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Politicising the Manhwa Representations of the Comfort Women: with an Emphasis on the Angoulême International Festival Controversy

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Abstract

This article discusses the nexus between comics, collective historical memory and politics in the context of the contemporary relationship between Japan and South Korea by examining the graphic manhwa narratives dealing with the memories of comfort women that were exhibited during the Angoulême Comics Festival in France in early 2014. With a theme of 'memories of war and gendered violence', commemorating the centennial of the outbreak of the First World War, the event that accommodated a special exhibition for Korean manhwa attracted controversy because of its political nature, drawing heavy media attention and sparking public debate and diplomatic quarrels. Adding academic depth to this cultural and diplomatic clash by linking the concepts of soft power foreign policy and cultural citizenship, this paper investigates what made the cultural event politically tainted and how the politicisation debate between the two countries escalated throughout the event. Existing studies on soft power foreign policy often leave the core contents of the 'soft' part unexplained. This article, in contrast, explores the current limits of accommodating cultural expressions of historical memories through an in-depth analysis of the exhibited artworks and the two countries' nationalised soft power diplomacy. It argues that both governments' direct and indirect intervention in the cultural realm nurtured irreconcilable cultural representations in this particular theme and genre of cultural representation under the current research.

Keywords Soft power diplomacy · Politics of comics · Comfort women · Japan–Korea relations · Cultural citizenship

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Introduction

This paper intends to provide an analysis on the controversies, as a by-product of top-down soft power diplomacy, that arose over Korean *manhwa* (equivalent to *manga* in Japanese) on comfort women exhibited at the international comics festival in France at the 41st Angoulême International Festival of Comics (*Festival international de la bande dessinée d'Angoulême*), which was held from 30 January to 2 February 2014 in Angoulême, France. The Angoulême International Cartoon Festival has been held every year since 1974. Cartoonists, experts, publishers and researchers from all over the world participate. Focusing on cartoon books, it is one of the largest international cartoon festivals in the world alongside Comicon, which began in 1970 and is held in San Diego, USA, and the Tokyo Comike, which began in 1975 and is held in Japan [16]. The event attracted a great deal of media and public attention from both Japan and Korea. In particular, all of the major Korean media outlets reported in great detail on, what they interpret, how 'successful' the exhibition was 'despite Japan's attempts to stop the event'. This was because the event touched on one of the most politically and emotionally sensitive issues between the two nations, the question of comfort women, stimulating once again the two nations' deep-seated animosity, which dates to the colonial era of the early 1900s. Japanese cultural products had been strictly banned in Korea even after the normalisation of the diplomatic relationship between the two nations in 1965. It was under one of the former Korean presidents, Kim Dae-jung, that Japan and Korea gradually built a close cultural relationship, establishing numerous institutions and programmes to facilitate cultural exchange. In October 1998, Kim Dae-jung 'visited Tokyo to confer with the then-Japanese Prime Minister Obuchi Keizo, which resulted in a "Joint Declaration of Partnership toward the Twenty-First Century,"' followed by 'the first explicit apology by the Japanese government for its colonial past in Korea' which led to the multidimensional attempt of 'thick reconciliation' [66].[1]

Together with this détente in cultural diplomacy, globalisation enabled Japan to open its domestic entertainment market to foreign cultural products and investments, including those from Korea. It is within this context that the Korean TV drama series *Winter Sonata* was aired by the NHK in 2004, triggering a Korean drama boom in Japan known today as *hallyu* [47]. Japan continued to import Korean mass cultural products throughout the 2000s. However, the case in this research reveals the limits in the relationship between the two countries due mainly to the aggravating state-to-state affairs and the way of institutionalising soft power policy in both countries. Since the current Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe, took power, East Asian countries have cast a wary eye on Japan's progressive enforcement of revisionist-leaning policies once again. The two countries had begun to show some efforts towards reconciliation during Park administration, predominantly due to the US' pressure under the Obama administration on South Korea in order to ensure the triangular security alliance between the three countries. Nonetheless, over the past several years, their usual sensitive and controversial diplomatic issues have been exposed, notably those related to territorial claims, Japan's revision of school textbooks, comfort women and ultrarightest violence towards Korean minorities in Japan [87].

[1] Sawada, pp. 223–224.

In response to *hallyu*, *kenkanrū*—'hating the Korean wave' in Japanese—has gained popularity in Japan. As domestic laws banning hate speech have loosened in Japan, extreme racialised public expression has increased through direct protests targeting Koreans living in Japan and through indirect cultural channels, including *manga* and popular songs [11]. Throughout the Angoulême festival, animosity between the two parties deepened. The confrontation escalated sufficiently that the Japanese Embassy in France intervened. The Minister of Japanese Foreign Affairs made comments to the public expressing deep discontent with the event's organising authorities and the Korean government. This incident is worth social scientists' attention, critical engagement and discussion because the event entails a panoply of issues concerning and implications for the relationship between the two nations.

This article mainly answers the question, 'How did the supposed cultural exhibition as a form of representation of historical memories evolve into a politicised issue that caused diplomatic tension and confrontation?' Kimura Maki's list is referable in this context on the diverse forms (e.g. films, documentaries, art performances) of representation of the comfort women issues in Japan [29].[2] And, 'what are the significance of this particular cartoon genre of representing comfort women stories for the relationship between the two nations?' Following this introductory chapter, the paper first discusses what the politicisation of cartoons, together with explanations on political cartoons, mean. The paper explores the process of the exhibition in juxtaposition with cosmopolitan cultural citizenship (as opposed to promoting ethnicised nationalisms) through an analysis of how the two countries' soft power policies contributed to the polarised discourse on a certain genre of comics and provoked the public censorship of colonial history, which was reignited by overall foreign policy failure of the two countries under Abe and Park administrations.[3] Then follows a detailed analysis of the main contents of the exhibited Korean *manhwa* on comfort women (in comparison with *manga*, dealing with comfort women to the extent applicable) as illustrations to demonstrate if and how their contents resulted in diplomatic uneasiness or confrontations. Finally, the article concludes that although the exhibited *manhwa* work does not constitute political cartoons per se, similar with existing comfort women *manga*, it only reveals the historical limitations and cultural restrictions imposed by predominantly nationally divisive social discourse on comfort women. I argue that this phenomenon of representation has been politically reinforced, throughout the history of state building, by political leaders' use of collective historical memories for their own means to mobilise state-led nationalism. This contradicts efforts of building inclusive cultural and artistic citizenship, which could be the key norm through which negotiations over historical interpretations can occur between Japan and Korea.

[2] Kimura, pp. 169–173.

[3] Under the current presidency of Moon Jae-in in South Korea, the Japan-Korea relations have deteriorated among controversies over comfort women that have not been mitigated. One of the other issues that emerged is Korea's Supreme Court's decision, on October 30, 2018, ordering Nippon Steel to pay 100 million won ($89,000) to four Koreans who were forced to work in its steel mills. The initial spark originated from Seoul's accusation of Tokyo for 'repeated low-altitude, 'provocative' flights over its naval vessels. This has been something that the Japanese government denies, and the two sides have been going back and forth publicly for over a month disputing one another's accounts as bilateral relations sink' [82].

The Politics of Cartoons

I should first mention that the main materials that I refer to herein are not exclusively the single-panel cartoons that can be found in many daily newspapers around the world. My empirical discussion focuses more on the form of longer graphic narratives with sequential storylines (comic books). However, discussions on political cartoons, either with or without narratives, provide useful insights into understanding the nature of graphic-verbal hybrid work because comics are sequential and extended cartoons. Controversy over cartoons is at times severe because they are open to readers' own interpretations and because the combination of a few lines of texts with visual expressions can be powerful and provocative than other rhetorical expression. 'Cartoons and caricatures [have] often caused controversies for centuries', perhaps 'first [arising] as a weapon in the atrocious and prolonged religious wars that divided Catholics and Protestants' in Europe [67]. Other examples include 'vivacious anti-Semitic caricatures of Germans who [were] Jew-haters' [42],[4] the radical Islamists' attack on the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*, which published cartoons depicting the prophet Muhamad in 2005 [1, 45][5] and the attack on the French magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in January 2015. Cartoons also have the power to globally disseminate a message with a few strokes of the pen, as seen in the case of a Chinese prisoner wrongly convicted of murder who delivered his desperate message through multiple-panel cartoons on the prison walls in which he depicted himself being tortured and forced to confess [78].

Visualised storytelling (including cartoons, caricatures with verbal expressions, graphic narratives and comic books, etc.) is a popular and powerful means of communication. It allows imagination and creativity, providing unlimited boundaries through which cartoon artists and comic authors can freely tell their stories and express their views and interpretations of any issue. '[W]hile cartoons did not necessarily convey any real facts, they did express strong emotions about the war, (…) since the genre itself permitted unlimited possibilities for exaggeration and invention' [38].[6] Through the medium of visual storytelling, historical memories are reinterpreted and reproduced simply and yet powerfully.

Cartoons and comics are among the most popular tools for conveying political messages and often include satire, transferring uncomfortable serious content into humour. West highlights what is appreciated most about a talented political cartoonist in his comments on Jay Norwood Darling, who has the ability 'to cut through the cant and fog of routine political debate (…) by translating highfalutin pronouncements or obscure manoeuvrings into everyday terms' [85].[7] However, judging whether graphic narratives are 'political' or not is a difficult task that depends on what political is broadly defined to mean. Depending on the word's use and perspectives, 'political cartoons' can be a form of satirical journalism, a cultural genre dealing directly with politics as a topic or governmental promotions that use cartoons to deliver the agenda and messages of a particular government to influence and persuade the general public [15].[8] The 'politics of cartoons' is not necessarily limited to political cartoons, which

[4] Morris, pp. 195–201.
[5] Navasky, pp. 20–22.
[6] Mikhailova, p. 163.
[7] West, p. 5.
[8] Greenberg, p. 182.

commonly contain political satire and often deal with commonplace political issues such as the 'state of the economy, the defence of the nation, foreign relations, the political process, and the electoral framework, *inter alia*, campaigning, policy, strategies, voting, [and] special interests' [37].[9] El Refaie clarifies the political cartoon as a specific genre and an illustration 'usually in a single panel, published on the editorial or comments pages of a newspaper', commonly addressing 'a current political issue or event, a social trend, or a famous personality, in a way that takes a stand or presents a particular point of view' [12].[10] The typical and conventional example of this genre is *Puck*, the nineteenth-century political cartoon magazine [23]. Among recent *manhwa* publications, *Bulggot* [*Flame*] (by cartoonist Kim Hyung Tae, 2015) [27], an autobiography of Kim Jong Pil—the well-known politician and a Prime Minister during the Park Jung Hee regime—would be an example. Few would differ with categorising it as a political cartoon. Political cartoon is a more established genre in which it is thus relatively easier to match the words politics and catoons. More recent forms of graphic narratives (or graphic novels) could be far more controversial and invite more discussion and debate because of institutional aspect of their evolution (e.g. state subsidies, the establishment of markets and industries, etc.), the diversification of genres, and their much lengthier verbal content [73]. The 'politics of cartoons (or any similar visual-verbal hybrid forms)' can signify either power struggles and governance within the professional circle of production or any activities using such art as a tool to achieve political gains in various forms. While admitting that any art or literature dealing with inter-state memories are to some extent inevitably political, the focus of this research is more on the latter aspect of the issue, particularly in the context of its diplomatic international implications, as demonstrated through this case study of Japan and Korea.

In Japan, *manga* and *anime* are generic terms for what comics (or cartoons) and animation, respectively, in English [68].[11] Their equivalent terms in Korean are *manhwa* for *manga* and *manhwa younghwa* (motion picture) for *anime*. Although the literal meanings of *manga* in Japanese, *manhwa* in Korean, comics in English and *bande dessinée* in French make them the best corresponding terms, because of the particular cultural and linguistic contexts in different societies, the terms may sometimes cause confusion to readers, and the common usage of related terms might be incoherent. There also remains the question of how to differentiate accurately among the related terms—for example, the difference between multiple-panel cartoons and comic strips or the difference between cartoon books and graphic novels. It is generally understood that a cartoon is a single illustration (possibly narrative) whereas a comic is a sequential graphic narrative. The core barometers for discerning related terms depend not only on the form of expression (e.g. single panel, multiple panel or sequential) but also on a genre (e.g. satire) and a medium (e.g. printed, motion picture, webtoon, exhibition), although there remain some in-betweens [21, 28, 55, 56, 60]. This research intends to determine the political nature of a certain genre in comics; thus, while detailed discussions of the different forms of comics are important, they are beyond the scope and purpose of the current paper. For analysis, the empirical part of this article mainly focuses on 'the printed version of sequential graphic narratives (with stories and

[9] Medhurst, M. J., Desousa, p. 200.
[10] El Refaie, pp. 184–5.
[11] Schodt, pp. 22–23.

including a collection of sequential comic strips) on comfort women produced by Korean *manhwa* artists' while mentioning, when necessary, some other types of 'word-image hybrid' artwork exhibited at the same festival.

In a micro-cultural analysis of political cartoons and comics, historical and political contexts appear to be critical in some cases. Existing works on the Japan–Korea relations are either centred on the diplomatic relationship or take a neorealism approach, emphasising the historical and political deadlock created by the superpowers and subsequent security dilemmas [54, 75]. Although these theories offer useful political contexts, the occasional exposure and repeated resurgence of the deep-seated national animosity between the two nations in the cultural field remains unexplained. Alluding to ethnicised nationalism, constructivist approaches within the discipline of international relations pay some attention to the root cause of historical confrontation and focus on the clash between anti-colonial nationalism and expansionist nationalism [13, 72]. Nevertheless, over-emphasis on ethnicised nationalism in this field of study (an essentialist cultural approach to analysing representations of comfort women) only tends to negativise the nationalism as a naturally evolved cultural outcome in which agents (citizens) are somehow proudly but passively structured [29], which misses how nationalism becomes 'ethnicised' by political and diplomatic means. The ups and downs of collective exposure of nationalism are often politically manipulated by leaders and their policies according to their agendas. For example, the South Korean public was more reactive to the issue of Dokdo during the presidency of Lee Myung Bak, whereas throughout the Park Guen Hye administration, the comfort women issue occupied the core programme of anti-Japanese nationalistic sentiment. Under the current progressive Moon administration, the comfort women controversy re-emerged as an action of political accusation of his predecessor's grave policy failures. Although nationalism theories explain the historical irreconcilability of Japan and Korea, they do not offer forward-looking prescriptive insights beyond historically structured exclusivism. In this sense, globalised cultural and artistic citizenship [40] presents a basis for a future-oriented relationship between the two nations in terms of culture, at a minimum. While a nation as 'imagined communities' [3] is something to be critically reconsidered in the domain of politics, creative imagination is legitimised rather than criticised.

Soft Power Versus Cosmopolitan Cultural Citizenship

The culture industry is increasingly globalised, which could place fundamental limits on the top-down approach of soft power policies. Many cartoons reflecting a country's nationalism will interest a global audience if they offer universalised sensitivity and values. Cartoons in the nationalism genre are not necessarily exclusive, anti-universal and anti-global; Korean-ness or Japanese-ness can co-exist with Asian-ness and global values as long as nationalism is inclusive to the extent that a country recognises other non-aggressive nationalisms. It is undeniable that Korean nationalism became fully fledged through anti-Japanese-ism and anti-colonialism, which are by nature defensive; the core element of modern Korean nationalism is the existence of Japan. Japanese reaction to it involves the occasional surge and resurge of revisionism (with a vast derivatives within Japanese revisionism throughout history), and this resurgence of historical revisionism(s) at the governmental level continuously stimulates ultranationalist *manga* lovers. Likewise, during Park Geun Hae administration,

cultural diplomacy led by conservative group was much re-emphasised and dominated major government projects related to sports, films, food, music and games. This ideological shift contributed hugely to the confrontation at the festival. Revisionism is explained as a new type of nationalism and is depicted as a reaction to the rise of Korean and Chinese anti-Japanese sentiment in the 2000s [87]. 'Revisionism typically defends Japan's actions in the course of establishing colonial rule and waging the Pacific War. It depicts Japan as a victim of postwar US hegemony and glorifies the past to indulge national pride' [2, 14, 64].[12] Evolution of *manga* and popularisation of *manga* was in parallel with rise of liberal nationalism. 'A close study of the discourse on the status of *manga* as expressed by cartoonists themselves reveals that, by defining *manga* as an ideal medium for conveying nationalism, cartoonists played an active role as agents of the war' [19].[13]

In this regard, nationalism in the two countries is continuously evolving, and representations of nationalism are as ceaseless as the means of communication are diversified. Moreover, as Reilly (2011) holds, once state-instigated antagonistic nationalism is embedded in the cultural sector and connects with commercial interests, the state (even the Chinese Communist Party in Reilly's schema) cannot easily control the level of mass hatred regardless of how urgently a diplomatic detente is strategically needed later on [62].[14] As seen in this case, the arenas in which the two nations confront one another over topics such as comfort women used to be limited to printed materials (textbooks, newspapers, printed *manga* and *manhwa*) but have been expanded to cyberspace over the last three decades and have now been further extended to the space of international events (exhibitions).

As both countries' history education on colonialism is extremely nationalised, conversation between ordinary Japanese and Korean citizens (even among the well-educated) concerning historical issues often results in a unilateral monologue that is 'lost in translation', and the rising collective antagonism between the nations can be equally puzzling to both parties. This is illustrated by one of Kim Jung-ki's single-panel graphics in *Viewpoint*, which was exhibited at the Angoulême festival, describing the two nations' ever-conflicting memories of history as an 'entangled knot' and both nations as being imprisoned in 'restraints', explained as 'condensation' in Morris' framework on skills of cartoon work [42].[15] Iwabuchi illuminates that Japan's modern national identity has always been imagined in an asymmetrical totalising triad between Asia, the West and Japan, unambiguously existing outside a cultural imaginary of Asia in Japanese mental maps. In this way, 'Japan constructed "an oriental Orientalism"' [20][16] as opposed to a Western orientalism, resisting the dichotomy between the developed West and the less civilised Asia. Japanese popular culture struggles between 'Japan as the Oriental' and 'Japan as the exotic Other'. Globalisation may demand more interconnectedness and unevenness. This process increases the differences between and the complexity of locally constructed meanings because of hybridisation and indigenisation, which often contain conflicts and contradictions [2]. A fear of the hybridisation of Japanese 'oriental Orientalism' in Mori's term in page 189 of the

[12] Allen and Sakamoto, p. 2.
[13] Inouye, p. 20.
[14] Reilly, pp. 485–489.
[15] Morris, p. 200.
[16] Iwabuchi, pp. 19–20.

above cited book would explain the Japanese reaction to the rise of new Asian cultures, including Korean *manhwa* and Chinese *xinmanhua* [52, 71, 89]. From a constructivist viewpoint, government intervention via soft power policy tools in the reproduction of a nation's memories on history may easily distort historical facts and worsen the nations' relationship [74]. Yet, a positive side of constructivism is the belief that such distorted memories can also be reconstructed. In this regard, cosmopolitan cultural citizenship may link the hybridity of different cultures in the global cultural sphere, and conflicts on memory of wars could be healthy input for artists' creation (representation).

The notion of soft power diplomacy can be discussed in parallel with globalised cultural citizenship. The former is a top-down official diplomatic tool that seeks to culturally influence foreign nations in view of linking it to obtain hard power in various manners. In contrast, the latter can be understood as an identity attached to the artistic and cultural community and as a normative notion for sharing cultures and a globalised civil society or public sphere that responds to or resists soft power diplomacy [50, 51], in his frequently cited books on soft power, stresses the importance of universal and sharable core values as the kernel of soft power [49, 50].[17]

In Nye's comprehensive definition, soft power is made up of culture, political values, institutions, research outcome on public affairs by government-funded think tanks, foreign policy including foreign aid and public diplomacy such as training and educational exchanges. Although Nye puts less emphasis on mass culture, cartoon and *anime* characters, such as Disney characters and pocket monsters, are at times powerful enough to reshape the image of a country and contribute to the national economy. They do not just remain in the cultural domain or indirectly influence hard power, but also directly link with economic benefits and have the potential to influence politics as a means of nurturing pro-US or pro-Japan ideas. It is difficult to prove empirically the causal link between 'soft' and 'power' in a conventional sense. However, it is more relevant for Japan and Korea that the interactions between the soft power policies of the two countries result in more diplomatic clashes than mitigated tensions. In contrast, both countries have achieved great success in exporting cultural products, which have hugely contributed to enhancing their economic power and their diplomatic relationships with the importing countries in question. Foreign policy decisions from the Japanese or Korean governments hardly touch the general public and civil society of each other's nation directly [6, 7, 53].

Although many have criticised Nye's theory, most advanced countries today use soft power policies, such as Japan in the 1970s and from the early 2000s until the present and Korea since the late 1990s. Japanese soft power believers view the Japanese-ness of Japanese popular culture's ability to enhance the country's image as hugely important. For example, many believe that 'Cool Japan' serves the national interest because it helps to reduce anti-Japanese feelings in East Asia and because Japan needs an active 'cultural diplomacy' to export the Japanese spirit via popular culture [84, 87]. The cartoon industries in both Japan and Korea have been well supported by an array of government policies (although this support has fluctuated because of changing leadership and vision in both countries) through various types of cartoonist associations and promotional institutions. Foreign Minister Aso Taro's 2007 proposal adopted Japanese pop culture, especially *manga* and *anime*, as an official diplomatic tool, and the Foreign

[17] Nye 2004, p. 88.

Ministry established *manga* awards [33].[18] Associations are subsidised or supported (directly or indirectly), universities (public or private) have set up programmes on cartoon studies, and festivals and competitions are regularly organised and supported by public agencies. The Japanese pattern of implementing soft power policies for popular culture has been highly praised and is considered to be a successful case study for benchmarking by many nations, including China and Korea [25].[19]

This is not to support the view that popular culture can be largely manipulated and managed by state policy or commercial actors alone. Without self-generated value in itself, government intervention would not have championed a certain sector of cultural industry as a strategic field. Although the state often uses its potential power to define art through policy [17],[20] culture cannot be generated purely by government-led policies, and soft power does not only belong to the government. 'Indeed, the absence of policies of control [culture] can itself be a source of attraction' [50].[21] In this sense, the term 'cultural citizenship' itself may contain some level of inherent contradiction. This is because the notion of citizenship entails a risk of orienting individual apolitical cultural expressions towards a more harmonised collective awareness via education and political socialisation. A critical analysis of the conventional concept of citizenship also informs the necessity of adopting a liberated notion of citizenship opening to various aspects of multiplicity in a globalising world [9]. The government-level promulgation of soft power as a country's foreign policy can be both explicit and implicit, and it is not confined to direct earmarked support for a designated area of popular culture in the search for an immediate effect.

Enhancing the connectivity between cultural communities in the two nations at levels beyond the state may nurture a more globalised, open cultural citizenship. Cultural citizenship concerns 'the maintenance and development of cultural lineage through education, custom, language, and religion, and the positive acknowledgment of difference in and by the mainstream' [40].[22] However, cultural citizenship is not be confused with the notion of ethnicised or culturalised citizenship, which imposes nationalised culture as a precondition for full integration with a state, ignoring the cultural diversity of groups with different religious, linguistic and historical backgrounds and excluding them from mainstream society. In this research, cultural citizenship means 'cultural artistic citizenship at a global level', which requires the right to express cultural identity and the duty to respect other nations' artistic expressions and interpretations to overcome cultural chauvinism beyond a nationalised boundary of arts. T. S. Marshall's analytical framework divides citizenship into civil, political and social rights. It was developed 'in the context of the emerging public sphere, as, in Habermas, a space created by the new impersonal media of communication. ... [T]o these traditions of rights, a theme of cultural citizenship adds a fourth dimension of cultural rights' [10]. Full-fledged cultural citizenship is a useful conceptual framework for overcoming the predominant animosity between nations, at least over cultural expression.

[18] Lam, p. 351.
[19] Kim and Lee, pp. 189–191.
[20] Heikkinen, p. 79.
[21] Nye, p. 17.
[22] Miller, p. 2.

In a nutshell, the core of my response to the question, 'How did the supposed cultural exhibition evolve into diplomatic tension and confrontation?' would be the interactively generated outcome between 'absence of cosmopolitan cultural citizenship' and 'governments' undesirable ways of soft power intervention in certain genres of cultural representations'.

The Comics

Ten comic books along with various lengths of comic strips and videos were exhibited in the special section for Korean *manwha.* Ten comic books (13 to 100-page long), six cartoons (single to six strips), three installation artwork, two animation (10:55 and 16:55 min) and two films (7:10 and 92 min) were exhibited in the special exhibition hall under the theme of comfort women. Those comics are collected and reprinted as books in three volumes in August 2014, entitled *Dorajikkot* [Platycodon grandifloras], *Nabiŭi norae* [The Song of Butterfly] and *Siseon* [Viewpoint].[23]

Manhwa was invited to the Angoulême festival for the first time in 2003 as a 'new' cartoon genre [35].[24] Prior to that, Japanese *manga* had been the only cartoon art from Asia that was widely viewed in Europe. Interaction and cooperation have continued between the French and Korean cartoon communities ever since through the translation of *manhwa* into French, the co-production of *anime* and the cooperative holding of exhibitions [16]. The theme, comfort women, happened to fit the broad theme of the 2014 festival, 'memories of war and gendered violence', which the then Minister Cho Yun-sun, the congresswoman-turned-Minister of Gender Equality and Family Affairs (GEFA) thought fit her soft power diplomacy strategy; thus, the GEFA was deeply involved throughout the year-long preparation period. As a mixture of factual and fictitious content, the *manhwa* exhibition attracted a great deal of public attention from the preparation stage onwards. The purpose of this section is not to provide a literary criticism but to demonstrate how the major *manhwa* work's representation clearly is constrained by social discourse on comfort women-related issues in South Korea. As detailed in the equivalent *manga* representation (Annex), this evidently demonstrates two remote worlds of imagining the historical event.

The exhibited *manhwa* reflects Korean discourses on comfort women and the artistic effort of illustrating the authors' views and interpretations of the complex emotions of comfort women at various levels (Table 1). These feelings are expressed as a mixture of the shame, regret, torment, despair and rage that the victims have kept to themselves for many decades. The following sections provide analysis of the contents of *Yamato Terminator*, *The Song of Butterfly* and *Viewpoint* (an edited collection of exhibited comic stories, shorter cartoon strips and single-panel cartoons) from among the exhibited *manhwa* encompassing a variety of themes from personal emotions to visions for the wider community. The significance of focusing on these three is twofold: first, their representation is based on what is already shared by the public through testimonies by former comfort women, which is reproduced in the authors' own ways (being selected

[23] After the event, it was published by HyongSol Life publisher in Seoul in 2014.
[24] Lee, p. 181.

Table 1 Multilayeredness of psychological conflict and tension

Categories of representation level	Manwha	Manga
Political	-Views about war, Japan's imperial government, colonial officials, soldiers, Japanese who were involved in the affair and the post-war Japanese government -Anti-colonial nationalist sentiments -Feeling against *Joseon*	-Patriotism with understanding of the necessity -Loyalty to the state
Social	-Feminism (stigmatised by society and community) -Universalising history and sharing humanism	-Poverty
Individual and family	-Loss of life as ordinary women, frustrated motherhood and the pressure of coming out for self-healing	-Regrets if not served due to inter-personal affection developed between soldiers and a comfort woman

by the Ministry), and second, taking a social scientist approach, analysis is made more in terms of 'interpretation' (stories) than 'identification' (imagery).

Yamato Terminator

The imaginative work *Yamato Terminator* (story by Ahn Soo-chul and graphics by Kang Hyo-sook, 2014) is a 76-page comic book representing the fear of the main character, Tae-kyong, who symbolises an embryo carried by a comfort woman. The nightmare of a victimised woman in a wartime brothel is transferred into a visual expression. The story follows the emotional changes of the embryo Tae-kyong, who is attacked and haunted by the terminator.

The terminator symbolises arsphenamine (arsenic), a venereal remedy called the 606 injection, and mercury, which was administered to induce abortion. The terminator is disguised as a messenger from Tae-kyong's mother. It harasses Tae-kyong and tries to destroy its (the embryo) hope and resilient spirit. Simultaneously, the cartoons describe the real world, where small doses of arsenic are regularly injected into the victim. Tae-kyong is depicted as a courageous creature fighting against mental harassment and physical threats yet full of hope that s/he will meet her/his mother soon. Tae-kyong gradually becomes helpless in the face of a mercury attack that spreads through the victim's (the mother) entire body. The real world of the camp is described as miserable and is drawn in a dark monotone, whereas Tae-kyong's habitat inside the womb is warm and presented in bright colour. The work uses very few words and focuses on visualising the dynamic adventure of Tae-kyong living inside the womb. This piece follows the interviews with former comfort women who revealed that their traumatic memories are formed through multiple layers of suffering. They are regarded victimised as women, as people of *Joseon*, as subordinates and as prisoners or patients during Japanese imperialist and colonial times. This multilayered human suffering stems from the complexities of gender, nation and power, as Byun's analysis of Nora Okja Keller's novel on comfort women conveys [8].[25]

[25] Byun, p. 40.

For Akiko, the main character in Keller's novel, her deepest suffering is brought about by the several abortions she undergoes at an early age, which, after 20 years of marriage, still lead to miscarriages and infertility. The scars of the mental and physical violence to which she was subjected remain, never disappearing or diminishing. The intended message of the Tae-kyong's story is to reflect the cartoonist's aspiration for collective remedy/healing through telling the shared memories of former comfort women.

Comfort Women in Post-War Society

The Song of Butterfly (story by Chung Ki-young and graphics by Kim Kwang-sung, 2014) is the story of an old lady named Geum-soon. Based on testimonies by comfort women, it describes how Geum-soon finds the courage to reveal her past life as a comfort woman and actively participates in sharing this past, which she has kept to herself for 70 years. In 1942, aged 16, Geum-soon (*Michiko* in Japanese) was shipped to Japan, 'having been coaxed by a recruitment agent' (highlighted in the story). Much of the current debate around comfort women inside Japan has centred on the issue of whether or not the comfort women knowingly and voluntarily served the Emperor's soldiers. 'Of 237 Korean women who provided evidence to the tribunal, 35 per cent had been kidnapped and 51 per cent had been tricked into believing that they were going to work in factories, restaurants or elsewhere' [43].[26] In January 1992, Kato Koichi, speaking for the Japanese authorities, admitted that there was indeed documentary evidence that Japan's imperial army recruited comfort women from Korea, China, the Philippines, Indonesia, Taiwan and Japan [90].[27] 'In response to international pressure and investigations, the Japanese government issued an official report on the comfort women in 1992. The report was followed by an apology by the Chief Cabinet Secretary, Kono Yohei, admitting the government's official involvement in the recruitment of comfort women.' Nevertheless, the sincerity of this apology was questioned as the government escaped legal responsibility. A division was also noticeable within Japanese society: 'self-critical progressive' versus the 'ethno-centric conservative' camps, in parallel with the debates over textbooks in Japan's political arena. Such debates culminated in 2007 with Prime Minister Abe's official denial of the state's institutionalised involvement with coercion in the process of recruiting and operating the comfort women system [86].

Contrarily, *manga* (Annex) represents opposite views arguing that there is a lack of evidence that the imperial government was involved in the recruitment or forcible conscription of women from former colonies. Reflecting this, in *The Song of Butterfly*, the author includes the story element that Geum-soon's family was convinced by the recruiting agency and trusted that she would be employed as a factory worker in Japan. They hoped that she would escape their poverty-stricken life in Korea. Instead, she was dropped in a battlefield outside Japan to serve as a comfort woman in Vietnam and Burma until the end of World War II.

Geum-soon's past memories are depicted, overlapping with her present life in Seoul. One day, a conversation with another victim named Min Soon-ae completely changes her view. Geum-soon is guided to participate in the Wednesday Rally, a weekly protest in front of the Japanese Embassy in Korea. She desires to escape from her nightmarish past

[26] Morris-Suzuki, p. 157.
[27] Yu-Rivera, p. 222.

by sharing her story, but she fears that her family will be ashamed and affected. She thought that keeping her secret until her death would be a better choice. 'Rape is often treated as a crime against the family, an approach that makes the woman who was raped guilty of dishonouring her family' [18, 59][28]. Herr notes that only approximately 200 victims have ever come forward; most have taken their secrets to the grave. Using theories on nations and nationalism, Herr emphasises the historical continuity of a nation and collective responsibility towards the nation's past and argues that private funds for remuneration set by the Japanese government should be distinguished from compensation [4]. Until the 1990s, the issue was not well publicised. The victims remained silent because of shame, agony and resentment. In 1991, the first victim, Kim Hak-sun, then 67 years old, came forward after a lifetime of extreme hardship. 'Uemura was the reporter who broke the story of Kim Hak-sun, the first woman to come forward as a former "comfort woman" in Japan. Even though the story did not receive much attention then, looked at historically, the two articles that he wrote on Kim are clearly significant in breaking the half century of silence on the issues' [46, 88].

The Song of Butterfly represents Geum-soon's regretful feelings towards both imperial Japan and her motherland, which she had thought was helpless and not strong enough to protect its own people. Her psychological struggle is portrayed through a conversation with her daughter-in-law in the car while passing the site of the Wednesday Rally in Seoul. 'I guess they (the victims at the protest site) could not even have a proper family or children. It would be gruesome to know one's own mother was a comfort woman serving for the Japanese soldiers', says her daughter-in-law. Geum-soon recalls the day she was forced to go to the battlefield. In the present day, she thinks to herself, 'I couldn't understand why there was a war in the first place and why women were needed in the battlefield'. She hears people at the rally shouting, 'Japan denies the existence of comfort women for no evidence, *we* are the living evidence … money doesn't compensate … we want a sincere apology. Emancipation of the nation hasn't reached us yet … we are still living under war … over 70 years, we have never been able to feel free of the nightmare'.

Min Soon-ae persuades Geum-soon to come forward, saying, 'I witnessed that our shameful personal history echoed that of the world. Although at the beginning "coming out" was for the sake of my own healing, it's important to act lest this history should be repeated'. Min Soon-ae explains how she feels free now that she has told the truth to the world and how it has changed her life. The message reflects the artist's message to the victimised comfort women who prefer to stay silent. It also reflects the Korean public's concern that the victims will die in silence, burying the truth forever and concealing the crimes, allowing history to be whitewashed.

Geum-soon makes up her mind to reveal her past to her family, her son and daughter-in-law and their two children: 'I know the consequences from which you'll suffer, but I feel that unburdening my mind is of paramount importance'. Her son reacts angrily: 'This [problem with comfort women] is what the government has to solve, not you as an individual … it won't help anyhow'. She replies, 'You can say this because you're a man. You take a victim as someone who has committed a sin. When we were suffering, what did *Joseon* men do? Now it's the Korean men who feel ashamed of victims like us?' *Flower Ring* by Tak Young-ho (2014) in *Viewpoint* presents similar memories. In this story, Jung-sook barely survives, but she manages to return to her

[28] Payne, pp. 58-59.

hometown at the end of the war. The people in her hometown then say behind her back, 'How could she possibly think of returning home after living such a shameful life?' There is a comparable example of such representation in a Taiwanese narrative of a comfort woman victim who chronicles; "When the woman, who tried to kill herself three times by drinking alcohol returned home after the war, her uncle admonished her, "our family can't have whores." When she finally married, she was unable to bear children, and her mother-in-law forced her to divorce her husband. Following her divorce, she made her living by selling coconuts, adding that she often drank 'alone, cup after cup, to forget about my pain' [83].[29]

The Song of Butterfly reflects to a degree contemporary discourse on the approach of intellectuals in Japan and Korea to comfort woman-related issues in a 'feminist (a universalised approach focusing on women beyond nation) versus nationalist (a nationalised approach focusing on the Japanese imperial army)' framework although the two approaches are not mutually exclusive in theory given the complexities within both politico-social ideologies (nationalisms and feminisms). A tendency is that the nationalist approach in comfort women issue is critical of the feminist standpoint [57, 58, 69, 70, 80], viewing it as the rhetoric of reconciliation and as blurring the line between state responsibility and the discourse of universalism [5, 24]. Compared with the domains of graphic narratives or official textbooks, transnational academic debates among sociologists (if not historians) dealing with comfort women issues have been relatively open, as the 'feminism' spectrum can be more cross-cultural than the nationalism lens [26]. Insomuch as intellectual debates are divisions between scholars with different national and educational backgrounds (including Zainichi scholars) who have shown their diversified views, intellectual evolution by sociologists on this topic is still ongoing. In the transnational arena outside Japan and Korea, discourses on the historical controversy of wartime sexual violence and sex trafficking gained the notion of universality, contending against the tendency of degrading the stories into 'private [acts] of individuals' voluntary choice of prostitution'. The new discourses emphasise the nature of the crime as malicious 'state-engineered structural public crime'. In fact, civil society-led transnational movements elsewhere especially in the USA go beyond the new discourse by vigorously struggling to universalising the comfort women problem as one of the dire human rights issues using catchphrases such as 'human rights violations' and 'crimes against humanity' [36, 76, 79, 83].

Kimura Maki's publication [29] offers some timely insights into methodological problems and Japanese intellectuals' discourse on the credibility of using interview materials of comfort women's testimonies.[30] Discussions reflect concerns about the unscientific nature of such narratives, stressing the interviewees' shifting identities from a sex slave (social outcast) to *halmoni* [grandmothers] (victim survivor) as the principle character of the nationalised narrative of constructing a comfort woman as a new social category. Although the author mentions Kobayashi's work as 'deeply problematic' if viewed from a feminist viewpoint (as opposed to a nationalist viewpoint), 'due to his denial of the existence of the 'comfort women' system that sexually exploited these

[29] Ward, pp. 4–5.

[30] See also Yamaguchi 2015 on the former Asahi newspaper reporter, Uemura Takashi, who allegedly fabricated the stories of comfort women and suffered nationwide social bullying by the Japanese right-wing activists' network and the nationalistic public sphere despite strong support groups from the opposite end [88].

women', there are no rational grounds upon which 'comfort women' should be catagorised as a distinctive group from any other victimised 'sex slaves' (e.g. 'Japanese' wartime prostitutes) [29].[31] This trend of individualising comfort women in line with general sex slaves is also found in other research by Caroline Norma [48]. One approach to address those concerns and doubts on the quality of evidence would be, inter alia, sharing both data and analysis, including historical archives and collaborative and transparent interpretation. In spite of continuous endeavours by some scholars from both nations, such efforts have been disrupted multiple times, depending on two countries' diplomatic relationship. Such frustration is also reflected in the failure of the two nations' negotiations for co-registering historical archives on comfort women under the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage in 2017.[32] Although imagination could be the critical part of cartoons, the authenticity of cultural representations of controversial historical events can be influenced by the quality of societal-level interactions, which are still, in most cases, under political control.

Cartoons as a Reflection of the Post-War Discourse on Comfort Women

Choi Min-ho's (2014) *Viewpoint* offers a collection of interviews with those who for many years have engaged in the regular Wednesday Rally but were not victims. The rally's participants request formal acknowledgement of the crime of sexual slavery by the Japanese military, a detailed investigation into guilt, an apology through congressional resolution, legal compensation, recognition of the facts about comfort women in history textbooks, the establishment of a memorial tower and a historic documents pavilion and the punishment of those responsible [34]. The interviews in *Viewpoint* are meant to represent the current social discourses on comfort women in Korean society. They reiterate that 'generally people tend to ignore the past suffering of others, but there are some people who seriously value the importance of sharing the victims' agony'. A young female protester at the site mentions that 'among 200,000 victims, only 234 have registered as former comfort women, and today only 56 victims survive'.[33] *Viewpoint* delivers more hope than resentment through its detached manner and lack of visual exaggerations. The changing trends represented in this *manhwa* work demonstrate, to some extent, a struggle to nurture reconciliation between past and present, between conflicting identities within the victims' selves, and possibly between the two nations.

In the comic book, the first interview was conducted on 1 October 2013 with Kim Dong-hee, Secretary General of The Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan. 'These days, more and more young people participate, especially young students'. On the question of whether the social atmosphere is more ready than before to accept and understand citizen collective action: 'In 1997, for example, students who participated in rallies were banned and even penalised at school, but students today are much more mature, aware of social affairs, and ready to engage in society. Since 1998, we often see teachers participating with their students … When this kind of rally was first begun in 1994, there were only cries hurled at the victims,

[31] Kimura, pp. 170–174. See also Miller 2004 [39].

[32] See Vickers' commentary article on Japan's denial of inscription on 'comfort women' documents and UNESCO's fervour to placate Japan due to the structural problems of the organisation which became a cultural battlefield among Japan, South Korea, and China [81].

[33] One of the victims, Kwak Ye-nam recently died at the age of 94 in March 2019.

and the ambience was extremely sad and hopeless. Today the protesters are more determined and hopeful; consequently the whole process has become peaceful'. On the question of why there appears to be a deadlock preventing a solution from being found: 'First of all, [the deadlock] is rendered by the Japanese government's denial and the Korean government's passive approach. In fact, the Korean government only became involved after August 2011, when the Constitutional Court in Korea, on 30 August 2011, by a 6 to 3 vote, held that the failure of the government to act on the issue of comfort women was unconstitutional. The overall content of the text highlights a hope for reconciliation, especially at a citizen level'.

The second interview was conducted with Baek See-jin, a manager of the above-mentioned council and a social welfare studies graduate. This interview further discusses the possibility of reconciliation with Japan: 'Many Japanese citizens come and visit the Women's Human Rights Museum in Seoul, although we never publicise anything about the museum. Many Japanese are also interested in sharing our views. I feel relieved and have come to think that the problem is obviously not with the Japanese citizens, but the government that constantly tries to politically twist the issue'.

The third interview was conducted with male volunteer, Kim Pan-soo, an agriculturalist. 'It has been nine years that I have been participating in the rally, which now aims for one hundred million signatures worldwide … Japan as a state should take responsibility, but even after emancipation, nothing has been clearly resolved … There are many Japanese citizens who prefer to keep an amicable relationship with the Korean nation. Such Japanese people are also the victims of their government … The purpose of the protest is to persuade people who think that we should let our past go rather than struggling in vain. I would make every effort not to repeat regrettable history … Letting go of unpleasant history will be possible only through a sincere official apology and then forgiveness'.

Controlling Memories of Comfort Women

The exhibition appeared to be an attempt to share the Korean discourse and expressions on comfort women with a wider audience but tainted by both governments (the ministries of the two countries). As Korean perspectives in visual arts on this issue are rare, the exhibition could have simply been an opportunity to introduce the expression of a part of Asian regional history without governments' involvement from either side although it is not fair to say that the contents of the *manhwa* were government propaganda. Politics is involved directly and indirectly because of the particular theme and the two countries' worsening diplomatic relationship fuelled by increasing Korea's aspiration to secure international cultural space [52, 89]. While the exhibited *manhwa* also cannot be categorised as common political graphic narratives with some degree of political connotation because they do not contain any typical political subjects. The expressions and discourses used in the *manhwa* are 'domesticated' in an effort to make them more universal. The contents are focused on individual expressions and memories (with some effort to be) detached from emotive anti-Japanese sentiments. Apolitical cartoons can be more universally sharable, as political cartoons have a transitory character, although a 'political cartoon' itself is not considered taboo in comics in a global arena. This temporality on account of the meanings of cartoons is 'more persuasive with people living under a particular set of social,

historical, political, economic and cultural circumstances' [15].[34] Political satire (in any form) cannot be shared widely unless the audience and readers share the same symbolism. Even violent satire is mostly acceptable, despite harsh criticism from the opposing camp, as there seems to be an invisible consensus that this criticism arises from a fundamental care for the community to which the cartoonists in question belong. 'Those cartoonists who devote themselves to local cartoons … are more likely to look at their city or region and feel that the work they've done has made a difference' [22].[35] This notion in an increasingly globalised world may extend beyond national boundaries to a broader readership. As Medhurst and Desousa state, 'Cartoonists are respected and trusted when they respect what they draw … Political cartoonists—even the most vitriolic—must know and respect the audience for whom they draw' [37].[36]

So far, the political whims of changing leadership in both countries has shaped and reshaped the inter-cultural development of the two countries, which to some extent, provides a hope that history or memory per se are not the main cause or the barrier of non-reconciliation of the two nations.

The following section further explores how the occurrence entered into a diplomatic quarrel, with reciprocal accusations of politicising the cultural event via the manipulation of history.

When *manhwa* Meets *manga*: Political Intervention in Representing Historical Memories

A series of assertive diplomatic exchanges ensued before the festival. Japan protested against the *manhwa* exhibition, putting pressure on the authorities of the organising committee. A Japanese booth was set up to exhibit Japanese *manga* representing Japan's interpretations of comfort women. The *manga* described the victims as well-paid voluntary prostitutes, with messages such as 'the fabricated comfort women story' and 'the military comfort women did not exist' (see Annex on comfort women manga analysis). 'The well-known *manga* writer Kobayashi Yoshinori, who emerged as one of the most vocal members of the revisionist group, has played a key role in the current public controversy' over *kenkanrū* subjects [43],[37] including comfort women. Raddatz's (2013) research examines this genre in detail. *Manga Kenkanryū* (written under the pseudonym Yamano Sharin), the first published in 2005, covers various issues, notably those related to comfort women. Often using 'a realistic and pseudo-scholarly approach', *Manga Kenkanryū* blurs the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction [61].[38] Erik Ropers in Rosenbaum (2013) provides useful analyses of three manga that represent histories of comfort women, including a sympathetic work. They include Ishizaka's *Aru hi*, *Ianfu repoto* ('Report'), translated by manga scholar Yamashita Yon'e (originally written by Chong Kyong A), and *Mo ichido umaretara*. In *Aru hi*, the author attempts to mitigate the trauma of the main character, a comfort woman, with a romance between the woman and a Japanese soldier who at times shows her affection [63],[39] thus

[34] Greenberg, p. 183.
[35] Judge, p. 42.
[36] Medhurst, p. 232.
[37] Morris-Suzuki and Rimmer, p. 151.
[38] Raddatz's, p. 122 and p. 222.
[39] Ropers, p. 65.

concluding the story with a tender relationship rather than victimisation. *Repoto*, previously authored as non-fiction, shocked readers with its depictions of violence and the gruesome nature of war. *Mo ichido umaretara* was originally written by Overkwon, a Korean webcomic artist (2006); after being translated into Japanese, it was posted on YouTube and spread across the Internet, although he himself was not directly involved in this particular event. In the post-world war era, public expressions of memories of war have reflected the dynamic changes in the nation's psychological struggle to both glorify its wartime history and highlight its collective victimhood [41].[40] Mori explains that the Japanese concealed two types of violence during the war: violence towards Asian and other countries' citizens and violence towards the Japanese themselves. The latter type of violence has been predominant in public discourse, whereas very little *manga* deals with Japanese atrocities committed abroad. Memories of war in Japanese colonies are missing from this body of work [41].[41] 'Comic books, like novels, make certain historical landscapes visible while rendering others invisible', as Morris-Suzuki illuminates [44],[42] and 'the most striking characteristic of the comic is [the] inseparable interconnection of text and picture'.

The Japanese Embassy in France passed out pamphlets at the event's press centre to clarify the Japanese government's position concerning the issues associated with comfort women. As *manga* occupies one third of the market of *bande dessinée* in France, the pressure from Japan was embarrassing to the authorities. With support from Philippe Lavard, the mayor of Angoulême, the *manhwa* exhibition went on as planned and the Japanese booth was removed.

It was reported that the event attracted around 17,000 visitors, a fact highlighted by the Korean authorities and the public and private agencies involved in the event. However, how many saw the imagery does not enable us to conclude that the story itself powerfully influenced the viewers' respective ways of perceiving graphic narratives by changing their judgements on a piece of colonial history between the two nations. 'Attending to diverse representations of a past event does not give us a perfect picture of what happened. Nor can it be a purely relativist process (…). Our knowledge of the past determines who we are and how we live in the present' [44].[43] It seems that what culture-loving eventgoers appreciate was what was selected for the organisers' presentation. An informational session for the local press about the exhibited work had also been planned, but it was cancelled following the organising authorities' decision not to provoke Japan. In addition, the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs became anxious about an uncomfortable diplomatic confrontation (author's interview with government official in Paris on 28 July 2014). Japanese politicians and newspapers harshly criticised both the Angoulême organisers and the Korean government. Neither Japan nor Korea seriously and openly discussed the meaning of the particular theme of the festival or the contents of the exhibited art. This reminds us again the brutal incidence of Charlie Hebbdo in which there was no media coverage or serious expert discussion on the meaning and intention of the single piece of cartoon let alone with the subtlety coming out of the highly complex mixture of culture, religion, history and

[40] Mori, p. 182.
[41] Mori, ibid: pp. 182–183.
[42] Morris-Suzuki, pp. 181–182.
[43] Morris-Suzuki, p. 240.

politics and yet still became powerful enough to mobilise and lead a few ill-guided believers to kill the artists.

In Korea, the exhibition was superficially reported as if it was a kind of 'national' victory and was covered by most of the Korean media outlets for several weeks afterwards. Nevertheless, much of the spotlight was concentrated on the then-Minister of GEFA, Cho Yun-sun (later reappointed as Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism) rather than the cartoon artists, comic writers or at least the contents of the exhibited work. Cho had developed her vision of soft power diplomacy, and commentators had highly praised her unusual cultural depth as a politician, which had been well appreciated by former President Park. Cho was seen as one of the influential politicians in the President's advisory circle, where her power was beyond that of just a Minister of the least powerful Ministry in Korea. This aspect of Ministerial-level involvement contributed largely to the event's politicisation, even making the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs slightly puzzled with her deep involvement. Two years later, as an important craftsman of the former President's Park's soft power policy—unfortunately, during the Blue House scandal—Cho was also heavily affected, being summoned for a parliamentary hearing and gaoled after being found guilty in court of making a so-called 'blacklist of influential left-leaning figures in culture sector'.

Prior to the event, Frank Bondoux, the chairman of the festival, confirmed to the press that the event was disrupted by pressure from Japan. The statements below made by Bondoux and Nicolas Finet, the editorial manager and Asia coordinator of the festival, were reported by many Korean newspapers and television news programmes [30, 31]. I cite Korean sources because the organisers were interviewed mostly by Korean media, which frequently asked whether there was pressure from Japanese authorities: 'Despite the mounting pressure, we, the organising committee of the festival, decided to hold the special exhibition, mainly because the goal of this special exhibition is for peace. France, along with the rest of Europe, consider World War I and II to be the worst conflicts ever in human history' (Bondoux). 'Raising awareness of a particular historical fact which has yet to be known to the public is not a politically motivated act; such an attempt of distorting history is rather political' (Finet) (GEFA press release, 30 January 2014). Several months earlier, in an interview with the Korean press, Finet also commented, 'Japan's sexual military slavery could be a political issue. But I think that such a political issue does not necessarily clash with the goal of art. There is no such thing as a forbidden topic at the festival. We welcome any ideas, whether they bear on controversies, tragedies or whatever' [32].

At a press conference held during the week of the exhibition, Japan's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Fumio Kishida, remarked, 'It is disappointing that this action [the non-cancellation of the *manhwa* exhibition] does not follow the goal of deepening international understanding and friendship through comics' [65]. Japan's ambassador to France, Yoichi Suzuki, expressed concern that the exhibition would promote a mistaken point of view and would further complicate the relationship between Japan and Korea. The incident sparked anxiety among the Japanese public that outsiders would be misinformed through the *manhwa*. A post-event press conference in Paris with Minister Cho was then cancelled and rescheduled as a smaller-scale event in Angoulême to avoid any further diplomatic confrontations.

Similar cases of contesting artwork dealing with comfort women have become increasingly pervasive and global outside Japan and South Korea, in the form of

monuments, memorials, films, performing arts and other art exhibits particularly in the USA, Canada, China, Taiwan, Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam. In such a way, as one of the anonymous reviewers rightly commented, the increasing global discourse and narrative on comfort women have contributed in shaping the two states' soft power agendas. In this context, the case of France under this paper has particular significance (overreaction of the concerned parties) in the following three points: in terms of the form of artwork (cartoon), the form of media (exhibition) and the locality (Europe). First, manga as the most important source and content of soft power in Japan entails a national pride and a strong collective identity is attached alongside. In particular, the cultural space in comfort women *manga* has long been a monopoly of Japanese artists. Second, one principal reason the confrontation against the exhibition was relatively easier than other forms of presentations such as films, museums and monuments would be due to the reversibility (cancellation of the event) and immediate reprisal with counter-examples (e.g. exhibition of comfort women *manga*). Third, the European public, compared with the public in Asia and in North America, is much less aware of the history of East Asia in general and oblivious to high degree of political sensitivity of the comfort women issue between the two countries. From Japan's point of view, there was a concern of gate-opening beyond Asia and North America. One evidence is that the French cartoon artists began to deal with the topics years after the occurrence of the event. Thorough analysis of different reactions to different art forms and different locality of confrontations is beyond the scope of this current paper although I acknowledge that it is worth investigating in comparative terms, examining and categorising each case and analysing the meaningful link between certain cultural forms and geographical location. This meaningful endeavour of establishing a theoretical formula will require a full-length research monograph.

The selection of the theme in each *manhwa* was an implicit response to existing *manga* on major points of controversies (Annex). Manga representation has been rather a process of caricaturising women involved with masculinised touch and individualising the points of controversies, from 'forced conscription to voluntary participation'. Undoubtedly, Japanese *manga* artists and Korean *manhwa* artists have their own agencies. Ideally, they should not be the tools of the government, and their views about the comfort women issue, or any international controversies based on different perceptions of historical experiences, would not rigidly conform to those of their own governments. I do not deny such heterogeneity that, in theory, stems from the disparities between state agendas and those between state agenda and the purpose of cultural representations (either *manga* or *manhwa*). What I instead stress is that there has been only a very limited inter-cultural sphere on this particular issue. In fact, the initial title of this paper was 'When *manhwa* meets *manga*: the politicisation of comics at the *Angoulême International Festival of Bande Dessinée*'. As one colleague rightly commented, after all *manhwa* has not properly met *manga* at the event apart from the attempt by a small group of the Japanese extreme right-wingers.

Conclusion: Comics and Ruptured Historical Memories

This study on *manhwa* representation reveals that, on the one hand, such events can be understood as artists' aspiration of sharing their interpretations and public

discourse on comfort women in the international arena through cartoon art; on the other hand, at this stage, such effort seems heavily guided by the government's soft power agenda in an effort to universalise it through politicisation. Official censorship was removed long ago, but invisible controls on memories on this particular issue seem to continue, as seen from a recent court decision on Professor Park Yu Ha's book [77]. In principle, a sovereign state has the right to choose how it guides its citizens to express certain content, and yet at the same time, a democratic society normally allows artists to freely choose what to express through their artwork.

However, transboundary cultural exchange makes this difficult in practice. History deals with a nation's memories (at the same 'beyond' and 'constrained by' politics), and every country aspires to celebrate the glorious parts only of its past. Problems arise when the memories deal with interstate affairs, as the boundaries of stories became *inter*national and nationalised memories become public goods shared by all of the related nations. What to remember and what to obviate from historical episodes of interstate relationships is still a state affair (although individuals' access to interpretations of history is much more privatised than before because of the development of media technology). Thus, any cultural media dealing with these historical events cannot be entirely politics-free. People in Japan and Korea are consciously and unconsciously guided in what to remember or forget through institutionalised education and the state's involvement in the process of strategically omitting and selecting pieces of history. In this regard, the two nations' memories of war are naturally ruptured and uneven. Throughout modern history, both Japan and Korea have developed selective collective 'memories' and 'amnesia' regarding certain historical facts, each developing a domesticated interpretation. The involvement of the two governments in framing cartoons dealing with history through policies and diplomacy has resulted in the politicisation of these cartoons and the discussed cultural event.

Soft power diplomacy competition may hamper Asian popular culture from thriving across the globe and from engaging citizens who are ready to accept and understand more diversified stories and genres beyond governments' imposed officialised histories, whether in the realm of realistic history or fictitious lore. Regardless of the contents of the cartoons in question, the idea that 'a certain theme itself is regarded as political and taboo' is attributable to governments' influence and top-down policies on cartoons. The conditions for widely appreciated cartoons are not only the cartoons' contents or themes but also their artistic techniques and skill of expression. Artistic quality will ensure wide readership and the effective delivery of the message. The deeper that cartoonists engage in realism, the more their cartoons will be open to debate and will invite different interpretations. In an era of cultural interconnectivity, both *manhwa* and *manga* communities are expected to play a greater role in motivating more universalised discourses on all cartoon genres. One role may not exclude cartoon artists' influence on reconciliation beyond redressing trauma of their own nation. Interpretations can vary. However, global artistic citizens are exposed to increasingly varied representations of history from different nations. In this context, only carefully researched interpretations based on reliable facts will be appreciated by a wide range of readers.

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Appendix. Plots of Major Comfort Women *manga*

1. Luccica Amagae (2010) *The cruel wartime history of women: military comfort woman, how far is shredded snow [Onnano sensouzankokushi: jyuugunianfu, chigirekumo dokomade]*. Bunkasya.

Yuki is Japanese. She is sold to the military brothel at 200 yen by her father due to poverty. She is required to provide sex service to Japanese soldier for 1 year in order to be free and be back home again. She makes some foreign Asian comfort woman friends (not mention from which countries) in the brothel. She cries in the arm of a senior comfort woman Eiko when she is devastated, because Eiko encourages her and treats her like a little sister. She is beaten cruelly by some soldiers. However, the brothel owner convinces her that the solider almost die in the war, she should understand the soldiers' trauma and bear their violent. Yuki is also pregnant because some soldiers are not willing to use condom. Later, the owner died in an explosion. All the comfort women are only able to work for the solider for free in order to have their protection. However, the soldiers treat them cruelly, so they decide to leave the army and wander in the forest. Eiko dies of wound on her back and gives Yuki all the cash she saves before she dies. Finally, Japan lost in WW II, and Yuki brings her kid back to Japan to start a new life.

2. Mizuki Shigeru (2010) *Young lady [Ku-nyan]*. Kodansha.

Japanese troops conquer a small village in China. They notice that there is a young lady underwear on the street. All villagers are hiding at their homes. They broke into an old couple's house and notice a pair of young lady's shoes and pants. The old couple deny that they have a daughter, but the troop later find that the young lady is hiding inside a big wooden box. They capture the young lady force her to their camp. As they have not touched a woman for quite long time, they are all eager for having sex with the young lady. However, they make a rule that just one soldier is to have sex with this lady per night. The squad leader is the first guy to have sex with the lady. The lady is still a virgin and does not know the meaning of a comfort woman, so she asks the squad leader to be her husband, because she thinks that she will not be allowed to be back to the village once she has sex with a Japanese soldier. Squad leader likes the lady, but he is confused. The next night, a junior soldier enters the lady's room to have sex. The lady beats the soldier up and becomes angry. She complains to the squad leader how he can allow other men to have sex with her. Then, squad leader has quarrel and fight with the junior soldier and accidentally kills the junior soldier. Finally, he decides to leave the army and live with the lady in China in low profile. Forty years later, he becomes a dirty old wanderer in China.

He bumps into an old comrade on the street one day. He told his old comrade that the young lady died of illness soon after they started living together. He feels guilty of what he has done to the Japanese army and feels shame to be back to Japan again. So he decides to just continue wandering in China his whole life.

3. Ichika Okada and Akiko Tomita (2016) *Japanese propaganda girl, Vol.2 [Hinomaru gaisenotome Vol. 2].* Seirindou.

Kanade is a high school girl in Tokyo. She has a bosom friend Sakura, who moves to the USA and studies in a high school in Glendale, which is a city in California. A comfort woman statue is established in the central park of Glendale, which irritates the emotion of overseas students there. Kanade has a Skype call with Sakura and realises that Sakura is bullied by Korean students severely there. There are more Korean students than Japanese students in the school. Due to the comfort woman history, Japanese students are regarded as 'children of the rapist' and bullied by Korean students. Sakura has a good Korean friend called Yunhi at the beginning. However, Yunhi dislikes Sakura due to the comfort woman history. For saving Sakura from bullying, Kanade decides to form a comfort woman history study group in her class and holds a live debate contest show on the internet with the Korean students in Sakura's class. The study group also tries to send an email to the mayor of Glendale to express their discontent and request for the removal of the statue. However, the mayor does not reply to their emails.

Below are some points the study group 'discover' during their debate preparation.

- The term 'military comfort woman' is only be used after 1973. Those women should be called 'prostitute in battlefield', not belonging to the Japanese army.
- According to Japanese historian Ikuhiko Hata, there were only 20,000 comfort women during the war. Sixty per cent of them were Japanese, 20% were Korean, and 20% were local women. Hence, there were only 4000 Korean comfort women during the war. However, Korean claims that there are 200,000 Korean comfort women abused, which is a huge misunderstanding.
- Prostitutes are necessary during the war. Otherwise, the army may rape and kill the local women if there are no comfort women to fulfil their sexual desire.
- Some comfort women fall in love with some soldiers, and they get married after the war. Some diaries show that comfort women are happy during the war.
- There is an IWG report investigated by the USA showing that no comfort women are forced to work. Hence, they are not comfort women; they are simply prostitutes.
- During the war, Korean army respect Japanese army during the war. They chose to support Japan instead of China or Russia. However, Korean keeps accusing Japanese after the defeat of Japan.

For further study, Kanade also goes to Osaka to see the 'Wednesday Demonstration demanding Japan to redress the comfort women problems' at Umeda. The demonstration is organised by 'House of Sharing'. Kanade is told that many comfort women live alone without support after the war for many years. So they join House of Sharing, lie about their suffering and attend the demonstration, just for having supportive 'family members' in their lonely elderly life. Kanade rushes to the parade and tries to talk to

one comfort woman. However, she is beaten by a male protestor. This scene is captured in photo and reported to the media. The teachers read the news and scolds Kanade and the study group. In the meantime, Sakura is also beaten by a violent student, falls down a staircase and is sent to a hospital. Her parents suggest her to transfer to another school, but she decides to confront the bashing. Finally, Kanade's study group has an online debate with four Korean students in Glendale at 3 a.m. by Skype. The Korean students claim that Japan Prime Minster also admits of the comfort woman history. They also claim that there are many verbal evidences collected during interviews with comfort women investigated by an organisation in Korea. The study group uses most of the points I mention above to debate. They also mention that many verbal evidences provided by comfort women and Japanese army are contradictory and nonsense. They also emphasise 'harmony' is a key cultural element in Japan culture. Hence, Japanese are used to apologising causally in order to maintain a peaceful relationship. However, foreigners take advantage of this Japanese weakness to accuse of the Japanese's 'fault'. At the end, they said the war ends 70 years ago, and they are born in 2001; they should not be accused of any things they have not done. The debate is a live show on the internet. The study group's presentation is touching, and they gain many support. The Korean students lose. Yunhi brings a few Korean wild male students to beat Sakura the next day. A Korean even tries to rape Sakura. They are stopped by a black student and a few American students. Korean students leave and say that it is impossible to be friends with the Japanese anymore in future.

4. Takayoshi Mizumoto (2014) *Stories of military comfort women (prologue) [Jyuugunianfu puroroguhen]*. http://seiga.nicovideo.jp/comic/10009; http://seiga.nicovideo.jp/watch/mg81391?track=ct_cover

This is not a story. The manga artist uses manga to present a few points regarding to comfort woman. The points are as below:

- Korea is developing very well these years. Hence, they look Japanese in many aspects. Many foreigners may be confused about the difference between Korean and Japanese. For example, when some Korean commit misconduct overseas, they will say sorry 'Sumimasen' in Japanese, in order to mislead the foreigners to think that they are Japanese.
- Some Korean army's uniforms are very similar to Japanese army uniforms. Hence, foreigners may think that it is the guilt of Japanese army when they look at some brutal Korean soldiers' photos.
- During WW II, Korea is under the control of Japan. Korean soldiers also fight for Japan against other countries. The comfort women in Korea are Korean. Most of the soldiers who have sex with the Korean comfort woman are also Korean.
- Korea produces some war movies, in which Japanese army is very evil, and use the materials to teach Korean students in school. It makes young Korean think the Japanese are all bad and Korean are all good during the war.

5. Aria, Haruko (2014) *A story of a Japanese comfort woman [Arunihonjinianfuno mogatari]*. Ameba. https://ameblo.jp/aria-in-wonderland/entry-11786561923.html; https://ameblo.jp/aria-in-wonderland/image-11786612225-12864130966.html

Haruko is a 19-year-old Japanese comfort woman, who is working in China's Canton Province in 1944. She has a star-shaped birth mark on her left hand. She works as a comfort woman for earning money to pay back the debt for her parents. However, her parents do not reply to her letters. It makes her not look forward to going back home. Some Japanese soldiers are shivering and crying while having sex with her. It makes her feel that her comfort is helping the soldiers be stronger to fight for the country. She is pregnant while Japan is losing in WW II and everything is in chaos. She does not know who the father is. She gives birth to her kid in a wild forest because there is no doctor and facilities to help her to give birth. She notices there is a star-shaped birth mark on the baby's left hand too. However, she does not have any money and any place to stay. She leaves her baby outside a rich family's home, hoping that the rich family may raise the kid because the rich family does not know the kid is a Japanese. She is saved by two Asian guys because of her beauty when she is dying in the forest. She denies that she is a Japanese because she remembers that many Chinese kill Japanese women and children in Tungchow mutiny in 1937. She is delivered to Korea to work as a 'Korean Military Comfort Woman—West Princess' to provide sex service to American soldiers. She feels the cultural difference between Japanese and Americans while working on Christmas.

She is so exhausted and confused. She had a faith of contributing to the Japanese army in the war to protect Japan in the past, which enabled the suffering. Now she was just suffering for survival. She is delivered to Vietnam in 1968 to continue her sex service. One day, she sees a dying young lady in the forest with the star-shaped birth mark on her hand. She realises that the young lady is her daughter. Her daughter dies. She is crying while a child comes out in the forest also with a star-shaped birth mark on hand. She knows that the child is her grand son. She commits suicide with the child in a river because she does not want to suffer any more. She is saved by people and sent to a hospital. After her recovery, she is proposed by the military doctor Kanda. Haruko was Kanda's first love when she was still working in China many years ago. Finally, they move back to Japan to get married and live together. One day in 2012, Haruko is 88 years old. Her grand grand daughter reads the news about American soldiers raping Japanese ladies in Okinawa and becomes angry about the brutalism of the soldiers. Haruko explains to her grand grand daughter tenderly, saying that the soldier is brutal by image, but if there is no soldier to protect a country, all the women in the country may die brutally.

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