Under the Gaze of the American Other

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Abstract

This paper addresses Korean perceptions of America using Lacanian psychoanalysis. Throughout modern Korean history, an idealized image of America has played the role of Korea's ego-ideal. While the U.S. has provided South Korea with its form of government and the foundation of a capitalist economy, it has also defined the trajectory of many aspects of modern Korean history since Liberation in 1945. Furthermore, a series of historical experiences have caused significant changes in America's image. Today, the U.S. appears even as the obscene superego, the other side of the Other. These aspects of America correspond to the three father figures presented by Lacan: the idealized imaginary father, the symbolic father, and the obscene and violent real father. Shifting views of America as the Other have been reflected in Korean films. In Spring in My Hometown *and* Phantom: The Submarine*, the oppressive aspect of the American Other takes the figure of the obscene real father. In* Joint Security Area*, the split between the American Other and the Other of a unified Korean national community is far more manifest. Today, Korean subjects are still not free from the gaze of the American Other and the determining power of the U.S.*

Keywords: America, the Other, fantasy, father, Lacan, psychoanalysis, film

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I

Throughout modern Korean history, America has been represented by compressed images of an idealized advanced country. For the last one hundred years, and specifically the last several decades, the United States has dominated the Korean imagination as an ideal model—a country that achieved not only material affluence, but also stood for political and social virtues. Assuming this, I think it is safe to assert that America has played the role of the Other to Korea in the sense of a Lacanian psychoanalysis, especially since its national liberation in 1945. The image of the U.S. as an ideal model country firmly ingrained in Korea's conscious and subconscious has been at the place of the ideal self-image, i.e., the ego-ideal, with which we Koreans unconsciously identify when forming our collective identity. The America that Korea has aspired to become and depended upon is not merely an object toward which Korea projects its desire to fill what it considers to be lacking. It is also the cause that forces Korea to define itself as a "lacking being."

However, saying that America has played the role of the Other does not mean that we can confine America to a mere object of identification on the level of the Imaginary, nor to an image as a passive object. The ego-ideal is not simply an image similar to the self that is associated with the formation of the ideal ego, but an image that is different from the self, a socially idealized image, and above all, a signifier. In this sense, identification with the ego-ideal is a symbolic identification that surpasses imaginary identification.[1] Therefore, the image of the Other as the ego-ideal stands at the site of the master signifier, and the field of the Other is the Symbolic, namely a symbolic reality. The Other thus outlines the reality itself that is meaningful to us.

In this sense, America is Korea's Other both in name and in fact.

1. For further discussion on this, see Žižek (1989, 105-110). For Lacan's discussion of the ideal ego, the ego-ideal and two kinds of Narcissism, see Lacan (1991a, 1991b).

The U.S. bestowed Korea with a form of state and a political system of liberal democracy by establishing military government in South Korea just after liberation and dispatching troops soon after the Korean War broke out. The U.S. also facilitated Korea's launch of a modern capitalist economy by handing out aid. In a word, the United States was a kind of father who, for better or worse, gave birth to South Korea (the U.S. even drew up the 38th parallel). Furthermore, the U.S. has "helped" Korea politically, economically, and militarily after the cease-fire and intervened both visibly and invisibly in Korean affairs at critical junctures in its modern history, including the April Revolution (1960) and the military coup of May 16 (1961); the end of President Park Chung-hee's Yusin regime (1979) and the short-lived Seoul Spring (1980); the December 12 coup (1979) and the Gwangju massacre of May (1980); the June 10 Struggle for Democracy and June 29 Declaration (1987); and the IMF financial crisis (1997).[2] More recently, as the North Korean nuclear crisis has brought the Korean peninsula to the verge of war several times, the U.S. wields an almost free hand over the destiny of the Korean people. In a word, the progression of modern history of Korea has been continuously constrained by American influence. Rarely have Koreans voiced their opinions to the U.S. Korea has had to be attentive to the policy lines of the U.S. government, and Korean leaders have begged their people for restraint and silence in all spheres, including politics, economy and society. So indeed, as Lacan said, the discourse of the subject is always the discourse of the Other, and desire is always the desire of the Other.

II

Dialectics between the ideal ego and the ego-ideal and between imaginary identification and symbolic identification are deployed under

2. For a well-organized study of the incidents, see Kang (2000a, 53-77, 145-180; 2000b).

the domination of the former by the latter. Therefore, the identity formation of the subject or identification is always carried out under the gaze of the Other.[3] Being subject to the gaze of the Other means that an individual or group takes the point of view of the Other and then internalizes the way the Other looks at that individual or group. Thus, the way Korea looks at the U.S. as a model country and the way the U.S. in the Real looks at Korea are not symmetrical by any means. Moreover, a gaze is not an ideal image, but only a small fragment of the Real, or a real void in the Symbolic, in the Lacanian sense. Gaze does not respond to one's desire, and if confronted, threatens one's survival as a subject, because one is degraded and reduced to the object of the gaze.

Said's discussion of Orientalism has many implications in this regard. According to Said, Orientalism, the Western European view of and discourse on the East, refers to the way European Christianity, for the purpose of setting up its own identity, created the East as the Other, imposed a rule upon the East, and took the control of the East. It is a long-established system of accumulating and reproducing knowledge. In this system, the East cannot exist, nor can it speak for itself; it only speaks from the perspective of the West. The U.S. has adopted this viewpoint with regard to Islam and the rest of Asia. With its imperial hegemony in the twentieth century, the U.S. has created a similar kind of discipline in the name of regional studies, while the United Kingdom and France did through bibliographical study during the nineteenth century.[4] This approach was vital to the U.S. because without a feudal history and tradition it had to "confirm its identity by regarding the external world and its enemies as the other and negating it."[5] This tradition has been stronger perhaps in the U.S. than in any other country. The gaze of the Other that observes, examines, and imposes itself on its others is cruel. It classi-

3. For a detailed description, see Joo (2003, 59-96).
4. On the United States, see Section 3, Chapter 4 of Said (1991). The translator's long, poignant postscript lets us think about the contemporary Korean society more deeply (see Said 1991, 525-587).
5. Kwon (2003, 27-28).

fies and controls its objects of observation and forces them to internalize its perspective. The subject, in relation to the Other, is the product of this process (subjectification as subordination). Fanon, who has greatly influenced Said, argues that Africans are stripped of their individuality and fixed as a "fossilized" race of the Black under the gaze of white people, which is "the only existing eyes looking at them in reality."[6] How different are Koreans from Africans in their relationship to the U.S.? And what is nature of the national modernization for the sake of which Koreans have exerted such in the last thirty to forty years? Modernization theory takes the U.S. as its model and believes that modernization, industrialization, and Westernization are one and the same. It regards the ambiguous concept of tradition as an obstacle to development and something that must be overcome. So, modernization theory is nothing more than the will to power and truth that demands a thorough self-denial.[7]

Korea has always hoped and believed that the U.S. would look upon it with a favorable eye, but regretfully, this has not always been the case. The United States has only looked upon Korea as a less developed country of a yellow race in Asia, at best as a docile client to buy U.S. products and weapons, and even so, the gaze was not friendly. Contrary to Korean hopes, the negative gaze of the Other produces curious stereotypes that merge with the Orientalist prism of the West. For example, Koreans are portrayed in Hollywood movies as dependent, childlike docile people, who need to be protected and educated by whites (note the film *M*A*S*H* (1970) about a U.S. mobile army surgical hospital during the Korean War and the television comedy series based upon it.), or as heartless money-mongering economic animals, and petty shopkeepers. These negative stereotypes persisted in the 1990s film *Falling Down* (1993), in which Korean and various Third World characters are portrayed as enemies threatening the status of white middle-class fathers.

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6. Fanon (1998, 139-140, 147-148).
7. Today the modernization theory has been revived under the slogan of "globalization," and Korea tends to accept the unilateral viewpoint of the U.S. without serious thought.

III

The gaze of the American Other and the eyes of the admiring Korean can never meet because, Lacan says, the Other does not exist. The consistent, smoothly integrated symbolic order does not exist. No organic, completely harmonious or agreeable relations can exist between Korea and the United States. On the same count, the U.S., as an ideal image and model also does not exist in reality. In the two countries' intersubjective relations, America as the subject supposed to know the secret of Korean desires also does not exist. Therefore, it is merely wishful thinking to hope that the U.S. will consider Korea's situation if Korea makes a concession to the U.S. first. This is similar to Lacan's proposition that "There is no such a thing as sexual relationship." As long as the subjects with desire are at a face-off, communication is impossible.

And yet Korea's unrequited love affair with the U.S. continues. Just a few days after anti-U.S. "candlelight vigils" were held to commemorate two middle school girls killed by a U.S. armored vehicle in Uijeongbu (where a U.S. military base is located), another mass rally of a similar scale was held on the same spot shouting "We love America." Korea's blind love of and trust in America has been led by the dominating class and elite for the last several decades. This community has learned by experience that affinity with America helped them succeed in life and earn power and money since America's occupation of the peninsula in 1945. They studied in America, and internalized the American worldview. Thus, they have gained benefits from maintaining a favorable relationship with the U.S. and enjoyed the ensuing comfort. Because they are smart, they retort, "Do you think we are so naive? We know very well that international relations work based on specific interests, not on unconditional friendship." But as Žižek points out, that kind of cynicism is a very effective form of ideology that supports symbolic order: "I know very well . . . but still . . ." Moreover, ideology is already at work in the very reference to the relationship with interests, whether it be a national interest, private, or collective. This is the case because ideol-

ogy is a matter of behavior before it is a matter of knowledge. This is a Pascalian problem: "If you do not believe, kneel down, act as if you believe, and belief will come." It is the same as people believing, although bank notes are actually valueless paper, that they effectively mediate exchanges of goods and services.[8] The leaders of Korean society, although they themselves are illegitimate sons of the American father, send their pregnant wives and daughters-in-law across the Pacific to deliver their babies in American hospitals to give their offspring the status of America's legitimate sons.

Sensing such overt secrets of the elite early on, the shrewd middle class, motivated by fear of downward mobility and desire for status upgrade, send their children abroad to study or provide them expensive English lessons in Korea, stretching their means to catch up with the upper class. In a sense, those who sincerely believe in the ideal image of America or fear to discard this image are in fact ordinary Koreans who were taught to regard America as the savior who sacrificed its soldiers and saved Korea from hunger and poverty. But things have since changed, most significantly, since the violent suppression of the Gwangju Uprising in 1980. Also, one must consider the U.S. involvement in the IMF bailout and doubt regarding the role of the U.S. in the financial crisis which brought about bailout (and U.S. pressure on Korea to open up its market), as well as the killing of two middle-school girls in Uijeongbu. In addition, the U.S. reaction to the North Korean nuclear crisis took the Korean peninsula to the brink of war in 1996 and triggered a crisis of imminent war once again in the summer of 2003. Even today, the future is unclear. And then there was the so-called Hollywood action by short-track speedskater Anton Ohno at the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympic Games, notorious for the U.S. team's unfair home ground advantage.

The official history of the Korean peninsula has been written in a fashion to hide the traumatic facts that the Republic of Korea was established with the sacrifice of many Korean lives, that much of the sacrifice was caused by a U.S. scheme to dominate the world order,

8. Žižek's discussion of ideology maintains this tone in many of his books.

and that the U.S. directly led or intervened in the process. This history sublimates those traumatic facts as much as possible so as to make them comprehensible within a network of symbolic signification. Particularly, the killings of Korean civilians led by U.S. forces after liberation (e.g., the April 3 Uprising) were expelled to the realm of the Real, which is not captured by the network of signification of "History," since they threaten the appearance of liberal democracy. Thus the consistent symbolic appearance of the Republic of Korea has been constructed at the diachronic level. In a synchronic structural arrangement, the traumatic fact had to be covered up that the power of the U.S.—as epitomized by the U.S. forces still stationed in Korea's territory—has played the role of the real core posing a threat to the appearance of Korea as an independent nation, and has also contributed to repressing inner antagonisms in Korean society and maintaining the appearance of a nation system.[9]

However, the massacre in Gwangju and the ambiguous role of the U.S. in it disclosed these traumatic truths. Because of these experiences, the way Koreans view the U.S. has changed fundamentally, as has the image of the U.S. While the U.S. may still be the Other, it now appears more like the other side of the Other, or as the figure of the obscene superego. It is no longer the imaginary loving father, the object of identification, but the father who enjoys *jouissance*, the obscene father or the real father who wields traumatic violence and monopolizes women, like the Zeus's father, the titan Cronus, who devoured his sons.

Lacan's theory presents three types of father or father figures. The symbolic father is a symbolic instance who is defined by his place in the network of symbolic signification and governs intersubjective relations. He is the law, the father as name, noun, or the name of the father, i.e., the signifier. The imaginary father is the object of identification, the ideal image, i.e., father as the Imago. In

9. The real core, or the small fragment of the Real is also a subject repeated in many of Žižek's works. On the construction of the symbolic order by concealing the traumatic incident diachronically, see Žižek (1989, 1991).

contrast, the real father is estranged from the ideal image and cannot be subsumed into the web of symbolic signification, so this father becomes a traumatic experience. The real father or father figure cannot be the object of identification, unlike the ideal father; he may take the appearance of a weak, incapable, impotent father or an obscene, violent father. The real father is the other side of the symbolic father as the other side of the Other is the obscene superego and the other side of law is violence.[10] Roughly speaking, America as the symbolic father is defined by its status in the world system as the military and economic hegemonic nation in the world order of the twentieth century. Based on this, the U.S. exercises certain structural control over Korea from which Korea cannot easily escape. Meanwhile, America as the imaginary father appears as the image of an ideal model nation and Korea's savior, benefactor, protector and as a bastion of liberal democracy. America as the real father demands that its national interest become the absolute order. It is totally indifferent to the legitimate demands Korea or other weak nations make based on universal human values or international law, and exercise or threaten bloodless violence for its goals. All of these facts shatter the illusion of benevolent paternalism. In other words, America as the real father is the nation that is directly and indirectly involved in the killings of civilians on Jejudo island and in Gwangju, but is hidden behind the scenes, and is the homeland of soldiers who brutally murdered Korean prostitutes in brothels serving U.S. soldiers.

IV

The American Other is reflected in the fantasies of the general public. These images and their shifts can be detected in recent Korean films. From the standpoint of psychoanalysis, fantasies set the coordinates of desires and allow either their fictional fulfillment or its frustration.

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10. For Lacan's theory on the three types of father or father figures, see Julien (2000). For more on the obscene father or the anal father, see Žižek (1992).

According to Žižek, fantasies ultimately play out the desire of the Other, not merely the desire of the individual subject. The desire of the Other conceals the truth that the Other does not exist and so fantasies covered the cracks in symbolic reality and form the exterior appearance of a consistent, organic community. At the same time, fantasies reveal the lack of the Other or the fundamental impossibility of symbolic reality, because they inevitably include the object of desire or the core of the Real, such as the Things that refuse to be subsumed into the network of symbolic signification. Therefore, fantasies are closer to the realm of the Real than the Symbolic.[11]

The most important symbolic reality or the Other whose organic consistency needs to be maintained or reconstructed is the national community in the context of our discussion. Thus, if America is considered the Other, Korea has in fact two Others. This is characteristic of the societies in a subordinate position in the world system, despite the existence of a strong consciousness of nation/state identity, or a society which has recovered political independence from colonizers facing the historical task of fostering national identity.

Since the trauma of Gwangju in 1980 and the June Democratization Movement of 1987, the image of the U.S. has been transformed into an oppressive force that threatens the Korean national community, which marks a clear departure from the past. In the movie *Eunma-neun oji anneunnda* (The Silver Stallion Will Never Come, 1991), the American threat is represented in the rape of a Korean woman by an American GI. As implicated in the word "motherland," women's bodies are often used as metaphors of a national community. The rape causes the leading female character to become a prostitute serving U.S. military men, and then continues to suffer from insult and oppression by her own people. This act represents the other side of the American Other, oppressive in nature, which looks on Korea only from a strategic viewpoint and forces a structural fixation of national division, the cause of suffering of the Korean people

11. I rely on Žižek's theory in what follows: Fantasy is another core subject in Žižek's works. *The Plague of Fantasies* has the word in the title.

in their modern history.

In *Areumdaun sijeol* (Spring in My Hometown, 1998), the oppressive side of the Other takes the more vivid image of an obscene real father. This movie has similar scenes of U.S. soldiers having sex with Korean women. In particular, the subject witnesses a primal scene in which his own life is conceived, an "impossible gaze" in Žižek's term. With color variations and careful placement of characters left or right of the screen, the movie, depicted from the eyes of the young boy Seong-min, describes how a village suffers confrontation between the left and right political movements, and how the left-right structure is shaken and loses its meaning.[12] But the U.S. forces, rather than left-right confrontations, exercise structurally definitive power over the villagers' conflicts and their rise and fall in a form of overdetermination. The opening scenes of the movie show the recapture of the village by the U.S. forces and the punishment of the Korean leftist fighters. The main narrative of the movie revolves around the ups and downs of Seong-min's family (his father is a civilian employee of the U.S. army). The mise-en-scene of the movie is built tactfully around the strategic placement and depiction of the occasionally appearing U.S. soldiers on the screen. Usually standing high atop a military jeep, they wield overwhelming definitive power over the villagers, playing the role of a "signifier without signified." (The movie itself is not particularly talkative but the U.S. soldiers are especially like foreign, incomprehensible bodies, and compared with the villagers, their internal minds remain undisclosed.) The U.S. soldiers are depicted as conquerors rather than liberators.

Lady Choe, mother of Chang-hui (Seong-min's friend) suffers after her husband runs away following his involvement in leftist activities. She sells her body to an African-American soldier in a water mill. Seong-min and Chang-hui peep at their actions through a hole in the wall, a classic example of the primal scene. The U.S., which has power to determine the Korean peoples' destiny, is imag-

12. For a detailed and delicate analysis of the movie in this respect, see Kim J. (2000).

ined as the obscene father or the real father who enjoys the *jouissance* denied to the subjects. In this primal scene, in which his friend's mother is a substitute for his own mother, Seong-min's gaze represents an impossible one that witnesses the traumatic incident of "voluntary" subordination of his Other to the foreign Other. (Seong-min's father is a civilian employed by the U.S. army, so he has a better life and superior status compared to the villagers. But he rides a bicycle, instead of a U.S. army jeep. Moreover, he pimps for Lady Choe. It is also important that, unlike *The Silver Stallion Will Never Come*, the primal scene in this movie is not based on violence but a contract.) As for Chang-hui, he witnesses the usurpation of the U.S. GI of his father's place in having sex with his mother.

The obscene father forbids his sons from regarding the mother as an object of desire and monopolizes their sisters. In the movie, a young woman in the village sells her body to a U.S. GI for money to cure her sick father while Seong-min's sister gets pregnant with a U.S. GI who deserts her. The subjects who have faced the obscene father have to build new symbolic order. Chang-hui is killed in a fight with a U.S. GI (real death) and Seong-min and other children in the village mourn his death (symbolic death), creating a new symbolic order. In the final scene, Seong-min's father leaves the village with his family, abandoned by the U.S. army he served. Before that, we have a scene in which Seong-min rejects his father by running away. He also has a strong bond with his uncle throughout the film, who leads a very different life from his father. All of these events, along with Seong-min's father's downfall (another Real father who is incapable and weak), imply that Seong-min will live a different life from his father's generation after Chang-hui's funeral. Although *Spring in My Hometown* seemingly looks upon the past with nostalgia, it sends a quiet but powerful message to build a new symbolic order on the basis of the painful life of the older generation to which the movie is dedicated.

V

Experiencing the onslaught of national bankruptcy crisis near the end of 1997 and the unconditional economic submission to the IMF and U.S. Treasury-financial capital on its vanguard, many Korean fathers yearned for a strong nation and for the realization of masculine power. This is proved in the success and popularity of the novel *Mugunghwa kkot-i pieotseumnida* (Rose of Sharon—Korean National Flower) and Yi Hyeon-se's comic book *Nambeol* (Raid of the South). *Yuryeong* (Phantom: The Submarine, 1999) was made in this social milieu of humiliated nationalism. After Korea's attempt to obtain nuclear weapons is aborted by the U.S., the Korean government buys a nuclear submarine from Russia. Thwarted by potential conflicts with powerful neighboring countries, high-ranking government and military officials plan to dispose of it voluntarily by exploding it in the open sea. Deputy Captain 202 and his men rebel in opposition, take control of the submarine, and plan to shoot a nuclear missile over the Japanese islands to counter the U.S. and Japanese forces. This story line is a typical recreation of the fantasy of achieving a strong nation by masculine power.

As the subject of the movie implies, the movie was created against the social backdrop of the IMF-bailout, North Korea's rejection of nuclear weapons inspection and missile shooting over the East Sea in the 1990s, thus bringing the peninsula to the brink of war; and the controversy over Japan's remilitarization, which caused conflicts with its neighboring countries. Interestingly, although the nuclear crisis followed the outbreak of the financial crisis and the main parties involved in the nuclear weapons crisis were North Korea and the U.S., South Korea's main conflict in the movie is with Japan rather than the U.S., due to realistic considerations.[13] Nonethe-

13. In *Raid of the South*, Japan is represented openly as an enemy, similar to *Geonchuk muhan yungmyeongakche-ui bimil* (A Mystery of the Cube, 1999), a movie released at roughly the same time. As seen in the scene where the coach sermons the players in *Gongpo-ui oein gudan* (A Formidable League of Their Own), Yi

less, the American Other's gaze, as phantom-like as the movie's title implies, dominates the fantasy world. Deputy Captain 202's mutinous plans constituted, above all, protest against the U.S., which aimed to demonstrate Korea's power to the U.S., as reflected in the dialogue between Deputy Captain 202 and Officer 431 before they set off to sea. In the movie, the U.S. functions as father's law, which prohibits South Korea from possessing power (nuclear weapons). But just as the father does not directly threaten his son with castration, the father as law does not appear directly. More precisely, it is hidden. The gaze of the Other is invisible and its signifier operates in veil. As Lacan says, the phallus as a signifier can play its role only when veiled. The old Captain takes the place of the veiled phallic signifier. He represents the South Korean government and military, while the prohibition of the command of the U.S./Other's law is executed through the Captain/South Korea/Other.

The Captain does not assume the figure of the ideal imaginary father but that of the incapable real father, giving instructions that are the opposite of seeking power. He knows his crew is going to die, yet he leads them through it. Decades ago, he murdered 431's biological father who was secretly seeking to produce nuclear weapons. Deputy Captain 202 and other men kill the incapable father (patricide/regicide) and take charge of the submarine. By this, they defy the command of the father's law, thus assume the power of the phallus themselves. They board the submarine and are one with it in its narrow space. More than anything, they share the same destiny with the submarine. The submarine resembles the imaginary phallus or penis, which roams freely though the ocean, which is associated with the woman's womb or vagina, the water-filled space of fantasy.

The fantasy played out in *Phantom: The Submarine* resembles

Hyeon-se's comic book earning unparalleled popularity in the 1980s, masculine fantasies of Koreans' yearning for power tend to implicitly reveal a so-called "Japan complex." This is of course due to the fact that Korea directly experienced colonization under the Japanese, and was thereafter compelled to live with the undeniable reality of America's formidable power that is too gigantic for Koreans to directly fight against or compete with.

the dream Freud mentions in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, in which a father sees his dead son's arm burning and wakes up frightened. Lacan comments that because the father is dangerously close to the Real, he wakes up at its threshold. Žižek interprets the dream as follows: In the dream the son asks his father, "Father, can't you see I'm burning?" meaning, "Father, can't you see I'm enjoying?" that is, "Father, can't you see I'm alive, burning with *jouissance*?"[14] Similarly, 202 and his soldiers, who defy the prohibition order from the father and take charge of the submarine, ask the U.S./Other, "Father, can't you see we are enjoying *jouissance*?" This fantasy is a protest and resistance against the father who monopolizes the enjoyment of *jouissance*. The U.S./Other is more than the law/symbolic father; it is the obscene real father enjoying jouissance. According to Žižek, the Lacanian master signifier is itself a small piece of the Real. In the movie, behind the impotent real father is the real father who monopolizes *jouissance.*

In this fantasy, the object of desire is nuclear arms, i.e., the nuclear submarine. The submarine, *Phantom*, is a sublime object that cannot be incorporated into the symbolic order, i.e., the real Thing. Just as Korea does not have nuclear arms, the nuclear submarine does not officially exist, so it is named "Phantom." This also means that it cannot be approved of in the realm of the Symbolic. Thus, it is a phantom, as the title implies, and exists somewhere between the realm of the Real and the Symbolic. For the same reason, the crew aboard the *Phantom* is a phantom, too. They are believed to be dead in the world. For the recovery of symbolic order, phantoms must return to the realm of the Real. The plan of 202 and his crew is aborted by 431 and the *Phantom* sinks into the deep sea, thus achieving the recovery of symbolic order. But 431's logic for the series of events is weak compared to 202's nationalist logic, which is grounded in power. It is because 202's desire is 431's as well. One characteristic of fantasy is that there can be multiple subject positions within it. 202 and 431 are two sides of the same subject. They resemble each

14. Žižek (1992, 124-125).

other: both killed their superiors in the past and 202's desire for nuclear weapons was the dream that 431's father tried to realize. The confrontation between 202 and 431 can be considered a daydream shared by Korean male subjects who wander between desire and prohibition, coveting power but restrained by the double Others.

VI

While the two Others tend to be one in the case of the subjects of *Phantom: The Submarine* (202 identifies the high-ranking officers as subservient to the U.S. and for this reason, hates them), the subjects of *Gongdong gyeongbi guyeok JSA* (Joint Security Area, 2000) experience split between the two Others. This difference comes from the different natures of the Others gazing at the subjects in the two movies. In the former, the two Others are the U.S. and the South Korean government, whereas in the latter, the Others are both the U.S. and the "national community" of the Korean people.

Shots ring out at Panmunjeom (the location of the single crossing point between North and South Korea) and a South Korean soldier, who had been kidnapped, escapes, leaving two North Korean soldiers, a private and an officer, dead. Major Jang (Major Sophie Jean) investigates the incident as a representative of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission and finds out that four North and South privates were holding a get-together at the North Korean guard post on the night of the incident. During the investigation, Major Jang reminisces about her father, a North Korean POW who chose a neutral nation for his destination when released. The movie ends with the suicide of corporal Yi Su-hyeok, the soldier who claims he was kidnapped by North Korean soldiers.

On the surface, all the characters except Major Jang try desperately to maintain the current Cold War order of national division. The efforts of South Korean Corporal Yi Su-hyeok and North Korean Sergeant O Gyeong-pil to maintain the appearance of the division system is upheld for the gaze of the Others, i.e., their respective govern-

ments and military. But their effort exists ultimately for the gaze of the American Other because divided Korean peninsula, the only remaining remnant in the world from the Cold War and symbolized by Panmunjeom, was a creation of U.S. world politics and has still been maintained by the U.S. (The U.S. shares the responsibility for the division with the Soviet Union, but the latter no longer exists.)

That their efforts are for the gaze of the American Other is revealed in the maintenance of their caution towards Major Jang. Although she belongs to and receives orders from the Neutral Nations Command, there is no doubt that she represents the gaze of the U.S., the crafter of the Cold War order, given the relations between the characters in the movie and the historical reality of the politics of division. The movie even shows her participation in a run-in with U.S. soldiers. The apparent symbolic order of the movie is built along the axis of the gaze of the U.S./Other in the form of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission, an order the characters try to maintain. (Naturally, the superiors of Yi and O have no interest in knowing the truth of the incident. Sensing the fragility of the symbolic order, the North and South Korean generals do not want the truth revealed, whatever it is. They just want to maintain the consistent appearance of the Other as it is, free from any potential threat.)

Nonetheless, beneath the external order, it is the gaze of *one* nation, or a nation they *believed* to be one, that the four South and North soldiers desire. In other words, they desire to maintain a totally different symbolic order of a unified national community. For this, they meet in the darkness of night in an underground bunker of the North Korean guard post, thus avoiding the gaze of the U.S./Other and the gaze of both sides of the divided nation maintained along the axis of the gaze of the American Other. The underground bunker and the surrounding area become the space of fantasy in which the symbolic order of one national community is constructed and maintained.[15]

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15. The movie can be interpreted as constructing a fantasy of national homogeneity. See Mun (2002, 52-55).

The space of fantasy in which national homogeneity is formed is regressive in a way. This is because it is the imaginary space that we imagine we enjoyed before entering into the symbolic order of the division system, and in which the momentum of wholeness that is lost is presently to be recovered. In the fantasy space, the four soldiers play children's games such as marbles and chicken-fighting while listening to the songs of Kim Gwang-seok, a South Korean pop singer, instead of discussing politics. At the same time, from the standpoint of the U.S./division system/Other, the space is even obscene and belongs to the realm of "the Real," because it is within this space they can enjoy national harmony and homogeneity that the Other expressly prohibits.

The space of this fantasy is constructed by the desire to build a symbolic order of a homogeneous national community, or the desire to confirm and maintain national homogeneity, which is something believed to have continued despite national division. That is why Major Jang realizes the truth of the space only after she reconciles with the childhood memories of her father by unfurling the folded part of the family picture that contains her father's image, which signifies her return as a member of the homogeneous national community going beyond the division system. When the fact that her father was a North Korean soldier is revealed, she is removed from her role as the representative of the investigation team of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission. Her father also had refused to go to either the South or the North, and chose a neutral nation, signifying his refusal of the divided system of the Cold War order.

But the space of this fantasy is fragile, as is the symbolic order of the homogeneous national community maintained by the fantasy. (The Other does not exist.) The four soldiers' happy childhood space is shattered by the intrusion of a North Korean officer, and they are forced to fire at each other, even though they had just exchanged friendship. Yi's suicide is symbolic, a gesture to defend the dismantling of the symbolic order. He cannot accept the traumatic truth that the homogeneous national community, which he believed to exist despite the history of division, does not exist and it is crossed and

divided by various lines of hostility. When he takes a photo of the soldiers in the bunker, Yi adjusts the camera angle to not capture the pictures of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il. He cannot face the gaze of another Other in a nation that symbolizes the history of national division. He wants to maintain the appearance of this Other of one national community by embracing the responsibility for the breakup (he killed a brother-like North Korean soldier) and sacrifices himself rather than reveal the traumatic truth of the absence of a suitable nation/Other. It is a suicide for the desire of the Other, the nation, as well as a gesture toward it.

VII

The way Koreans look at the American Other, which dominated Korean history and their everyday sensibility to a great extent, has changed with the times. In my view, the image of the United States has shifted mainly from the overwhelming domination of the imaginary father figure as an ideal model to a competition between that figure and the obscene father figure in the realm of the Real. The image of the obscene real father figure may be more notable in a fantastical scene, which conveniently reflects the sensibilities of the general public as well as young people, who receive little concrete benefit from amicable relations with the U.S. But in fact, the two images of the father engage in constant struggle, which is presumably a fairer description of what is really happening. Considering the current actions of the U.S. government, however, it is most likely that the figure of the obscene father will overwhelm the imaginary father in the very near future, unless there is a drastic change in its military and foreign policy.

In any case, the symbolic father figure continues without fail. This is because it is supported by the status of the U.S. as a hegemonic nation in the world system, as well as Korea's dependency on the U.S. within this system. Therefore, in Korean consciousness and unconsciousness, in the construction of a fantasy that provides cer-

tain interpretations about the world and plays out people's desire, the gaze of the American Other still functions as its undeniable, fundamental core.

Limiting the discussion to the movies reviewed in this paper and allowing the drawing of a direct link between fantasy and reality at the present time only, it can be said that contemporary Korean society is caught between two Others, as depicted in the movie *JSA*. Let us suppose that two alternatives are presented to us, the first suggested by *Spring in My Hometown*, the second by *Phantom: The Submarine*. (Through identification of the two Others, we may choose to indulge in happiness instead of rebellion and refusal as in *Phantom: The Submarine*, but I do not want to think of a regression of history of this sort.) It may be hard to accept the adventurous option of *Phantom: The Submarine*,[16] which seems unrealistic, since it may lead to self-destruction and is a far cry from the goal of realizing peace and universal human values. Yet the option presented by *Spring in My Hometown* is not an easy one, either. Given the fact of this reality, it is first necessary to try and face the gaze of the American Other eye to eye. This does not mean to say that the option of *Phantom: The Submarine* must be taken. Is it really impossible to face the gaze of the Other for true freedom of the subjects? In this context, Lacanian imperatives such as "Do not give way on your desire" or "Enjoy your symptom," ring in the air.

16. According to Kim Jong-yeop, *Phantom: The Submarine* borrows a lot of materials from Gawaguchi Kaiji's comic book *The Fleet of Silence*. But he offers the critique that the former shows the idea of a nuclear adventure, supposing that if Korea obtained nuclear arms, it would use them against Japan, while Gawaguchi presents Japan's trauma of the nuclear attack in a subtle manner, such that it seeks world peace instead of an offensive nationalism. Kim J. (2001, 203-205).

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