The Thesis committee for Se Hee Han

Certifies that this is the approved version of the following thesis:

GLOBALIZATION AND HYBRIDITY OF KOREAN CINEMA:

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF KOREAN BLOCKBUSTER FILMS

APPROVED BY

SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:

Supervisor: _____

(Shanti Kumar)

_____

(Joseph D. Straubhaar)

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by

Se Hee Han, B.E.; M.A.

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Dedication

To my mother and my father.

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In this study, I analyze how recent South Korean cinema has responded to the forces of globalization by appropriating these influences both on and off screen. In particular, by situating Korean blockbuster within its local, regional and global contexts, I highlight the ways in which the identity politics of Korean blockbuster complicate our understanding of globalization and national cinema.

The second chapter focuses on the globalization of recent South Korean cinema, with critical attention given to hybridity as an industrial strategy and as shaped by intra-regional co-productions. The third chapter analyzes four Korean films to represent the characteristics of Korean blockbuster and Korean national issues.

Through the two primary chapters, I argue that Korean blockbuster is a hybrid form between national cinema and Hollywood blockbusters. It is a local answer to the accelerating forces of globalization at home, evident in the growing direct competition with Hollywood

blockbusters. In fact, despite the growing reliance on the big-budget blockbusters, the recent rise in the domestic market share of local films against Hollywood movies owes much to the high-profile success of many of Korean blockbusters.

The significance of the case of Korean Cinema is multifaceted in our comprehensive understanding of globalization and hybridity. It illustrates that globalization as hybridization takes place at multiple levels and in multiple directions beyond the conventional global-local paradigm. In noting intra-regional exchanges as integral to the construction of today's hybridities, my study has contended that regionalization and localization strongly contribute to the globalization process. More important, by locating hybridity outside of Western hegemony in the intraregional cultural dynamic, it also resists the Eurocentric approach that tends to view hybridity as only produced through local appropriation of the global/Hollywood model. This is often implied even in the recognition of hybridity as a resistance against hegemonic power.

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Chapter 1. Introduction:
The Rehabilitation of Korean Cinema

Since 1999, South Korean cinema has entered the rehabilitation era. *Shiri* (Je-gyu Kang, 1999), the first successful Korean blockbuster, opened the new era of Korean cinema. The film broke the domestic box-office record by drawing more than six million admissions nationwide. A mixture of action and love story, the film was marked not only by high production values, but more importantly by the previously taboo theme of relations between North and South Korea. But what was more impressive about *Shiri'*s success was that the film broke the local attendance record set by the biggest Hollywood blockbuster, *Titanic*, which had garnered 4.7 million admissions in 1998. The local blockbuster that draws on the Hollywood model and yet domesticates it with a quintessentially local issue seemed to provide a successful model to challenge Hollywood hegemony. Dubbed by the local press as the "small fish that sank Titanic," *Shiri'*s victory over the biggest of Hollywood blockbusters spearheaded the astounding success of local cinema in the following years. Indeed, the next decade saw a series of box-office records by local films, which engendered a rapid increase in the domestic market share.

Certainly, South Korean cinema was undergoing a significant transformation. For attentive film fans and critics, however, the transformation of South Korean cinema was already visible in the years prior to *Shiri*, when films such as *The Gingko Bed* (Je-gyu Kang, 1996), *The Day a Pig Fell into a Well* (Sang-su Hong, 1996), *Three Friends* (Soon-rye Im, 1996), *Green Fish* (Chang-dong Lee, 1997), *Contact* (Yun-hyeon Chang, 1997), *Christmas in August* (Jin-ho Hur, 1998), and *The Quiet Family* (Jee-woon Kim, 1998) came out. These films marked remarkable feature debuts of young directors. These and many other filmmakers that made debuts in the subsequent years signaled a generational shift in the local film industry. Notably,

many of the debut films by these directors were box-office successes. For example, in both 1997 and 1999, three among the top ten highest grossing domestic films were debut features, while in 1998, seven out of the top ten best-selling domestic films were by first-time directors.

The films of these young directors not only exhibited substantially improved aesthetic and technical qualities, but also explored diverse subject matters, including previously prohibited topics. In particular, while avoiding overtly political stances, recent South Korean films have expressed much more interest in such disparate issues as North Korea. For example, films such as *Shiri*, *Joint Security Area* (Chan-wook Park, 2000), and *Welcome to Dongmak-gol* (Kwang-hyun Park, 2005) exhibit a new sympathy for North Korea. In a noticeable departure from the anti-Communist attitude toward the North during the Cold War, these films reveal a new kind of nationalism marked by an increasing embrace of North Korea as half of the nation, not as an enemy.

Another important trend in recent Korean films is intensified cultural hybridity. Rather than insisting on cultural purity, young directors actively use diverse foreign cultural resources, including East Asian popular cultures that have been very popular with young Korean audiences. For example, the fantasy action drama *The Gingko Bed* and the comic action film *My Wife is a Gangster* (Jin-gyu Cho, 2001) were highly influenced by Hong Kong action films, *The Ring Virus* (Dong-bin Kim, 1999) is a remake of a popular Japanese horror film, *Ringu* (Hideo Nakada, 1998), based on a Japanese novel, and *Old Boy* (Chan-wook Park, 2003) is a loose adaptation of a Japanese manga. These films show that young directors simultaneously capitalize on the more liberalized local culture and address local audiences who have been deeply influenced by diverse foreign cultures and media. In doing so, the new generation of directors brought a much-needed vitality to the Korean film scene.

The excitement surrounding the transformation of Korean cinema also traveled beyond the national border. Both *Shiri* and *Joint Security Area* set new records for the export price of South Korean films to Japan, with the former selling for US $1.3 million and the latter for $2 million. *Shiri* even accomplished the unprecedented breakthrough of topping the Hong Kong box office for three weeks in 1999 (*JSA* broke export record, 2000). In 2001, the overall success was even greater, with a 60% increase in rights sales over 2000 to a total $ 11.25 million (Korean Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2002).

Moreover, recent critical acclaim, including the Best Director award for director Kwon-taek Im (for *Chihwaseon* at the 2002 Cannes Film Festival) and the Grand Prix for director Chan-wook Park's *Old Boy* (won at the 2004 Cannes), seem to accompany commercial achievements and confirm a long-anticipated renaissance of South Korean cinema (Ryoo, 2004). Soon after, Ki-duk Kim, the director well-known for his *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter and Spring*, won the Best Director award in 2004 at the 54th annual Berlin Film Festival for *Samaria*. The international success of Korean cinema soon extended to other parts of the world, including Europe and the U.S. The works of Korean auteurs, such as Kwon-taek Im, Chan-wook Park, Sang-su Hong, and Ki-duk Kim, are now routinely seen on European art-house circuits. Korean films have also become more visible in America, largely through numerous film festivals and film series in big cities and major universities. Notable Korean film festivals held in the U.S. include the annual New York Korean Film Festival, which started in 2001, and the Korean Film Festival in DC, which began in 2004. Though less pronounced, a growing number of Korean films have been distributed in the U.S. film market as well. Many of them, including *Chunhyang* (Kwon-taek Im, 2000), *The Way Home* (Jeong-hyang Lee, 2002), and *The Host* (Jun-ho Bong, 2006), garnered substantial revenues in the U.S. Furthermore, coupled with the recent boom of

Hollywood remakes of Asian films, several Korean films have also been bought by major studios for these purposes. While most American audiences might be clueless about the origins of The *Lake House* (Alejandro Agresti, 2006), *My Sassy Girl* (Yann Samuell, 2008), and *The Uninvited* (Charles Guard, Thomas Guard, 2009), they are US remakes of popular Korean films. These are all signs that the local film industry is increasingly moving toward a global business model.

Diverse academic discussions were carried out concerning the shifting status of Korean cinema. In particular, several themes including industrial characteristics of changed Korean cinema, the status of Korean cinema as national cinema in the age of globalization, and the aesthetic features of such films have been dealt with vigorously. At the center of the discussions on the changed Korean cinema, the Korean blockbuster exists. In this thesis, I argue that the Korean blockbuster demonstrates a particularly vivid case of the complex reality of media globalization in local and global contexts. The existence of global media conglomerates, such as Hollywood studios, has long intimidated local media around the world. It is often believed that they threaten not only the domestic media players, but also the cultures of the consuming local communities. However, local media are not inevitably passive victims of global media, and flows of transnational media do not always jeopardize the autonomous cultural expressions of local media. Despite the influx of transnational media, the Korean film industry not only survived, but managed to compete successfully with foreign competition. The South Korean government's active promotion of the local film industry played an important role in the recent development of local cinema, which challenges the view of nation-states as obsolete in the age of globalization. Moreover, rather than shattering the cultural authenticity of local cinema, global media have provided resources that can be incorporated into local revitalization. Through active and creative borrowing and appropriation, the Korean blockbuster has manifested itself as a

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cultural hybrid.

As a long forgotten and ignored national cinema, until recently Korean cinema had not received much foreign academic attention. While a number of books analyzing major classic and contemporary Korean films and directors have been published in recent years, a comprehensive analysis of the transformation of South Korean cinema has yet to be written. In local and international news media, however, there has been substantial attention to the recent growth of Korean cinema. After a long unflattering history in which the domestic market suffered from Hollywood domination and the poor international standing of Korean films, local journalists have recently offered numerous celebratory accounts of the advance of the Korean film industry on the local and international media scene. Impressed by the achievements of the long forgotten national cinema, international news media and media industry trade journals have also been closely following the success of Korean cinema. Meanwhile, the Korean Film Council (KOFIC) has regularly published analyses of the performance and practices of the local film industry since the late 1990s.

Such discussions have generated some sketchy theories about how Korean cinema was able to revive itself over the past decade. But we now need both a more critical and a comprehensive approach to Korean cinema, especially Korean blockbuster as a phenomenon of globalization. The increasing production of blockbuster films that have met with limited success despite skyrocketing production costs has already generated voices questioning the sustainability of the current success of Korean films and pondering the potential damage to quality that such commercialism will generate. Several scholars have started to grapple with the issues of recent South Korean cinema and popular media in relation to globalization. Yet, most of these investigations tend to be one-dimensional in their focus and thereby fail to provide a well-

rounded analysis of the phenomenon, one that would account for the multiple aspects of production, representation, distribution, marketing, and audience reception. We need an analysis that examines the implication of Korean blockbuster for globalization, while considering the connections between production/distribution and text in diverse socio-politico-cultural contexts.

By adopting a critical and multidimensional approach, I will offer a comprehensive analysis of Korean blockbuster in its local and global contexts. Such an analysis will necessarily address a series of key questions. How has the Korean cinema responded to the forces of globalization both on and off screen? What were the conditions in the regional and global media economy in which Korean cinema emerged as a significant player? How does the Korean cinema appropriate Hollywood blockbuster? How is nationalism revealed in Korean blockbuster films? How does its hybridity inform our understanding of the concept of national cinema?

The following will serve as a literature review that begins to situate my work within contemporary currents in the field. In doing so, it will also build a 'dialogue' among the diverse studies in a way that allows a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of recent Korean cinema. This study addresses these research questions by using the framework of hybridiy and argues that the Korean blockbuster is a hybrid between the local and the global and Korean nationalistic stories and foreign film aesthetics.

Globalization and Hybridity

Since the 1980s, the term globalization has increasingly pervaded both academic literature and popular discourse. The intellectual and popular interest in globalization is associated with a growing perception that the conditions of individual local communities or nation-states, whether economic, political, military or ecological, have significant consequences

for communities in distant parts of the globe. This growing awareness of global interconnectedness is reinforced by the modern electronic media, which enables people in almost any part of the world to immediately share distant events, creating a sense of a global community. Another important change associated with globalization is the intensified flows of people, capital, goods, and cultural products across national borders.

Despite a shared perception of global change, there is considerable debate concerning the nature and effects of globalization. Until recently, the most popular and influential concept in the critical analysis of the increased international flow of mass media has been a negative perspective: media imperialism. This thesis concerns two related issues. First, there is concern that the ownership and control of the worldwide media is increasingly integrated with the market dominance of a handful of transnational corporations (Schiller, 1969, 1992; Herman and McChesney, 1997). Second, there is the question of the effects of such market dominance on consumers around the globe, which raises the issue of cultural imperialism. In assessing these effects, some simply equate politico-economic forms of domination with cultural imperialism, while others analyze imported cultural texts and argue that these texts, by promoting Western values, are a powerful ideological tool that threatens local and national cultures.

Herbert Schiller, an American Marxist media scholar, is one of the principal advocates of media imperialism. In his *Mass Communications and American Empire*, originally written in 1969, Schiller focused on the predominant power of American capitalism in the world media economy, though later (1992) he recognized the increasingly transnationalized ownership of worldwide media. However, seeing a U.S. media-cultural sector as the main, though no longer exclusive, source of products for the international market, he continued to equate capitalist culture with American culture. The view that cultural hegemony is brought about by global

capitalism is reminiscent of the world-system theory of sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein (1974), for whom the modern world-system is based on the logic of the ceaseless accumulation of capital. What is assumed in the work of Schiller is that world culture becomes homogenized as a universal mass culture as a result of Western economic and political domination.

This sort of political economy approach to cultural hegemony has a long-standing legacy in the critical analysis of international media systems. In their book *The Global Media: The New Missionaries of Corporate Capitalism* (1997), Edward Herman and Robert McChesney observe the accelerating concentration and integration of the ownership and control of global media systems in a limited number of transnational media corporations. Herman and McChesney share with Schiller their grim view of the world in which the spread of capitalist, transnational media leads to the demise of local, "authentic" cultures. Although they offer more up-to-date empirical research from the mid-1990s, one is struck by the persistence of a "totalizing" critical theory that has hardly changed from Schiller's work in the late 1960s and early 1970s. According to them, the power of media transnationals is not only economic and political, but extends to modes of thought.

While these views do illuminate certain aspects of globalization, the media imperialism thesis based on a political economy approach has been criticized for its overly simplistic view of the globalization process. First, one of the fundamental problems with the political economy model is its economic reductionism, since it often makes a simple inference from the sheer presence of Western cultural goods to local cultural dependency (Tomlinson, 1997: 180). Most of this literature lacks empirical case studies examining the actual impact of global media on local cultural production and the local reactions to the influx of transnational media. In their reaction to the totalizing approach of the political economic analysis, some critics such as Ariel Dorfman

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and Armand Mattelart (1975) focus on media texts to reveal their imperialist nature. Still, by simply assuming that in consuming these global media, local audiences absorb the hegemonic ideologies carried by the media, they overlook the individual audience member's ability to negotiate meaning in accordance with her or his personal interests and within the context of local social and cultural priorities.

Second, the idea that globalization results in a homogenization of culture by way of Western cultural hegemony fails to note that transnational cultural flows bring about cultural hybridization. Moreover, the notion that cultural homogenization is Westernization/Americanization, and is destroying the autonomy of indigenous cultures, is often based on the problematic essentialist notion that national identity is inherently homogenous and coherent, and represents the entire population of a nation-state. Benedict Anderson challenges this perspective that views cultural identity as pregiven in his seminal book, *Imagined Communities*. Anderson (1983) shows how the concept of homogenous national identity or nationalism relies on the construction of an "imagined community." Although most individuals within a nation never know, let alone meet, each other, through imagining a nation they feel a horizontal alliance. Anderson argues that nationalism has come to exist only since the rise of print capitalism, which allowed people to read in their vernacular languages and to feel a shared time and space, thus creating a sense of unity. However, this sense of unity is imaginary, and unified national culture has never actually existed.

Third, in their emphasis on the negative aspects of globalization, these scholars of cultural imperialism are not only pessimistic, but also blind to the potentially beneficial or contradictory dimension of the globalization process (Demers, 1999; Tomlinson, 1999). They fail to recognize diverse multi-directional cultural exchanges and transnational media flows offering

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an alternative model to the repressive authority of the nation-state or patriarchy. Although we should not lose sight of the uneven power relations that exist in the world capitalist media cultural economy, it is important to observe that transnational cultural flows do not necessarily result in cultural homogenization but can instead produce new cultural diversity and help revitalize local culture.

Fourth, while rightly recognizing the asymmetries of media distribution, views of media imperialism that relate globalization to a unilateral process from the center to the peripheries or from the West to the Rest, fail to recognize the existence of bilateral and multi-directional cultural flows and resilient local and national culture industries, some of which even become regional players. In other words, they tend to neglect plural cultural production centers around the world, including Hong Kong, India, Qatar, and Mexico. In doing so, the dichotomized view of the global and the local tends to reinstate the hegemony of West-based global media corporations, rather than challenging it. In short, because of its exclusive focus on the global and consequent neglect of the local, the cultural imperialism model could not help but fail to recognize the complexity and ambiguity of the globalization process. Without examining how local and national cultures actually respond in their encounter with global media, this model simply assumed they were doomed in the face of better-financed, more entertaining, and eyecatching transnational media.

There have been attempts, however, to understand globalization as a more complex and diverse process that involves contradictory consequences. For example, Anthony Giddens notes that globalization is a "dialectical process" because it does not bring about "a general set of changes acting in a uniform direction, but consists in mutually opposed tendencies" (Giddens 1990, 64). Similarly, rejecting the center-periphery model, Arjun Appadurai (1990) has argued

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that the new global cultural economy must be understood as "a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order." This view of globalization as involving seemingly opposed and contradictory processes—such as local and global, homogenization and heterogenization, universalism and particularism, deterritorialization and reterritorialization—is also shared by many other scholars (Featherstone et al. 1995; Lash and Urry 1994; Tomlinson 1991, 1997, 1999). Of them, I find Tomlinson particularly useful for my project.

John Tomlinson (1991, 1997, 1999) argues that imperialism is no longer a valid concept to describe today's complex world environment known as globalization. He notes that globalization is distinguished from imperialism in that it is a far less coherent and purposeful process, involving unintended effects and countervailing forces. Tomlinson explains globalization through the concept of "complex connectivity," that is, interconnections and interdependences of all global areas that occur simultaneously in the areas of economy, politics, culture, technology, etc. Significantly, he does not deny the existence of an asymmetrical distribution of power in various aspects of globalization. In rejecting the totalizing perspective of the imperialism thesis, however, Tomlinson urges us to recognize "the ambiguous gift of capitalist modernism" and "the contradictions of capitalist culture" (1991, 108), which include potentially positive effects. In addition, he points out that the effects of globalization apply also to the economically powerful nations, since their cultural coherence or identity is also weakened by the process of globalization. In short, the contemporary globalization process is more complex and ambiguous, and less coherent and ominous, than cultural imperialism.

One of Tomlinson's "contradictions of capitalist culture" relevant to my study is that the influx of global media such as films produced by Hollywood prompted the transformation of South Korean cinema from a poor entertainer to a vibrant cultural producer and exporter. It

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motivated the local film industry to revitalize itself to become more competitive. Then, with the

success of Korean cinema, major Hollywood studios began not only distributing profitable

Korean films, but also remaking Korean films that have been popular with local and East Asian

audiences. It is also important to note that market liberalization and the new media technologies,

such as DVDs and the Internet, which were believed to support the spread of global media, have

promoted the transnational spread of recent Korean cinema. By overcoming global forces

through active appropriation of foreign influences, and thus manifesting itself as a resilient local

culture industry, Korean cinema demonstrates the ambiguous and complex nature of

globalization.

   With regard to hybridity, it is often used in defining today's globalization due to the

interactions of the local with the global (Wang 2008). Several media scholars (Wang and Yeh

2005; Shim 2006; Ryoo 2009) believe that hybridization has occurred in Korea as local cultural

players interact and negotiate with global firms, using them as resources through which local

people construct their own cultural spaces. Through this, globalization, especially in the realm of

popular culture, breeds a creative form of hybridization that works towards sustaining local

identities in the global context. Some theoreticians have argued that in the current global media

environment, which is characterized by a plurality of actors and media flows, it is no longer

possible to sustain the notion of Western cultural imperialism emphasizing hegemonic

westernization and homogenization of local culture (Chadha and Kavoori 2000; Sonwalkar

2001). However, as Kraidy (2002, 323) points out, some scholars use the concept of hybridity

without rigorous theoretical grounding:

   Such superficial uses will tend to be descriptive rather than analytical, utilitarian rather

   than critical. Since instances of cultural mixture abound in intercultural relations, a

merely descriptive use of hybridity is especially threatening because it leads to uncritical claims that "all cultures are hybrid" and evacuates hybridity of any heuristic value.

As a reflection of its complexity, different thinkers have taken almost completely opposite views about globalization (Robertson 1992; Giddens 1999; Shome and Hedge 2002; Winseck and Pike 2007). For some, globalization is a single homogeneous system that is characterized by convergence and the presence of the universal (Wallerstein 1990), representing cultural imperialism theory. On the other hand, globalization is a matter of long-distance interconnectedness, and meddling with other people's environments (Hannerz 1996, 17), which symbolizes cultural globalization or hybridity theory. The concept of hybridity has become a new facet of the debate about global culture with the rise of post-colonialism, yet opinions are divided over the nature of cultural globalization (Wang and Yeh 2005).

The term hybridity can be used to describe mixed cultures or the process of mixing genres within a culture (Turow 2008). Some people use hybridity to describe the local reception of global culture as a site of cultural mixture. For them, hybridity primarily means the physical fusion of two different styles and forms, or identities, which often occurs across national borders as well as across cultural boundaries. A few previous studies have indeed employed hybridity to describe mixed genres and identities (Tufte 1995; Kolar-Panov 1996; Fung 2006). What they primarily emphasized is the nature of hybridity as the physical mix of two different cultures; however, what they did not focus on is whether the fusion of two cultures truly avoids a homogeneous culture heavily influenced by Western countries.

Hybridization is not merely the mixing, blending and synthesizing of different elements that ultimately forms a culturally faceless whole. In the course of hybridization, cultures often generate new forms and make new connections with one another (Wang and Yeh 2005; Ryoo

2009). As Bhabha (1994) points out, hybridity opens up "a third space" within which elements encounter and transform each other as signifying the "in-between," incommensurable (that is, inaccessible by majoritarian discourses) location where minority discourses intervene to preserve their strengths and particularity. For Bhabha (1994, 53), "hybridity is an interpretive and reflective mode in which assumptions of identity are interrogated." As such, the theory of cultural hybridity assumes that hybrid culture is more rich, resistant, democratic, diverse, and heterogeneous than cultures of Western states (Appadurai 1996; Tomlinson 2000). Several scholars (Bhabha 1994; Joseph 1999; Shim 2006) also claim that domination within a culture may become more dispersed, less orchestrated and less purposeful because culture can then be negotiated by local and global power.

These approaches assume that the relationship among different cultures is more one of interdependence and interconnectedness than dominance, and also that no single power and no single model can control all the processes of hybridization (Bhabha 1994; Kraidy 2005a). Garcia-Ganclini (1995) and Jan N. Pieterse (2004) especially state that hybridization offers an opportunity for local culture to be highlighted or to be continued, and furthermore that globalization is built on the base of local culture and local interpretation. In other words, they strongly refute the idea of cultural imperialism, which argues that there exist a one-way flow of cultural products from Western to non-Western countries (Schiller 1976), and the idea that capitalism creates a homogeneous or a universal culture; instead they claim that global culture is hybrid and thus more diverse (Ferguson 1990; Kraidy 2005a).

While the term hybridization is a significant concept for explaining globalization, the concept of hybridity and/or cultural globalization is not without areas of concern because there are some deficiencies in both theory and practice. Most of all, the concept of hybridization falls

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short of acknowledging structural inequalities, which is one of the major concerns of political economy, and it has allegedly become a neocolonial discourse that is complicit with transnational capitalism (Friedman 2000). It means that the theory of cultural globalization or hybridity intentionally or unintentionally ignores the commercial and capitalist nature of the global expansion process (Mosco 2009). Under the logic of capitalist production, hybridization inevitably has inherent limitations, and we cannot be pointlessly optimistic about the idea that hybrid culture is democratic, resistant, diverse and less purposeful. In fact, hybridity is often criticized as de-powering and with apolitical concepts (Wang 2008). Golding (1997) also points out that the theory of hybridity overly emphasizes cultural dimensions, leading to a neglect of the dynamic impact of structure, especially the unequal and asymmetrical power relationships among countries, cultures, regions and audiences.

Most importantly, hybridity has not given much attention to the nature of hybridized cultural products at the local level. While hybridity emphasizes the nature of local resistance and diversity against homogenous western hegemonic power by providing some examples of developments in local culture as seen in Korean cinema, it does not reflect the results of the hybridization process in terms of content. Again, hybridization should not merely represent the mixing, blending or synthesizing of different elements that ultimately forms a culturally faceless whole. Instead, hybridization means that local culture generates new forms of culture, not homogenized, but the mixed third space by resisting global forces. However, hybridity theory misses in understanding the fundamental part, the nature of hybrid local cultures - whether they are unique local cultures representing local specificity, or whether they are only another form of global cultures with local clothes. Unlike many previous studies, therefore, this thesis critically investigates the problematics of hybridity in interpreting Korean blockbuster by analyzing the

characteristics of hybridized local cultures.

Methodologically, my thesis research adopts an approach that combines political economy and cultural studies to provide industrial and textual analyses of hybridity in Korean blockbuster films in global and local contexts. In its concern with media ownership and control, the political economy model, predominant in arguments for the media imperialism thesis, focuses on the production and distribution of media. In comparison, the cultural studies approach is primarily concerned with the textual articulation of cultural politics and the reception and use of media by audiences. While both approaches have been popular in media studies, because of their respective emphases, neither alone is able to provide a comprehensive analysis of the rise of recent Korean cinema, especially Korean blockbuster in its local and global contexts. For example, the political economy approach neglects the analysis of media texts and their content, as well as the ways in which the media audience actually interacts with the texts. In addition, this approach is unable to recognize that an encounter between transnational media and the local audience often results in a hybrid culture based on creative interaction between the two, rather than on cultural homogenization or imperialism. Similarly, in its neglect of the production and distribution side, the cultural studies model illuminates only limited aspects of media practices. Moreover, some opponents have criticized the 'uncritical populism' in cultural studies, which has resulted from an exclusive focus on strategies of active interpretation and appropriation of media by ordinary people at the expense of an adequate grasp of the material relations of power and the political and economic conditions of cultural consumption.

All media practices involve closely related aspects of production, distribution, media texts (products), and reception. It is impossible to understand fully the recent Korean cinema in local and global contexts without taking all of these factors into account. Although observing the

phenomenon more from a cultural studies angle, my thesis also considers the local and regional political and economic conditions, as well as the local film industry's globalizational strategies, which are becoming increasingly aggressive and ambitious. Particularly, the development of the contemporary Korean film industry from an eager consumer of foreign media products to a producer and exporter of its own media cannot be demonstrated by an exclusive focus on either the producer (political economy) or the active audience or use (cultural studies) of media. Incorporating both cultural studies and political economic models, my work thus takes a holistic approach in providing a comprehensive analysis of recent Korean cinema that examines the relationship between the media industry, production and distribution, texts, and audience.

Balancing human agency and the political-economic structure and operation of media, my work also brings together contextual and textual analysis. While paying close attention to the historical contexts in which recent Korean cinema has emerged and developed (political economies in the local and global context), my thesis also analyzes several film texts to examine how they represent certain key national issues. My study attempts a dialogue between theories of globalization and a case study by considering recent Korean cinema from local and global perspectives. A phenomenon is best understood when informed by diverse theoretical positions, and a theory is best constructed when supported by closely observed and analyzed case studies. In short, my thesis adopts an approach that mediates between political economy and cultural studies, between textual and contextual analysis, and between the theoretical and the case-specific.

My thesis consists of two primary chapters, evenly divided between industrial and textual analysis. Chapter 2, "Globalization of Korean Cinema" examines the globalization of contemporary South Korean cinema as an industry. The chapter begins by observing the notable

rise of Korean cinema in the international scene, from film festivals to international distribution and marketing. Then I show how these globalizational endeavors have been most successful in East Asia. Next, I illustrate some of the key strategies that Korean film institutions have adopted to expand their business abroad, while also scrutinizing their disparate practices with regard to East Asia and North America. On the one hand, this chapter notes that recent Korean cinema is emerging as a significant cultural production in East Asia, and is greatly benefiting from the new media ecology marked by liberalization and ever-improving technology. On the other hand, it demonstrates that the recent development of Korean cinema is increasingly marked by corporate transculturalism that capitalizes on hybridity through diverse intra-regional exchanges, including co-productions and collaborations as well as remakes and adaptations.

Chapter 3 "Hybridty of Korean Cinema" examines Korean nationalist blockbuster films in relation to the hybridity of recent Korean cinema. *Shiri* (Je-gyu Kang, 1999), *Joint Security Area* (Chan-wook Park, 2000), *Tae Guk Gi: The Brotherhood of War* (Je-gyu Kang, 2004), and *Welcome to Dongmakgol* (Kwang-hyun Park, 2005) are the best texts not only for discussing the characteristics of Korean blockbuster, but also for representing Korean national issues. I analyze and compare the national identity in these films. I also consider genre-bending of Korean blockbuster, which negotiate a hybrid form between the local and the global.

My conclusion reviews how South Korean cinema in the past decade has responded to the forces of globalization by appropriating various foreign influences both on and off the screen. In particular, it highlights the ways in which the new identity politics of Korean blockbuster complicates our understanding of globalization and national cinema. I call attention to the multifaceted manifestations of hybridity in Korean blockbuster, to intra-regional exchanges and complex global-local dynamics as important components of globalization, and to national cinema

as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, an on-going process, and a site of conflict and negotiation

shaped by its relation to international cinemas and global forces. In this chapter, I ultimately

show that Korean blockbuster is a hybrid phenomenon marked by the co-existence of

nationalism and hybridity.

Chapter 2.
Globalization of Korean Cinema

In the late 1990s, when the astonishing growth of South Korean cinema became discernible, it was most apparent in its fast-growing domestic market share. By the turn of the new millennium, however, the success of local cinema was not merely a national phenomenon, but was accompanied by the equally remarkable performance of Korean films abroad. Unlike in the previous decade, during which the international exposure of Korean cinema was limited to occasional international film awards, Korean cinema has shown greater success in expanding its international endeavors, from numerous awards at major international film festivals to rapidly growing overseas distribution to transnational collaborations and operations with major firms. Particularly, capitalizing on the surge of interest in Korean popular culture in East Asia on the one hand and building partnership with regional major firms on the other, the Korean film industry has emerged as a significant player in the region. With this regional success fueling burgeoning global aspirations, major film institutions in South Korea have also become increasingly keen to venture into the global market, where international film companies, particularly Hollywood, have started to take notice of the achievement of Korean cinema. South Korean cinema has become ever more global in its operation as an industry.

In this chapter, I examine the globalization of South Korean cinema by focusing on various international practices and strategies of some major institutions and consider its implications for globalization. The chapter begins by noting the major forces behind Korean cinema's growing internationalization, including a governmental campaign to globalize Korean culture industries and rising production costs. Then I show how these globalizational endeavors have been most successful in East Asia, where the recent fascination for Korean popular culture,

together with regional market growth, has helped promote the wide circulation of Korean films. The remaining section examines some of the key strategies that Korean film institutions have adopted as a way of expanding their business internationally, with particular attention given to regional co-productions. While noting growing collaborations with other East Asian companies and patterns of film exports to the U.S. market, I also scrutinize the disparate practices of the Korean film industry with regard to East Asia and North America.

Ultimately, the chapter demonstrates that Korean cinema is globalizing alongside of and interacting with other regional players and Hollywood. The chapter also illustrates that there are prospering regional markets, numerous centers of cultural production, and cultural flows that move in multiple directions in the increasingly globalizing world. It thus argues that regionalization co-exists with globalization in the world media cultural economy. More importantly, this chapter further complicates our knowledge of hybridity in the context of globalization. Locating hybridity in the context of Korean co-productions with regional firms, it demonstrates how geo-cultural sites and communication processes that shape cultural hybridities are more diverse and broader than recognized by previous studies. It also points out the ambiguous nature of hybridity as it is simultaneously a product of neoliberalization motivated by pursuit of profit and a collective regional effort to resist Hollywood hegemony in Asia.

The Governmental Efforts to Globalize Korean Cinema

Although several factors contributed to the strong internationalization of contemporary South Korean cinema, the major force was the globalization policy of the government. Korean cinema has developed under the governmental campaign to enhance and globalize all of Korea's culture industries. The Young-sam Kim administration (1993-1998) adopted a globalization

policy in an effort to promote an economy that faced severe competition when the domestic

market was opened in response to U.S. pressure in the late 1980s. The idea was to strengthen the

Korean economy by embracing globalization rather than becoming its victim. After shifting its

media policy from control to promotion, the Korean government applied the same approach to

the film and media sectors to enhance and globalize culture industries. This shift was also

motivated by the recognition that culture industries are potential sources of huge profits. The

promotion of them intensified during the Dae-jung Kim presidency (1998-2003) and its legacy

continued with the administration of Mu-hyon Noh (2003-2008).

By the late 1990s, the government's promotion of the film industry had shifted its focus

from strengthening of the local industry against Hollywood at home to internationalization of

Korean cinema. The role of the Korean Film Council (KOFIC) has been central in this effort. To

promote Korean films abroad, the KOFIC sets up pavilions at major international film festivals

and markets, and provides assistance in overseas showcases for Korean films. It also provides

translations, or subsidies for the writing of subtitles for selected films targeting overseas film

markets or international film festivals. In addition, it subsidizes travel costs for filmmakers,

producers and actors invited to major film festivals.

With such efforts to promote Korean films abroad, recent years have seen an outstanding

rise in Korean cinema's visibility on the international film festival and art-cinema circuits. Local

films' participation in overseas film festivals grew significantly over the past decade, jumping

from 48 in 1995 to 172 in 2005. In addition, many have garnered awards at prestigious festivals.

The major achievements include: *A Picnic* (Il-gon Song, 1999; Short Film Jury Prize, 1999

Cannes Film Festival), *Chihwaseon* (Kwon-taek Im, 2002; Best Director Award, 2002 Cannes

Film Festival), *Oasis* (Chang-dong Lee, 2002; Best Director Award, 2002 Venice Film Festival),

Samaria (Ki-duk Kim, 2004; Best Director Award, 2004 Berlin International Film Festival), and

Old Boy (Chan-wook Park, 2004; Grand Prix, 2004 Cannes Film Festival).

<Table 1. Korean Film Exports 1995-2009>

Year	Export Sales (US $)	Number of exported films	Average export revenue per film (US $)
1995	208,679	15	13,912
1996	404,000	30	13,467
1997	492,000	36	13,667
1998	3,073,750	33	93,114
1999	5,969,219	75	79,590
2000	7,053,745	38	18,5625
2001	11,249,573	102	110,289
2002	14,952,089	133	112,422
2003	30,979,000	164	188,896
2004	58,284,600	194	300,436
2005	75,994,580	202	376,211
2006	24,514,728	208	117,859
2007	24,396,215	321	38,577
2008	21,036,540	354	58,026
2009	14,122,143	279	22,450

[Source: Korean Film Council (KOFIC)[1]]

Mirroring the impressive success of renewed Korean cinema on global art-house circuits, exports of Korean films have increased sharply over the past decade. In 1995, the total number of local films exported was only 15, but that number grew to 354 films in 2008. Accordingly, the revenue from film exports has grown tremendously. With a turning point in 1998, when export revenue soared to US $3.07 million from $0.49 million the previous year, the figure jumped exponentially from a mere $0.21 million in 1995 to $76 million in 2005. The average export price per local film also grew dramatically in the same period, from $0.14 million to $0.38 million (Table 1).

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[1] "The statistics on Korean film industry 2009." Korean Film Council. KOFIC Online. 7 April. 2010. Web. 9 Oct. 2010.

<Table 2. Average Production Costs for Korean Films by Year>

(Unit: Hundred Million Korean Won)

Year	Average Production Costs	Net Production Costs	P & A Costs	Produced Films	Released Films
1996	10	9	1	65	55
1997	13	11	2	59	60
1998	15	12	3	43	43
1999	19	14	5	49	42
2000	21.5	15	6.5	59	62
2001	25.5	16.2	9.3	65	52
2002	37.2	24.5	12.7	78	82
2003	41.6	28.4	13.2	80	65
2004	41.6	28.0	13.6	82	74
2005	39.9	27.3	12.6	87	83
2006	40.2	25.8	14.4	110	108
2007	37.2	25.5	11.7	124	112
2008	30.1	20.7	9.4	113	108
2009	23.1	15.6	7.5	133	118

[Source: Korean Film Council (KOFIC)[2]]

Ironically, the increasing emphasis on globalizational endeavors was partly motivated by the need to keep up with the skyrocketing production costs that followed the spectacular growth of the film industry. Together with the still powerful presence of imported films, the recent growth and success of Korean cinema has intensified competition at home, prompting a sharp rise in the costs of production, of which marketing and promotion became a substantial part. In 1996, local film companies spent an average of 1 billion Korean Won (KW) per film, but in 2004, the average cost of producing a film amounted to KW 4.16 billion (US $4.04 million). During the same period, the cost of making prints and advertising a film (P&A cost) increased more than thirteenfold, from KW 0.1 billion to KW 1.36 billion (US $1.33 million), while the net production costs[3] tripled from KW 0.9 billion to KW 2.8 billion (US $2.73 million) (Table 2).

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[2] Ibid.

[3] The net production cost, or what is called a negative cost of production in the US refers to all

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P&A costs were only 10 percent of the total production costs in 1996, but since 2000 have grown

to over 30 percent of the total costs. This soaring growth reflects the intensity of local market

competition.

<Table 3. Local films' box-office profits against production costs>

Year	Average production cost KW billion (a)	Local films released (b)	Estimated total production costs for local films released (A) [A = a x b]	Average ticket price for local films (c)	Total admissions for local films (d)	Revenues from box-office sales (B) [B = 1/2c x d]	Local films' net box-office profits (C) [C = B – A]
1997	13	60	78,000,000,000	4,952	12,120,000	30,009,120,000	-47,990,880,000
1998	15	43	64,500,000,000	4,996	12,590,000	31,449,820,000	-33,050,180,000
1999	19	42	79,800,000,000	5,192	21,720,000	56,385,120,000	-23,414,880,000
2000	21.5	62	133,300,000,000	5,324	22,710,000	60,454,020,000	-72,845,980,000
2001	25.5	52	132,600,000,000	5,823	44,810,000	130,464,310,000	-2,135,690,000
2002	37.2	82	305,040,000,000	6,071	50,820,000	154,264,110,000	-150,775,890,000
2003	41.6	65	270,400,000,000	5,981	63,910,000	191,122,850,000	-79,277,150,000
2004	41.6	74	307,840,000,000	6,295	80,190,000	252,398,020,000	-55,441,980,000
2005	39.9	83	331,170,000,000	6,176	85,440,000	263,838,720,000	-67,331,280,000
2006	40.2	108	434,160,000,000	6,034	97,869,200	295,273,790,000	-138,886,210,000
2007	37.2	112	416,640,000,000	6,247	79,390,000	247,974,665,000	-168,665,335,000
2008	30.1	108	325,080,000,000	6,494	63,540,000	206,314,380,000	-118,765,620,000
2009	23.1	118	272,580,000,000	6,970	76,470,000	266,497,500,000	-60,820,500,000

[Source: Korean Film Council (KOFIC)[4]]

The rising costs pose a particular challenge for the Korean film industry. Since the

domestic market is small, foreign revenue is essential for profits. There are two reasons for the

size of the domestic market. First, in Korea, ancillary markets for videos and DVDs are

surprisingly insignificant, so domestic box-office revenues account for most of the total revenue

of domestic films. The low proportion of ancillary revenues for Korean films is striking when

compared to the U.S. and Japan, where home video sales can amount to 250 percent - 300

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production, overheads, financing costs up to the creation of the negative of a new film.

[4] "The statistics on Korean film industry 2009." Korean Film Council. KOFIC Online. 7 April. 2010. Web. 9 Oct. 2010.

percent of revenue.[5] The meager figure for the Korean ancillary market is partly due to rampant

physical and on-line piracy, which has been increasingly damaging to the industry, but which

government has done little to fix. Second, despite local cinema's reliance on domestic screenings

for revenue, with a national population of only 48 million, the Korean film market is too limited

to produce reasonable profits for the rapidly expanding industry. The liberalization and growth of

the industry has generated more films to watch, the rise of modern multiplexes has provided

more screens and comfortable seats, and the number of tickets sold has tripled over the past

decade. Local competition has become fiercer, reflecting both a gradual increase since the late

1990s in the number of domestic films released and the continued influx of a large number of

foreign imports (see Table 3). In addition to rapidly rising production costs, the Korean industry

also faces decreasing average revenues, a clearly unsustainable situation.

South Korean cinema's predicament becomes more obvious when we focus on the total

box-office profits of local films against total production costs as seen in Table 3. Of course, local

cinema has other sources of revenues, and thus the negative number of the total net box-office

profits (C) does not mean an actual loss for the industry in the given year. But this table is useful

for understanding the relationship between the number of films released, their production costs,

and their profitability. For example, between 1998 and 1999, the average production cost

increased by 26.7 percent, but the number of films screened was down from 43 to 42. The result

was a slight increase in the net box-office profits against production costs. Between 1999 and

2000, however, when production costs and the number of films released increased 13.2 percent

and 47.6 percent, respectively, from the previous year, and total admissions increased only by 4

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[5] Russell, Mark. "Troubled Seoul." *The Hollywood Reporter*, 15 May. 2007.

percent, the net box office profits dropped by less than a third. Yet in 2001, when there was a significant drop in the number of films screened, there was a sharp rise in the net profits. In short, local box-office receipts cannot support production costs, and together with these rising expenses, the increase in the number of local films released reduces total revenues. In this respect, globalizational marketing is not merely an option but an inevitable policy for the local film industry. In order to sustain their business and make stable profits, major local film institutions have been making greater efforts to look for new opportunities abroad, not only for new markets but also for co-production partners and production resources.[6]

The Expansion of Regional Market

While contemporary South Korean cinema is rapidly drawing attention around the globe, its popular success has been most conspicuous in East Asian countries. Since the late 1990s, many box-office hits at home have been increasingly entertaining international viewers in theaters, as well as on DVD, or on copies downloaded from the Internet. Those films that have widely appealed to international audiences include *The Foul King* (Jee-woon Kim, 1998), *Shiri* (Je-kyu Kang, 1999), *Joint Security Area* (Chan-wook Park, 2000), *My Sassy Girl* (Jae-young Kwak, 2001), *My Wife is a Gangster* (Jin-gyu Cho, 2001), *A Moment to Remember* (Jae-han Lee, 2004), and *The Host* (Jun-ho Bong, 2006).

Statistics on the exports of Korean films by region show that Asia represents the highest proportion of the total export revenues in recent years (Table 4). For example, in 2003, Asia marked 61.4 percent of the total export revenue, which amounted to US $19 million, while North

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[6] Kim, Tae-jong. "Hard Lessons for Big Budget Films." *The Korea Times*, 13 June. 2005.

America accounted for 14.5 percent and Europe 18.5 percent. The export dependency of Korean films on the Asian market continued, reaching its peak of 87 percent in 2005, when Europe and North America together accounted for only 12.3 percent of the total export revenues. As Table 5 shows, Japan has been the largest market for South Korean films in the past several years, though local films have been exported to many other Asian countries, including Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore, and Malaysia, as well as China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. South Korean films focus on the more lucrative Japanese market because a Korean film is not only sold at a much higher price, but also garners much more revenues. Note that the Asian market is highly concentrated in Japan.

<Table 4. Korean films' exports by region 2003-2007>

Region	2003		2004		2005		2006		2007	
	(US $)	(%)	(US $)	(%)	(US $)	(%)	(US $)	(%)	(US $)	(%)
Asia	19,024,000	61.4	45,327,500	77.8	68,143,686	87.0	17,029,759	69.5	6,943,118	56.5
North America	4,486,000	14.5	2,900,000	5.0	2,014,500	2.7	1,959,200	8.0	307,260	2.5
South America	82,500	0.2	141,500	0.2	235,600	0.3	384,000	1.6	199,100	1.6
Europe	5,724,000	18.5	8,245,250	14.1	7,315,970	9.6	4,902,054	20.0	4,553,625	37.1
Oceania	30,000	0.1	152,850	0.3	147,830	0.2	71,215	0.3	111,571	0.9
Africa	0	0.0	0	0.0	35,320	0.0	0	0.0	17,465	0.1
Others	1,632,500	5.3	1,517,500	2.6	101,674	0.1	168,500	0.7	151,200	1.2
Total	30,979,000	100	58,284,600	100	75,994,580	100	24,514,728	100	12,283,339	100

[Source: Korean Film Council (KOFIC)[7]]

The remarkable popularity of Korean films in the East and Southeast Asian region is, in fact, part of the craze for Korean popular culture across Asia, often referred to as Hallyu (Korean Wave). The term Hallyu was first coined by Chinese journalists to describe a sudden influx of South Korean popular culture, such as television dramas and popular songs, and their fast-

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[7] "The statistics on Korean film industry 2009." Korean Film Council. KOFIC Online. 7 April. 2010. Web. 9 Oct. 2010.

<Table 5. Korean films' exports to 8 major territories 2003-2007>

	2003		2004		2005		2006		2007	
	(US $)	(%)	(US $)	(%)	(US $)	(%)	(US $)	(%)	(US $)	(%)
Japan	13,893,000	44.8	40,401,000	69.3	60,322,686	79.4	10,385,000	42.4	3316796	27.0
USA	4,486,000	14.5	2,361,000	4.1	2,014,500	2.7	19,592,000	8.0	300100	2.4
France	709,000	2.3	2,084,000	3.6	1,504,820	2.0	1,285,000	5.2	1759500	14.3
Thailand	1,448,500	4.7	1,771,500	3.0	1,520,000	2.0	3,324,500	13.6	1154000	9.4
Ger-many	1,908,500	6.2	1,558,000	2.7	1,237,250	1.6	1,293,209	5.3	501890	4.1
Taiwan	906,500	2.9	1,069,000	1.8	997,000	1.3	533,000	2.2	347000	2.8
China	805,500	2.6	206,000	0.4	530,500	0.7	435,659	1.8	473000	3.9
Hong Kong	834,500	2.7	702,000	1.2	1,145,500	1.5	708,000	2.9	289300	2.4
Others	5,987,500	19.3	8,132,100	14.0	6,722,324	8.8	4,591,160	18.7	4141753	33.7
Total	30,979,000	100	58,284,600	100	75,994,580	100	24,514,728	100	12,283,339	100

[Source: Korean Film Council (KOFIC)[8]]

growing popularity among Chinese youth in the late 1990s (Jang 2003, 144). In 1997, the Korean drama *What is Love All About* was aired on China Central Television (CCTV), and became a big hit, with a 4.3 percent rating, the highest of any imported program (Samsung Economy Research Center 2005, 4). Another Korean drama *Star is in My Heart* broadcast on Mandarin Chinese Broadcaster Phoenix TV became a success in China and Taiwan in 1999, driven in part by the popular appeal of the main actor Jae-wook Ahn (Sung, 2008). Due to the huge popularity of Korean drama, the Chinese government moved to change the law limiting Korean content to 15 percent of TV airtime.[9] Beijing radio began broadcasting Korean popular music in 1996, and Korean pop music videos, featured on a regional music TV channel, Channel V, started to draw Asian fans in the late 1990s. In particular, the Korean boy band H.O.T. topped the pop charts in China in 1998, and was a sensational success in their Beijing concert in February 2000, which drew significant attention from Korean as well as local media.

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Kim, Mi-hui. "Korean TV stars shine behind Bamboo Curtin: Country influenced China's TV, pix, games, fashion." *Variety*, 29 August. 2001.

The rising Korean Wave was accompanied by the emergence of a number of Hallyu stars. One example is the abovementioned Jae-wook Ahn, a Korean actor/singer who starred in *Star in My Heart*, who has enjoyed enormous popularity in China, with successful concerts and television appearances and commercials. Indeed, at the peak of his fame in China, he was ranked number one in a 2001 poll of the most popular stars, surpassing even Leonardo DiCaprio (Choe, 2001). Also outstanding is Korean actress Hee-sun Kim, who was selected as a model for TCL, a Chinese mobile phone company. She was not only awarded a two-year contract with TCL worth US $1.2 million, but appeared in a commercial filmed by Yimou Zhang. According to a 2004 report in a Korean newspaper, Hee-sun Kim was one of the most sought-after actresses in China, receiving calls from four famous directors in the region—Stanley Tong, Ang Lee, Yimou Zhang, and Kaige Chen—all of whom showed great interest in working with her.[10] As a result, she co-starred with world star Jackie Chan in *The Myth* (2005) by Stanley Tong.

The Korean Wave first arose almost simultaneously in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, and soon expanded to other parts of Asia, including Singapore, Vietnam, and Japan. Moreover, Korean popular media have recently had enthusiastic receptions in many other parts of the world, including Iran, Mexico, and Spain, as well as in Asian diasporic communities in North America. The Korean Wave also expanded its scope to other areas of popular culture, including film, fashion, and cosmetics.

Especially, amid the sizzling popularity of Korean culture and media in Asia, many Korean critics predicted that the phenomenon would soon cool off, seeing it as a passing fad (Cho, 2005: 167). In reality, though, the Korean Wave has become stronger, with Japan now the

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[10] Lee, Ji-sheung. "Chinese Press Predict Kim Hee Sun to be Reborn as Representative Brand of Asia." *Chosunilbo*, 12 July. 2004.

biggest market for Korean media and stars. A driving force behind this "second" Korean Wave is Yong-joon Bae, a Korean actor who has become incredibly popular among Japanese middle-aged women with the phenomenal success of a Korean TV series, *Winter Sonata*. Thanks to his phenomenal success in Japan, not only is Bae currently one of the highest-paid actors outside Hollywood, charging US $5 million a film, he has also accumulated an entertainment empire worth $100 million.[11] Following Bae, a number of major Korean stars have also entered the lucrative Japanese market to cash in on the Korean Wave. Rekindled by the recent success of Korean popular culture in Japan, the Korean Wave has continued to prevail in East and Southeast Asia, while also spreading further beyond the region.

Along with the overwhelming success of Korean popular culture in East and Southeast Asia, Korean films have also rapidly attracted viewers in the region. Through Korean television dramas and popular songs, people have developed a taste for Korean films. Moreover, many Korean stars work across several media, including film, television and music. For example, Jae-wook Ahn was popular as a television actor and as a singer, and also starred in some films, while Yong-jun Bae and Hee-sun Kim have appeared in both film and television. In the wake of the abovementioned huge success of *Shiri* and *Joint Security Area* in Hong Kong and Japan, a growing number of Korean films have been released in regional theaters, with many of them drawing sizeable audiences.

One prominent case is popular Korean romantic comedy, *My Sassy Girl* (Jae-young Kwak, 2001), which became a runaway hit in the entire region when it was released throughout East and Southeast Asia. When the film was released in Hong Kong in spring 2002, it landed at

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[11] Faiola, Anthony. "Japanese Women Catch the 'Korean Wave': Male Celebrities Just Latest Twist in Asia-Wide Craze." *The Washington Post*, 31 August. 2006.

the top of the box-office for two weeks and earned more than US $1.2 million in 19 days,

breaking the record set by *Shiri* in 2000. In summer 2002, *My Sassy Girl* was among the top ten

box-office films for four weeks in Taiwan, grossing over US $0.3 million, and it also earned US

$2.8 million in Singapore, where it stayed in the box-office top ten for six weeks. *My Sassy Girl*

was also a big success in Japan, grossing US $4 million when it was released there in early 2003.

With some fluctuations, many Korean films have continued to attract large numbers of viewers

in the region. A Korean horror film, *The Phone* (Byeong-ki Ahn, 2002) became a hit both in

Hong Kong, where it grossed HK $2 million (approximately US $0.26 million), and in Japan,

where it was released on 236 screens and earned US $6.7 million. More recently, *A Moment to*

Remember and *April Snow* (Jin-ho Hur, 2005), starring Yong-joon Bae, were included in the top

20 grossing films of 2005 in Japan.

The Korean Wave has had a significant impact on the Korean film industry in several

ways. Above all, it has provided the local film industry with revenue to compensate for

skyrocketing production costs. In the wake of the record-breaking success in 1999 of *Shiri* that

cost KW 3.5 billion (US $3 million), a series of Korean blockbusters appeared in 2000. The

swordplay fantasy *Bichunmoo* (Young-jun Kim, 20000) cost KW 4 billion (US $3.5 million),

and *Libera Me* (Jun-ho Yang, 2000) cost KW 4.5 billion (US $4 million). A new record-setting

blockbuster, *Joint Security Area*, also cost KW 4 billion (US $3.5 million), some of which was

spent building a replica of the Panmunjom truce village. Partly driven by the need to recover

rising production costs and partly stimulated by the outstanding success at home, major Korean

firms had already become eager to venture into overseas markets by the beginning of this decade.

They were quick to capitalize on the rising popularity of Korean popular culture in East Asia,

coupled with the expansion of the regional market.

The breakthrough came with *Shiri*, which marked a turning point in the Korean blockbuster boom. When it was released in Hong Kong at the end of 1999, it topped the local box-office. Samsung Entertainment, which was in charge of the international distribution of many Korean films, sold the film to Japanese distributor Cinequanon for US $1.3 million plus 30 percent of the profit from the theatrical revenues. Before *Shiri*, the export price of a Korean film was much lower, with even big local hits selling for about $40,000 - $50,000. *Shiri* was also the first Korean film to enjoy nationwide release in Japan, where it attracted 1.2 million viewers and made $15 million. Then *Joint Security Area* was sold for $2 million to Japan, where it opened on 225 screens throughout the country, and stayed among the top ten films for eight weeks in 2001. Remarkably, *Joint Security Area* was Korea's first example of distributing a film directly into a foreign country since CJ Entertainment released the film through its Hong Kong branch office. The interest in Korean film intensified with the runaway success of *My Sassy Girl* in several regional markets. Ever since, a number of Korean films have been distributed widely all over East and Southeast Asia, from cinema-savvy Japan and Hong Kong, to Singapore, a smaller but regular importer of Korean films, and Thailand, one of the largest markets in the region, and to other niche markets such as Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia.

Significantly, Korean firms looked overseas not simply for new export markets but also for co-production partners and new production resources. Co-productions were a logical step for a local industry needing both additional revenues and sources of financing, in response to rapidly increasing production and marketing costs. In the wake of the Korean Wave, there have been a growing number of international co-productions between Korea and other East Asian countries, particularly China, Hong Kong and Japan. For example, after the commercial success of Jin-ho Hur's critically acclaimed *Christmas in August* (1998) in Hong Kong and Japan, Sidus, the

producer of his next project *One Fine Spring Day* (2001) could secure co-financing deals with

Japan's Shochiku and Hong Kong's Applause Pictures. The co-production deal included a

division of distribution rights to Hur's new film: A Korea's major distribution company, Cinema

Service would keep distribution rights in Korea, while Applause handled distribution in Hong

Kong and in East Asia, and Shochiku distributed it in Japan and outside Asia. It is worth noting

that Applause Pictures in Hong Kong started with the goal of promoting pan-Asian co-

productions with a particular interest in Korean and Thai films. The company packaged two pan-

Asian horror anthologies, namely, *Three* (Jee-woon Kim, Peter Chan, and Nonzee Nimibutr,

2002), a Korea-Hong Kong-Thailand co-production, and *Three Monsters* (Chan-wook Park,

Fruit Chan, and Takashi Miike, 2004), a Korea-Hong Kong-Japan co-production, which were

popular regional successes. It should also be noted that regional cooperation, including co-

productions, has been the Asian film industries' strategy to promote pan-Asian cinema as a

response to the continued threat of the Hollywood giants in each of the local markets. In addition,

co-productions are extremely beneficial for local film industries with limited financing and

markets, as they ensure more capital and wider distribution nets, while reducing risks.

International co-production deals made a quantum leap forward with the 2002-2003 pan-

Asian mega hit *My Sassy Girl*, which made its leading actress Ji-hyun Jeon a cultural icon in the

region. Seeing the huge success of the film he distributed in Hong Kong, Bill Kong, head of the

producer/distributor Edko, which produced *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000), agreed to

co-produce *Windstruck* (2004) starring Jeon.[12] *Windstruck* also became the first Korean film to

be totally financed by foreign investors. Arranged by Hong Kong's Edko, American banks

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[12] Russell, Mark. "Korea: Asian Alliance." *Hollywood Reporter*, 24 May. 2005.

invested money in the film for the production costs, and the film was simultaneously released in Korea and Hong Kong. Taking a cue from this, the Korean film production company i Film decided to make its new project, *Daisy* (2006), co-starring Jeon and Woo-sung Jung, with more international appeal. The company thus turned to a Hong Kong director and co-produced the film with Hong Kong. A mixture of melodrama and action set in Netherlands, the film was written by Jae-young Kwak, writer-director of *My Sassy Girl* and was directed by Andrew Lau, director of *Infernal Affairs* (2002).

Partnership with Hong Kong companies also made it easier for Korean film institutions to enter the otherwise difficult Chinese market. In 2003, Jae-young Kwak's *Classic* (2003) was one of the 19 foreign films distributed as a revenue-sharing release, and became the first Korean film ever to be released in that way.[13] Although China is a potentially enormous market, its restrictive system makes it difficult for foreign films to enter the market, let alone to make a profit. First of all, only about fifty foreign films are allowed to be imported into China each year. Of those, only twenty are distributed on a revenue-sharing basis so that the foreign company and the Chinese distributor share the profits, while the rest are sold outright to the Chinese distributor, usually for a low price.[14] The majority of these revenue-sharing films have been from Hollywood. Thus, the inclusion of *Classic* was a significant landmark for Korean efforts to venture into the Chinese market. Hong Kong distributor Edko Films was instrumental in setting up the arrangement, so it shared the profits. The sales of rights to Korean films in China became noticeable toward the end of the 1990s, when films with Hallyu stars started to be released. In

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[13] Ahn, Ji-hye. "Current Status of Korean Film Exports to Overseas' Markets." *Korean Film Observatory* Spring 2004: 14-15. Print.
[14] Ibid.

2003, twenty Korean films were released in China, but in most cases, Hong Kong distribution companies, rather than mainland ones, bought the rights and distributed them throughout China. In one way or another, Korean and Hong Kong film companies have become important partners in the shared pursuit of Chinese markets. Through these transnational co-productions and collaborations, South Korean cinema has become ever more hybridized as an industry, while also producing culturally hybrid films.

Korean film firms have also practiced other strategies to break into the potentially giant yet impermeable Chinese market. The most common approach has been to make a historical swordplay epic featuring stars with regional appeal, using locations in China, and working with Chinese film crews. The martial arts fantasy, *Bichunmoo* (Young-jun Kim, 2000) is one early example. While the film was budgeted at KW 4 billion (US $3.5 million), the use of less costly Chinese labor and locations, in addition to the casting of Hallyu star Hee-sun Kim, both reduced costs and helped arrange a better distribution deal in China. The film was a big success, with reportedly over 0.12 million admissions in Shanghai alone in its first month.

The success of *Bichunmoo* engendered another Korean-Chinese co-production of a big budget epic blockbuster, *Musa* (2001). This film was directed by Sung-soo Kim well-known for high quality action films, and had a multi-star cast, including Woo-sung Jung, Jin-mo Ju, Sung-ki Ahn, and mainland actress Ziyi Zhang, the latter of whom represented another step in approaching the Chinese market, while also helping to raise the international profile of the film. Indeed, sharing talent already proved to a safe bet, for even before shooting began, distributors from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan bought the rights to *Failan* (Hae-sung Song, 2001), a Korean film featuring popular Hong Kong actress Cecilia Cheung. *Musa* enjoyed a wide release on some 180 screens in China, after aggressive marketing, including a promotional visit to

Beijing and Shanghai by the two leading actors, Woo-sung Jung and Jin-mo Ju. Staying among the top three grossing foreign films in China for three weeks, the marketing strategy proved to be successful.

Korean film companies have also been active in expanding their business in Japan, the biggest market for Korean films in Asia. The recent growth in Korea's business with Japan in the cultural sector is linked to the 1998 shift in South Korean policy toward Japanese culture. Due to their colonial history under Japan, the Korean government banned the importation of Japanese pop culture. But the ban was lifted in 1998. Under the Korean government's gradual relaxation of restrictions on the importation of Japanese cultural products, there have been substantial cultural exchanges between the two countries, including film imports/exports in both directions and joint film projects. With Japanese manga and pop music already popular among young people through pirated copies, the official opening to Japanese culture greatly increased Korean youth's consumption of Japanese popular culture, from manga to TV dramas and music. The number of Japanese film imports in Korea jumped from two in 1998 to thirty five in 2006. Conversely, as shown above (Table 5), Japan has been the largest market for Korean films, despite the big drop in revenues from exports to Japan in the past two years. Notable Korean film exports to Japan include *Joint Security Area*, the Korean SF animated film, *Wonderful Days* (Moon-saeng Kim, 2003) and *A Bittersweet Life* (Jee-woon Kim, 2005). *Joint Security Area* was sold for US $2 million and garnered an additional $2 million from profit-sharing and the sale of rights to video distribution, while *Wonderful Days* and *A Bittersweet Life* were sold to Japanese companies for $2.5 million and $3.7 million respectively.

Some Korean companies are taking even more aggressive steps to tap the lucrative Japanese market. For example, after co-producing the martial arts blockbuster *Musa* with China

and distributing it directly to Hong Kong, CJ Entertainment produced a big budget action fantasy

2009 Lost Memories (Si-myung Lee, 2002), which was shot in Korea, Japan, and China. The

film co-starred Korean actor Dong-gun Jang and Japanese star Toru Nakamura, and also featured

many Japanese actors and the famous Japanese director Shohei Imamura. In 2004, with the

Japanese market as its main target, another powerful Korean production house Sidus made

Rikidozan (Hae-sung Song, 2004), a biopic about a famous wrestler in Japan[15]. The film was

made with a Korean director and a Korean star, Kyong-gu Seoul, but was set in Japan and filmed

in Japanese with mostly Japanese performers, including Miki Nakatani, Tatsuya Fugi, Masato

Hagiwara, and Taro Yamamoto. More recently, in 2005, CJ Entertainment started a partnership

with the Japanese company Kadokawa Holdings to co-produce films, including projects based on

Kadokawa books, manga, or films, and to collaborate in investment, overseas sales, book

publishing and multiplex construction. One outcome of the collaboration was a Korean horror

film, *Black House* (Terra Shin, 2007), adapted from a 1997 Japanese bestselling novel by

Yusuke Kishi that was filmed in 1999 by Yoshimitsu Morita as *The Black House*.

Although Korean cinema's transnational endeavors are most visible in Asia, the

remarkable success of Korean films at home and in East Asia has also begun to draw attention

from Hollywood. First of all, seeing their strong performance at the box office, some of the

Korean branch offices of Hollywood firms have begun distributing domestic films. For example,

the local direct distributor of Disney, Buena Vista International Korea/Disney, distributed *Il

Mare* (Hyun-seung Lee) in 2000 and *Bungee Jumping of Their Own* (Dae-seung Kim) in 2001,

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[15] Rikidozan (1924-1953) was a famous Korean-born famous professional wrestler in Japan. His Korean
identity was kept secret for many years even after his death because of the Japanese discrimination
against Koreans.

while the Korean branch of Twentieth Century Fox distributed *Calla* (Hae-sung Song, 1999). In the wake of the Korean Wave in Asia, local offices of Hollywood companies also have started investing in Korean films to acquire their international distribution rights in the region. One of the most active companies is Buena Vista Korea, which invested in several Korean films, including a 2002 Korean horror film by Byeong-ki Ahn, *Phone*, and Ahn's new horror film *Bunshinsaba* in 2004. While Buena Vista Korea distributed both films locally, the former was also released on 236 screens in Japan by Buena Vista Japan, and Buena Vista International handled the release of the latter in Japan and Singapore.

A growing number of Korean films have also been exported to the US. Columbia Tristar became the first major U.S. distributor to purchase a Korean film when it acquired the rights to *Shiri* for the North American and Latin American markets. Other distinguished examples of Korean film exports in the US include Yun-hyeon Jang's *Tell Me Something* (1999), Myeong-se Lee's *Nowhere to Hide* (1999), Kwon-taek Im's *Chunhyang* (2000), Jeong-hyang Lee's *The Way Home* (2002), distributed by Paramount, and Jun-ho Bong's *The Host* (2006). Some of these films have garnered positive reviews and considerable revenues in the US. With Korean cinema still relatively unknown to the American public, however, and because of a general aversion to subtitles among American audiences, theatrical distribution of Korean films has been slow and difficult even for Korean cinema's exciting mainstream features. Consequently, most Korean films have been limited to film festivals, art-houses circuits, or niche markets targeting pan-Asian communities in big cities such as LA, Chicago, and New York. Not surprisingly, those films that do get a US release are usually action flicks or art-house fare that either disregard or exaggerate cultural identity in both representation and consumption.

Rather than releasing Korean films directly in theaters, American companies have been

more eager to buy remake rights. For that reason in 2001, Miramax bought *Bichunmoo* and *My Wife is a Gangster* (2001), the latter for US $1.1 million for both distribution rights and a remake. *My Sassy Girl* was sold to DreamWorks for $7.5 million and 4 percent of the profits from worldwide distribution of the remake. *Hi Dharma* (Cheol-gwan Park, 2001) was sold to MGM for a remake, for $3 million and 5 percent of the profits from its worldwide release. Warner Brothers joined the boom of Hollywood majors' remake arrangements with Korea, buying rights to *Il Mare* and *Marrying the Mafia* (Heung-sun Jung, 2002). With many more such arrangements on the way, some of these deals have already started to come alive in American theaters. *The Lake House* (2006) starring Sandra Bullock and Keanu Reeves, *My Sassy Girl* (2008) starring Elisha Cuthbert and Jesse Bradford, and *The Uninvited* (2009) starring Emily Browning and Arielle Kebbel are remakes of each Korean film, *Il Mare*, *My Sassy Girl*, and *A Tale of Two Sisters* (Jee-woon Kim, 2003).

Although I have focused on diverse globalizational endeavors in East Asia and in the US, the Korean film industry has also been increasingly successful in exporting its films in Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. It should be noted that Europe has been a stable market for Korean films, accounting for the second largest revenues from film exports. Moreover, several European firms have co-produced or invested heavily in Korean films. For example, two famous Korean art-house directors, Ki-duk Kim and Sang-su Hong have enjoyed huge success in art-house circuits in Europe, and their films have often attracted financing from European film companies.

As noted, recent years have seen a remarkable globalization of the institutional practices and strategies of South Korean cinema. Since the late 1990s, efforts to globalize the Korean film industry have been facilitated by a number of factors: the governmental campaign to globalize

domestic culture industries, increasing pressures in the local market, confidence from

extraordinary domestic success, the renewed regional market environment marked by the Korean

Wave of rising Korean popular culture throughout East and Southeast Asia. Along with an

impressive rise in worldwide art-house and film festival circuits, recent Korean films have

increasingly catered to foreign viewers. Though some Korean film companies are ambitiously

expanding their business beyond Asia, riding the Korean Wave in the ever-growing Asian

market has been the most rewarding strategy for most film companies in South Korea. By

dramatically expanding its overseas projects and markets through collaborations and partnerships

with other East Asian media firms, the Korean film industry has emerged as a major player in the

region. Now, the Korean film industry, the fifth largest in the world in box-office revenues, and

with exports to 59 countries in 2007, is no longer producing films merely for domestic

consumption, and is increasingly taking on globalizational strategies to both sustain and expand

its business. In short, South Korean cinema is globalizing, while its films are simultaneously

localizing and transnationalizing various cultural resources available to them.

While riding the prevailing Korean Wave, South Korean cinema has become more

active in the pursuit of international success by adopting various strategies, including co-

productions as well as other collaborations with East Asian companies. These regional

collaborations and co-productions produce a new kind of hybridity in the context of globalization.

They demonstrate that a local cultural industry is hybridized through intra-regional cooperation.

Kraidy (2005) argues that most research has focused exclusively on media texts and the

dynamics of media reception, while little consideration has been given to media production. He

also points out that the existing analyses of hybridity often ignore structural issues, while

celebrating cultural hybridity as antithesis to cultural hegemony. In response, Kraidy demands a

more critical and more rounded approach to hybridity that considers not only power and structure but also the links between production, texts, and reception. Yet, even his more comprehensive analysis situates the formation of cultural hybridity mostly in the global-local nexus, with his examples of local manifestations of hybridity grounded in the local production and reception. In this way, most research, including Kraidy's, has rarely paid attention to hybridities produced through intra-regional cultural mixing as an industrial strategy and through non-Western, local institutions' international media practices. By locating hybridity in the context of Korean co-productions and collaborations with regional firms, however, this section demonstrates how globalization as cultural hybridization takes place at multiple levels beyond the conventional paradigm. It also points out the ambiguous nature of hybridity as an industrial practice of regional cooperation as it embodies what Kraidy calls "corporate transculturalism" that produces hybridity to garner more revenues, as well as a regional resistance to Hollywood hegemony. As noted, hybridity as corporate transculturalism has become more evident in recent years as the Korean film industry is becoming more ambitious in its overseas business by employing more aggressive modes of transnational investment, coproduction, collaboration, distribution, exhibition, and promotion.

Chapter 3.
Hybridty of Korean Cinema

With the appearance of the Korean Wave from the late 1990s, the Korean entertainment

and film industry has stood at the center of East Asian popular culture. The rise of the Korean

blockbuster at the same time has located the Korean film industry as the leading power within

the regional film industry. The Korean cinema has grown rapidly from the late 1990s and this

extreme development is a rare phenomenon in the world film industry. The international cultural

flow, which was stagnant for a long time, in East Asia, such as China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan,

South Korea, and other countries, has been active with the support of the Korean entertainment

and films. Taking the initiative in the regional cinema of East Asia, the Korean film industry is

functioning as a regional media hub, stimulating cultural exchange throughout the area.[16] As the

director of *Made in Hong Kong* (1997), Fruit Chan (2005), states, the Korean film industry has

experienced revolutionary development over the last decade and is leading the Asian film

industry in various aspects including technology and narrative. One of the major propulsions of

this regional leadership of the Korean film industry is certainly the Korean blockbuster.

The Korean blockbuster films discussed in this chapter possess the elements that makeup

the contemporary Korean cinema. Roughly speaking, their net production costs are in excess of

US $10 million. The total production costs, including the marketing costs, are between $15

million and $20 million. Even though this amount is about 10% of that of Hollywood

blockbusters, the films are considered blockbusters within the Korean film industry. They are

works of large size that target 10 million admissions, which is approximately 21% of the present

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[16] Shim, Doo-bo. "Globalization and Cinema Regionalization in East Asia." *Korea Journal*. 45(4). 2005: 233-260.
Print.

population of Korea, which numbers 48 million. They use star casting and a huge amount of special effects. Their release time is also adjusted to coincide with the national holidays, such as Chuseok (the Korean Thanksgiving Day), Christmas, and New Year's Day.

While Hollywood blockbuster films have sought universal and global ticket sales by means of the typical themes rewarding the good, punishing the evil, and happy endings, Korean blockbuster films appeal to the Korean people's nationalist sentiment, present the national identity, deal with historical moments, and attempt to heal emotional wounds from national traumas. In other words, Hollywood blockbusters have set global audiences as the target, regardless of their nationality, but Korean blockbusters have targeted Korean audiences with the purpose of countering Hollywood blockbusters. So, although Korean blockbusters resemble Hollywood blockbusters in terms of the scale of production and spectacle-centered storytelling, they can be considered as a part of the Korean national cinema seeking Korean national peculiarity and resisting Hollywood films.

In this chapter, I examine Korean blockbuster films in relation to the hybridity of recent Korean cinema. *Shiri* (Je-gyu Kang, 1999), *Joint Security Area* (Chan-wook Park, 2000), *Taegukgi: The Brotherhood of War* (Je-gyu Kang, 2004), and *Welcome to Dongmakgol* (Kwang-hyun Park, 2005) are the best examples not only for discussing the characteristics of Korean blockbusters, but also for representing Korean national issues. I analyze and compare the characteristics and the national identity in these films. I also consider genrebending of Korean blockbuster, which negotiate a hybrid form between the local and the global.

The chapter begins to investigate what Hollywood means from the viewpoint of local film industries in order to clarify the relationship between Hollywood cinema and its style and the economically cultural imperialism of the U.S., before proceeding to the substance of Korean

blockbuster. Then I show how Korean blockbusters have appropriated Hollywood blockbuster to create a unique hybrid cultural form and to unfold national narratives.

The Politics of Hollywood Blockbusters

Hollywood cinema can be defined as the synthesis of the following characteristics of the Hollywood film industry: the consumer-targeting of a global audience beyond the American domestic audience through the use of universally understandable stylistic and narrative techniques; the concentration on the action and SF genres which result from this approach; and the implicit or inherent infusion of U.S. and/or European culture into the narrative.

First, the Hollywood film is no longer a purely American phenomenon, as the Hollywood film industry has increasingly sought a global audience in the wake of the global economic and cultural economic integration that has occurred since the 1970s. Frederic Wasser (1995) suggests that Dino DeLaurentis, who became the global distributor from 1974, initiated the transnationalization of global financing and marketing accompanied with "pre-selling unproduced films" into the American film industry (p. 423). Hollywood had to follow the rules of the most predictably successful films to ensure presales. This has raised the industry's dependency on violent action genres and the star system. As a result of transnational financing and marketing, the Hollywood film style has transformed from the realist classical to a "universal style" that international audiences could understand easily without cultural barriers. So, the universal style tends to focus on sights-centered action over dialogue-centered drama explicitly depicting American culture. It seeks to use simple dialogue that can be easily dubbed for the convenience of global audience/marketing. In terms of editing, the universal style seems to maintain the invisible style of classical Hollywood cinema, also called continuity editing. The

goal of continuity editing is that audiences should not be conscious of the existence of camerawork and editing. The more invisible the editing, the deeper the audience focuses on spectacle.

Wasser's notion of a "universal style" is echoed by Charles Acland, who describes Hollywood films as operating at a "cultural discount" (p. 33) compared to local productions that remained commercially constrained by their cultural specificity. Acland argues that Hollywood films use a "universal popular language" (p. 33) that transcends any national cultural contexts. This language is rooted in what Scott Olson calls the "transparency" (p. 33) of Hollywood films. Transparency is achieved by removing American cultural peculiarities from themedia, so that global audiences can project their own domestic beliefs and values. So, American cultural products are easily absorbed into the domestic cultures.

Wasser, Acland, and Olson all argue that Hollywood's global success comes from its ability to develop a "universal" sensibility that transcends cultural specificity. But this sensibility is perhaps not as universal as these critics imagine. Critics of Hollywood's global influence suggest that "universalism" is in reality simply the latest form of cultural imperialism.

Georgette Wang and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh (2005) describe the development of Hollywood's global style as a process of "deculturalization, acculturalization, and reculturalization" that is the process of "transparentization." Wang and Yeh show that the demand of films and television programs rapidly increased in the 1990s because of the development of cable and satellite television programs. They argue that the hybridization of global culture has satisfied the demand by means of "the localization of global products and the globalization of local products" (p. 177). According to them, in order to satisfy the global audience's preferences, producers of films and television programs deculturalize the products by

removing "ethnic, historical or religious" cultural particularities, and "adapt, repackage or transform" the existing story model for the global audience's understanding. As a result, a new form of the "acculturalized" products is born (pp. 177-178).

Despite the efforts of deculturalization, derived from the economically imperial globalization/transnationalization strategy, Hollywood films reveal inherently American culture, beliefs, and values through reculturalization of the films' narrative. Through a comparison between Disney's *Mulan* (Tony Bancroft and Barry Cook, 1998) and Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000), Wang and Yeh argue that Hollywood implicitly and inherently infuses Americanism. Both the films show a typical model of transnationalization; the films were globally financed, marketed, and distributed. However, they argue that while the Chinese-made-and-owned *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* shows an artistic globalization of Chinese aesthetics, the Hollywood-made-and-owned *Mulan* shows infusion of "American-style individualism in the context of ethnic and gender assertion" (p. 180).

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon adhered to Chineseness by "a synthesis of Peking opera, kung fu and the Taoist worldview"; however, it deculturalized the issue of social class and hierarchy through the Jen and Lo's love scene, which did not exist in Wang Dulu's original novel (p. 184). In addition, it was reculturalized by the possibility of various interpretation derived from acculturalization transforming the end to Jen's suicide (p. 184). However, Hollywood's effort to globalize a Chinese local product, *Mulan*, implicitly infused Americanism while removing Chineseness. According to Wang and Yeh, the original Chinese fairy tale describes Mulan as a patriot and dutiful as well as chaste and prudent girl. However, Disney's *Mulan* is a hussy who fails her bridal test, agonizes over her identity, and participates in a war to resolve the doubt (p. 181). *Mulan* deculturalizes traditional Chinese values of loyalty and filial piety and

acculturalizes it into the narrative of American or Western individualism. Despite the period setting of the ancient China, *Mulan* reculturalizes the fairy tale through infusion of the "celebration of the triumph of will" that is a typical "modern and American" value of Hollywood blockbuster. There is no true Chineseness in Hollywood-made *Mulan* because there is no "cultural mission" in Disney's purpose (p. 189). Thus, *Mulan* is not about the Chinese but about the transnational-American.

Wang and Yeh point out the deceitful aspect of the universal narrativity of Hollywood films:

Although deculturalization may be the key to entering the global market, its "acultural" outlook may in fact be deceptive, as storytelling cannot be accomplished without touching on beliefs, attitudes, values and behavioral patterns. When characters are pushed into action and decisions are made, the underlying beliefs and values emerge. … Reculturalization, therefore, is often as symbiotic with deculturalization as it is with acculturalization (pp. 178-179).

According to Wang and Yeh, Hollywood sells deculturalized products in pursuit of a universal formula; however, this search for universality is impossible, for storytelling cannot be accomplished outside of the implicitly American perspective of the Hollywood-based directors, screenwriters, staffs, actors, and producers. When the characters' action occurs, their culture, beliefs, and values are latently infused into the narrative. Disney deculturalizes the tradition of loyalty and filial piety from the original work, acculturalizes it with the emphasis on Mulan's selfhood, and by doing so, has produced *Mulan,* a work reculturalized with modernism and Americanism. In this context, the Hollywood film and its global style is economically and "reculturally" imperial.

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Addressing this deceptive reculturalization of Hollywood narrativity, Wasser introduces his interesting conversation with American film executives:

In my conversations with American film executives, it was obvious that they perceive the worldwide market as desiring a certain image of America to be featured in the movies. Each executive may have differing and changing notions of the desired image— one season it may be hedonist consumers on the open road with fast cars—the next season it may be the American ethic of an individual hero struggling against all corrupt collectives. The point is not whether international viewers are actually seduced by such images but that film producers set for themselves the task of portraying an "America" that is a dreamscape for "universal" desires rather than a historical reality (p. 435).

Wasser insists that Hollywood films, already globalized, no longer represent the historical reality of the U.S. For Wasser, the Hollywood film industry and films are economically imperial, but culturally just global and not imperial in that the Hollywood style is not an American style representing the U.S. but a global style targeting the global audience. However, the Hollywood style cannot be simply a global style because, from the viewpoint of local film industries, markets, and audiences around the world, the Hollywood style is clearly different from their national styles. A style that the global audience can easily understand can be said to be a Hollywood or universal style; nevertheless the universal style is only a space for easy-to-understand emotional sympathy. It cannot replace the local films' style and those films' own narratives. In other words, even if the Hollywood style no longer represents America, or even if the term "universal style" thoroughly replaces the term "Hollywood style" the universal style is, for the local film industry, merely another form of economically and culturally imperialist power onto which the label "Made in U.S.A." is attached. Whether Hollywood is American or not, it

certainly is the foreign imperialist force threatening local film industries.

In particular, South Korea has been exposed to American values and models of heroism accompanied with the memory of Korean War in which the U.S. Army participated. The U.S. prevented Korea's transformation into communism by the intervention into the war; as a result, the U.S. has been a political ally of South Korea. The U.S. materially supported the socio-economic reconstruction of South Korea after the war. This situation has made Korea more open and receptive to American cultural influence than many other Third World countries. In this context, American values and heroism, presented through Hollywood's so-called "universal" style, have influenced Korean culture in many ways.

For example, in *Star Wars Episode VI: Return of the Jedi* (Richard Marquand, 1983), as Kyoung-wook Kim (2002) indicates, there is a symbolically imperialist scene revealing the U.S. viewpoint of the Third World which includes Korea. Luke, Princess Leia, and Han Solo go inside Endor's forests to remove Emperor and Darth Vader. In the forests, they give chase to the Vader's scouts with the speeder bikes. Leia falls off of her bike and faints. An Ewok, Endor's indigenous occupant, wakes up Leia with a wary eye. He resembles a teddy bear. He drapes a piece of straw mat over his head and shoulders, and holds a crude spear. Ewoks dislike the Empire. The Ewok threatens Leia; however, he looks like a cute kid. Leia is not afraid of him; rather, she treats him as gently and with levity as if he were a child, and offers him a cookie. This scene in which Princess Leia ingratiates with the Ewok with a cookie in Endor's forests, from the Korean context, has the associations of the U.S. Army's support in the post-Korean War period (p. 185). Leia gives food to the benighted Ewok, and finally, brings him over to the Rebels' side. One of the most representative scenes of post-war Korea was that of children chasing U.S. military trucks shouting, "Give me chocolate." Korean children wearing ragged underwear begged for

chocolate from the U.S. soldiers; the soldiers gave it to them from their battle jackets. The chocolate could be lunch, or even their only meal for the day. The U.S. Army was the all-powerful benefactor for hungry Korea at that time. Princess Leia, the Ewok's similarly powerful benefactor, parallels the role of the U.S. Army. The film symptomatically approaches Korean audiences by portraying the phase of time when the U.S. was absolutely powerful and all behaviors of the U.S. could be justified without any condition. As the innocent Ewoks sacrifice themselves in the middle of the war between the Empire and the Rebels, Korea was likewise trampled down in the middle of the Cold War between the Soviets and the U.S. As Endor's peace is restored by the Rebel Alliance, South Korea is supported and reconstructed after the war by the U.S. As Luke, Leia, and Han Solo are heroes of the Ewoks, the U.S. Army is that of Korea. In this sense, for Korean culture, *Star Wars Episode VI* can be viewed to serve as a cultural anesthetic mitigating the antipathy toward the U.S.'s econo-political control over South Korea, and at the same time, to be a culturally imperial medium infusing superiority of American culture and values.

In addition to their allegories of historical experience, Hollywood films have served to westernize Korean culture. In traditional Korean life, cohabitation before marriage could not be imagined. However, Soo-yeon Lee (1995) shows how the example of Hollywood films featuring unmarried couples, such as *Ghost* (Jerry Zucker, 1990), have heavily influenced the Korean youth's way of thinking. Since the mid-1990s, both contracted marriage, in which couples decide whether or not to get married after a period of cohabitation, and cohabitation without any condition, has become more and more common among Korean youth. In another example of westernization, forms of social activity have been rapidly changing among Korean youth. Traditional static Asian party culture, in which guests remain seated, is being replaced with

western-style parties, in which the host circulates among guests and encourages the development of new friendships. This shift in social rituals seems in large part to be the result of the social models presented in western media.

If we combine Wasser, Acland, and Wang and Yeh's lines of argument, America in Hollywood films is not any historically real America but the fictitious image of America created to satisfy the global audience, while silently imposing implicitly American values. At the same time, the success of these not-so-universal films undermines the efforts of local film industries to create more specific, authentic cultural expressions. The question of whether American culture and value themselves shown in Hollywood films are imperialist or not should be dealt with film by film; however, Soo-yeon Lee's remark, "the fact that American films disseminate American culture cannot be denied" (Lee, 1995, p. 81), seems to well represent Hollywood films' culturally imperialist aspect, in addition to the transnationally economical imperialist attitude. Even though Hollywood films have distanced themselves from American historical reality, the various value system of American culture represented in Hollywood films has latently infused to global audiences, including Koreans, and influenced their ways of thinking and behavior.

Korean Blockbusters as a Hybridity of the Local and the Global

Korean nationalist blockbuster films are a hybrid form between the two poles of national cinema and Hollywood cinema. Their subjects and artistic spirit are a kind of national cinema, but their mode of expression resembles that of Hollywood blockbuster films. They take national traumas as their subject, representing the tragedy of fratricidal war and the experience of occupation, inspiring nationalistic patriotism. Unlike many Hollywood blockbusters, according to film critic Young-jin Kim, most Korean blockbusters feature tragic endings. This is due to the

fact that the filmmakers not only seek box-office profit, but also recognition as auteurs (Park, 2006).

The difference between the national and the nationalist indicates the difference of range of the subjects. Korean national cinema refers to all things related to Korean nationality; the range of its subjects is extensive. It can be a Korean art cinema or a Korean cinema dealing with social consciousness of economic and political status, with self-awareness of Korean tradition, historical events, culture, and so forth. As Andrew Higson (1989) suggests, "there is not a single universally accepted discourse of national cinema" (p. 36). However, the Korean nationalist film concentrates on the representation of the Korean nationalism and expression of Korean national identity and history. Thus, Korean nationalist film can be viewed as a distinct kind of national cinema.

On the other hand, Korean nationalist blockbusters appropriate Hollywood blockbusters' aesthetics. Especially, their visual image follows the Hollywood spectacle by use of special effects. Their use of sound effects and editing styles also resembles that of Hollywood. The technological level of special effects as a whole are not yet comparable to that of Hollywood, but the level of digital visual effects is in hot pursuit of Hollywood. In this sense, Korean nationalist blockbusters are a hybrid film form, standing against Hollywood's domination by means of the dominant style. This new film hybrid form has overcome Hollywood cinema in the Korean domestic market. In this context, Korean nationalist blockbusters can be a new alternative of national cinema, countering against Hollywood's dominance over the local film industry.

According to Byeong-cheol Kim (2006), the contemporary Korean cinema is divided into three main categories: "producer-centered packaged cinema," its variant "Korean-style blockbusters," and the "director-centered New Korean Cinema" (p. 8). According to Kim, when

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a producer persuades investors with a "proposal package," the package includes all matters in detail related to the film's production, such as the synopsis, market research, main actors, production company, director, and so forth. The films produced under this "quasi Hollywood system" are packaged cinema (p. 18). Korean blockbusters follow the same business model. The difference is the larger investment of capital, making the use of more expensive special effects affordable (p. 20). Packaged cinema began to appear in the early 1990s, while blockbuster films came onto the scene with *Shiri* in 1999.

New Korean Cinema, also called the Korean New Wave, is a less commercially-oriented and auteurist movement reflecting Korean's growing economic, political, and cultural ambitions in the 1980s and 1990s. Yong-gyun Bae, Kwang-su Park, Sun-woo Jang, and Kwon-taek Im are representative auteurs. Their films have been recognized by international film festivals. According to Byeong-cheol Kim, New Korean Cinema has dealt with "social awareness" and "consciousness" with the reflection of national uniqueness, and it has posed itself as "a critical counter against a Hollywood cinema backed by universal capital, particularly in the form of Hollywood blockbuster" (p. 13). The New Wave films' social commentary is represented through the narrativization of the socio-political problems of the times, such as the military regime's oppression of the people and the resulting Democratization Movement, and the partition of the territory, class, and gender. However, despite the New Wave films' artistic or national significance as a counter cinema, they could not be rivals in terms of the box-office profits. For example, Kwon-taek Im's *Sopyonje* was a record-breaking mega-hit in 1993 which 1,035,741 audiences-in-Seoul saw. It was the first Korean film exceeding one million admissions, and was the only one over one million admissions in 1993. However, in the same year, the admissions-in-Seoul of *Cliffhanger* (Renny Harlin, 1993) were 1,118,583, that and of *Jurassic Park* (Steven

Spielberg, 1993) were 1,063,352.

David E. James places national cinema into the realm of art cinema, countering Hollywood films. According to James (2001), "national art-film styles" have been understood within the relationship "between the deconstruction of the language of classic Hollywood cinema and some combination of two other frames of reference: the language of cinemas standing against capitalism and the languages of pre-colonial domestic cultural practices adapted to the medium of film" (p. 16). Based on James's definition of the national art-film style, Korean nationalist blockbuster films cannot be national cinema because their language is much closer to that of Hollywood. Their language does not stand against capitalism, nor does it represent precolonial cultural practices. In addition, Kathleen McHugh (2005) suggests that the national cinema obtains the identity as a national cinema through the prize winning of international film festivals (p. 21). However, Korean nationalist blockbusters have not yet gained special responses from international film festivals. Chan-wook Park's *Oldboy* was awarded Grand Prize of Jury in 2004 Cannes International Film Festival; however, it was a non-nationalist blockbuster. The value of studying Korean national cinema today is precisely because it deviates from the older models of national cinema. In this context, the significance of this chapter is to show how a cinema can embody national consciousness while still using the language of Hollywood.

Even though these concepts and practices of national cinema present an aesthetic or artistic alternative to the Hollywood film, they could have not been a visible economic alternative in the Korean film market. National cinemas could not overwhelm the local market share. Historically, Hollywood films have dominated national cinemas, including the Korean national cinema. Direct distribution of Hollywood cinema in South Korea began in 1988. Hollywood film companies could establish their local offices in Korea, directly distribute their

films through them, and be able to dominate the Korean film market by means of the superior power of their capital. As a result, the Korean films' market share, which was 35~40%, was reduced to only about 20%; this phenomenon continued into the late 1990s. The vast majority of films seen in Korea during this period were made by Hollywood. In the 1980s and 1990s, Korean cinema was regarded as a national cinema in the conventionally festival-oriented definition. Kwon-taek Im produced national art films *Come Come Come Upward* (*Aje aje bara aje*) in 1989, *Sopyonje* in 1993, and *Taebak Mountains* in 1994. Yong-gyun Bae's *Why Has Bodhi-Dharma Left for the East?* was awarded the grand prize of Golden Leopard in the Locarno International Film Festival in 1989. Ji-young Chung, Gil-su Jang, Sun-woo Jang, and Kwang-su Park produced national art films and were awarded prizes from international film festivals. Despite several national films' successes in international film festivals, however, the domestic film market was dominated by Hollywood films. Korean audiences preferred Hollywood blockbusters to these Korean art films. The alienation between art and reality, between theory and practice, and between critics and audiences was pervasive. The appearance of Korean nationalist blockbusters filled this gap, becoming an alternative model for the Korean film industry.

The Korean blockbuster appeared as the benchmark of the Hollywood blockbusters' success strategy to compete with the Hollywood blockbusters. Opposing the capital's globalization, which centers on Hollywood, the Korean blockbuster, with local particularity, positively adopted mimicry as extension and transformation to rival Hollywood blockbusters. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that although the Korean blockbuster have much larger production funds than that of other Korean films, Korean producers have the burden of creating spectacles like that of Hollywood blockbusters with just ten percent of the cost of a Hollywood blockbuster. The Korean blockbusters, which could not but fall behind those of Hollywood in

spectacle owing to little production funds and insufficient technology, needed other strategies to overcome this and pursued Korean subject matters and content to attract common interest from Korean audiences. Therefore, it would be a strategic choice for the Korean blockbusters to adopt materials and contents in Korea's national features to cope with Hollywood blockbusters.

Korean Nationalist Blockbuster Films

The success of *Shiri* in 1999, which was the combination of the Korean nationalist subject and Hollywood aesthetics, was not the result of the plan of the Korean film industry, but that of the director Je-gyu Kang's individual strategy. However, since *Shiri*, the film industry itself, feeling a premonition of the possibility of blockbuster, has strategically increased investment in blockbuster films. The most successful films have been movies appealing to national emotion, based on past traumas. More conventional blockbusters, SF-oriented blockbuster without nationalist themes, such as *A Mystery of the Cube* (Sang-wook Yu, 1998), *Resurrection of the Little Match Girl* (Sun-woo Jang, 2002), and *Natural City* (Byung-chun Min, 2003), have failed, in terms of both commercial and critical reception. Audiences' embrace of the nationalist blockbuster films clearly reflects a desire to see representations of natural traumas onscreen, and perhaps to heal through the pleasures of these effects-driven narratives.

The Korean nationalist blockbuster films do not hide the traumas of recent Korean history; rather, they expose and imaginatively twist them. Their narrativization strategy has been labeled "faction," by Korean journalists, referring to the combination of historical fact and imaginative fiction. The origins of contemporary Korean nationalism can be viewed as the traumas from the invasion of foreign powers, including China, Japan, and the U.S. Opposition to the invaders is the main motif of most Korean nationalist blockbuster films. As Tae-jong Kim

(2006) indicates, five films out of the ten most popular Korean films concerned a national trauma: "*Taegukgi: The Brotherhood of War* (2004), *Welcome to Dongmakgol* (2005), *Silmido* (2004), *Shiri* (1999), and *Joint Security Area* (2000)" by the end of 2006. All five films address the Korean War and its aftermath.

This nationalism reflects an eager desire for real independence as a sovereign state. As Gi-na Yu indicates, it is the expression of "the collective sense of inferiority or anger" caused by the painful experiences (Kim T.). Korea has been attacked by surrounding powers since the beginning of its history, and has often been occupied by outside forces. Entering into the Twentieth Century, it experienced the painful history of Japanese occupation for thirty-six years. Five years after emancipation, the Korean War broke out between North and South Korea. Korea could not maintain independent sovereignty, as she was split by the military intervention of the U.S. and China. Korea is still the only divided country in the world. This collective sense of both inferiority and anger about the dark past of the Korean nation tends to explode through nationalistic subjects. This Korean nationalism was not invented by the Korean nationalist blockbusters, but it was rediscovered and reconfirmed by them. *Shiri*, the first of the nationalist blockbusters and a runaway hit, re-emancipated the suppressed sense of anger and inferiority among the Korean people. The painful history had never disappeared. As Korean film director, Woo-suk Kang, recently producing a nationalist blockbuster, *Korean Peninsula/Hanbando*, states, the reason that Korean audiences are enthusiastic over the film is that they can recover their self-respectful hurt from the reality through the nationalist film and that the film can provide the space for letting off their resentment (Chun & Lee, 2006). The Korean audience is attempting to compensate for the humiliating traumas with these nationalist films. Nationalism, as the subject of Korean blockbuster films, functions as an imaginative vicarious war against the foreign forces.

This anti-foreign narrative not only emotionally absorbs the Korean audience, but also influences its response to films made outside of Korea. Andrew Higson insists, "the concept of a national cinema has almost invariably been mobilized as a strategy of cultural (and economic) resistance" (p. 37). Thus it is the resistance against Hollywood's domination over local cultures and local film markets. In terms of the Korean nationalist blockbuster films, the national sentiment against foreign forces is matched with the concept of a national cinema as a response to Hollywood hegemony.

In what follows, I will examine the aesthetics and the narrative of Korean blockbusters. Then, I will show how Korean nationalist subject matter and Hollywood style is mixed, reveals the past trauma, and functions as a tonic for the nation, by means of the textual application. I choose four Korean blockbusters, unprecedented box-office hits in the domestic market, which dealt with the division of Korea into north and south, a national trauma. The four films are *Shiri* (Je-gyu Kang, 1999), *Joint Security Area* (Chan-wook Park, 2000), *Taegukgi: The Brotherhood of War* (Je-gyu Kang, 2004), and *Welcome to Dongmakgol* (Kwang-hyun Park, 2005).

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Shiri

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Shiri (1999) was directed by Je-gyu Kang, one of the most successful Korean directors. It was a commercial and critical breakthrough in the Korean film industry. As 6.1 million audiences watched *Shiri*, it surpassed the record of *Titanic* (James Cameron, 1997) admitting 4.7 million audiences in the local film market. *Shiri* was also awarded Grand Prize in Film at Baeksang Arts Award, one of Korea's most prestigious film awards, in 1998. *Shiri* is the nationalist blockbuster film that describes by means of Hollywood the pain of the broken country and its long-cherished desire for unification of the North and the South. In the plot, North Korean

revolutionists intend to break the mood of accommodation between North and South Korea, to give rise to the second Korean War, and finally to accomplish military unification led by the North. They send Bang-hee LEE to assassinate Korean leaders and make her approach to the South Korean OP agent Jung-won YOO as a lover. The North Korean special force, Mu-young PARK, is sent to the South, in order to kill the minister of the North, at a major soccer event between the North and the South. They intend to incriminate the South to break out the second Korean War. The name of the plan is "Shiri". YOO saves innocent people of the South by killing PARK, the assassinator, and his true lover, LEE.

In reality, despite the South Korean's heartiest wish for unification, the political barrier between the North and the South seems to be heightened to the degree that the unification is felt impossible. Neither the South nor the North wants to unify via the way that each of them prefers. In addition, some intellectuals of the South do not want the unification because the extreme poverty of the North may become a total burden to the South's economy. The government of the South is supporting the North from various angles to prevent the North's economic collapse. This inequality of economy and the polarization into opposing politics put a question mark onto the possibility of the unification. Even now, to ensure the power of the North's dictatorship, each North Korean is brainwashed since his elementary school years into thinking that the South is a cat's-paw of the imperial U.S. From the mid 1990s, after the military regime ended, the South began to recognize the North as a subject to embrace. The South's recognition of the North has changed, but the North's recognition of the South has not seemed to be changed. The unification may be accomplished in the near future, or not at all. For the South today, the unification seems to be closer to a fantasy than to reality. In this geopolitical context, the South agent YOO's struggle with PARK's violent provocation for the unification in *Shiri* shows the clear distinction

of vision of the unification between the South and the North.

As the director Je-gyu Kang directly states (Shim, 2005), *Shiri* follows the style of Hollywood action thrillers. Throughout the film, *Shiri* faithfully imitates the narrative scheme and the spectacular imagery from Hollywood action movies. In the first 10 minutes of the film, audiences are fascinated by the dynamic actions of the heartless and cruel drill of the North Korean Special Forces. This kind of narrative scheme – attracting audiences speedily by showing dramatic and intensive scenes in the first scenes – is common in Hollywood action films. It also follows the Hollywood's peculiar speedy narrative development by providing a lot of information on the heroine Bang-hee LEE's skill and lethalness as a killer in a short time using still cuts with subtitles. Specifically, the scene in which agent YOO leads the OP special units and has a fierce battle with the North Korean Special Forces in the building imitates the action scenes in *The Rock* (Michael Bay, 1996) or a number of SWAT action movies. The bodily movement of OP units is much closer to that of the Special Forces led by Commander Anderson (Michael Biehn) in *The Rock*. The urban combat scene resembles that of *Heat* (Michael Mann, 1995). The scene in which PARK threatens YOO by a phone call imitates the scene in *Die Hard: With a Vengeance* (John McTiernan, 1995). PARK says, "We have ten CTXs placed all over Seoul. I'll call you 30 minutes before each of them goes off. You'd better find them before people get hurt." Manhattan is replaced by Seoul, and Detective John McClane is changed to Agent YOO.

The film shows the stereotypical characters of Holly action movies. *Shiri* is developed while focusing on the confrontation between the South Korean OP member Jung-won YOO and the North Korean Special Forces' Moo-young PARK. These two heroes are described as stereotypical characters that represent good and evil. The confrontation between YOO and

PARK symbolizes the conflict between the South and the North, and the narrative ends with the victory of YOO, who protects the righteous democracy against PARK, who attempts to accomplish reunification by a war. This kind of framework is suggestive of Hollywood spy films about the Cold War, which describe the confrontation between American spies and Soviet ones as the conflict between good and evil. It is clearly evident in *Shiri* that it borrowed the Hollywood narrative element of the confrontation between a hero and a villain.

In addition, the film exposes the cultural influence of Hollywood in itself. In the scene wherein Agent Jung-won YOO and his best friend, Agent Jang-gil LEE and Bang-hee LEE (pretending to be YOO's lover) are having dinner together after seeing a musical, the cultural influence of West on South Korea is explicitly presented. The musical they see is the Korean version of the Broadway musical *Guys and Dolls*. The restaurant where they have dinner is the European-style family restaurant, Marché. The camera takes the logo of Coca Cola in the middle of the frame, and slowly pans right and tilts down to the parasol of the dinner table, where the logo of Marché is seen. They are in the center of cultural imperialism called globalization.

The main musical theme of *Shiri* is also Carol Kidd's *When I dream*. It is heard whenever the melodramatic-scenes between Jung-won YOO and Bang-hee LEE are presented. At the very end, in particular, when YOO recalls LEE, it is heard again with the ending-credits. "I could build a mansion that is higher than the trees… But when I dream I dream of you maybe someday you will come true…" The mood of YOO recollecting his love with LEE, which is impossible to gain, is replaced by the heart of a South Korean falling in love with a North Korean, which also seems impossible to achieve. South Korean people's heartiest wish for the unification is repeatedly symbolized by the American popular song, rather than by Korean music;

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it is a vivid representation of cultural imperialism. As *Shiri* reveals the U.S.-oriented Korean

culture of the present, it naturally absorbs the audiences into the nationalist narrative.

In *Shiri*, the seeming impossibility of the South's dream of unification with the North is

repeatedly represented through the leitmotif of two fishes, Kissingurami and Shiri. Bang-hee

LEE, a spy from North Korea, falling in true love with the South's Agent Jung-won YOO repeats

the story of Kissingurami, a tropical fish coming from abroad.

> Bang-hee LEE: (as giving two Kissinguramis to Yoo) If one of them dies, the other
>
> dies too. They dry up from malnutrition or their scales fall off. Don't let them
>
> die. Feed them once a day, and change the water…
>
> Joong-won YOO: Every five days. They don't survive where it's dark and cold. Keep
>
> the lights on all the time.
>
> Bang-hee LEE: I might do the same thing if you left me alone.
>
> (They imitate the kisses of Kissinguramis.)

Their dialogue of Kissingurami with the background music of *When I dream* represents the love

mood in peace. However, in reality, the kiss of two Kissinguramis refers to not a kiss of love, but

a fighting to keep their territories. In the end, the lovers point guns at each other, due to their

differences of ideological and political identity, despite their real love. In the narrative, when the

two ministers of North and South Korea see the friendly soccer game between the North and the

South, the South's agent YOO and the North special forces' Mu-young PARK fight desperately

under the stadium. So, LEE and YOO's imitation of the kisses of Kissinguramis symbolizes the

relationship between the North and the South, beyond that between LEE and YOO. Their tragic

love implies the recognition of South Korea's unification with North Korea, in that despite

South's real love and desire for the unification, the difference in the bigger reality makes the

future dark.

While Kissingurami symbolizes South Korean recognition of the present status of territory division, Shiri, an endemic fish, represents the South Korean expectation of the North Korean way of unification. In diegesis, Shiri is the name of the secret plan that the revolutionists of the North intend to ignite the Korean War again through killing a minister of the North during the friendly soccer match. To induce Jung-Il Kim's misunderstanding that the South assassinated the minister of the North is the purpose of Shiri plan. PARK says about Shiri to YOO.

> Mu-young PARK: You know the fish named "Shiri"? It's a Korean aboriginal fish, living
> in crystal streams. Though they are separated with the country divided, someday
> they'll reunite inthe same streams.

Shiri is a Korean aboriginal fish able to live only in the purest stream. The name of the unification plan is Shiri in diegesis. The title of the film, *Shiri*, symbolizes the unification of the North and the South, without the interference or help of foreign powers. PARK's remark that Shiris of North and South reunite in the crystal stream refers to the setting of anti-foreign forces revealing the desire of unification within a pure stream/culture, not polluted by foreign culture/power. It is the intention of the North in diegesis, and simultaneously, the expectation of the South in reality. The two symbolisms of the fishes: the exotic fish, Kissingurami, as the South Korean recognition of the unification and the aboriginal fish, Shiri, as the North Korea's perceived way for the unification, are representations of self-reflection, that the influence of western cultures on South Korea is getting heavier, and that North Korea's political, economic, and cultural isolation from the world is getting deeper.

Shiri implies that the unification of North and South Korea, symbolized by Shiri reunited, has a cultural and economic barrier placed by the foreign forces, in particular, the U.S. The

special force of the North, Park, wreaks his wrath - the North Korean national wrath - on the

South's agent, YOO:

> Mu-young PARK: "Our hope is reunification. We dream about it." When you sing this
>
> song, our people in the North are dying on the street. They barely manage to
>
> live with roots and barks. Our sons and daughters are being sold off for fucking
>
> 100 dollars! Have you ever seen parents eating the flesh of their dead kids? With
>
> cheese, Coke and hamburgers, you wouldn't know. A soccer match to unite the
>
> nations? It's bullshit. We've had enough with the 50 years of deception. We're
>
> opening up a new history of Korea.

"Our hope is reunification" is a children's song of the South. South Korean people learn this

song during their elementary school years and love to sing the song throughout their lifetime.

The song can be regarded as the expression of South Korea's will for the unification. When the

South's children sing a rosy song, the children of the North hunger. When South Korean people

are filled-up with Coke and burgers, the North is starving. Since the friendly soccer match is a

political play, a war is needed for the unification. PARK's remark represents the difference of

consciousness and culture between the North and the South, caused by the cultural influence of

the U.S. The implication of PARK's line is the anti-U.S. sentiment, that the U.S. is a setback to

the unification in that the U.S. draws away the South from the North. This scene proves that *Shiri*

is an antiforeign nationalist film. The goal is to resist foreign interference and influence, to

secure practical independence of sovereignty, and to combine two governments into one. This is

the Korean nationalism that Korean films, dealing with the reality of territory partition, such as

Shiri, *Joint Security Area*, *Taegukgi*, and *Welcome to Dongmakgol*, are commonly based on.

Joint Security Area

Joint Security Area (2000) was directed by Chan-wook Park, the director of *Old boy*, which is the winner of the Grand Prix at the 2004 Cannes Film Festival. *Joint Security Area* recorded a box office success of 6 million viewers in the local market and won a lot of awards at the national film festivals. The film begins with a shooting rampage. A gunfight occurs at the military post in the joint security area between North and South Korea, leaving two North Korean soldiers dead and one South Korean soldier injured. With the North and South sides offering conflicting reports on what happened, the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (NNSC) brings a Swiss/Korean military officer, Major Sophie JANG, to investigate the politically sensitive incident. Sophie speaks Korean but has never been to Korea. In the urgent investigation, she struggles to find the truth behind the silence of the two soldiers, Sgt Kyung-pil OH and Sgt Su-hyuk LEE. The story unfolds by shifting perspectives between the present investigation and flashbacks based on various reports and confessions made by the characters. The central narrative focuses on the secret bonding between the North and South Korean soldiers. We watch as Sgt LEE befriends two North Korean soldiers, frequently crossing over the "Bridge of No Return" to visit their barracks at night, at first alone and then with his companion soldier Sung-sik NAM, who soon joins their secret gatherings. The dangerous but liberating brotherly love these Korean soldiers forge among themselves continues until a North Korean Lieutenant intrudes on their party one night.

Joint Security Area approaches the tragedy of national division in a different way from *Shiri*. *Shiri* attracted audiences by mixing action spectacles and melodramatic scenes, while *Joint Security Area* relatively reduced spectacles of action. Instead, *Joint Security Area* has the more complex narrative, and characters and drama are the center of it. Main characters of *Shiri* are

standardized representing the North and the South, while characters of *Joint Security Area* are described as men who keep distance from the two Koreas' political system or ideology and have private relationships even though they are soldiers of the South and the North respectively.

Although *Joint Security Area* approaches national matters in a different way from *Shiri*, it is undoubtedly a Korean blockbuster that has similarities with Hollywood blockbusters. *Joint Security Area* shows hybridity by telling the story of Korea with the Hollywood style not in spectacle but in narrative. This film, a mystery, is very similar to Hollywood detective films in its sensitivity of narrative. According to Bordwell (1985), the basic feature of a narrative in a detective story is the fact that the plot reserves an important incident that happened in the crime. The plot conceals the motive, plan, and performance of the crime. The plot begins with discovering a crime. Therefore, the story of the investigation in a detective film is pursuing the hidden story of that crime.

This narrative method and feature can be applied to *Joint Security Area*. The film begins with a supposed crime: a South Korean soldier, Su-hyuk LEE, killed two North Korean soldiers and escaped. The result and the criminal of the incident are already known but circumstances and motive are hidden as they are in a detective film, and pursuing the most important hidden story is the core part of the narrative. In addition, the plot of the film reserves finding out the important incident of the crime like a narrative of a detective film would. Reserving the reason why LEE killed two North Korean soldiers at the North Korean military post till the end, the film maintains dramatic tension and the audiences' curiosity. If the film had not adopted the structure of a detective mystery film, its story might degrade to an extremely mundane one. However, its strategy to take a mystery structure and enable audiences to participate in inference was effective. In other words, through the narrative structure of Hollywood detective films, *Joint Security Area*

deals with the Korean national discourse concerning fraternal love broken up by national division.

Particularly, *Joint Security Area* has a number of similarities to Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane (1941)*, which is a monumental film in the world's film history, in narrative structure and the composition of characters not only externally – both films take on a mystery structure – but also in their attention to detail in expression. In *Citizen Kane*, pursuit begins with the investigation by a reporter, THOMPSON, who is trying to find out the meaning of "rosebud," the last word of KANE before his death and core stories develop following several recollections. Also, in *Joint Security Area*, pursuit begins with the investigation by Sophie JANG, a researcher from the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission, and several reminiscences narrate core contents of the story. As the childhood of Kane is recollected through record by a guardian named Thatcher in *Citizen Kane*, false statements made by Su-hyuk LEE and Kyung-pil OH is described though visual image in *Joint Security Area*.

The part that makes the similarity between the two films clear is the role and function of the researchers, THOMPSON and Sophie JANG, in the narrative. THOMPSON in *Citizen Kane* develops KANE's life story as a performer of plot but is a fake hero who does not take any function in the story and is shut in darkness by a dark lighting from start to finish. JANG in *Joint Security Area* is also a main performer who develops story as a researcher to find out the truth, but an insignificant character like THOMPSON because she is not allowed to intervene in the core story – the fraternal love among the male characters. Although she seems to be the main character that reveals the truth of the incident externally, there will be no significant change in the four soldiers' tragic story of national division if her character is deleted from the narrative. This is because her role in the narrative is limited to a mediator of the plot to develop the story.

Significantly, the single female character Sophie JANG, the most different one among the characters, symbolizes the foreign force in a Korean nationalist blockbuster, *Joint Security Area*. JANG has the nationality of Switzerland and is an anti-national character that cannot belong to the North or the South even though she is by blood Korean, and a heretical character that does not want to reveal to anyone but pursue persistently the truth for herself. Her heterogeneity is also confirmed by the narrative structure dealing with key facts of the story. During the revelation of key events and facts of the story that are seen and experienced by audiences, she is the uniquely excluded character who cannot be involved in their development. After Sung-sik NAM, who was seized with fear, jumped out of window, the most important event – how the four soldiers from the two Koreas fostered friendship and fraternal love – develops through recollection. The recollection is described with dreamy illusionary images, and the idealistic, degenerative, and childlike innocence of the four soldiers are expressed with touchingly warm sentiment that surpasses the national division. The scene of recollection ends right before the gunfight among the four soldiers and comes back to the present by zooming out from the eye of NAM who was lying down. It means the recollection belonged to NAM's subjective and internal memory. For this reason, Sophie JANG, who is an outsider of Korea, cannot but have a blind spot, not knowing the core story even though male characters and audiences all know it.

In addition, Sophie JANG acts as a harmful agent who forces the revelation of the tragedy of national division and extends and deepens the tragedy by persistently pursuing the truth nobody wants brought forth. JANG, who digs up and aggravates national trauma, maximizes the tragedy of division by playing a decisive role in suicide of Su-hyuk LEE and Sung-sik NAM. Owing to importunate investigation by JANG, NAM jumped out of a window

with fear, and LEE committed suicide by a gun feeling a sense of guilt after being reminded by

JANG of the fact that he killed the North Korean soldier Wu-jin JUNG. This part shows that

Joint Security Area is an anti-foreign nationalist film. Korea's tragedy, which is unusual in

Hollywood detective films, is expressed strongly in this part. This tragedy is felt the most

heartbrokenly at the event in which the four soldiers who had shared fraternal love and deep

friendship as one nation cannot but kill each other after being forced to recognize the opposite as

the enemy. It is the more tragic because the four soldiers' secret meeting at midnight is created as

a beautiful and innocent world of illusion that can exceed all ideologies of the real world.

Taegukgi: The Brotherhood of War

Taegukgi: The Brotherhood of War (2004) was directed by Je-gyu Kang who directed

Shiri in 1999. *Taegukgi* was a mega hit recording 11.7 million admissions in the domestic market.

It swept over Korean film awards including Grand Prize in Film at Baeksang Arts Award in 2004.

Taegukgi deals with the story of two brothers, Jin-tae and Jin-seok who are forced to be in

military service during the Korean War. The elder brother Jin-tae tries to be awarded the Medal

of Honor in order to have Jin-seok discharged from the military service. Jin-tae transforms

himself into a frenzied war hero to perform a meritorious deed. Jin-seok is wounded and sent

back to the rear. However, Jin-tae misunderstands that Jin-seok is dead by the fault of South

Korean troops, and becomes the commander of North troops as the incarnation of revenge. Jin-

seok comes back to the battle field to rescue Jin-tae; however, Jin-seok returns from the field

alone under the self-sacrificial protection of Jin-tae. Fifty years later, finding Jin-tae's bones, Jin-

seok bursts into tears of remorse. *Taegukgi* projects the national trauma derived from the Korean

War through the story of brotherhood.

Shiri and *Joint Security Area* deal with the ongoing issue of the national division on the Korean peninsula, while *Taegukgi: Brotherhood of War* reorganizes the past issue of the national division from the present point of view. The film actualizes the historical Korean War using spectacles of Hollywood war films and reminds audiences of the painful memory, a war within one nation. However, reality created by blockbusters' spectacles has both artificial falsehood and dramatic exaggeration, like the two sides of a coin. Thus, *Taegukgi* shows detailed war scenes realistically, unlike the previous Korean films. Audiences who did not experience a war feel as if they are witnessing a shocking reality, for example, at the war scene in which arms and legs are cut off with vivid realism. However, in this scene, audiences are also aware of the fact that the space is an invented image as they watch actors who energetically run through showering bullets. The power of a film's spectacles is confirmed when they function on duplicity in which reality and falsehood cross and coexist.

Duplicity of *Taegukgi* also can be found in hybridity in which scenes of Hollywood war film and particularity of the Korean War coexist. The film uses cruelty and inhumanness of a war, which were frequently seen in other Hollywood war films, and describes severity of a war realistically. In particular, it has several similarities to the famous Hollywood war film, *Saving Private Ryan* (Steven Spielberg, 1998). The two films are alike in that they revealed the terribleness of a war through fellowships of soldiers who lost parts of their bodies and their humanities. Also, the two films took the similar style and image technique in the scenes of the war.

On the other hand, the nationalist implications of *Taegukgi: The Brotherhood of War* are more direct and straightforward than the other three films. First, its title is nationalist and ideological because *Taegukgi* refers to the national flag of South Korea. The original Korean title

of the film is *Taegukgi hwinalrimyeo*, meaning "while flying Taegukgi" and implyes the extreme patriotism and nationalism of flying the national flag on high ground after killing a myriad of enemies. In the film, Jin-tae leads the victory of the battalion. Tying up Taegukgi on Jin-tae's rifle, the commander makes a compliment to him in front of the soldiers: "Your bravery exemplifies the men of this battalion. Raise this flag on Mt. Baekdu by the Chinese border." The soldiers give him a big applause and carry him shoulder-high. The solemn music is heard, simultaneously. It is an extremely nationalist moment represented by the symbolism of the Korean national flag. This scene signifies that the film is about nationalism via the story of brotherhood.

In *Taegukgi*, Korean nationalism is implied through the distorted brotherhood. The film has the narrative that the brotherhood is connected to the nationalist subject of the North and the South. Jin-seok is tender-weak, but good at studying. Jin-tae brave is strong, but bad at studying. Symbolizing the characteristics of North and South Korea, they represent the brotherhood that is impossible to be realized.

Jin-seok: You and I should be together. We live and die together.

Jin-tae: You know I want both of us to live. But if only one of us gets to go, I want it to be you.

If Jin-seok's lines mean the unification of the North and the South as brothers of the same blood, Jin-tae's lines indicate the practical difficulty of the unification and the superiority of the South. The symptom of the extreme nationalism, that the South is preferable for survival if the unification is impossible, seems to be shown. The reason that Jin-tae eagerly wants to let Jin-seok go back home is that Jin-seok's scholastic achievement is preeminent. The scholarship, including the rank and grades, is and has been related to the social success in Korean society. Jin-

seok's success is his family's success, too.

>Jin-tae: What did I risk my life for?... I want you to go home alive. I also want to go home, you know. But you're our family's hopes and dreams! I never regretted giving up school and shining shoes for you. Mom happily broke her back for you. Do you know our sacrifices?

>Jin-seok: Of course, I do. I know all of it. Why am I the only one you think about? If you had thought about Young-shin and Yong-man, you couldn't have done it.

>Jin-tae: I don't care what you think, as long as you can go home.

Family members' voluntarily sacrifices or support for the member who shows scholarly possibility has been easily found in South Korea. It cannot be said to be unique to Korean family-hood, but it is rarely seen in the West. Jin-tae not only sacrifices himself, but also attaches no importance to others' safety. Jin-tae only considers his own blood-related family. His companions and even fiancé are easily forgotten. This extreme family-hood and brotherhood cinematically represent the extreme nationalism of Korea, proud of a single race. In this sense, Jin-tae's ignorance of others implies the strong sentiment of the anti-foreign forces.

Welcome to Dongmakgol

Welcome to Dongmakgol (2005) was directed by Kwang-hyun Park. It was commercially successful as it reached 8 million admissions in the domestic box office record and awarded Grand Prize at Korean Film Award in 2005. *Welcome to Dongmakgol* tells about the Koreans' dearest wish for unification of the North and the South, by means of dealing with a story about the straggling soldiers of North and South Korea. The dropout soldiers of the North—High Comrade Soo-hwa LEE, Sergeant JANG, and Taek-gi SEO—encounter the South

dropouts—Second Lieutenant Hyun-chul PYO and Medic Comrade Sang-sang MOON—as well as the U.S. Navy Captain Neel SMITH in a remote village, Dongmakgol, in Gangwon Province. The soldiers of North and South Korea have daggers drawn at each other; however, as assimilated by the pure souls of the Dongmakgol folks, they are gradually accorded. Allied Forces mistakenly think that Captain SMITH's fighter was shot down by Northern anti-aircraft emplacements in Dongmakgol, and sends a number of fighter-bombers to make a bombing raid on Dongmakgol. The soldiers of the North and the South sacrifice themselves to save the pure folks who do not even know what a gun is. The dropout soldiers become the new allied forces of North and South Korea facing against Allied Forces.

The film appropriates Hollywood blockbusters' aesthetics. Especially, the visual image follows the Hollywood spectacle, by investing enormous expenses in computer graphics. For example, the grand finale of *Welcome to Dongmakgol* was created with over 500 CGI shots. All of the B29 fighter-bombers, P47D fighters, and the bombs in the last scene were produced by CGI (Kim, K.Y., 2005). The scene in which the soldiers accidentally burn the storehouse for winter food was also created by special effects. As stored corn is popped up in the air, amazed villagers joyfully jump around in the snow of popcorns, which is shown in slow motion. Besides above two scenes, formatted *a lot of scenes of Welcome to Dongmakgol* were completed by computer graphics.

In *Welcome to Dongmakgol*, however, CGI supports the symbolism of anti-imperialism. The butterflies drawn by CG protect Dongmakgol from the intervention of Allied Forces. Captain SMITH's fighter is brought down in the beginning because of the butterflies' flight disturbance. Later, SMITH finds out that another fighter was knocked out of the sky. When the special forces of Allied Forces come down in parachutes, the butterflies hinder the entrance of

the forces into Dongmakgol. The butterflies serve as guardian angels of the saintly village of

Dongmakgol. In addition to the butterflies, when the Communist People's Army soldiers of the

North, High Comrade, Soo-hwa LEE, Sergeant JANG, and Taek-gi SEO, enter the village, a

snake exhausts the cartridge clips of their rifles. The snake demilitarizes the soldiers.

  The name of the village, Dongmakgol, means "the village where one lives like carefree

children." By the origin of the name, Dongmakgol refers to the village being free from the

control or intervention from the external elements. It is the village that is untouched by foreign

forces. The story of the film is about making a small allied force of the North and the South to

protect Dongmakgol from Allied Forces' bombing. Dongmakgol is the realm of nationalism.

Allied Forces are represented through B29 bombers and P47D fighter-bombers, the major

aircrafts of the U.S. Air Force.

  The implication of anti-foreign powers is more concretely described in *Welcome to*

Dongmakgol. Dong-goo's mom, who has lived in Dongmakgol for a lifetime, is afraid that the

outsiders will entice Dong-goo to leave the village. She does not want to give him a chance to

see the outside. She tries to isolate his son at Dongmakgol, rather than to give him critical power.

The lines of Dong-goo's mom embody the anti-foreign forces. She shows the anxiety about the

outsiders to his father-in-law, the head of the village.

> Dong-goo's mom: It's almost 9 years since Dong-goo's pa left home. Sure, he wanted to
> see the outside world, but I'm worried sick Dong-goo will leave, too. We have
> to send the outsiders away before something happens. If Dong-goo ends up
> leaving, too, I'll die!

The title of the film, *Welcome to Dongmakgo* is a kind of paradox. The villagers of Dongmakgol

are naïve and pure to the degree that they do not know or understand violence. They are warm-

hearted and fond of the strangers. They do not draw a distinction between a native and a foreigner, and between the North and South peoples. Dongmakgol welcomes everybody. However, Dong-goo's mom reveals an internal caution and fear for the outsiders. She considers the soldiers as invaders breaking the peace of Dongmakgol. From her lines, we can think that almost all of the villagers have never left Dongmakgol. Neither did many outsiders enter the village because of its geographical isolation and the support of the butterflies and the snake. Her husband did not come back after going out into the world. For the villagers, the world outside the village is for certain a place so attractive that one does not want to come back if once exposed. That is the western culture mirrored by the world outside Dongmakgol. As undergoing the war with the help of the Allied Forces, the sovereignty of South Korea is gradually disappearing. South could not reject the help of the U.S. The pure nationality has not come back home yet. The more carried away by the western culture, the more estranged from the pure aboriginal culture. The scene is a criticism against the U.S.'s cultural domination, and at the same time, against the present cultural status of Korea, which is being fully soaked in American culture.

In the end of *Welcome to Dongmakgol*, the bombers of the Allied Forces approach Dongmakgol. The dropout soldiers prepare for the bombing induction to the place secluded from the village. SMITH comes back to the base first to notify the survival of himself. Only North and South soldiers remain.

(North) Taek-gi SEO: Aren't we allied forces, too? We're a North-South Joint Force, aren't we? Am I wrong?

(South) Sang-sang MOON: You can joke at a time like this?

(North) Soo-hwa LEE: That makes sense!

(South) Hyun-chul PYO: Instead of like this… if we had met somewhere else some

other way… we would have had real fun. Don't you think so?

The dropouts form small allied forces, made up of South and North army men, in order to resist the Allied Forces' attack on Dongmakgol. In order to stop the Allied Forces referred to by the U.S. Airforce, South and North are accorded. To keep the purity of Dongmakgol, the allied forces of North and South confront the foreign forces. In the scene of the harmony between North and South, Director Kwang-hyun Park refuses the help of Captain SMITH.

Korean Blockbuster as National Cinema

By defining a nation as a community of "shared beliefs and mutual understandings" (Miller, 1995: 22), it is easy to see that a "nation cannot exist unless there are available the means of communication" to share/transmit their beliefs and to imagine their compatriots (Miller, 1995: 22 and 32). National cinema has the potential to be a much more effective device to enable people to imagine their communities than the print press. Anderson views the nation as an "imagined community", as the people of even the smallest country will never know, meet and hear of one another, however, "in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson, 1991:6). The imagination of one's communion has become available through the novel and the newspaper as "these provided the technical means for 're-presenting' the kind of imagined community that is nation" (Anderson, 1991:25). In his analyses of novels and newspaper articles, he clearly showed that these written works help engineer a sense of belongingness and unity among a people through various topics, characters, and stories (Anderson, 1991: 25-32). Operating with the same function as the novel and the newspaper invented by "print capitalism", national cinema has the potential to provide a wide recognition of the vernacular language and shared culture so that the individuals of a nation are able to imagine

their membership of that nation. National cinema as part of the mass media thus plays a central role "in re-imagining the dispersed and incoherent populace as a tight-knit, value-sharing collectivity, sustaining the experience of nationhood" (Higsons, 2003: 65). However, national cinema do not always emphasize a unity and commonality of "nation", as it is clear that a "nation" actually consists of cleavages, conflicts, inequalities and differences among a people. These differences within a "nation" are parts of "national culture". A nation should thus be defined by "both commonality and difference" and its central theme is not "necessarily uniformality" (Silversone, 1999:99). In this sense, national cinema should work with "the lived complexities" of "'national' life" that does nevertheless contain commonality as well as difference (Higson, 2000:28). Both are involved, as long as nationals identify a certain story in national cinema on the basis of their shared or mutually familiar memories and their shared and overlapping current situations, then national cinema will be a tool to strengthen "national identity".

However, national cinema and its relationship with Hollywood films exemplify the dialectical processes. Unlike the belief of an essentialized, pure, national cinema, it is almost impossible to find a real "authentic national cinema" due to the massive dominance of Hollywood films across the world and increasing interactions between the national and Hollywood. As Higson noted, "the paradox is that for a cinema to be nationally popular it must also be international in scope. That is to say, it must achieve the international (Hollywood) standard" (Higson, 1989:40). Elseasser's claim, in this context, seems to be reasonable; "Hollywood can hardly be conceived… as totally other, since so much of any nation's film culture is implicitly 'Hollywood'" (1997: 166 cited in Higson, 1989:39).

In this sense, there cannot be pure or essentialized authentic "national cinema." Hollywood has indeed become part of each national cinema and is "one of those cultural

traditions which feed into so-called national cinema" (Higson, 1995:6). The Korean blockbuster is a good example to show the massive influences of Hollywood. It literally means the mixture of blockbuster trend from Hollywood with nationally specific materials.

Many scholars criticize the Korean blockbuster as "imagined resistance" towards global Hollywood productions. As So-young Kim pointed out (Kim, 2003), it is perhaps common to consider the Korean blockbuster as a mere mimicry of Hollywood. However, I argue that the Korean blockbuster is a hybrid between the local and the global and Korean nationalistic stories and foreign film aesthetics. The Korean blockbuster provides to some extent "authentic" elements that help audiences to believe in and consume the films as "national cinema" and "ours," even as they clearly also involve "Hollywood" and "others." Familiar stories based on collective memory, current cultural values and sentiments are enough for national audiences to interpret the Korean blockbuster as their own national cinema, to feel more attached towards it, and to share a certain level of emotions with other nationals in relation to it notwithstanding the fact that the typical Korean blockbuster contains a number of externally imported elements such as styles, spectacle dominating format, and so on.

Box-office hit Korean blockbusters, *Shiri*, *Joint Security Area, Taegukgi: The Brotherhood of War,* and *Welcome to Dongmakgol,* obviously exemplified the ambivalence at work as they narrated stories of the tragic situation of a divided country and reflected current cultural sentiments among national audiences with the Hollywood blockbusters' aesthetics. Korean nationalist blockbusters would not be "authentic" at all if this were to mean being a product of a purely domestic industry drawing on home grown filmic languages, but there is little doubt that in fact they did attain a certain "emotional and moral authenticity"(Hjort and Mackenzie(eds), 2000: 7) in the eyes and interpretations of Korean audiences. What follows is

the reception of a general audience about Korean blockbuster[17].

> "I think the Korean blockbuster has certain cultural codes that many Koreans could
> share….These are perhaps our cultural stuffs. It is hard to explain exact words, but
> cultural things. Actually I used to prefer the Hollywood blockbuster. I thought that the
> Hollywood blockbuster guarantees a certain level of entertainment and fun. However, in
> recent years, I am fed up with spectacles from the Hollywood blockbuster. Every
> spectacle looks pretty similar! On the other hand, the Korean blockbuster has distinctive
> codes that match well to us. In particular, our stories like *Shiri* and *JSA* are really
> touching to me. I was deeply touched by the tragic stories between two Koreas from
> both films".

Audiences do not expect the same level of spectacle from the Korean blockbuster in comparison
with the Hollywood blockbuster. Rather, audiences figure out common cultural codes based on
their own history, tradition, values and beliefs as the distinctive characteristics of the Korean
blockbuster. Deeply embedded cultural expressions and codes in the Korean blockbuster help
audiences to have great sympathy for the films and to attach themselves emotionally to
characters and stories. In other words, national audiences can feel a stronger familiarity with, and
receive greater comfort from, Korean nationalist blockbuster as a national cinema.

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[17] This audience reception is extracted from a post made up on February 13, 2010 in the 'Views on Movies' section
of *Cine21* <www.cine21.co.kr>.

Chapter 4.
Conclusion

Much scholarly debate on globalization concerns the impact of intensified transnational flows of culture, people, and capital upon the ways in which people grapple with both personal and cultural identity issues. In particular, regarding the cultural consequences of such flows, the discussion has involved dichotomous views of globalization as cultural imperialism vs. cultural pluralism. The critical cultural imperialism thesis, which has long been the dominant paradigm of globalization theory, argues that globalization produces homogenization and loss of local cultural autonomy and identity (Schiller 1969/1992; Tunstall 1977; Mattelart 1979; Herman and McChesney 1997). With the revisionist understanding of globalization as cultural hybridization (Appadurai 1996; Featherstone 1996; Hannerz 1997; Tomlinson 1999), the pessimistic view is giving way to a more optimistic vision of cross-cultural fusion, local cultural resilience, and cultural diversity. Indeed, the concept of 'hybridity' has now become common currency not only in academia but also in general public and popular culture.

In this study, I have analyzed how recent South Korean cinema has responded to the forces of globalization by appropriating these influences both on and off screen. In particular, by situating Korean blockbuster within its local, regional and global contexts, I have highlighted the ways in which the identity politics of Korean blockbuster complicate our understanding of globalization and national cinema. Korean blockbuster is a hybrid form between national cinema and Hollywood blockbusters. It is a local answer to the accelerating forces of globalization at home, evident in the growing direct competition with Hollywood blockbusters. In fact, despite the growing reliance on the big-budget blockbusters, the recent rise in the domestic market share of local films against Hollywood movies owes much to the high-profile success of many of

Korean blockbusters. Chapter 3 revealed how Korean blockbusters have appropriated Hollywood blockbuster to create a unique hybrid cultural form and to unfold national narratives. Mixed genres in general are not limited to South Korean cinema, but the case at hand has significant implications for globalization. My study conceives of the global and the local not as dichotomies but as equally important forces that shape cultural identities and situates Korean cinema in the global-local nexus. As discussed in Chapter 2, distinctive local production conditions played a role in developing this hybrid cultural form. Moreover, the utilization of Hollywood blockbuster is a strategic local response to the forces of globalization, an attempt to simultaneously compete with Hollywood at home and to venture into the global market. In this respect, the nature of hybridity in Korean blockbuster is ambivalent because it embodies both resistance to Hollywood hegemony and an ambitious move toward globalization. While the particular mode of hybridity embodied in the appropriation of Hollywood blockbusters can be seen as capitulation to Hollywood as a cultural form, my analysis has noted the ways in which the practice of genre-bending and the nationalist narratives found in four Korean blockbusters provide a critical resistance to Hollywood blockbusters.

In addition, contemporary South Korean cinema participates in cultural hybridization through its increasing transnational co-productions. As I have noted in Chapter 2, partly pressed by the need to recover rising production costs and partly stimulated by the phenomenon of the Korean Wave in East Asia, Korean film enterprises have placed growing emphasis on transnational endeavors with a particular interest in the sizeable East Asian market. One example of such transnational endeavors is local companies' co-production and collaboration with major firms in East Asia. While the partnership with East Asian firms is in part a joint effort to promote Asian cinema against Hollywood hegemony, it also embodies neo-liberal "corporate

transculturalism" that capitalizes on cultural hybridity. Here, we witness the ambiguity of the politics of hybridity in contemporary Korean cinema. Furthermore, hybridity constructed through regional co-production demonstrates that the regional is an essential component constituting hybridity in the global media cultural economy.

In summary, the significance of the case of Korean Cinema is multifaceted in our comprehensive understanding of globalization and hybridity. It illustrates that globalization as hybridization takes place at multiple levels and in multiple directions beyond the conventional global-local paradigm. In noting intra-regional exchanges as integral to the construction of today's hybridities, my study has contended that regionalization and localization strongly contribute to the globalization process. More important, by locating hybridity outside of Western hegemony in the intraregional cultural dynamic, it also resists the Eurocentric approach that tends to view hybridity as only produced through local appropriation of the global/Hollywood model. This is often implied even in the recognition of hybridity as a resistance against hegemonic power. In addition, while many case studies of hybridity in relation to globalization are contextualized in diasporic communities and focus on reception and representation, this thesis has situated manifestations of hybridity in production as well and at the crossroads of the local, the regional, and the global.

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Vita

Sehee Han was born in Seoul, South Korea. She completed high school at Myungduck Women High School in Seoul in 1992. She received the degree of Bachelor of Economics from Sangmyung University, Seoul, South Korea in Feb 1997 and the degree of Master of Arts in Drama and Cinema from Dongguk University, Seoul, South Korea in Feb 2002. After six years of work in Korean Association of Film Art & Industry (KAFAI), Seoul, South Korea, she entered the M.A. program in Radio-Television-Film at the University of Texas at Austin in the fall of 2008.

Permanent address: 1618 W. 6th Street

Austin, Texas 78703

This thesis was typed by Se Hee Han.