

International Journal of Korean Humanities and Social Sciences
vol. 7/2021
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14746/kr.2021.07.05>

HOST-PARASITE COEVOLUTION: BONG JOON-HO'S URBAN SMELLSCAPES AND CONTAGIOUS TOUCH¹

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Abstract: This paper is an exploration of some of the modes of haptic visuality, smell, touching, being touched and contagious contact in contemporary South-Korean cinema through Bong Joon-ho's (봉준호) Oscar-awarded *기생충* (*Gisaengchung*, *Parasite*) (2019) and his earlier film *괴물* (*Gwoemul*, *The Host*) (2006), films that, I would argue, are the most prominent examples and a culmination of the embodied visuality within the contemporary South-Korean cinema. Both films operate as the studies of the internalized forms of capitalism, a phenomenon that, according to Bong Joon-ho (봉준호), "before it's a massive, sociological term, is just our lives". This paper looks into the manifestations of internalized capitalism in the everyday lives of Bong

¹ This work was supported by the Seed Program for Korean Studies through the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the Korean Studies Promotion Service of the Academy of Korean Studies (AKS-2018-INC-20180060).

Joon-ho's (봉준호) characters, as well as spatio-temporal structures that, I would argue, best reflect the process of internalization.

Keywords: smellscape; contagious touch; filmic space; embodied visibility.

괴물-기생충의 공진화: 봉준호가 말하는 도시의 향과 전염적 촉각

국문초록: 본 논문에서는 아카데미상을 수상한 봉준호 감독의 영화 <기생충, 2019>과 그의 전작 <괴물, 2006>을 통해 현대 한국 영화의 촉각적 시각, 후각, 감동 및 전염적 촉각의 몇 가지 유형을 탐구하는데, 여기에서 저자는 두 작품이 이러한 요소를 가장 두드러지게 나타낸 현대 한국 영화에서 대표적인 예이며 그것이 구현된 시각의 정점이라 말한다. 두 작품 모두 자본주의의 내면화된 형태에 대한 연구임을 보여주며, 이는 봉준호가 말한 "거대하고 사회적인 개념이 아닌 평범한 우리의 모습"이라는 대목에서도 확인할 수 있다. 본 논문에서는 봉준호의 성격이 고스란히 전해지는 일상에서 나타난 내면화된 자본주의의 모습과 내면화 과정을 가장 잘 반영한 시공간적 구조를 살펴본다.

주제어: 도시의 향; 전염적 촉각; 영화적 공간; 구현된 시각성.

HOST-PARASITE KOEVOLUCIJA: BONG JOON-HO, OLFAKTORNI PEJZAŽI I ZAZRAZNI DODIR

Abstract: U ovom se radu istražuju modaliteti haptičke vizualnosti, mirisa, dodira, dodirivanja i međuljudskog kontakta kao izvora zaraze u suvremenoj južnokorejskoj kinematografiji na primjeru Bong Joon-hoova (봉준호) Oscarom nagrađena *기생충 (Gisaengchung, Parazita)* (2019) kao i filma *괴물 (Gwoemul, Domačín)* (2006) istog redatelja. Riječ je o filmovima koji se u radu razmatraju kao najrepresentabilniji primjeri, ako ne i sama kulminacija haptičke vizualnosti te kao studija internaliziranog kapitalizma, ali i vremensko-prostornih struktura koje ponajbolje odražavaju navedene procese.

Ključni pojmovi: olfaktorni pejzaži; dodir; filmska arhitektura; haptička vizualnost.

KOEWOLUCJA HOST-PARASITE: BONG JOON-HO A MIEJSKI KRAJOBRAZ ZAPACHU I ZARAŻLIWY DOTYK

Abstrakt: Niniejszy tekst opisuje badanie niektórych rodzajów widzenia haptycznego, zapachu, kontaktu, bycia dotykanym i zaraźliwego dotyku we współczesnym południowokoreańskim kinie na przykładzie filmów Bong Joon-ho – wcześniejszego *The Host* (2006) i oskarowego *The Parasite* (2019). Filmy te, zdaniem Autorki, stanowią najbardziej znaczące przykłady

kumulacji ucieleśnionej wizualności współczesnego południowokoreańskiego kina. Obydwa filmy służą za studium uwewnętrznionych form kapitalizmu, zjawiska, które, zdaniem Bong Joon-ho, “nim stanie się uogólnionym terminem socjologicznym, stanowi po prostu nasze życie”. Artykuł przygląda się zatem manifestacjom uwewnętrznionego kapitalizmu w codziennym życiu bohaterów Bong Joon-ho, jak i strukturom przestrzenno-czasowym, które, zdaniem Autorki, najlepiej odzwierciedlają proces uwewnętrzniania.

Słowa kluczowe: krajobraz zapachu; zaraźliwy dotyk; przestrzeń filmowa; ucieleśniona wizualność.

1. Damps, sewers and staircases

“As soon as we renounce fiction and illusion, we lose reality itself; the moment we subtract fictions from reality, reality itself loses its discursive-logical consistency”

— Slavoj Žižek et. al, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology* (1993: 47)

The first part of this paper focuses on the movie settings, and Bong Joon-ho (봉준호) has, intriguingly or predictably, opted for similar spaces in films discussed here. The spaces at work in the films of one of the most prominent Korean directors are mostly low-level apartments, damp, sewers, and symbolically loaded staircases that allow for the vertical exchange of meaning to take place between Bong Joon-ho’s vertically superimposed characters. Logan Baker points out to similarities between Hitchcock’s *Psycho* (1960) and Bong Joon-ho’s *기생충* (*Gisaengchung*, *Parasite*) use of stairs (Baker 2021), and it’s rather obvious that Hitchcock was a great influence on the South Korean director in the treatment of filmic space, which, in *기생충* (*Gisaengchung*, *Parasite*), operates as a host inhabited by vertically arranged sets of parasites, representatives of different social classes who, on the other hand, display more similarities than it appears at a first glance. South Korean director’s outstandingly depicted spaces further emphasize the impossibility of advancement within a rigid system.

I called *Parasite* 'a staircase movie' [...] So even in pre-production, my set directors and I held a staircase team contest, where we each selected a staircase scene from our favourite movies. I told Kang-ho Song, who plays the father of the Kim family, that if I were to summarize the story of one guy, especially from his character's perspective, I would call it a story about a man that wants to go up the stairs, but ultimately ended up going down the stairs (Bong Joon-ho qtd. in Caicoya 2019),

said Bong Joon-ho during Q&A at the Toronto International Film Festival Lightbox in 2019 and he was, obviously, referring to the Kim family, to the financially underprivileged individuals who have already undergone a form of symbolic death and what looks like an opportunity for them to be symbolically born again slowly deviates into a panic attempt to avoid the absolute and actual death as well. Analysing Hitchcock's *Birds* (1963), Žižek points out how

the attack of the birds can be viewed as embodying Hitchcock's vision of the universe, of the (human) cosmos as system—peaceful on the surface, ordinary in its course—that can be upset at any time, that can be thrown into chaos by the intervention of pure chance. Its order is always deceiving; at any moment some ineffable terror can emerge, some traumatic real erupt to disturb the symbolic circuit (Žižek 1992: 77),

and the same (Žižek would call it “cosmological”) reading is applicable to both of Bong Joon-ho's films discussed here. The monster from *괴물* (*Gwoemul*, *The Host*) and an “illegal immigrant” from the *기생충* (*Gisaengchung*, *Parasite*) might as well be perceived as manifestations of the traumatic real disrupting the symbolic circuit, and the traumatic real usually disrupts or erupts from the depths, it is a vertical process, just like Bong Joon-ho's narrative structure and spatial organization. At the very first hint of the dismantlement of a play that the Kim family has staged for the Parks, the reality loses its logical consistency and the anticipation of a complete collapse raises the sense of unease, provoking laughter at the same time. Bong's filmic space cannot sustain what's inside and what's inside, consequently, expands beyond the frame itself.

Thus, the basement is a space in which dirty and ugly masses of contradiction cohere, not revealed on the surface but hidden away in the depths. It is in the basement that the kidnapped dogs are butchered and boiled for stew in *Barking Dogs Never Bite*; it is in the drain pipe, buried away under the surface, that the gruesomely butchered corpses of

women are laid out in *Memories of Murder*; and it is in an underground sewer next to the Han River that the bodies of victims kidnapped by the monster decompose in *The Host*. In *Incoherence*, the apartment basement is already a metaphorical place where excretion and appetite (the rice dish) are merged into one objet, and where that junction leads the viewer not to feel seriousness but to explode with laughter (Jung Ji-youn 2011: 21)

Jung Ji-youn delivers an apt commentary on South Korean director's filmic spaces. Architecture indeed seems to be the fundamental site of Bong Joon-ho's film practice. Space, frequently viewed as dead and static comes to life and conscious expression. Reflecting on film and Scheffauer's "sixth sense of man", his feeling for space or room, Vidler speaks of a filmic space that is "no longer an inert background, architecture now participated in the very emotions of the film; the surroundings no longer surrounded but entered the experience as presence" (Vidler 1993: 47). Bong Joon-ho's spaces come alive, host a whole range of "parasites", devour them and spit them out, just to devour them again. Keen on real monsters and monster metaphors as he is, I would argue that Bong Joon-ho's architectural designs, even those that appear calming and comforting, display a high degree of monstrosity, and act as an embodiment of a system that Bong's characters are desperately trying to inhabit, only to become inhabited in turn. South Korean director's filmic spaces make a noise, and noise is what makes Bong Joon-ho's filmic spaces. Moreover, not only do they make a noise, but they smell too.

1.1 The Introduction of discomfort: Bong Joon-ho's Smell-o-Vision

Meglio puzzà di merda che di povero.
(Better to reek of shit than of poor)
 — Italian proverb

In his foundational work entitled *Le parasite* (*Parasite*, 1980), French philosopher Michel Serres explores human relations reducing them to the concepts of the parasite and the host body to rethink the basic categories in social science. Bong Joon-ho's 기생충 (*Gisaengchung*, *Parasite*) takes place in deeply personal spaces, whereas public spaces

are not as represented. Referring to private property and its genesis, Serres points out:

Those who see only public space have no sense of smell. As soon as you soil it, however, it is yours. Thus, the dirty is one's own [propre]. The first one who, having shit on a terrain, then decided to say, this is mine, immediately found people who were disgusted enough to believe him. They distanced themselves from his territory, without war or treaty (Serres 2007: 144).

The Kim family slowly possesses the Parks' family home, their "parasitic" invasion takes place smoothly and none of the Park family members is aware of it, except for their youngest child who is the first to notice that all of their household helpers smell alike. This, in my view, is the precise moment of the introduction of discomfort into a seemingly calm environment and the viewer is the first one to feel it because the youngest member of the Park family expresses his observation to his mother who does not take them seriously, but the viewer does and the mood is irrevocably changed. The introduction of smell signifies a significant change in tone and a breaking point in the cinematic event as a whole. Park family aseptic home is suddenly filled with an unfamiliar smell and a sense of anxiety. It is, all of a sudden, making a noise, so to speak, but, at the same time, it's the noise that makes the house.

The parasite doesn't stop. It doesn't stop eating or drinking or yelling or burping or making thousands of noises or filling space with its swarming and din. The parasite is an expansion; it runs and grows. It invades and occupies. It overflows, all of a sudden, from these pages. Inundation, swelling waters. Noises, din, clamour, fury, and noncomprehension. Asymmetry, violence, murder and carnage, arrow and axe (Serres 2007: 144).

Bong Joon-ho's treatment of a very Alien-like monster from the 괴물 (*Gwoemul*, *The Host*) corresponds to French philosopher's take on the nature of a parasite. South Korean director's monster is an expansion, running and growing, invading and occupying. The process, however, extends beyond the body of the monster itself. It overflows and inundates the city in the form of a deadly virus that is, out of a sudden, feared more than the monster itself. The virus, as the extension of Bong Joon ho's monster, provokes fear of proximity and touch in the residents. In 기생충 (*Gisaengchung*, *Parasite*), the parasitic invasion

takes place on a micro-level, and a very intimate one. Parks' family home is being invaded by a parasitic expansion that runs and grows, instilling fear and uncertainty into Bong's film fabric and the viewer's mind. However, the Park family themselves don't seem to be aware of the parasite and this is mostly because of the fact that they, in a sense, parasitise whatever is parasitising them.

And it's not just the poor family that are the parasites, it's also the rich family as well," Bong observed. "Because they leech off the labour that the poor family provides: They can't drive for themselves, they need to hire a housekeeper, so everyone is our parasites, including the third family (Bong Joon-ho qtd. in Caicoya 2019).

As the director himself states, everyone is our parasite in the film and it is, arguably, the architectural element that acts as a host, a backdrop of a class struggle that exposes the deeply flawed vertically designed system. The monster from the *괴물* (*Gwoemul*, *The Host*) is a direct result of parasite-host-like evolution of a relationship of two nations, parasitising and harassing a city from the depths. What Bong Joon-ho is so brilliant at is demystifying both the poor and the rich. Poverty does not make a character noble, and abundance only makes a character naïve. Compared to the Kim family, the Parks seem to be the nicer ones but it is only because they can afford to be nice, whereas the Kim family is forced to constantly be coming up with ways to make a living. Just like the family from the *괴물* (*Gwoemul*, *The Host*). Inundation and swelling waters that fill up their basement apartment are nothing but a metaphor of hardship they face on a daily basis, a metaphor of a struggle to remain floating. It is not the poor that parasitise the rich or the other way around. Man, according to Serres, is a universal parasite and

everything and everyone around him is a hospitable space. Plants and animals are always his hosts; man is always necessarily their guest. Always taking, never giving. He bends the logic of exchange and of giving in his favour when he is dealing with nature as a whole. When he is dealing with his kind, he continues to do so; he wants to be the parasite of man as well. And his kind want to be so too (Serres 2007: 24).

So why do the observations of the youngest member of the Park family pass unnoticed, why aren't they taken seriously? Is it the narrowmindedness of the adult Parks who simply attribute Ki-taek

smell to his class and think of it as, simply, the smell of poor, a smell they are to be exposed to to keep their household in a functioning state? Smell is, I would argue, a pivotal force, in Bong's *기생충* (*Gisaengchung*, *Parasite*). Not only does it instill discomfort into filmic space, but it has the potential to, haptically, introduce discomfort into the viewer's mind as well, if not even invoke a slight change in the spectator's perception of the Park's beautiful family home. But what kind of function do *기생충* (*Gisaengchung*, *Parasite*'s) constant references to smell perform in the cinematic event as such?

To provide at least a partial answer to a similar question I will touch upon Chion's reflections on the era of silent films that led to cinema which "enabled spectators to hear with their eyes" (Stam 2020: 37). French film theorist takes Stam's argument a step further claiming that

The very absence of smell should allow spectators to smell with their eyes and ears, as well. While it may be tempting to base the plausibility of an olfactory cinema solely on one's ability to accurately experience the physicality of smells, I argue on the contrary that it is this inability to physically smell in films which welcomes an effective olfactory response to cinema (Chion 1999: 27).

On the other hand, Marguerite Duras, for instance, was rather sceptical when it came to the new form of cinema because, in her view, the talkies closed off the imaginary. The spectator was no longer allowed to imagine the voice of Greta Garbo. The talkie, according to the French novelist, limited this silver screen icon to one single voice. However, when the youngest member of the Park family exclaims that their driver, their chef, and their tutor all smell alike, or when his father complains to his wife about the smell of his driver, the spectator's imagination is allowed to run wild. Bong Joon-ho brilliantly uses dialogues to open up the haptic.

Addressing the lack that was taken away from cinema with the introduction of sound, Chion talks about how, from the moment they became heard, the voice and synch sound brought a certain degree of disappointment to film, the disappointment that comes from "the "oral" filling of an absence or lack over which desire has built its nest", claiming how, "once heard in reality, even the most divine voice had something trivial about it" (Chion 1999: 13). However, I would argue that the lack Chion is referring to is still there and the viewers are allowed to fill it imagining smells, odors, etc. The audio-enforced image

has the potential to stimulate an even stronger haptic response. The “new lack” is haptically induced, the viewer is still given black spaces that are to be filled with her/his imagination. However, when it comes to contemporary Korean cinema, the haptic forms of contact seem to be rather strong but they are, by no means, pleasurable.

This paper looks into less pleasurable aspects of the haptic form of contact between the film and the viewer. The American academic Steven Shaviro reflects on proximity as a source of disgust, disease, and infected perception (Shaviro 1993), and in Bong Joon-ho’s films proximity is perceived as such: highly contagious, and results in the infected perception: the viewer’s perception of filmic space and, as is the case with *Ki-taek*, a change in auto-image. Furthermore, smell often parasites both the sound and the image in the Korean director’s intense sensory landscape. His films do not seem to lack a lack, but in this case, the lack is not a cozy space for the spectator’s desire to nest in but rather a damp, cold, and dark place that turns out to be the source of discomfort and disgust.

What takes place inside Bong’s filmic spaces is a sort of a primal hide-and-seek game. Human vision, just like that of cinema, Chion points out, is partial and directional (Chion 1999: 17). Bong’s characters are either hiding or seeking, sending Morse code signals to make their location known or working on a perfect cover. Korean director’s characters align with Serres’ views of blocked communication. We are, “buried within ourselves”, states French philosopher, “we send out signals, gestures, and sounds indefinitely and uselessly. No one listens to anyone else. Everyone speaks; no one hears; direct or reciprocal communication is blocked” (Serres 2007: 121). This seems to be the case in Bong’s movies as well. Violence turns out to be the only way to communicate. The Kim family has to convince the Parks that their housekeeper is contagious in order to overtake the house. It’s only when the father of the abducted girl from *괴물* (*Gwoemul*, *The Host*) threatens the medical staff with contact and infection that he manages to do what he has been struggling to do all the time: to get out of the hospital and continue looking for his daughter, and it’s only when violence escalates in Park family home that everyone comes to understand or at least to begin to understand the severity of the situation.

Bong Joon-ho’s *기생충* (*Gisaengchung*, *Parasite*) and *괴물* (*Gwoemul*, *The Host*) brilliantly address the communication block, partial vision, and partial visibility – and fill it with a smell, a stench

that is the only thing that the Park family seems to notice, because, unlike seeing, smelling is omnidirectional. It creates a mental tension that stifles the image. Body smell in 기생충 (*Gisaengchung*, *Parasite*) and the institutionalized fear of proximity in 괴물 (*Gwoemul*, *The Host*) slowly take over the image and the sound and, arguably, over the whole cinematic event, turning it into an intimate experience, establishing a close connection with the viewer as well. The linguistically euphemized and psychologically repressed erupts in the form of body smell or the threat of being touched/infected that (first slowly, then suddenly) fills out Bong's filmic spaces. Parks' remarks on the way he smells, act as a form of an olfactory mirror for the father of the Kim family, whose humiliation is further amplified by the fact that his children could hear their remarks as well. He is not ashamed of encouraging his children to deceive others, just like he is not ashamed of his deception because that's, in a way, his *seo-ri*² right. However, it's only when he sees his image in the olfactory mirror that the Parks have linguistically painted for him that he starts feeling shame because of what he is and how he is.

Discussing urban smellscape, Henshaw dwells on the difference between our visual landscape as separate from our bodies, which makes it controllable, and our olfactory landscape, which is more immediate, less controllable, and, since we are immersed into it, also an integral part of our bodies (Henshaw 2013: 13). When Park Dong-ik complains about his chauffeur's smell it is because he feels that his employee is crossing the boundary: Kim Ki-taek's body odor invades the interior of his car, his posh family home, and ultimately his body and there's nothing he can do about it, except maybe fire him, just like they fired their former housemaid due to fear of infection. Mr. Park can either put up with it or look for another driver and the latter is not really an option since the Park family is struggling with finding adequate household staff.

Furthermore, the father of the rich family does not even approach his driver directly and complains to Mrs. Park instead, performing what Pallasmaa would term suppression by the code of

² According to *Encyclopedia of Korean Folk Culture*, the term, used in Bong Joon-ho's 괴물 (*Gwoemul*, *The Host*), refers to the stealing of grain, fruit, and poultry for fun among children to satiate their hunger when there was food shortage during the agricultural off-seasons.

culture. “Vision and hearing are now the privileged sociable senses”, claims the Finnish architect and former professor of architecture,

remnants with a merely private function, and they are usually suppressed by the code of culture. Only sensations such as the olfactory enjoyment of a meal, fragrance of flowers and responses to temperature are allowed to draw collective awareness in our ocularcentric and obsessively hygienic code of culture (Pallasmaa 2005: 10).

If there was such a thing as an anti-ocularcentric director, Bong Joon-ho would make a great example of one. *괴물* (*Gwoemul*, *The Host*) is a monster movie, but the alien-like monster is rarely shown both in the intradiegetic and the hypodiegetic part of the narrative structure. After its appearance, the characters seem to be more afraid of each other than the monster itself. It literally causes a war between its potential victims. *기생충* (*Gisaengchung*, *Parasite's*) basement dweller who took refuge there not to be seen is what moves and directs the plot and disturbs the balance between the superimposed set of characters.

Vision, according to Pallasmaa, displays a very strong tendency to

grasp and fixate, to reify and totalize: a tendency to dominate, secure and control, which eventually, because it was so extensively promoted, assumed a certain uncontested hegemony over our culture and its philosophical discourse (Pallasmaa 2005: 10-11).

Bong Joon-ho challenges vision in a visual medium and reverts the order of senses, and with it the entire philosophical discourse of vision, which disorients both characters and the viewers. The very architectural design of the Park family home enables each family member to enjoy full privacy and isolation (should they wish to isolate themselves from the others, as is the case with the youngest member of the Park family who camps in the front yard) but it also enables its owners to have full visual control over the interior and exterior which ultimately makes them feel safe. However, the body odor of the Kim family member challenges their ultimate power over their personal space. It crosses the boundary, as Mr. Park puts it, and the cultural code forbids him to confront his driver on the matter.

2. 괴물(*Gwoemul, The Host*), 기생충 (*Gisaengchung, Parasite*) and the Impossible Climb

“Today’s history comes deodorized”

— Roy Porter, Preface to Alain Corbin’s *The Foul and the Fragrant, Odour and the French Social Imagination* (1986: v).

괴물 (*Gwoemul, The Host*) reaches its culmination point plot-wise, violence explodes in horrifying ways but the calm after the storm is, according to the film critic Chung Sung-ill, realized in a form of a return to point zero:

When the monster is dead, the film does not actually end, but returns to zero. In the process, the vicious cycle returns once again to its starting point, and after the film is over, the first scene (of the sequel in real life as it starts again) can only be the moment in which the 8th Unit of United States Forces Korea once again empties its dusty bottles of formaldehyde (Jung Ji-youn 2011: 55).

By the same token, when the Park family basement dweller is chased out, the film does not end, it merely returns to zero. The basement dweller is simply being substituted because the system needs its ‘parasite’ and is completely and utterly unable to overcome the need for one. To put it in Serres’ words:

We parasite each other and live amidst parasites. Which is more or less a way of saying that they constitute our environment. We live in that black box called the collective; we live by it, on it, and in it. It so happens that this collective was given the form of an animal: Leviathan. We are certainly within something bestial; in more distinguished terms, we are speaking of an organic model for the members of a society. Our host? I don’t know. But I do know that we are within. And that it is dark in there (Serres 2007: 22).

What Bong’s characters, regardless of their social standing, have in common is their complete ignorance when it comes to the system they all inhabit, their ultimate host, a system in which, Serres would argue “we don’t know what belongs to the system, what makes it up, and what is against the system, interrupting and endangering it” (2007: 16).

According to Gabilondo:

기생충 (*Gisaengchung, Parasite*) is an overworked and convoluted narrative about the impossibility of overcoming, dismantling, or exiting neoliberal capitalism. Literally, the South Korean film is a cinematic version of Fredric Jameson's infamous dictum that "it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism" (Gabilondo 2020: 1).

Bong Joon-ho's characters naively try to overcome or dismantle whatever is making it impossible for them to climb the stairs that the director so frequently makes references to in the interviews, but that turns out to be a rather difficult, if not completely futile task since the system has internalized them and they have internalized the system in return. It's precisely what makes it hard to set an individual apart from the system, his/her host, and the ultimate parasite, it makes it hard to tell where one ends and the other begins, since, to go back to French philosopher, we do not know what we're within but what we do know is that it is something bestial, and it's rather dark inside.

South-Korean director's characters are the epitome of what Polish sociologist and philosopher Zygmunt Bauman termed "human waste or wasted humans" or, more precisely,

the population of those who either could not or not wished to be recognized or allowed to stay), an inevitable outcome of modernization, and an inseparable accompaniment of modernity (Bauman 2003: 10),

reduced to trash, a by-product of socio-political processes manifesting themselves both on macro and micro scale. And trash is something that is supposed to be hidden away from sight, thrown, or chased out. It is no coincidence that 기생충 (*Gisaengchung, Parasite*'s) privileged characters describe "the others" in terms of smell and avoid contact due to fear of contagion, as is also the case in 괴물 (*Gwoemul, The Host*). Corbin (1986: 143) points out, reflecting on the fetidity of the labouring classes and the danger of infection in their presence, that "[T]he absence of intrusive odor enabled the individual to distinguish himself from the putrid masses, stinking like death, like sin, and at the same time implicitly to justify the treatment meted out to them". However, Bong Joon-ho won't allow for "the trash" to simply be taken out and will not settle for a deodorized filmic space. Despite opting for an architecture of exclusion and separate spheres, the Park's family home is impregnated with smell. The trash belonging to damp or sewers explodes in the face of the South Korean director's characters and

viewers, and the cinematic event, turning systems taken for granted into systems that ought to be dismantled or at least questioned.

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