

Name: Heikki Henttonen

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MASTER'S THESIS

**CONSTRUCTING SOCIAL IDENTITY UNDER
DICTATORSHIP -
DEPICTION OF YOUTH AND MESSAGES TO THEM IN
NORTH KOREAN CINEMA BETWEEN 1971—2016**

Centre for East Asian Studies

Faculty of Social Sciences

University of Turku

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UNIVERSITY OF TURKU

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This thesis examines the ways in which the social identity of the youth is constructed, and what that social identity is like, in seven films produced in The Democratic People's Republic of Korea between the years 1971 and 2016. In the thesis, the North Korean regime is labeled as a repressive authority which is why the construction of social identity is given focus in the context of totalitarianism, but also through post-totalitarianism and authoritarianism. Based on the secondary sources, the importance of cinema mainly as an educational tool for the North Korean regime, is emphasized. Understanding this relevance, North Korean films can be examined to find out what issues are relevant for the regime, especially considering the youth, always representing the future.

The thesis approaches the issue of social identity through the ideas presented by Alexa Ispas in her book *Psychology and Politics: A Social Identity Perspective* (2013) which emphasizes the habit of authoritarian powers to promote prototypical behaviour which they seem suitable, when influencing the formation of social identity. The totalitarian aspect is examined mainly through Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) where issues such as the notion of future and the importance of tying the masses with the totalitarian leader, proved to be relevant for the thesis.

The films were then analyzed by utilizing the theoretical background as well as relevant secondary sources on North Korean cinema, culture and society.

The results of the analysis reveal that the films utilize model characters, who emphasize the regime's supported values often connected with Juche, the country's official ideology, in promoting the prototypical behaviour for the youth. In addition, flawed characters are used to condemn behaviour which the regime does not support. The films also utilize music and lyrics, and other characters beside the youth, to emphasize the regime's messages. The social identity which the regime constructs in the films emphasizes unconditional loyalty to the leader of the country with heavy emphasis on sacrifice. The analysis reveals that the major messages have remained the same in the films while there are also contextual differences. The study could be continued in the future by focusing on different eras, such as the Kim Jong un -era, or different themes, such as the theme of sacrifice. Other art forms, such as television, could also be researched.

Keywords: social identity, North Korea, totalitarianism, propaganda, cinema, Juche.

Note on romanization

The thesis uses Revised Romanization of Korean for names and phrases translated from Korean.

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1 Introduction

While literature on propaganda, totalitarianism and authoritarianism in The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (henceforth North Korea) is largely available, the transformation of youth itself as a specific focus has not been widely discussed. As Rüdiger Frank notes, according to Brian R. Myers, a longtime observer of the country, the study of North Korean arts is an underused way of understanding the North Korean regime and its behaviour (Frank 2012, 21). While the thesis is not an art analysis but rather a study in the field of social sciences, Myers' notion is still important in understanding how examining cinema can shed light into the regime's intentions.

In the context of North Korea, it is essential to understand how a regime of one family, spanning from the first leader Kim Il-sung to his son Kim Jong-il and to his son, the present leader Kim Jong-un, has been able to maintain power through immense economic, humanitarian and social problems. Considering the author's interest in how the North Korean regime has managed to maintain its power, the youth, always representing the future and therefore holding great importance in any political system, were chosen as the focus of the topic. In the light of what has happened in other socialist systems considering the youth, for example, in Cuba, the importance has been explained through the youth's ability to adapt to new patterns introduced in the society (Blum 2011, 12—13).

In the light of Myers' statement and the importance of the youth in socialist systems, the author's interest is in the ways the youth's social identity is attempted to be constructed in films produced in the country as, as it will be explained later, cinema is perhaps the most appreciated form of art in the country, with its use as a tool of propaganda noted by the regime. Therefore, the focus is in, for example, messages aimed for the youth through the depiction and phrases of the characters, the music and the lyrics, as well as connections to real life campaigns and events taking place during the time period depicted in the films and the films' year of release. These traits demonstrate the intentions behind the films and therefore the intentions of the regime, regardless of their effectiveness.

Construction of the youth's social identity in the films was chosen as the focus, with the help of the thesis supervisor. The focus makes sense as social identity's importance is great in issues such as making a division between “us” and “them” and taking political action (Ispas 2013, i, viii). It is also relevant due to its effect in social influence and political messages (Turner 2006, 44).

Due to North Korean society having its roots in totalitarianism and the author's own interest in said rule of governance, Hannah Arendt's classic work *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) was chosen in order to examine the films from the context of totalitarianism. In addition, while not mentioning social identity per se, she discusses issues related to identity in the book. She also discusses propaganda and ideological indoctrination which can act as a tool for constructing social identity. Therefore, and considering the significance of her work in social sciences in general, the book is a useful when examining the films. All of the above considered, the author arrived to the following research question: *How do North Korean films try to construct the youth's social identity and what is that social identity like.*

Despite North Korean films having been analyzed and examined in numerous occasions, for example, by Tatiana Gabroussenko, Immanuel Kim, Hyangjin Lee and B.R. Myers who are all also referred to in the thesis, the data and the specific angle of the youth and social identity, in addition to the use of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, set the thesis apart from previous studies conducted on North Korean cinema. In addition, Johannes Schönherr has authored the book *North Korean Cinema: A History* (2012), which the author unfortunately was unable to obtain to use as a source material for the thesis despite having previously read it. While Carter Matherly's (2019) article dealing with constructing social identity through North Korean propaganda posters is also referred to in the thesis, it is noteworthy that Matherly examines a different form of art, and the article is also relatively short while the thesis researches the question much more thoroughly.

The author has certain expectations about the results of the thesis. Based on the author's previous experience on North Korean films (some of the films examined in the thesis included), the films will emphasize the role of the leader and the party, including Juche, the country's official ideology. Emphasis on nationalism is also expected, but due to the films not taking place during wartime, foreign aggressors (from North Korea's point of

view) such as The United States and Japan will not most likely be referenced greatly, especially compared to the films taking place during the Japanese occupation of Korean peninsula or the Korean war.

The thesis first introduces the literary review after which the theoretical framework used is explained, including politics of remolding the youth into ideal citizens in other socialist countries. Considering social identity, Alexa Ispas' work acts as the main theoretical framework. After that, the influences, history, traits and importance of cinema in North Korea are discussed. Then, the most relevant terms for the analysis of the films are explained. These include family state, Juche, songbun, Songun and shock brigades.

What follows is the methodology and data chapter explaining the reason for the data chosen, how it was attained, and the method of the analysis. Then, forming by far the greatest portion of the thesis, the analysis chapter is presented. The films are first analyzed individually after which their similarities and differences are discussed as well as the overall results of the thesis. The thesis ends with a conclusion recapping the thesis' results and aims, justifying its existence and discussing how the research could be continued in the future.

2 Literature Review

There is a great deal of studies conducted on North Korean cinema with varying focus, including the youth. For example, Gabroussenko has contributed greatly on the issue. In her articles, she discusses many of the films of the thesis, such as *When We Pick Apples*, *A Broad Bellflower* and *The Girls in my Hometown*. Her findings include, for example, the surprising level of individuality presented in the films of the Kim Jong-un era, (2016c), the North Korean state using melodrama to influence the youth in the 1980's (2018b), the evolving nature of the elderly in cinema (from presenting hopelessly outdated ideas during the Kim Il-sung era to becoming dignified and respected servants of the leader in the Kim Jong-il era) (2020a) and the differences in portraying scientist from weak annoyances in the Kim Il-sung era to tireless workers advancing the state's agenda in the Kim Jong-il era (2020b). Therefore, her writing offers well-developed ideas on the evolution of various factions and ideas used in the country's propaganda during different eras of the country's history, and the way they are connected to the eventual goals of the regime and the construction of social identity through cinema.

Immanuel Kim (2015) has also written about North Korean cinema during the 1980's. Like Gabroussenko, he also discusses more specific themes of the films such as womanhood and sexuality. He also has written about the country's literature and notes the changes in the depiction of women and the issues related to them in North Korean fiction, thus questioning the stationary nature of North Korean arts and society in general in addition to arguing that there are complex nuances in the stories which go against the notion of the country's literature as being completely tied down by the strict regulations set by the regime. (Kim, I 2018).

In her book *Illusive Utopia: Theater, Film, and Everyday Performance in North Korea* (2010) Kim Suk-young writes about the importance and history of cinema in North Korea. Her (2010, 315—318) discussion on some of the films, such as *The Schoolgirl's Diary* offers valuable support when examining the themes of the film. Most importantly the book accompanies well Charles Armstrong's article *The Origins of North Korean cinema: Art and propaganda in the democratic people's Republic* (2002). These two articles form the basis for the thesis' presentation of the history of North Korean cinema.

Armstrong's article depicts the evolution of cinema in the country from the late 1800's until the release of the country's first film *My Home Village* (1949) while briefly mentioning the classic films of the 1970's such as *The Flower Girl*. Kim Suk-young's book offers views on the later period of the country's cinematic efforts further concentrating on Kim Jong-il. Both articles also highlight cinema's importance for the North Korean regime, most importantly, as a tool of propaganda. The connection to social identity is therefore formed as propaganda can be attempted to be used as a tool for molding people's social identities as will be explained in the theory chapter.

Brian R. Myers's book *The Cleanest Race: How North Koreans See Themselves and Why it Matters* (2010) discusses North Korean symbology and questions the general scholarly views on Juche, labeling it as a vague pseudo-ideology (Myers 2010, 47). Most importantly, the focus of the book is about the country as a unity based on race and the aspect of the leaders as the parents of the citizens (Myers 2010). As it will be evident, these are important themes and building blocks for the youth's social identity in the films of the thesis. Similarly, in *Exploring North Korean Arts* (2011), Myers (2011, 72—87) explains the importance of the “Strong and Prosperous Country” campaign in North Korean propaganda, it also being relevant in the films of the thesis. Specific symbols such as the sun and stars (Lim, J-C 2015) and various flowers such as Azalea (Lee, S-S 2008) are also discussed.

When it comes to North Korean politics and society, Byung-ho Chung's and Heonik Kwon's *North Korea – Beyond Charismatic Politics* (2010) offers comprehensive information on various unique aspects of the North Korean society such as on the concept of family state, theater state, military-first politics and the concept of the “gift” while Andrei Lankov's *North of the DMZ: Essays on Daily Life in North Korea* (2007) is especially useful when examining the militaristic nature of North Korean society.

The importance of the youth in other socialist societies has been written about and can then be compared to the situation in North Korea. As psychologist Erik Erikson has pointed out in Denise F. Blum's *Cuban Youth and Revolutionary Values – Educating the New Socialist Citizen* (2011, 13), the identity the youth are searching for is ideological and focusing on action. In the context of socialist Cuba, Erikson's analysis is fruitful as the problems of the Cuban youth (mobilization of rural areas, material sufficiency) and

the strengthening of their identity by molding their surroundings and making them partake in nationally important tasks is similar compared to the problems and their solutions presented for the youth in North Korean cinema.

In addition, Yinghong Cheng's chapter about the molding of Soviet youth into ideal Soviet citizens in the book *Creating the "New Man": From Enlightenment Ideals to Socialist Realities* (2009), offers insight into how molding a correct kind of revolutionary consciousness might clash with social and economic improvements and thus make the population desire, for example, material well-being and individual freedoms and therefore change the society (Cheng 2009, 46—47).

Lee Hyangjin (2000) has also written about the country's caste system, songbun, which in addition to Robert Collins' *Marked for Life: Songbun* (2012), lays a comprehensive background on the issue which is relevant in the films, and a cause of frustration for the youth as will be explained later.

While Arendt's book on totalitarianism is relevant, due to North Korea being today generally referred to as more of an authoritarian (Dukalskis & Gerschewski 2017), (Silberstein (2010) or post-totalitarian society (McEachern 2010), it is useful to incorporate studies on these point of views as well. Dictatorship, in this case meaning rule acquired by other means than “competitive elections” (Gandhi 2008, 7), is in any case a common factor and was thus used in the title of the thesis.

All this considered, while there have been many studies on North Korean society, culture, history and cinema, the combination of the youth, social identity, totalitarianism and cinema is something that has not been studied in this scale and therefore makes this thesis relevant.

3 Theoretical Framework

3.1 Social Identity

Due to the nature of North Korean cinema as a persuasive and educational tool for the regime and the topic of the thesis being specifically about the youth as a social group whose social identity is to be molded, it is necessary to examine what the concept means. Social identity can be labeled as: “A sense of self that derives from group membership rather than personal characteristics.” (Ispas 2013, 117). It also has a major impact on people's political behaviour (Ispas 2013, vii). This therefore gives an idea on why the North Korean regime might want to influence different groups (such as the youth) within the society.

The thesis does not delve too deeply into the specific psychological studies mentioned in Ispas' book but rather focuses on the political aspects of her findings which she goes through at the end of each chapter. This is done in order to keep the thesis in the field of social sciences.

3.1.1 Leader's Prototypicality in Gaining Influence over Social Groups

In the book, she questions the so called “great person theory” which has typically included the leader's strength stemming from innate traits such as physical attractiveness, height or more recently, charisma, for its lack of empirical support (Ispas 2013, 71). Instead, Ispas mentions how, from the social identity point of view, the leader's strength lies in their ability to represent the people or “us” making them the prototype of the group. Prototypical behaviour is therefore something which sets the ingroup apart from the outgroup or “us” from “them”. (Ispas 2013, 71) As psychologist John Turner points out, prototypicality is formed in a similar manner to norms and is a polarizing force between the in- and outgroups (Turner 1991). However, prototypical behaviour does not necessarily need to be perfectly materialized in the leader. It is often enough that the leader demonstrates the *most* prototypicality within the group (Ispas 2013, 73). Turner (1985) uses the label “relative prototypicality”.

The two ways for leaders to continue their prototypicality within the group is by adapting to the changing context and/or changing the context to improve their prototypicality. Improving one's prototypicality can be done, for example, through speech which highlights the leader as one of “us” (Ispas 2013, 87—88). When the leader's position is threatened, outgroups are used to emphasize the leader's prototypicality and distinctiveness compared to them (Ispas 2013, 90).

When it comes to crowds, Ispas emphasizes the importance of the authorities to represent the ingroup and make themselves to appear as defending the common cause (Ispas 2013, 68). As for the leaders, the importance is on being the “prototype” of the ingroup. Therefore, even portraying, what someone might call universally accepted virtues such as intelligence, is not necessarily what the leader should emphasize but instead whatever the group thinks is representing “us”. This is evident, for example, through the act of consideration which is only seen as a virtue when guided towards the ingroup, while fairness towards the outgroup is viewed negatively by the group members. (Ispas 2013, 81)

3.1.2 Social Identity in Authoritarianism

Chapter five focuses on authoritarianism with emphasis on how to resist it (Ispas 2013, ix—x) offering insight into the dynamics between the oppressor and the oppressed in an authoritarian society. These dynamics depend on how the subordinated group perceives itself in relation to the dominant group (Tajfel 1978b, Tajfel & Turner 1979, as cited in Ispas 2013, 105). An important issue of this concerns the perceived impenetrability to the dominant group. The manner how one can leave the subgroup for the dominant group typically involves highlighting individual attributes while shunning down the previous group where one used to belong. For established traits such as sex and race, people typically rely on their own subordinated group and possibly confront the dominant group from that position. Other important factors deal with perceived legitimacy and stability in the relations between the groups. If illegitimacy and instability is sensed, the subordinated group might want to challenge the dominant group. (Ispas 2013, 105)

Ispas (2013, 111) argues how the rise of authoritarianism can happen when the authoritarian group cements itself as the ingroup by creating a hostile outgroup which for example the Nazis did by using the victoires of World War I as the outgroup. Similarly, after gaining power, the authoritarian powers change the prototypicality of the ingroup to represent their values and label anyone opposing them as the outgroup. Ispas (2013, 112) also emphasizes the youth's role in opposing authoritarian powers. This can further explain the importance of the North Korean government to influence the youth of the country. As Gleb Tsipursky (2016, 227) notes, in the Soviet Union, the Brezhnev era alienized the youth and pushed them further from the activities supported by the state. He stresses the importance of emotion in activating citizens politically, as well as aiding in preserving the existing social system. Again, the youth's relevance is emphasized as they are in the most important stage in their lives when it comes to assimilation into society and molding their identity.

3.1.3 The Importance of Acknowledging Different Social Groups

Ispas points out how people belong to different social groups. The process on which group they identify themselves depends on the context. She for example uses herself as an example on identifying as a woman or as a writer depending on the situation. (Ispas 2013, 19) The films of the thesis acknowledge the different factions (students, soon to be married, urbanites, rural people) within the social group of the North Korean youth and discuss the issues concerning them accordingly. As Ispas mentions, for example, favouring the ingroup instead of the outgroup increases social influence of the leader over the ingroup (Ispas 2013, 90). Thus, one can see the importance of realizing different social groups in order to have influence over them.

Additionally, Ispas emphasizes that political messages targeting social identities are more effective than those targeting individual identities and they also make people specifically interested on the well-being of the whole group (Ispas 2013, 24).

3.1.4 Use of Division and Unity in Constructing Social Identity

An important notion in the films is that of division. Ispas notes how people are influenced by ingroup members (“A social group to which someone sees themselves as belonging, within a particular context.” (Ispas 2013, 115)) while remaining negative to influence of the outgroup (“A group to which one does not see oneself as belonging.” Ispas 2013, 116). This stems from people identifying with the ingroup members due to viewing them to be similar compared to themselves with also expecting agreeableness. If it does not happen, people are more willing to change their beliefs according to the ingroup. When it comes to the outgroup, agreeableness is not expected, agreeing with them to be in fact viewed as a form of betrayal. (Ispas 2013, 27)

Jan E. Stets and Peter J. Burke also discuss how the division is formed. They note how the similarities in the ingroup and the differences in the outgroup can be emphasized to deepen the division. These can deal with, for example, values, norms, beliefs and attitudes. This comparison then strengthens the self, especially by examining the ingroup positively and the outgroup negatively. (Burke & Stets 2000, 225) Similarly to Ispas, they argue that the basis of social identity is formed through the similarity of viewpoint and actions within the group (Burke & Stets 2000, 226).

The manner in which one can distance oneself from the out-group and to express affection towards the in-group through action is, for example, by depicting willingness to participate in in-group's culture (Deaux & Ethier 1994, Ullah 1987, as cited in Burke & Stets 2000, 226). Extreme unanimity is also more likely to happen if social identification is high (Leve et al. 1992). Social identification is also one of the main forms of taking part in social movements (Freitag et al. 1998, as cited in Burke & Stets 2000, 226). Therefore, it is understandable why constructing a specific kind of social identity would be important to a repressive government.

As noted, to construct a social identity, a threatening outside force needs to be created (Laclau 1996, 39, 52). The division is essential since identities are relational and cannot be constructed without the ”other”. The relations within the group then form antagonism towards those excluded. The correspondence created by the antagonism towards

the "other" creates a community that can possibly connect the various social appeals into a cohesive one. In a similar manner, a cohesive "other" is created. Representational division is essential between "us" and "them" or "self" and the "other". The exclusion is however ethical, biased and includes power relations between the group and the outsiders. The equivalence within the group does not however equal identity. The equivalence expects difference but the formation of social identities on some ground are possible. The identity created by the correspondence towards the negative other is endangered by the other since it cannot become a positive identity for relying on the negative perception of the other. (Nabers & Shim 2013, 291) As Laclau (1996, 14) notes: "(...) that in a relation of equivalence, each of the equivalent elements functions as a symbol of negativity as such, of a certain universal impossibility which penetrates the identity in question." Identity therefore needs an outside force in order to exist. If the Other disappeared, identity would change. Therefore, "(...) the Other continuously feeds the identity of the Self." (Nabers & Shim 2013, 291)

Matherly discusses North Korean cultural propaganda through examining North Korean propaganda posters. He analyzes the effects on which the construction of social identity is based on in the posters, such as similar physical appearance of the target audience alongside significant national symbols as a way to increase national unity (Aronson & Pratkanis 1992, as cited in Matherly 2019, 99).

All this considered, being aware of different social groups and their relevance in decision making, taking action and participation in society in general, is a necessity for the North Korean regime in order to have influence over different groups. Matherly also offers concrete methods of forming social identity in North Korean propaganda.

3.2 Totalitarianism and Totalitarian Propaganda According to Arendt

3.2.1 North Korea – Totalitarian or Not?

Regarding totalitarianism, for example Dukalskis and Hooker have previously characterized North Korea as being totalitarian due to the governance being a symbiosis of the party, state and society, where the official state ideology is prevalent everywhere, the state is repressive and political ambivalence is avoided (Dukalskis & Hooker 2011,

56). A more contemporary analysis however labels the country as authoritarian or post-authoritarian such as Dukalskis' more recent study *Everyday Authoritarianism in North Korea* (Dukalskis & Joo 2021).

Indeed, for example, the possibility of bribery has eroded the total control of the state police as well as other means of control of the state (Silberstein 2010, 46). In mass media, the decrease in control has taken place through increase in the flow of information from abroad available for the citizens, making it more possible to question the reality presented by the regime. This, in turn, has led for the regime to make adjustment in its policies which is a post-totalitarian trait. (Silberstein 2010, 48–49) The economy is also not completely planned by the state anymore contrary to a totalitarian society where the state plans everything. Due to there now being factions out of the state's control such as private traders, another post-totalitarian trait can be added into North Korean governance. (Silberstein 2010, 50–51)

Based on Silberstein, changes towards post-totalitarianism have taken place excessively in the 1990's after the economic changes due to the famine. However, three films examined in the thesis were made before said time period. This therefore adds another layer to the analysis as it is interesting to see if and how the changes can be seen in the films.

Despite totalitarianism being mainly a thing of the past, acknowledging the traces of totalitarianism to modern authoritarian states can better help understanding authoritarianism as well. The relevance of totalitarian roots in modern authoritarianism also makes it at least possible that various parts of said systems might strengthen again in the future. (Dukalskis & Gerschewski 2017, 255, 259)

In any case, Arendt's 1951 book *The Origins of Totalitarianism* offers a throughout investigation into totalitarianism. While she concentrated on Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, her theories can be used for examining totalitarian societies in general, therefore making the book relevant considering the thesis. She writes about the birth mechanisms of totalitarian societies in addition to their propaganda. While there are differences between her definition of totalitarian societies and North Korea as mentioned above, there are many different traits of totalitarianism in the book which match North Korea.

3.2.2 The Use of Totalitarian Propaganda in Changing Reality

Arendt also dedicates a part of her book on how propaganda is needed in order to gain the support of the masses (Arendt 1951/1958, 341). As, Ispas points out, the ruling forces of a repressive system try to transform reality and norms so that the leader's behaviour is seen as the most prototypical of the group (Ispas, 2013 68, 89—90). Therefore, by using propaganda, the leader can increase his support by making the values and actions he supports as the prototypical models of behaviour, thus connecting the concepts of social identity and propaganda together. As, for example, Matherly's (2019) article points out, art has been used in North Korea as a means of propaganda to construct social identity. Therefore, cinema is also included. The same concept is discussed further as Arendt mentions how totalitarian organizations are meant to turn the fictitious image presented by ideology into reality and make everyone follow the rules of this new world based on fiction (Arendt 1951/1958, 341, 364). The purpose of the ideological is then to transform reality (Arendt 1951/1958, 341). It is indeed this aspect of the transformation of reality that the regime can use cinema for.

Arendt also addresses the superiority of totalitarian propaganda in relation to propaganda in other societies in that only in totalitarian societies can propaganda become an unquestionable part of existence (Arendt 1951/1958, 363). Due to the intense repression and ideological indoctrination, the North Korean sphere of existence is similar, although, as established, from the 1990's onwards, things changed greatly.

Arendt also mentions how indoctrination along with terror is intensified when the regime is isolated and wants to secure itself from the outside (1951/1958, 344). This kind of situation seems especially relevant when examining North Korea.

3.2.3 Turning Classes into Masses

Another central concept is the turning of the classes into masses as propaganda cannot be projected onto people who do not feel themselves as part of any political or social entity. Thus, the masses must not have any individual interests as their fanaticism relies on the will to sacrifice oneself. (Arendt 1951/1958, 348, 460) Thus, the desire for individualism for the youth in the films are attacked. This ties into the concept of social

identity in how the youth as a social group must be made to see themselves as a larger group of North Korean people whose loyalty is to the party and the leader.

As Arendt notes, totalitarian propaganda emphasizes how, by following the ideology, problems can be solved in the future. The notion of making predictions which then remain to be seen in the future is essential since they are difficult to be proven wrong. (Arendt 1951/1958, 346) Enduring hardships due to the promise of a better tomorrow is a common message in the films of the thesis.

Repetition is another important aspect since the masses do not believe their eyes and ears when examining reality but only the consistency of ideology which is held through repetition. It is this consistency that the masses choose rather than the anarchy of reality. (Arendt 1951/1958, 351–352)

The “scientific” nature of totalitarianism and the prophetic language it includes offers a safe haven to the masses who are without home. For the Nazis it was relying on genetics and for the Bolsheviks it was Marxist determinism. Through it, it could be assured that the eventual victory would happen even with defeats on the way regardless of the specific areas those defeats would happen. It is specifically the abstractness of the victory that the masses enjoy which sets them apart from the classes who possess collective desires. (Arendt 1951/1958, 350–351)

3.2.4 The Leader and Enemies in Totalitarianism

After totalitarian forces have gained power, the whole existence of the party is tied to the leader and its sole purpose is to forward the leader's message. After that the leader cannot be removed without the whole system collapsing. (Arendt 1951/1958, 374) This idea also has parallels with the North Korean system as it will be established.

The leader is the embodiment of the movement and that everything in the movement is connected through him and all the measures taken are because of him (Arendt 1951/1958, 374). In North Korea also, the leader is the embodiment of Juche and the Korean people.

In totalitarianism, labor takes over all the aspects in society. This in turn destroys spontaneity, creativity and identity which causes loneliness. In this loneliness and inability to trust anyone, the only stable thing is the consistency of ideology and its messages that, if not followed, the person is completely lost. (Arendt 1951/1958, 474–478) All of these measures then naturally help the leader to control his people and one can understand the usefulness of ideology as a “cure” for the loneliness caused by the lack of identity in an oppressive society.

The enemies of the totalitarian states are pre-determined before their ascend into power. They can then be blamed for, not specifically on their actual hostility towards the regime but because they are the “objective enemy” (Arendt 1951/1958, 423) regardless of their actions and in accordance of the reigning ideology. This happened to for example to the descendants of the previous ruling classes in the Soviet Union. The objective enemy does not need to be provoked as he carries the undesirable tendencies. (Arendt 1951/1958, 423) In North Korea too, for example landowners and those connected to Japan were discriminated after Kim Il-sung gained power according to the new caste system (Collins 2012, 15). This is another distinction between totalitarian and “normal” governments; the totalitarian government is a movement which needs to keep eliminating new obstacles to move forward. The obstacles are again dependent solely on the leader's will. (Arendt 1951/1958, 425)

3.3 Socialist Realism as the Base of North Korean Cinema and the Making of Model Citizens in Other Socialist Systems

The ideological indoctrination which Arendt refers to is close to socialist realism and North Korean propaganda since they both aim for the transformation of the individuals and the society through the ideological indoctrination they practice. This connects the issue therefore in the construction of social identity through means of indoctrination, such as cinema, as was done in North Korea and the Soviet Union.

The reasons for the adoption of cinema as the main tool of propaganda in the Soviet Union was explained by Anatoli Lunacharsky, the first head of the Soviet ministry in charge of propaganda:

Cinema's strength lies in the fact that (...) it imbues an idea with feeling and with captivating form but, unlike the other arts, cinema is actually cheap, portable and unusually graphic. Its effects reach where even the book cannot reach and it is, of course, more powerful than any kind of narrow propaganda. (Lunacharsky 1924).

Despite truthful depiction being supposedly one of the main traits of socialist realism¹, it is evident that based on real life conditions, more emphasis was given to rightful ideological depiction as later explained by Russian author Maxim Gorky (1977, 44):

Myth is invention. To invent means to extract from the sum of a given reality its cardinal idea and embody it in imagery that is how we got realism. But if to the idea extracted from the given reality we add (...) the desired, the possible, and thus supplement the image, we obtain that romanticism which is at the basis of myth and is highly beneficial in that it tends to provoke a revolutionary attitude to reality, an attitude that changes the world in a practical way.

The citation has echoes on what would become the main idea behind North Korean cinema as well. Portraying an idealistic version of reality which focus was then to instill the revolutionary spirit into citizens thus creating concrete changes in the reality through cinema.

In North Korea, the way Kim Jong-il defined the characters of Juche socialist realism is as follows:

Communist art and literature are the endeavour to describe model examples of a new type of person who strives devotedly for the building of [national] socialist and communist society, in order to help develop the revolutionary outlook on the world of all members of society and impart a strong impetus to the people's revolutionary struggle and their work of construction, in the course of which

¹ (...) demands a truthful, historically concrete depiction of reality in its revolutionary development. These qualities must be achieved through the ideological reformation of all the working people, nurturing them in the spirit of socialism. (*Pervyi Vsesoiuznyi s'ezd sovetskikh pisatelei, 1934: Stenograficheskii otchet; Prilozheniia* 1990, 24).

they transform themselves, society and nature in accordance with the principle of Juche (Kim 1973, 431–432).

As Ispas points out, prototypical behaviour is something that others in the ingroup try to emulate (Ispas 2013, 22). The positive depiction of the young idealistic model characters can be interpreted to be the regime's way of encouraging their behaviour as the prototypical behaviour of the youth's social group in North Korea as Kim's ideas also seem to suggest.

This kind of human remolding taking place in socialist societies such as in The Soviet Union is called political socialization. It can be summed up as the process in which the community's youth members are taught correct values and attitudes (Hess & Torney 1967, 7) in addition to adequate norms of the surrounding political system (Renshon 1977, 5). Afterwards, having learned these new methods of how to act and be, the individual should know how to operate in the new political environment (Dawson & Prewitt 1969, 17). Its effectiveness for the youth is especially noteworthy. Under communism, political socialization was more intense than in other societies in how it was used for the reigning party to instill itself in all aspects of the society including people's personal spheres making the party equal the country and making the leaders as gods. (Cheng 2009, 27)

In addition, indoctrination could not take place only through education but a more active role on the individual's part was needed. The process would start from early childhood and be taken into action by practical activities considering, for example, ideology and politics such as various campaigns and youth organizations. (Cheng 2009, 27—28)

In the Soviet Union, the local youth organization, Komsomol, also emphasized the importance of correct ideological and political activities for the youth (Tsipursky 2016, 32—53). In North Korea, the youth union was then later formed based on Komsomol (Cho et al. 2012, 199).

The main traits of the Soviet youth clubs were on praising the party and the leader, Marxism-Leninism, heavy nationalism and militarism as well as hard work in order to advance the country's aims especially economically while also strongly denouncing

influences especially from the West (Tsipursky 2016, 32). In addition to these values, the model Soviet youth was not supposed to act independently but only within the limits of guidance provided by the state (Rolf 2004 1—6). The youth was guided towards club activities which strengthened these values and find meaning in their lives through them (Tsipursky 2016, 51). As it will become evident, these similar values are emphasized in the films of the thesis as well.

Similarly in East Germany, education and work were also seen only in relation to ideology which meant that rather than personal desires, these important areas of life should be continued in a manner which advances socialism (Watts 1994, 486).

Also in Cuba, the youth were targeted by various institutions and especially through the education system which gave them official guidelines according to which the youth should model their behaviour. (Blum 2011, 24). This was done in order to mold the youth to the ideal image planned by the regime but also to utilize them as a solution to problems in specific areas in society which had suffered because of the revolution (Hart 1962 as cited in Blum 2011, 24). Similarly in North Korea, the education system was harnessed to instill Juche ideology in the students' minds, with Kim Il-sung's importance as the leader highlighted. However, the education system suffered greatly from 1987 to 2005 especially during the famine and in the rural areas. Due this, emphasis shifted towards loyalty comparable to that within the family with Kim Il-sung as the father of the nation. (Kim, H-C & Kim, D-K 2005, 16, 186—187) This perhaps emphasizes the importance of other means of indoctrination for the youth.

4 The History, Influences, Traits and Importance of Cinema in North Korea

4.1 History of North Korean Cinema

After the Second World War, the Soviets emphasized cultural production praising the Soviet socialist system. This included the film industry, where aid was given to the North Koreans in helping to set up their own film industry. In both the Soviet Union and North Korea, culture was seen as something that can and should be constructed as any other material entity. (Armstrong 2002, 10)

The greatest possible viewership for the films had to be achieved. Thus, "Mobile Film Groups" were sent around the northern part of the peninsula in order for the films to be seen by as many people as possible. (Armstrong 2002, 13–14) A large factor in the regime's favouring of cinema compared to, for example theater, was due to it being quick and convenient to spread around the country and the fact that the events were new and rare for the peasants which meant that they would enjoy even films with very high ideological content (Kim, S-Y 2010, 24).

While the aid of the Soviet Union was the main factor in advancing the North Korean film industry, the aim of the films was not to praise the Soviets and the socialist movement which they were leading, but rather increase the level of nationalism among the Korean people (Armstrong 2002, 15). This is also evident when the first DPRK film *My Hometown* (내 고향) was released in 1949.²

² The film does not mention the Soviets, instead focusing on the national struggle against the Japanese. The influence of Soviet cinema is however clear, and the films generally follow the formula of socialist realism, but the themes differ. For example, nationalism is highlighted over class struggle. (Armstrong 2002, 16) Later these differences increased. Internationalism and Marxism-Leninism were abandoned while nationalism and Juche were highlighted (Lee, H 2005, 201). In addition, the melodramatic elements that would dominate North Korean cinema in the future could, already be seen. The film deals with absolutes: the Koreans are depicted as pure and good while the Japanese are only pure in evil. Emotionality is also emphasized by making use of the Korean landscapes and highlighting the innocence and purity of the Korean peasants. Kim Il-sung is also given praise by being the main force in the battle against the Japanese. (Armstrong 2002, 16–17)

Armstrong sums up well the significance of *My Hometown* to North Korean cinema: it laid down the main principles of what was to become. It depicted a new reality where the country was founded independently, without foreign aid, by the guerilla forces led by Kim Il-sung and cemented Manchuria as the birthplace of the revolution. (Armstrong 2002, 19)

From 1968 onwards, Kim Jong-il began to prepare films which would form the basis for the cinema of the country, such as the golden era “revolutionary operas” *The Sea of Blood* (피바다) (1971) and *The Flower Girl* (꽃파는 처녀) (1972) (David-West 2009, 14). In 1971, he was appointed the head of the Department of Culture and Arts of the Central Committee of the WPK (David-West 2009, 14).

Later his ambitions grew even larger as he tried to improve the artistic quality of North Korean cinema to compete on an international level. With the abduction of South Korean film director Shin Sang-ok and his ex-wife, actress Choe Eun-hee and utilising them in North Korean cinema, North Korean films began to have more entertaining traits.³ (Kim, S-Y 2010, 28—30)

However, later, in the 1990's the production level again fell back due to the passing of Kim Il-sung and the famine (Kim, I 2015).

4.2 Melodrama in North Korean Cinema and as Propaganda

The films examined for the thesis can be labelled as melodramas. Lindsay Williams defines melodrama as follows:

If emotional or moral registers are sounded, if a work invites us to feel sympathy for the virtues of beset victims, if the narrative trajectory is ultimately more concerned with a retrieval and staging of innocence than with the psychological causes of motives and action, then the operative mode is melodrama. (Williams 1998, 42).

³ The films of Shin also had some minor success in competitions with other films from the socialist countries (Kim, S-Y 2010, 28—30).

This kind of description suits North Korean films well. They are often about trauma taking place which sets the main character on a journey. The protagonist then later returns having either failed to overcome the trauma or having championed it. (Dukalskis & Hooker 2011, 57)

Melodrama has propagandic traits by its way of dealing only with absolutes and staying away of nuances and uncertainties. Also, its way of appealing to basic human emotions while bringing the social and economic into the private sphere effectively engages the viewer. (Heins 2013, 2)

Melodrama films have also been used as a tool of propaganda in other totalitarian societies like in Nazi Germany. Their use can however be problematic when it comes to indoctrination in oppressive societies as they side with the victim. In Germany this was not a problem for war films where it was relatively easy to cast the German side as the victim of aggression from abroad. In films dealing with domestic issues, antagonists were chosen in order to lay critique for example on bourgeois ideas. (Heins 2013, 4) In North Korea, Kim Il-sung has echoed similar ideas: "(...) outdated ideas persist in the minds of the people for a long time and the ideological and cultural infiltration of imperialism continues." (Kim, I-S 1977). Therefore, to combat this, the revolutionary spirit and the correct communist ideas must be instilled into people's minds (Kim, I-S 1977, 4).

4.3 Kim Il-sung's and Kim Jong-il's Literary Policies and the Importance of Cinema in North Korea

In 1987 it was stated in a Pyongyang radio show that an average North Korean goes to the cinema 21 times per year. A similar survey was done for defectors in South Korea in the mid-1990's where the average was revealed to be 15 to 18 times a year. (Lankov 2007, 62) In contrast, in 2019, an average South Korean went to the cinema 4,37 times per year (Yonhap 2020). The reasons behind cinema's popularity in North Korea stem partially from mandatory attendance as specific films (full of praise on the party and the leader) are required to be seen. People do however typically go to the movies voluntarily due it being an easily accessed and affordable form of entertainment. In addition, other leisure activities are scarce. (Lankov 2007, 62)

Understanding official guidelines for literature in North Korea is important in understanding the message the regime wants to send through art. Despite major events like the famine, changes in leadership and changes in economic policies as well as the transformation of socialist literature into Juche literature, the leaders' works have remained relevant when examining North Korean literature (David-West 2009, 2).

To Kim Il-sung, arts were an educational tool, and therefore had a functional nature (David-West 2009, 6—7). In Kim's mind, the heroes of North Korean arts should portray the ideal traits of a socialist man, such as collectivism and ascetism. The villains are also portrayed in a very black and white manner: if they are foreign (American or Japanese) they are violent and barbaric whereas the domestic villains after the “liberation” cause minor trouble in the otherwise harmonic socialist society. (David-West 2009, 10, 12)

When it comes to cinema, Kim Jong-il's importance cannot be overstated. When he started to work in the Department of Organization and Guidance of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, his ambitions and influence for the country's cinematic endeavours were soon made clear. He, for example, intervened heavily in a film conference banning all talk about foreign influences and concepts. In addition, his emphasis on building the cult of personality for Kim Il-sung was made clear when he demanded that the conference (and art in general) should be only concerned about studying Kim Il-sung's ideas. (David-West 13, 2009) Indeed, the films produced under him emphasize the personality cult of Kim Il-sung and the special nature of the Kim family in general, easing his eventual succession to power (Lee, H 2005, 203–204). It is through his works, especially, *On the Art of the Cinema* (1973), that one can examine the desired traits of the North Korean cinema.

4.5 North Korean Symbolism

Various studies conducted on North Korean cinema, and the ways to read North Korean symbolism and literature, are used in the thesis in order to improve the analysis. For example, not knowing the meaning of the sun and stars or various flowers as the symbols of the leaders would mean that the intensity of the leaders' presence, central to the formation of the youth's ideology, would not be necessarily noticed.

Frank sheds light into the ways North Korean symbolism could be accidentally omitted by a reader not familiar in North Korean culture. He compares North Korean symbolism to that of Christianity in the West in that one has to know the context of Christ to see something else than "a dead man nailed to a wooden cross" (Frank 2012, 9). The same applies for North Korea. For a Western person not familiar with North Korean symbolism, red and purple flowers depicted in a North Korean painting are just that, flowers. For any North Korean these flowers, *Kimilsungia* and *Kimjongilia* represent the father and the son, leaders of the country, just as the cabin in front of a mountain in a 2000 won note is not just *any* cabin in front of *any* mountain but rather the birthplace of Kim Jong-il in front of the mythical Mount Paektu. (Frank 2012, 9–10)

In fact, different flowers have great importance in North Korean culture and are used many times in the films as symbols, such as the abovementioned *Kimilsungia* and *Kimjongilia*. Another regularly appearing flower is Azalea. The flower is connected to Kim Il-sung's first wife and Kim Jong-il's mother Kim Jong-suk.⁴

Other frequent symbols are the sun⁵ and star(s). These again generally refer to Kim Il-sung (sun) and Kim Jong-il (star) (Lim, J-C 2015, 95). In addition, in 2014 Kim Jong-un was officially given the title of "The Sun of the World" (Jung & Yoo 2017, 93). The official propaganda has also emphasized Kim Jong-un's likeness to Kim Il-sung, even going as far as depicting the youngest Kim as the reincarnation of his grandfather (Jung & Yoo 2017, 97). By referring to Kim Jong-un as the sun, this depiction is emphasized for sun is the symbol most heavily connected with Kim Il-sung.

⁴ The official story behind the symbol is that Kim Jong-il apparently recalled that the first thing his mother did when she first returned to North Korea after the Japanese occupation, was embracing Azalea flowers. According to Kim Jong-il, this depicted her love for her country. In addition, when she died, Kim Jong-il planted Azaleas in front of her tomb. (Lee, S-S 2008, 194—195) Therefore, Azaleas are a symbol of motherhood but also a symbol of Kim Jong-suk, whose characteristics are emphasized by anti-Japanese activism and are thus connected to military first -politics. (Lee, S-S 2008, 194—195) Thus, the flower symbolizes specifically women who are willing to fight for their country and emphasizes their role in the military first -society. Also, due to emphasis being on Kim Jong-suk as the most loyal and fierce defender of Kim Il-sung especially during his partisan days, rather than her marriage to Kim Il-sung or her motherhood to Kim Jong-il, her image is that of the most exemplary person of the Songun (Military-first politics) era whose actions and ideological consciousness are to be emulated. (Chung & Kwon 2012, 115—116) As noted, the symbolism of Azalea has not been static. For example, it can be also seen as symbolising the country as a whole and especially its bright future (Lee, W-Y 2002).

⁵ The sun's effectiveness as a symbol can be summed up in three parts: firstly, the sun is the center of the solar system which everything revolves around just like everything revolves around the leader in North Korea. Secondly, the sun is also essential for life, and nothing could exist without it, such is the case in North Korea where people are taught to depend on the leader. Thirdly, the sun's radiation lights the world, like the leader gives light to the society. (Lim, J-C 2015, 89)

5 Definition for Central Terms of the Analysis

5.1 Family State

The political system in North Korea has been labeled as a “family state” by Lee Moon-Woong. He argues how the relationship between the leader and the people is reminiscent of a familial relationship (Lee, M-W 1976, as cited in Chung & Kwon 2012, 18). Rodong Sinmun (2007) has also described the country as one large family under the parent-leader.

Chung and Kwon (2012, 19) also refer to North Korea as a Neo Confucian society where father is the head of the family and filial loyalty to him is a tradition. Political loyalty is naturally included in this idea. Indeed, the use of Neo-Confucianism in a state that has vowed to break its ties with its pre-revolutionary history is explained to be a way of political consolidation and social integration (Armstrong 2003, 215—229).

5.2 Juche

Juche is an essential part of the films as established by the leaders' literature policies and works. The beginnings of the ideology are generally traced back to 1955 when Kim Il-sung first mentioned Juche in his speech. It was however only in the 1970's when the ideology was emphasized as equal to Marxism-Leninism. (Kim D-K & Kim H-C 2005, 11—12)

Frank defines Juche to be “an ultra-nationalist ideology” (Frank 2012, 13) which “ (...) gradually came to dominate all aspects of life in North Korea including the arts.” (Frank 2012, 13). The ideology puts emphasis on “Man” being the master of everything. According to the ideology, under the right leadership, humans are capable of anything, and they have the power to shape their environment, not the other way around. This makes the ideology basically anti-thesis to Marxism which emphasizes the material laws that control human societies which can be understood but not controlled. As Frank

notes, the idea of the regime might be to distance itself from the Eastern block and have more independence from the Soviet Union (Frank 2012, 13).⁶

Indeed, there is a great emphasis on self-reliance by the armed force, self-sustainability in the economy and independence in, for example, foreign affairs (Frank 2012, 14). Thus, self-sufficiency in production of food, raw materials and oil was necessary as well as industrialization. Isolation of the country in global affairs and heavy investment in its armed forces can also be better understood through Juche. (Lee, G 2003, 106—107) Attacking imperialism was most likely made easier through the emphasis on independence within the ideology.

Other reasons can also be seen behind the ideology. As teaching other ideologies is banned in North Korea and as Kim Il-sung was long held as the only one who could sufficiently understand the ideology, Juche has been seen as a means of cementing the regime's power (Byun 1991, 55-6, 60). The second school of thought views Juche stemming largely from Korea's history of having been under constant attacks and occupations by China and Japan and, for example, the Mongols. The third school of thought views Juche as a brilliant ideology developed by Kim Il-sung and stemming from his guerilla years. This viewpoint is naturally the one held by the regime and strengthened further by Kim Jong-il (Lee, G 2003, 108—109).

In general, the ideas regarding class, the masses, need for a singular strong leader and the mind over matter aspect, are not original ideas due to them stemming from China and Eastern Europe but the mixture of them makes the ideology interesting. The ideology also has clear parallels with Confucianism and ideas of Mao Zedong (Lee, G 2003, 109—110).

Indoctrinating Juche on the people meant that Juche attitudes such as heavy nationalism, revolutionary spirit, and the ability and willingness of people to solve all the problems simply by their will and actions, have been emphasized in North Korea (Lee, G 2003, 110—111).

⁶ Indeed, balancing between The Soviet Union and China while maintaining independence was difficult for the country and through Juche ideals the country could distance itself from them by labeling the larger socialist powers as imperialist (Byun 1991, 62—76).

On the other hand, B.R. Myers (2010, 47) has labeled Juche as a “pseudo-doctrine”. He views the vague ideology as a sort of a disguise for the actual prevalent ideology of the country based on race and xenophobia, being therefore similar to the ruling ideology of fascist Imperial Japan (Myers 2010, 47).

5.3 Songbun

In North Korea, the working class was created rather than evolving naturally since it was needed for the credibility of a socialist state (Lee, H 2000, 243). Thus, the existence of a class system, songbun, in the officially classless country, has been a cause of friction in many issues. Cinema then reveals the real tensions in society by addressing the problems. (Lee, H 2000, 246) This also includes the aspirations of the youth.

In songbun, the whole of the country is unofficially divided into three different classes: the core, the unstable and the hostile. The core consists of 25 per cent of the population including the elite. These are, for example, war heroes and their descendants, party and military officials and their families. They are given privileges such as attending universities, party membership, larger food rations and better health care. (Lee, H 2000, 244–245)

The unstable is the largest class consisting of 50 per cent of the population. Members of this class are in clear disadvantage compared to the core since they are not for example allowed to travel or move freely within the country. The class includes for example farmers and factory workers. (Lee, H 2000, 244–245)

The rest of the population, 20 per cent, are labeled hostile. The class consists of, for example, criminals, capitalists, “anti-revolutionaries” and owners of land and wealthy farms. In addition, their relatives are automatically included in the class as well. They are forced to live isolated from outside visitors, being under heavy surveillance and having no possibility to apply for party membership. In fact, most of the class are in labor camps. (Lee, H 2000, 244)

The system is highly restrictive in that it can place people within the system based on the regime's needs. Therefore, cinema has been mainly focusing in defending the class system (Lee, H 2000, 245–246). This makes sense for the regime as, from a social

identity point of view, the (perceived) ability to enter to enter the dominant group can lessen tensions between the dominant group and the subordinate groups (Ispas 2013, 105).

However, the market activities which started due to the state's inability to distribute food adequately to everyone during the famine in the 1990's, changed the class system even after the famine ended. Those of lower songbun could now earn more, and, in turn, bribe those with higher songbun for goods and services⁷ which were previously reserved only for the upper class. (Robertson 2016) Therefore, after the famine, wealth has in many aspects replaced family background as the means to get by in the society.

Also, despite the unequal areal differences, the Jangmadang market economy has also been a rare event where the rural communities, mainly farmers, have had an advantage compared to those living in the cities. This is due to the fact, that they have been able to sell their crops for markets and therefore earn more than before. (Patterson 2017, 70)

The system however still matters greatly. For example, when it comes to labor, those of lower songbun are assigned to heavier and mundane assignments. In other aspects, the system does not allow positions of influence, and means poorer medical care or diet for life. Therefore, the most important decisions are made by those of higher songbun. The bribes are also received by them. (Collins 2012, 5) Thus, despite bribes being able to be used for improvements in life by those of lower songbun, those of higher songbun still benefit as well.

5.4 Military-first politics (Songun)

Korean People's Army (KPA) is estimated to have 1,2 million active soldiers making it the fourth largest army in the world (Albert 2020). The service time is also very long, with the average for males being 13 years. Despite the conditions being hard, the benefits of service are still great for the soldiers in gaining social acceptance, better clothing and more food although the material benefits are not as great as they were before the famine. In addition, the soldiers receive training that they could not get

⁷ For example, immunity for penalties and travel permissions inside the country (Robertson 2016).

elsewhere, for example with driving. This in turn helps them after their service.⁸
(Lankov 2007, 191—192)

The heavy emphasis on the army in the films is in line with the heavy emphasis on the army in general during the 1990's and in the era of Kim Jong-il. He has described Songun as follows; “Our Party's Military-First Politics is founded on the philosophy of the gun barrel, which advocates that revolution is pioneered, advanced, and completed by the barrel of a gun.” (Chung & Kwon 2012, 87). It intertwines the ever-present message of carrying on the revolution presented in the films with the army. It emphasizes the unity of the people and the army but also raises the army over society (Wada 2002, 310).

The army also concerns more than just militaristic affairs since it partakes in agriculture and is often the leading actor in construction projects. Therefore, the army has come to represent various factions in North Korea and thus justifies its importance in being prioritized in the society. (Chung & Kwon 2012, 94) Indeed, in contemporary North Korea, soldiers “are more used to shovels than to rifles.” (Lankov 2007, 111—112). In the spring they are sent to the farms to plant maize or rice for two months and in autumn they participate in harvest. Deployment to various construction sites around the country also happens throughout the year. In fact, according to estimations, farming and construction activities take up from one third to one half of the whole service time. (Lankov 2007, 111—112)

5.5 Shock Brigades

Another important faction in North Korean society connected to military, are the shock detachments.⁹ They consist of young people who, after graduating from high school, are sent to work in construction sites. The organization is very militaristic as the people live in barracks, wear uniforms, have military ranks and receive some basic military training. Their status is however not high compared to those in the military or based on the material goods they receive. In addition, there are internal differences between the

⁸ However, as mentioned, the army cannot offer the same kind of ratios it used to, meaning soldiers are malnourished. In addition, with the army also, the Jangmadang markets have lessened the importance of inherited songbun. (Lankov 2007, 195—196)

⁹ Referred as shock brigades in the films.

brigades with the most prestigious ones, “high-speed battle youth shock detachments” being in charge of more politically important undertakings such as statues of the leaders. Most of the people are drafted to less prestigious brigades. (Lankov 2007, 113—114)

6 Methodology and Data

6.1 Choosing and Collecting the Data

The methodology used for this research is analyzing seven different films produced in North Korea between 1971 and 2016. The films chosen and their distinctive general themes are: *When We Pick Apples* (사과 딸 때) (leadership/women/industrialization of rural areas) (1971) *A Broad Bellflower* (도라지꽃) (migration/urbanisation) (1987), *The Girls in my Hometown* (내 고향의 처녀들) (marriage, the army) (1991), *Myself in the Distant Future* (먼후날의 나의 모습) (generational debt) (1997), *The Schoolgirl's Diary* (한 녀학생의 일기) (family, materialism, individualism) (2007), *The Name Given by the Era* (시대가 주는 이름) (education) (2009) and *The Story of Our Home* (우리 집 이야기) (family state) (2016). The films were downloaded from YouTube and used only for scholarly purposes for the thesis. The full version of *The Girls in My Hometown* could only be found in two parts.

The films were chosen with the research question in mind, based on their contents discussing the youth, meaning that the main characters had to be young people and the problems and the general themes in the films needed to be relevant for the youth of the country. Hence, films taking place after the Korean war were chosen because they are more concerned with internal problems (such as with the youth) rather than solely focusing on foreign aggressors as the films taking place during the Japanese occupation or the Korean war typically do. Thus, “immortal classics” such as *The Sea of Blood* (1971) and *The Flower Girl* (1973) were not chosen for the thesis.

To form a cohesive understanding on the issues dealing with the youth, the films were chosen from different periods of time and different regimes. Also, all the films have a specific larger theme concerning the youth, which separates them from one another. It is noteworthy however, that all the films also had major similar themes.

Practical issues were however also a factor; due to the author’s limited Korean skills, the films had to include English subtitles which many of the films found on YouTube lacked. This was however not a major problem although there were some films which seemed interesting and relevant but could not be examined because they were either not

available or did not have English subtitles. In addition, relying on English subtitles also meant that possibly some interesting nuances evident in Korean, might go unnoticed.

At first, only six films were included but the author decided then to add another one, after noticing how the analysis lacked films from the 1970's, the golden era of North Korean cinema. Therefore, and due to the film again having a theme which stood out, *When We Pick Apples* from 1971, was chosen.

Originally, the author's intention was to include more films from the Kim Jong-un era (or even solely focus on them). However, when conducting research in the University of North Korean Studies library in Seoul, the author was informed by the employers how film production in North Korea during the Kim Jong-un era has slowed down and the films of his era could not be found in the otherwise extensive collection of North Korean films in the university. Indeed, only one film with English subtitles and being relevant to the thesis, *The Story of Our Home* (2016) from the Kim Jong-un era, could be found from YouTube and is analyzed in the thesis.

6.2 Method of Analysis

During the first viewing, loose notes were made on everything connecting the films to the topic of the thesis. On the second viewing, the actual formal analysis was written down as it would appear in the final thesis. As the author had already accustomed himself with the theory by making notes on Ispas' and Arendt's works as well as having familiarized with the relevant literature, they were also added to the more extensive analysis. The films' contexts were also taken into account and relevant actual events tying into the films' messages were discussed. Then, secondary sources were added. Previous studies conducted on the films of the thesis were examined and their ideas, relevant to the topic of the thesis, discussed. In addition, literature written about the themes of the films such as marriage, education and women's role in society were discussed.

The analysis section of the thesis is constructed as writing the synopsis first and then going through the main characters. After that, the most visible themes in relation to the construction of the youths' social identity are discussed in detail and relevant secondary sources are used to examine possible reasons for why the themes are discussed in the

films and most importantly, the manner how the issues are addressed and how they should be solved according to the films. After discussing the themes, they are briefly summarized. After analyzing the films, the results chapter discusses the similarities the films share as well as the overall results of the study.

Various literature on social identity is applied to the analysis with emphasis on Ispas' work. Important aspects are for example the different ways ingroups and outgroups are formed and the importance of the leader, the party and the nation in building the youth's social identity. The different messages are also analyzed through the lens of totalitarian studies, mainly *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) although some references are made to similar methods of molding the youth into ideal citizens in the context of socialist authoritarianism in other countries, as literature on simply concentrating on the North Korean youth is scarce.

An essential part of the analysis is examining the characters. As Lee Hyangjin (2005, 195) writes, ideologically correct model workers are an essential part of North Korean cinema through which the party speaks. Indeed, these characters depict to the audience through their actions on how the citizens should behave in order to be good citizens. In addition, they often literally state through the lines given to them praise to the leader and how to lead a revolutionary life. These characters are either the main character or their actions are viewed by the main character who in these cases are typically flawed in some way and then later correct their actions based on the example set by the model character. Therefore, addressing and examining these model characters is given special attention in the analysis as well as discussing the flawed characters.

While direct references to Juche are scarce in the films with the most obvious traits of Juche being the constant praise for the leader and the party, the emphasis on hard work could be seen as a method of maintaining the self-sustainability emphasized in Juche. In addition, references towards ideological strength overcoming material deficiencies can also be linked to Juche due to the mind over matter aspect. Therefore, Juche remains one of the most important themes examined in the films and the positive role models, always encompassing Juche ideals, are thus sometimes referred to as “Juche characters” in the analysis but typically the term model character is used. The characters lacking (or not depicting strong enough Juche values) will be referred to as “flawed characters”.

7 Analysis

7.1 When We Pick Apples (사과 딸 때) (1971)

7.1.1 Synopsis

The film is about two sisters working in an apple farm. One of them, Jong-ok, has been working in another farm to learn more about apple farming. When she returns, she notices various problems in the farm. The division of work, for example, is very inconvenient. One of the biggest blames is however laid on the team leader of the farm whose leadership is heavily criticized in the film.

Jong-ok's sister Kye-ok, also receives criticism in the film. As she is about to get married and move away from the village, she is criticized for not caring anymore about the apple farm's success, demonstrated by some errors she makes on the farm.

A major theme in the film is about the importance of not wasting even a single apple. In the beginning of the film, it is established that the crop of the season is very large and due to insufficient storage and manufacturing methods, many apples go to waste. The team leader and many others have an indifferent attitude towards wasting apples. Jong-ok, however, reminds everyone of Kim Il-sung's message about not being wasteful but remembering the difficult times not too long ago (under the Japanese) and therefore making sure that the same prosperity the people now have, will be also possible for future generations.

Through various lessons, especially through the stories of the girls' grandfather about the harsh times during the Japanese occupation, the flawed characters change their ways. The team leader, previously dismissive towards Jong-ok and the other girls in the farm, changes his leadership style and begins to have faith for the young women of the farm. Kye-ok also realizes she has been absentminded and starts to focus on the apple farm again.

The film ends as the girls finally learn to prepare jam from the apples and the farm is depicted to be on its way to prosperity.

7.1.2 Characters

The positive characters depict well the values of the Chollima era¹⁰, with the most visible being Jong-ok. She is hardworking and always advancing the leader's agenda, expressing endless loyalty towards him in true Juche spirit. Her hardworking nature is demonstrated by saying phrases such as: "(...) why the people sleep." and wishing how "a day can be a 100 hours." (Kim, Y-H 1971, 1:28:42).

A notable trait of Jong-ok is also reminding the others how the apples must be handled with care. In one scene a truck driver almost drives over an apple but Jong-ok stops him. The truck driver then calls her "miserly" (Kim, Y-H 1971, 0:48:48) for caring so much about an apple as the others laugh.

She is also depicted to be knowledgeable on practical matters when it comes to apple farming and teaching others. She can be heard saying how "(...) worms eat up 30% of the crop during harvest season." (Kim, Y-H 1971, 00:16:11). She later uses her knowledge to instruct other workers as well.

Her grandfather on the other hand, is the one reminding the people about the suffering under the Japanese occupation from which Kim Il-sung has released them from. The message of the grandfather is therefore that people should be in gratitude for the leader and obey everything he and the party say.

The flawed characters of the film are Kye-ok and the team leader as well as some of the other minor characters such as Jong-ok and Kyeo-ok's mother. Their flaws are rather minor, especially Kye-ok's, but they still serve the part. Kye-ok seems to be more focused in preparing for her married life than improving the apple farm but she still feels bad when she is criticized. Indeed, as Gabroussenko (2019b) notes, it is Kye-ok's lack of enthusiasm for responsibilities considering work and political life which is problematic.

¹⁰ Chollima movement can be traced back to the late 1950's as a variation of the Chinese Great Leap Forward. Named after a mythical horse of Chinese lore, the movement emphasized hard and fast work based purely on correct spirit which in turn made up for possible material deficiencies of the work process. Similarly, individual benefits and well-being were looked down with motivation expected to stem purely from correct ideological mindset in advancing the state. In practice, the movement was visible in, for example, very long workdays and exhausted workers. (Gabroussenko 2017b)

The team leader is a more obvious example of a flawed character. He demonstrates poor management skills, indifference towards effective use of the apples and willingness to put aside his tasks. For example, in one scene his wife says how he should "stop wondering around and look after your work team properly." (Kim, Y-H 1971, 00:40:06) Then again, while he is seen acting indifferently towards the girls saying how: "I just can't stand their constant pestering", he does seem to admire their attitude as he immediately mentions how their: "(...) intention is praiseworthy." (Kim, Y-H 1971, 00:24:00).

Through criticism received by the other characters (in the case of Kye-ok a self-criticism session is involved), and following the actions of the model characters, the flawed characters are redeemed in the end of the film. The notion of criticism presented in the film is also connected to the Chollima movement as criticism was seen as a method to guide the insufficiently educated people back on the correct track (Gabroussenko 2017b).

7.1.3 Generational Debt, the Youth and Women

The film discusses the role of women in society and seems to support a more active role for them, judging the patronizing behaviour the team leader portrays. The importance of the youth is also emphasized and one of the general messages seems to be for them to understand how well things are under Kim Il-sung, compared to the Japanese rule before him. The film teaches how people should be mindful and efficient in their lives and in the workplace, to ensure that the future is also prosperous for future generations. The theme of generational debt for the previous generations, who fought for Korean independence is intertwined with the passage of time. It is mentioned how little time has passed since the occupational period and the idea that the situation can therefore change again (due to insufficient ideological education and foreign aggressors).

In general, the film depicts the period prior and during Kim Il-sung's era in a very polemic manner which is line with melodrama. In addition, it emphasizes the way authoritarian powers can construct social identity through using the outgroup in order to strengthen one's status as an ingroup. In this case, the outgroup, due to their negative portrayal, are those in power before Kim Il-sung while his regime (and those supporting

him) are the ingroup. Therefore, the actions of his regime do not really matter as, as the ingroup, the regime is always superior compared to the outgroup and their opposers are always the enemy. (Ispas 2013, 111)

The sisters' grandfather gives the most striking message about generational debt. Through a flashback it is depicted how years ago, the girls' uncle picked up a fallen pear from the ground and how "the vicious landlord's son who was born with an evil mind of his father lashed your uncle's face with a leather whip even to blind him." After that the grandfather tells how the sister's father attacked the landlord's son. Then, "although I was a farm servant in his house for generations and obedient just like his horse or cow" the grandfather attacked the landlord himself. "I knew what my actions would bring on to me in that society. But a man's patience has a limit. Yes, this kind of world did exist." (Kim, Y-H 1971, 01:05:26) They were then run out of the house.

Being separated from his family by the police, he then mentions how the sisters' uncle died from starvation and coldness. The mother then also died "with a grievance against that society." (Kim, Y-H 1971, 01:08:24). The grandfather, who was beaten badly by the police, later found the sisters' father who was "half-dead from starvation." (Kim, Y-H 1971, 01:08:41).

In the present, he says how he wishes he could:

(...) took the vicious landlord here. Because of a single pear, my son lost his eyes and I went to jail for a hard beating. And my wife and children were buried under the wayside. This was my fate of a servant in the past. But today I became a proud owner of the wonderful orchard given by the Leader. (...) (Kim, Y-H 1971, 01:08:52).

He continues: "To satisfy the grief and grudge of our people, the leader had already shaped his idea to cover the whole country with blooming orchards in those fighting days." (Kim, Y-H 1971, 01:09:28). As he says this the camera moves from the rotten pears the grandfather had brought from outside, to the luscious apples next to them to further demonstrate the change that has taken place for North Koreans. He continues:

If you understand the warm affection of the fatherly Leader, you should take better care of the orchard and never waste even a single apple. All the people who were poor and ill-treated in the past will enjoy better lives and eat better food so that the Leader can be happy. (Kim, Y-H 1971, 01:09:46).

With these words echoing, Kye-ok is seen outside, sitting in the sun's warmth, thinking about the criticism she had received about not caring about the farm anymore due to her upcoming marriage.

The flashback paints an extremely harsh image of Korea before Kim Il-sung's rule. Through the depiction, justification is brought to the politics of 1970's North Korea. For example, the mention of the landlord's son being born "with an evil mind of his father" (Kim, Y-H 1971, 01:05:26) can be seen as justification for the punishment of the landowners in Kim Il-sung's North Korea and their relatives being considered "hostile" in the country's class system. It is implied that the bourgeoisie are inherently evil, and their evilness is inherited. Thus, they have to be eradicated and cannot be "cured". The idea connects with Arendt's mention on how the enemy in totalitarianism is a carrier of undesirable tendencies whose being as an enemy does not necessarily even have to have anything to do with their actions (Arendt 1950/1958, 423).

The scene also demonstrates a relevant theme of the film's criticism towards "outdated" ideas. Considering, and as the film also repeatedly reminds, the short period of time Kim Il-sung had been in power prior to the release of the film, this can be seen as further plead for the youth to follow the regime's ideas instead of old pre-Kim Il-sung ideas.

The beating which the grandfather and the uncle give to the landlord after he tried to attack the uncle, is depicted as just and it therefore establishes the idea that even violence, encouraged by the ingroup and pointed towards the outgroup, is a possible act which is expected from a member of the ingroup. As Ispas (2013, 21) points out, this feature of social identity is something that makes it possible for tyrannical regimes to exist.

The grandfather also associates himself (and therefore the peasants of North Korea prior to Kim Il-sung's rule) as someone who is stripped from his humanity and only seen as

property of the landlord. When constructing social identity, the idea seems to be that before Kim Il-sung the workers were dehumanized but now they have become the masters of themselves according to Juche ideals while also reminding that it was specifically the leader who gave them this freedom. This can be seen as a clear example of what Ispas views as the leader favouring the ingroup instead of the outgroup and therefore increasing social influence over the ingroup (Ispas 2013, 90).

The grandfather also must emphasize to the naive youth about the differences between that society and the present one. "I knew what my actions would bring on to me *in that society*. But a man's patience had a limit. Yes, *this kind of world did exist*." (Kim Y-H 1971, 01:06:14). Then again, in 1970, 70 per cent of the North Korean population was under 30 years old and were therefore brought up in a socialist system. (United States Department of the Army, Communist North Korea 1971, 75, as cited in Kim, J.A 1975, 314) and thus needed to be reminded.

The mention of how, thanks to Kim Il-sung, the grandfather has now become an owner of an orchard, references the land reform in which the land, previously owned, for example, by the Japanese, Korean landowners and religious communities, was redistributed to Korean peasants (Report of the United Nations Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea 1951, 27) More gratitude should therefore be given to the leader and the idea again is that the leader favours the ingroup and condemns the outgroup.

Taking the grandfather's words into her heart Kye-ok goes to her self-criticism session. In there, one of the women says how:

Your sweet dreams have nothing to do with us. Think of the times we're living in. Take a look around whether there is another youth seeking a personal pleasure and indolence youth like you. It is indeed a disgrace that our youth league has such member. (Kim, Y-H 1971, 01:10:45).

There is therefore a clear attack on individuality (personal pleasure). It is also interesting to note how emphasis is put on "the times we're living" as this idea is most often repeated in the films taking place in more harsh times in the country's history such

as the famine. For a relatively prosperous time period such as the 1970's in North Korea, it is interesting for this idea to come up.

Kye-ok then answers the criticism:

(...) All of you have correctly pointed out my shortcomings at the right time.
 (...) I can't believe how backward I have been. You've been so heartbroken over a single apple falling down on the ground. But... I.. far from it. To tell the truth, even this good orchard was not important to me. Because I thought I would leave here. As our life becomes affluent I've forgotten our parents' bitter past.
 (Kim, Y-H 1971, 01:11:17).

She then recites the story the grandfather told and continues:

(...) our enemy are watching for a change to force such misery on us again. (...) I've been indulging in indolence. I haven't taken active part in the organizational life and missed studies. I used to embroider in my spare times. I'm a fool, not worthy of a member of the youth league. It is natural that you are surprised to find such a person beside you. I'm a daughter of the ill-treated servant. I've temporarily left my class stand and indulged in the out-dated idea. I can't forgive myself for that. (Kim, Y-H 1971, 01:12:54).

The scene fades into black as Kye-ok puts her head down in shame.

The emphasis on the youth organization¹¹ can be seen as strengthening the state institution committed to Kimilsungist ideas and therefore emphasizing the youth's social identity to be built through the leader and the state. Due to Kye-ok disowning her behaviour, such as not taking part in organizational life and missing studies due to, for example embroidering in her spare time, she sends the message from the regime on how the youth is expected to act. Her mention of leaving her "class stand" could be interpreted as another example emphasizing the importance of songbun in North Korean society. The mention of an "outdated idea" on the other hand is a typical tool in totalitarian propaganda in where people are threatened being left out on the ever

¹¹ Known as the Socialist Patriotic Youth League in the present (KCNA 2021).

proceeding forces of the movement and remaining "behind the times." (Arendt 1951/1958, 345). In fact, at one point the grandfather also accuses the sisters' mother on having a "feudalistic viewpoint." (Kim, Y-H 1971, 0:52:17).

Because the leader can strengthen his position by utilizing his distinctiveness compared to the outgroup (Ispas 2013, 90) and as the mention of the enemy naturally indicates foreign aggressors, the film is using the outgroup to emphasize the nationalist sentiment within the North Korean youth.

The mention of embroidery as a negative thing is connected to the overall trend in North Korean cinema where household chores are frowned upon whereas ideological activities are emphasized (Gabroussenko 2019b). This way the social identity of young women in the country is not to be built on "idle" housework which is deemed to be in the way of achieving proper ideological consciousness and therefore molding the ideal Juche citizen.

The change of Kye-ok had been discussed in previous scenes where some of the sisters' friends discuss her engagement: "Hard to believe. She worked so hard to improve our processing sub-work team. Now she is giving it up to become a shy wife." (Kim, Y-H 1971, 00:19:24). Through this, criticism is again laid on the idea of one's duties as a housewife replacing ideological education and political tasks. This idea is perhaps connected to the regime's emphasis for the women to first educate themselves ideologically, and then pass on what they have learned to their children (Park 1992, 539).

The capabilities of the youth are also explored through Jong-ok and her efforts. She, for example, suggests how the apples that are already going to waste, could be saved with relative ease just by improving the management and having a correct mindset. She suggests everyone to collect apples when they go home and dry them for later use. She says how with correct storing, the apples would never go bad. The team leader agrees and puts Jong-ok in charge of that operation. Jong-ok then says how she wants to pass on what she has learned. The team leader agrees and says how the operation "(...) can be organized within your youth league" (Kim, Y-H 1971, 00:23:16). Jong-ok notes how: "As we're in charge of processing, we must do our own efforts. We can't blame

anyone.” (Kim, Y-H 1971, 00:25:36). This is an indication for the youth on how to act while also reminding them of the responsibilities they have as a group towards the state.

Later, Jong-ok goes alone to pick apples. Sometime later the others come and the girls point out how the youth team leader is mad because Jong-ok “didn't rely on the masses and tried to do everything on your own.” “The organization is good indeed” they say talking about the youth league. Jong-ok continues: “Without it, we won't be able to do anything and live even for a day.” “Oh, it's too well known to be mentioned” the others say and laugh. (Kim, Y-H 1971, 00:31:17) The exchange highlights the importance of the community while also demonstrating how the youth's social identity is constructed through the party and the leader.

In a similar manner, in another scene, Jong-ok talks with her mother how she got “ (...) reprimanded by the party secretary (...) He told me that I couldn't work with my loyalty alone, and that the knowledge should be also acquired to be truly loyal to the revolution.” (Kim, Y-H 1971, 01:28:18). He also gave her a book on technology to read. Thus, the film is both sending a message that people need both technological and ideological knowledge. The notion of “relying on the masses” might also be connected to the idea in totalitarianism in which by eliminating spontaneity, the possibilities of the individual to begin anything new are diminished (Arendt 1951/1958, 455, 457). The message is also similar compared to the Soviet Union where the youth was only supposed to act based on the guidance of the state, avoiding individuality (Rolf 2004, 1—6). The scene also emphasizes the importance of the party as it is the party secretary who advised Jong-ok.

In another scene, Jong-ok finds out how the tractor of the farm cannot be used as there is no driver. The other girls are going to get help but Jong-ok assures them that they can do the work themselves as in the fruit farm she previously did her practice “All the work is done by women.” She continues saying how they “must practice now” as “in time of emergency, we have to do it all by ourselves.” Then they talk about how the newspaper said how “in the future, our farms will be fully mechanized and chemicalized.” (Kim, Y-H 1971, 00:14:54)

This exchange emphasizes women's role in North Korean society and especially the intention to make them an integral part of the work force in industrialization in the

1960's. This intention was however quickly abandoned in actual society, surviving only in the country's official ideology and mass entertainment (Gabroussenko 2019b). The scene also addresses material shortages in the country.

Later, the girls are struggling with spreading pesticide when the team leader arrives and gets angry at them. He says how he they should be making boxes and continues to mock them, saying to his son, Myong-gil: "how can a man be manipulated by girls like that?" (Kim, Y-H 1971, 00:18:09). The scene further exposes the "outdated" Confucian values and poor management of the team leader who labels Jong-ok's friend as someone who "(...) knows too much" (Kim, Y-H 1971, 00:18:22) despite one of the film's main messages being the importance of technological knowledge.

As the film ends, Jong-ok is chosen to go instruct the nearby Toha-ri village on how to prepare jam. As Jong-ok is about to hop into Myong-gil's tractor to leave for Toha-ri, she is interrupted by the sound of children picking apples enthusiastically but carelessly. She tells the children how there were no apple trees when they were born:

(...) nobody paid any attention to this land in the past. Our father Marshal told us to plant the apple trees here so that our villagers could get fruits all the year around (...) But look at this. Who has made a bruise to this precious and thankful apple? (...) You have the apples now, and they'll have to be kept well so that we can eat them till next year summer. (...) Our parents grew up without seeing an apple but you and I are the masters of a new history in which all can have the apples as much as they want. (...) So, even when you handle an apple, we should keep it deeply in mind the warm affection of our father Marshal. (...) Not only all of us but also our younger brothers and sisters, and all our coming generations shall be implanted with his lofty intention to bring this country into bloom forever just as he intended. (Kim, Y-H 1971, 01:38:09).

The scene connects the themes of youth, generations and Juche. It establishes how little time has passed since the Japanese occupation and how fast things can therefore change again. Thus, people need to be conscious and work diligently, honoring the past and future generations. All of this has been made possible by the leader and it is through following his guidance, meaning Juche, which has made the people the "masters of history", that they can ensure a bright future.

The message is also emphasized in the lyrics of the song played out through the film. For example in the beginning of the film, the lyrics mention "the fatherly love" providing the people's happiness and how it will be "repaid with loyalty – this pledge is as red as the apples. We'll bring it into full blossom for generations." (Kim, Y-H 1971, 00:01:50)

As the film ends, the song starts as the camera pans across the vast apple trees full of fruit with planes are seen flying over the vast fields: "Ah- the fatherly love. We'll bring it into full blossom for generations" (Kim, Y-H 1971, 01:40:59).

7.1.4 Juche and Portrayal of Rural People

The polemic presentation of the conditions before and after Kim Il-sung took power serves as an example of praise given to the leader and the party and thus to Juche. An important notion of this is in the positive depiction of the workers and the country, *especially* compared to how things used to be before Kim Il-sung. For example, the film starts with shots of Pukchong and its vast apple fields, with planes flying over spreading pesticide. This happens as Jong-ok, arrives to the apple farm, watching happily from the bus as people are shown working hard in beautiful, sunny fields.

In another scene it is sung how: "The tender care of the girls that is as red as the apples, have blossomed into red clusters." (Kim, Y-H 1971, 00:13:01). All of this happens while the girls are showing working happily together. The song continues:

In the paradise of happiness with apples and flowers, The great leader's lofty ideas have bloomed red. Let us devote all our care to the trees laden with plump fruits. Ah, my blossoming homeland, let us guard this post for generations. (Kim, Y-H 1971, 00:12:48).

Also, in another scene a song starts when people are shown picking the apples:

(...) Ripe fruits on every branch on this endless fruit garden. (...) Let us pick apples. Let us pick these fruits of loyalty. When the golden apple heap grows the pleasure of worthwhile labor overflows. As the fruits turn red, so does my spirit.

My hands work always like a whirlwind. (...) Bearing the Leader's teaching in our minds. Not to waste even an apple. (...) (Kim, Y-H 1971, 00:43:08).

The apples could be interpreted as depicting the loyalty of the people towards the leader and their revolutionary mindset as they outright state it but also, as red spirit, with the color commonly associated with socialism, suggests. Through this, the concept of not wasting apples can be seen as connected directly to the leader and how essential it is to stay loyal to him.

A story about Kim Il-sung visiting the orchard on a rainy day is also told:

After seeing the orchard on the mountain slope, he summoned the enlarged meeting of the Presidium of the Party Central Committee and gave detailed directions to turn all mountains of the country into a orchard. On the day after Our Marshal gave us a new hope. (Kim, Y-H 1971, 00:32:39).

Kim writes about the meeting ten years later in 1971 (year of release for the film) and praises the county for achieving his wish for heavy increase of orchards in the area. He also emphasizes the need for them to be treated with care. (Kim, I-S 1986, 112–114) This way the film is heavily intertwined with actual events that have taken place and the positively portrayed characters can be seen advancing these goals.

7.1.5 Inefficient Management, Lack of Proper Ideological Education and Marriage

The film lays heavy criticism on the leadership style of the team leader. In addition to the already discussed mistreatment of women, the farm work is depicted to be poorly organized.

Indeed, in one scene, which also again demonstrates the team leader's patronizing attitude towards the girls, Myong-gil confronts his father and accuses him of being a “terrible bureaucrat”. ” The father answers:” It seems the girls annoy you instead of me (...) You're a man. Don't be so narrow-minded.” He proceeds to tell Myong-gil to learn to ignore the girls. The boy also brings up again the notion of criticism and how the father avoids it. The father tells how: ” (...) I'm busy to go around day and night. It's not for you or me alone. To increase income of my people as much as possible...” ”If you

look after your people so well.” the boys answers ” how can you make the girls collect the fallen apples in this cold raining?” The father looks surprised. The boy continues: ”You're a leader, but provide nothing to them. They're trying to make jam by themselves. So that the fallen apples can be no longer wasted.” (Kim Y-H 1971, 01:14:05)

The attack on the father's bureaucratic nature is in line with the cultural revolution which had started over ten years prior to the film. Kim Il-sung aimed to change the management style of the party leaders who in turn then would change the way the people act. He criticized bureaucracy and emphasized ”revolutionary methods”, meaning taking an active role in leadership. This is how the Chongsan-ri Method¹² was created. He noticed that a major problem was with the lack of know-how among the local cadres. (Kim, I-S 1960-1963, 283, as cited in Kim, J.A. 1975, 288–290) Thus, the scene also depicts the importance of acquiring knowledge on technology and advanced work methods, demonstrated through Jong-ok's character, and is therefore also connected to Kim's idea on cultural revolution coming to fruition once people learn ”rational-analytical thought methods, and had acquired a knowledge on modern technology.” (Kim, J.A. 1975, 290). Due to the youth defending Kim Il-sung's policies, they are lined with him in the ingroup unlike the team leader.

The mother, hearing Myong-gil's accusations, steps into the room and says how the father should listen to his son:

They're trying so hard not to waste even an single apple. (...) Don't you know that it's the party policy not to waste even a single apple? Stop wondering around and you need to study. In the past, when I made mistakes, you would admonish me with our Leader's teachings and the party policy. When we planted apple trees on the back hills with upholding the idea of the Pukchong Meeting, you worked so earnestly and took a good care of those apple trees. But what are you now? Without any study, you get far off from the party policy and your head is filled with outdated ideas. (...) Who knows what mistake you will make? Did you say the fallen apples were practically nothing? (Kim, Y-H 1971, 01:16:36).

¹² Kim Il-Sung visited Chongsan-Ri Cooperative Farm in 1960 where he established the country's policies on agriculture. He later returned to the village several times giving further guidance on how to develop the country. Thus, The Chongsan-Ri movement was born, creating the famous on-the-spot guidance method practiced by the leader which aims at solving regional problems. (Jung & Shin 2019)

The boy then continues:

Father, you're the head of our workteam as well as our family. If you lead the workteam members with such an idea, how can you revolutionize and assimilate them to the working class? Even though you provide nothing, we will surely carry out the Leader's teachings. When the Leader came to Pukchong (...) He told us to make jam or syrup so that all the apples can be supplied to the people without wasting even a single. (...) Please come back to your senses. (Kim Y-H 1971, 01:17:51).

Through the exchange, the father's incompetence is made to be a direct result of ignoring his studies and teachings of the leader and the party. Due to his leadership position, there is also the danger for this to be spread on his workers. It is also his son (the youth) who must remind him of his faults although his wife also criticizes him.

The mention of assimilating peasants into the working class was indeed on the regime's agenda in the 1960's and it consisted of the industrialization of rural areas along with proper ideological education (Pyongyang Times 1966, as cited in Kim, J-A. 1975, 305). The echoes of the restructuring of society are clear in the film. The emphasis on ideological studies also further ties the youth's social identity into the leader. It also shows what happens if one lacks in ideological education.

It is important to analyze the team leader's depiction as he, as a middle-aged man, is contrasted with the young Juche characters (and the grandfather). Indeed, as a leader of her youth team, Jong-ok is shown to be completely different than the team leader. She is seen teaching the others how to properly store the apples and the various scientific methods behind it. The people also appreciate her help. Most importantly, she leads by example unlike the team leader who eagerly gives his tasks to others. This creates contrast between the ingroup and outgroup and helps to solidify the regime's supported values as the ingroup mentality.

When the team leader once again is quite nonchalant about losing some apples due the harvest being so large, Jong-ok criticizes him harshly. After that Myong-gil defends his father while the girls blame the father. They then state the same criticism Myong-gil

said to Jong-ok in an earlier scene about being hard on others except for her relatives. The criticism for Jong-ok and Myong-gil about their unwillingness to criticize their family members perhaps alludes to the idea of the family state, where the leader and the state are superior to one's family.

After receiving criticism for his son, the team leader heads out to Jong-ok's house to learn that she is still in the apple farm. At the house, Jong-ok's grandfather however asks him to sit down. Then he also starts to criticize him. He says how he does not care if the man is wasteful in his own life, but the problem is that that kind of thinking has spread into his leadership and the management of the farm.

Now that we get rich, you do not try to do the things. (...) Your management is worse than the girls. You should never forget your past. Do you think if you've done your share as a party member? As an endorser for your admission to the party, I'm ashamed of myself before the party. And you weren't good when your study was reviewed. (Kim, Y-H 1971, 01:19:45).

The team leader answers: "Right, that's why I will go to the party organization for reporting and reviewing all my faults. I should have done exactly as the party told us. This fault is very serious." (Kim, Y-H 1971, 01:20:35). He then leaves.

Later, the team leader, who has now changed his ways, goes to meet the girls who are making jam. The jam they have made is delicious, but the equipment is poor. The team leader says how he will bring a larger pot so the girls can widen the scale of production. He vows to now "accept your proposals whatever you want to do." (Kim, Y-H 1971, 01:22:34).

Later, the team leader however finds out that the girls have failed. He tastes the jam and it is very bad. The girls are visibly embarrassed and sad but the team leader strengthens their will: "This is just the beginning. You must find out the cause quickly and try it again. Behave yourselves as the member of the youth league. Come on, cheer up!" Jong-ok's face changes from sad to happy and she stares the team leader in awe and embraces him. The team leader assures her that he is "not the leader who you saw in the past." He continues: "You can try it again ten times or hundred times at ease. Let's try it again. Cheer up, my girls." (Kim, Y-H 1971, 01:24:35)

At the Youth league office, Jong-ok brings everyone many books. Then the lesson behind their failure is explained. Jong-ok asks everyone to read the books on fruit processing and hold a presentation later:

(...) we've only placed our desire above all others. We tried to fly before we had wings and that led to our fall on the ground. To carry out the Marshal's teachings perfectly, we should be first equipped with technical knowledge. This was what we missed." (Kim, Y-H 1971, 01:26:30).

The scene thus again emphasizes the ideas of cultural revolution where old Confucian ideas are eradicated and replaced with socialist ideas.¹³

Kye-ok also redeems herself. She gets a jam pot from her fiance and brings it into the village. The fiance, Kwan-sik also joins them to produce jam. The team leader then says to Jong-ok how "you seemed dissatisfied with him before. But you still don't like your sister's husband-to-be?" (Kim, Y-H 1971, 01:34:04). This phrase repeats the common trait in North Korean cinema where affection (romantic or not) can only be achieved if both parties possess proper ideological consciousness (Gabroussenko 2016b).

The detrimental factor of marriage and the duties of the "traditional" wife towards proper revolutionary consciousness is a relevant theme in the film. For example, Kye-ok is shown at first not helping the others with drying apples but instead sowing her new fabrics. The mother however says how it is fine as she is preparing for her married life.

Kye-ok's negative attitude stemming from her nearing marriage is indeed portrayed in several occasions. For example, in one scene, as she is picking apples with Jong-ok, the latter points out to her sister how the fallen apples are piling up. Kye-ok however says: "No option, it is beyond us." (Kim, Y-H 1971, 00:44:56). Jong-ok then says how

¹³ In addition, increase in intellectual level of the people through education was emphasized and the eventual goal was to mold everyone to depict new communist ideals and to possess technical and cultural skills compared to that of a university graduate. The arousal of masses and molding of society based on Juche ideas happened through the regime's actions in remolding people through indoctrination in which ideological education was elemental. Through this, individuals were turned into masses as the goal was to increase selflessness in advancing collective goals of the socialist regime. (Missuri 1978, 228) Therefore, the idea is very relevant for this film but the main intention of molding people to become ideal communist characters is prevalent in all the films of the thesis.

Kye-ok has changed. Kye-ok says how she will soon be gone and how she has done her share.

In another instance, there is an argument between the grandfather and the mother. The grandfather argues that the way the mother is acting towards the in-laws is embarrassing. She for example dismisses her own work for them. Grandfather says how Kye-ok used to be active but is now "poor in the study as well as the youth league." The mother says: "With a good match for a girl, it's best to marry her to him as soon as possible." (Kim, Y-H 1971, 00:52:52) The grandfather then says that she has more responsibilities besides getting her daughter to marry. He compares the present for the past and how in these days one must not forget about ideological education. He therefore again emphasizes the film's message for the women to ideologically educate their children (Park 1992, 539). The conflict of old and new ideas is again reinforced as well.

In another scene, Kye-ok and Jong-ok get into an argument. Jong-ok says how Kye-ok has changed while she "can't sit like this. I must be out to take action." "Listen, down from your high horse," Kye-ok says. "If everyone acts with self-assertation like you, how can managers work?" Jong-ok however answers: "Our fruit farm does not belong to a single individual." (Kim, Y-H 1971, 01:01:32) She then voices the same blame the others had said before about Kye-ok:

You think this is not your concern after leaving here for marriage. We simply can't live like that. You'll be wearing makeup, go shopping, pushing a baby carriage under a parasol but we'll be here in this orchard for the rest of our lives. The Leader said that our farmers should be also revolutionized and assimilated to the working class. Is it really the time to be in such a state of peaceful daydream? To enslave us again, the US scoundrels are running amuck together with the Japs. Even at this moment in the southern half of the country, our women are left homeless with their shabby houses torn down, and many mothers whose children starved to death are longing for our help. Why can't you think of it? To save fellow countrymen in the south from the misery, all the people are now waging intensive struggles everywhere. But why are you living in this mode? No space to live in our farm or country for a person like you. (Kim, Y-H 1971, 01:02:07).

The exchange has different themes. It again vetoes against Kye-ok's abandonment of her class and makes a direct attack towards, what could be labeled as traditional behaviour for married women. The implication is again that this kind of behaviour is something that women simply cannot afford to do for it interferes with ideological life. The message is then enhanced by pleading towards the national identity of the viewers (ingroup) and emphasizing the menace of the foreign aggressors (outgroup) in especially negative terms such as them trying to enslave Koreans and emphasizing how bad the conditions in South Korea are because of them. Due to the mention of the southern part of the peninsula and *our women*, the importance of shared Korean unity (as Myers notes the North puts great emphasis on race (Myers 2010, 40—41) and Kim Il-sung's role as the saviour of the *whole* peninsula, is implied. It is also clearly stated how people like Kyeo-ok should not be part of the ingroup. Therefore, it can be seen as a threat that those acting against the will of the state will be cast out.

As Jong-ok and the grandfather are constantly at odds with Kye-ok and the mother about Kyeo-ok's marriage, the model characters (Jong-ok and the grandfather) can be seen depicting new viewpoints based on the teachings of Kim Il-sung, which, for example in this case, emphasizes correct ideology over married life. The flawed characters (the mother and Kye-ok) however are stuck in the ways of the past with the grandfather even calling their ideas "feudalistic" (Kim, Y-H 1971, 0:52:17). This is another example of totalitarianism where people not following the leader's ideas are deemed regressive and missing the train of history (Arendt 1950/1958, 345). It can also be seen as a clear example of what Ispas writes about authoritarian regimes molding society to match the leader's prototypicality (Ispas 2013, 111) since the Juche characters act in this "new" way promoted by the leader. Thus, the leader's position is strengthened while also depicting the prototypical behaviour of the ideal citizen for the youth to emulate.

To sum, the film puts heavy emphasis on correct leadership, generational debt, role of women in the society and how, in the end, all the great things that have taken place, have happened because of the leader and the party, and therefore, ideological education is something that no other part of life should interfere with. It also emphasizes the need for the industrialization of the rural areas in accordance with the cultural revolution. In

addition to the theme of generational debt, the emphasis on adopting to new ideas while abandoning old, is present and forms an interesting conflict between these two themes.

7.2 A Broad Bellflower (1987) (도라지꽃)

7.2.1 Synopsis

The film presents the story in two different timelines. In the present, a boy (Se-ryong) and a father (Won-bong) are returning to a remote village the father had left 27 years ago. As the father is not allowed to enter the village anymore, the boy continues alone. The other timeline, taking place in the past, reveals the reasons for the father's banishment. It is revealed that, while the other villagers were hardworking and enthusiastic workers who loved their home village and wished to improve it, Won-bong, even though talented in design, was lazy, hated the village for its backwardness and wished to relocate into a city. He was in love with Song-rim, a woman who, despite also having feelings towards Won-bong, did not want to abandon her village assuring to Won-bong that with hard work, they could make the village prosper. Won-bong however left but not without Song-rim's sister, Song-hwa, making him promise not to return ever again.

In the present, Song-hwa has become the chairwoman of the village which has now become prosperous as Song-rim promised. After Se-ryong arrives to the village and meets Song-hwa's daughter, Tal-lae, she takes him to see her mother. Song-hwa is clearly frustrated after Se-ryong reveals who his father is.

It is later revealed that Song-rim died saving a sheep sent from the government when a typhoon hit the village and a landslide swept over her. At the film's end, Se-ryong begs forgiveness for the sins of his father and he is allowed to stay. As the film ends, images of Song-rim smiling with the Bellflower in her hands are shown. Won-bong however, is shown in tears, watching the village from afar, begging forgiveness from his native place which he is never allowed to return.

The party and the leader are depicted in a highly positive light in the film. The party is established to be capable of taking care of the villages (such as sending tractors to them) but also encouraging the people to work for themselves, not relying on handouts. Kim

Il-sung is depicted to be someone who deeply cares about the *whole* land and its people, due to the blood shed for its independence. The model characters then in turn portray extreme loyalty towards the party and the leader.

7.2.2 Characters

The name of the film comes from the flower Bellflower which according to Won-bong: "blossoms for its root." (Choi et al. 1987, 0:02:20). Therefore, someone who has lost his roots, like Won-bong, cannot bloom unlike Song-rim who is generally referred as the Bellflower. This distinction establishes the difference between the main characters.

The flawed character of the film is Won-bong. While depicted as having a talent in design, his skills are wasted because he does not want to use them to improve his home village but instead wishes to move to a city in search of an easier life filled with attractions and leisure activities. Thus, he is not willing to work to improve his surroundings but instead wants to exploit the work of others.

The most visible model characters of the film are Song-rim and her sister Song-hwa. The villagers could however all be labeled as model characters due to their hardworking nature, loyalty to the leader and appreciation of their home village. Song-rim and Song-hwa however, are portrayed as the clearest examples for the youth to emulate. Their immense devotion to the party and the leader, and their unshakeable faith in the future prosperity of their village due to their own labour, is in clear contrast with the character traits of Won-bong. Especially Song-rim's example of choosing her village over Won-bong, despite loving him, and dying saving the sheep sent by the government, crystallizes the main message of the regime; the party and the leader are superior to one's individual desires, in this case considering marriage, but the people should also be willing to risk even their lives (the ultimate sacrifice) for the leader, as Song-rim's actions demonstrate.

7.2.3 Migration, Individual Desires and Portrayal of Rural People

Migration within North Korea is deeply connected to class. The frustration of Won-bong, and therefore the country's youth, stems from the notion that the officially

classless society has a class system that cannot answer to the changing demands of its citizens, but is adapted from generation to generation as it is. From 1946 to 1987, the year of release for the film, the middle class had more than doubled, from 6,2 to 17 per cent (Choson Chungang Yearbook 1988, as cited in Lee, H 2000, 245). This worried the regime as a new power elite, consisting of highly educated professionals, could make it more difficult for them to maintain the system. This also includes the aspirations of the youth who would naturally replace the older generation eventually. Indeed, in the late 1980's, influences from the increasingly liberated Soviet Union, worsening economy and the material deficiencies brought by it, caused frustration especially for the country's educated youth in urban areas. Increased ideological indoctrination was seen as the solution, naturally including the cinema as well. (Gabroussenko 2018b)

Due to the restrictions in mobility inherited in songbun, the country is regionally very unequal. Location wise, those of lower rank are generally relocated in the northern part of the country (Patterson 2017, 67).

Another important notion related to migration in the country is Pyongyangism which refers to the unequal relationship between the country's capital Pyongyang and the rest of the country. The standard of living in Pyongyang is much greater than in other parts of the country. In addition, the capital offers a vast selection of different leisure activities. (Patterson 2017, 77) It is understandable that people, especially the youth, would aspire to relocate to Pyongyang at some point in their lives.

Migration is perhaps the most visible theme in *A Broad Bellflower*. The remoteness, poverty, underdevelopment and general harshness of the village depicted in the film are established early on. For example, in one flashback, Song-rim and her sister are wondering when would power lines be drawn to the village. Song-hwa also shows general frustration about the village's remoteness with Song-rim putting the blame on the devastation caused by the war, therefore taking blame off the North Korean government.

In the flashbacks, Won-bong is depicted to be a lazy dreamer. As the other villagers are shown working together full of joy, Won-bong is seen browsing through magazines showing images of luxurious city life.

Song-rim however, is the exact opposite. Although having genuine feelings towards Won-bong, she never truly considers leaving the village but rather assures Wong-bong that if they work hard enough, the village will prosper in the future. She is therefore expressing a general message of the North Korean regime, as well as totalitarian regimes in general as Arendt (1951/1958, 346) points out, how despite present hardships, in the future things will get better if people work diligently and follow the teachings of the regime. Generally, totalitarianism relies on the concept of future in maintaining its power because it is difficult to question something happening in the present if the future is the only thing revealing the success of the measures taken in the present. (Arendt 1951/1958, 346) Cheng (2009, 5—6) also writes about the meaning of time in the Soviet Union by referencing Mikhail Heller's ideas. Cheng mentions how Heller speaks of "nationalization of time." (Cheng 2009, 5—6). It means that time is manipulated so that the individual who understands the ideological historical progression and his part within it, is more eager to act according to the state's ideological needs considering the future.

Won-bong however always labels Song-rim's aspirations as useless dreaming. For example, Song-rim says how: "Here is our home, we were born and bred here" which Won-bong replies to: "(...) Don't talk rot. Any place can be one's home if he grows fond of it" (Choi et al. 1987, 00:31:00). Won-bong further complains how difficult it is in the village, especially with all the hard work involved. "What kind of life is it? Can we enjoy a movie? (...) Always digging, sowing, cropping and nothing. A remote mountain with no electricity." (Choi et al. 1987, 00:31:30). Due to the material deficiencies and general hardships, the village could be interpreted as symbolizing the whole country.

As he tries to tempt Song-rim into leaving with him he says how: "We are on a turning point of youth. Everybody has the right to choose his life." (Choi et al. 1987, 0:32:20). These continuous outbursts of individuality make him the clear manifestation of the youth's demand for urbanization and the liberation of mobility which Lee Hyangjin (2000, 160) writes about.

There is also an interesting description of Won-bong as a Woodpecker. When meeting with Song-rim, he imitates the sound of a Woodpecker to surprise her. A deeper meaning can be found as one of the villagers, Pooh, describes a Woodpecker as

follows: "It lays eggs in other's nest, never building its own. (...) Diligent dove hatches its eggs to raise them." (Choi et al. 1987, 00:34:18). In this way Won-bong is described as someone who does not wish to improve his own surroundings but rather abandon it and move somewhere that is already established whereas Song-rim is the "diligent dove" who wants to improve her own surroundings first.

Indeed, in addition to simply discouraging the rural youth of moving into the cities and further disrupting songbun, the regime can also be seen as trying to advance the country as a whole. As Gabroussenko (2018a) notes, the image of the rural areas in North Korea is the backside of socialism which can be cured through technological innovations and eventually the whole country achieving the same standard of living as the urban areas. This notion is further emphasized by, what seems to be a common pattern of thought in North Korea, that new is always good (Gabroussenko 2018a).¹⁴

In *A Broad Bellflower*, unlike in most of the other films examined in the thesis, the flawed character is not given a chance to redeem himself but Won-bong is instead left bitter and alone despite regretting his mistakes, the only atonement given to him through his son, who is allowed to stay in the village. Perhaps this is how the seriousness of the situation, meaning the free mobility demanded by the youth, is acknowledged, since it is stated many times to Won-bong in the film that he would regret his decision to leave the village. To not deliver on that message could have underplayed its importance.

In addition, the decision to let Se-ryong stay could be a sign of faith given to the young people who are willing to learn from the mistakes of the older generation. Emphasizing the youth's importance as the "backbone" of the country was important for the regime in order to address their desire to move into modern areas. The importance for the youth to stay in the rural areas was largely due to the country's problems with food production from 1980 onwards. (Kim, S-Y 2010, 110, 117) The decision to let Se-ryong stay could also be done to depict that entering the dominant group is allowed in right circumstances (Ispas 2013, 105).

¹⁴ This theme could be seen in *When We Pick Apples* as well with the attacks on outdated ideas.

The contrast between Won-bong and the other villagers is also made clear. After watching a film depicting city life, they sing cheerfully on their way back home, praising their village, saying phrases such as: "We've no electric lamp but we like the moonlight. (...) We've no theater but our song sounds beautiful." (Choi et al. 1987, 00:36:31) and "Ah my home, mother's embrace. I'll live here forever my home." (Choi et al. 1987, 00:36:52). Therefore, they are not only living happily in their village but almost praising its backwardness. The film therefore clearly romanticizes rural areas and rural people with one important reason perhaps being the abovementioned importance of these areas in agriculture.

The nationalist sentiments of the land as the "home" or "mother's embrace" echo the observations of Myers on the Worker's party as the mother of the country (Myers 2010, 82) and the general nationalist traits in Juche. In addition, the positive portrayal of rural people is essential as Ispas (2013, 23) argues how acknowledging different factions within the society helps having influence over them. In addition, favouring the ingroup can also increase the social influence of the leader over the ingroup. (Ispas 2013, 90) The positive portrayal of the rural youth can therefore be viewed as an attempt to do just that.

Won-bong on the other hand is visibly excited by the film experience and he starts to imagine himself with Song-rim taking a boat ride in a beautiful city. His views such as: "It'll take a century for us to catch up the city." (Choi et al. 1987, 00:35:12) demonstrate the frustration that the youth of the country might have due to the unequal nature in the development of the country. Therefore, by showing his eventual downfall and prosperity of the village in the present, his actions are less tempting to be viewed as a prototypical behaviour by the rural youth and therefore something for the youth to aspire for.

In addition, there is a repeating song about Bellflower acting as a metaphor for the village. In the lyrics it is described as:

The flower rooted in deep mountains. Does it bloom here for show. To bring a new spring to its snowy home. It bloomed unbendingly. The flower standing unobserved in deep mountains. Did it bloom sweetly for show. To sing a sweet song in its paradisaical home, it bloomed smiling" (Choi et al. 1987, 00:46:18).

The song plays for example as the villagers finally draw electric lines to the village. The song's lyrics paint another contrast between Won-bong and the villagers. They do not care about how they look to others, hence the "does it bloom for show" -section. Won-bong on the other hand laments: "Who would appreciate our new dress?" (Choi et al. 1987, 00:31:34). He is portrayed as vain, and the villagers are portrayed as humble. This way the youth's materialistic desires are addressed and judged, and the rural areas and its people are romanticized.

Soon after viewing the film depicting city life, Won-bong makes an ultimatum to Song-rim that he will leave the village either with or without her. Song-rim declines but they both still demonstrate clear affection towards each other. Won-bong then leaves but only after Song-hwa makes him sign a contract which allows him to never return or being even buried in the village.

In the present, as Se-ryong is shown around the village, it becomes clear that the promise Song-rim made to her sister about how the village would prosper has truly become reality. There is a new impressive club house, a nursery, a kindergarten and a fishpond where fish have been bred. All the young people are also now riding bikes. Therefore, the message is that the material desires that the North Korean youth wish for, can be achieved if they work hard enough. Song-rim has also contributed greatly to the village having served as chairwoman. The buildings based on Won-bong's designs have also been constructed, further emphasizing his tragedy.

Song-hwa, who still cannot stand Se-ryong because of his father, reveals the truth about Won-bong to her daughter who seems to have grown fond of Se-ryong. Even though, Se-ryong assures that he has come to ask for forgiveness and wishes to stay in the village, Tal-lae tells him to leave: "Village folk who built a paradise on this land will not forgive you. (...) Listening to my mother's story since my childhood, I came to realize that struggle is the only source of happiness." (Choi et al. 1987, 00:56:12). This repeats the communist ethos of struggle in order to make better times possible.

Song-rim and Won-bong do however later meet for the last time as she receives a telegram that he is coming to the village. Won-bong does not however plan to move back like Song-rim had hoped, but instead pleads her one last time to join him to

Wonsan where he is planning to go working. Song-rim rejects his offer again: "I'd rather enjoy my own food living in my village than begging for good food in the city." Won-bong answers: "What's the good in that mountain village!?" "Home is home anyway, don't insult your native home" she says and continues: "This is my last advice, your wandering life will never lead you to happiness, you'll regret one day" (Choi et al. 1987, 01:03:35) which is exactly what happens. The mention of "begging" in the city can be also interpreted as a warning for the rural youth who wish to relocate to cities.

7.2.4 Juche

The construction of a suitable social identity for the country's youth, can be discussed by examining the Juche traits connected to the characters. As established, they are prevalent in the young villagers whereas Won-bong lacks them. Thus, social identity for the youth is built through division which Laclau mentions to be essential for the construction of social identity (Laclau 1996, 39, 52). For example, Song-hwa talks about Won-bong with her husband Pooh, who says that: "Won-bong didn't know that happiness is not a windfall but is created by our own hands." (Choi et al. 1987, 00:49:45). The words are in line with Juche's notion of self-reliance by establishing that people should not rely only on handouts by the government but work hard for themselves. On the other hand, the first time Song-hwa is seen in the present timeline she is welcoming new tractors sent to the village by the leader. There is a brief conversation on how the leader used to send all the necessary things to the village first when it was poor but then Song-hwa, as the chairwoman, has said that the village does not need aid anymore since it has become prosperous. Similar balancing with the demand from the regime to not expect handouts while at the same time assuring that the state is perfectly capable of supporting everyone, takes place in other films as well.

Appraisal for work are uttered in other instances: "So the dream is not a matter of future" "Yeah it depends on our will." (Choi et al. 1987, 00:57:47). These examples represent clear Juche thinking in which man is the master of everything and sheer willpower can overcome material reality (Kim, J-I 1973, 164).

Praise and loyalty to the leader is an elemental trait of Juche. In order to connect the youth's social identity to them, their necessity for the state must be demonstrated. Indeed, in a flashback, Song-rim and Song-hwa are talking about an instance when

someone had asked for the village to be demolished because of its remoteness and poverty. The petition had apparently been sent to Kim Il-sung himself who came straight from the battle, almost reaching the village. He had pondered the petition a while before stating that:

” Lowland and highland are all part of our country, you're willing to give up the plot so easily, but we guerillas fought in the vast Manchurian plain for over 15 years to regain every inch of this land.” (Choi et al. 1987, 00:58:25).

Song-rim is clearly emotional as she is reciting Kim Il-sung's words continuing to state how it is due to the sacrifices made by Kim Il-sung and his guerillas that they have this country. ”So we should make this land rich and fruitful”, she continues. ” (Choi et al. 1987, 00:59:00).

Therefore, the message to the youth, who are taught to look up to the leader, is to follow in their footsteps and be willing to make sacrifices for the sake of the country, just like they did. The country is a gift from the leaders to them which follows the general idea presented by Chung and Kwon about the national sovereignty of North Korea as a gift from the leader and his guerillas to the people of North Korea (Chung & Kwon 2012, 128). Poorer areas should not be abandoned as they have been fought for and through similar struggle, they too can prosper. Thus, the idea of independence and hard work, inherited in Juche are connected into the theme of the film.

To sum, the most striking message of the film is against migration to cities which is in line with the demand of the youth towards more urbanisation. From the aspect of a repressive system, this can be seen as defending the unequal caste system, songbun. In addition, the importance of rural areas for the country and the responsibility of citizens to improve the country on their own, is emphasized. Thus, rural areas and their people are depicted in a very positive manner. In addition, Juche ideals of independence, hard work and most importantly, loyalty to the leader and the party, are highlighted and they too are especially connected to rural people.

7.3 The Girls in My Hometown (내 고향의 처녀들) (1991)

7.3.1 Synopsis

The film tells a story of Sin-nae a young woman who is distraught when a soldier, Sin-song, working to construct a dam to her village, loses his eyesight while saving another soldier in an accident. The event leads Sin-nae's friend and the soldier's girlfriend, Un-ha, to abandon him. Un-ha has also been greatly influenced in a negative way by her sister who has come back to the village from an unnamed foreign country. As time goes by, despite people around her saying how difficult it is to take care of an invalid, Sin-nae, out of affection and feeling a sense of duty, eventually gets married with the soldier. In the end Un-ha, inspired by Sin-nae's actions, abandons her sister and vows to change her life and dedicate herself to the improvement of the state, just like Sin-nae has done.

7.3.2 Characters

The model character of the film is Sin-nae. She is hardworking and ideologically pure, remaining loyal to the party and the leader. Most importantly, she is willing to sacrifice a life of convenience in order to marry the disabled soldier and take care of him for the rest of her life despite everyone warning her on how difficult her life will be. She is not however depicted to be as perfect as Song-rim from *A Broad Bellflower* in how she is not shown to be immediately ready to marry the soldier, instead showing clear contemplation over her future with him.

Nevertheless, she is characterized admirably by others. For example, she begins to send letters to the soldier who dismissed her due to losing faith in love because of Un-ha's betrayal. The nurse who treats him however says how the soldier could "never find a girl so pure and chaste." (Pak 1991, 01:09:54a). While highlighting Sin-nae as a model character and, considering the film's context, an ideal woman, this line can also be seen as emphasizing the patriarchal nature of North Korean society which demands women to be "pure" (Myers 2010, 87–88).

Once again, the other villagers could also serve as the model characters in that they are always shown to be hard at work and being ideologically sound, holding Un-ha in

contempt for her decision to leave the soldier. The political instructor of the village, who Sin-nae first accuses of not understanding her position, could especially be labeled as model character, since he is also taking care of his wife, a disabled soldier.

The flawed characters are Un-ha and her sister, with the sister being irredeemably corrupted by foreign ideas. In Un-ha and her sister, the flaws of the new generation of North Korea (from the regime's point of view) are symbolized as the sisters are vain, interested in foreign matters and most importantly not willing to sacrifice their personal desires for the greater good.

7.3.3 Family and Marriage

The film opens with a text: "This film is dedicated to the disabled soldiers and their wives." (Pak 1991, 00:00:33a). Indeed, appreciation for the soldiers who have been disabled during their service, and for the women still choosing to marry them and care for them, is a major theme in the film. From a military point of view, the film focuses on a contemporary topic, with the injury happening working in a construction site. The theme is thus again connected to the larger theme of sacrifice. In addition, it can be seen as a more practical message where the government wants people to take over some of the responsibilities it used to be responsible for.¹⁵

A flashback depicts Sin-nae and her friends as little children. A friend asks Sin-nae: "Who do you want to marry? Which she replies to: "A boy in Pyongyang." Her friends ask whether she likes Pyongyang which she replies to "All girls do." Then the flashback moves forward to when they are older. They ask the same question again. One of them wants to marry "a writer", another "a scholar" and the third "a handsome man". (Pak 1991, 00:41:03a) The theme also continues in another scene where the villagers are seen working hard but still with a smile on their faces singing:

"Some girls marry a handsome boy. Some girls marry a rich boy. I won't marry either of them. I'll marry a boy with a kind heart. I won't marry for looks. I'll marry a boy with a kind heart." (Pak 1991, 00:57:02a).

¹⁵ Also depicted in *A Broad Bellflower*.

Then the song is inverted from the boys' point of view.

The lyrics clearly disturb Un-ha who feels guilty for abandoning her boyfriend for superficial reasons. The other girls say how they are very proud after hearing the rumor that one of them wants to marry the disabled soldier (they do not know it is Sin-nae). Therefore the social identity being constructed for the youth is to choose their spouse based on their "kind heart" meaning correct Juche spirit and ideological understanding, and not on vain matters such as their status in society or wealth and looks.

Thus, marriage, as everything else in people's lives, should be based on the demands of the state. Still, as the film depicts, the soldiers and the girls who aspire to be with them, all happen to be attractive young people. Therefore, while pursuit based on "vain" desires is judged, sacrifices made for the state are still rewarded. This is something that Gabroussenko (2016a) also notices.

Un-ha's sister's corruption is demonstrated many times in the film. For example, in a scene at Un-ha's house she asks the mother about what kind of men the mother thinks the girls of the cities likes these days. The mother answers: "Party members or discharged soldiers probably." which makes the sister laugh. She says that things might have been like that in the old days but today they like:" (...) well-off young men or boys whose parents are living abroad." The mother however does not think there are many girls like that. "You know nothing mom, that's a trend now. Sacrifice for others... That's crazy! Time's changed, mom!" (Pak 1991, 00:15:56a) Her views emphasize the importance of wealth and foreign experiences in spouses and are clearly in violation of the Juche spirit. Especially noticeable is her contempt for the notion of sacrifice, something that the regime deems very important in constructing the youth's social identity. By contrasting the youth to the idealistic views of the older generation, in this scene Un-ha's mother's, it is specifically highlighted how the youth is the problem. In addition, by specifically referring to girls living in the city, the urban youth is directly contrasted to the generally exemplar values of the girls in the village. As Ispas notes, it is essential to acknowledge different factions within the society to have influence over them (Ispas 2013, 23).

The purity and ideological correctness of Sin-nae is established as she realizes that the only man she has ever "thought" of has been Ri Su bok¹⁶, (Pak 1991, 00:42:25a) a revolutionary hero. "Since I read his last poem. He always lives in my heart." (Pak 1991, 00:43:12a) The wounded soldier has, in a similar way, now won her heart. The scene also again emphasizes Sin-nae's chastity.

After her realization, she confesses to the political instructor of the village on how she wants to marry the soldier, but he swiftly denies her desires. "Who will marry him, a blind man?" Sin-nae asks and then blames the man for not caring about disabled people. (Pak 1991, 00:45:30a). It is then revealed that the man's wife is a disabled soldier. The wife seems to be regretful for her husband: "(...) I'm sure his heart's filled with tears. (...) He's not indulging in his own happiness" (Pak 1991, 00:48:55a) she continues. The woman gives her blessing to Sin-nae's desires about marrying the soldier and wishes for her to not change her mind offering also to help her. As Sin-nae leaves, the political instructor says how: "You'll have to suffer your whole life. Can you manage that?" (Pak 1991, 00:52:20a) again highlighting the harshness of the life as a spouse of a disabled person. Therefore, the film does not try to paint a positive image of what it is like to be married to a disabled person but emphasizes the need for sacrifice.

After returning to the village from the hospital, the disabled soldier again rejects Sin-nae. Even after this, she continues to try to win his affection. She gets approval from her mother to pursue him and leaves the village to search for him. She eventually finds the soldier and his mother with the latter thanking her in tears for her efforts. The soldier is further away playing his flute. She starts to sing the song he is playing: "How much the soldiers loved their home..." (Pak 1991, 00:26:52b) Then the two finally embrace and he asks Sin-nae to marry him. There is a great shot of their silhouettes holding hands in front of the sun. Thus, their ideological compatibility is made clear and blessed by Kim Il-sung who, as Lim Jae-cheon (2015, 95) mentions, is generally symbolized by the sun.

¹⁶The importance of Ri Su Bok in North Korean propaganda cannot be understated. He allegedly wrote a long letter where he confessed his willingness to sacrifice his life for the country, which he allegedly then did, by jumping in front of machine gun fire during the Korean war. His letter has been widely studied in North Korean schools for decades and especially during the famine of 1990's the youth of North Korea was encouraged to become like him. His story is however almost a direct copy of a Soviet myth of Alexandr Matrosov who, in a similar fashion to Ri, jumped in front of machine gun fire to help his comrades. (Lankov 2009) Considering the influence the Soviets have had on North Korean culture, it is not surprising that his story was adapted.

Later, after they have gotten married, they return to Sin-nae's village where the army arrives to show their respect to Sin-nae due to her marriage to the disabled soldier. The commander says to Sin-nae how: "Your true and noble comradely love set a fine example of Korean women to all of us officers and men. Women like you encourage us to give our lives unhesitatingly for the country and the revolution." (Pak 1991, 00:41:44b). Sin-nae bows to them in tears. The exchange thus emphasizes the idea of women as a reward for the soldiers for their efforts and encourages women's to be that reward. Also, prototypical behaviour for the regime is depicted (Ispas 2013, 111).

7.3.4 Foreign Influences Corrupting the Innocence of the People Korean People

Since the social identity constructed in North Korean films is centered around Juche and all the values it holds, all foreign influences form a threat towards it. As Arendt notes, all information leaking from outside into the totalitarian system, forms a threat towards said system (Arendt 1951/1958, 392). However, even if one is exposed to foreign influences, for example, through media, their social identity still aligns with the majority culture in North Korea. Therefore, individuals will search for behavior that strengthen their self-efficacy by participating in the shared rituals of the country (Shavitt 1990, Tajfel 2010, as cited in Matherly 2019, 102—103). The film seems to greatly rely on this notion, clearly making the flawed characters outsiders who do not follow the traditional rituals of North Korea and are therefore cast out. As more foreign influences get into the country through the years (as has happened in North Korea (Yoon 2015, 167–184)) it is probable that the threat for the dominating culture relying on false exceptionalism becomes larger. Considering the year of release of the film, the disintegration of the Soviet Union was most likely a great concern for the regime.

In the beginning of the film, Sin-nae, Un-ha and another girl are talking during the night watching the stars. They talk about the beauty of the stars and how some, not all, humans are like them. Some, they say, only look for their own well-being. They also discuss whether man is selfish by nature which Sin-nae disagrees to because, according to her, humans are not born selfish as proved by the innocence of babies. The three girls then discuss how one of the girls' brother-in-law had written from abroad mentioning how bad things are there with people saying things such as: "Pleasures are all I want in life. What's the good of talking about humanity struggle, emancipation and the like?" The girls are horrified about this kind of attitude and wonder: "What would the

revolutionary martyrs say if they were alive?” (Pak 1991, 00:01:32a) In this way it is hinted that there is something that corrupts people abroad, since, as it was established, people are not born selfish. It is then suggested that the North Korean system makes people, like the three girls in the scene, to judge this kind of selfish thinking. Because of the system, they have maintained the innocence people have when they are born.

Indeed, innocence and purity of its people are traits that the North Korean regime has emphasized from the beginning. Kim Jong-il has for example called North Koreans “the purest and cleanest in the world” (Kim, J-I 2006, 87, as cited in Myers 2010, 179). The regime has also spread the message of innate high morality of its people. Similarly, to the three girls who equate innocence with being a child, the official propaganda of the country has done the same. Also, not claiming physical superiority towards foreigners, in fact quite the opposite since for example Americans are always portrayed as being taller than Koreans in official propaganda, adds to the supposed virtuosity of the people in how they, as the whole country, are like children who wish nothing more than to be left alone in peace but who are continuously being bullied by vicious foreigners. (Myers 2010, 81) This way they can therefore claim moral superiority.

In the film, the social identity of the three girls, based on being pure, innocent and the most virtuous in the world, is later threatened by foreign influences and all the anti-Juche traits they hold, such as individualism, materialism and greed since the only people demonstrating these values are Un-ha's sister and Un-ha, who have been exposed to foreign influences.

In North Korean cinema, the main characters are often women. According to B.R. Myers, the purity aspect is also connected to this. The female lead characters' mannerisms in North Korean propaganda demonstrate innocence and purity in general but also when it comes to romance (Myers 2010, 87–88). Through this, the social identity of the young women in the country is encouraged to be innocent in all aspects, including romantic relationships, and vanity in all aspects is frowned upon. A good example is given in the film when Un-ha and her sister are coming back from the cinema and Sin-nae witnesses the older sister mentioning how all the boys in the cinema were looking at Un-ha because of her new foreign dress. Sin-nae is clearly disgusted by this.

Comparison between North Korea and foreign countries are made in other instances as well. For example, the disabled wife of the political instructor tells a story on how she once read a story about a girl in Seoul who wanted to sell herself to support her sick father and how after reading the story she could not sleep because she felt sorry for her and kept thinking about her country and the party. As Ispas notes, the leader can strengthen his position by utilizing his distinctiveness compared to the outgroup (Ispas 2013, 90). Thus, the film depicts the horrors of the negative outgroup (capitalist South Korea) to strengthen the social identity of the North Korean youth to be based on the demands of the regime.

In addition, Un-ha and her sister can be heard listening to, presumably Western music as the lyrics are in English, which is described by their mother to be more noise than music with Un-ha agreeing. Un-ha is also unsure about the new foreign dress her sister has brought for her which she assures is in fashion. Un-ha also labels her sister's ideas about marriage being corrupted by her time spent abroad: "You're infected with bad ideas." "Listen, you talk like someone from a capitalist country. It sounds nothing socialist. It's all nonsense!" Which the sister replies: "People are now busy raking in money to become rich. This is the reality today." (Pak 1991, 00:16:59a) These are early hints of the sister's corruption, and that Un-ha is resisting. It is not surprising that in the end Un-ha changes her ways, but the sister does not.

Indeed, Un-ha finally realizes the error of her ways in a scene where her sister's vanity is demonstrated again. The sister is doing her make-up telling Un-ha not to worry when she feels guilty about the disabled soldier. Un-ha's new boyfriend has also gone abroad. Her sister tells her that: "Some girls marry the poor and others marry the rich. It's a matter of fate. You must take advantage of things." Un-ha finally sees how bad her sister truly is. "I feel ashamed to have a sister like you." She cries how alone she feels because people make fun of her and how she misses her friends. "I feel like being isolated. I miss my friends." (Pak 1991, 00:38:22b) Thus, the scene clearly depicts the alienation an outgroup member can feel in a Juche society and thus makes the Juche ingroup feel more tempting.

The last straw is when Un-ha and her sister witness the army and the villagers welcoming the newlywed Sin-nae and the soldier as they return to the village. Un-ha is so distraught that she faints. Later, when the sisters leave it starts to rain and thunder.

They were supposed to leave the village but Un-ha now wants to go back and "(...) live and die in my village." In the scene, the sisters are figuratively and literally standing in a crossroads. Un-ha tells her sister not to "ever come to my house." (Pak 1991, 00:43:58b) When the sister leaves, the wheel in her suitcase breaks possibly representing the doomed nature of her lifestyle (as well as the bad nature of foreign craftsmanship if the suitcase, like much else the sister has, is of foreign design.) Un-ha's emphasis on staying at her home village also highlights the message given in *A Broad Bellflower* about the importance of staying in the rural areas.

In the end, Un-ha comes to the wedding party held in the village, now noticeably wearing a traditional Korean dress instead of a foreign one, and starts to play the accordion as the others join in.

7.3.5 Juche and Songun

In *The Girls in my Hometown*, the army is praised. For example, the villagers can be heard saying how: "Our soldiers are doing splendid job for the villagers. The soldiers are benefactors to us. So, we're one with them." (Pak 1991, 00:12:08a). This emphasizes the military's role in North Korean society not only as an instrument of armed defense but due to their general contribution to society as demonstrated by, for example, them partaking in mining in the beginning of the film.

In accordance with Songun, it is naturally only the military personnel who have become disabled or dead due to partaking in construction projects, who are celebrated as heroes of the country. In reality, non-military personnel suffering from the same fate are discriminated. Due to poor working conditions and large partaking of the military in construction projects, there are lots of accidents and therefore also many new "heroes". It is also in accordance with the trend of emphasizing self-sacrifice in North Korean propaganda, beginning from the late 1980's. Marrying a disabled veteran was then, in turn, the sacrifice civilians needed to make in order to pay their debt for the veterans. (Gabroussenko 2016a)

Despite Songun not officially beginning until 1994, Kim Il-sung emphasized the importance of unity between the citizens and the army as being important for the unity of the country (Hassig & Oh 2000, 109). This perhaps explains the strong emphasis

given on the military in the film. In addition, the disintegration of the Soviet Union has been seen as one of the rationales behind the military first -politics. It served as a mean of protection for both, inside and outside, threats (Kwon 2003, 295). The appraisal is important due to some part of the population being envious of the army due to its special position in North Korean society. The friction between them had to be eased (Myers 2010, 87). This of course applies to the youth as well, whose identity needs to be based on the established values set by the regime.

When the disabled soldier is sent off after his accident, he and the farm chairman discuss Choe Hui-suk, a female soldier who died in the anti-Japanese struggle. Her eyes were gouged out by the Japanese and her last words were: "I lost my eyes but I can see the victory of the revolution." (Pak 1991, 00:27:08a). There is therefore a clear parallel drawn with the mythical war heroes of the past and the soldiers of present day who might get wounded, not in war, but building the society, their sacrifices nevertheless not being any less important. As mentioned with the example of Ri Su Bok, the use of these mythical heroes would become even more common later during the famine to instill faith into the minds of the North Korean people (Lankov 2009).

The emphasis on the soldiers therefore already hints of the Songun policies that would begin in the following years. This is also a message to the youth who the disabled soldier also represents. There is also a song sung where it is said how: "Soldiers and people are one in Kangwon province." (Pak 1991, 00:35:07a) In addition, Sin-nae says how: "Affinity between soldiers and civilians is a long tradition in our village." (Pak 1991, 00:19:34a).

In one scene, Sin-nae has a conversation with her uncle about how the villagers seem to think that the girls of the village are different compared to the girls during the wartime. Indeed, the uncle says how: "In wartime many girls died helping the army. But what's worse than leaving a friend in trouble?" referring to Un-ha. She then asks him if there will be "another hero like Ri Su Bok?" which he says there certainly will be. (Pak 1991, 00:36:06a)

The poem Ri¹⁷ allegedly wrote is a clear plead for the youth: “Is there any life, hope or happiness nobler, greater or more beautiful than giving up my youth for my country.” (Choe Y-N) This line therefore connects to themes of the importance of the military and the youth for the country, and most importantly, the importance of sacrifice for the state. Indeed, Sin-nae continues the theme and how: “If everyone cares only for himself, ignoring the national interests, what'll become of the farms and the communities? It pains me to think of the change that's come over Un-ha.” Her uncle answers: “Selfishness will spoil the revolution and usher in capitalism.” Sin-nae asks him to somehow force Un-ha be with the wounded soldier but he says that: “She needs her own experience in love and sacrifice.” (Pak 1991, 00:37:18a)

In the end as Sin-nae's and the soldier's families meet, Sin-nae's mother says how: “It's the Party that reared my daughter.” (Pak 1991, 00:48:32b) therefore establishing the party as the true source of her daughter's inspiration. She had indeed forbidden her daughter the marriage earlier because she felt that Sin-nae might blame her later if she would start to regret the marriage. Therefore, it could be interpreted that the party is the true family which knows better what is good for the people compared to the family unit.

Sin-nae assures everyone how: “I'll stay by my husband as long as I live, considering it my duty (...) This is my vow to the Party.” (Pak 1991, 00:50:18b). The county party committee then agrees to arrange their wedding. At the wedding afterparty, the “I won't marry a boy for her looks” song is sung again but the lyrics are a little different. Firstly, the soldiers, previously saying how the girls of the village are ugly (because of the way the disabled soldier was treated by Un-ha) now happily sing how they are beautiful. This time the lyrics also say how: “Wise are the youth of my country” (Pak 1991, 00:52:12b) demonstrating the positive change Sin-nae has brought to the village. Sin-nae then wonders where Un-ha is which the guests then answer by mentioning how she had said how sorry she was and vowed to change her ways.

Sin-nae then goes to Un-ha's house where she asks Un-ha to come to her wedding. She says however that she is too ashamed to join. Sin-nae then says how “ This isn't a love struggle for man. This is a matter of moral obligation to take care of a disabled

¹⁷ It is interesting that Ri is mentioned in two occasions in the film. As it has been already mentioned, he is most heavily connected with the famine which would not begin until a few years after the release of the film. The film indicates that his presence might have been important even prior to that.

soldier.” ”Though fatherless, we've grown up happily under the Party's care.” (Pak 1991, 00:53:16b) Sin-nae vows how they can never be separated and forgives Un-ha.

Thus, according to the film, marriage to a disabled soldier is a duty that loyal citizens, emphasis on women, should be willing to commit to. It does not have to be romantic but rather, as Sin-nae says, “a matter of moral obligation.”

In the wedding party, Un-ha goes to her knees and apologizes for everyone saying how she has sinned and even her death would not make up for it:

A girl like me can betray the country and the Party. I thought you'll never forgive me. I make a vow to you. Like Sin-nae and her husband I'll give my all to the country and the revolution. (...) I'll dedicate my whole life to the disabled soldier too. I swear before you. (Pak S-B 1991, 01:00:51b).

Everyone agrees to believe her.

Juche traits are also emphasized in the film. For example, in the opening scene Sin-nae says how: ”A human being is the most beautiful and noble. Some say it is flower, or sea, or mountain. But most noble of all is a human being.” (Pak 1991, 00:00:44a) clearly echoing the Juche notion of man as the master of the universe and how he can and should control nature being above it. In addition, after approval from Sin-nae's sister on her aspirations for the disabled soldier, another song is heard, in it the lyrics say how: ”The girl will keep the Party's wishes in her heart.” (Pak 1991, 01:07:12a) emphasizing the loyalty Sin-nae is having for the party, as the youth should in general.

The film ends as a direct request of the narrator is heard: ”Sin-nae! People may praise her. Papers may highlight her virtues. But will it compensate the troubles she'll go through from now on? Please cherish girls like her. They're jewels of the country.” (Pak 1991, 01:02:16b). Then the film ends with a shot of the night sky full of stars and Sin-nae saying: ”Let's live a life as pure as those stars!” (Pak 1991, 01:02:56b) therefore, implying how people should live like Kim Jong-il, generally referred to as a star (Lim J-C 2015, 95).

7.3.6 The Youth and Generational Debt

The difference between the old and the new generation is established in the film. It is mentioned numerous times by the older generation living in the village how the youth has changed negatively. In addition to the already mentioned scene with the older villager reminiscing about the good deeds of the girls during war time, in another scene, another older villager also praises the women of war time and how he himself also helped the soldiers. Then he recites a proverb of the province: "Be an evergreen pine rather than a deciduous paulownia." then asking Sin-nae what she thinks the meaning behind the proverb is. "It means never to change." (Pak 1991, 00:31:08b) she answers. Thus, the lesson for the youth is to not change but rather look for the elderly who, as pointed multiple times during the film, sacrificed their youth for the county and follow in their footsteps. The older generation is also generally portrayed as being more ideologically sound than the youth which further emphasizes the importance of constructing social identity through them. It also interestingly contrasts the film with *When We Pick Apples* which emphasizes change and abandonment of old ideas.

In a scene after the accident on the mine and seeing Un-ha's sorrow, Sin-nae wonders:

Hot blood of youth, what is it you've taught us? Beauty, or ardent love? Youthful years! When we crossed your threshold, did we only ask for our happiness? Didn't we vow to dedicate everything precious in our life to our glorious country, to our mother Party. (Pak 1991, 00:13:16a).

She can relate to Un-ha's distress and is struggling with her own youthful desires and the demands set by the government. In the next scene she even defends Un-ha who has not visited her boyfriend in the hospital while the others mock her.

After Sin-nae is leaving the political instructor's house vowing to take care of the disabled soldier, there is a song with patriotic lyrics emphasizing the need of sacrifice of the youth for the good of the country: "This is my homeland (...) Images of patriots in my heart. They gave their youth to the country. For that I love them with all my heart." (Pak 1991, 00:53:23a).

In sum, where Sin-nae represents the unchanging ideals of Juche, Un-ha represents the change that has happened for the youth of North Korea partly because of foreign influences as seen through her corrupt sister. She however also serves as an example on how the youth can change by following the right kind of people, such as Sin-nae and the revolutionary martyrs mentioned throughout the film. The main theme of the film seems to be for the youth to continue the legacy of sacrifice done by the previous generations, especially in the context of marriage and the military and how the sacrifices of the soldiers will be rewarded.

7.4 Myself in the Distant Future (1997) (먼 후날의 나의 모습)

7.4.1 Synopsis

The film is about Sin-jun, a care-free young man living in Pyongyang. He is lazy and generally lacks ambition, depicting willingness to live off his famous and wealthy parents. Things change however when he meets Su-yang, a complete opposite of him, being the platoon leader of a shock brigade. Su-yang however does not like Sin-jun due to his characteristics. He later tries to impress her by coming to work to her home village. Su-yang however sees through his efforts and is not impressed. It is only later, after Sin-jun starts to understand how important it is to succeed by one's own efforts, that Su-yang starts to appreciate him. He goes back to the village, not to impress Su-yang but to actually help the villagers by working on an alternative fuel. Eventually, having achieved the revolutionary spirit, he succeeds, learns to appreciate the rural areas and therefore gains the affection of Su-yang.

7.4.2 Characters

Sin-jun is the main character and the flawed character of the film. At first, he is depicted as a privileged man who is willing to even commit corruption such as using his parents' fame to get through exams. He likes to play videogames and listen to radio while lying on his bed displaying his material well-being and laziness. It is in the end, after following the examples of the model characters of the film, Su-yang and his own parents, that he changes his ways completely to serve the state. By criticizing Sin-jun, the social identity of the upper-class youth of the country is put into question.

As mentioned, Su-yang and Sin-ju's parents act as the film's model characters. They are a complete opposite of Sin-jun, being hardworking, not caring about wealth or fame, insisting on achieving merits on their own and not relying on the labour of others. However, again the rural people, in this case people living in Su-yang's village, are portrayed in a very positive manner, them also having achieved the Juche spirit.

7.4.3 Generational Debt

The importance of the youth to contribute to the society on their own, is connected to the broader theme of generational debt. The film repeats the idea from the other films of the thesis in how the country is seen as a gift from the previous generation to the new generation whose changing attitudes are now endangering it.

Comparisons are drawn between the older generations (especially those who fought for the country during the Japanese occupation and in the Korean War) and the youth, through stories told by the older villagers. For example, Su-yang's father mentions how the struggle of the Taehongdan villagers "(...) can't be compared with that of anti-Japanese fighters or pioneers of this land." He continues to tell a story about a "martyr" buried in the village, who is later revealed to be Sin-jun's grandfather. After the war, Kim Il-sung, assuring that the village could prosper, sent useful farming equipment to the village. In gratitude, Sin-Jun's grandfather worked to make the crops grow. One day however, the "reactionaries" attacked and set the forest on fire with Sin-jun's grandfather defending the forest with his life. He mentions how: "It is necessary for you rising generations to cultivate the spirit of martyrs who thought of the leader and future of the country first of all." (Jang 1997, 01:11:46) After hearing the story, Sin-jun gazes at the benevolent sun in tears.

The story changes him and he starts working on the alternative fuel since: "We can't rely on expensive foreign oil." He continues: "I'm a man who must work more than others." (Jang 1997, 01:02:10) acknowledging how he has to "make up" for the wasted years of his past.

He however leaves the village, making everyone feel like he betrayed them. It is revealed that he only goes to get help from his mother, a scientist who is away on a trip when he arrives. He continues to work on the problem alone. While at his family house,

looking at his father's trophies now impresses him greatly. He has started to grasp the revolutionary mind.

Through a flashback, Sin-jun's mother, who is visiting Taehongdan, reveals to Su-yang how Sin-jun decided to later return to the village. In an assignment through his organization, he was to play his grandfather in a play. In the play, in a very meta-fashion, he continues to explain the main themes of the film. He tells a younger boy:

“Even the crow does its duty by feeding parents in return. But you are doing nothing for the motherland. I think you should work more for the country so that you can remember your past with pride.” (Jang 1997, 01:16:26)

The main message is thus for the youth to get through the famine by fighting as the previous generations did when things were also bad. This means taking an active role on their own, not relying on the state, or in the case of upper-class youth such as Sin-jun, their family background.

7.4.4 Migration, Songbun and Comparison between Urban and Rural Areas

The generational debt is linked to family background and therefore to songbun. After returning home from the play, Sin-jun looks himself on the mirror and sees himself as his grandfather with the makeup and the jacket full of medals still on, this being perhaps the deciding factor on how he wants to live his life: he wants to make the image reality, to see himself in the future as such a man.

His grandmother tells to his mother how: “A person has two faces. One face is given by your parents. And another is formed by yourself. Such a noble name as martyr or hero cannot be given by any parent.” (Jang 1997, 01:18:21). The father continues:

That's why those who fought at the risk of their lives to restore the lost country and to defend it are called fighters and veterans and highly respected. Your maternal grandfather is also respected because he devoted himself for the future of the country and the rising generation during the arduous period after the war. If one lags behind the times, he is as good as dead. (Jang 1997, 01:18:57).

As Arendt notes, these kinds of veiled threats specifically referring to one being left behind in historical progression, are common in totalitarian propaganda (Arendt 1951/1958, 345). Considering the year of release of the film, 1997 during the famine, the message emphasizing individual effort was perhaps even more important than before due to the problems the state had with for example food distribution (Chung & Kwon 2012, 159). In addition, the threat of death during the famine was naturally very real, one did indeed have to fight to survive.

It is also inherited in Juche itself how every human has a biological political identity. In North Korea, it is emphasized how the biological identity given by the parents is far less important compared to the political identity given by the party and the leader (Lankov 2007, 201–202). This message in the film can be seen as a direct plead for the youth on how to build their social identity. As social identity depends on the context and affects the way people act in specific situation according to the social group (Ispas 2013, 19–20), this could be the regime's way of making the youth to identify themselves from the social group of the family state which therefore affects how they act in specific situations, in this case most likely in a beneficial manner for the state. In this way unity within the country could be increased as, from the context of family, people would not view those outside their family unit as the outgroup.

As the "two faces" -metaphor implies, the family however *does* still matter in order to justify songbun and the hereditary status of the leadership succession in the Kim dynasty, especially considering the year of release of the film when Kim Jong-il officially took control of the country. As a part of a new generation, everyone must work hard in gratitude for those who gave the country its independence and the difficult times people have had (the famine) are nothing compared to the struggles Kim Il-sung and other revolutionary heroes had.

As Sin-jun is about to leave Taehongdan the first time, Su-yang is asked to write a letter of recommendation for him. He confesses how the reason he came was to meet her again. She does not reject him at first but when he says how they cannot live at the village and how "(...) everybody wants to go to Pyongyang" she agrees to but says: "Even when I'd go there, I'll not go with you." (Jang 1997, 00:38:38) This way the film acknowledges the youth's desire for urbanization and the rejection of this desire by

the model character therefore emphasizes the prototypical behaviour the regime seems fit.

The message of gratitude and the youth's desire for urbanization is also asserted by the conversation between Sin-jun and Su-yang after they meet in Pyongyang after Sin-jun had left the village for the first time. When Sin-jun confesses that he still wants to be with Su-yang, even though he has left the village, he asks whether Su-yang would like to live in an apartment like his forever. Su-yang answers that she would, but only because she was the one taking part in building it. Su-yang remembers the difficult times and doubts she had building the houses and how a political instructor helped her by reminding that the apartments were for those who were fighting for the revolution, again reminding of the debt of the youth to the older generations, but also how those who succeed in their efforts for the country are rewarded as the films of the thesis also imply.

According to Su-yang, everyone who had lived in the houses had been "excellent and respectful people." (Jang 1997, 00:50:13) until Sin-jun. Therefore, the criticism towards the Pyongyang elite is aimed only towards people like Sin-jun, while those living there in general have, as Su-yang says, earned their status. This is understandable considering that the people discussed would be higher party officials or other valuable people for the regime, such as scientists.

Su-yang then says how previously Sin-jun might have been able to live in the glory of his parents but not anymore: "It's not a time we could live that way." (Jang 1997, 00:51:53) referring to the famine. She then states to Sin-jun her wish of him becoming a man on his own, not living under the achievements of his parents. Her words begin to haunt Sin-ju, acting as a starting point to his change into a Juche character.

Indeed, before this, his grandmother had asked him when will he become like his father which Sin-jun replies to: "Father's honor is my honor, grandma" There is yet another comparison between generations when the grandmother tells how: "At your age we fought war risking lives and after war we rebuilt the country." Sin-jun answers that the times are now different. "Then, you have only to enjoy it?" the father asks. "All are living in the spirit of "arduous march." but the boy thinks its "temporary." (Jang 1997, 00:06:30) The grandmother then puts blame on the parents for lack of proper education

for the boy. Thus, the importance of proper ideological education is emphasized in this film as well and is particularly reminiscent of *Why We Pick Apples*.

There is also a scene in which Su-yang, while in Taehongdan, is taking care of the graves of the revolutionary heroes. One of the graves belongs to Sin-ju's grandfather. Sin-ju is surprised how respected his grandfather is and thinks about mentioning his relation to him in order to impress Su-yang, again demonstrating his willingness to take advantage of his family. Through this, Su-yang is shown to respect and cherish the sacrifices of the previous generations while Sin-jun is willing to exploit them.

When it comes to comparing urban and rural areas, there are many shots depicting Pyongyang as a vibrant metropolis with vast selection of different leisure activities, which Sin-jun gladly enjoys, such as drinking beer in a fancy restaurant. Taehongdan is however also depicted as a beautiful place with vast fields and hardworking and friendly people.

The youth of the village differ greatly from Sin-jun. They can for example be heard singing: “Friends of passion where’s the merit? It’s in realizing the Party’s intentions. The country loves us most. Who are living for the future.” (Jang 1997, 01:07:35) They also sing: “ (...) We're youth, future of the country. Country loves us most who live for the future. Ambitious friends, where do you go. We go towards the bright future of the country.” (Jang 1997, 00:26:11) They understand their importance for the country and have immense faith for the future despite difficult times.

They also recite poems. When it is Sin-jun's turn, he recites a humorous poem, but the villagers prefer revolutionary ones, reciting them from memory. Sin-jun then also tries to recite a poem by Ri Su Bok. The poem deals with youth with lyrics saying:

I am a youth of liberated Korea. Precious is my life. However my life, my hope and happiness are no more precious than my country. To dedicate my life to the one and only fatherland is the most glorious life, beautiful hope and great happiness. (Jang 1997, 00:28:51).

He cannot finish the poem, so the villagers finish it for him. Thus, they are clearly more revolutionary than Sin-jun as they follow the example of Ri, as the scene highlights the

purity and revolutionary spirit of rural people, also adding to their character traits' the correct understanding of generational debt. The poem also highlights the importance of sacrifice for the youth.

The distinction made between the villagers and Sin-jun emphasizes the difference between the rural people and well-of urban citizens. The positive image painted of the countryside and its people is perhaps made in order to decrease migration from the rural areas to the cities and even encouraging migration from the cities to rural areas as Sin-jun, after grasping the Juche spirit, does. The film does not however try to send the message that life in the rural areas is easier than life in the city. While the village is depicted to be very modern in having tractors and other modern equipment, the main difficulty they face is lack of oil, a common problem as Su-yang says, perhaps acknowledging the real-life problems of workers. This could also be a hint by the regime on how the real blame for the problems of the country stem from abroad due to the economic sanctions, which, as Chang (2006, 109) notes, were set on the country in the 1950's. The villagers reveal however that they are working on a substitute fuel. The idea would be in line with the regime generally blaming economic sanctions and natural disasters for the famine as well as encouraging people to achieve almost literal miracles to battle these problems (Gabroussenko 2014).

The villagers' pure spirit is also shown for example when they solve sudden technical problems during farming by competing in who works the fastest with sickles, demonstrating how, in the end, sufficient food supply is not a matter of technical equipment but the will of the workers which is connected to Juche idea of mind over material.

7.4.5 Foreign Influences, Work and Education

The flawed character and the model character are contrasted again in how the flawed character is generally interested in foreign matters (Sin-jun mentions having studied foreign studies) whereas the model character is nationalistic and highly respects North Korean traditions (Su-yang prefers to wear traditional dresses). This idea therefore resembles the Soviet youth molding process where emphasis was also on nationalism and rejection of foreign influence (Tsipursky 2016, 32).

Sin-jun's vanity is depicted again when he asks her mother to help transfer Su-yang into a cooking school because he views it as more feminine work compared to working in the shock brigade. His mother does not however mind her work. Su-yang does not care for vain things either since, despite being offered a place in high school, she decides to go work on a farm "to solve the problem worried by the Party." (Jang 1997, 00:19:47). Sin-jun's father then suggests how Sin-jun should also visit Taehongdan, Su-yang's, home village, to see his grandfather's grave and to " (...) learn how the revolutionaries lived in the past." (Jang 1997, 00:21:52). The ideas presented are similar compared to *When We Pick Apples* as traditional "feminine" models are criticized while hard manual work for the state is encouraged even for women.

In the village, after Sin-jun ends up in a tractor accident because of his sheer will to make amends with his past, his reckless behaviour is criticized by the villagers since "our party values the technicians." (Jang 1997, 01:10:22) These kinds of lines reveal the emphasis put on technology and hard sciences by the party. There is also a demand to "criticize yourself sincerely." He is however informed instantly how the criticism he received "is not criticism but love for you." (Jang 1997, 01:11:30) just like perhaps, criticism from the party is only a way of love. This could also be connected to the mutual criticism sessions practiced in the country (Cho, Kwak & Lankov 2012, 208).

7.4.6 The Notion of Future and the Youth

The themes of generational debt and future are deeply connected in the film. For example, in the beginning of the film Sin-jun explains his decision to leave Pyongyang to settle in the north as: "If son wastes away what father earned, grandson would be a beggar. To make next generation prosper" he continues "There shouldn't be my sort." (Jang 1997, 00:03:29). He summarizes the moral of the story or at least the fears the regime might have for the country's youth. According to the film, there are responsibilities when it comes to people passing on and learning from previous generations. People in the present must realize the sacrifices made in the past, and be willing to make sacrifices themselves, in order to achieve a prosperous future. The theme is emphasized by the lyrics of the song playing in the opening: " Born in this blessed land. Could I wish to enjoy only an easy life." (Jang 1997, 00:01:13).

Indeed, after becoming a Juche character, Sin-jun says how: "I'm happy. Whenever I remember the "arduous march" I would say that I lived as the Party wished me to. These days I live with pride." (Jang 1997, 01:24:01). It is understandable why the regime would like the youth's social identity to be based on these kinds of values where pride and happiness in life are found through serving the party.

The reason for the emphasis on the future in the film is most likely due to the famine. Therefore, the youth, already frustrated with how things are, must be made to have faith on things getting better in the future, a common trait in totalitarian propaganda (Arendt 1951/1958, 346).

While being critical of the upper-class youth in Pyongyang who are willing to exploit their status, the film also praises the urban youth. For example, Sin-jun's father tells how designers the age of his son, are now competing against him and also recites Kim Jong-il who said that: "Anything we failed to do can be done by our sons but not wrong education of them." (Jang 1997, 00:14:58). This can also be seen as an effort to legitimize Kim Jong-il's position as the heir of Kim Il-sung considering the year of the film's release when he officially succeeded Kim Il-sung after the three-year mourning period of the latter's death (Buzo 2007, 164). Considering the status of Kim Il-sung, no one would question whether he would have given the proper education to his son. In addition, the emphasis on ideological education is prevalent in this film as well.

In the film's climax, Sin-jun finally manages to get the tractor running on an alternative fuel on top of the hill they have tried to conquer. In the process he must burn some of his clothes, his shoes for example, since he needs a bigger fire to ensure that the tractor keeps going. This is perhaps addressing the lack of fuel and other commodities North Koreans have suffered during the famine and emphasizing innovative ways to combat those shortages, even with personal sacrifices. Sin-jun serves as an example for the youth to be willing to sacrifice material well-being for the good of the country. Su-yang is also there to clear the road as Sin-jun drives with his tractor towards the sun.

The villagers celebrate Sin-jun as Su-yang's father says how: "Our dear General taught there's nothing impossible for a man who loves future." (Jang 1997, 01:35:51). The lesson, is that despite great difficulties in the present, in the future things will become better if people work enough and even learn to "love the future".

It is then shown how Sin-jun gets his first medal and is starting to realize the vision he had when he looked himself in the mirror dressed as his grandfather. A montage follows, showing him continuing to work on the farm with a plane helping in the farming in addition to a shot of Azaleas.¹⁸ The lyrics say: "Not to regret today. When I write my life story in the future. I'll render distinguished services and give pleasure to the country." (Jang 1997, 01:37:07). This is indeed what has happened to Sin-jun who can be seen enjoying working on the vast golden fields under the sun. There he meets Su-yang who now gives him her respect. "I'm but a beginner", Sin-jun however says. "From now I must work hard to enrich the treasure left by former generation. For tomorrow and for the next generation." (Jang 1997, 01:40:07)

The film then ends with shots depicting the village prospering and the farmers using technology such as combine harvesters. The narrator tells: "As many flowers form a garden, so many beautiful stories decorating our times, tomorrow of this land will be more beautiful. The country will bless our young men who are living for the sake of tomorrow." (Jang 1997, 01:40:52).

In sum, while the film is sending a similar message as *A Broad Bellflower* in discouraging emigration to urban areas, the main message is about generational debt to the older generations, the party and the leader, with heavy emphasis on future. Through Sin-jun, specifically the well-off urban youth are addressed, and they are expected to contribute more towards society themselves and not rely on the privileges given to them by songbun. As Ispas notes, it is essential to acknowledge different factions within the society to have influence over them (Ispas 2013, 23). The messages' importance can be seen stemming largely from the hardships of the famine which calls for similar kind of attitude as with the older generation during the Japanese occupation and the Korean war.

¹⁸ In this scene, the best suited significance for the Azalea is perhaps acting as a symbol of hope which is one of its attributes (Lee, W-Y 2002, 23). Therefore, it perhaps emphasizes the bright future young people, such as Sin-jun, can bring to the country. In the context of the film, especially the youth of the Songun and Arduous March era are celebrated.

7.5 The Schoolgirl's Diary (한 녀학생의 일기) (2007)

7.5.1 Synopsis

The film tells the story of a high school student Soo-ryun, who feels neglected by her father, a scientist, who is always away working. The father, unlike Soo-ryun, does not care about fame or material, saying how working to improve the state is enough for him. The father's attitude and lack of titles is something that Soo-ryun gets then later teased about in school.

She lives in an old house with her sister, mother and a grandmother. As the film progresses, her relationship with her family gets worse. However, after her father has a scientific breakthrough and through that, recognition from Kim Jong-il himself and a new apartment, she finally learns the importance of dedicating oneself to the state.

7.5.2 Characters

Soo-ryun is the main character of the film as well as the flawed character. Her depiction differs from the other female characters of the thesis since she is portrayed as a teenager who has mood swings, yearns for independence and longs for her absentee father. She could even be compared to a teenager in a Western film or a TV-show demonstrated by phrases about her father such as: "He isn't even a father!" (Jang 2007, 00:32:48). Her flaws are depicted to be mainly about individual and material desires and unwillingness to embrace the family state instead of her own family unit.

The model characters of the film are Soo-ryun's parents. The father is working directly for the state and the mother helps him alongside her own work at the library by translating science books for the father to read. While the father is depicted to be feeling regretful about how little time he gets to spend with his family, he still chooses to work for the state. The mother is the same; even after she is diagnosed with cancer, she continues to work until the doctors finally stop her.

The lack of young model characters (before the redemption of Soo-ryun) is interesting and sets the film apart from the other films of the thesis. Overall, the film does not paint a particularly positive image of the youth until the end.

7.5.3 Individualism and Materialism

The film opens with a flashback of Soo-ryun as a little girl. The first shot of the film is of the Mickey Mouse back bag on Soo-ryun's back. This feels surprising considering the usual hostility towards everything American in North Korean society. It could be interpreted to be a symbol of the character's materialistic and individual desires that the North Koreans could connect with American culture. Soo-ryun then narrates how her greatest wish as a little girl was to live in an apartment.

The film portrays songbun in an interesting manner. While the model character (Soo-ryun's father) clearly rejects the need for social recognition whereas the flawed character (Soo-ryun) aspires for it, the film ultimately rewards the family after the father's scientific breakthrough with all the things Soo-ryun wished for. The film seems to forward the message that an individual should not make their life choices based on improving their social status or material well-being but rather on what the state needs. Simultaneously, the film says that if one succeeds in advancing the regime's goals in a significant manner, they will get material and social recognition. Social mobility within the system is therefore implied while it is, in reality, very difficult to move upwards within the system (Robertson 2016). Again, favouring the ingroup instead of the outgroup increases social influence of the leader over the ingroup (Ispas 2013, 90). Thus, rewarding the members of the ingroup (Juche youth) makes sense. Also, the perceived ability to enter to enter the dominant group can lessen tensions between the dominant group and the subordinate groups (Ispas 2013, 105).

Indeed, individualism and materialism are the main negative traits attributed to Soo-ryun. She can be heard saying: "My life belongs to me." (Jang 2007, 01:05:04) and how her father "doesn't even know me". (Jang 2007, 00:32:43). She also sometimes feels absent and is shown fighting with her mother. She also rebels by telling her teacher that her father is dead. In addition, gaining individual recognition based on trophies or material goods is something that Soo-ryun desires. For example, in one scene, Soo-ryun is studying at her friend's house where she can be seen admiring all the pictures with important people and various acknowledgements her friend's parents have received.

Her desires are then contrasted against her parents. It is revealed in a flashback that the father could have received a doctorate and with it, an apartment, but decided not to, in order to concentrate on his work. After hearing about the father's decision Soo-ryun breaks down in tears and says how she hates him.

Soo-ryun is also very excited when her uncle visits the family house and brings her and her sister fashionable new clothes while also proposing a trip to Pyongyang. The enthusiasm for the clothes is another sign of Soo-ryun's materialism. The excitement over the uncle's proposal to visit Pyongyang could also be viewed similarly as it is the main hub for attractions in the country and a desired place of living for the youth.

7.5.4 Education and Science

Education in the film is heavily connected to individualism through individual recognition and titles gained through education. Soo-ryun views these as something that will bring forward both material well-being and human capital. Her social identity is built by comparing her life towards her peers, whose parents have gained recognition.

Her indecisiveness regarding the future is a typical trait for a teenager and it causes frustration for her father. Her indecisiveness is also contrasted to her schoolmates who already know their plans for the future saying: "I'm joining the army" and "I'm going to university." (Jang 2007, 00:53:14) This could be viewed as a message from the regime to the youth that instead of daydreaming and thinking about too much what they, as an individual, want to do, the youth should do that which benefits the state. In the case of Soo-ryun, she should listen to her father who, during their discussion about her future after high school, says how: "From now on, one cannot live without sciences." (Jang 2007, 00:26:03).

Soo-ryun however later rejects her father's wish for her to study science. She says to her teacher that: "My life belongs to me. My father leads a loser's life." (Jang 2007, 01:05:04). Again, the need for acknowledgement is clear when Soo-ryun shows disappointment over the fact that there is no picture of his father with Kim Jong-il. The teacher then mentions that there are scientists who only gain minor success in their lives while others can achieve major breakthroughs. He says how even the small successes are something to build on and "that is how the Motherland progresses." (Jang 2007,

01:07:05). This is a message for the youth to have patience in their efforts for the betterment of the country and perhaps again send the message that the improvements promised by the regime can take time.

While the nuclear program of the country is not mentioned, the emphasis on the importance of science could be linked to it due to the country conducting missile launches in 2006 (BBC 2006). It is also not explicitly mentioned what kind of a job Soo-ryun's father has but he appears to be a computer engineer based on how the breakthrough he finally reaches deals with operating the factory with computers.

Scientists became prominent characters in North Korean cinema in the 1990's and the 2000's although their importance in society had been emphasized already from the 1960's. Unlike the earliest rare portrayals of scientists before the 1990's, the self-sacrificing and heroic scientists caused no conflict between the intelligentsia and the peasants. (Gabroussenko 2020b) In *The Schoolgirl's Diary* this is depicted in how the father works together with younger female factory workers with no signs of elitism. In fact, it is only Soo-ryun who presents this elitism when he witnesses his father working with the female factory workers.

During the Kim Jong-il era, the scientist characters were most likely presented to increase unity in the changing country while prior to that they were depicted to be clearly subpar to workers and party cadres having to be, for example, continuously instructed by them (when regular workers had actually very little power) (Gabroussenko 2020b). The film therefore condemns Soo-ryun's unwillingness to study science but also her elitist attitude towards those “beneath” scientists.

7.5.5 Family and Marriage

Considering that Soo-ryun's perhaps greatest resentment towards his father stems from the lack of time he is spending with his family, family is an important theme in the film.

In one scene, Soo-ryun's grandmother expresses frustration about the situation with the father: "All this for the success of the father. But why aren't things advancing? To be honest, I've had enough." (Jang 2007, 00:34:06). The film tries to acknowledge the general frustration the citizens might have considering the living conditions in the

country and how, just like in the film, eventually things will get better. Also, when the mother falls ill, in what is revealed to be cancer, without even telling the father, the grandmother says how: "You have fallen ill by dedicating yourself to him." The mother however replies: "A scientist cannot succeed if he must look after his family." (Jang 2007, 0:59:02) The message is clear; in order to improve the country, personal sacrifices, even considering one's health, must be made. As Gabroussenko (2020b) notes, the themes of sacrificing one's health and family matters is a common theme in the films portraying these "hero" scientists.

Later, Soo-ryun talks with her mother on how she does not wish for her life to resemble her parents' lives and questions whether they are happy together. The mother then questions her about the nature of happiness by saying that many people think she is not happy because she works so much. She however argues that a person is happy when she does something she can be proud of. Soo-ryun calls her a liar who keeps telling that to be able to live with herself. Therefore, while the lack of father at home and the workload of both parents is depicted as having clear negative connotations to the family unit, Soo-ryun's mother demonstrates how happiness can be achieved by serving the state. This scene also depicts Soo-ryun's individual nature with her clearly supporting the idea of a "romantic" marriage whereas the parents seem to view it in a more practical way and, most importantly, subordinated to the well-being of the nation. This is an important message for the youth of the country. Although marriage is important in order to have children, it does not need to be romantic but rather a partnership of two ideologically pure individuals who work together in advancing the regime's goals. Therefore, the film represents marriage similarly as the North Korean films of the 1960's and 1970's where mutual revolutionary mindset was the main reason for marriage and served as a way to avoid typical marriage conflicts. (Gabroussenko 2016b).

Following in the footsteps of the leaders and those following his ideas, is a major theme in the film. As common for North Korean cinema, the lyrics used in the songs of the film emphasize the film's main messages. A song that is repeatedly heard in the film connects the theme of family to Juche and to the idea of putting the country before one's own family, following the example of the leader. In an earlier part of the film, Soo-ryun can be seen singing the song. As the lyrics mention how Kim Jong-il is leaving traces in the snow and making his way to the front, Soo-ryun is shown studying diligently, a clear

indication of how she has started to finally follow the leader. The song becomes even more relevant in the end when she, having further grasped the Juche idea, has decided to study science and has attended a ceremony for new university students. Her parents are not able to join due to their work, but she however receives a recording of her father singing the song to her. In the recording, the father tells to Soo-ryun how the leader is also an ordinary man with a family, yet he still travels every day of the year. The father continues by saying that if his path resembles the Dear Leader's path and if his work can improve the country, he wishes "for nothing else". (Jang 2007, 01:25:18).

The absence of the father in the film can be compared to the absence of the leader. He is also humanized by mentioning how he too has a family of his own which he is always separated from due to his dedication to the country. (Kim, S-Y 2010, 318) This is important considering the idea how the youth's (and everyone else) identities are intertwined with the leader (Myers 2010, 126–127). Hence, the reason to acknowledge his absence is to assure that it is not in vain. Humanizing Kim Jong-il could be connected to the notion in social identity where the strength of a political leader is heavily connected in his ability to represent the essential traits of "us" (Ispas 2013, 71). By mentioning how the leader too puts the country before his own family, this kind of prototypical behaviour is encouraged.

Soo-ryun's father's words are heard as she is walking along the school hall listening to the recording and going outside to smell the Azalea flowers.¹⁹ In the same montage, it is announced in the news how Kim Jong-il visited the factory Soo-ryun's father worked in after which Soo-ryun is shown getting praised in class.

When she goes home, her grandmother informs her that the father's workplace has decided that they can move to a new apartment since that was Soo-ryun's dream. Next, Soo-ryun is shown in the balcony of the new apartment next to Kimjongilia flowers.²⁰ She can also be seen looking down from the balcony to herself as a young child, perhaps depicting how hard work and dedication to the leader will eventually be rewarded. However, as the ending reveals, the work is never finished.

¹⁹ In this scene, the Azaleas perhaps symbolize her transformation into a model female citizen of the country which the flowers can also be seen representing (Lee, S-S 2008, 194—195).

²⁰ Perhaps symbolizing the leader as the enabler of her dreams which are now fulfilled, in addition to the presence he now has in Soo-ryun's life

Indeed, as the film ends, Soo-ryun is seen writing a letter to her parents about the path they have taken and how it is "full of only love and sacrifice." (Jang 2007, 01:27:23). She writes how they follow the Dear Leader with all their hearts until their last day. A montage follows, showing the parents continuing to work while a song is sung:

"You and me call him our Father, our Father who watches over all the families of the nation. We follow you to the end of the earth and sky, we listen with joy the footsteps of our Dear General." (Jang 2007, 01:28:03).

The father is seen boarding a train without no one knowing how many years he must work again while the mother happily waves to him as his train departs. Soo-ryun is also there, finally on the same path with her parents, and through them, with the Dear Leader just as the lyrics of the song suggest, the whole nation is.

As Gabroussenko notes (2020b), the importance on sciences at the cost of one's health or familial relations has been prevalent in other North Korean films as well. Thus, the regime has tried to strengthen its prototypicality (Ispas 2013, 111) by encouraging this kind of behaviour for decades.

The same applies for marriage which does not need to be romantic but instead a union of two people who are willing to support each other in order to help the state. As Immanuel Kim (2018, 82) points out, the ideal marriage in the country is more akin to a "political union" and in literature, marriage is not a source for happiness unlike political life which success is then measured in how the individual has served the state. Similarly, one's identity is constructed in relation to the state first before one's own family.

Therefore, a father and a mother are workers first, parents second and the union is that of workers, not lovers. Ideally, the wife's role is to support the husband in his efforts for the state. There are no disputes between them, as well as no romance. The film depicts these similar traits.

Despite the situation with the father being away is not depicted to be easy, it is still shown how the dedication and pure ideological consciousness is the only way for people to lead happy lives.

To sum, Soo-ryun can be seen as a representation of the country's youth whose individualistic, materialistic and social desires are addressed by the film. Through the example given by her parents and finally herself at the end of the film, the film tries to correct these attitudes. Thus, the message from the regime is for the youth's social identity to be built on advancing the state's goals instead of their own, regardless of whether they get awarded for it or not and being willing to sacrifice even their health and family, while at the same time depicting that if they do work hard, their desires can be rewarded.

7.6 The Name Given by the Era (시대가 주는 이름) (2009)

7.6.1 Synopsis

The film begins as the main character, a young woman named Jin-ok, decides to go work to a shock brigade despite getting admission into a university in Pyongyang. Her friend Yon-hui stays behind in the capital and the two send letters to each other throughout the film. Jin-ok's decision to turn down the possibility to study in a prestigious university greatly impresses Yon-hui.

At the brigade, Jin-ok is depicted as working hard and declining the pleads of her superiors for her to go to university. In the end, she and her team of other youths demonstrate their value and the power of proper ideological mindset despite being looked down by their elders and the dam is completed.

In the climax of the film, Jin-ok and the battalion leader of the shock brigade, Jong-min, must plant an explosive in order to guide the stream threatening the construction due to heavy rain and thus save the dam they are building. Together they manage to set the explosive and escape in time. Later the two also get married.

In the end, after completing the dam and being celebrated by Kim Jong-il himself, Yon-hui understands the revolutionary spirit Jin-ok has and vows to also dedicate herself to improve the state and follow the examples of Jin-ok and the leader.

7.6.2 Characters

The film starts as Jin-ok and Yon-hui meet after the former has taken an entrance exam to university with the latter having almost graduated. When Jin-ok wonders how she could ever catch up with Yon-hui, Yon-hui says how Jin-ok has:” a precious thing that I haven't. The revolutionary spirit of soldiers.” (Kim, H-C 2009, 00:00:59). This is indeed made clear throughout the film as Jin-ok is depicted to be perfect in almost any standard emphasized by the North Korean government. She also takes the Royal Azalea flower with her to the shock brigade.²¹

Jin-ok is therefore clearly the most visible model character in the film. She is hardworking, independent and extremely loyal to the leader and therefore willing to make great personal sacrifices in order advance the goals of the state. She is demonstrated to not be vain as, for example, in the beginning of the film when they enter a jewelry store with Yon-hui, she explains how she does not know or care much about make up or fashion. She does however agree to receive a hairpin from Yon-hui but she will only put it on after her entrance to university, demonstrating her determination. Later, she also chooses to get married wearing her shock brigade uniform rather than a wedding dress.

Other model characters are the battalion leader Jong-min and his sister Jong-sim. Jin-ok meets Jong-sim briefly before coming to the shock brigade and is greatly impressed by her determination and loyalty towards the leader. Her insistence in wanting to come to work to the shock brigade, and her eventual death, saving an innocent girl from drowning, are what inspire both Jin-ok and Jong-min to later come and work to the shock brigade. Jong-min is also proven to be extremely dedicated to the state, matching Jin-ok in his revolutionary consciousness and therefore paving way for their eventual marriage.

The film does not particularly have any flawed characters, but Yon-hui could be labeled as one. However, her flaws are very minor, she basically contributes as the character in that, unlike Jin-ok, she is not willing to sacrifice her education for the good of the

²¹ This perhaps emphasizes her character as a revolutionary female of the country considering one of the things Azalea symbolizes is Kim Jong-suk (Lee S-S 2008, 194—195).

country and that she fails to (at first) understand the reasons for Jin-ok's decisions. It is again at the end of the film, that the flawed character vows to change her ways having witnessed what the model character has done.

7.6.3 Youth, Songun and the Future

In several instances, the strength and spirit of the youth is emphasized in the film. For example, at the shock brigade, all the young workers are very enthusiastic about the positive outcomes of the dam and work very hard, demonstrating the Juche idea of man over matter. In one exchange one of them says how: "I feel we can easily match excavators." with another one saying "Do you know the source of such conviction?" and then answering: "It's because we are youths." "The youths of Songun Era who won the "Arduous March" together with the General." "Now let's show our merits." (Kim, H-C 2009, 00:29:51) they say and everyone cheers. The way the unity between the leader and the youth is emphasized could be done in order to the leader to seem as defending the common cause with them, therefore strengthening his prototypicality (Ispas 2013, 68).²²

It is important to notice how the youth have now "won" the famine with the leader, again establishing the idea of the films on how the youth's social identity is constructed through the leader and his policies. In another instance, it is also uttered how: "Victory depends on the leader." (Kim, H-C 2009, 00:44:59) emphasizing the importance of correct leadership.

The mention of Songun also highlights the importance of said policy for the state. In fact, the youth and Songun policies are linked again later when Jin-ok and Jong-min are about to get married. After hearing about Jin-ok and her husband wanting to "wear sweaty uniforms instead of showy wedding costumes", one of the older commanders at the brigade says how: "They want to learn the patriotic devotion of the General. How nice they are!" "So are the youths of Songun Era", (Kim, H-C 2009, 01:12:34) the other commander replies.

²² In addition, the enthusiasm of the youth could be connected to two campaigns that took place during 2009, the year of release for the film. The 150-Day Battle and 100-Day Battle which followed it, were connected in realizing the "Strong and Prosperous Country" program by 2012, Kim Il-sung's 100th birthday (Myers 2011, 81–82). Then again, emphasizing the model characters' hardworking mentality is prevalent in all the films examined.

In addition, Jin-ok's exemplar actions are compared to the army as when she digs a cellar for the vegetables with her own hands the others say how: "She's done just as our army does." However, the others work hard as well as they immediately say "Comrades, let's overfulfil today's plan by 150%." "50% is Jin Ok's, isn't it?" (Kim, H-C 2009, 00:13:32) they can be heard joking. Also, the image of Jin-ok in her shock brigade uniform, planting the Royal Azaleas on the place Kim Jong-il once stood, is sure to stimulate some corners of the North Korean viewer's consciousness.²³

In a similar manner to *The Schoolgirl's Diary*, the (few) faults of the youth are connected to gaining recognition. The young workers can be seen admiring one of the older workers', Jae-sik's, achievements from a photo book. They specifically admire the many orders he has received. Jae-sik however asks the youth: "Do you know what is dearer than orders? It's our conscience." (Kim, H-C 2009, 00:34:57) thus lifting ideological correctness above fame. In addition, soon after Jin-ok has arrived to the shock brigade, one of the commanders asks the young workers who will be in charge of cooking. "What has cooking got to do with our wish?" they ask. "You seek honor and fame only." the commander replies and continues: "You must do devotedly any job given to you." (Kim, H-C 2009, 00:08:10) Jin-ok then volunteers to cook if the others are sent to the main sector where they all wanted. This can be interpreted as putting emphasis on following orders of the regime and ignoring one's own wishes.

Later, the earth the young workers have been digging is found to not be hard enough for the dam. Jin-ok however thinks that the ground is still good enough which the older commander is shocked about. He says how the datum, used to measure the hardness of the ground, is also used to measure the "conscience." (Kim, H-C 2009, 00:36:55). After hearing the news Jae-sik plans to inform Jin-ok that her crew of youths cannot be the standard platoon anymore because of their error. The youth then plead him not to do that. He answers: "Do you know what is bigger than ten prides? It's an indelible mar in one's heart." (Kim, H-C 2009, 00:37:40). He then tells a story about a time he did not correct a flaw of his when building a dam despite knowing there was one because he wanted fame for the completion. He says how he still regrets it.

²³ Here the Azaleas perhaps symbolize, in addition to the already mentioned Kim Jong-suk, the Songun era (Lee, S-S 2008, 194—195).

When a heavy rain is threatening the construction, the senior commanders decide that a battalion, including experienced older soldiers, should take charge of protecting the construction against landslide. Jong-min, who has had faith in Jin-ok throughout the film however says how her platoon should be in charge of the mission. The older commander is doubtful about their skills but Jong-min vows that: "Now they realized clearly that they should give only pure conscience to our dam." (Kim, H-C 2009, 00:41:01).

After completion of the dam, against a backdrop of a rising sun, a female narrator explains how: "General Kim Jong-il visited the completed Kumjin River Hungbong Youth Power Station."²⁴ As the camera shows the now completed station and the workers celebrating, the narrator continues: "He looked round it and said it's great that the country completed such huge edifice only in five years. He said it demonstrated well the backbone of our youths to the world." (Kim, H-C 2009, 01:14:15) Great importance for the youth is therefore given and they are labelled as being able to achieve great things by following the guidance of the party and the leader.

7.6.4 Work and Education

In the beginning of the film, as Jin-ok and Yon-hui are departing, Yon-hui tells to Jin-ok how: "We, mountain folks, all dreamed of studying in Pyongyang." (Kim, H-C 2009, 00:02:05) addressing, what certainly is, a dream for many young North Koreans. Indeed, Jin-ok gets accepted into the school but does not appear, having joined the shock brigade. Thus, one of the clearest divisions between Jin-ok and Yon-hui is depicted in that the former is willing to put the country before her personal desires.

The desire for encouraging the youth to be willing to choose working in a shock brigade instead of going to university is perhaps linked with military first -politics. Kim Jong-il himself has said how the military is "the university of the revolution," and "a magnificent school of ideological, intellectual and physical training." as well as him also being referred to "love warriors most of all." (Myers 2010, 85).

²⁴ An actual construction project in North Korea, Kumjingang Hunbong Youth Power Station, located in Hamgyongdo.

In addition, according to North Korean defectors, higher education has become something that the newer generations aspire to achieve. Especially those students who are fortunate to graduate from Kim Il-sung University, are envied. It is also the aim of the parents to get their children educated for them to secure a stable white-collar job for example from the service industry. (Lim, S-H 2007, 20)

In North Korea, the choice of jobs is not left for the individual to decide since employment is controlled through central economic plans. The workers are then stationed and commanded to those sectors of the society in need of labour. Songbun plays a significant role in determining where people are stationed. In fact, songbun and central demand apply for education also, therefore making higher education a privilege only those with suitable backgrounds can achieve. Central planning again heavily affects the number of students and the fields they are allowed to study, based on the state's demand. (Lim, S-H 2007, 19–20, 22) Considering this, and Kim Jong-il's personal admiration for the army, the social identity of the young students of the country is to be molded in a way that puts the military before personal desires in education, and most importantly, does not disrupt the existing class system.

The contrast with, for example, *The Schoolgirl's Diary* is clear however as that film specifically emphasizes sciences without many references on the military, aside the obligatory mentions of the leader making his way to the front.

When a chief secretary arrives to the shock brigade to tell Jin-ok to go to university, he also tells the commander how they will soon receive much needed cement. Everyone else needs it too but "Electricity counts first." (Kim, H-C 2009, 00:14:57). The collective urgency of the dam and Jin-ok's determination to sacrifice her education over it, are thus established.

The situation is similar compared to *Myself in the Future* when the Juche character Su-yang goes to her home village similarly to solve a specific problem of the state. Indeed, a flashback shows Jin-ok and the others working hard in the rain when, a letter by Yon-hui, in which she tells the reason behind Jin-ok's determination, is read. She also pleads the commander to let her attend university. In the letter she tells how Jin-ok, born in the mountains, attended the best middle school in Pyongyang "thanks to the fatherly General." She tells how Jin-ok had heard that "The General even went to Panmunjom to

see the soldiers. Covering him against enemy's imminent firing the soldiers shed tears whispering hurrah." Encouraged by them she "decided to be a soldier defending him." (Kim, H-C 2009, 00:54:20)

While Jin-ok and her crew are working, another one of the soldiers reveals her inspiration to join the shock brigade. She used to be a publications supplier which meant that she was the first to find out news about Kim Jong-il. As the camera zooms slowly towards her face she gets more serious: "But I saw him only in the newspapers and TV. I was sure I could see him on the completed dam. So I joined the shock brigade." (Kim, H-C 2009, 00:55:58). It is therefore revealed that Kim Jong-il, and the will to serve him, has been the unifying motive behind the main characters of the film to join the brigade. In a similar way, the social identity of the North Korean youth, is constructed around the leader in the films in the thesis.

As the film ends, there is a reunion between Yon-hui and Jin-ok. Yon-hui sets the hair pin Jin-ok bought in the beginning of the film, on Jin-ok's hair, with Jin-ok now having earned it despite not entering the university as she promised. This perhaps signals how graduating from the university is not necessarily the grandest achievement one can have but rather doing what the leader wants. The hairpin shines so bright that Yon-hui can only say: "You're a pearl and jewel known by the General!" Together they look up at the sky full of stars as Yon-hui continues: "Our father General Kim Jong-il has set you up as a pearl and jewel of the Songun Era known throughout the country." "He finds out all pearls and jewels of this world and make them shine." Jin-ok continues. In typical North Korean movie fashion, Yon-hui, taking herself after the model citizen Jin-ok, vows to "devote my pure conscience to the General all my life to become such pearl and jewel as you." (Kim, H-C 2009, 01:20:07) They then embrace.

7.6.5 Marriage and Family

After the completion of the power station, Jong-min and Jin-ok decide to get married and hold the ceremony at the brigade. Jin-ok then sends a letter to Yon-hui about deciding to stay at the shock brigade instead of going to university. She says how she will not regret because "(...) regret comes from an impure conscience." (Kim, H-C 2009, 01:08:20). Yon-hui understands her decision and decides that the only thing she can do is to send a wedding dress to her. This notion of regret is something that can be

related to wasting one's life and not progressing among the rest of the country, a notion that has been used for example in communist propaganda (Arendt 1951/1958, 345).

There is great debate among the commanders on which wedding dress should Jin-ok wear; the one Yon-hui sent from Pyongyang, or the one she received from Jong-min. Jin-ok rather wants to wear the shock brigade uniform which Jong-min agrees to.

Just like the workers, the film depicts Kim Jong-il as someone who has also worked devotedly all his life for the country and always wearing a field uniform, referring to his trademark clothing. As a devoted follower of his, Jin-ok thus feels she does not have the right to remove her uniform either, so great is her gratitude towards him. The film thus shows how the positively depicted model characters modify their lives based on the examples given by the leader(s), therefore promoting the regime's prototypicality (Ispas 2013, 111).

As the wedding ceremony begins, another song, praising Kim Jong-il begins:

So much missing the father (...) I wish I could go ahead to cover him from rain and wind. When could we have our General with filial duty as his children. (...) Along the snowy road he covered comes the spring of happiness. Thanks to General's devotion we have nothing to worry about. When could we repay the General for all pains he's taken for us. Oh, our General, our father." (Kim, H-C 2009, 01:13:08).

As the song plays, everyone cheers and Jin-ok is crying again, thinking about the leader. The newly wedded couple then salute, honoring their pledge to the leader and to the shock brigade on their wedding day. In addition, later, when Kim Jong-il visits the completed power station, the girl who previously mentioned how she came to work to the dam to meet him, climbs the observatory in tears shouting "Father General!" (Kim, H-C 2009, 01:15:34) possibly having not been able to witness his visit. The theme of family state and filial piety to the leader, established in the lyrics, are therefore clearly seen in the actions of the characters depicting the implementation of the idea presented in North Korean education about the leader as the parent of the people (Kim, H-C & Kim, D-K 2005, 16, 186—187).

7.6.6 Juche and the Concept of the “Gift”

The youth's strength, pure consciousness and their motivation in general are linked with Juche. On a symbolic level, the Azalea, which Jin-ok brings with her to the brigade, can be seen as symbolizing Songun (Lee, S-S 2008, 194—195). Therefore, she is very worried about the flowers when the commanders almost make her leave the brigade to go back to university. Also, the Azalea is revealed to serve a great motivation for her for having joined the brigade as she reveals that she got the flower from a demobbed soldier, Jong-sim, who wished to work in the shock brigade but died accidentally saving a girl from drowning and is later revealed to be Jong-min's sister. The Azalea is taken from a place Kim Jong-il was once standing when he came to visit Chol Pass where Jong-sim, was stationed at the time. Jin-ok wants to make the flowers bloom on the dam once it is completed.

After Jin-ok is made the platoon leader, the soldiers gather around to discuss the recent problems they have had. Due to technical difficulties (excavators have been broken) the work pace has decreased. The older soldiers remind the younger ones how the project was started without any excavators. The youth however reply how the workload has increased while manpower has not, and how the remaining gap should be filled by machine power. Jin-ok however disagrees: "I think that the spirit of self-reliance will give us wisdom and courage that makes everything possible." The commander agrees: "The spiritual strength will make everything possible." Jin-ok then suggests that: "Our platoon will replace them for clay loading. We'll show which is stronger, men or machines." The other male soldiers however ridicule her efforts: "Does she know an excavator's loading capacity?" (Kim, H-C 2009, 00:26:54) The commander still supports her suggestion.

The situation demonstrates the competition between the elderly and the young and the will of Jin-ok to show what the youth is capable of. Also, the references to self-reliance and mind over matter are pure Juche values. The constant mentions of the significance and capabilities of the youth could be reflecting the coming generational change in the country's leadership from Kim Jong-il to Kim Jong-un which would in fact take place two years after the film's release. In general, the mind over matter -aspect can also be interpreted as addressing the material and technological shortages in the country and encouraging people to overcome these obstacles.

Jin-ok continues to support her comrades saying how: "Our sweat will make the colossal dam completed soon." The others gain faith from her and they start to talk about the benefits of the dam: "First we'll cook and heat rooms with electricity." "All houses will overflow with laugh of happiness." 2nd, drinking water will be completely solved." 3rd, full irrigation and no flood." "The day of powerful nation is quite near." (Kim, H-C 2009, 00:28:55).

In scenes like this the film tries to encourage people to act for the government in order to improve their lives. This would then lead to improvements in material well-being, which is somewhat ironic after praising how the human will is much more important. Naturally, the scene also addresses material deficiencies

In the next scene it is revealed that they succeed beyond expectations in their task, thus demonstrating the power of human will over materialism and the strength the youth of the country hold. One of the older soldiers says to Jin-ok: "You showed clearly spiritual strength has no limit." (Kim, H-C 2009, 00:33:20). Everyone celebrates as the song goes:

"Vying to work in difficult sectors we'll make exploits for nation. Creation of our struggle is a bouquet of youth for country. We'll be in the van to build The General's powerful nation." (Kim, H-C 2009, 00:33:38).

There are also shots of billboards crediting the team as "Miracle Makers". (Kim, H-C 2009, 00:33:20) Therefore, the notion of the country encouraging the people to make miracles (Gabroussenko 2014), is prevalent in this film as well, while the favourable depiction of the youth is once again done to increase the social influence of the leader over the ingroup (the youth) (Ispas 2013, 90).

Jong-min's story of how he came to the shock brigade is also revealed through a flashback. He met the senior commander on the spot where Kim Jong-il once stood. The senior commander says how Kim Jong-il had arrived there one cold night some years ago. Kim had just finished:

(...) a 400 kilometer long travel to the front but he stood here long amid the severe cold. Attendants persuaded him to get in the car for the next 400 kilometer travel to the front. The General said he was sorry he could not find no one here who could harness Kumjin River, he didn't mind his health or any long travel if only he could give luxury to the people, he couldn't rest to think of the President and the fate of the country. (Kim, H-C 2009, 00:51:06).

Because of this the workers had decided to build the observatory where the senior commander is telling his story. "We'd resolved we'd not have the General painful again when he'd come here." Jong-min's sister had heard about this and pleaded the old commander to let her join the brigade "saying she'd devote herself to meet the General's will." (Kim, H-C 2009, 00:52:16)

The notion in the scene on how they do not want for the leader to be "painful" again when he returns can be seen as the "gift". The most striking feature in North Korean society is probably the national distribution system for food and other commodities. In addition, the sovereignty of the state as a whole has been attributed to Kim Il-sung and his guerrilla comrades who fought for the independence and then gave it as a gift to the people of North Korea. (Chung & Kwon 2012, 127–128) This idea is therefore linked to the theme of generational debt discussed in other films of the thesis.

There seems to be a reciprocity in the relation between the leader and the people²⁵: because the leader dedicates everything in his life to the people, the people should do the same. Therefore, the idea ties heavily into the youth's social identity in how they are supposed to lead their lives and the collective debt they must pay. This can also explain the heavy praise on the youth in the film and the emphasis of their unity with the leader such as them beating the famine together as mentioned earlier.²⁶

The idea is continued when Jin-ok refuses to get married in any other uniform except her shock brigade uniform. She thinks about Kim Jong-il in tears:

²⁵ The dedication the characters in the films portray to the leaders, also tie into the theater society of North Korea in how, for example the Arirang games, started in 2002, are meant to be a gift from the people of North Korea to the leader while also acting as a gift by the present leader to the previous leader (Chung & Kwon 2012, 129).

²⁶ see p. 99.

” Now the General, still in faded field uniform, is visiting front posts all over the country braving snowstorms and steep mountains. If I put off my uniform even a moment, I'll feel guilty to him.” (Kim, H-C 2009, 01:11:30).

The on-the-spot-guidance practiced by the Kim leaders, that also inspired Jong-min's sister to dedicate herself for Kim Jong-il, is also seen as a gift given by the leader to the people. The gift is given again at the end of the film when Kim Jong-il visits the completed dam.²⁷

Later, Jong-min's heroism is also demonstrated when he is shown going to get seedlings to replace the trees the platoon had to cut down. He goes by foot and then leads the car with the seedlings back, lighting up his shoes to make torches so the driver could see in the darkness. The driver also makes the same thing for the fire to last longer. This way the film connects with *Myself in the Distant Future*, where the hero also sacrifices his shoes in order to achieve his goal.

After completing the dam, the workers are invited to Pyongyang by Kim Jong-il. There, a party official congratulates them and says how proud Kim Jong-il is of them. He also mentions how happy the leader was after visiting their house and seeing their wedding photo with them wearing army uniforms. He had said how the whole shock brigade are the pearls and jewels of the nation. Everyone listening to the speech, having previously been crying, jumps to cheer.

The film ends with a song:

Even if the earth may perish, the road covered by the General with devotion to the nation we will brave it in the van. Our minds so pure as crystal will become pearls and jewels of the pedestal of the General. (Kim, H-C 2009, 01:21:18).

The camera moves across the now completed dam and stops to show the Azaleas Jin-ok planted, now blooming, being the final shot of the film.

²⁷ The significance of Kim Jong-il's trips is perhaps increased due to the serious health problems he had been suffering from 2008. Based on the regime's public attempts to cover the actual state of the leader's health, the problems were probably general knowledge inside North Korea as well. (Snyder 2010)

In sum, as the final scene explains, the devotion that Jin-ok had for Jong-sim and to Kim Jong-il has paid off. The scene depicts the transformative power of both Juche and the reciprocal nature of the "gift" in North Korean society. Everything is possible if one follows the principle of Juche and therefore the leader. The film also emphasizes the willingness to make sacrifices for the party's efforts and concentrates especially towards education. In addition, the capabilities of the youth are especially praised in the film and the leader's role in uniting them and being the inspiration behind their actions is emphasized. Due to the Strong and Prosperous Country -campaign having been modeled after the Chollima movement (United States Institute of Peace 2009), its presence can be seen as stretching for decades in North Korea.

7.7 The Story of Our Home (우리 집 이야기) (2016)

7.7.1 Synopsis

Partially based on a true story, the film tells the story of three orphan siblings living alone in their family house. They are helped by Jong-a, a young woman who has decided to dedicate her life to helping others. The oldest of the siblings, Un-jong, has a difficult relationship with Jong-a due to her pride. She however eventually learns to appreciate Jong-a. Other people, especially a local party leader, also help the family. He also has an important role for not letting the other party officials to interfere with Jong-a's efforts despite, as mentioned several times in the film, the state would be able to take perfect care of the children.

The name of the film derives from the book the siblings' mother used to write before her passing, entitled "The Story of Our Home". After the parents' death, Un-jong, who is still in high school, has been left to take care of her younger sister and brother. The oldest brother of the family is away serving in the army and has not been informed about the mother's death in accordance with the mother's last wish.

In the end, everyone realizes the great deeds Jong-a has done for the siblings and she is celebrated as a national hero, even getting to meet Kim Jong-un. She is also saluted by the oldest brother of the siblings and his army comrades as they visit the orphans' hometown. In the end, the siblings have accepted Jong-a as their mother while she has taken even more orphans to care for, fulfilling her dream.

The title refers to the main theme of the film, about the idea of a family state, meaning that the whole nation is one large family under the care of their parents, the party and the leader. As Gabroussenko (2016c) notes, the film also puts heavy emphasis on children, which is something that has been typical in fiction in the Kim Jong-un era.

7.7.2 Characters

Much like in *The Name Given by the Era*, there is no clear flawed character let alone villain. Un-jong is however closest to a flawed character. Despite Un-jong being hardworking and generally seeming to appreciate the party and the leader, her main flaw is her hesitance towards Jong-a, the model character. Un-jong's extreme pride and independence, while being traits connected to Juche, are in her case too great. Following the typical North Korean film formula, she is redeemed in the end by embracing Jong-a and her efforts towards Un-jong's family.

The model character of the film is Jong-a. She is hardworking and extremely selfless, often praising the leaders and the party while mentioning how her greatest wish is to make everyone else's wishes come true. She views everyone in North Korea as sharing the same blood and being therefore like family. Thus, she is sometimes frustrated by Un-jong's resistance towards her.

The party leader, who could be seen as representing the state, is also a model character but his role in the film is relatively small. He is depicted as someone who is efficient and can be trusted. He is also willing to not intervene if people act the right way.

7.7.3 Family State, the Youth and their Dreams

Despite the siblings living by themselves, the situation is depicted to be their choice. When the friend of the siblings' father offers to take care of the siblings he notes that: "You know that our party takes warm care of children like you." (Ki & Ri 2016, 00:06:50). Therefore, it is hinted how it is not the system's fault that the orphans live by themselves, the only reason is the pride of Un-jong.

The fact that Jong-a's efforts are encouraged while at the same time it is assured that the state could take care of the children, is similar with the ideas presented in *A Broad Bellflower* or *The Girls in my Hometown* where people are expected to take on the duties of the state without admitting any major problems taking place within the country, perhaps only hinting at difficult times. As Gabroussenko (2014) notes, in North Korean cinema, any kind of mistakes done by the government are not admitted and blame is usually laid on The United States or Japan instead. She also notes how the promotion of adoption in North Korean cinema began following the famine in the 1990's (Gabroussenko 2019a) and it can be seen in this film as well.

The living situation does take its toll on Un-jong whose grades start to fall. Her teacher also offers to take care of the youngest of the sibling, Un-chol. Again, Un-jong declines the offer but it has been clearly established that both the state and the people around her would like to take care of her and her family even without having any familial relations with one another. The situation also takes its toll on the relationship between the siblings as Un-jong is angry for the younger sibling for being too demanding and the younger sister is frustrated because Un-jong is always so angry to them.

In the later part of the film, Un-jong and the siblings decide to go their aunt's house so that Jong-a could be with her parents, her mother having been hospitalized. Jong-a however later follows them. There, Jong-a's speech about Kim Jong-un's care for the country and its youth is what makes Jong-a and Un-jong finally to fully embrace. "You know our Marshal worries a lot over parentless children, don't you?" Jong-a asks. (Ki & Ri 2016, 01:19:32). She then proceeds to tell a story on how Kim Jong-un had visited an orphanage on his way to the front.

Our Marshal was gratified with children reading and dreaming (...) the Marshal said reading and laughing of children guarantees the bright future of our country. The Marshal also said that children should be grown up to be heroes, scientists and sportsmen. (Ki & Ri 2016, 01:19:59).

The emphasis on Kim Jong-un's fondness on the youth and noticing how they are the future of the country can perhaps be seen as a way to, again, strengthen the prototypicality of the leader by representing "us" but also changing prototypicality to suit the regime's needs as authoritarian powers try to do according to Ispas (2013, 87—

88). Emphasizing the youth as a prototypical trait makes sense considering how Kim Jong-un was only a little over thirty years old when the film was released. It is important to also note the importance of Confucianism in North Korean society which puts emphasis on the elderly.

There are clear connotations between Kim Jong-un and Jong-a. Just like it is Jong-a's dream to make everyone else dreams possible, so does Kim Jong-un “safeguard” (Ki & Ri 2016, 01:20:55) everyone's dreams. The party as a whole is also established in a similar manner through the actions of the chief secretary who cares for the orphan family but also lets Jong-a fulfill her dreams without interfering.

After Jong-a and Un-jong have settled their differences, a car sent by the chief secretary comes to pick them up. In tears Jong-a says how: “Many people worry of your brothers and sisters. You aren't parentless children.” (Ki & Ri 2016, 01:23:00). This is another example on how the blood shared by the population and the leader as their father means that even the orphans have parents in North Korea.

The main theme of the film is exposed through the lyrics of the various songs sang in the film. For example:

You and I belong to one family, as we live in harmony with each other, best is our family, our happy family (...) We live happily with our neighbors, harmonious are our neighbors, you and I belong to one family as we open our hearts to each other. (Ki & Ri 2016, 01:08:15).

In another song the lyrics say:

”We live full of hope under the sun, bright is our family, full of beautiful dreams, you and I have promising future as we are cared by our motherland, best is our family. Happy family.” (Ki & Ri 2016, 01:24:25).

The latter song is sung near the end of the film as the siblings and Jong-a are seen visiting and bowing to a mural portraying Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il. Also, a song with similar message starts to play as the say goodbye to the brother who has arrived from the army to visit the siblings. The lyrics say:

A harmonious family loud with songs of children. Oh my home, precious cradle of love. (...) Great enthusiasm brings miracles. People devote everything to each other. They built this land with one mind. It is our paradise we cannot live without it. (Ki & Ri 2016, 01:30:14).

The main ideas in the lyrics connect to the family state, positive future, the greatness of North Korea and especially in how the people "cannot live" without it thus, connecting the youth's social identity heavily into nationalism, a theme which is present in all of the films of the thesis and emphasized in Juche. In addition, the sun can be seen as symbolizing Kim Il-sung (Lim, J-C 2015, 95) or Kim Jong-un (Jung & Yoo 2017, 105).

As the song plays, a montage shows the orphan children moving into a fancy apartment while the chief secretary is seen helping. Un-jong is also publicly congratulated on her success in academics.

The idea of a "girl mother", to which Jong-a is referred to many times, further demonstrates the idea of kinship without actual family relations. For example, Jong-a's mother asks Jong-a: "Is it true that our Marshall held your hand?" Jong-a nods. The mother continues: "Is it true that our Marshall called you a "girl mother" with Jong-a again nodding and continuing "How can I be called a mother, our Marshall said that he wanted to embrace me." (Ki & Ri 2016, 01:33:49)

As Jong-a is celebrated, another song starts: "(...) What a wonderful homeland we have, a land filled with harmony and hope, Our father is marshal Kim Il-sung, Our home is the party's bloom" at the same time people are shown taking flowers and bowing to the bronze statue of Kim Il-sung. "We are all blood brothers and sisters, We are the happiest in the world". (Ki & Ri 2016, 01:36:13)

The film ends with the siblings and Jong-a in their new apartment. There are also other children present, demonstrating that Jong-a has continued to help others in need. They have drawn a picture of their home and go through the people in the picture. Among them there is for example Jong-a, who is now referred to as "mom". The teacher and the party secretary are also included. Un-jong also refers to Jong-a as "mother" as she wishes for her to write into the book, taking over their deceased mother's duty. Jong-a

then writes to the book that: "Our father is Marshal Kim Jong-un, Our home is the Party's bosom." The image fades into the North Korean flag in the background as the children read aloud what Jong-a wrote. She also continues: "The story of our best home in the world would continue forever." (Ki & Ri 2016, 01:37:31) While the whole family poses in front of the North Korean flag, the image fades away and the ending credits start with a view of the sun. The use of the flag in the scene can be seen as serving the purpose of the significant national symbol which can be used to increase national unity (Aronson & Pratkanis 1992, as cited in Matherly 2019, 99).

The social identity that is being emphasized by the film (North Koreans as one large family with the party and the leader as their parents) could be an attempt to challenge the social identity one has in relation to their family unit. As Arendt notes, total domination (an end goal of totalitarianism) needs total loyalty (Arendt 1951/1958, 323). When private life and the party are in conflict, the latter is to be favoured (Arendt 1951/1958, 367). In this film the idea is demonstrated through the dismissal of the personal (family unit) and support of the family state demonstrated through the portrayal of Kim Jong-un and the Worker's Party as the parents of the people. The theme is prevalent in all the films of the thesis, but *The Story of Our Home* puts the most emphasis on it.

In addition, in multiple occasions it is mentioned how important the youth are while also listing accomplishments which the youth has been specifically responsible of. For example, Un-jong is also established to be an extremely bright student as she easily solves a mathematical problem her friend had been struggling for a long period of time. Perhaps due this, the film condemns her distrust towards Jong-a as her grades start falling; the country needs bright students like her to advance the revolution, and again, the focus is on hard sciences.

The party chief also discusses about Jong-a in a local party meeting where again one of the attendees ushers that: "I think our state would take a better care of orphans than a young girl." (Ki & Ri 2016, 00:35:54). The chief secretary is however eager on letting the girl help the family because:

"Our respected Marshall Kim Jong-un pays frequent visits to orphanages and he is deeply concerned about orphans and this girl's dream is to take care of

orphans, I for one want to make her dream to come true.” (Ki & Ri 2016, 00:36:27).

So, the capabilities of the state are again established but it is also demonstrated how the state respects individual dreams as long as they are beneficial for the state, unlike for example, the materialistic dreams of Soo-ryun in *The Schoolgirl's Diary*. The chief secretary also says how:” Everything is big with the youth.” (Ki & Ri 2016, 00:35:45).

There is also a line: ”Comrades what is one of the greatest achievements of our party in history? It's the opening of a new era of youth power stations.” (Ki & Ri 2016, 00:36:54) referring to the Hydroelectric power stations in the Sodusu river in the northeastern part of the country (Makowsky et al. 2020). Again, the name of the stations mentioned in this context seems to highlight the importance of the youth of the country. Also, in another instance, the chief secretary is in a meeting, uttering the line: ”Young researchers suggested the technical innovation.” (Ki & Ri 2016, 01:26:11) giving another example of the film's emphasis on the youth and science.

Different dreams the characters have, are emphasized in the film. Due to the constant stress of taking care of her siblings, Un-jong decides to give up on her dream, partaking in a math competition she was chosen into as a competitor. She intentionally fails a terminal exam. After hearing about this, Jong-a reaches the school's staff, explains the situation, and the teachers allow Un-jong to compete again.

At home, Jong-a talks with the younger siblings while ironing their red neckties worn by the members of the Korean Children's Union while at the same time citing Kim Jong-un. She talks about the red neckties and how they get their color from the red of the national flag again utilizing national symbols to increase nationalism (Aronson & Pratkanis 1992, as cited in Matherly 2019, 99). Later they gather around to talk about their dreams, how the youngest brother will become a football star, the youngest sister will become a music teacher and Un-jong will become a scientist.²⁸ Jong-a's dream is to

²⁸ The siblings' dreams reflect the aims of Kim Jong-un when it comes to sports: he has increased the resources aimed towards sports and the aim is, in addition to national pride, to increase national productivity. Thus, even sports have been paralleled with the Chollima movement (Moody 2014). In addition, the alleged hydrogen bomb (Choe & Sanger 2016) and Kwangmyongsong-4 satellite launches (Williams 2016) conducted during the release year of the film could explain the emphasis on science.

make all their dreams to become possible. The youngest sister then sings a song praising the motherland.

7.7.4 Juche

While Jong-a's exceptional Juche spirit is highlighted, her deeds are in the end attributed to the leader and the party. For example, when Jong-a is being celebrated, her mother asks the chief secretary if it is true that a 20-year-old can be the party's daughter and a "girl mother". The chief secretary answers: "The great world of our Marshall's human love created another legend of Kangson." Un-jong then adds: "Our fatherly Marshall sent us the unique "girl mother." (Ki & Ri 2016, 01:33:58)

The utmost gratitude is therefore given to Kim Jong-un over Jong-a. This again further connects the social identity of the youth to the party and the leader; the individual is capable for great things but only through them. This is in line with the Juche thought which emphasizes the leader as the pinnacle of society. It can also be seen as a message to the youth of the country where wealth has become an increasingly important factor in songbun: wealth cannot replace what the leader and the party bring to the country, and it is possible to act only through them.

In a similar manner to *The Schoolgirl's Diary*, the notion of following the path of the leaders is emphasized. After having reconciled, Jong-a, Un-jong and the siblings leave the siblings' aunt's house. They walk along a road where "the president" (Kim Il-sung) had once walked as well as "the General" (Kim Jong-il). Jong-a reminds the others how: "We should never forget them when we go this way" (Ki & Ri 2016, 01:23:56), as the sun blissfully shines upon them. This shows how they are literally and figuratively following the leaders.

To sum, the film establishes that the youth's social identity should be constructed through a race-based ideology where the citizens of North Korea are one large family under the wise guidance of the leader and the party who are their parents. The youth are labeled to be able to achieve marvelous things if they follow the party and the leader. Various goals in society, especially sciences and sports are also emphasized.

8 Results

8.1 Style, Messages and the Use of Characters in Constructing the Youth's Social Identity

All films follow the melodramatic style which importance was highlighted by Kim Jong-il in *On the Art of the Cinema* (1973), and which has been used in cinemas of other totalitarian countries (Heins 2013). The polemic storytelling inherent in melodrama (Heins 2013, 2), demonstrated, for example, through the contrast between the model "Juche type" character, demanded by Kim Jong-il (Kim, J-I 1973, 431–432) and the flawed character, is evident in all of the films although in variable degrees. In all the other films the flawed main character is redeemed except in *A Broad Bellflower* where Won-bong is left alone and bitter, the only redemption coming through his son who cannot be labeled as a flawed character. Un-ha's sister in *The Girls in my Hometown* is not redeemed either but she is not as heavily present compared to other flawed characters in the films.

Thus, for example, the model characters are portrayed in an extremely positive manner; they all possess traits connected with Juche such as nationalism (including appreciation of Korean traditions) and loyalty to the leader and the party (including willingness to sacrifice everything in order to do what the regimes wants). The main messages of each film are best emphasized by the actions of the model characters as they portray the ideal way on how to act according to the regime.

Since it is essential for the leader to be the prototype of the ingroup in order to gain as much social influence as possible, the authoritarian forces, once in power, aim to mold their prototypicality by changing the norms of the society (Ispas 2013, 111). The purpose for the depiction of the model youth can be seen as promoting the regime's prototypicality. The idea is reinforced by depicting everyone not following the Juche values as the outgroup. The notion is emphasized by the message that the regime is "us" and "we" are fighting against "them". Because the prototypical behaviour of the ingroup is something the other members start to emulate while condemning the outgroup (Ispas 2013, 22), it is understandable why the regime would want to cement itself as the

ingroup, as other totalitarian/authoritarian powers have done in the past. The films can be seen as a method of doing that.

Indeed, the way the clearly flawed characters within the country are separated from the positive model characters is in some cases done by depicting them as outcasts with negative connotations. Especially clear this is with Won-bong who stands out from the other villagers in *A Broad Bellflower* by his character traits. The same applies for Un-ha and her sister. One of the ways their outcast nature is depicted is by the criticism they receive from others. If they have support, it is only by other characters who are also flawed and criticized in the films, for example, for having outdated ideas such as with Kyeo-ok's and Jong-ok's mother in *When We Pick Apples*. Thus, the in- and outgroups are clearly separated. As Burke and Stets note, comparison between the in- and outgroups strengthens the self, especially when examining the ingroup positively and the outgroup negatively. Also, having a specific social identity means being similar compared to others in the group and sharing their point of view and it is this similarity which strengthens social identity. (Burke & Stets 2000, 225—226) Thus, the positively depicted characters can be seen as forwarding the supported values of the North Korean regime.

Then again, in some cases the model character can also be depicted as one of the few exemplar individuals such as in the case of Jong-ok in *When We Pick Apples* who seems to be the only one, aside from her grandfather, who endlessly preaches about the importance of preserving apples with some of the villagers even mocking her for that.

Still, generally in the films, the majority of the characters follow the Juche principles, although the main model character is always at least morally, but often also physically superior to the other characters with the latter demonstrated by, for example, the impressive physical feats for example Song-rim in *A Broad Bellflower* and Jin-ok in *The Name Given by the Era*, are capable of. These feats can be seen as stemming from their correct ideological consciousness. Indeed, ideological correctness and loyalty to the leader in the films, are demonstrated as values and prototypical behaviour, which sets the desired ingroup of the regime and the outgroup. As Ispas (2013, 72) notes, criticism within the ingroup is accepted while criticism of the outgroup is dismissed. This is indeed generally the case in the films but, as the mandatory redemption of the flawed characters prove, the criticism they receive from their outgroup can still change them

(although not in all cases such as with Un-ha's sister). In Un-ha's case, it is also demonstrated how her negative actions are reinforced by her negative ingroup, meaning her sister.

The positively depicted characters typically outnumbering the flawed characters might be done in order to assure the viewers that the flawed character's behaviour is not normal, and that the majority of the people support the regime's values. This therefore strengthens the social identity of the Juche group because the others are labeled as outcasts and abnormal. As Matherly points out, following socially accepted rituals and attitudes of the dominating culture strengthens the individual's social identity (Matherly 2019, 102–103). In addition, social identity comprises ideals through which the individual also defines himself. These ideal values motivate the individual and influence his self-esteem which then acts against cognitive dissonance (Matherly 2019, 96). Therefore, the films try to demonstrate the right kind of values to the viewers and how it is right to follow them for it benefits the state and often the individual also. Also, adopting the values shared by the majority, can be seen as helping to process the, sometimes contradictory, nature of the world depicted by the state and the actual reality.

The model characters are also incorruptible and not after glory or individual recognition, although in many of the films (*Myself in the Distant Future*, *The Schoolgirl's Diary*, *Name Given by the Era*, *The Story of Our Home*) the model character or the flawed character turned Juche, receives some sort of recognition, sometimes from the leader himself at the end of the film. The other films also end up in a positive note for the model character(s) with *A Broad Bellflower* again excluded due to Song-rim's demise. Therefore, the message for the youth is that while one should not be after personal glory like the model characters are not in the films, it is entirely possible to gain recognition if one works hard enough in advancing the regime's goals. The message is somewhat ironic since many of the films (especially *The Schoolgirl's Diary* and *The Name Given by the Era*) strongly condemn the young characters who want official recognition from the state. It is however understandable that, in order to construct the youth's social identity through the state and the leader, people would be awarded for their efforts for the state.

The negatively portrayed flawed characters are generally portrayed as the opposite of the Juche characters. They portray individualistic desires such as willingness to make important life decisions (regarding for example work and education) based on what pleases them rather than what would benefit the state. They also have material desires such as a better apartment (*The Schoolgirl's Diary*) or a desire to live in urban areas (*The Broad Bellflower, Myself in the Distant Future*) in search of an easier and more exciting life. They are often portrayed to be lazy, willing to exploit their status in society and having interest in foreign phenomena.

Carter Matherly emphasizes the importance of appearance because it acts as the model for social identity (Matherly 2019, 99). Thus, the main characters (as well as the “historical” war heroes who are mentioned) are young and attractive people dealing with, for example marriage, education and work, which are all relevant matters for the youth and can therefore act as an example for them to act on.

8.1.1 The Use of Confessions and Self-Criticism in the Construction of the Youth’s Social Identity

The reform of the flawed characters turned Juche in the films happens through them confessing the error of their ways, vowing to dedicate themselves to the state and the leader. Friedrich and Brzezinski also write about the use of confessions in communist societies such as China. Confessions relate to one admitting his errors. Constant propaganda has dehumanized those not believing in the official ideology of the state (which is clearly the case in North Korean films taking place during the war and dealing with foreign aggressors, however takes a lighter and subtler form of contempt when it comes to domestic “non-believers”). The constant accusations and questioning for crimes and the cure for the crimes which the state can decide, means that the eventual confession of the individual forces him to totally surrender to the system. This then serves the purpose of abolishing personal identity, which is seen as one of the worst crimes in totalitarian societies. (Friedrich & Brzezinski 1956/2013, 195—196)

The attacks on individuality in the films mirror these ideas and the way the characters’ flaws are always about acting against the will of the state. Thus, the way the youth’s social identity is constructed is that of constant self-criticism which aim is to serve the state better. This happens even *after* the flawed character has turned Juche and is often

connected to the idea of “lost time” which must be made up as demonstrated for example by Sin-jun: ”I’m but a beginner. From now I must work hard to enrich the treasure left by former generation.” (Jang 1997, 01:40:07). Jin-ok also says how “I’m still far from being perfect”. (Kim, H-C 2009, 00:40:18).

One of the clearest examples of self-criticism in the films is a scene with Kye-ok in *When We Pick Apples* which takes place in an actual self-criticism session. However, similar confessions happen in all other films as well, most strikingly with Un-ha in *The Girls in My Hometown*, Se-ryong in *A Broad Bellflower*, Sin-jun in *Myself in the Distant Future* and Yon-hui in *The Name Given by the Era*. In all these films the characters, very emotionally, denounce their former lives, vowing to solely serve the party and the leader in the future. Therefore, the redemption they have gone through is only the beginning of what the state wants and therefore the youth’s social identity should also be constructed on constant improvement. In *The Schoolgirl's Diary* and *The Story of Our Home*, similar kind of expressive confession do not take place with Soo-ryun and Un-jong but the aftermath of their change is made clear as Soo-ryun tells in an emotional and proud manner of her parents' continued efforts towards the leader (who she also vows to follow) and Un-jong calls Jong-a her mother without a hint of her former rebellious self.

Indeed, the confessions connect into the real-life practice of self-criticism sessions which are supposed to improve the ideological spirit of the citizens²⁹ as emphasis is put on, for example, the importance of proper ideological education which aim is to emphasize the leader as the model to follow. Thus, while actual self-criticism sessions are depicted especially in the older films, the general idea of constant criticism and improvement of the individual to serve the state better, are present in all films.

The performative nature of actions, such as the mutual-criticism sessions, is also important to notice, since in most cases people just perform them without necessarily believing in what they “admit” in the sessions. However, it is particularly the youth who can take these sessions very seriously. (Cho et al. 2012, 209) The idea can be perhaps

²⁹ During the sessions, the person first quotes an appropriate citation from the leaders and then confesses some mistake he has done. Then the reasons behind the mistake are analyzed and the fault, typically stemming from inadequate ideological consciousness, is found and improvements are suggested, after which loyalty to the party and the leader is announced. In a mutual criticism session, after self-criticism, everyone also criticizes each other. Even though the sessions are rather short, only a few minutes, their regularity causes significant psychological pressure. (Cho et al. 2012, 208)

interpreted as mirroring the broader spectrum of the North Korean society as a performative state where it is not necessarily important whether people believe what they are taught but only that they act accordingly. However, just as the young seem to be more vulnerable towards the mutual-criticism sessions compared to the adults, perhaps the same applies for films, and therefore further emphasizes the importance of this thesis.

8.1.2 Emphasis on Strong Work Ethic Echoing the Chollima Movement

A strong work ethic is a common theme in the films and the model characters are depicted to be especially hardworking. Thus, it seems that the mentality of the Chollima movement has lasted throughout the decades. It can be seen as connecting to Juche values of self-sufficiency which according to Gabroussenko were especially visible in the North Korean films from the middle of the 1990's until early 2000's or during the famine (Gabroussenko 2017a). During the same time period, as the aid from other socialist countries stopped, films started to emphasize the need for various miracle projects which would solve the new problems caused by the worsening economy (Gabroussenko 2017a). Thus, in *Myself and in the Distant Future* (1997), the villagers struggle to invent a new fuel, which Sin-jun then does. Similar issues are still persistent in later films of the thesis as well, demonstrated especially with Soo-ryun's father in *The Schoolgirl's Diary* and Jin-ok in *The Name Given by the Era* as both films also deal with important breakthroughs, Soo-ryun's father with computers and Jin-ok with the completion of the dam.

The model characters and the flawed character after their redemption, are also portrayed to be skillful in their efforts such as excelling in school (Soo-ryun in *The Schoolgirl's Diary* and Un-jong in *The Story of our Home*) or in the shock brigade/rural areas with new innovations and achieving impressive change in the backward village (Jin-ok in *The Name Given by the Era* Sin-jun in *Myself in the Distant Future*, Song-rim and Song-hwa in *A Broad Bellflower* and Jong-ok in *When we Pick Apples*) or in general being able to manage great workloads with a smile on their face such as Jong-a in *The Story of our Home*.

8.1.3 Juche and the Context of the Characters

In totalitarianism, the heavy emphasis and praise on the party and the leader can be connected to idea of connecting citizens identities into the "machine" which is led by the perfect leader who is able to accomplish wonderful things. This in turn strengthens the identity of the members who are now intertwined with the party and the leader (Friedrich & Brzezinski 1956/2013, 53). The praise of the leaders connects to the idea of model citizens in that several times in the films it is said literally (*The Schoolgirl's Diary*) and figuratively (*The Girls in my Hometown* and *The Story of Our Home*) how the leaders should be followed. The existential importance of the leader presented in the films ties into Arendt's notion on how the leader cannot be removed from the totalitarian movement without the whole system collapsing (Arendt 1951/1958, 374).

The model characters of the films are depicted as the prototype of the North Korean citizen as they act according to the leader's teachings. Therefore, Juche as a theme is prevalent in all the films. The change in prototypicality can be seen when put into the correct context in the nation's history and the different themes each film has. For example, in *When We Pick Apples*, Jong-ok (and her grandfather and the team leader's son) criticize anti-bureaucracy while the former two also support new ideas of the state such as women taking a larger part in the work force or how ideological education should not be subpar to, for example, marriage, with these ideas being directly in conflict with the "outdated" ideas of the past. These are then connected with political programmes of the times such as the cultural revolution or other relevant incidents in the country's history like the famine which presence can be felt in *Myself in the Distant Future* as it is established how Sin-jun's actions cannot be allowed during the time they are living (a phrase which is in fact repeated in other films as well.) As established, the main characteristics of the Juche characters have however remained the same throughout the films examined in the thesis.

Contextuality applies for the flawed characters as well as there are differences in the severity of their flaws. For example, Kye-ok from *When We Pick Apples*, Yon-hui from *The Name Given by the Era* and Un-jong in *The Story of Our Home* do not depict great flaws but are still the flawed character of their respective films as they are not willing to sacrifice everything for the state like the Juche characters. It seems that in North Korean

cinema, it is already a flaw if one cannot be labeled as a Juche character which matches the notion of constant improvement for the characters.

In contrast to the less flawed characters, in *A Broad Bellflower* Won-bong is openly against the state's wishes for improving the rural areas, Un-ha abandons his boyfriend in *The Girls in my Hometown* after he loses his sight, in *Myself in the Distant Future* Sin-jun abuses his parents' status in society, and Soo-ryun in *The Schoolgirl's Diary* rebels against her parents for them prioritizing the state to their own family.

The changing nature of the flawed characters can be seen as connecting with Arendt's idea of the "objective enemy". According to her, totalitarian regimes need to find new enemies as otherwise one great purge could technically set things back to normal. (Arendt 1951/1958, 424) Therefore in North Korea, after eliminating for example the landowners and Japanese collaborators, smaller and smaller mistakes are enough to label one as an enemy, an idea which the films seem to support.

8.1.4 Use of Flashbacks, Enemies and Corruption of Foreign Influences

Heavy use of flashbacks in the film relates to the idea that there is no real conflict in present North Korea. Because the country is continuously improving, one must go back in time when things were worse in order to depict the conflict. (Myers 2010, 93) While true in some cases such as *Myself in the Distant Future* being a story told by a writer who meets the already reformed Sin-jun, in addition to the grandfather's stories in *When We Pick Apples* about the Japanese occupation, or flashbacks to Won-bong's youth in *The Broad Bellflower*, the rest of the flawed characters still act in present time.

It is however true, as Myers points out that flawed, mildly flawed characters are plenty in the films (Myers 2010, 92). The only ones who could be labeled as having characteristics of a proper villain in the films are the landlord and his son in *When We Pick Apples*. Their appearance is however very brief, but it indeed takes place in a flashback. From the author's own experience on seeing North Korean films taking place during the Japanese occupation, Myers' point is also valid since the villains in those films, (for example the Japanese occupiers or Korean landowners in *The Flower Girl*) are violent, merciless and in no way redeemable. However, an outgroup is an outgroup, and despite not being nearly as negative as the villains of the Japanese occupation era,

the flawed characters of the films act as a way to improve the leader's prototypicality inside North Korea and serve as the “objective enemy” mentioned by Arendt (1951/1958, 423).

Comparison between internal and external enemies in the films is difficult to make since the latter ones do not have much of a presence in the films of the thesis. As Myers however notes, the Japanese and the Americans have been labeled in propaganda as eternally and inherently evil (Myers 2010, 137). Based on the few mentions of them in the films (for example in *When We Pick Apples*), they are indeed depicted as plotting against North Korea. The landowner and his son can also be labeled as the external enemy despite being Korean since landowners were seen similarly as unredeemable enemies as the Japanese and the Americans when the Kim Il-sung's era began (Collins 2012, 15). Therefore, there are differences in the depiction between internal and external enemies

As Myers notes, internal enemies are typically portrayed as having only minor flaws as the North Korean society is typically depicted as having no internal conflict (Myers 2010, 92). The connection between the internal and external enemies is however depicted through foreign influence. The most striking example can be found in *The Girls in my Hometown* with Un-ha and her sister who has come back from abroad but Sin-jun from *Myself in the Distant Future* is also mentioned to have studied foreign studies, and Soo-ryun in *The Schoolgirl's Diary* wears a Mickey Mouse back bag. It is noticeable how these characters could be labeled as the worst flawed characters in the films in addition to Won-bong who is the only one not being depicted as being exposed to foreign influences.

Indeed, there are no hints of foreign interest with the less flawed characters in the films. Therefore, the films perhaps try to highlight the corruptive influence foreign influences can have on the “pure” Korean mindset of the youth. The condemn for foreign influences and the individuality among the youth can perhaps be linked with the changing attitudes of the North Korean youth and the ever-growing foreign influence flooding into the country (Lim S-H 2007, 45). Also, as Arendt notes, all the information leaking from outside into the totalitarian system, forms a threat towards said system (Arendt 1951/1958, 392). It is however interesting how the most recent films of the thesis *The Name Given by the Era* (2009) and *The Story of our Home* (2016) do not

discuss the issue. Perhaps this can be seen as further proof of the country steering further away from totalitarianism. In general, the idea of foreign influence as a corruptive force for the youth was present in the Soviet Union as well (Tsipursky 2016, 32—53).

In general, however, compared to, for example, the evolution of the model Soviet youth³⁰, in North Korea, despite real-life-changes in consumption of, for example, foreign culture (Lim S-H 2007, 45), the ideal youth citizen depicted in the films has remained relatively the same. This could be a sign of the stagnant nature of the governance in North Korea. Perhaps this is also a conscious choice of the regime as they might fear that the same fate would happen to them as to the Soviets. Indeed, in the Soviet Union, individualism and materialism eventually replaced correct revolutionary consciousness (Tsipursky 2016, 46—47). Considering the emphasis the films put on correct ideological thinking, this might be the case.

8.1.5 Utilizing “Historical” Figures

In addition to the fictitious model characters, “historical” figures such as Ri Su Bok are mentioned in the films. They have been generally used especially during dire situations in the country's history (for example during the famine) but as the thesis points out Ri and Choe Hui-suk³¹ are already mentioned in *The Girls in my Hometown* (1991) although Ri is mentioned in *Myself in the Distant Future* as well.

These characters connect the films with reality since the model characters in the films are fictitious. Indeed, as Kim Suk-young writes, in order to bridge the gap between the unrealistically harmonious reality the official propaganda tries to depict, with the actual reality, these kind of “intermediary agents” with detailed backgrounds (without actual confirmation of their existence) have been created. They serve the part of revolutionary war heroes. Through them, emulating the fictitious model characters of the films is made possible because it is said how there have been actual similar self-sacrificing heroes as them in real life. Their actions are depicted as not being superhuman but unconditional

³⁰ They were given more liberties as the regimes changed, turning from devout nationalists rejecting all foreign influences to be allowed to consume, for example, foreign cultural products, rather freely (Tsipursky 2016, 229)

³¹ A female soldier who was killed and had her eyes gouged out by the Japanese during the Japanese occupation. See p.76.

self-sacrifice which the regime deems necessary for everyone. Through these "real" people, it is demonstrated how everyone is capable of similar acts of self-sacrifice. (Kim, S-Y 2010, 186–187)

8.1.6 Utilizing Female Characters

It is worth mentioning that the only clear male protagonist in the films is Sin-jun in *Myself in the Distant Future* (Won-bong cannot be labeled as the sole protagonist in *A Broad Bellflower*). In all the other films, the protagonist is a female. As Myers points out, in North Korean society, women are seen as chaste and pure which is the way the country's propaganda wants the whole race to be seen. According to Myers, the female leads depict both the childlike innocence expected from a model citizen as well as the protective, maternal traits expected from those who are to be followed. (Myers 2010, 88) This, connected to the idea of the model characters enforcing the leader's prototypicality in North Korea, perhaps emphasizes the nature of the leader as a benevolent parent of the nation.

Indeed, considering, as Myers notes, that the purity aspects connect with race, it could be said that the issue has remained relevant due to the theme of shared Koreaness being perhaps the most relevant theme in *The Story of Our Home* (2016). In addition, according to the official propaganda, North Koreans are supposed to be acting like children referring to "state-sponsored infantilism". Myers mentions the psychologist Erich Fromm and the notion of the innate fear in humans of the separation from the warmth of the womb. (Myers 2010, 82–83) The social identity build by the North Korean films, pleads to this similar notion; if one's identity is separated from the identity of the Juche model citizens, one will be separated from the "mother" as well. Then one will be alone, and because social identity relies on ingroup relationships from which the negative outside group "feeds" the person, (Nabers & Shim 2013, 291) those cast outside will suffer. As Myers notes (2010, 126–127) the whole national identity is connected so deeply to the leader that the people cannot survive without him. In this way, loyalty is tried to be created among everyone, including the youth.

To emphasize the purity aspect, the women who depicted interest in "vain" things such as makeup, fashion or even casual dating (Un-ha in *The Girls in my Hometown*, Sooryun in *The Schoolgirl's Diary*, Yon-hui in *The Name Given by the Era*) were all flawed

characters who, after their redemption, began to wear traditional outfits and most importantly learned to put ideological purity before their marriage (Un-ha in *Girls in my Hometown* and Kye-ok in *When We Pick Apples*). In addition, the only female character willing to express her individual desires, even acting in a rebellious manner instead of typical depiction of a shy and innocent girl, Soo-ryun in *The Schoolgirl's Diary*, is also a flawed character but seems to also change for the “better” at the end of the film.

8.1.7 Depiction of Rural People

When it comes to institutes and other specific sections of the population, rural people, including their youth, are portrayed as very innocent, hardworking and ideologically correct. Some comparison is done with the urban people but generally the films focus on rural areas and do not specifically condemn urban people either, only people like Sin-jun and the youth who he represents. There is a mention from Song-hwa in *A Broad Bellflower* on how: “I'd rather enjoy my own food living in my village than begging for good food in the city.” (Choi et al. 1987, 01:03:37) which could be interpreted as a negative depiction of the city, while on the other hand, it could also be just interpreted her viewing Won-bong’s relocation to the city as similar to begging or relying on others. In general, for example Pyongyang is depicted as a very attractive city full of attractions. Un-ha’s sister also mentions how specifically the city girls like boys who are “well-off” or whose parents live abroad (Pak 1991, 00:15:56a).

In the films the rural youth are positive, onward looking people who seem to understand and appreciate their significance for the country. “We're youth, future of the country.” (Jang 1997, 00:26:11) the young villagers in *Myself in the Distant Future* can be heard singing. This could be done in order to depict the importance of agriculture in North Korea in addition to maintaining the unequal area politics connected with songbun.

8.1.7 Use of Music, Lyrics and Repetition

In addition, the emphasis on music and lyrics is great in the films, with the main messages of the film often announced through lyrics of the songs or then just generally praising the country, state and the leader. Indeed, Kim Jong-il also wrote instructions on the use of music and lyrics and emphasizes its importance in *On the Art of the Cinema* (Kim J-I 1973, 338) As Cathcart and Korhonen note, music can connect people and

increase unity within a group. The process involves psychological and chemical factors. Music releases endorphins even if listening only passively. Combined with movement among other group members and suitable narration through the lyrics, psychological changes on a national level are possible. (Cathcart & Korhonen 2016, 393)

An essential note in the film is also repetition. It is used for the consistency needed in molding the reality to match the ideology (Arendt 1951/1958, 351–352). It probably is not a coincidence that similar themes, such as praise for the leader, emphasis on nationalism and hard work are repeated in all the films and offer insight into the most important messages that have stayed relatively the same throughout the years.

8.1.8 Collectivism and the Effect of the Famine on the Totalitarian Traits

The emphasis on collectivism presented in the films is understandable as total subordination to the state means the willingness to sacrifice individual desires for the improvement of the state in all aspects of life. As Arendt notes, totalitarian propaganda cannot be projected onto people with individual interests (Arendt 1951/1958, 348). In addition, political messages targeting social identities work better than those targeting individual identities and they also make people specifically interested on the well-being of the whole group (Ispas 2013, 24).

As mentioned in the theory chapter, scholars' views on the specific nature of North Korea as a totalitarian, post-totalitarian or authoritarian society have varied but something that is agreed on is that the society changed due to the famine. As it was mentioned, the famine weakened the state and forced people to find their own methods of finding food, and with that the totalitarian traits have diminished. In the films made before the famine, totalitarian traits condemning individual efforts are more prevalent, for example, in *When We Pick Apples* (1971) where Jong-ok "didn't rely on the masses and tried to do everything on your own." (Kim, Y-H 1971, 00:31:17) while afterwards personal innovations are encouraged such as the alternative fuel in *Myself in the Distant Future*. For example, in the Soviet Union, the model youth was not supposed to act independently but only within the limits of guidance provided by the state (Rolf 2004, 1—6).

8.1.9 Romance, Marriage and the Family State

When one thinks of grand emotions, a major trait in melodrama, romance comes to mind. However, in addition to lacking any kind of sexual romance, mutual affection between people is only formed after both parts of the relationship have grasped Juche ideals. For example, in *Myself in the Distant Future* Sin-jun gains Su-yang's affection only after becoming a model character. Similarly, in *When We Pick Apples* the model character Jong-ok, gives her appreciation to her sister's fiancé only after he comes to help Jong-ok's village.

In the films, marriage is based on the same idea of two loyal Juche characters. There is no sense of traditional romance between Jin-ok and Jong-min in *The Name Given by the Era*, or Soo-ryun's parents in *The Schoolgirl's Diary* and displays of affection are also nowhere to be seen. In the case of *The Schoolgirl's Diary*, while Soo-ryun's parents are supportive of each other, the characters always put the state before their own marriage. Before her change at the end of the film, their daughter Soo-ryun does indeed question the marriage and their happiness. Similarly, the union formed between Sin-nae and the blind soldier is mostly due to the sense of duty Sin-nae feels in taking care of a disabled soldier in *The Girls in my Hometown*. In *When We Pick Apples* marriage is even seen as detrimental to one's ideological education.

The films heavily support the idea of a family state in which the family unit is depicted to be secondary to the state, thus following the general idea of the family state in North Korea. This is especially highlighted in *The Story of Our Home* (and therefore the Kim Jong-un era) where the main message is that all North Koreans are brothers and sisters due to the blood they share, and how the leader and the party are their parents. The main goal seems to be to form a social identity of the whole country as a single unit, with the leader and his teachings as the core that holds the identity together because, as established in the films, those not following the regime's values suffer in the end if they do not change their ways.

The leaders are also constantly referred as "father" and the party and the country commonly referred as "home" or "mother". In, for example *The Girls in my Hometown* Sin-nae's mother even says how "(...) the Party reared my child" (Pak 1991, 00:48:37), therefore, stating how their biological relationship is subpar to the relationship between

the state, leader and the citizen. This strengthens the idea of the family state and how life is given, and possible, only with the "father" and the "mother".

The Schoolgirl's Diary also makes it clear how the family unit is subpar to the state, as the film paints the father's neglect of his family as a positive thing as he is advancing the state's affairs which the reformed Soo-ryun understands in the end. As Gabroussenko (2019a) notes, the theme of biological parents as only giving life, not raising the children, the state being superior to the family unit, and the idea that the blood shared by the North Koreans makes them one large family, are common themes depicted in the country's art.

The shared social identity between the leader and those he rules is important (Ispas 2013, 91). Therefore, for example, in *The Schoolgirl's Diary*, Soo-ryun's father talks how the leader is also a man who has a family with whom he cannot spend much time because of his duties for the people of the country. His situation is therefore compared to Soo-ryun's father and thus the film attempts to emphasize that the leader shares the social identity of a North Korean with family.

The parents' role as ensuring their children's ideological education is evident for example in *When We Pick Apples* and *Myself in the Distant Future*. As the ideology supports the regime and condemns its enemies, this can be seen as a method of strengthening the regime as the ingroup. The films therefore emphasize the need for people to actively reinforce the regime's values.

8.1.10 The Role of the Military in the Society

In the films, the military serves as a defender from international aggression but also as an enabler in society by for example partaking in various constructions. The latter characteristics are in fact emphasized more in the films, compared to armed defense perhaps due to the films not taking place during the war.

Militarism is naturally portrayed in the leaders as well. For example, it is mentioned several times how the leader is making his way "to the front". In North Korea this kind of militaristic language is used about important construction projects and specific agricultural areas. The language therefore connects with Songun and may strengthen the

idea on how the country is still in a warlike state. Indeed, as Gabroussenko notes, the mention of the front in addition to the constant narration of how difficult the leader's journeys to the front are, adds to the image of constant threat of war (Gabroussenko 2016a). These ideas are present in other dictatorships as well.³² This instability is depicted in the films also due to domestic issues such as the famine and insufficient ideological education. The characters are therefore advised against all kinds of disturbance against the state.

Other examples of militaristic language are for example *The 150-Day Battle* and *100-Day Battles*. The shock brigades are also organized in a very militaristic fashion with the people having ranks and wearing uniforms (Lankov 2007, 113—114).

As mentioned, the importance of the military is inherited in the leader, and through emulating him, also the youth. The habit of going “to the front” also sends the message that the leader is one of “us” as military plays such a large role in North Korean society. In addition, as the division between “us” and “them” is contextual and authoritarian powers need methods to keep themselves as the members of the ingroup (Ispas 2013, 50), the notion of the constant threat of war can be linked with the idea of the regime constantly keeping the outgroup of foreign aggressors relevant and thus keeping itself as the most relevant ingroup opposing the enemy.

There are however differences in the films between the emphasis put on the military, including the shock brigades. The army is most relevant in *The Girls in my Hometown* and in *The Name Given by the Era* while playing a minimal role in *When We Pick Apples* and in *Myself in the Distant Future*. In *The Story of our Home*, the orphans' brother is away in the army and when he comes to visit his village with his army unit they salute Jong-a as they had been informed about her selfless deeds. Similarly, in *A Broad Bellflower*, the villagers can be seen celebrating one of them returning from the army and hailing him as a hero. (Choi et al. 1987, 01:12:34). In *The Schoolgirl's Diary*, Soo-ryun also dedicates a song she sings for “ (...) my comrades who will be joining the People's Army.” (Jang 2007, 00:48:21).

³² For example, both Hitler and Stalin promised to bring stability into society while intending to bring the society into a permanent state of instability (Arendt 1951/1958, 391).

8.1.11 Generational Debt, the Notion of Time and Sacrifice

The presence of generational debt was a theme that the author did not expect to be depicted as heavily as it did. When it comes to the youth, they are often compared to the older generation, either negatively or positively, depending on the context of the film. For example, *The Story of Our Home* depicts the youth in a very positive light, perhaps due the recent change of leadership, with young Kim Jong-un taking over his father as the leader of the country. The same applies for *The Name Given by the Era*, released only two years before Kim Jong-un's rise to power. Then again, *The Name Given by the Era* and *The Schoolgirl's Diary*, also have many scenes where it is specifically the youth who are after recognition and trophies.

In the context of generational debt, the youth (mainly the flawed characters) are in various ways critically compared to the older generations. In *When We Pick Apples* the grandfather has to continuously remind the youth how bad things used to be under the Japanese so that they would make sure to maintain their level of prosperity to new generations. Jong-ok then forwards his message to children visiting the apple farm. In *The Girls in my Hometown* comparisons are made on how during the wartime girls helped the army whereas Un-ha abandons her boyfriend. In *Myself in the Distant Future* one of the clearest signs on how the flawed character Sin-jun and the model character Su-yang are separated is due to the former abusing his parents and grandfather's reputation instead of contributing on his own, while Su-yang is always concentrated on contributing herself and respecting the previous generations. In *The Name Given by the Era*, the young characters emphasize the importance of serving Kim Jong-il and respecting the earlier generations as the country is a gift for them which needs to be repaid by fighting for it (advancing the state's agenda).

As Gabroussenko (2018b) notes, North Korean cinema of the 1980's persuaded the youth to have faith in the regime by demonstrating how negative things were in colonial times. In addition, in the films, the future is always made to look better compared to the past and present, with phrases such as “the time of powerful nation is soon” (Kim, H-C 2009, 00:28:55) often accompanied by examples of material wellbeing received in the future.

However, excluding the colonial past and general use of flashback to find a more negative time period, the role of older people and the concept of generational debt in the films is to urge the youth to learn from them. The idea is interesting as, according to Gabroussenko, older people are also used as an example of outdated ideas in North Korean cinema (Gabroussenko 2020a). This is evident in *When We Pick Apples* but is not explored in the other films of the thesis. Therefore, the films, on the other hand, disown the older generation's old ideas but also praise their spirit during the occupation and the war and say how the youth should look up to them in their own struggles, such as the famine.

It is noteworthy however, that the struggle of the present is only evident in speech. In the scenes taking place in the present food is everywhere and generally everyone's living conditions are depicted to be good, although the urban areas seem to do better than the rural areas. This was the case even during the famine (*Myself in the Distant Future*) or with the orphan family (*The Story of Our Home*). Through these messages, the regime tries to strengthen its power as the country is depicted to be always progressing, even during difficult times, if the youth remember the sacrifices of the leader and the older generations and are willing to make sacrifices of their own. Making new innovations, especially in sciences, is encouraged, but also partaking in construction projects.

8.1.12 Summary

To sum, the films' main ways to construct the social identity thus rely on the dichotomy of the positive and negative characters. Due to the positive youth characters emulating the ideals within Juche (such as unwavering loyalty to the leader and the party) and the important political movements in the context of each film which the party and the leader have emphasized, they in turn make these attitudes and actions as the prototypical behaviour of the social entity that is the youth. This achieves two things; first, as Ispas notes, the most prototypical person of a group is the leader, meaning that by making the actions and values of the regime to be the most prototypical behaviour of the group, the regime strengthens its power. In addition, those demonstrating the least prototypical behaviour are labeled as the outgroup towards whom the ingroup has extremely negative feelings (Ispas 2013, 27). The manner in which this ties specifically into repressive forms of governance is that the authoritarian forces, once in power, can mold

the prototypical behaviour to reflect their desires. (Ispas 2013, 111). Despite there always being some autonomy in the arts, the cinema in North Korea is still so tightly controlled that the regime has used it mainly as an educative tool, and it can therefore be used to strengthen the prototypical behaviour of the regime for the youth.

In the end, it seems that the element of sacrifice and the leader in the films are the ideas which eventually ties the youth, social identity, and an oppressive system such as totalitarianism together. As Arendt notes (1951/1958, 348) the masses must not have any individual interests, but their fanaticism relies on the will to sacrifice oneself for the leader. This is what all the films prior to *The Story of Our Home* emphasize but in that film the message of sacrifice is more subtle. It emphasizes selflessness and even individual dreams, but in fact, the dreams of the people in the film are dreams which correspond with the desires of the state. In addition, the notion of the family state is connected to sacrifice also because the idea itself means to raise the party and the leader above one's own family. Therefore, even if the notion of sacrifice as the one single important message of the films is debatable one thing is not: the leader. Like Lim J-C (2015, 89) mentions, the leader indeed seems to be the sun who lights the world and, as the films indicate, there can be no life without him.

9 Conclusion

The research question of the study was to examine *How do North Korean films try to construct the youth's social identity and what is that social identity like*. This was done by analyzing seven films from different eras in North Korean history, spanning from 1971 to 2016.

The analysis revealed the manner on how the films construct the youth's social identity. The films utilize the model characters who personify the teachings of the leader and the Worker's Party of Korea. The films emphasize how these characters act in a desirable manner and should be followed. The leaders' importance in the construction of the youth's social identity in the films is revealed through the constant messages given in the films about their relevance in all aspects of life.

The messages of the regime were spread by the characters through their actions but also through the messages they were given by other characters. Music was also utilized and especially the lyrics of the songs revealed the main themes of the films. Based on the model characters mirroring the regime's intention for the youth and strengthening the prototypicality of the leader for North Koreans, not much has changed throughout the years as the basic principles of Juche have always been there with the films also discussing more specific themes such as education and marriage, in addition to various campaigns promoted by the regime. The military also always had some sort of presence in the films and was always depicted positively.

The desired social identity of the youth presented in the films, emphasizes the importance of the leader and the party for the identities of the youth as it is explained how everyone in the country is their child and how abandoning the leaders will lead to bitterness and isolation. This is sometimes applied even to state institutions such as the youth league in *When We Pick Apples* ("Without it, we won't be able to do anything and live even for a day." (Kim, Y-H 1971, 00:31:17)). This unity is emphasized with strong nationalism; traditionality is encouraged while all foreign influences are seen as corrupting the people. Nationalism based on race, an idea which B.R. Myers writes about, is implied, for example, by how Kim Il-sung is seen as the rightful leader of the whole peninsula, not just the North, as mentioned in *When We Pick Apples*.

In addition, vanity, individualism and materialism are discouraged although the films after the famine are more supportive of individual efforts as long as they advance the state's goals.

In addition to the fictional characters, historical characters (whose real origins are debatable) are used in the films to make the transformation of the citizens to emulate the model characters more plausible.

In the films, ideological education and criticism received from others are seen as essential tools to achieve the desired social identity.

It was also interesting to notice that there were many aspects of totalitarianism from Arendt's book which matched the North Korean system such as the notion of things improving in the future, evolution of enemies, the notion of "outdated" ideas, the importance of belonging to a group for one's identity as well as the importance of the leader, indoctrination and propaganda.

As the collection of North Korean films is vast, the way to continue the study could be to broaden the data. This would be especially fruitful for someone fluent in Korean as the data for this thesis needed to have English subtitles. In addition, the films could be examined from different angles, for example the theme of generational debt which connects to Chung and Kwon's idea of "the gift" could be a single theme, or, for example, the theme of sacrifice. Comparative analysis could also be made by for example comparing films taking place during the occupation or the Korean war, and films after that, or more extensive analysis on films made post, during and prior the famine of 1994—1998.

In addition, it would be interesting to examine the films of the Kim Jong-un era. If the role of cinema in North Korea has indeed faded under Kim Jong-un as the author was informed in the University of North Korean Studies, other artforms could be examined. TV shows could be one option as they have been given a larger role in North Korea in recent years (Chandran 2017). Also, the films of the Kim Jong-un era have depicted surprising individualism in the portrayal of children (Gabroussenko 2016c). Thus, it seems that some changes have taken place which would make further research fruitful.

Still, as demonstrated, cinema, having played such a significant role in North Korea's propaganda, has offered a window to examine what the regime has wanted to achieve in different stages of the country's existence, and how it has tried to affect the youth and what it expects from them. Therefore, continued studies on the country's art can give a glimpse on what the regime wants. Due to North Korea's closed nature yet relevance in global affairs, the information is as important as ever.

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