

Spring 2010

Friday 9:00-12:00 am/ Room: 425 (International Studies)

Prof. Dong-Yeon Koh

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Office Hour: By appointment.

KOREAN CINEMA IN GLOBAL CONTEXT

OBJECTIVE: From the late 1990s and onwards, the Korean wave, known as “Hallyu,” has opened up new ground for international popular culture in Asia as some famous Korean dramas, such as *Winter Sonata* have become highly successful in Japan and other parts of Asia, as well as the movie *My Sassy Girl* (2000), which was made into a Japanese drama and an Indian Movie. *Il Mare* (or *Siworae* of the original title in Korean, 2000), by Hyun-Seung Lee, was also adapted by Hollywood, featuring two Hollywood celebrities, Sandra Bullock and Keanu Reeves. These incidents prove an increasingly globalized network of film making beyond what used to be considered as the boundary between western and non-western worlds.

With the international success of Korean popular culture in general and Korean cinema in particular, this class, which is titled “Korean Cinema in Global Context,” has two purposes: 1) The class is designed to introduce the history of Korean cinema from the 1950s until 1990s when the cinematic representation of women, their relationship to traditional Confucianism, popular culture, America, and national conflicts are good illustrations of Korea’s transformation into a modernized state. In this class, many pivotal examples of postwar Cinema in Korea shows how traditional values of family and of nationalism have become replaced by a western individualism and internationalism—sometimes with a lot of resistance. 2) The class is also designed to introduce the historical background of the Korean wave and the globalized environment of film making and reception. The changing atmosphere of film industry in Korea during the 1990s, both politically and financially, enables Korean film makers to create a new type of blockbusters and critically acclaimed artistic films; they skillfully combined cinematic vocabularies of either Hollywood and renowned auteurs with the themes drawn upon the tumultuous histories of Korea—from the Korean War, the continued remnants of the Cold War to the troubling history toward democracy under the three decades of the military dictatorship.

In the class, I would like to pose a few important questions: What are the consistent themes and stylistic traits that have defined “national” cinema in Korea? How has the recent development of Korean cinema continued to maintain or challenge the national character of Korean cinema? What are the changing conditions of production, circulation, and reception of recent Korean films that have contributed to the globalization of Korean cinema? Finally, can the New wave of film making in Korea, dubbed as “New Korean Cinema,” be considered as the successful adaptation of Hollywood Cinema in the local context?

* The minimum knowledge of the history of postwar Korea is required.

METHODS: The class will consist of screenings, lectures, and discussions based upon weekly review papers and submissions. All films will be screened with English subtitles; no knowledge of Korean is required.

READINGS:

Required

- Lee, Hyang-Jin, *Contemporary Korean Cinema: Identity, Culture, Politics* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2000)
- Shin, Chi-Yun and Julian Stringer, *New Korean Cinema* (New York: New York University Press, 2005)
- The reading package for weekly assignment will be reserved at the copy store

Optional

- Gateward, Frances, ed. *Seoul Searching: Culture and Identity in Contemporary Korean Cinema* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007)
- McHugh, Katherine and Nancy Abelmann, ed. *South Korean Golden Age Melodrama: Gender, Genre, and National Cinema* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000)

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:

Attendance and participation (30%)

Written documentation for any absences from which one wish to be excused must be submitted right before and after one’s absence.

Screening Report (30% each)

Students must submit at least more than 7 screening reports of 2-3 pages based upon films shown at the class. Reports can be either drawn upon the personal observation and responses to the film as well as incorporate assigned readings related to the film. The due is the beginning of the every class.

Research Paper (40%)

Research topic for 7 page length paper can concentrate on film critic, director, or theme critical for understanding films and assigned readings in the class. Students are expected to demonstrate their interpretative and analytical skills in approaching film, history, and other topics related to the production and reception of films. The possible topic list will be handed out in the class, and all of the students are expected to have a meeting to discuss about the research paper topic until 7th week of the class.

CLASS SCHEDULE

1. INTRODUCTION

The first class provides an overview of the syllabus and course requirements, followed by a short introduction to important themes to be discussed in the class. Each student will share his or her personal experiences with Korean cinema and popular culture. We will watch the part of *My Sassy Girl* (literally meaning “That Bizarre Girl”), a Korean box office hit that made into a television drama and movies in Japan, US, and India respectively.

My Sassy Girl (Kwak, Jae young, 2001, 137 min.)-Partial screening

- Cho Han, Hae-Joang, “Reading the ‘Korean Wave’ as a Sign of Global Shift,” *Korea Journal* 45, no. 4 (2005): 147-82.
- Chua, Beng Huat. “Conceptualizing an East Asian Popular Culture,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 5, no. 2 (2004): 200-21.

2. POSTWAR REALISM: *The Stray Bullet* (1961)

The Stray Bullet (“Obaltan,” also translated into “The Aimless Bullet”) applies the style of Neo-realism into the Korean context. The film deals with the devastated postwar condition of the ideological and class divides within South Korea, a theme that remains also popular in Korean blockbusters.

The Stray Bullet (Yu, Hyunmok, 1961, 110 min.)

- Cho, Eunsun, “*The Stray Bullet* and the Crisis of Korean Masculinity,” in *South Korean Golden Age Melodrama: Gender, Genre, and National Cinema*, edited by K. McHugh and N. Abelman, 99-116 (Wayne State University Press, 2005).

3. WESTERNIZATION, TRADITIONAL VALUES, AND WOMAN: *Madame Freedom* (1956)

Madame Freedom (“Jayu Buin,” also translated into “Free Woman”) illustrates an increasingly westernized, urbanized social environment that has posed a serious threat to traditional values by using the images of a “decadent” housewife. As the cinematic adaptation of the controversial novel *Jayu Buin* (1954-56), a movie opens a filmic genre of sensational melodrama in Korean film history.

Madame Freedom (Han Hyungmo, 1956, 125 min.)

- Kim, Soyoung, “Questions of Woman’s Film: *The Maid*, *Madame Freedom* and Women,” in *South Korean Golden Age Melodrama*, 185-200.

4. THE “DIFFERENT” MELODRAMA: *The Insect Woman* (1972)

The decade of the 1960s and early 1970s is often cited as the golden age of Korean cinema, and *The Housemaid* (“Hanyeo,” also known as “A Maid”) by Kim, Kiyong demonstrates a more matured stage of Korean filmmaking with skillful editing and camera movement—to make Kim as the pioneering film auteur and the master of horror films in Korea. He is also known for his eerie portrayal of Korean family and the conflicts of old and new values among the upper- and middle class when, with the gradual success of industrial development in Korea, some people in major cities began acquiring extra financial assets during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The Insect Woman (Kim Kiyong, 1972, 120 min.)

- Berry, Chris, “Scream and Scream Again: Korean Modernity as a House of Horrors in the Films of Kim, Ki-young,” in *Seoul Searching: Culture and Identity in Contemporary Korean Cinema*, edited by Frances Gateward (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), 99-114.

- Ann, Minwha, “Representing the Anxious Middle Class: Camera Movement, Sound, and Color in *The Housemaid* and *Woman of Fire*,” (2004), the article is available at <http://web.archive.org/web/20040506062157/http://www.asianfilms.org/korea/kky/KKY/Stairway/AMH.htm>

5. THE MOVIE FOR THE “REBELLIOUS”: *The Heyday of Youngja* (1975)

Made under the most notorious military regimes of the Yushin administration in the 1970s and influenced by the rebellious film languages of the late 1960s in North America and Europe, *The Match of Fools* and *The Heyday of Youngja* set the prototypes for resistant films produced during the 1980s. It is worthwhile observing the film in comparison to other films of social commentary and criticism made during the 1980s

and 1990s.

The Heyday of Youngja (Kim, Hosun, 1975, 110 min.)

- The introduction to the film *March of Fools* available at

http://www.koreafilm.org/feature/100_55.asp

- Eungjun Min etc., *Korean Film: History, Resistance, and Democratic Imagination* (Praeger, 2003), 49-65.

- Seo, Hyunseuk. "To Catch a Whale: A Brief History of Lost Fathers, Idiots and Gangsters in Korean Cinema," *The Film Journal* (online) at

<http://the.filmjournal.com/issue2/whale.html>.

6. KOREAN FILM AND THE MINJOONG MOVEMENT: *Chilsu and Mansu* (1988)

The 1980s, in many ways, marked a turning point in modern Korean history, and Park, Kwangsu's film concurred with the ideologically oriented cultural movement called "Minjoong Misool (art for the people)." His movie also signaled the waning influence of a generation whose collective consciousness gradually gave way to more individualistic and practice attitudes toward the self, family, and politics in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Chilsu and Mansu (Park, Kwangsu, 1988, 108 min.)

- Kim, Kyunghyun, "Male Crisis in the Early Films of Park Kwang-su: Chilsu and Mansu," in *The Remasculinization of Korean Cinema* (Duke University Press, 2004), 143-151.

7. THE RESEARCH TOPIC/THE INTRODUCTION TO THE "NEW" KOREAN CINEMA IN THE 1990S

Due of short presentations and written report of the research topic.

- Paquet, Darcy, "The Korean Film Industry: 1992 to Present"; Shin, Jeeyoung,

"Globalisation and New Korean Cinema," in *New Korean Cinema*, edited by Shin, Chi-Yun and Julian Stringer (New York University Press, 2005), 32-50, 51-62.

8. NATIONAL CINEMA, CULTURAL HERITAGE, AND IM, KWANTAEEK

Im, Kwantaek can be referred to as the Akira Kurosawa of Korea for his incessant pursuit of what could be considered as "culturally distinctive" style of Korean cinema usually drawn upon traditional themes, peoples, values, and aesthetics. With critical

success that Im gained in international film festivals and local support, his film, such as *Sopyonje* that evolves around the traditional musical drama of “Pansori” poses questions about the use of cultural and artistic traditions in creating a Korean “national” cinema.

Sopyonje (Im Kwontaek, 1993, 112 min.)

- Cho Han, Hae-Joang, “*Sopyonje*: Its Cultural and Historical Meaning”; Stringer, Julian, “*Sopyonje* and the Inner Domain of National Culture,” in *Im Kwon-Taek: The Making of a Korean National Cinema*, edited by David James and Kyung Hyun Kim (Wayne State University Press, 2002), 134-156, 157-181.

9. KOREAN BLOCKBUSTERS AND DEFERRED UNIFICATION

In the recent film history in Korea, the box office performances of *Shiri* (1999) and *JSA* (2000) challenged the dominance of Hollywood productions that had bombarded the Korean movie industry until the mid 1990s. These “Korean” blockbusters had often centered on the distinctive political circumstances of the peninsula to intensify effects of suspense and spectacle, adopted from Hollywood and western genre films.

J.S.A.: Joint Security Area (Park Chanwook, 2000, 109 min.)

- Gombeaud, Adrien. “*Kongdong Kongbi Guyok / Joint Security Area*,” in *The Cinema of Japan and Korea*, 235-42.

- Kim, Kyunghyun, “Each Man Kills the Thing He Loves’: Transgressive Agents, National Security, and Blockbuster Aesthetics,” in *Shiri and Joint Security Area*, in *The Remasculinization of Korean Cinema*, 259-76.

10. KOREAN BLOCKBUSTERS AND “HALLYU” (THE KOREAN WAVE)

Korean blockbusters, particularly films made in the genres of comedic variations of melodrama have gained great popularity in international film markets, especially among Asian audiences. This class focuses on the case of *My Sassy Girl* (2000) and its actor, Jun, Ji-hyun, whose subsequent films *Windstuck* (2004) and *Daisy* (2006) was produced by an inter-Asian company, emerging as an iconic figure of “Hallyu” melodrama.

My Sassy Girl (Kwak, Jaeyoung, 2001, 137 min.)

- Xiyang Wang & Sik Ying Ho Petula. “*My Sassy Girl*: A Qualitative Study of Women’s Aggression in Dating Relationships in Beijing.” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 22:5 (2007): 623-638.

- Lau, Jenny Kwak Wah, “Introduction,” in *Multiple Modernities: Cinemas and Popular*

Media in Transcultural East Asia, edited by Janny Kwak Wah Lau (Temple University, 2003), 1-10.

11. KOREAN CULT MOVIES AND JAPANESE MANGA

This class concentrates on the hybrid nature of the New Korean cinema as viewed in the example of *Old Boy* for its debt to Hollywood pulp fiction and Japanese manga.

Old Boy (Park, Chanwook, 2003, 120 min)

- Kim, Kyunghun, "Tell the Kitchen That There's Too Much *Buchu* in the Dumpling":
Reading Park Chan-wook's "Unknowable" Old Boy, *Korea Journal* vol. 46 no. 1 (Spring 2006): 84-108.
- Galloway, Patrick, "Confinement," in *Asia Shock: Horror and Dark Cinema from Japan, Korea, Hong Kong and Thailand* (Stone Bridge Press, 2006)

12. KOREAN AUTEURS AND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVALS 1: LEE, CHANGDONG

The golden age of Korean cinema during the 1990s and early 2000s witnessed not only the commercial success of Korean films in international markets, but also the critical success of Korean filmmakers. Among major auteurs, Lee is noted for his transitional place between the late 1980s resistance films aligned with Minjoong Misool (art for the people) and the more politically indifferent and personal films of other major auteurs. The movie centers on one man who is looking back upon his own life--his transformation from a high-spirited and idealistic labor activist into a corrupted businessman. With the relative freedom that filmmakers had gained in Korea during the 1990s, Lee was finally able to address the highly controversial issues of historical amnesia—in the face of ever more industrialized and money-driven Korean society in the 21st century.

Peppermint Candy (Lee, Changdong, 2000, 129 min.)

- Kim, Soyoung, "Do Not Include Me in Your 'Us': *Peppermint Candy* and the Politics of Difference," *Korea Journal* 46, no. 1 (2006): 60-83.

13. KOREAN AUTEURS AND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVALS 2: HONG, SANGSOO

The influence of the French nouvelle vague on Korean cinema is unmistakable. Hong revived the character of the "drifter" and 1960s film language for his depiction of urban

dwellers lacking clear purpose and intimate relationships. It is interesting to compare Hong's depictions of ordinary people with Park's rather explicit social critique in the 1980s. His oblique way of dealing with this "malady of modern life" is much more subtle and sophisticated, demonstrating the influence of independent and avant-garde films throughout the Western history of cinema.

Turning Gate (Hong, Sangsoo, 2002, 115 min.)

- Kim, Kyunghyun, "Too Early/Too Late: Temporality and Repetition in Hong, Sang-Su's Films," in *The Remasculinization of Korean Cinema*, 203-232.

- Kim, Kyunghyun, "The Awkward Traveler in *Turning Gate*," in *New Korean Cinema*, 170-79.

14. KOREAN AUTEURS AND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVALS 3: KIM, KIDUK

Kim, the most controversial Korean auteur, has sometimes had difficulty finding domestic theatrical venues. His intensively personal world of erratic and psychopathic characters has given him a reputation as one of the most artistic and gifted filmmakers among international critics. In contrast, domestic audiences are often troubled by his grotesque visions. His treatment of Chang-Guk, a racially mixed man in *Address Unknown* in particular, is highly controversial as it shows the perspectives of both local people living in the area of American military camps and that of the American GI, who has been often portrayed as a ruthless invader.

Address Unknown (Kim Ki-duk, 2001, 119 min.)

- Kim, Myungja, "Race, Gender, and Postcolonial Identity in Kim Ki-duk's *Address Unknown*," in *Seoul Searching*, 243-264.

15. RE-EXAMINING "HALLYU STARS": RAIN GOES HOLLYWOOD

This class re-visits the concept of globalization as a cultural phenomenon, as viewed in the example of internationally acclaimed Korean films and film stars. The national boundary is no longer viable means of controlling the international cultural flow among filmmakers and movie stars. *Il Mare* (Lee Hyun-Seung, 2000) had been adapted by the Warner Brothers and made into the Hollywood version of *The Lake House* (Alejandro Agresti, 2006). Recently, we have witness Byung-Hyun Lee and Rain acted in the films produced by major Hollywood studios. Not only the stories, but also the movie stars have become exported into Hollywood as a new international commodity. Focusing on

the examples of Rain's *Ninja Assassin* (2009), we can discuss about both potential and limited marketability of film stars from non-western contexts. What are the implications of Rain's role as a Japanese Ninja in a Hollywood film, especially in an era for a globalized film industry?

Ninja Assassin (James McTeigue, 2009, 99 min.)

- Ethan Alter, "Ninja Assassin-Film Review," *The Hollywood Reporter*, November 11, 2009; <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/hr/film-reviews/ninja-assassin-film-review-1004041862.story>
- Bryan Walsh, "Rain: The Magic Feet from Korea," *Times* (Sunday), April 30, 2006.
- Buck, Elizabeth, "Asia and the Global Film Industry," *East-West Film Journal* vol. 6 no. 2 (1992): 116-133.
- Higson, Andrew, "The Limited Imagination of National Cinema," in *Transnational Cinema*, edited by Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden (Routledge Press, 2006), 15-26.

16. THE DISCUSSION ABOUT INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH/GLOBAL CULTURAL FLOWS

- Higson, Andrew, "The Limited Imagination of National Cinema," in *Transnational Cinema*, edited by Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden (Routledge Press, 2006), 15-26.
- Leo Ching, "Globalizing Regional, Regionalizing the Global: Mass Culture and Asianism in the Age of Late Capital," reprinted in *Globalization*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001), 279-306.

ADDITIONAL READINGS FOR THE CLASS & RESEARCH

(Numbers inside the bracket indicate the classes related to readings)

- Koichi, Iwabuchi, "Introduction: The 1990s-Japan Returns to Asia in the Age of Globalization," in *Recentering Globalism* (Duke University Press, 2002) (1)
- Pacquet, Darcy, "Obaltan/ Aimless Bullet," in *The Cinema of Japan and Korea*, edited by J. Bowyer, 83-92 (Wallflower, 2004). (2)
- McHugh, Kathleen and Abelman, Nancy, "Introduction," in *South Korean Golden Age Melodrama*, 1-15 (3).
- Park, Jiye, "Gothic Imagination in *Canivore* and *The Housemaid*," (2003) available at <http://www.asianfilms.org/korea/kky/KKY/Stairway/PJY.htm> (4)
- The Korean Film page for the history of 1960s Korean films at [Fhttp://www.koreanfilm.org/kfilm60s.html](http://www.koreanfilm.org/kfilm60s.html) (4)
- Kim Hongjoon's 2003 video essay *My Korean Cinema* (5)

- The Korean Film page for the history of 1970s Korean films at <http://www.koreanfilm.org/kfilm70s.html> (5)
- The Korean Film page for the history of 1980s Korean films at <http://www.koreanfilm.org/kfilm80s.html#chilsu> (6)
- Stringer, Julian, "Introduction," 1-14 in *New Korean Cinema*. (7)
- Wilson, "Korean Cinema on the Road to Globalization: Tracking Global/Local Dynamics, or Why Im Kwon-Taek Is Not Ang Lee," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 2, no. 2 (2001): 307-18. (8)
- Berry, Chris, "What's Big About the Big Film?": 'De-Westernizing' the Blockbuster in Korea and China," in *Movie Blockbusters*, edited by Julian Stringer (Routledge, 2003), 217-29. (9)
- Kim, Sukyoung, "Crossing the Border to the 'Other' Side: Dynamics of Interaction between North and South Koreans in *Spy Li Cheol-jin* and *Joint Security Area*," in *Seoul Searching*, 219-242. (9)
- Stringer, Julian, "Putting Korean Cinema in Its Place: Genre Classifications and the Contexts of Reception," in *The New Korean Cinema*, 95-105. (10)
- Hampson, Sasha, "Rhetoric or reality? Contesting definitions of women in Korea," in *Women in Asia: Tradition: Modernity and Globalisation*, edited by Louise Edwards and Mina Roces (The University of Michigan Press, 2000), 170-187. (10)
- Kim, Hyunkyuu, "Horror as Critique in *Tell Me Something* and *Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance*," in *New Korean Cinema*, 106-116. (11)
- <http://scrpro.blogspot.com/2008/10/chung-and-oldboy.html> (11)
- Nichols, Bill, "Discovering Form, Inferring Meaning: New Cinemas and the Film Festival Circuit," *Film Quarterly* 47, no. 3 (1994): 16-30.
- Magnan-Park, Aaron. "Peppermint Candy," in *New Korean Cinema*, 159-69. (12)
- Chung, Hye-Seung and Diffrient, David Scott, "Forgetting to Remember, Remembering to Forget: The Politics of Memory and Modernity in the Fractured Films of Lee Chang-dong and Hong, Sang-soo," in *Seoul Searching*, 135-140. (12)
- Lippit, Akira Mizuta. "Hong Sangsoo's Lines of Inquiry, Communication, Defense, and Escape," *Film Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (2004): 22-30. (13)
- Acquarello, "A Divine Tragedy: Kim Ki-duk Searches for Redemption in *The Samaritan Girl*," *Senses of Cinema*, May 2004; available at http://archive.sensesofcinema.com/contents/04/32/samaritan_girl.html(14)
- <http://www.koreanfilm.org/kimkiduk.html> (Director's web-page) (14)
- Kim, Ki-- Duk, *Kim, Ki-Duk* (Dis Voir, 2006) (14)