representations in US comics. The defining mechanisms used in these novels are not to be overlooked. Even beyond the border, deep down in South Korea, there are limits to the stories of excess in spatio-topia. There is a limit to how far the North Korean undercover character is able to journey into the South Korean/Western mind and body.

While these graphic novels venture into fantasies, reveries, and daydreams, these excesses are circumscribed. To begin with, the North Korea undercover agents are frequently and conveniently killed off before their return. In an ultimate act of self-sacrifice, the adaptable heroes enter the rigid landscape of regime metaphors: bodies irreversibly atomized in suicide missions turn into flowers and falling stars; they become permanently fixed as minor celestial or natural phenomena of the Kim Il Sung family universe. Even with that being the case, the undercover genre constitutes a field of tension that has not been resolved, which has allowed the North Korean creators of graphic novels in the 2000s to return to this subject matter over and over.

The June 1, 1999, *Nodong Sinmun* article mentioned earlier presents the notion of a mosquito net that should keep the yellow winds of capitalism out of North Korea:

We must safely put up mosquito nets in all areas of social life. It is the nature of Bourgeois ideological culture to always look for parasitic gaps. In crushing the penetration of imperialist ideological culture, it is of immediate importance to fully block the path of penetration. The yellow winds of capitalism cannot pass through places where impregnable fortresses have been erected. . . . Also in the field of culture and arts we must completely reject the art for art's sake principle, antisocial fads [nallarip'ung] and creative freedom.⁴¹

The behind enemy lines theme, as seen through North Korean war-theme graphic novels made in the 2000s, walks a fine line between condemnation

Appendix: Graphic Novel Résumés

Graphic Novel	Résumé	Reference
<i>Guard the Cradle</i> , vol. 1–2 (Kümsöng Youth Publishing House, 2008–9)	Security officer Kukch'öl is assigned to find an American-supported gang of terrorists on North Korean soil in 1954. To solve the riddle of the identity of the ringleader, Vulture, who is a person from his own past, he recollects his undercover missions in the South in the post-liberation years in extensive flashbacks. Vulture's gang is eliminated, but Kukch'öl dies fulfilling his duty.	Chin Yönghun. <i>Yoram ül chik'yo</i> . Che-1 pu. P'yöngyang: Kümsöng Ch'öngnyön Ch'ulp'ansa, 2008. Chin Yönghun. <i>Yoram ül chik'yo</i> . Che-2 pu. P'yöngyang: Kümsöng Ch'öngnyön Ch'ulp'ansa, 2009.
<i>Operation Shooting Star</i> (Korea Publications Exchange Association, 2002)	<i>Operation Shooting Star</i> is set during a standstill in trench warfare. The Americans are planning a large-scale attack, and Söngmin is sent undercover in the South Korean / American army to reveal the scheme. Söngmin prevents the attack by sacrificing his life to become a star of the Eternal Sun (Kim Il Sung). He does so by withstanding the lure of Mihyang, a South Korean CIA agent.	Cho'e Hyök. <i>Yusöng chakchön</i> . P'yöngyang: Chosön Ch'ulp'anmul Kyoryu Hyöphoe, 2002.
<i>They Came Back</i> (Kümsöng Youth Publishing House, 2001) ^a	<i>They Came Back</i> is the story of Yöngim and Sunim, two North Korean reconnaissance soldiers who work undercover in the South. They are activated in a mission to bring back to P'yöngyang the daughter (Chinae) of a killed undercover agent. Yöngim and Sunim succeed by sacrificing their lives. They live on in national memory and in the mind of Chinae, the sole surviving member of the mission.	Kim Yöngsam. <i>Küdü'l ün torawatta</i> . P'yöngyang: Kümsöng Ch'öngnyön Chonghap Ch'ulp'ansa, 2001.
<i>Quiet Outpost</i> (Kümsöng Youth Publishing House, 2006)	<i>Quiet Outpost</i> is set in the North Korean countryside in the last stage of the Korean War. The North Korean intelligence service learns that a group of American-sent South Korean special troops are hiding in some secluded mountains. Kōnuk is sent to his hometown village nearby to find them. He succeeds in revealing the hiding spies and collaborators in the village but loses his life doing so.	Kim Ch'ölguk. <i>Koyohan Chö'nch'ojön</i> . Che-1 pu. P'yöngyang: Kümsöng Ch'öngnyön Ch'ulp'ansa, 2006. Kim Ch'ölguk. <i>Koyohan Chö'nch'ojön</i> . Che-2 pu. P'yöngyang: Kümsöng Ch'öngnyön Ch'ulp'ansa, 2006.
<i>Operation Typhoon</i> (Korea Publications Exchange Association, 2003) / <i>Operation Dagger</i> (Korea Arts Publishing House, 1993)	The story is set in Spring 1951 as the Korean War enters the stage of trench warfare. Chöngu, a Korean Christian working for the Americans and involved in drug dealing, is awakened to the Socialist cause by Ch'inuk, an undercover North Korean agent. Withstanding the lure of Yumi, a South Korean–deployed CIA agent, Chöngu assists Ch'inuk and other patriots in preventing a major American offensive.	Cho'e Hyök. <i>T'aep'ung chakchön</i> . P'yöngyang: Chosön Ch'ulp'anmul Kyoryu Hyöphoe, 2003. Cho'e Hyök. <i>Tan'göm chakchön</i> . P'yöngyang: Chosön Misul Ch'ulp'ansa, 1993.

a The time setting in *They Came Back* is not mentioned. It appears to be set in the time around the war.

and becoming what it shows. Like an acrobat on a tightrope, authors of these North Korean graphic novels arguably teeter back and forth between critiquing a hostile, foreign world and adapting that world's "art for art's sake principle, antisocial fads and creative freedom." Like other cultural works in North Korea, the message is firmly ideological, but through the thematic storyline—adaptable patriots temporarily transforming their minds and, in particular, their bodies into enemy Others—the authors of these graphic novels spin together images of Self as Other, which makes for ambiguous interplay between entertainment and ideology. The radical alteration theme allows writers and authors to transcend the formula required for homeland patriots and provide entertaining images and potentially subversive messages without transgressing regime politics. A key characteristic of this genre then is the adaptable hero. These heavily biased interlocutors between North and South exist in a hyperreality composed of a disjunctured time-space dimension. The mixed media negotiation of this time-space produces a characteristic go-stop routine—circumscribed excess—in which the borders of morality and self-perception are crossed only to be reestablished.

NOTES

1. "Chegukchuŭi ŭi sasang munhwajŏk ch'imt'u rŭl paegyŏkhaja." Italics added.
2. *Hyŏndae Chosŏnmal sajŏn*. Italics added.
3. In North Korea, the term *kŭrim ch'aek* is used for both graphic novels and children's literature. South Korea reserves the term *kŭrim ch'aek* for children's literature and uses the term *manhwa* for comics and graphic novels. For a short introduction to *kŭrim ch'aek*, see Martin Petersen, "The Downfall of a Model Citizen?"
4. For Military First literature, see Tatiana Gabrussenko, "Self-Sacrifice in North Korean Creative Writing," 29–56.
5. Sonia Ryang, *Reading North Korea*, 106.
6. Chin Yŏnghun, *Yoram ŭl chik'yŏ*, Che-1 pu; Chin Yŏnghun, *Yoram ŭl chik'yŏ*, Che-2 pu; Kim Yŏngsam, *Kŭdŭl ŭn torawatta*; Kim Ch'ŏlguk, *Koyohan Chŏnch'ojŏn*, Che-1 pu; Kim Ch'ŏlguk, *Koyohan Chŏnch'ojŏn*, Che-2 pu; Cho'e Hyŏk, *Yusŏng chakchŏn*; Cho'e Hyŏk, *T'aep'ung chakchŏn*; and Cho'e Hyŏk, *Tan'gŏm chakchŏn*. *Operation Typhoon (T'aep'ung chakchŏn)*, published by Korea Publications Exchange Association in 2003 is a slightly revised version of *Operation Dagger (Tan'gŏm chakchŏn)* published for a presumably internal audience in 1993 by Korea Arts Publishing House.
7. Julia Round, "Reconstructing Alice Cooper," 151–69; and Julia Round, "Visual Perspective and Narrative Voice in Comics," 316–29.
8. Julia Round, "Reconstructing Alice Cooper," 164.
9. Brian Myers, *Han Sŏrya and North Korean Literature*; Brian Myers, *The Cleanest Race: How North Koreans See Themselves—and Why It Matters*; Tatiana Gabrussenko, "Cho Ki-chon: The Person behind the Myths," 55–94; Tatiana Gabrussenko, *Soldiers on the Cultural Front*; and Suk-Young Kim, *Illusive Utopia*.

10. Sonia Ryang, "Technologies of the Self," 21–32; Sonia Ryang, *Reading North Korea*; Hyang-jin Lee, "Conflicting Working-Class Identities in North Korean Cinema"; Alzo David-West, "The North Korean Positive Hero in *The People of the Fighting Village*," 104; and Suk-Young Kim, *Illusive Utopia*.

11. Alzo David-West, "The Literary Ideas of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il," 1–31; and Stephen Epstein, "On Reading North Korean Short Stories on the Cusp of the New Millennium," 33–50.

12. Julia Round, "Reconstructing Alice Cooper."

13. Alice Cooper, *Alice Cooper, Golf Monster*, 107. Cited in Julia Round, "Reconstructing Alice Cooper," 156.

14. Julia Round, "Reconstructing Alice Cooper," 163.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., 154.

17. Ibid., 155.

18. Ibid., 166.

19. In a 1999 lecture, Kim Jong Il (Kim Chŏngil) gave the following elucidation of the flower motif: "Our nation's socialism is the cradle of happiness from which our youth grow, and it is the benevolent bosom that brings our youth into flower." Kim Chŏngil, *Kim Chŏngil sŏnjip* 14 (1995–1999), 473.

20. For an analysis of focalization and metalepsis in DPRK graphic novels, see Martin Petersen, "Sleepless in the DPRK," 30–58.

21. It is conceivable that the media is considered to be too popular to visually portray Kim Il Sung.

22. Sim Yŏngt'aek, *Yŏsŏng chŏngch'albyŏng*, 111; and Pak Hŭngju, *Angae tŏp'in sŏm*, 78.

23. Ch'oe Hyŏk, *Yusŏng chakchŏn*, 17.

24. For the historiography of the sun symbol in DPRK, see Charles K. Armstrong, "Familism, Socialism, and Political Religion in North Korea," 383–94.

25. Chŏn Yŏnghun, *Yoram ŭl chik'yŏ, Che-1 pu*, 105.

26. Ibid., 106.

27. See Martin Petersen, "A New Deal: Graphic Novel Representations of Food Issues in Post-Famine North Korea," 181–208.

28. Kim Il Sung, *Duties of Literature and Arts in Our Revolution*.

29. "Chegukchuŭi ŭi sasang munhwajŏk ch'imt'u rŭl paegyŏkhaja."

30. See Soon-hee Lim [Im, Sun-hŭi], *Value Changes of the North Korean New Generation and Prospects*, 16–17. Importantly, this reference, which notes a recent rise in the use of methamphetamine, is from 2007, fifteen years after the publication of *Operation Dagger* and four years after the revised republication for a foreign readership. For further information on the rise of methamphetamine usage in North Korea, see Isaac Stone Fish and Sean Gallagher, "North Korea's Addicting Export: Crystal Meth."

31. Hyang-jin Lee, "The Images of Otherness and 'Sleeping with the Enemy' in North Korean Cinema," 34.

32. Chŏn Yŏnghun, *Yoram ŭl chik'yŏ, Che-1 pu*, 40.

33. Ibid., 42.

34. Ch'oe Hyŏk, *Yusŏng chakchŏn*, 25.

35. For a discussion of self-criticism in literature, see Sonia Ryang, "Biopolitics or the Logic of Sovereign Love."

36. Ch'oe Hyök, *T'aep'ung chakchön*, 95.
37. North Korean dictionaries define homosexuality as perverted love (*pyönt'aejögín sarang*) of the old society (*nalgün sahoejögín*). *Hyöndae Chosönmal sajön*.
38. For further reading, see Sonia Ryang, "Biopolitics or the Logic of Sovereign Love."
39. Ch'oe Hyök, *Yüsöng chakchön*, 50.
40. Alice Cooper, *Alice Cooper, Golf Monster*, 107. Cited in Julia Round, "Reconstructing Alice Cooper," 156.
41. "Chegukchuüi üi sasang munhwajök ch'imt'u rül paegyökhaja." Italics added.

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