4

Vil(l)e Encounters

Transnational Militarized Entertainment Areas on the Fringes of Korea

In the Shadow of the Base

Rose is sitting in front of her little diner together with a few of her friends, and she invites me to have a coffee with them. Rose is a Korean woman in her mid 30s, but looks at least 10 years older than her actual age—a result of all the heavy drinking that her former work at the GI clubs nearby entailed. Nowadays she runs this small eatery in the ville, but things are not going too well for this new business of hers, either. Many of the soldiers in the area have recently been relocated to P'yŏngt'aek, which has hit the remaining residents in this kijich'on North of Seoul rather hard. This is why she had to close down the little club she was running up until three years ago, she tells us. Even though the diner that she owns now is not doing any better either, Rose says she still prefers GI customers over Koreans: "The Koreans, they think they are the king, and they treat you like a slave, while the GIs, they just come, they want one big meal, no fuss, no extra wishes, no bullshit."

If the US base Rose lives alongside of were to close for good, maybe she should seize the opportunity, she says, and "get the hell out of here, go to the States myself." She has been contemplating such a move also for the sake of her son—he is 16 now and, with her failing business, she is very concerned about his future prospects. Being the offspring of a soldier, he has been attending US military schools for most of his life. And although he can read, write and speak in Korean, he is at a great disadvantage compared to his age cohort when it comes to passing the necessary exams that would allow him to get into a Korean university. Rose's son causes her a lot of trouble these days "with all his running around," she says, but the fact that she can occasionally speak with the boy's grandfather in the States on the phone gives her some consolation. Grandfather keeps telling

Figure 4.1 Fenced-off US military installation

her that "Kids will be kids, give the boy some time, things will change." With the actual father of her son, however, she barely has any contact at all—her ex-partner does not send him any gifts, not even a card on birthdays or Christmas. "Asshole," she concludes the talk about him, "he has so much more money than I do, but still, he doesn't do anything for his son … You know what my kid said to me the other day? 'Basically I have no father, right?'"

Miss Yu, another woman in her early 30s, jumps in now, telling us of her work at a club nearby where she is employed as an entertainer. She finds the younger Filipina women that she has to work with quite irritating. They rarely talk to her, and even when they greet her, she says, they do it in such a mocking fashion that she feels rather insulted by them. She has this distinct feeling that these Filipinas are gossiping about her behind her back, constantly switching to Tagalog when they are in the midst of a conversation, and giggling obnoxiously at the same time. At least there is Natalia, a Russian woman who is 22 years of age. But then Natalia has a problem with alcohol and, whenever she drinks too much, she gets very aggressive, swearing at everyone in Russian and being abusive toward the girls she does not like. On one occasion, she got herself into a fight with a Mongolian entertainer, tearing out a lot of the woman's hair. "So whenever Natalia gets too drunk," Miss Yu says, "I just make sure that the girl gets

a bit of sleep until she is fit enough to work again." A reason for all the tensions amongst the women working at the club, Miss Yu believes, is that everyone has been so stressed out about money lately. Barely a customer has made his way to their club over the last few weeks, and the financial situation of the business seems to be getting worse by the day.

In the last chapter, we saw how various symbolic struggles in South Korea that became more predominant in the 1990s put camptown areas into the national spotlight, where they served as vital zones of the imagination during a tumultuous political era. Gruesome depictions of camptowns have accumulated through a social practice that I call violent imaginaries, which, as I have explicated in the introduction, involves the rescaling of individual acts of violence into a matter that pertains to the Korean nation. But these images, accrued via a political project that is aimed at shifting larger US–Korea relations, do not entirely capture the reality of contemporary camptowns as I experienced them in the late 2000s. Rather than finding contested zones where Korean women are routinely mistreated by US soldiers—an image of camptowns that spoke well to the national imagination of the 1980s and 1990s—I discovered a number of marginalized transnational spaces where a diverse set of actors encounter each other in a very particular landscape.

These meetings, while potentially open-ended, are in practice often scripted by the fact that this assortment of soldiers, foreign entertainers and local women confront each other within an economic micro-system that largely encourages sex for sale, with the Korean club owners, in particular, seeking to sideline all other, non-monetary relations between women and soldiers that they are unable to make a profit on. This order regulating the entertainment areas, which places sexualized entertainment squarely at the center of all economic activities, in practice often sidelines the Korean women still working in camptowns, who find themselves unable to compete against the young female foreigners in their midst. With a woman's worth largely defined by her ability to attract the attention of the American customers who come to the club she works at, young and physically attractive entertainers are typically in a much better position to make a living than are women who are older. This distinction between younger and older women, between potentially high-performing entertainers and those who need to content themselves with meager wages, is usually drawn along ethnic lines in the camptown areas I visited in 2009:[1] most of the young entertainers are from the Philippines or Central Asia nowadays, while the Korean women—typically in their

30s, 40s, or older—have often quit club work in order to take up other positions in the area, such as managing the clubs' daily affairs, waiting on tables, cleaning, bar-tending, etc. If they do become too old to perform even these low-paid tasks, they may come to depend on the (very minimal) welfare support provided by the Korean state, or on donations made by Christian groups or non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

As for the foreign entertainers themselves, the business with sex is not necessarily a lucrative one for them, either. The women usually receive a base salary of up to $400 a month; the rest of their money they have to earn through commissions they receive on the overpriced drinks they sell to the soldiers[2] in exchange for a little bit of their time at the club. There is also the extra income that can be made by going on "bar fine" with a client. The bar fine is a fixed amount of money (usually at least $100) that needs to be paid to the club owners in order to be allowed to take an entertainer outside of the bar for the remainder of the night. The entertainer herself typically only receives a fraction of that sum, which is why many of the women seek to arrange their own meetings with clients without the knowledge of their club owners. De facto, the bar fine is often the equivalent of a sex fee; but the term itself and the conditions of this arrangement are left vague enough to absolve the club owners from accusations of facilitating prostitution, while most of the weight of any illicit transactions is placed on the shoulders of the entertainer, who putatively has to decide for herself how far she wants to go with her customers. In reality, however, soft and sometimes outright pressure to perform sexual services on a night out is often exerted by the club managers or the soldier who has paid a lot of money to be in the company of the woman.

While all these monetary and sexual activities are going on, at the same time many of the daily goings-on in camptown revolve around the women's efforts to re-embed their brief encounters with the soldiers into the non-monetary realm of social obligation, longer-term commitment, and possibly even love. The women engage in myriad strategies that are aimed at disrupting the strictly transactional nature of their relationships with the men who come to their clubs. In doing so, they often resemble their Korean predecessors at the clubs, who frequently worked at these establishments with the stated goal of finding themselves an American husband. And some of the tensions between the older Korean women in camptown and the younger foreign women at the clubs may well be grounded in the fact that the Koreans typically look back on a long line of failed relationships with soldiers, with their chances of finding "a good guy" rapidly fading over the years, while the younger foreigners usually

still have the highest hopes for themselves. Suzie, a Korean woman in her mid 30s, whom I often found in a somewhat intoxicated state, sitting at this bar or that while loudly complaining about the Filipina women in town, summed up this key dilemma of her life in the following way: "Yeah, sure, I used to go with all the guys. And boy, did they treat me badly. I am done with all that now. Just want a husband now, and want to be loved."

Camptown Residents: Hopeful Actors or Preoccupied Persons?

In an attempt to navigate the social stigma attached to their line of work, the Filipina women who perform the actual sexual(ized) labour often place their bets entirely on their soldier-clients when it comes to improving their chances in life. Sallie Yea, who conducted a series of interviews with Filipina entertainers in South Korea in 2002/3, has called the romantic underpinning through which the women make sense of their work a kind of "labour of love." Such a romantically charged framing of their lives, Yea argues, allows the migrant women to assert a degree of agency while working in this highly unfavorable environment, and to temporarily overcome the stigma attached to prostitution (2005: 457). Sealing Cheng, in her ethnography *On the Move for Love* (2010), advances a similar argument when she notes that the "vitality of hope […] propels these women's transnational movements" (2010: 222). In the foreign women's attempts to make their current lives in camptown meaningful by imagining a brighter future ahead, GI boyfriends play a vital role. Soldiers, Cheng notes, emerge as the women's "prime concern, and preferable source of support" (2010: 6):

> This strange intimacy between the Filipinas and the GIs in the context of *gijichon* is a main theme […]—"strange" because of the dominant/subordinate political, economic, and historical relationship between them, a structural relationship that has predominated in discourses about the US military and women in rest and recreation (R & R) facilities. (2010: 6)

Such a focus on hope also reflects a wider trend in social anthropology, where the term has recently gained much traction (for a review, see Narotzky and Besnier 2014)—Hiro Miyazaki (2004, 2006), for instance, has argued for a deeper exploration into the ways that hope figures in various forms of knowledge production. Vincent Crapanzano (2004),

on the other hand, speaks of our informants' "imaginative horizons" as a potentially fruitful terrain for ethnographic research, while Arjun Appadurai has advocated for a "politics of hope," which people engage in in order to transform uncertainty into a manageable risk (2013: 115ff). And Frances Pine, who explicitly links migratory trajectories to hope, explains that "hope is a complex, many-layered notion resting on the capacity for imagination, on a sense of time and of temporal progress, on a desire to believe in a better future or in the possibility that something can change" (2014: 596).

Analytical approaches that seek to locate these migrant women's agency in their ability to manage their daily lives in kijich'on through their hopes of a better future are unquestionably important contributions to the larger victimhood vs. agency debate that has been dominating research on prostitution / sex work for decades now (see, for instance, Agustin 2007; Berman 2003; Day 2007; Day and Ward 2004; Doezma 1998; Kempadoo 2005; Kempadoo and Doezma 1998; Weitzer 2000, 2005).[3] The term *prostitution* notoriously entails an impossibly diverse range of activities and systems across the globe (Donovan and Harcourt 2005; see also Majic 2014), with the case of Korean camptowns certainly having much to contribute to these larger discussions. However, my goal here is not primarily to contribute to this body of literature, but to discern what is arguably the unique feature of the kijich'on system—that is, the fact that entertainers and soldier-clients encounter each other within a highly militarized environment, and find themselves drawn into a system that appropriates their labor for the benefit of a security system that spans half the earth. While I fully support a project that accentuates the agency of sex workers, paying close attention to the larger structural forces that these actors need to come to terms with is also of crucial importance.

By keeping the sweeping historical forces in mind that have given rise to these red-light districts adjacent to US bases in South Korea, when thinking of the women and men who encounter each other in camptowns, another question may arise: Can we actively bring militarism into the equation again, while at the same time avoiding the pitfall of portraying the women involved in camptowns as mere victims? And if outright violence does indeed play less of a role in the maintenance of the camptown system than nationalist actors in Korea would have it, what other, softer forces keep these kijich'on actors in their place? While I believe that the rather generic term "hope" may not provide a satisfactory answer to this type of concern, it does lead us in a very interesting direction—that is, to the terrain where personal aspirations, collective imaginaries, and various

temporal orientations come up against a local architecture (i.e. the world of kijich'on) that has attached itself to the globe-spanning infrastructures of the US Armed Forces.

As discussed in chapter 1, militarism is perhaps best understood not only as an ideological matter that pertains to how military practices are made sense of but it is also a phenomenon that has significant, yet often unacknowledged effects on actual social relations. Militarism, whether explicitly verbalized or not, often permeates the everyday lives of civilians in numerous ways. In South Korea's US camptown areas, then, we may find ourselves on a rich terrain to explore the impact that one particular military has had on sexual and romantic encounters in its sphere of influence. Sandya Hewamanne, in her work on Sri Lankan soldiers and their girlfriends, has proposed the term "preoccupation" to capture a sense of the extensive emotional work that goes into maintaining sexual and romantic relations in highly militarized environments. Militarism, she has shown, indeed did not remain at the discursive level of nationalist ideologies at her field site, but tended to seep "into the intimate, everyday spaces of supposedly peaceful areas" (Hewamanne 2013: 61) among working-class women in southern Sri Lanka, who typically forged sexual liaisons with lower-ranking soldiers. Describing these female factory workers she encountered as "friendly fire casualties of war" (2013 62ff; see also Lutz 2002b: 88), Hewamanne looks into how "*occupation* can take many affective forms, sometimes entailing pleasure, pride, hope, and opportunity along with pain, fear, and violence" (2013: 66). The women she lived with did indeed invest much emotional labour in their soldier boyfriends, albeit often with little actual success: "Occasionally, one heard of soldiers marrying their […] worker girlfriends, but mostly they were said to cheat, abuse, and abandon them" (2013: 67).

"Preoccupation," laid out in such a way, seems to be an excellent phrase to also capture the intense emotional and sexual involvement that women working in camptowns attempt to establish and maintain with the US soldiers they meet in the ville. While "preoccupation" today is most commonly used to refer to a mental state of near-total absorption, the term has military connotations as well: it is derived from the Latin word *praeoccupare*, that is, "being seized beforehand." Additionally, it points to people's active engagements with their futures: during the 16th century, for instance, the word was still used in the sense of "meeting objections beforehand."[4] By keeping these two older meanings of "preoccupation" in mind, we may be able to make this term speak to a wide emotional spectrum that goes into the sexualized labour that the women are

engaged in. While "hope," in a sense, primarily points to those sentiments and feelings that are more firmly anchored in individual choices and aspirations, "preoccupation," in my understanding, is much more tied up with the notion of affect—that is, it highlights how people's emotional agitations are both a deeply embodied experience *and* a phenomenon that significantly emerges in the collective, in the encounter with those who are (not) like us (Mazzarella 2009, 2015).

And, indeed, the sensual and emotional underpinning of camptown life, the sum of these countless interactions between soldiers and women that play themselves out every night, may in fact be the "soft" stuff that ultimately keeps the uneven system of the camptown in place. If the ville is a pressure valve for the soldiers who visit it in their free time, a place where they can "let off some steam"[5] after the day's work is done, it is simultaneously also a space of desire, uncertainty, anguish, and hope for the women who labor there. Affect, William Mazzarella has claimed, is a crucial component of structures of power in the sense that "any social project that is not imposed through force alone must be affective in order to be effective" (2009: 299).[6] If we take this explosive claim seriously, then camptowns could simultaneously be understood as a historical project arising out of Cold War insecurities, an economic and political solution to the perceived danger posed by too many young foreign men in one place, and a social project in Mazzarella's sense that is affective in its effectiveness as a reality to be lived in by those who temporarily find themselves in it.

What about the soldiers then? Are they equally "preoccupied" with the entertainers they meet in the camptowns close to their military installations? While the young women's lives were typically dominated by their involvement with a number of soldiers—which, in addition to the sexual(ized) labor of the night, also involved grooming and beautifying oneself during daytime, as well as engaging in the almost endless work of texting (potential) clients during the day—the soldiers I spoke with were often also quite invested in the emotional work of building relations in camptown. With kijich'on areas functioning as temporary escape zones that allow the soldiers to relieve the stress of the demanding work they engage in, camptowns certainly become emotionally charged spaces for many of the servicemen, too. Their "preoccupation" with the relations forged in these spaces, however, is often of a qualitatively different kind than that of the women, given that their monetary interests are essentially opposed to those of the entertainers.

The fact that money plays a crucial role in the way soldiers and women first encounter each other certainly makes the emergence of romantic relationships difficult, to say the least, with the "whore" stigma that the young entertainers seek to manage also directly affecting their interactions with the men they meet in the clubs. The soldiers, some of the women complained to me, typically seemed to assume from the start that the entertainers they encountered in the clubs were only after their hard-earned money, and thus frequently treated them with little respect. All the while, however, quite a few soldiers were receptive enough to the presence of these women, and forged (temporary) relationships with these other working-class strangers living and laboring on the outskirts of Seoul. Within this context, some soldiers opted for a very different evaluation of these entertainers; they, too, chose to portray the women as victims who are involuntarily trapped in a vicious prostitution system. Tony, a 26-year-old soldier who had been stationed in South Korea for four years, explained to me one evening that much of the bad reputation of the US military in Korea stems from the women present in the villes who are "brought in for specific purposes," as he put it. In his hometown in New Mexico, there were also many female Philippine residents to be found, he

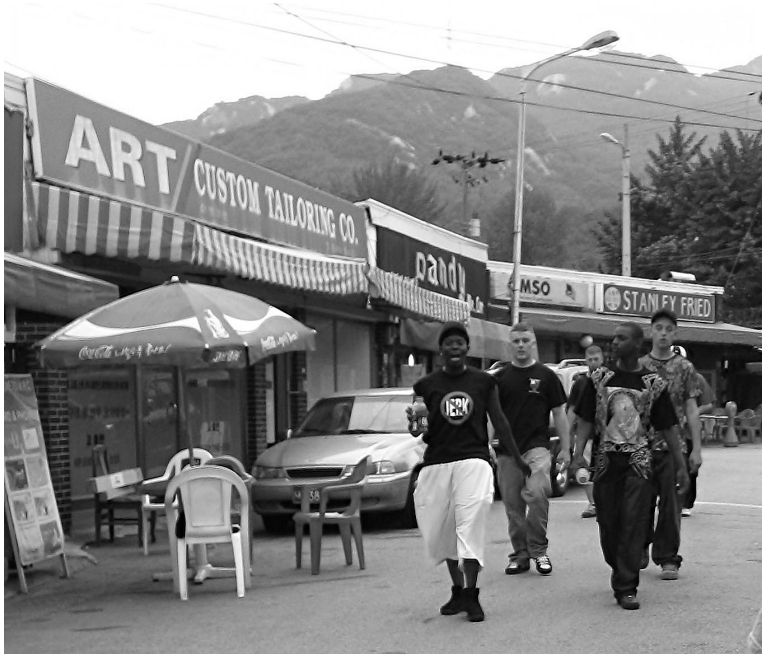

Figure 4.2 A group of servicemen in a kijich'on

said. "They are beautiful, beautiful women. I just love them." Recently, he re-visited Tongduch'ŏn's ville for the first time in a while. "I met a very nice Filipina lady there in one of the clubs," he explained. Instead of paying the bar fine for her to purchase her company for the night, he asked her out on a date, but she told him that the club owner would probably not allow her to do that. "You know what that means, right? She's basically being held there like a slave. Many are. It's sickening."

Transnational Migration Circuits Into the Entertainment Industry and Debates on Sex Trafficking

> Lana came to South Korea for the money. Back home in the Kyrgyz Republic, where she toiled in a shoe factory for $20 a month, she longed to buy an apartment, but the $5,000 price tag seemed impossibly high.
>
> Then she saw a newspaper ad seeking women to dance and talk with U.S. servicemen in nightclubs in South Korea. The ad promised what for her was an astounding wage—$2,000 in the first six months. Lana, a bright, attractive blond, took the job.
>
> Now, she wishes she hadn't. (McMichael 2002)

In the early 2000s, a number of articles were published in American media outlets concerning the issue of sex trafficking of women from post-Soviet areas and the Philippines to kijich'on terrains in South Korea.[7] Tom Merriman, a US reporter working for the Fox television affiliate WJW, got the ball rolling on this story after he had encountered a number of Korean sex workers in Cleveland's massage parlors. These women, he learned, had ended up in the area because they had typically followed US servicemen to the United States, where they then resorted to prostituting themselves after their relationships with these men had ended. "I always had an interest in how these women got here," Merriman told another journalist (Jacoby 2002), and he would consequently travel to South Korea's camptowns in a quest to learn more about the matter. To his surprise, though, in the meantime the Korean women he expected to find nearby US bases had largely been replaced by Russians and Filipina entertainers. The reporting that followed after Merriman's television station aired secretly filmed footage of US soldiers pursuing foreign entertainers generally focused on how these women had allegedly been lured to Korea under false pretenses, where they were then pressured or directly coerced into prostitution. An article entitled "Sex Slaves" (McMichael 2002; see also excerpt above)

gives a good indication of the kind of reporting that was done on this topic of female migrant workers who came to South Korea on "entertainer" visas to work in the GI clubs nearby US bases.

While recruiters—who often use illicit practices to get women to sign up for this work—certainly played a significant role in bringing Russian entertainers to South Korea, some of the migratory paths of these young women were most likely also facilitated through informal networks among the sizable migrant community of Russians living in South Korea. Two Russian women, to whom I spoke during field research in It'aewŏn, essentially told me that going to South Korea to work at a club was thought of as a good option to make some quick money among their circle of female friends. Unemployment rates are incredibly high in her native town of Vladivostok, Alexandra, a 24-year-old woman said. Many of the young people dream of finding jobs in Japan or South Korea, places which to them represent much more attractive destinations than the far-away urban centers of their own country. Yuliana, a 26-year-old resident of It'aewŏn who also hails from Vladivostok, says she came to Korea for the first time at the age of 21. She recently got married to a South Korean man, but continues to work part-time at a Russian club in It'aewŏn. Her dream is to go into retail and eventually to establish a little trading company for herself. This would allow her to ship goods to her hometown of Vladivostok. Since the late 1980s, Russians have done exactly that: attracted by Seoul's Tongdaemun area, the old heart of South Korea's garment industry that is still a regional center for the trading of cheap clothes, many have come to South Korea to try their luck in small-scale retailing. An estimated 70,000 Russians, quite a few of them undocumented, were residing in the urban centers of South Korea until a major crackdown against illegal immigration took place in late 2003/early 2004 (Chun 2004). As of 2013, 12,800 Russians still live in South Korea legally (5,000 of whom are made up of ethnic Koreans with Russian citizenship), with the number of undocumented Russians being estimated to range in the thousands as well.[8]

At approximately the same time that Russians in South Korea experienced this crackdown, South Korean NGOs and women's right groups were increasing the pressure on their government to take the issue of sex trafficking more seriously (Moon 2010a: 347). Curiously, they found their anti-prostitution stance supported by an unexpected ally: the same United States government whose soldiers happened to be the main clients for the Filipina and post-Soviet women working in clubs close to US military bases. Already in the year 2000, the US government had introduced its

Trafficking Victims Protection Act, and would consequently attempt to globally combat prostitution (which was identified as a prevalent form of trafficking) through various ways and means (Cheng 2015). For instance, it began to utilize the annually published *Trafficking in Persons Report*. By assessing and grouping various countries' anti-trafficking measures into three tiers, this report proved to be a vital tool in shaming states into cooperation with the US anti-prostitution agenda. In 2001, South Korea was listed as "tier 3" in one such report. That is, it was named to be among those countries whose governments do not fully comply with the minimum standards and are not making significant efforts to do so. While in that same report, South Korea had only been listed as a source and transit country for human trafficking, by 2002, it was also named as a destination country, with "persons from the Philippines, China, Southeast Asian countries, Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union" named as those who are primarily trafficked to Korea.[9] This kind of exposure seemed to have played quite a significant role in how swiftly South Korea came to replace the old Prevention of Prostitution Act with the Act on the Punishment of Procuring Prostitution and Associated Acts and the Act on the Prevention of Prostitution and Protection of Victims Thereof in 2004 (Cheng 2015).

Another response to this rather unwelcome international attention had already come a year earlier, in 2003, when the Korean government stopped issuing E-6 visas to women from Russia and other post-Soviet spaces (Moon 2010a: 347). And indeed, in these debates surrounding the touchy subject of sex trafficking of foreign women into South Korea's camptowns the particular international travel document, the E-6 visas that are given out to entertainers, came under much scrutiny. The category of E-6 visas was first created in 1993, and in 1996, the Korean Ministry of Culture and Sports officially granted the Korean Special Tourism Association (that is, a powerful organization of club owners working in camptowns) the right to invite entertainers from abroad to work in the GI clubs (Moon 2010a: 342). At first, women were recruited from several parts of the world, but eventually, club owners "found Filipinas and Russian women most suitable for their businesses" (2010a: 342). In 2001, the highest ever number of women entering the country on an E-6 visa was reported; 8,586 foreign entertainers came to South Korea with the help of this visa scheme, with 81.2 percent of those arrivals at that time being female (2010a: 342). Perhaps due to the mounting pressure to curtail the influx of women into the GI entertainment industry, however, by 2009, only approximately 2,300 Filipinas came into the country through E-6 (Rabiroff 2009). Their

numbers seem to be on the rise again currently, though, with a total of 4,940 foreign workers entering the country on an E-6 visa in 2013. Approximately 70 percent of these visa holders today hail from the Philippines according to government estimates (Lee C. 2015).

Filipina migrant women, who, together with Russians, have made up the majority of the new entertainers in these GI clubs over the last couple of decades, have indeed been coming to camptown areas in relatively large numbers[10] since the mid 1990s. As we have seen in the previous chapter, by the early 1990s, when Yun Kŭm-i's murder threw a glaring spotlight onto kijich'on spaces, these neighborhoods close to US military installations had turned into economically destitute areas, where, due to a combination of factors, the number of local women working in the GI clubs had dwindled drastically. Incidentally, at around the same time, the Philippine government—another key military ally of the United States—took a historic step: the US Armed Forces, which still maintained a sizable military presence with several large installations on Filipino soil, was asked to leave the country after the base-agreement regulating the US military presence in the country was not renewed in a landmark vote of the Philippine Senate on 16 September 1991 (Simbulan 2009). Both the Subic Bay Naval Base (once the largest US naval installation overseas) and the nearby Clark Airbase were subsequently abandoned. The local economies adjacent to these bases, however, had also been heavily dependent upon the influx of young soldiers, with the adult entertainment industry, in particular, flourishing close to the bases. At the height of US military activities in the Philippines, Clark and Subic together were estimated to have hosted 55,000 prostitutes (Santos 1992: 37). Given the historical disjuncture between the United States, the Philippines and, by extension, South Korea, where troops would stay on, an informal and lucrative solution was found to the camptown crisis of the early 1990s, with the surplus of potential sex workers in the Philippines coming in handy for GI club owners located in South Korea.

Over recent years, however, the continuation of these transnational migration circuits into Korean GI clubs has proven to be a rather fragile affair. In addition to unwanted media and NGO attention, Korean club owners are today often struggling economically, as they have also come under much pressure from the US Armed Forces. Military authorities regularly put their venues "off-limits" nowadays, with any service member found in an off-limits establishment automatically in violation of US Forces Korea (USFK) regulation, which can lead to disciplinary consequences.[11] This seemingly drastic measure is one direct outcome of

the "Zero-Tolerance Policy" that was launched by the US Department of Defense with regard to human trafficking in September 2003, a policy that, as Moon Seungsook critically notes, in the South Korean case mostly entailed a concern with:

> distancing the military and its soldiers from camptown prostitution tainted with trafficking. The policy is nebulous about the use of (poor) women's sexual labor presumably without force or trafficking to keep male soldiers docile and useful. It continues to normalize male soldiers' heterosexual entitlement at the expense of marginalized women. (2010a: 350)

In reaction to such concerted crackdown efforts in kijich'on, the methods deployed by club owners and recruiters to sustain the influx of young female bodies from the Philippines into the camptown areas seem actually to have become more unscrupulous. Apparently as a result of the introduction of the anti-trafficking laws of 2004, any person applying for the contentious E-6 visa ("entertainer" visa) today needs to prove that they are actually capable of singing or dancing. This is usually done by first submitting a video of one's performance skills to the recruiters, with successful applicants also being made to sing in front of Korean consulate personnel to prove that they are indeed entertainers in the narrow sense of the term (Lee C. 2015). This lengthy process may have led to the unfortunate outcome that Filipino recruiters nowadays have a harder time finding women who fit the bill, so to speak, that is, performers who can pass these tests, and who are also fully informed that they will in fact be working in the adult entertainment industry.

What is more, while these detailed bureaucratic processes may at first glance give the *impression* of legality (including to women who might be somewhat uncertain about the nature of the job they are signing up for), quite often this kind of recruitment is actually illegal under Philippine law, which some of the prospective entertainers who sign up for the job seem not to have been entirely aware of (see also the next section of this chapter). In order to recruit women in a lawful manner, Filipino recruiters would also need to acquire an Overseas Employment Certificate, which is a document issued by the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration that is only handed out after Philippine authorities have been able to verify whether the workplace abroad is safe and legitimate (Lee C. 2015). In an effort to circumvent these additional procedures that these GI clubs would most likely have difficulties passing, many recruiters these days seem to try

to fly the women out of the country on tourist visas, usually avoiding the direct route from Manila to Seoul that may arouse suspicions, and hiding the women's E6-visas by gluing together two pages of their passports to prevent detection through border control personnel (Lee C. 2015).

While such techniques have for now allowed this business to continue, in spite of the increased attention paid to women recruited into the entertainment industry of South Korea, at the same time awareness of the often illicit nature of these work opportunities in Korea is slowly but surely growing in the Philippines. During a stay in Subic Bay, Philippines, in 2014,[12] for instance, I was sitting in a taxi when a local radio station was broadcasting a warning to the general public, asking women to be on the alert when it comes to job offers from South Korea that involve "entertainment." Having lived in the Subic area for a few months at that point already, I had some doubts as to whether such awareness campaigns would really be effective, though: Korean beginners classes for would-be migrants were offered in several locations in the area, and a sizable Korean expat community in Subic and elsewhere in the Philippines was certainly contributing to spreading the image of South Korea as a very prosperous nation. At the same time, the number of Filipinos living below the poverty line, according to conservative estimates by the government, stands at approximately 25 percent today (ABS-CBN News 2015),[13] with single mothers, in particular, being targeted by recruiters looking for new volunteers for East Asia's sex and entertainment industry. Incidentally, our taxi was speeding through a local red-light district, Barrio Barretto, when I heard the radio announcement in question; this little entertainment town has in the past served countless sailors coming through the Philippines and, even these days, local club owners still do not have much trouble recruiting sex workers from remote provinces of the Philippines, who will then cater to the needs of retired US military personnel and sex tourists from across the world. The business of sex in the Philippines, despite the official departure of US forces two decades ago, is alive and well, with South Koreans playing a significant role as both club owners and clients in the Philippines, too.[14]

Foreign Camptown Women and Their Management of Stigma: "Until the Whole House is Finished"

Raquel is a 31-year-old mother of three, whom I meet at a women's shelter near P'yŏngt'aek.[15] She had come from the northern Luzon region in

the Philippines to this town south of Seoul in order to work as a singer. Recruited by an agency in the Philippines that was run by a young and beautiful woman who had previously worked in a club in South Korea herself, Raquel and several other women went through a recruiting process that included putting together a portfolio of songs to perform, going through several interview stages and even a final performance in front of South Korean consulate staff. In the end, Raquel was chosen, together with two other women—Emily, who is 29 years old, and Audrey, who is 21. "I had heard some rumors about the job, read some stuff online that the job was not only about singing," Raquel told me, but she nevertheless hoped for the best before her departure. Her sister had gone to Singapore as a maid after all, and things had worked out well for her there. Her friend Emily says that her family suspected, too, that this job might entail sex work, and so some of her relatives came to the agency a few days before her departure to Korea to speak with the woman running the agency one more time. "We will take extremely good care of your daughter," the woman assured them, and so Emily finally also made up her mind to go.

Raquel, Emily, and Audrey were separated at the airport in Inch'ŏn after arriving in Korea, and Raquel was taken to Anjŏng-ri, while Emily went to Songt'an, another camptown near P'yŏngt'aek that mainly services US Air Force personnel stationed at Osan Air Base. Audrey, the most inexperienced of the women (Emily and Raquel claimed that Audrey never even had a boyfriend before), was taken to a third location, and Emily and Raquel would never meet her again. Raquel described her first evening at the club as eye-opening—in no time, she found herself on stage, performing a "sexy dance" at the pole. "Me!" she laughed, reminiscing about this evening, "a mother of three! Look at my hips!" The other women working at the club spent most of the evening filling her in about the job. Going on bar fine, they would explain to her, was the only way to really make good money around here, and they encouraged her to get over her fear of sex work as soon as possible if she wanted to do well for herself in this town: "When I think of my first guy," one of them explained to her, "now I just think of the door to the new house I will build in the Philippines. The second one, he's the window. And so it goes, until the whole house is finished."

On her second night at the club, she had her first client—an African American GI—who kept sitting with her all night buying her drinks and trying to coax her into sitting on his lap. "'Honey,' he said to me, 'tomorrow I will come back for you, and then we fuck!'" There was to be no tomorrow, though, because in nearby Songt'an, Emily had spent her first night crying in a corner of the club. She went through a lot of back and forth, Emily told

me, trying to make up her mind what to do about the situation she found herself in, and the thought of her family back home in the Philippines certainly was a factor in her hesitation to call for help. "What will they think about me," she said, "getting myself into this?" Eventually, she made up her mind that she could not stay at the club and called for help via email. A Filipina friend she wrote to then passed her name and that of her club on to a friend in Korea, who then called the NGO workers from Turebang.

Within half a day, a few Turebang staff members showed up at the club, together with the police, who demanded Emily's passport back from the club owner so that Emily was free to go. She was then taken to a recently opened shelter facility run by Turebang (where I would eventually meet her). The next morning, she joined an NGO worker on a walk through Anjŏng-ri, where they were to hand out flyers to other Filipinas they met in the streets. They ran into Raquel that day, who was extremely happy to see her friend again—and they both decided to make use of the Turebang offer of a free flight ticket back home. Their agent in the Philippines, as soon as she heard about the fact that both women had left their clubs, called up Emily's parents to demand the money back that had been invested in Emily's trip overseas, but Emily's relatives threatened the agent with the police, which eventually brought an end to the stream of phone calls they received. When I last talked with the two of them, on the day before their departure, Emily said to me, "You know, I can really understand how women are drawn into this business. And why they stay, even when it gets tough. Maybe staying is easier for them than going home empty-handed, like us."[16]

The story of Raquel and Emily, who, by all definitions of the term (Schober 2007), were trafficked to South Korea under false pretenses, may still serve us as a reminder of the various complexities and social pressures that contribute to women staying in the Korean sex industry servicing US soldiers—familial obligations (that is, the pressure to send remittances home), numerous debts acquired on the way to Inch'ŏn airport, shame as well as the desire to make your fortune regardless of the odds stacked up against you are all factors that have convinced numerous Filipinas to stay at the GI clubs. If they decide to stick around and fulfill their contractual obligations they have entered into with the club owners, they soon find themselves part of quite a claustrophobic environment. The migrant women barely ever leave the camptown spaces they come to live in, as the 6 to 7 days a week they spend working at the clubs barely gives them the time and leisure to venture out into the rest of the country. In addition

to the club owners and the older women managing them in the clubs, they rarely ever meet any Koreans at all. Their primary social contacts are US military personnel and other migrant workers, and their visions and hopes for a better life are often entirely focused on the GIs they get to meet during their working hours in the clubs.

Angie, a 34-year-old Filipina, is a good example of a female migrant worker who has placed all her bets on her fiancé, Bill, who is in his mid 40s. I met Angie for the first time because she had a medical emergency—a week earlier, she had had an accident and broken her arm. She had refrained from seeking medical treatment right away because she was living in Korea without documents, had no health insurance, and depended solely on Bill for money, who was strapped for cash so close to payday. "I'm sorry, I don't speak any Korean," Bill immediately apologized to the Turebang worker and the doctor on duty at the hospital where we had brought Angie when he arrived a couple of hours later. "It's just that the only people I ever get to hang out with are other Americans or Filipinas up there in Tongduch'ŏn." Bill and Angie, I learned, had met each other only a few months earlier. Because of their encounter, Angie had finally decided to run away from her club. She had continuous trouble with receiving her promised wages, suffered from the stressful working conditions at the club, and felt bad that her boyfriend had to pay large sums of money to the club owner just to see her.

The oldest sibling of eight and hailing from a peasant family, she had come to Korea from the Visayas region of the Philippines, where her two children were still living with her mother, who tried to scrape a living for the family by selling fish at the market ever since Angie's father had lost his small plot of farm land. Angie's Filipino boyfriend, the father of her children, died a while ago, leaving her as the main caregiver for her children. And even though Angie helped her mother with the selling of fish, there was never enough money. So when Angie heard of the opportunity to work as a Karaoke singer in Korea, she took the chance and applied for the job. The work turned out to be much harder than she could have imagined, though: she had been promised $800 per month, but she soon found that there was barely any singing to be done, just drinking every night with her GI clients and coaxing them into buying her more overpriced drinks which would entitle them to 20 minutes of her time.

The guys would pay $10 per drink, of which she usually received $1. Her quota was to sell 100 drinks per week, a goal she rarely ever reached, with business going very badly at times, so she typically ended up with much less money than she was supposed to make through these drinks.

Additionally, the club owner withheld her fixed pay of $100 per week, arguing that Angie would only get to see that money when her contract was finished. Under such conditions, she explained, many of the women she knew resorted to prostitution to augment their low salaries, or were talked into it by their club owners or their clients. "You know about the bar fine, right?" Bill asked me at this point of Angie's narrative, and shook his head in disgust, "Angie was so lucky that they didn't have that at her club." Angie jumped in now, "The women only do it because they are so poor, you know?" She herself never considered prostitution an option, she said, but instead she frequently ended up hungry and broke. Most of the money that she made went toward buying the sexy clothes she needed for her work, and toward buying food for herself—as per contract stipulations, the club owner was supposed to provide them with three meals per day, but instead, they frequently only received one meal.

When she met Bill, things changed for the better, though: he talked her into running away from the club, which she did after only three months of employment there. He got her an apartment and promised to marry her, as her visa status had expired the moment the club reported her as missing.[17] In the meantime, they had already signed all the necessary papers for their marriage to be legal, Bill told me, but with two different embassies and the US military involved, it took ages for all the paperwork to be processed. Bill had no intention of returning to the States any time soon, but instead wanted to continue his career with the USFK or wherever else the military would choose to send him. Angie wanted to be reunited with her children, once their marriage and her residence permit as a military dependent came through. This was bound to complicate things for Bill further, but he was confident they would be able to make their new life as a transnational family work.

Camptown Preoccupations: "Marry a Nice GI …"

Where exactly she was living she would not be able to disclose, Angelina, a 30-year-old Filipina told me. Her fear of the immigration authorities was too great. She and her child had been living without documents in South Korea for four years now. Trying to avoid deportation, she only left her flat at night to go to work at the club. She had decided to stay in this country regardless of her legal status until her former boyfriend, a US serviceman, started to pay alimony for their child. She was currently in the process of suing him in a Korean court, but just this morning, her lawyer had told her

that her case seemed rather hopeless because the young man in question had already returned to the States and refused to even acknowledge the court order from Korea.

Angelina, a very pretty woman, gave off a certain nervous, yet determined energy on the morning I spoke to her. "I only had coffee for breakfast and then we had to rush to the court hearing," she explained. She took the previous night off from working at the club in order to get all the official meetings done. She had come to Korea five years earlier, she told me, sent by a Manila-based agency. Her boyfriend back then, a European, was regularly taking drugs, so she wanted to get away from him for a while and see a bit of the world. Before that, she had already worked at a club in Japan, a totally different line of work, she first tells me—but later conceded, yeah, sure, they wanted her to sell sex there as well, and things were not going very smoothly, which is why she changed employers so many times in Japan.

The agency asked her before she headed off to Korea what kind of clubs she wanted to work at—at a place that serves GIs only, or at one where regular Asian men go as well. She picked the one reserved only for GIs, "of course," she told me, and, within three weeks, she held in her hands her visa for Korea that would allow her to work for six months. Once she arrived at her club in Korea, however, matters quickly escalated with the owner of that business over the issue of sex:

> When I got here, after that I found out what kind of job they wanted me to do. [. . .] They wanted us to go out with the customers, you know, "bar fine". And I told them that this was not in the papers that I signed in the Philippines. So if you want, send me back to the Philippines, I won't do this, I told them.

It is one thing, she told me, if a girl *decides* to go with a GI to make that extra money, and quite another if the club owner orders you to go with a guy: "No pushing. If some of the girls want to work that kind of job, make the extra money, then I can't stop them. But if the girls don't want to work like that—no pushing!" Within two weeks of her arrival in Korea, the police had shown up—a girl from the club had run away a little while earlier because of the conditions at the club, and a priest who had helped her escape had notified the police. The women were then all taken into custody, but jointly decided to return to the club a few days later because neither the police nor the priest could provide them with what they really wanted: a new job to make a living for themselves in Korea.

The next few months turned into a constant struggle for Angelina. In the midst of trying to negotiate with the bar owner, her GI clients, and the other girls for better working conditions, she ran away from her place of work several times. On one occasion, a GI customer hid her in his flat inside the base for an evening, but reconsidered his offer to let her stay there after the club owner threatened him with the police:

> My friend, boyfriend,[18] I think, he said, just come with us on post, we can buy you everything. When we got on post, they just let us borrow their clothes and we could take a shower there. No shampoo, no nothing. Then we stayed on post until around 11. Then my club owner tried to call them, and the soldiers got scared. Because he said, he'd call the Korean police, blabla, so they got scared. So they said, "You have to run away, 'cause we're gonna get in trouble [if you stay here]." So they found an apartment for us.

She changes clubs, she changes jobs, and she changes boyfriends. She receives an offer to work "on post," that is, as a civilian working inside the base, she works the telephone there, she works behind the counter at the PX store, there's this guy who remembers her from her club days and soon enough, they start dating. He is already married to a Russian woman, he tells her that his marriage is only a sham so he can live off base. They move in together, and she soon realizes that he cheats on her, sleeps around, so she threatens to leave him, and eventually she leaves. She goes back to work at a club, where she finds out that she is pregnant. Her ex says he will pay for the abortion, but then she changes her mind, she is a Filipina after all, a proud Catholic, and once she sees the baby's heartbeat during an ultrasound, she makes up her mind to keep the child.

He refuses to talk to her now, then he says he will support her, then long silences again, the occasional phone call in between many, many unreturned ones. She is broke, too pregnant to work, friends help her out, she works in a restaurant for no pay, just for the food, enough to not starve. She runs into her ex-boyfriend occasionally, they have horrible fights and she fears she might lose the baby because of all the stress. She gives birth, he pays for the hospital bills, and he makes sure the baby gets an American passport, but then does not contact her again. She files a complaint with the military authorities, and his supervisor apparently speaks to him, and nothing comes out of that. He doesn't pay for any of her additional costs, he is dating another Filipina now, he talks badly about her in front of her friends, he keeps telling her that she should give him the baby so he can

take it to the States. He wants to marry the other Filipina now, who has a kid of her own, from yet another GI, they want to raise both children together in the States. Angelina goes into hiding, because she believes he wants to call immigration on her in an attempt to get the child. She changes flats, she changes jobs, she is in a constant panic, until the day that he leaves for the States.

Would she like to go back to the Philippines some day, I ask her. Maybe later, she says, but she wants this child support issue solved first, she wants a future for her boy—she cannot give up, not just yet, and how are they going to live in the Philippines, she asks me. Her little boy is an American citizen, so they will have to regularly leave the country, "With what money, how are we supposed to do that?" The last time she spoke to the father of her child was six months ago. Her son was very ill at that time. "If you had given me the baby, that kind of stuff would not have happened," he told her on the phone. His Filipina wife later wrote her an email, starting it with "How's night life in Korea?"—"She speaks as if she's never seen a club from inside herself," Angelina laughs bitterly. What about the future, I ask her. "Marry a nice GI," she says, wait and see, and then pick the right one, make sure she can go to the States with him and file a law suit there. "Have you met anyone nice yet?" I ask. "No, there's no one," she says, and there's tears in her eyes now, it has been a very long day for her.

Two hours later, we sit on the bus that is bound to take us back to the town she lives in. Her son is excited to be on the bus, he puts his little fingers onto the window screen—as we depart, we pass by Camp Stanley, and its many buildings, vehicles, military structures come clearly into view for a brief moment. "Mama, look!" the child exclaims, pointing at something he sees inside the base, and so they both look, as the US military base and all that is inside of it rapidly disappears out of sight again.

Villes as Captured Spaces

When camptown spaces were first cast into view as violent spaces from 1992 onwards in Korean public debates, they proved to be extraordinarily fruitful zones of the imagination that gave nationalist actors a powerful tool that allowed for a drastic repositioning of South Korea in relation to its powerful ally, the United States. Whereas the public focus on kijich'on is primarily directed at how these realms are endangering to local (and, to a lesser degree, to foreign) women, in this chapter I have shown that a crucial difference between discourse and practice, between imagination

and lived experience, can be made out when looking closely at the ville. Camptowns, as they present themselves in their 21st-century reconfigured forms, are much more transnational spaces for asymmetrical encounters between GIs and local and foreign women employed in the entertainment areas than they are spaces of outright domination that pertain to a nation's fate. No doubt violent escalations are, to some degree, normalized experiences in people's lives in these areas, but the story cannot, and should not, end on this note. Murder and rape are not daily events in kijich'on for the women employed there, but fearful suspension in between different countries and legal systems is, made worse by financial and emotional difficulties, and by finding oneself in a dire spot far away from home.

Camptowns are both endangering and endangered spaces that require much maneuvering, scheming, and everyday strategizing by those who live, work, and play in them. Alliances shaped in kijich'on—of a merely sexual or a romantic kind—are made on a daily basis, but in this transient space, seemingly stable commitments often collapse with great ease. Hopes for a better future always threaten to evaporate into thin air, and the soldiers' money seems to be constantly slipping through the fingers of those who seek to get their share of it. And in the midst of all the young bodies encountering each other in the dark spaces of the GI clubs, the older ones, cleaning the counter, filling the glasses anew, or mopping the floor, may easily be overlooked—but it is these older Korean women, having experienced double abandonment by their co-ethnics and their former American lovers, who are often the only ones among all of kijich'on's actors, who are here to stay.

To be sure, a few of their friends have done well for themselves by building up new lives with money earned in the ville or by founding transnational families with their soldier lovers. It is with similar success stories in mind that many of the Filipina women go about their business in kijich'on—with their lives seemingly on hold, suspended between state of failure and success, hope and abandonment. Camptown is an *affective* space that they find themselves temporarily caught up in, a space that, in the way that it also holds the potential to throw them onto new life trajectories, is quite *effective*, too. Camptowns, it is crucial to note in this context, are not only spaces that capture those foreign men and women for a limited time, they are also captured spaces, semi-occupied terrains that, due to the proximity of the base, are seemingly not quite part of South Korea any more. The women's actual "labor of love" (Yea 2005), I have argued, can also be read in light of this military appropriation of these spaces—the entertainers' intense preoccupation with their soldier-clients,

I believe, cannot easily be separated from the fact that these encounters occur in the midst of a heavily militarized environment.

Camptowns are usually doubly removed from the center of gravity in the region, that is, downtown Seoul, with the introduction of foreign sex(ualized) labor to serve the proletarian military labor of the United States further disconnecting these areas from Korea proper. For many of its inhabitants a kind of suburban marginalization—and the social and geographical immobility that comes with it—is a very real fact of life indeed. While the older women often find that they have nowhere else to go, the younger ones see that their mobility (both across Korea, the region and the globe) is very much dependent on how well they play their cards at the game of the night in the GI clubs.

US soldiers, on the other hand, can and do move relatively easily across the greater landscape that is the Seoul Capital Area during their time off from work. In addition to the troop reductions and relocations that have had great impacts on camptowns in the past, nowadays another more silent threat to the ever-dwindling prosperity of the villes can be found in easy access to public transportation, and in the presence of glitzier entertainment districts a mere hour or two away, where sex can often be attained without monetary compensation, and possibly also without all the intense emotional labor that preoccupies both entertainers and soldiers in the camptowns. Faced with the progressive devaluation of kijich'on spaces, the soldiers—as will be explored in the next two chapters on It'aewŏn and Hongdae—increasingly deploy a strategy to get themselves out of the villes. In their free time, they often seek out inner-city entertainment districts instead, with their claims to a right to downtown entertainment dis-placing and dispersing much of the old conflict over their presence in the country across the vast urban space of the capital. At the same time, the women brought in for their entertainment once again find themselves left behind.