

Mi-Jeong Lee
Université de Montréal

Posthuman Individuated Narrativity: Motherhood in the Cinema of Hong Sang-Soo

This essay will investigate the reiteration of a particular treatment of motherhood in the cinema of Hong Sangsoo that conjures the Korean New Woman (Sinyeoseong), a Korean term describing modernized women from 1923 forward by employing the concept of individuation (Simondon, 2020) which manifests posthuman feminine narrativity. In Hong's 26 feature-length films from 1996 to 2023, motherhood is peripheral to female identity. Examining the rare exceptions to what is otherwise a total lack of motherhood in Hong's work, I will illustrate his resistance to traditional tropes of the caregiver or victim surrendering her own being for the sake of her family or children through the three exemplary films: in *Hahaha* (2010), an arguably traditional Korean mother whips her adult son to discipline him; in *In Another Country* (2012), a mother running from debt collectors escapes to a small village with her daughter, representing a traditional mother role but a very contemporary character. Peripheral mother figures also take shape in relationship to central characters, the search for self and not-self woven into an internal alterity: in *The Novelist's Film* (2022), a woman in her fifties becomes a film director, with no reference to her motherhood or familial ties. Emphasizing an active process of individuation, Hong Sang-soo decentres motherhood and refabricates the Korean New Woman to project an individuated future feminine engaged in an unceasing process of the search for alterity within the self, a way of being in the world.

Mi-Jeong Lee, PhD, graduated from l'École des Arts Visuels et Médiatiques de la Faculté des arts at Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM). Intersecting theory and practice in art, Lee is an active artist and scholar in film, video, and installation art as well as Founder and Director of Asian Art Publication Lab (AAPLab), a cluster research-creation laboratory for publication of Pan-Asian visual and media arts, and Arts East-West / Korean Film Festival Canada, an artist-driven non-profit organization founded in 1996. Lee teaches Korean visual and media arts at Université de Montréal and Korean cinema at the King Sejong Institute of Montreal. Her recent research focus is Asian diaspora arts. Lee is also working on the 2nd series of her multimedia installation exhibition *The Body That Hums: Ungnyeo's Cave* with the support of the Canada Council for the Arts.

<https://asianartpublication.com>

<https://koreanfilm.ca>

<https://mijeonglees.art>