



Forging the Personal with the Historical in *Cheonggyecheon Medley** – Experiments in Documentary Form in South Korea –

Michael A. Unger
Graduate School of Media, Sogang University

I . Introduction

Experimental documentary filmmaking has consistently challenged mainstream notions of documentary visual representations of the non-fiction world. John Grierson's famous definition of documentary as "the creative treatment of actuality"¹⁾ acknowledges the dialectic between cinematic aesthetics and cultural representation, yet seeks to reconcile the two within the documentary enterprise. What separates documentary from other film practices is that the former is founded upon the concept, as Scott MacDonald succinctly phrases, of a "truth claim"²⁾ or verifiable knowledge of a social subject that exists outside the purview of the individual expression and subjectivity of the filmmaker. However, evocation through expressive cinematic techniques offer a different type of knowledge rather than traditional documentary forms such as rhetoric in expository documentaries, argumentation and testimony in participatory

* A shorter and different version of this manuscript was presented as a paper at the Documentary Studies Association Conference on "Korean Documentary" at Sogang University on 25 Oct 2014 in Seoul, Korea.

1) John Grierson, "The First Principles of Documentary", in Forsythe Hardy (ed), *Grierson on Documentary* (London: Faber & Faber, 1966), p.147.

2) Scott MacDonald, *Avant-Doc: Intersections of Documentary and Avant-Garde Cinema* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015), p.2.

documentaries, and visible evidence in observational ones. Louise Spence and Vinicius Navarro point out that experimental forms in documentary filmmaking “are less a communicative act than a poetic form of engagement with the sociohistorical world” that “opt for a different kind of formal arrangement in order to provide new insights into the events, situations, or subjects represented.”³⁾ This approach expands the interaction and the relationship between the filmmaker and an aspect of reality to include highly subjective cinematic representations that are multi-layered and open to speculation, and yet are derived from the filmmaker’s encounter with the non-fiction world.

The *Hollywood Reporter* underscores this point in Lee Hyo-won’s article entitled “South Korean Indie Documentaries Get Experimental.” This review analyzes Kelvin Kyung Kun Park’s (hereafter Kelvin Park) documentary *A Dream of Iron* (<철의 꿈>, 박, 2013), which premiered at the Berlinale and was shown at New York’s Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in 2014 and screened at the Jeongju International Film Festival (JIFF). The lead programmer of JIFF, Kim Youngjin, comments in the review that Park’s film is part of “a very visible shift in the local indie documentary scene, where filmmakers are offering more creative and diverse formats.”⁴⁾ Kelvin Park himself is emblematic of the recent phenomenon of Korean filmmakers who in the last decade studied or lived abroad and brought back with them creative processes and theories that shape films they now make in Korea. Park was born in Seoul in 1978 but was educated in the United States, earning his BA degree in Design and Media Arts from the University of California, Los Angeles and graduated from the California Institute of the Arts with an MFA in film and video. Currently he runs a multidisciplinary studio in Seoul named “Flying Studio” that features film and video, photography, and installations. His experimental documentaries have contributed to a more flexible culture within the Korean documentary field that has embraced experimentation in documentary aesthetics. In fact, Kim Jihoon maintains “Korean independent

3) Louise Spence and Vinicius Navarro, *Crafting Truth: Documentary Form and Meaning* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 2011), p.147.

4) Lee, Hyo-won, “South Korean Indie Documentaries Get Experimental”, *Hollywood Reporter*, 28 May 2014. <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/south-korean-indie-documentaries-get-706126>.

documentary during the last few years has been the richest and most vibrant territory of formal and aesthetic experimentations in Korean national cinema.”⁵⁾ To name a few, Lee Kang Hyun’s experimental documentary *The Color of Pain* (<보라>, 이, 2010) in an innovative fashion explores various working conditions and environments as they relate to health concerns in Korea and received praise for its formalistic approach when screened at JIFF.⁶⁾ Lee Hyun-Jung’s *The Virgin Forest* (<원시림>, 이, 2012) consists of three sections of different documentary styles-participatory, essayist, and journey modes respectively- in addition to using a range of in-camera and post-production visual effects. According to one reviewer, the film “blurs the lines between reality and fiction to such a degree that the camera becomes an active part of understanding how to interpret such scenes.”⁷⁾ *The Watchtower* (<망대>, 문, 2014) by Moon Seung-wook intertwines fictional and dramatic elements, such as a time-traveling device, within the film’s exploration of Moon’s hometown, creating one of the first “Sci-Fi” experimental documentaries ever to be made in Korea. Venues for Korean experimental documentaries, to name a few in addition to JIFF, include EXiS (Experimental Film and Video Festival in Seoul), NeMaF (Seoul International New Media Festival) and Wildflower Film Festival in Seoul.

One of the most important experimental documentaries that helped open the floodgates in Korea for international film festival recognition is Kelvin Park’s first film *Cheonggyecheon Medley* (<청계천 메들리>, 박, 2010). His multi-layered documentary melds the personal with the historical through a collage consisting of a variety of different documentary modes that evoke the filmmaker’s subjective state of mind and feelings on the social subject of precarious labor in Korea. Bill Nichols defines his categorization of documentary modes as different ways to represent the historical world in “formal, cinematic qualities.”⁸⁾ Expanding upon Nichols’ formulation, I will first examine the structure of Park’s documentary as a collage or “medley” that

5) Jihoon Kim, “*Factory Complex*; the Post-*Vérité* Turn of Korean Experimental Documentary”, *Millennium Film Journal*, no. 62. (2015), p.11.

6) Cho, Young Kag, “Upcoming Korean Documentary: ‘The Color of Pain’”, *Han Cinema*, 1 Nov 2011. <https://www.hancinema.net/upcoming-korean-documentary-the-color-of-pain-34874.html>.

7) Connor McMorran, “Edinburgh 2013: *Virgin Forest* (원시림, 2012)”, *Modern Korean Cinema*, 21 June 2013. <http://www.modernkoreancinema.com/2013/06/edinburgh-2013-virgin-forest-2012.html>.

8) Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010), p.143.

includes an array of different cinematic methods: expressive animation, an essayistic voice-over of Park talking to his dead grandfather, and musical montages of machinery and molten metals interwoven with observational footage of a group of metal workers who inhabit the rundown, small-scale metal workshops in Seoul's Cheonggyecheon neighborhood. Using iron as a metaphor for Korean modernity, Park furthermore traces Korea's economic development by evoking the historical through archival footage from Korean and Japanese newsreels, feature films, and television programming through recontextualization. He forms an alternative, subjective history of the ironworkers, situating his own subjectivity within the formalism of a film that is fractured, open-ended, and unstable.

Critics who still consider observation or objectivity (even when regarded as an artifice itself) and formalism at opposite poles of the documentary enterprise may regard *Cheonggyecheon Medley* as art rather than visual anthropology or a socio-historical documentary. Such an outlook fails to take into account how the film's formalism derives from Park's ethnographic encounter with the social subject of iron. Furthermore, the boldness of Park's formalism gives priority to his personal interpretation of that subject for himself and the viewer, infusing it with ever-changing meaning and interpretation. Paul Ward, for example, construes Nichols' documentary poetic mode as "aesthetic expression of aspects of the real that becomes the main focus, rather than the real *per se*."⁹⁾ *Cheonggyecheon Medley* can certainly fit into this category, but Park's medley of documentary aesthetics actually transcends this formulation. Therefore, I will then deconstruct each documentary mode he uses—animation, voice-over, music montages, found footage, and observational footage respectively by analyzing their formalist properties to show how they reveal and reflect Park's stance on the subject of iron. I will integrate theoretical precepts from Bill Nichols, Michael Renov, Jaimie Baron, Annabelle Honess Roe, among others, to unpack these different documentary forms. By crafting each scene or segment of the film with a different documentary technique, Park calls attention to the organization of the documentary image—how each mode depicts the social subject through a different critical lens—to create a kaleidoscopic experience of documentary sensibilities.

9) Paul Ward, *Documentary: The Margins of Reality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), pp.14-15.

This postmodern construction reveals how visual anthropology is discursive to the way a social subject is represented in a different manner through each documentary mode. It also shows how Park as an independent filmmaker constructs his own subjectivity through this type of formalism, rather than presenting a mere *pastiche*, or borrowing, of these modes.

II. Medley as Collage of Visual Texts

Park overtly calls attention to the unusual formalism of his film with the title *Cheonggyecheon Medley*. In an unpublished interview he states that he “composes” rather than edits a film, as he considers it more like a “musical composition.”¹⁰⁾ A medley in musical terms is a combination of different melodies and phrases that are distinct yet constitute a musical piece (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*). His title refers to the film’s structure of parallel editing, as Park switches between various documentary modes with each new scene or segment roughly every two or three minutes throughout the film. Parallelism makes the viewer compare and contrast the different evocations of iron as a subject, object, and metaphor. It creates a meta-narrative pertaining to iron that is not contained or dramatized within the film itself, but generated by the viewer’s active engagement in comparing different documentary modes, thus allowing multiple and open readings regarding the social subject of iron. C. J. Wheeler elaborates on the metaphor of iron in his review of Park’s subsequent documentary *A Dream of Iron* that also shares this metaphor:

Iron in the film is a symbolic element in the film that gets shaped and shapes at the same time. With each strike of the mallet, with every casting, and with every forge, the process of becoming is exposed as free-flowing idea, rather than an immovable or one-way process of creation.¹¹⁾

10) Pierre Conran, “Kelvin Kyung Kun Park, Director of A DREAM OF IRON”, Korean Film Biz Zone, 10 Mar 2014. http://www.koreanfilm.or.kr/jsp/news/interview.jsp?blbdComCd=601019&seq=85&mode=INTERVIEW_VIEW.

11) C. J. Wheeler, “Cheonggyecheon Medley: A Dream of Iron”, Han Cinema, 1 Oct 2011. http://www.hancinema.net/korean_movie_Cheonggyecheon_Medley_2p_A_Dream_of_Iron.php

Iron and steel manufacturing in Korea marked the country's transformation from an agrarian economy to an industrial one during a period of rapid industrialization in the mid- to late twentieth century. Pohang Iron and Steel Company, LTD (POSCO), for example, founded in 1970 as one of the important initiatives of Park Chung-hee's government, went from producing 1.03 metric tons of crude steel to 33 metric tons by 2010, making it one of the largest producers in the world.¹²⁾ Park's subject of iron is metaphorical given its multiple representations: a way of making a living in the observational mode; an economic force that shaped Korea with the archival footage of its modernizing past; a bond between grandfather and grandson in Park's voice-over; and an obsessive passion of the filmmaker in his animated and musical montages.

I consider the aesthetics of *Cheonggyecheon Medley* a collage of different documentary *sensibilities*, each treated with equal but limited significance. According to Richard Dyer's broad but useful definition, collages are "visual works made up of disparate materials. Assemblage is usually reserved for three-dimensional works, collage (from the French '*coller*' (to stick together) for two-dimensional ones."¹³⁾ A collage reveals its own materiality as a display of appropriation, a borrowing of materials placed in a new context with others. The seams of its construction are visible and revealed to the viewer as an act of reflexivity. Collage in the words of Johannes Fabian reveals the "producer, process, and product"¹⁴⁾ in its presentation. This art form relates to the concept of dialectical montage where disparate shots juxtaposed together create a new meaning not inherent in either of the two shots. As a result, the juxtaposition of two images of two different concrete objects can produce a new abstract meaning in the mind of the viewer, which Sergei Eisenstein describes as "intellectual montage."¹⁵⁾ Taking this principle to its logical conclusion, the construction of a film according to Budd Hopkins "by its various nature is a collage, an assemblage of fragments and points of view, put together often in a non-linear way."¹⁶⁾ Collage

12) Ahn, Choong-yong, "Korea: From Rags to Riches", Korea Times, 19 Jul 2010.

http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/biz/2016/06/367_137652.html

13) Richard Dyer, *Pastiche* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p.12.

14) Johannes Fabian, "Languages, History, and Anthropology", *Journal of the Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, vol.1 (1971), pp.19-47.

15) Sergei Eisenstein, "Methods of Montage", in Jay Leyda (trans.) *Film Form: Essays on Film Theory* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1949), p.82.

films *per se* in documentaries are usually associated with the category of compilation films that consist entirely of archival or found footage appropriated from other sources, but Park creates a collage of documentary modes that highlights them as different types of discursive texts—different ways of seeing and interpreting the social subject in visual ethnography. The film therefore is a sum of aesthetic parts whose postmodern reflexivity calls attention to its construction as an assembly of disparate visual and audio texts. In collage, abstraction and representation are intertwined; the juxtaposition of documentary modes in Park's film reveals each one to be a cinematic construction that transforms the viewer's perception of the social subject. Neither mode is privileged, unified, nor complete, but instead displayed together as a collection of documentary fragments. Other Korean experimental documentaries also use a combination of different aesthetics. A noteworthy example is Im Heung-Soon's experimental documentary *Factory Complex* (위로공단, 2014), which explores the history of past and present struggles of Korean female factory workers by using interviews, poetic observations, found footage, and subjective re-enactments. Kim Jihoon, in his astute analysis of the structure of the film, denotes that these different forms altogether “allows him to employ and mix various formal devices of avant-garde”¹⁷⁾ as a way to express an alternative history of their experiences.

What differentiates *Cheonggyecheon Medley* from mere formalism is that Park's collage makes visible the various connections between his subjectivity and the historical world through this structural method. Michael Renov asserts that collage is “a vehicle for self-expression that is equally an act of testimony.”¹⁸⁾ Collage, in turn, emulates Park's sensibilities as a filmmaker. Park describes *Cheonggyecheon Medley* as a “*Bibimbap*” film.¹⁹⁾²⁰⁾ *Bibimbap* is a traditional Korean dish comprised of rice topped with a variety of colorful and seasoned vegetables and usually chili

16) Budd Hopkins, “Modernism and the Collage Aesthetic”, *New England Review*, vol. 18, no. 2 (1997), p.5.

17) Jihoon Kim, “*Factory Complex*, the Post-*Vérité* Turn of Korean Experimental Documentary”, *Millennium Film Journal*, no 62. (2015), p.11.

18) Michael Renov, “Art, Documentary as Art”, in Brian Winston (ed), *The Documentary Film Book* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p.351.

19) Kelvin Park, Unpublished interview, Documentary Studies Association of Korea Conference, Sogang University, Seoul, Korea, 25 Oct 2014.

20) One can note my comparison of Park's comment and his documentary form in relation to the Italian dish *pastiche* by which Richard Dyer, in his book *Pastiche* (2006), discusses how this culinary entity relates to the meaning of the postmodern term.

pepper paste. One can have it with a variety of different meats or fish, a raw egg, and have it served cold or hot. Before eating one stirs up ingredients together—hence the word *Bibimbap*, which literally means “mixed rice.” Park’s film is a mixture of aesthetics borrowed from different documentary traditions that encapsulates his own sensibilities from his experiences abroad and his return to Korea. He views much of Korea as an outsider, commenting that he does not know what Korean aesthetics entail.²¹⁾ His self-reflexivity, instead of just endlessly bending back on itself, creates what Bill Nichols calls the “textual voice” of the documentary in its postmodernist construction that restores “the dialectic between self and other: neither the ‘out there’ nor the ‘in here’ contains its own inherent meaning. The *process* [italics contained in quote] of constructing meaning overshadows constructed meanings.”²²⁾ Park himself states that he did not set out to make an experimental documentary, or to impose a specific aesthetic on his social subject, but that the form came from making the documentary itself. This process, in turn, stems from his own status as an ex-pat and an outsider, his past experiences and training abroad in the visual arts as an artist rather than an anthropologist, and his attempt to situate himself within his new Korean surroundings.²³⁾ Park reveals that the concept of subjectivity itself in documentary is fractured and interconnected with, rather than separated from, the historical world as an amalgam of multiple cultural and historical influences and articulations.

III. Documenting the Inner World

Park frames his documentary in the opening scene with his own voice-over as he describes being “haunted” by iron in the form of a re-occurring nightmare where his “blood tastes like iron.” His voice-over establishes Park as an unseen but pervasive character in the film.

21) Kelvin Park, Unpublished interview, Documentary Studies Association of Korea Conference, Sogang University, Seoul, Korea, 25 Oct 2014.

22) Bill Nichols, “The Voice of Documentary”, in Alan Rosenthal and John Corner (eds), *New Challenges for Documentary* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.229.

23) Kelvin Park, Unpublished interview, Documentary Studies Association of Korea Conference, Sogang University, Seoul, Korea, 25 Oct 2014.

Accompanied by an industrial soundscape composed by Paulo Vivacqua, which incorporates the sound effects of machinery, these two audio elements underscore the first abstract images of the film: hard-to-decipher shapes and movement, washed in a vivid, bluish color that appear to have been manipulated by digital filters in post-production to create an abstract negative image of inverted values. Park slowly reveals this abstract imagery to be a metal worker working at a machine that together makes visible and audible the interiority of Park's nightmare and experience with iron. Park's documentary begins as a form of domestic ethnography, which Renov delineates as "a form of self-portraiture in which the self is bound up with its familial other, takes as its unspoken precept 'ethnography begins in the home.' Self entails other; the other refracts self."²⁴) Park's highly interior stance appears to situate his film as an autobiographical meditation on his personal nightmares, thoughts, and feelings on the social subject of iron. Yet his voice-over also directly addresses his deceased grandfather who was a metal worker himself and transforms Park's musings into a one-sided dialogue with his grandfather and the viewer regarding the plight of the Cheonggyecheon ironworkers and the history of their neighborhood.

Named after a stream that flowed through the center of Seoul's downtown area, Cheonggyecheon is a commercial area consisting mainly of industrial areas and small shops. Its transformations capture the rapid industrialization of Korea after the Korean War. First came the building of a highway overpass and other construction projects during the mid-1970s, which covered up much of the stream and inundated the neighborhood with congestion and pollution, resulting in a poor infrastructure that persists to this day. Second was the Cheonggyecheon restoration project under the mandate of Seoul's mayor Lee Myung-bak in 2003, who sought to restore the river and devise an eco-friendly urban space to enhance Seoul's reputation as a world city and to promote tourism.²⁵) T. J. Lah discerns another motive with this project when he points out: "because of Cheonggyecheon's historical relevance, the restoration project was not seen as

24) Michael Renov, *The Subject of Documentary* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), p.xiii.

25) For a detailed description of the origins of this restoration project see Bianca Mariarinaldi's article "Landscapes of metropolitan hedonism: The Cheonggyecheon Linear Park in Seoul." For a celebrated view of the project one can visit the Cheonggyecheon Museum permanent exhibition that represents its positive aspects in no uncertain terms.

just another urban planning project; it became a symbolic task.”²⁶⁾ The government’s top-down approach in Lee Myung-bak’s emerging reputation at the time as a “bulldozer mayor” met with resistance mostly from the local merchants in the area who would be forced to relocate and street vendors illegally operating in the area who had no other recourse. However, Lee Jong-Youl and David Anderson Chad contend that the program “went over budget, met some protest, promoted gentrification, and involved more of an historical and environmental reimagining than a restoration.”²⁷⁾ Park’s film shows the impact of gentrification on a group of metal workers in 2010 attempting to maintain their businesses while feeling the economic pressure to leave the neighborhood. In one scene, the workers discuss their options over a meal when one remarks that the government will have the last word on whether they can stay or not.

Park revisits the abstract imagery at the beginning of the film repeatedly, culminating in a stop-motion, animated sequence of an assortment of metallic objects “coming to life,” moving and comingling with each other on a white surface, as he recounts his boss warning him about making his documentary “about Korean modernity or seeking truth behind surfaces.” The ontological difference between animation and live action expands the documentary image’s relationship with the filmic and profilmic in terms of visual evidence. Annabelle Honess Roe proposes that animation “evokes the experiential in the form of ideas, feelings, and sensibilities.”²⁸⁾ Animation makes visible the inner world of Park’s relationship with iron and *projects* his interiority onto the subject of iron. It also provides an excess of meaning for the viewer: s/he responds to the animated imagery as an evocation rather than a mimetic substitution for reality or live-action photography.

Park’s voice-over also accompanies montages of recurring images: close-ups of machines at work, white hot iron being forged and shaped, still life images of various metal objects and metal workers’ tools in the workshops, the sun obscured by moving grey clouds, empty streets of the

26) T. J. Lah, “The Huge Success of the Cheonggyecheon Restoration Project: What’s Left?” in Mark Holzer, Dongsung Kong and Daniel Bromberg (eds), *Citizen Participation: Innovative and Alternative Modes for Engaging Citizens. Cases from the United States and South Korea* (Newark: American Society for Public Administration and National Center for Public Performance at Rutgers University, 2011), p.115.

27) Lee Jong Youl and Chad David Anderson, “The Restored Cheonggyecheon and the Quality of Life in Seoul”, *Journal of Urban Technology*, vol. 20, no. 4 (2013), p.3.

28) Annabelle Honess Roe, *Animated Documentary* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p.25.

neighborhood, and the workers going about their daily activities. What unites this disparate imagery, or gives it a sense of narrative unity, is Park's voice-over combined with the industrial music soundscape. In traditional expository documentaries, Barry Hampe characterizes B-roll as documentary footage that commonly serves as illustration or evidentiary evidence to support and therefore privilege the rhetoric of the voice-over of the commentator or narrator.²⁹⁾ Park uses his B-roll more as a sounding board, where his subjective musings about metal and the workers, juxtaposed with the images outlined above, are amplified by the visual immutability of the machines and metal as objects as they mechanically come to life. In one example Park shows a series of close-ups of the machines and his voice-over states that he wants to find where "the dream world and the material world meet," and he wonders if he can create or find an image that describes "the outside and inside" in "synchronicity." In other words, the voice-over and musical soundscape in these montages function as a subjective counterpoint to the material imagery of the machines and workers at work and the loud, concrete sound effects and ambience from the ethnographic site; hence sound and image function as a compound rather than a mixture, inter-connected but also independent of one another.

This interconnection is made apparent by Paulo Vivacqua's musical compositions throughout the documentary. To score the film, Park sent the raw footage to Vivacqua in Brazil over the Internet, Vivacqua composed the music, and then Park added additional layers of sound elements to the music as he edited the film in Seoul.³⁰⁾ The use of music in a documentary, besides the poetic documentary mode where music plays a primary aesthetic role, has faced skepticism due to its close association with "mood cueing"—a device prevalent in fiction film to underscore the emotional content of the scene and to help guide the viewer to experience a certain emotion. This goes against traditional notions of the documentary task to either present an argument (as in the expository mode), record, preserve, or provide a perspective on an event or aspect of the social world (as in the observational mode), or provide a variety of different perspectives in a gesture of

29) Barry Hampe, *Making Documentary Films and Videos* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2007), pp. 106-107.

30) Kelvin Park, Unpublished interview, Documentary Studies Association of Korea Conference, Sogang University, Seoul, Korea, 25 Oct 2014.

objectivity, all of which strive to compel the viewer, in an unobtrusive way as possible, to react to the visual evidence. In this framework, the expressive quality of music in a documentary appears to maintain the false dichotomy of truth vs. beauty, despite its use in many documentaries with the possible exception of the observational mode that only privileges the use of location sound.

Park's expressive music serves several formal and thematic functions: Vivacqua's score helps bridge, connect, and provide formal unity for the disparate documentary techniques in the film. Furthermore, Vivacqua's score serves to unite and underscore the disparate imagery within the montages described earlier. Thematically, Park recalls that due to his limited budget, he could not afford HD sound or imagery and shot the film with a Canon GL1 mini-DV camera. What struck him about the ethnographic site was the loudness of the din of the machinery.³¹⁾ To capture that sensorial element he uses music, in combination with ambience, to evoke the loudness and dissonance of the aural environment and as an expressive device to impart a darker tone to the imagery. Park treats music, as John Corner articulates, as a form of "investigation,"³²⁾ which I would link with Renov's categorization of four documentary poetics, one of which is to analyze, interpret and investigate.³³⁾ The way Corner describes the use of music in the documentary *Listen to Britain* (Jennings and McAllister, 1942) in the following quotation can also apply to the music montages in *Cheonggyecheon Medley*: "this is music providing us with the time to *look* [italics contained within quote] properly, giving us a framework in which to gaze and to *think* [italics contained within quote]."³⁴⁾ Consequently, the music derives from the sensorial aspect of the social world and is not a decorative or aesthetic device external to that world.

31) Kelvin Park, Unpublished interview, Documentary Studies Association of Korea Conference, Sogang University, Seoul, Korea, 25 Oct 2014.

32) John Corner, "Sounds Real: Music and Documentary", in Alan Rosenthal and John Corner (eds), *New Challenges for Documentary* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.250.

33) Michael Renov in his article "Towards a Poetics of Documentary" (1993) analyzes four conceptual modalities of documentary as "preservation, persuasion, analysis, and expressivity." Twenty years later in his article "Art, Documentary as Art" (2013) he proposes a fifth mode as "the ethical function" which is the recognition of the relationship between self and other in the realm of non-fiction representation.

34) John Corner, "Sounds Real: Music and Documentary", in Alan Rosenthal and John Corner (eds), *New Challenges for Documentary* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.250.

IV. The Foundness of Found Footage

Park appropriates archival footage throughout the film as an audio-visual representation of Korea's historical past, as when he first discusses in voice-over his grandfather's work with metal during the Japanese occupation and how his grandfather, like the other Cheonggyecheon workers, made use of military war scraps left over from World War Two and participated in the rapid industrialization of Korea.³⁵⁾ With this recounting, the first montage of archival footage consists of Japanese newsreel of airplanes in the sky, civilians watching the airplanes, workers in fields, women working at home, iron workers, and military parades and weapons on display. Park connects his personal obsessions with the aura of the historical of the found footage through what Jaimie Baron describes as the "archive effect," which constitutes "an *experience of reception*"³⁶⁾ when the viewer perceives footage taken from another source and repurposed as a found document within another film. This archive effect depends upon two factors: temporal disparity and intentional disparity. Temporal disparity refers to the gap between "now" and "then:" the viewer can discern the chronological difference when the found footage was made and when later appropriated. In Park's documentary, all the found footage is filmed, rather than recorded with digital video that he uses to shoot the documentary, and consists of different types of black-and-white and color film stocks, in different states of deterioration or aging, revealing their own temporal disparities in addition to signs of the past contained within their *mise-en-scene*. Intentional disparity defined by Baron is "a disparity based on our perception of a previous intention ascribed to and (seemingly) inscribed within the archival document."³⁷⁾ Without knowing the exact origins of the found footage, the viewer can discern its purpose or intended meaning through their extra textual knowledge. For example, the Japanese newsreel footage appears to originally report on and affirm the industrial and military might of the Japanese nation. Park's repurposing evokes the history of the unseen Korean laborers who contributed, willingly

35) Alice H. Amsden, *Asia's Next Giant: South Korea and Late Industrialization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p.8.

36) Jaimie Baron, *The Archive Effect* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), p.7.

37) Jaimie Baron, *The Archive Effect* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), p.23.

or through necessity or coercion, to the nation-building of the Japanese by the sentiments expressed in his voice-over. Placing archive footage in a new context with his voice-over displays the mutability of imagery in any documentary form, even explicitly as a signifier of a document, or trace, of history. Historical meaning as visible evidence in an image is not guaranteed, nor permanent, though its original intentions can be discerned through intentional disparity. For example, later in the film Park appropriates footage from a dated Korean fictional film of a metal-eating monster that grows and almost destroys the royal city of Songdo. Although Park's voice-over recounts the plot of the film and does not offer an alternative reading, the film clip within the context of his documentary offers connotative meanings to the viewer as well as the filmmaker. The monster's name "*Bulgasari*," (불가사리), which became the term for "those who eat up everything," connotes Korea's insatiable need for materials, machinery, and laborers to foster its industrial development, and how the workers themselves were consumed by the task. The monster also refers to Park's own nightmares (mentioned in the beginning of the film) in which his "blood tastes like iron" as the viewer literally sees the monster consuming all of the iron in the city within the diegesis of the fictional film clips.³⁸⁾

The spectator's desire for the authenticity of found footage as a document or visible trace of the past from a collective history infuses its historical aura and invests Park's repurposing with his/her own personal yet shared subjective meanings. What is remarkable is that found footage usually consists of fragments of various appropriated images from other sources composed in a manner similar to that of a contemporary narrative montage. In classical Hollywood style a montage is defined as a series of shots disconnected in time and space that show a process and/or passage of time perceived, Gail Chandler specifies, as a "self-contained sequence of images."³⁹⁾ Montage as a visual construction gives the illusion of coherence and even an implied narrative through its sequence of images and its accompanying soundtrack of voice-over, music, or both. The documentary filmmaker

38) This popular cultural gesture evokes another monster metaphor, that of Godzilla who represented the fears and memories of nuclear holocaust and wartime destruction in Japanese fictional films. In Park's film, the metal eating monster can also connote the Japanese industrialization and consumption of Korean workers and materials for military advancement during their occupation of Korea.

39) Gail Chandler, *Film Editing* (Studio City: Michael Wiese Productions, 2009), p.161.

constructs coherence from found footage by creating a montage that changes the actuality of the found footage as a visual document into a form of interpretation. This also occurs when the filmmaker places the found footage in context within the documentary itself to form connotative meaning. One vivid example is when Park, in an observational segment, shows a few Cheonggyecheon ironworkers arguing about how to make a sign for a restaurant that will look “tasty”—inviting to potential customers. He then cuts from that scene to found footage of a Korean commercial promoting a casting agency featuring a narrative about an ironworker who, through his iron skills, solves the problems of three different people who seek out his help in the neighborhood. Connotative meaning emerges from placing a dated commercial that celebrates the iron worker as a problem solver against Park’s observational footage where the workers argue about the effectiveness of the sign they are making for a customer, unsure of how to solve their problem. As one worker states, “making art is about making mistakes.” After the commercial Park then cuts to his observational footage of a contemporary Korean artist creating a sculpture out of iron with the help of the Cheonggyecheon ironworkers. The commercial is a document of the past, but is accorded a new meaning within Park’s documentary as a past signifier of the celebration of the workers, while in the present observational footage, the ironworkers still offer useful services to others but nonetheless are marginalized in society by the forces of gentrification and the difficulty of making a living. This context exposes the shifting status of ironworkers in contemporary Korean neoliberal society.

V. Observing the Real

As an ex-pat, Park remarked that when he decided on the Cheonggyecheon neighborhood as the subject for his documentary, he first had to rely on observation to film a group of present-day metal workers working there. This process emulates his own feelings of culture shock returning to his homeland after many years as an outsider and observer of contemporary Korean life.⁴⁰ Park’s

40) Kelvin Park, Unpublished interview, Documentary Studies Association of Korea Conference, Sogang University, Seoul, Korea, 25 Oct 2014.

observational mode embraces the ethnographic encounter between filmmaker and subject in a cinematic approach which privileges as real the workers as social subjects in extended segments of mundane activity (except when Park documents one worker's departure from the colorful neighborhood to a modern, sterile industrial space in an anonymous high rise building that closes the film). This technique appears important as an aspect of salvage ethnography which Park alludes to in his voice-over questioning: "Are other people's failures a part of my success?" This refers to his own observational footage as a document itself, a form closer to actuality than interpretation, though Park's musings throughout the film offer an interpretation, a present looking back at a past, which will serve in the future as visible evidence of a neighborhood and a way of life about to disappear. At first, this procedure seems to function as a counterweight to the overt experimentation throughout the film. Park's handheld camera follows the workers in their shops busy with daily tasks such as working the iron with their machines, gathering for meals and discussing the day's events, dealing with everyday affairs of running a business, and makes visible the sharing of space between the filmmaker off-screen and the workers, who at times acknowledge the presence of the camera. As opposed to strategies of interpretation, persuasion, and even abstraction, observational cinema takes a different tact towards the social subject. Anna Grimshaw and Amanda Ravetz argue that the observational mode "was linked to a different epistemology and aesthetic. It was grounded in the ethnographic encounter itself—and it was fundamentally cinematic, not literary."⁴¹) The emphasis on duration of time and space unity with the subject in the frame, the apparent lack of direction by simply following the subject with the camera, treating every moment and detail with equal attention, encourages the viewer to regard such footage as visual evidence rather than a form of interpretation. Park seems not to direct the workers but simply to record them.

Contrary to popular belief, this method is not objective, nor is it an antithesis to experimentation. Many associate observational footage with a "fly-on-the-wall" approach—a detached filmmaker observing from a distance—when actually the filmmaker is involved, engaged and responding to the events unfolding before the camera. Grimshaw and Ravetz point

41) Anna Grimshaw and Amanda Ravetz, *Observational Cinema: Anthropology, Film, and the Exploration of Social Life* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009), p.4.

out “observational work is predicated on an exercise of imagination.”⁴²⁾ Experimentation lies in the encounter itself as knowledge-in-the making, whose traces are registered in the improvisatory moment of filming. Park’s collage of documentary modes further makes its artifice apparent: observation is also a filmic construction despite its illusion of unmediated reality.

VI. Conclusion

The formalistic collage of *Cheonggyecheon Medley* makes distinct, in a non-hierarchical way, how the various documentary modes represent the historical world in a different manner. Each one determines the “reality of its reflection”⁴³⁾ through its cinematic construction. This interrogation of different cinematic representations of the social world through collage reveals, in turn, the false dichotomy between form and content in the positivist notion of finding an objective meaning that supposedly exists “out there” in the discourse of the documentary enterprise. Expressivity and visible evidence are not mutually exclusive categories but intersect in terms of the degree of difference. Expressive aesthetics can advance an effective understanding of and engagement with the non-fiction world. Park’s collage of documentary modes also embodies his own subjectivity as partial, open, and inter-connected to the social subject through the overlapping of interpretation and expressivity. *Cheonggyecheon Medley* allows art and anthropology to meet through an engagement with the viewer’s experience of different documentary sensibilities. This open *experience* connects the viewer with the historical world by revealing that connection is also a construction of visual representation. *Cheonggyecheon Medley* is an important example of how experimental documentary filmmaking in Korea is a valid, compelling, and innovative form of critical subjectivity.

42) Anna Grimshaw and Amanda Ravetz, *Observational Cinema: Anthropology, Film, and the Exploration of Social Life* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009), p.124.

43) I am referring to one of Jean-Luc Godard’s famous aphorisms that art is not the “reflection of reality but the reality of its reflection”(Youngblood 1998, 29), which can be applied to both fictional and non-fictional filmmaking modes.

References

<Books>

- Amsden, A. (1992). *Asia's Next Giant: South Korea and Late Industrialization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Baron, J. (2014). *The Archive Effect*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Chandler, G. (2009). *Film Editing*. Studio City: Michael Wiese Productions.
- Corner, J. (2005). "Sounds Real: Music and Documentary." In A. Rosenthal and J. Corner (eds) *New Challenges for Documentary* (pp. 242-252). Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Dyer, R. (2007). *Pastiche*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Eisenstein, S. (1949). "Methods of Montage." In J. Leyda (trans) *Film Form: Essays on Film Theory* (pp. 72-83). New York and London: Harcourt Brace and Company.
- Grierson, J. (1966). "The First Principles of Documentary." In H. Forsythe (ed) *Grierson on Documentary*. London: Faber & Faber.
- Grimshaw, A. and Ravetz, A. (2009). *Observational Cinema: Anthropology, Film, and the Exploration of Social Life*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Hampe, B. (2007). *Making Documentary Films and Videos*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.
- Lah, T. J. (2011). "The Huge Success of the Cheonggyecheon Restoration Project: What's Left?" In M. Holzer, D. Kong, and D. Bromberg (eds) *Citizen Participation: Innovative and Alternative Modes for Engaging Citizens. Cases from the United States and South Korea* (pp. 102-117). Newark: American Society for Public Administration and National Center for Public Performance at Rutgers University.
- MacDonald, S. (2015). *Avant-Doc: Intersections of Documentary and Avant-Garde Cinema*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Nichols, B. (2010). "The Voice of Documentary." In A. Rosenthal and J. Corner (eds) *New Challenges for Documentary* (pp. 17-33). Manchester: Manchester University Press.

- Nichols, B. (2010). *Introduction to Documentary*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Rabiger, M. (1998). *Directing the Documentary*. London: Focal Press.
- Renov, M. (2013). "Art, Documentary as Art." In B. Winston (ed) *The Documentary Film Book* (pp. 345-354). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Renov, M. (2004). *The Subject of Documentary*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Renov, M. (1993). "Towards a Poetics of Documentary." In M. Renov (ed) *Theorizing Documentary* (pp. 12-36). London and New York: Routledge.
- Roe, A. (2013). *Animated Documentary*. London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Spence, L. and Navarro, V. (2011). *Crafting Truth: Documentary Form and Meaning*. New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press.
- Ward, P. (2005). *Documentary: The Margins of Reality*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Youngblood, G. (1998). "Jean-Luc Godard: No Difference Between Life and Cinema." In D. Sterritt (ed) *Jean-Luc Godard Interviews* (pp. 9-49). Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.

<Journals>

- Fabian, J. (1971). "Languages, History, and Anthropology." *Journal of the Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 1, 19-47.
- Hopkins, B. (1997). "Modernism and the Collage Aesthetic." *New England Review*, 18 (2), 5-12.
- Kim, J. (2015). "Factory Complex, the Post-*Vérité* Turn of Korean Experimental Documentary." *Millennium Film Journal*, 62, 11.
- Lee, J. and Anderson, C. (2013). "The Restored Cheonggyecheon and the Quality of Life in Seoul." *Journal of Urban Technology*, 20 (4), 3-22.

Mariarinaldi, B. (2007). "Landscapes of metropolitan hedonism: The *Cheonggyecheon* Linear Park in Seoul." *Journal of Landscape Architecture*, 2 (2), 60-73.

<Websites>

Ahn, C. (2010. 7. 19). "Korea: From Rags to Riches." *Korea Times*. http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/biz/2016/06/367_137652.html.

Cho, Y. (2011. 11. 1). "Upcoming Korean Documentary: 'The Color of Pain.'" *Han Cinema*. <https://www.hancinema.net/upcoming-korean-documentary-the-color-of-pain-34874.html>.

Conran, P. (2014. 3. 10). "Kelvin Kyung Kun Park, Director of A DREAM OF IRON." *Korean Film Biz Zone*. http://www.koreanfilm.or.kr/jsp/news/interview.jsp?blbdComCd=601019&seq=85&mode=INTERVIEW_VIEW.

Lee, H. (2014. 5. 28). "South Korean Indie Documentaries Get Experimental." *Hollywood Reporter*. <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/south-korean-indie-documentaries-get-706126>.

McMorran, C. (2013. 6. 21). "Edinburgh 2013: Virgin Forest (<원시림>, 이, 2012)." *Modern Korean Cinema*. <http://www.modernkoreancinema.com/2013/06/edinburgh-2013-virgin-forest-2012.html>.

Wheeler, C. J. (2011. 10. 10). "Cheonggyecheon Medley: A Dream of Iron." *Han Cinema*. http://www.hancinema.net/korean_movie_Cheonggyecheon_Medley_2p_A_Dream_of_Iron.php.

Park, K. (2014. 10. 25). Unpublished interview. Documentary Studies Association of Korea Conference, Sogang University, Seoul, Korea.

영화<청계천 메들리>에서 근대사로 본 인간 개인사에 관한 연구

- 한국의 실험 다큐멘터리 유형에 관하여 -

마이클 영거

서강대학교 영상대학원

다큐멘터리 미학에 있어서 실험다큐멘터리는 한국 영화에 있어서 더욱 유연한 다큐멘터리 문화를 만들어내는 것에 이바지해 왔다. 박경근감독의 영화<청계천 메들리(2010)>는 요즘 세대의 혁신주의자로서 폭 넓게 포용하며 상징적으로 접근했고 이러한 점이 그의 영화가 한국 실험 다큐멘터리로써 국제적인 관심을 받게 되었다고 할 수 있다. 한국 현대화의 메타포로 쇠를 소재로 하는 이 영화는 박경근감독의 기록 영화로 기존과는 다른 다큐멘터리 방식을 취하고 있는데 박감독의 메들리 혹은 콜라주로써 동네 금속 노동자를 관찰하여 촬영한 영상과 음악이 있는 몽타주, 에세이 같은 느낌의 내레이션으로 변화무쌍한 색다른 다큐멘터리의 감성을 표현해 내고 있다. 해외교포 출신인 박경근감독은 그의 시선으로 한국의 불안정한 노동자라는 사회적 소재에 관해 자신의 주관적이고 분열된 입장을 반영하고 있다. 본 논문은 또한 어떠한 방식으로 그의 포스트 모더니즘적인 구성을 관객들에게 보여 주는지와 각각의 다큐멘터리 방식이 어떻게 사회적 문제를 시각적으로 묘사하는 지에 관해 연구하고 있고 이것이 본문의 추상적 개념의 방식이기도 하다. 다큐멘터리 산업에 있어서 입증할 수 있는 지식의 유형과 표현성은 상호간에 독점적인 카테고리가 아니라 그것들이 서로 교차하는 것이고, 그리고 이는 영상 민족학에서 볼 때 비판적인 주관성의 유효하고 획기적인 유형을 창조해

나는 사회적 문제의 환기를 통해 서로 연결된 것이다.

키워드 : 영화<청계천 메들리>, 실험 다큐멘터리, 다큐멘터리 방식, 콜라주,
다큐멘터리 감성