

A Critical Consideration of the Use of Trauma as an Approach to Understanding Korean Cinema

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Abstract

A number of reasons have been forwarded to explain the emergence and current dominance of the Korean Wave in film, as well as the larger phenomenon of *Hallyu*, the term by which the popular-culture Korean wave has been known. Most of these accounts for the New Korean Cinema, the filmic equivalent of the Korean Wave, are tied to attempts to understand other national cinemas in Asia in terms of their respective countries' encounters with modernization. This paper attempts to (1) provide a historically grounded perspective on why and how film is currently being used in Korea to recapture and reevaluate traumatic experiences on the part of both filmmakers and audiences, and (2) to suggest ways in which these uses of trauma may be shifting or eroding.

Keywords: Korean cinema; trauma; psychoanalysis; realism; *auteurism*; spectators

IN AN ASSESSMENT OF the 60th anniversary of the Korean War undertaken in 2010 as a joint project with the Korea Institute of Public Administration, the *Korea Times* ascribed the emergence of the Korean popular-culture wave, or *Hallyu*, to the country's decision to move away from the "absolute primacy on economic growth" enforced by authoritarian regimes both within and outside Korea, to a new development paradigm (Salmon 2010, n.p.). The shift was articulated as a critique of the "Asian values" framework propounded by such rulers as Kuan-Yew Lee of Singapore and Mohamed Mahathir of Malaysia. "Asian values" was a tactic regarded as a coded justification for anti-Western authoritarianism. Two factors made possible the production of popular cultural material that "combined slick production with professional marketing, underpinned by a key local ingredient—the raw emotion Koreans express so passionately" (Salmon 2002). These are (1) the increasing numbers of Koreans exposed to Western countries and (2) the opportunity for new corporate players and renewed interest in the content industry as one of the reactions to the economic upheavals of the late 1990s. By looking at the specific medium of film within the context of this pop-culture wave, this paper aims to provide a closer understanding of the historical origins of the aforementioned "key local ingredient," and an explication of how it had been internalised and expressed in the cinematic component of *Hallyu*.

The attempt to explicate a complex socioaesthetic phenomenon is always a tricky undertaking—not so much because social phenomena are inevitably overdetermined—as mainly because people will always rely on a handle. People need ways by which they can understand whatever is happening to them at any given moment. In general academic practice, European modernity would be the umbrella category by which popular media in Asia are elucidated, inasmuch as both media and modernity are Western-sourced phenomena (A recent example that demonstrates this principle would be the 2002 anthology edited by Jenny Kwok Wah Lau, fully titled *Multiple Modernities: Cinemas and Popular Media in Transcultural East Asia*).

At the same time, the need to look more closely into Korean cinema is premised on the fact that it has moved beyond being an object of curiosity for cinephiles; it has become the latest major player among East Asian countries after the initial interest in Japanese and later in Chinese cinemas on the part of the major European film festivals.¹ In fact, the successful participation of Korean film practitioners in Western events arrived later than, and may be seen as influenced by, the impact they had in the immediate Asian region.

Inception issues

When the current film wave in Korea attracted the attention of international observers, one of the first responses of Koreans themselves was wonder. What was so special about their current film output when their country had been producing films for as far back in the past as anyone could remember? Casual observers of global trends may have felt that it was probably the Koreans' turn to be fetishized for their pop culture, after Westerners presumably grew tired of their fascination with things Japanese, Indian, and Chinese. The regard for Korean film culture as an object of fetishisation, immediately succeeding Hong Kong cinema's previous domination, is foregrounded as early as the subtitle, *The New Hong Kong*, of Anthony C. Y. Leong's best-selling, fans-oriented volume *Korean Cinema* (2002). Leong's position is further reflected and amplified through an acknowledgment of generational innovation in the introductory essays in the collection edited by Justin Bowyer and Jinhee Choi, titled *The Cinema of Japan and Korea* (2004).

That early response, a combination of unease and bemusement, is evident once more in the response of residents of Chuncheon City in Gangwon Province to the influx of foreign tourists eager to stage a pilgrimage, as it were, to the locations of one of their favorite televised drama series, Hyeong-min Lee and Seok-ho Yun's *Gyeoul yeonga* [Winter Sonata] (2002). Considered the first sample of the phenomenon that eventually was labeled *Hallyu* (literally Korean Wave), *Gyeoul yeonga*'s remarkability derived in

large part from the fan culture it engendered among residents of Korea's former coloniser, Japan (Onishi 2004).² The phenomenon of foreigners travelling all the way to Korea to visit the setting of their preferred series has since been replicated on Jeju Island, location of Byeong-hoon Lee's *Dae Jang-gum* (2003); and on Sugi Beach on Si-do or Si Island, Incheon, site of Min-soo Pyo's *Pool ha-woo-seu* [Full House] (2004). In fact, the Korea Broadcasting System recently opened its studio locale in Suwon, Gyeonggi Province to visitors interested in visiting sets and in viewing location shoots of its TV dramas (Gyeong-Gi Do n.d.).

Among standard explications for the origin of *Hallyu*, three competing (though overlapping) versions have emerged, delineated according to their relative stances: "neoliberal thinking, cultural nationalism, and the culturalist position" (Cho 2002 and Paik 2005; quoted in Keehyeung Lee 2008, 181). The first, so-called mainstream view, regards *Hallyu* as evidence of the comparatively high market value of Korea's culturally innovative products; the second, still-dominant perspective, argues that the highly attractive output of the country has resonated with a set of shared Asian values in neighboring places; the third, least conventional one, acknowledges the rise of popular culture as a state priority alongside the local economy. But it rejects the state-centrist nationalist discourses by focusing on the hybridity and Western-sourced inflections that raise "the possibilities of cross-cultural or transborder dialogues from below that can be mediated through [*Hallyu*] texts and their audiences in various geopolitical regions" (Keehyeung Lee, 181–85).

On the question of the current creative burst in Korean cinema, which we shall term the New Korean Cinema,³ a few frameworks have also been proffered. Some of the better-known English-language approaches deal separately with issues of North-South reunification (cf. Hyangjin Lee's *Contemporary Korean Cinema*[2000]), as well as gender roles (cf. Kyung Hyun Kim's *The Remasculinization of Korean Cinema* [2004]). Additionally, a recent study by Kwang Woo Noh (2009) claims that contemporary trends in Korean cinema derive from a "motivation to

re-examine the past.” This is evidenced in titles that focus on historical and political events, as well as personal stories from the period of robust economic growth (1960s to the 1990s) that provide “not only retrospection of the rapid transformation but also nostalgia for the past” (Noh 2009, i–ii).

It is not the intention of this paper to contest these viewpoints, inasmuch as they have proved workable for their respective volumes. In fact, it may even be possible to arrive at a perspective wide enough to accommodate existing frameworks and useful enough to account for the existence of the New Korean Cinema and suggest its future shapes and directions. This can be done by the relatively simple procedure of first looking at which film samples and practitioners constitute the said wave, and then focusing attention on the range of material covered by the films and the manner in which the materials are handled. This paper will therefore proceed contemplatively, in the sense that relevant cultural studies texts will be raised alongside a consideration of the condition of contemporary Korean film texts. The deconstructive critical method will also be deployed in instances when textual and historical aporia are encountered in order to arrive at possible useful scenarios for the future.

History as determinant

In considering a viable context for the study of the New Korean Cinema, the history of film in Korea would constitute an appropriate and useful starting point, inasmuch as a nation’s cinema has the ability to embody its culture’s prevalent ways of thinking and structures of feeling. Such an assumption underlies the writing of Gilles Deleuze’s twin volumes on film (1986 and 1989), where he concludes, “[We] must no longer ask ourselves, ‘What is cinema?’ but ‘What is philosophy?’ Cinema itself is a new practice of images and signs, whose theory philosophy must produce as conceptual practice. For no technical determination, whether applied...or reflexive, is sufficient to constitute the concepts of cinema itself” (1989, 280).

What may be termed a standard version, part of the Korean Studies Series, is aptly titled *The History of Korean Cinema* (Lee and Choe 1988). The book's authors maintain that, because of its technology-dependent and capital-intensive qualities, film in Korea has been more marked than other cultural forms by the various sociohistorical upheavals in the past century. One could take any such period and draw a direct correlation with developments in local cinema, such as the popularity of nationalist-themed films during the Japanese occupation or the rise of documentary and war film production during the Korean War. The book also helps explain certain stylistic qualities that continue to characterise Korean films, notably the insistence on a dramatic realism that directly, and rarely ironically, acknowledges the audience. What may well be the first major Korean blockbuster, Woon-kyu Na's *Arirang* (1926), functioned as a metaphor against Japanese colonisation and made effective use of direct address during its climactic moment (Lee and Choe 1988, 42–43).

Although *The History of Korean Cinema* ends right before the 1990s, on the eve of the transition to a democratic dispensation, its observations regarding the stylistic tendencies and thematic concerns of predemocratic Korean cinema appear to have persisted to the present. Several of its observations have been confirmed, upheld, or modified by an anthology sponsored by the Korean Film Council and titled *Korean Cinema: From Origins to Renaissance* (Kim 2006). In fact, in a short but cogent summation of the *Hallyu* phenomenon, Doobo Shim implicitly acknowledged such distinctive and exceptional cultural qualities—possibly relatable to the native concept of *han*, an ultimately untranslatable quality that roughly refers to sorrow or resentment derived from suffering or injustice (Bannon 2008, n.p.); the most prominent filmic example of this value would be the early-1990s' all-time blockbuster, Kwon-taek Im's *Seopyeonje*. In recognition of the need to bridge several periods marked by extreme variations in sociopolitical systems (colonisation, war, dictatorship, democracy), Shim recommended the use of an analytical approach that “comprises discourses that identify cultural hybridity and investigate power

relations between periphery and centre from the perspective of postcolonial criticism” (2006, 27). The approach is premised on the paradox that “globalisation encourages local peoples to rediscover the ‘local’ that they have neglected or forgotten in their drive towards Western-imposed modernisation” (ibid.).

How all these developments relate to the present may be the key to understanding what is going on in Korean films. From 1910 to 1987, the country had been continually wracked by diverse forms of violence by sources both outside and within the nation. Historians have duly taken note of the overt, physical, and often fatal sufferings of the population during the protracted militarised periods, whether the troops involved were foreign or local.⁴ Less visibly dramatic but still distressing in its own way were the periods of apparent quietude. These were times when the quest for sovereignty and self-determination during the Japanese and American occupations, as well as the pursuit of developmental goals during the military dictatorships, resulted in a largely unreflective willingness on the part of Koreans to submit to arbitrary and punitive disciplinary measures. These include curfews and rules delimiting maximum hair and minimum skirt length. The paradoxical relationship between repression and development was reflected even in film-related laws, as summarised in Sang-hyeok Im’s account of film censorship in Korea.

For a long time, the public was deprived of any opportunity to even discuss freedom of expression and films under colonial rule and military governments. Films were reduced to a means for the government’s promotion of ideology and preservation of order. Yet, the film-related laws evolved in a legitimate way through the rulings of the Constitutional Court. (Im 2006, 101)

For now, one can surmise that the population acceded to these intrusions on individual preferences for a complex of reasons. Each is inadequate in explaining a compliance that might seem unusually and

possibly pathologically uncritical to today's generation of young Koreans. First, any previous period of brutalisation may have inured the citizens to less physical demonstrations of authority by whatever regime happened to be in power; second, people may have willingly accepted controls on their freedom as a way of hopefully forestalling future disasters by their display of good behavior (regarding which, cf. the later discussion of the concept of behavioral self-blame); and third, in line with Foucauldian precepts, the regimes themselves held forth claims to long-term benevolence in the form of economic prosperity through modernisation.

Regarding the third cause, wherein the powers-that-be would promise development in exchange for the surrender of certain basic freedoms, conventional wisdom accepts that each patriarchal order during the past century—the Japanese, then the American, occupational forces, as well as the local military dictators—was at least earnest about making such a claim. The local militarists actually succeeded in ushering the nation through its still-enduring period of industrial prosperity. From this perspective, even both sides of the protagonists during the Korean War (Communist North, as well as free-market South) can be regarded as competing as to which of their governmental and economic models would be more beneficial to the already sundered nation.

Discontinuities

Within such a dominant and now admittedly facile framework, the presence of the New Wave of Korean filmmaking suggests ruptures in the historical fabric. For if the narrative logic of the Euro-American model of advanced industrial development were to be observed, then the Republic of Korea has finally achieved its happy ending and would now be entitled to the proverbial sleep of the weary. If we look at the experience of some of the once-prominent national cinemas in Asia, and read up on the discourses on their film-texts vis-à-vis their respective projects of nationalist development, we could arguably state that film served the function of articulating its viewers' desires and anxieties during the unavoidably long-

drawn-out industrialisation process. If we draw from the experience of Japan, whose cinematic vibrancy was at its peak a few decades ago,⁵ such a thesis would allow us to similarly remark that the glory years of Korean cinema should have coincided with the periods of military dictatorship, from the 1960s through the late 1980s; this was a period when the contradiction between economic growth and individual freedom was at its most intense.

So the question would be not only *Why the New Korean Cinema?* but also *Why only now?* A clue may lie in the self-understanding of Koreans themselves. A relatively recent empirical study of the population describes the respondents as engaged in a “dichotomised mode of social relations.” Members of the oppressed class find comfort in all types of religion that “are essentially this-worldly in orientation,” thereby throwing into doubt the spiritual claims of local religious practice (Kim 1999, 214–15).

What this suggests is similar to Sigmund Freud’s classic description of a reality principle, where the subject’s originally all-inclusive ego eventually “separates off an external world from itself” (1961, 15). Freud concludes his discussion of the distinctions between the pleasure and reality principles with an acknowledgment that “oceanic” feelings, which seek the “restoration of limitless narcissism,” traceable to “infantile helplessness,” become regarded as the source of “the religious attitude” (1961, 19). In developing further this concept, Freud advances an intriguing analogy, one that might be unexpectedly useful to the present discussion: he describes the maturation of consciousness as similar to the evolution of a once-ancient city, so that the challenge for the psychoanalyst is to visualise in the present the structures that might have once been there in the past but are now no longer visible (Freud 1961, 16–18).

In considering then the question of why an urgent and vital national discourse is ongoing in Korean cinema, we get to understand, first and

foremost, that this discourse could not be conducted in the past for two reasons. Critical thinking was prohibited, and the (sometimes monstrous) enormity of social suffering precluded any attempt at reflection and resolution. The severity of successive traumas that accompanied the Korean experience of modernisation could help suggest why the nation has turned to a Western-sourced and technology-based medium to articulate issues in its past. The tension between non-Western nationalism and Western-style modernity is articulated in relation to film practice in Ian Jarvie's "National cinema" essay. In contrast with the Korean response, which was to engage with cinema as a means of discourse articulation, Jarvie points out how some elements in other parts of the world "have in the past called for the prohibition of movies altogether" (2000, 83). Since the nation wrested for itself a crucial amount of democratic space with the onset of the 1990s, one might be able to provisionally say that its current use of film as repository of traumatic discourses indicates that it accepts the fruits of development as much as it desires to question the price it had to pay for it.

Again, a startling insight from Freud suggests this much when he avers that the most perfect response to the regard for "reality as the sole enemy and as the source of all suffering" is to do one better than the hermit, who "turns his back on the world" by "[re-creating] the world, [building] up in its stead another world" (Freud 1961, 28). Freud ultimately recommends the rejection of this option as belonging to the province of madness; still, we can realise how a project, which consists of externalizing one's trauma and inscribing it onto a medium upon which it can be shared discursively with others marked by the same set of experiences, could promise some therapeutic relief. As to whether this relief will have the capacity to fully exorcise the painful memories of the historical past, only the future will be able to tell.

New Korean Cinema and its discontents

Although trauma had been a feature of life in America since its encounter with European modernity, it was the admittedly and exclusively

grim associations with inexplicable tragedies such as the Holocaust or 11 September 2001 attacks that prompted several discussions regarding the experience of trauma in American intellectual culture (Some recent representative examples comprise LaCapra [2001], Walker [2005], and Kaplan [2005]. Butler [2004, 1–18] similarly ascribes its *raison d'être* to the aftermath of the experience of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the US—on which more will be discussed later). The reason for the delayed introspection may be gleaned from Elizabeth Wright's perceptive comment, that

Psychoanalysis explores what happens when primordial impulse is directed into social goals, when bodily needs become subject to the demands of culture. Through language, desire is constituted and “subjects” come into being, yet this language cannot define the body's experience accurately. What is of peculiar interest to psychoanalysis...is that aspect of being which is ignored or prohibited by the laws of language. Words fail to catch it but it is real none the less. (1998, Introduction)

As mentioned earlier, the self-repression imposed on earlier Korean generations underwent an internalisation brought about by the bludgeoning effects of overt, or macro violence. This violence was reinforced by the punitive disciplinarian exercises, a form of micro violence, enforced by authoritarian systems of government. Only with the lifting of controls on freedom of expression did it become possible for people to speak out; and since the advent of free expression coincided with the country's attainment of economic prosperity, one might be allowed a fairly reductive materialist explanation to account for the emergence of the New Wave. Leong, for example, ascribes the phenomenon to a combination of “relaxed government censorship, investments in infrastructure, entrepreneurial zeal, and an iconoclastic attitude” (2002, 10). Not surprisingly, most popular accounts available to Western readers seem to agree that the movement started after 1995 (Leong 2002, 11; see also Paquet n.d.).

While the concept of trauma may still prove insufficient to accommodate some exceptions, we can see at this point how it could encompass all the major recurrent themes that typify the New Korean Cinema: the North-South division and the ambivalent attitude toward socialism; the concern for workers' welfare and the right of labor to unionise; the heroism of participants in the student movement in the struggle against militarist dictatorships; the excesses of the rich and influential, including past government and military officials, and their resort to repressive measures against popular uprisings such as that of Gwangju in 1980; and the disaffected and sometimes violent handling of personal relationships, often extending to familial affairs and sexual liaisons. This calls to mind the insight formulated by Jean Laplanche (Caruth 2001, par. 49), in discussing the relations that bind trauma, sexuality, and narcissism, to explain Freud's observation that traumas develop sexual excitement as a way of allowing the subject to cope with the experience of suffering.

The association (among modern readers) of wartime imagery with spectatorial excitability has been tracked by Susan Sontag from its origin in journalism through the surrealist impulse that emerged roughly in the previous mid-century.

“Conscripted as part of journalism, images were expected to arrest attention, startle, surprise...The hunt for more dramatic (as they're often described) images drives the photographic enterprise, and is part of the normality of a culture in which shock has become a leading stimulus of consumption and source of value. “Beauty will be convulsive, or it will not be,” proclaimed Andre Breton. He called this aesthetic ideal “surrealist,” but in a culture radically revamped by the ascendancy of mercantile values, to ask that images be jarring, clamorous, eye-opening seems like elementary realism as well as good business sense...The image as shock and the image as cliché are two aspects of the same presence.” (16–17)

In this wise, most of the major New Korean Cinema films can be categorised according to their functions within specific forms of violence. A sampling of films that exemplify politically inflected concerns would include, in chronological order, Kwang-su Park's *Joon Tae-il* [A Single Spark] (1995); Sun-woo Jang's *Ggotip* [A Petal] (1996); Je-gyu Kang's *Swiri* (1999); Chang-dong Lee's *Bakha satang* [Peppermint Candy] (1999); Chan-wook Park's *Gongdong gyeongbi guyeok JSA* [JSA: Joint Security Area] (2000); Woo-suk Kang's *Silmido* (2003); and Je-gyu Kang's *Taegukgi hwinalrimyeo* [Tae Guk Gi: The Brotherhood of War] (2004).

The relatively more internalised forms of violence may be apprehended in films such as Sang-soo Hong's *Daijiga umule pajinnal* [The Day a Pig Fell into the Well] (1996); Neung-han Song's *No. 3* (1997); Chang-dong Lee's *Chorok mulkogi* [Green Fish] (1997); Kyung-taek Kwak's *Chingoo* [Friend] (2001); Joon-Hwan Jang's *Jigureul jikyeora!* [Save the Green Planet!] (2003); Joon-ho Bong's *Salinui chueok* [Memories of Murder] (1993); and Ha Yu's *Maljukgeori janhoksa* [Once Upon a Time in High School] (2004). Aimlessness compounds the main character's or characters' disaffection, a form of inwardly directed violence, as manifested by characters in Cheol-su Park's *301, 302* (1995); Je-yong Lee's *Jung sa* [An Affair] (1998); Sang-soo Hong's *Kangwon-do ui him* [The Power of Gangwon Province] (1998), *Oh! Soo-jung* [Virgin Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors] (2002), and *Saenghwalui balgyeon* [On the Occasion of Remembering the Turning Gate] (2002); Sun-woo Jang's *Gojital* [Lies] (2000); and Chan-wook Park's *Oldeuboi* [Old Boy] (2003).

Differences

The New Korean Cinema shares with the Hong Kong New Wave the quality of operating within the parameters of popular film production and reception, if we allow a liberal application of such terms. This contrasts with the avant-gardist aspirations of New Wave practitioners in other

national cinemas, including that of Japan (where, as an example, David Desser [1988] had valorised Nagisa Oshima, among other filmmakers, precisely for the latter's avant-gardism). But what distinguishes the New Wave of Korea from those of other countries, including Hong Kong, is a certain hesitation, a respectfulness if you will, toward the depiction of violence, including sexual excess.

This is not to mean that contemporary Korean movies, especially the more generic samples, do not indulge in the commercially dictated staples of scenes of sex and violence. But whether the violence is indulged or restrained, the presentation can be seen as always managing to implicate the film viewer in one way or another toward the idealised attainment of catharsis. In discussing the role this type of viewer (or listener) plays in allaying the experience of violence, Ellie Ragland refers to trauma specialist Cathy Caruth (1995) in maintaining that “the Other – the social order – must hear what is actually being said...such that a representative listener...believes the truth that seeps through the imaginary dimensions of a narrative” (Ragland 2001, par. 11).

Caruth in fact articulated a workable configuration of trauma as, pace Freud, consistent with the fact that

“the wound of the mind—the breach in the mind’s experience of time, self, and the world—is not, like the wound of the body, a simple and healable event, but rather an event that...is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor.... [Trauma] is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual’s past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on.” (1996, 3–4; emphasis in the original)

In “The Aftermath of Victimization,” Ronnie Janoff-Bulman (1985, 16–17) further described how the manner in which the traumatic

event returns can be distinguished from other forms of recurrence (i.e. normative accounts of memory); the visitations of the original event, usually in the form of dreams, are attended by a reduction in the victim's responsiveness to current reality (1985, 29–30); the historically significant qualifier in this instance is that among various possible origins of trauma, those induced by other humans is far more psychologically distressing than all other sources (1985, 20).

An even more practicable aspect is a specific coping strategy that Janoff-Bulman terms “behavioral self-blame.” Here, the victim blames her or his own behaviour as a way of dealing with the stressful re-living of the traumatic memory. One paradox of behavioral self-blame can also be seen in the way the Korean cinema's primary audience (synonymous, in this instance, with the Korean people) opts to accept historical traumas as owing to its own error, thus providing the aforementioned cultural peculiarity of *han*; the other paradox, of course, is that “victims are generally not to blame for their victimisation” (Janoff-Bulman 1985, 30). Nevertheless, the adaptive potential of self-blame, the reason why it is considered “a predictor of good coping” (29), is that the victim becomes capable of resolving to take charge of her or his own fate; in doing so, she or he convinces the self of the value of strategising in order to develop her or his invulnerability, provide meaning to a previously irrational and unjust existence, and restore enough self-esteem to resume a productive life and, subsequently, to avoid possible future instances of trauma.

Interpretive Principle

Within the terms of the reality that the depiction of historical suffering in Korean films had been experienced by its filmmakers and audiences (occasionally literally), we can herewith identify Korean cinema's contribution to film realism; it attempts to make sense out of historical traumas by drawing from collective experiences rather than fabricating new ones or adopting foreign accounts. The strategy is in a sense circular,

in that this is the means—one might even argue that this is the only means—by which film artists can effectively manage to connect with the local audience.

Through a borrowed medium, history makes its presence felt, sometimes by literalising itself onscreen, more often by infusing or haunting, as a phantom would, the spectacle that spectators are invited to participate in. This is literalised most starkly in another all-time blockbuster, Je-gyu Kang's *Taegukgi hwinalrimyeo* [Tae Guk Gi: The Brotherhood of War], where each of two brothers finds himself fighting for one side of the Korean War against his much-beloved, long-lost, and momentarily unrecognizable sibling. Because of its applicability in formal and narratological terms, such a contribution recalls the achievements of earlier global film trends, especially the ones in Third and Third-World cinema (cf. Armes 1987; and Pines and Willemen 1989). Consequently, it will arguably have a capacity to endure in spite of the formation of a backlash against *Hallyu*, the larger wave of Korean popular-culture that had made its mark not just in Asia but also in the rest of the world.⁶

By asserting the presence of the traumatic in the output of the New Korean Cinema, one might be misconstrued as stating that all its products are autobiographical. This line of argument may be redundant in a sense, if we hark back to the *auteurist* dogma that all film products are always-already inscribed by their respective filmmakers' personal narratives. But what might be useful at this moment is the notion that the use of such a popular medium in articulating the discourse of the experience of violence may be akin to seeking what has been called an alternative jurisprudence. Here, what remains historically unresolved might now have a chance of attaining closure. Leigh Gilmore (2001, 143) ascribes this idea to Michel Foucault's insistence on anonymity in one of his interviews, ironically so that he could be heard once again in the same way before he became famous, in the hope that both subject and reader could "risk transformation."

In extending this argument to film practice, we could say that, because of the “oceanic” or all-enveloping reality effect, authorial anonymity always-already accompanies the viewing experience. Note also another “limit” of trauma discourse in psychoanalysis (which serendipitously fulfils our study of the New Korean Cinema) in its association of the production of art with the condition of neurosis (Rose 1987, 2). While it may be too reductive to state that the considerably high concentration of artistic achievement in the New Wave is traceable to the neurosis induced by historical trauma, the obverse argument—that none of the actuations of Korean film talents and audiences is ascribable to the mechanisms of historical memory—would ring just as false. Therefore, the condition of possibility of history impinging on Korean film activity might be more of an always-already present, if not always fully conscious, aspect of everyday cultural reality.

In considering how much further the New Korean Cinema can travel on the fuel-strength of historical trauma as an interpretive principle, we could consider the prescription of Susan Hayward (2000, 101) in her essay “Framing national cinemas.”

This writing of a national cinema is one that refuses to historicise the nation as subject/object in and of itself but makes it a subject and object of knowledge. This (ideal) writing of a national cinema...is one which delves deep into the pathologies of nationalist discourses and exposes the symbolic practices of these forms of enunciation. Finally, this framing of national cinemas is one which perceives cinema as a practice that should not conceal structures of power and knowledge but which should function as a *mise-en-scène* of scattered and dissembling identities as well as fractured subjectivities and fragmented hegemonies.

Here, we can see how the “framing” described by Hayward would not have to be a still-to-be-implemented formulary in the case of Korean cinema, since its implicit recognition of the role played by trauma had already been (and is still being) foregrounded in the major output of Korean filmmakers.

Popular Preferences

A useful starting point for the reevaluation of the experience of trauma in the creation and evaluation by Koreans of their cinema is suggested by Sigmund Freud in his essay, “Screen Memories.” In this study of grown-ups recollecting childhood images, he concluded that inaccuracies tended to occur; this is because the typical subject failed to realise that, although she or he had been in the centre of her or his recollected scenes, she or he was in fact “paying attention not to [herself or] himself, but to the world outside [herself or] himself” (Freud 2003, 20). This emergence “as an object among other objects,” Freud continued, “can be taken as proof that the original impression has been edited” (ibid.). So-called falsified memories could not have been freely invented, but Freud questions the larger possibility—that of

whether we have any conscious memories from childhood: perhaps we have only memories of childhood. These show us the first years of our lives not as they were, but as they appeared to us at later periods, when the memories were aroused.... [Hence] the memories of childhood did not emerge,... but were formed, and a number of motives that were far removed from the aim of historical fidelity had a hand in influencing both the formation and the selection of the memories. (Freud 2003, 21; emphases in original)

This liberatory qualification, coupled with Hayward’s suggestion that a national cinema should in effect deconstruct the foundational assumptions underlying a nation’s self-concept, might yet find a fuller realisation in the New Korean Cinema, given the prospect of greater freedom of expression, as well as increasing diversification of topics. It could also be the basis of a future paradox: that the end of this New Wave, at least as we know it, would occasion expressions of mourning from film lovers in Korea and elsewhere. At the same time, it could also indicate that the nation has finally fully sutured the scars of its painful past.

As a sample of moving beyond enumerating film samples, we would like to propose the heuristic exercise of identifying all-time blockbusters

in Korean cinema; the latter are defined as films that set attendance records regardless of the actual income generated by ticket sales. Per the records of the Korean Film Council, this list consists of only six titles during the current millennium; if we include the 1990s, there would be an additional three, or nine in total. For the purpose of providing context, we may begin with the last premillennium decade.

The first two blockbusters since 1990 were set by the same filmmaker, Kwon-taek Im, a feat that would be repeated not long after by another director, Je-gyu Kang, but never again since then. Im's films, 1990's *Jangguni adeul* [The General's Son] (which generated two sequels) and 1993's *Seopyeonje*, are distinctive in two ways: in relation to his output, they belong to a consistent body of work that dwells on the past. Also, rather than update the material or reformulate its issues for a present-day audience, it seeks to transport viewers to the period in question, with a nearly self-conscious use of silence, measured pacing, and distanced placement of action. The advantage of this approach is that it provides a semblance of faithfulness to history and rewards an audience willing to engage in reflection and introspection. The disadvantage stems from the same properties confronting a shift in audience preferences (which became apparent with the next blockbuster on record, and in a sense never allowed for the return of the older sensibility). The provisional way of "reading" this instance of Im productions generating intense interest in the local audience can be drawn from the materials' historical nature: the people (conflating for this purpose Korean mass movie audience and Koreans in general), anticipating the arrival of full democratic rights as the final reward for attaining developmental stature, were taking this occasion to look back on first a recent past (a resistance fighter during the Japanese occupation), then a further one, both marked by the same infusion of *han* or unmitigated sorrow in the struggle for survival.

The next blockbuster, Je-gyu Kang's *Swiri*, may have been released in 1999 but in a sense belongs to the 2000s—in the sense that it departs from the Im films' historicizing project. Yet the stylistic self-awareness of the

Im films also gets carried over in Kang's project; Kang's is insistently noirish, fast-paced, complex, and filled with reversals, revelations, and (violent) incidents—the Hollywoodish frenzied response to Im's Europeanesque calm. *Swiri* is also the first film whose audience count was more accurate on a nation-wide level: the Im films were measured only in terms of Seoul audience attendance—about 679,000 for *Jangguni adeul* and 1.036 million for *Seopyeonje*—whereas for *Swiri* the figure was 5.82 million nationwide.⁷ The subject, turning on seduction, intrigue, and betrayal between double spies for North and South Korea, had elements of coincidence and superspy-level skills that also possibly included some level of wish-fulfilment in reconfiguring the Korean-War conflict in conservative gender terms. Here, the North infiltrator is presented as a *femme fatale* and the South detective as a too-trustful and chivalrous lover who needed to transcend his personal affection for the sake of saving his country.

Several scholars (notably Kyung Hyun Kim [2004]) regard this period, including the series of all-time blockbusters, as concerned with the questions of modernity specific to the Korean experience, particularly the aspiration toward democratization and North-South reunification. Two years after *Swiri*, Kyung-taek Kwak's *Chingoo* [Friend] returned to a reflection on the past, but not in the manner of the Im films; rather, it combined the sense of nostalgia regarding a lost time (a main character recalls the process of his falling out with his high school best friend, who ended on the opposite side of the law from him)—a strategy successful enough to attract 8.1 million viewers despite its period setting (Korean Film Council, qtd. in Rouse-Marquet, 2013, n.p.). The next two films once more combined this reflection on a by-gone moment with the significance that *Swiri* proffered; not surprisingly, one of them was directed by Je-gyu Kang.

This was also the period when all-time record-setters arrived with nearly regular (annual) frequency, and broke through the 10-million-viewer ceiling that *Chingoo* had been approaching. Woo-suk Kang's 2003 *Silmido* (11.08 million) (Korean Film Council, *ibid.*) was reminiscent of

Im's films in terms of its liberal, antiauthoritarian critique (as contrasted with the ambivalence of *Swiri* and the apolitical orientation of *Chingoo*); *Silmido* depicted a secretly trained hit squad originally tasked to punish North Korean leaders but was later targeted for extermination by their own higher officials. Although still privileging the same central best-friends-divided-by-ideology dramatic set-up of *Chingoo*, it was also the closest that any of the films in this series ever got to the multiple-character format that Robert Altman and a few other American filmmakers specialized in. Kang's *Taegukgi hwinalrimyeo* [*Tae Guk Gi: The Brotherhood of War*] (11.75 million) (Korean Film Council, *ibid.*), released the next year, amplified the separation between close buddies by portraying two brothers separated by the historical conflict between North and South. Compared with the Korean film record-setters of the 1990s, those of the 2000s up to this point shifted their appeal to male viewers via the subordination (and even in several sequences, the total absence) of women characters. And although the films, even from *Swiri* onward, featured chases and gunfire and martial-arts showdowns, the underlying narrative strategy remained the melodramatic tearjerker; it affirmed once more the argument that some of the most effective action films actually function as a reconfiguration of the (women's) weepie with and for men (cf. Modleski 2010).

The next year, however, the all-time blockbuster departed from its predecessors in several ways. Joon-ik Lee's *Wang-ui namja* [*The King and the Clown*] (12.3 million viewers) (Korean Film Council, *ibid.*), returned to some of the elements in the '90s' entries: the Joseon Dynasty period (as in *Seopyeonje*) with a strong female character, unfortunately still a villain (as in *Swiri*). The material dwelt on a king's desire for the masculine clown's feminine (but also male) partner and the malicious interventions performed by the king's concubine, resulting in death for the two clowns (depicted as true lovers) and in the downfall of the king (the lust-driven "pervert" who broke up the clown partners and drove his mistress to commit mischievous acts). There may be a semblance here of pursuing the gender reconfiguration of the systemic enemy as feminine, as the villain had been in *Swiri*; considering that the closest to a contemporary Korean monarchy

would be the dynasty founded by Il-sung Kim and inherited by his descendants Jong-il and Jong-un, one may attempt to read this situation as a critique of the debasement of the ideals of democracy and even socialism as practiced in North Korea. However, this interpretation needs to be tempered with the reality that the generation that had directly experienced the Korean War has been dying out and the majority of younger Koreans no longer have the same longing for reunification.⁸

These points may help explain why in the next year's record-setter, Joon-Ho Bong's *Gwoemul* [The Host] (13.02 million viewers – the all-time highest) (Korean Film Council, *ibid.*), any reference to North Korea was gone. One may insist that the monster that mutated from the toxic intervention of a Cold War agent (a US Army general who instructed his Korean assistant to dump toxic chemicals into the Han River) might stand in for the violent, unpredictable, and inhumane regime of Jong-il (and now Jong-un) Kim. However, this allegorical slant is rendered untenable by several other considerations in the text: no people in the local population, even among progressive groups, support the monster; it victimizes members of the proletariat and unites the residents against US-led globalization forces; it is challenged and vanquished by a working-class family, with women members playing strong roles; and so on. In fact, it would be safer to say that *Gwoemul* indicates that the mass viewers' attention has been caught up in the country's status as a global presence, confirmed in part by the earlier mentioned recognition given by global film competitions to Korean entries.

Future Shock

To recap the application of Western, especially psychoanalytic, principles in the course of discussing the Korean films in this paper, we may take the justification posited by Kyung Hyun Kim that his goal was “not to validate theory but to better elucidate recent Korean films that have increasingly become ‘Westernized’ [inasmuch as] contemporary South Korean society is no more Confucian than it is capitalist” (2004,

Introduction); moreover, he argues that “the cinema of the recent years parallels not the flourishing of its national traditional culture, but its rapid vanishing” (ibid.); Kim picks up this line through his next volume by discussing “virtual trauma” and “post-trauma” or “trauma-free” approaches in terms of “the current tide of Korean films [that move] discernibly away from the codification of political and national allegory” (2011, Chapter 6). This indirectly affirms Elizabeth Wright’s valorisation of psychoanalytic methods as useful descriptors for the intersection between bodies and culture (1998, Introduction).

A note of caution, however, ought to focus not so much on psychoanalysis as on the use of trauma. In *Precarious Life*, Judith Butler reflects on the turns taken by American society after the 11 September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and other targets by Islamic-fundamentalist radicals: instead of “[redefining] itself as part of a global community,” the US instead “heightened nationalist discourse, extended surveillance mechanisms, suspended constitutional rights, and developed forms of explicit and implicit censorship,” leading intellectuals “to waver in their public commitment to principles of justice” (2004, xi). Butler ascribes this response to the culture’s response to a traumatic experience; she made her critique explicit in a subsequent lecture where she warns of how trauma (e.g. the Holocaust) can threaten to persist in a destructive way via justifying the wrongs that its victims (e.g., the Jewish community in Israel) may be committing against others (the occupied Palestinians) precisely by arguing for their status as victims in need of recovery.

This may be reconfigured, in contemporary Korean culture, by restating the challenge posed by the Korean War experience—from militaristic (where both sides observe a truce) to economic (where one side attained a level of development unavailable to the other) and globalist (where even the North’s historical ally, China, has been expressing misgivings about the regime’s mischief-making). Hence, the turn away from questions of reunification toward the challenges posed by globalization in the popular preferences of the mass audiences similarly

signifies (within this admittedly narrow and necessarily open-ended reading) a preparedness to advance beyond concerns over historical trauma—but not by rejecting trauma itself. *Gwoemul*, as a sample, proffers an extensive list of people traumatized by global modernity, from rural migrants to political radicals to women and children and the homeless, even to the foreign migrants cleverly ranged by the narrative along the banks of the river, unknowingly making themselves potential prey for the indescribable spectral figure lurking in the placid waters of the “miraculous” Han River.

The challenges are manifold and present themselves not just within Korea but also overseas. A compelling example of one of many possible challenges facing a fully recuperated and consolidated Korean film industry has been narrated by Bliss Cua Lim in her recent volume, *Translating Time* (2009). Looking at recent cases of remakes of Asian horror films by Hollywood producers, Lim concludes that Western scholars such as Andrew Higson, regarded as a prominent authority on theorizing national cinemas mainly because of his essay “The Concept of National Cinema” (1989), fails to take into account “Hollywood’s debts to other national cinemas, its founding reliance on émigré talent, its appropriation of aesthetic hallmarks, its practice of borrowing and remaking, and its eye on foreign markets” (Lim 2009, 230).

As it had done with earlier European film trends, Hollywood’s appropriation of narrative and stylistic materials associated with Asian genre films has resulted in a deracination via a “softening of contrast, the quickly accomplished reduction of the distance between generic innovation and generic repetition” (Lim, 223). Lim brought up the case of Ji-woon Kim’s *Janghwa, Hongryeon* (2003), a film whose viewing experience she described as one that “slowly unfurls its secrets, yielding narrative clues and formal motifs whose significances are only apprehended on repeated viewing” (Lim, 243). Unfortunately, the remake produced by DreamWorks, titled *The Uninvited* (Charles and Thomas Guard [2009]), was produced “based only upon having watched the trailer—not the entire source film—

beforehand” (Lim, 304n). This resulted in divergent second halves between the two versions, with the original director, Ji-woon Kim, repudiating the remake (Lim, 243).

From the foregoing account, we can see how the challenge that globalisation first posed to the Korean nation, in the form of the late 1990s IMF crisis, and then replicated in the late 2000s global recession, is being configured in popular-culture terms. In both larger challenges, Korea was able to recover—with instances of trauma confined to certain specific corporations, families, and individuals, and, with lesser instances, during the second crisis. What this indicates is that the country has found its historical footing in a sphere of competition where it has been able to transform a sense of victimhood into reserves of psychic strength and determination. The challenges presented by the intrusions of globalisation in popular culture could be regarded as opportunities for the national culture to search for creative solutions, whose lessons could be explored when the next crises inevitably come along.

In this manner, Korea will be able to continue providing a model for nations that share its sense of historical heartbreak—from the injustice of colonisation and the brutality of dictatorship—via Korea’s search for ways of coping with an increasingly interdependent world system while maintaining a level of development acceptable to its people and their leaders. And when one realises that this type of experience, the trauma of Korea, is shared by all postcolonial countries outside the First World, then the achievement of full recovery from the past attains wider significance, beyond the borders of Korea, to the rest of the developing and still-to-be-developing world, through certain specific strategies: by seeking “to counter unethical discourses that pass as ethical, deadly decisions taken in the name of life (and whose life?), by refusing to associate...with narratives that promote death in the name of the state, death in the name of nationalism, the death of a constructed enemy who is [no longer] one” (Croisy 2006, 100).

Notes

- ¹ In fact, if we were to take the oldest European festivals accredited as “competitive” by the Paris-based *Fédération Internationale des Associations de Producteurs de Films* (International Federation of Film Producers Associations in English), even disregarding the fact that the Busan International Film Festival appears in the “specialized competitive” list, the emergence of Korean films is all the more undeniable (cf. FIAPF website). In 2002, the elderly Kwon-taek Im was awarded best director at the Cannes Film Festival for *Chi-hwa-seon* [Painted Fire]. Two years later, Chan-wook Park won the Grand Prix for *Oldboy* [Old Boy]. But a wider breakout was performed by Ki-duk Kim during the same year. At the Berlin International Film Festival, he won best director for *Samaritan* [Samaritan Girl] and the same prize (the Silver Lion) at the Venice Film Festival for *Bin-jip* [3-Iron]; later, in 2012, he won the best film prize (Golden Lion) at the Venice Film Festival for *Pietà*. The presence of Koreans in Cannes, the top film-festival event, was further solidified with Do-yeon Jeon winning best actress in 2007 for Chang-dong Lee’s *Milyang* [Secret Sunshine], Chan-wook Park the Jury Prize in 2009 for *Bakjwi* [Thirst], and Chang-dong Lee once more, this time for his own screenplay for *Shi* [Poetry], in 2010; in two years, Koreans dominated the Un Certain Regard prize—Sang-soo Hong in 2010 for *Hahaha* and the redoubtable Ki-duk Kim the next year for *Arirang*. US acknowledgment of Korean film achievement became evident in 2009 when Joon-ho Bong’s *Madeo* [Mother], which bypassed the European festival circuit, won a slew of prizes for its director/writer as well as for lead actress Hye-ja Kim (The authors acknowledge an anonymous reviewer for pointing out this trend).
- ² For a follow-up report by the same source, tracing the spread of *Hallyu* in the rest of Asia, see Onishi (2005). Intensive recent studies of the Japanese’s postcolonial fascination with Korea include Creighton (2009) and Mori (2008). In terms of statistics on the number of migrant wives in Korea, the Japanese have moved up behind Chinese and Vietnamese as the third most numerous group, displacing women from the Philippines.
- ³ Earlier versions of this paper opted to refer to the phenomenon as “Korean New Wave,” following the secondary title of Anthony C. Y. Leong’s volume (2002). However, as pointed out by a reviewer, Frances Greenward appropriated the term to discuss Korean films during the pre-*hallyu* period of the 1980s and 1990s, “when the consciousness of the nation was focused on a generation that would lead it through a decade of turmoil toward democratic reform” (2002, 115). To avoid terminological confusion, we decided to defer to the earlier study and use instead the same term used by several other authors, which is New Korean Cinema. The authors acknowledge the perceptiveness and wide-ranging expertise of the anonymous reviewer who pointed us in this direction. Another, more recent study, Ilkka Levä’s lecture titled “Encountering Korean Cinema,” conflated roughly the New Wave and the New Korean Cinema period and termed it “the Renaissance of Korean Cinema (approximately 1996 to 2008)” (2014, abstract). Since the coverage of this last study lies outside the present paper’s domain, the authors will be maintaining the New Korean Cinema designation.

- ⁴ Two useful English-language references, one macro and the other micro, would be, respectively, Cumings (1997) and the publication of The May 18th History Compilation Committee of Kwangju City (2000).
- ⁵ Japanese film scholar Donald Richie (2002) avers as much in *A Hundred Years of Japanese Film*, where he laments the decline in quality of contemporary products in relation to post-World War II masters such as the acknowledged trio of Kenji Mizoguchi, Yasujiro Ozu, and Akira Kurosawa. A similar notion—of cinema flourishing during a political dictatorship—infuses current critical opinion on Philippine cinema during and after the martial rule regime of Ferdinand E. Marcos (David 1995).
- ⁶ The panel titled “Historical Legacies, Mutual Perceptions, and Future Relations” in *Korea’s Changing Roles in Southeast Asia: Expanding Influence and Relations*, the Asia Foundation’s 2008 Public Policy Forum, presented a couple of papers that acknowledged the impact of *Hallyu* while reporting in detail objections to Koreans’ presence and behavior in Southeast Asia (Chachavalpongpun 2008); the said papers called for more active intervention on the part of the Korean government to provide a corporate-style set of rationales and plans for the phenomenon and ensure the longevity of its impact outside Korea (Kim 2008).
- ⁷ Korean Film Council (KOFIC) data for *Janggungni adeul* and *Scopyeonje* were available online only until early 2010. At present these figures, still quoting KOFIC, can only be found in the Korean-language version of Wikipedia: on the search page (<http://ko.wikipedia.org/wiki>), search for “daehanmingukeui yeonghwa hunghaeng girok” [Korea box-office record] to find the reference page.
- ⁸ A longitudinal survey conducted by the Institute for Peace and Unification Studies at Seoul National University revealed that between 2007 and 2011, support for reunification had been generally less among those in lower age groups, with less than half of Koreans in their 20s and 30s in favor as of the more recent sampling (Harlan2011, n.p.). More worryingly for reunification proponents, support for a unified nation had fallen among *all* age groups over time, resulting in a current overall average of 56 percent as opposed to, say, 80 percent during the 1990s. The main reason for the decline was the cost that propping up a severely impoverished country would entail, estimated at up to US\$ 1 trillion and leading to calls for a “reunification tax” to raise the necessary funds (Harlan n.p.).

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Filmography

Note: All entries have been released in video format but may be out of print. Entries were originally in film format (for 35mm. theatrical projection) except Hyeong-min Lee and Seokho-Yoon's *Gyeongyeonga* (2002) and Min-soo Pyo's *Pool ha-woo-seu* (2004), which were videotaped multi-installment TV-drama presentations.

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- Choo Chang-min, director and coscriptwriter. 2012. *Masquerade*. Coscriptwriter Jo-yun Hwang. Performed by Byung-hun Lee, Seung-yong Ryoo, Hyo-ju Han, In-kwon Kim, Gwang Jang, Eun-kyung Shim, Myung-gon Kim. CJ Entertainment, Realies Pictures.
- Guard, Charles, and Thomas Guard, directors. 2009. *The Uninvited*. Scriptwriters Craig Rosenberg, Doug Miro, and Carlo Bernard. Performed by Emily Browning, Arielle Kebbel, David Strathairn, Elizabeth Banks, Maya Massar, Kevin McNulty, Jesse Moss, Dean Paul Gibson, Don S. Davis, Lex Burnham, Matthew Bristol, Danny Bristol, Heather Doerksen, Alf Humphreys, Ryan Cowie, Troy Rudolph, John Prowse. DreamWorks SKG, Cold Spring Pictures, MacDonald/Parkes Productions, Montecito Picture Co., Vertigo Entertainment, Medien 5 Filmproduktion.
- Hong Sang-soo, director. 1996. *Daijiga umule pajinnal* [The Day a Pig Fell into the Well]. Scriptwriter Hyo-seo Koo. Performed by Eun-hee Bang, Eun-sook Cho, Eui-sung Kim, Eung-kyung Lee, Sun-mi Myeong, Kang-ho Song. Dong-a Exports Co. Ltd.
- , director and scriptwriter. 1998. *Kangwon-do ui him* [The Power of Gangwon Province]. Performed by Jong-hak Baek, Jaehyun Chun, Sunyoung Im, Yun-hong Oh, Hyunyoung Park. Miracin Korea Film Co.
- , director and scriptwriter. 2000. *Oh! Soo-jung* [Virgin Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors]. Performed by Eun-ju Lee, Seong-kun Mun, Myeong-gu Han, Ho-Bong Jeong, Hwang-Ui Lee, Bo-seok Jeong, Yeong-dae Kim, Mi-Jung Song, Mi-hyeon Park, Ryeon Cho, Won-Hee Cho, Seon Yu. Miracin Korea Film Co.
- , director and scriptwriter. 2002. *Saenghwalui balgyeon* [On the Occasion of Remembering the Turning Gate]. Performed by Sang-mi Choo, Ji-won Ye, George Georgiou, Hak-sun Kim, Sang-kyung Kim. Cinema Service, Miracin Korea Film Co., and UniKorea Pictures.
- , director and scriptwriter. 2010. *Hahaha*. Performed by Kang-woo Kim, Sang-kyung Kim, So-ri Moon, Yeo-jeong Yoon, Jun-sang Yu, Gyu-ri Kim, Ji-won Ye, Yeong-ho Kim, Ju-bong Gi. Miracin Korea Film Co.
- Im Kwon-taek, director. 1990. *Janggumi adeul* [The General's Son]. Scriptwriter Sam-Yook Yun. Performed by Sang-min Park, Hyeon-jun Shin, Il-jae Lee, Eun-hee Bang, Hyeong-il Kim. Tachung Pictures.

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- , director. 1993. *Scopyeonje*. Scriptwriter Myung-gon Kim. Performed by Myung-gon Kim, Jung-hae Oh, Kyu-chul Kim, Sae-kil Shin, Byeong-kyeong Ahn. Taehung Pictures.
- , director and coscriptwriter. 2002. *Chi-hwa-seon* [Painted Fire]. Coscriptwriters Yong-ok Kim and Byung-sam Min. Performed by Min-sik Choi, Sung-kee Ahn, Ho-jeong Yu, Ye-jin Son. Taehung Pictures.
- Jang Joon-Hwan, director and scriptwriter. 2003. *Jigureul jikyeora!* [Save the Green Planet!]. Performed by Ha-kyun Shin, Yun-shik Baek, Jeong-min Hwang, Jae-yong Lee, Ju-hyeon Lee, Ju-bong Gi. Sidus Pictures.
- Jang Sun-woo, director. 1996. *Ggotip* [A Petal]. Scriptwriter Yoon Choi. Performed by Jung-hyun Lee, Seong-Kun Mun, Yeong-ran Lee, Sang-mi Choo, Gye-nam Myeong. Miracin Korea Film Co.
- , director and scriptwriter. 2000. *Gojitmal*. [Lies]. Performed by Sang Hyun Lee, Tae Yeon Kim, Hyun Joo Choi. Korea Films, Shin Cine Communications.
- Kang Je-gyu, director and scriptwriter. 1999. *Swiri*. Performed by Suk-kyu Han, Min-sik Choi, Yunjin Kim, Kang-ho Song, Johnny Kim. Kang Je-Kyu Film Co. Ltd. and Samsung Entertainment.
- , director and scriptwriter. 2004. *Taegukgi hwinalrimyeo* [Tae Guk Gi: The Brotherhood of War]. Performed by Dong-Kun Jang, Bin Won, Eun-ju Lee, Hyeong-jin Kong, Yeong-ran Lee. Kang Je-Kyu Film Co. Ltd.
- Kang Woo-suk, director. 2003. *Silmido*. Scriptwriter Hie-jae Kim. Performed by Sung-kee Ahn, Kyung-gu Sol, Jun-ho Heo, Jae-yeong Jeong, Seong-jin Kang, Won-hui Lim, Shin-il Kang, Jeong-heon Lee, Yu-mi Jeong, Kang-woo Kim, Won-hie Lim. Cinema Service and Hanmac Films.
- Kim Ji-woon, director and scriptwriter. 2003. *Janghwa, Hongryeon* [A Tale of Two Sisters]. Performed by Kap-su Kim, Jung-ah Yum, Su-jeong Lim, Geun-Young Moon, Seung-bi Lee. BOM Film Productions and Masulpiri Films.
- Kim Ki-duk, director and scriptwriter. 2004. *Samaria* [Samaritan Girl]. Performed by Yeoreum Han, Ji-min Kwak, Eol Lee, Hyun-Min Kwon, Young Oh, Gyun-Ho Im, Jong-Gil Lee, Taek-Ki Shin, Jung-gi Park, Gul-seon Kim, Seung-won Seo, Jae-Ik Seo, In-gi Jeong, Jin-bae Jeon, Sae-Jin Yook. Kim Ki-duk Film.
- , director and scriptwriter. 2004. *Bin-jip* [3-Iron]. Performed by Seung-yeon Lee, Hyun-kyoon Lee, Hyuk-ho Kwon, Jeong-ho Choi, Ju-seok Lee, Mi-suk Lee, Sung-hyuk Moon, Ji-a Park, Jae-yong Jang, Dah-hae Lee, Han Kim, Se-jin Park, Dong-jin Park, Jong-su Lee, Ui-soo Lee, Jong-hwa Ryoo, Sung-hoon Kang, Sung-hoon Jung, Ji-yong Jang, Maeng-sung Kim, Hoon Jang, Seok-bin Jang, Hyung-suk Kim, Tae-suk Shin, Hong-suk Lee, Nam-min Park. Kim Ki-duk Film and Cineclick Asia.
- , director and scriptwriter. 2011. *Arirang*. Performed by Ki-duk Kim. Good Film.
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- , director and scriptwriter. 2012. *Pictà*. Performed by Min-soo Jo, Jung-Jin Lee, Ki-Hong Woo, Eunjin Kang, Jae-ryong Cho, Myeong-ja Lee, Jun-seok Heo, Se-in Kwon, Mun-su Song, Beom-jun Kim, Jong-hak Son, Yong-Ok Jin. Good Film and Finecut and Masulpiri Films.
- Kwak Kyung-taek, director and scriptwriter. 2001. *Chingoo* [Friend]. Performed by Oh-seong Yu, Dong-Kun Jang, Tae-hwa Seo, Un-taek Jeong, Ju-bong Gi, Hyeon Ju, Bo-kyeong Kim, Chang Yun. Cinline 2, Cowell Investment Capital Co. Ltd., J. R. Lighting, Korea Pictures, Simmani, Zemiro.
- Lee Byeong-hoon, director. 2003. *Dae Jang-gcum*. Scriptwriter Yeong-hyeon Kim. Performed by Yeong-ae Lee, Jin-hee Ji, Ri-na Hong, Mi-ri Gyeon, Mi-kyeong Yang, Ho Lim, Jeong Un Cho. MBC-TV Korea.
- Lee Chang-dong, director and scriptwriter. 1997. *Chorok mulkogi* [Green Fish]. Performed by Seong-kun Mun, Seong-kyu Han, Suk-kyu Han, Jae-yeong Jeong, Jin-yeong Jeong, Munshik Lee, Gye-nam Myeong, Ji-hye Oh, Hye-jin shim, Kang-ho Song. East Film Co.
- , director and scriptwriter. 2000. *Bakha satang* [Peppermint Candy]. Performed by Yeo-jin Kim, Kyung-gu Sol, Jung Suh, So-ri Moon, In-kwon Kim, Seo-hic Ko, Dae-yeon Lee, Ji-yeon Park, Se-beom Park, Yeon-su Yu. East Film Co.
- , director and scriptwriter. 2007. *Milyang* [Secret Sunshine]. Performed by Do-yeon Jeon, Kang-ho Song. CJ Entertainment, Cinema Service, Pine House Film.
- , director and scriptwriter. 2010. *Shi* [Poetry]. Performed by Jeong-hie Yun, Da-wit Lee, Hira Kim, Nae-sang Ahn, Myeong-shin Park. Unikorea Pictures, Pine House Film.
- Lee Hyeong-min, and Seok-ho Yoon, directors. 2002. *Gycoul yeonga* [Winter Sonata]. Scriptwriters Eun-hee Kim, Soo-yeon Oh, and Eun-kyeong Yoon. Performed by Ji-woo Choi, Young-jun Bae, Yong-ha Park, Sol-Mi Park, Hae-eun Lee, Seung-soo Yu, Dong-hwan Jeong, Hae-suk Kim, Wok-suk Song, Hae-hyo Kwon, Hyeon-suk Park. KBS Productions.
- Lee Je-yong, director and coscriptwriter. 1998. *Jung sa* [An Affair]. Coscriptwriter Dae-woo Kim. Performed by Jung-Jae Lee, Min Kim, Mi-suk Lee, Young-chang Song. Nain Film Co.
- Lee Joon-ik, director. 2005. *Wang-ui namja* [The King and the Clown]. Scriptwriter Seok-Hwan Choi. Performed by Woo-seong Kam, Jin-yeong Jeong, Seong-yeong Kang, Jun-ki Lee, Hang-Seon Jang, Hae-jin Yu, Seok-yong Jeong, Seung-hun Lee. Eagle Pictures.
- Park Chan-wook, director. 2000. *Gongdong gyeongbi guyeok JSA* [JSA: Joint Security Area]. Scriptwriters Seong-san Jeong and Hyeon-seok Kim. Performed by Yeong-ae Lee, Byung-hun Lee, Kang-ho Song, Tae-woo Kim, Ha-kyun Shin, Ju-bong Gi, Christoph Hofrichter, Myeong-su Kim, Tae-hyeon Kim, Herbert Ulrich. CJ Entertainment, Intz.com, KTB Network, and Myung Film Co. Ltd.
- , director and coscriptwriter. 2003. *Oldeuboi* [Oldboy]. Co-scriptwriters Jo-yun Hwang and Chun-hyeong Lim. Performed by Min-sik Choi, Ji-tae Yu, Hye-jeong Kang, Dae-han Ji, Dal-su Oh, Byeong-ok Kim, Seung-Shin Lee, Jin-seo Yun, Dae-yeon Lee, Kwang-rok Oh, Tae-kyung Oh, Yeon-suk Ahn, Il-han Oo. Egg Films and Show East.

- , director. 2009. *Bakjwi* [Thirst]. Scriptwriters Seo-Gyeong Jeong and Chan-wook Park. Performed by Kang-ho Song, Ok-bin Kim, Hae-suk Kim Ha-kyun Shin, In-hwan Park, Dal-su Oh, Young-chang Song, Mercedes Cabral, Eriq Ebouaney. CJ Entertainment, Intz.com, KTB Network, and Myung Film Co. Ltd.
- Park Cheol-su, director. 1995. *301, 302*. Scriptwriter Suh-Goon Lee. Performed by Eun-jin Bang, Sin-Hye Hwang. Park Chul-Soo Films Ltd.
- Park Kwang-su, director. 1995. *Jeon Tae-il* [A Single Spark]. Scriptwriter Changdong Lee. Performed by Kyoung-In Hong, Bo-kyeong Kim, Sun-Jae Kim, Seong-kun Mun, Yong-soo Park. Jeon Tae-il Memorial Foundation.
- Pyo Min-soo, director. 2004. *Pool ha-woo-seu* [Full House]. Scriptwriters Hyo-jeong Min and Soo-yeon Won. Performed by Hye-kyo Song, Rain, Eun-jeong Han, Seong-su Kim, Do Han, Hye Jin Im, Ji-yeong Kim, Yeong-eun Lee, Eun-Sook Sunwoo, Jang Yong. KBS Productions.
- Song Neung-han, director and scriptwriter. 1997. *No. 3*. Performed by Eun-hee Bang, Min-sik choi, Suk-kyu Han, Mi-yeon Lee, Kwang-jung Park, Sang-Myeon Park, Kang-ho Song. Free Cinema and Kang Woo-Suk Productions.
- Yu Ha, director and scriptwriter. 2004. *Maljukgeori janhoksa* [Once Upon a Time in High School]. Performed by Sang-woo Kwone, Jeong-jin Lee, Ga-in Han, Hyo-jun Park, Won-kwon Kim, Jong-hyeok Lee, Dong-won Seo. Sidus Pictures.