

ABSTRACT

Title: KIM KI-DUK AND THE CINEMA OF
SENSATIONS

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COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

Despite the apparent usefulness for film analysis, the notion of “sensation” disappears in Deleuze’s two Cinema books (*Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* [1983] and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* [1985]) published right after *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (1981), which develops the idea of sensation. By tracing the conceptual origin of sensation from “event,” “sense,” and “affect,” this dissertation answers the mystery of the disappearance of sensation in the Cinema books and clarifies the possibilities and limitations of using “sensation” in the analysis of film. It puts Deleuze’s concepts of affect and sensation side by side with Korean director Kim Ki-duk’s films so that they can initiate mutually beneficiary discussions. Among the fourteen films Kim made, *Crocodile*, *The Isle* and *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring* are analyzed in detail. Each of these three films represents each stage of Kim Ki-duk’s own transformation as a director, and corresponds to Deleuze’s own deployment of the event into affect, sensation, and becomings. In the Cinema books, the concept of “sensation” is retained through the discussion of signs and images, but buried under the notions of the “affection-image” and the “impulse-image” because of the way “sensation” is conceptualized in *Francis Bacon: The*

Logic of Sensation and because of the worry that “sensation” might be confused with the “sensational.” While maintaining the conceptual thrust of event and sense, Deleuze reformulates affect and sensation in relation to movement in the Cinema books. Thus, “affect” appears when the movement decreases to a minimum, whereas sensation appears to mobilize the frozen movement. The understanding of Deleuzian usage of sensation prepares us to move beyond the conventional conceptual tools of narrative, symbolization, representation, and signification towards the flows of materials, forces and the virtual.

KIM KI-DUK AND THE CINEMA OF SENSATIONS

By

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2008

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2008

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to Okju for her patience, understanding and encouragement and to our daughter Yoonjin who is a source of joy and inspiration.

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Chapter One: the Encounter between Kim Ki-duk and Gilles

Deleuze

From *Crocodile* (1996) to *Breath* (2007), the prolific director Kim Ki-duk has made fourteen films thus far. As one of the most well-known contemporary Korean directors outside of Korea, his films have been routinely invited to prestigious international film festivals and have received numerous awards, including the Silver Bear Best Director's Award from the Berlin International Film Festival (2004) for his tenth film *Samaritan Girl* (2004), the FIPRESCI (Fédération Internationale de la Presse Cinématographique: International Federation of Film Critics) prize and the Special Director's award at the Venice Film Festival (2004) for his eleventh film *3-Iron* (2004). He is best known to US audiences for his ninth film *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring* (2003), which has been successfully released in the US.

While Kim Ki-duk is considered one of the most talented and important directors currently working in South Korea by the international film communities, Kim Ki-duk's reputation in his own country has been, at best, mixed – composed of a few enthusiastic supporters and many disgruntled detractors. He is praised for his uninhibited and painterly images, yet many film critics have been displeased by his shocking, bizarre, voyeuristic, gruesome, and violent images, as well as his politically suspicious characters and stories. General Korean audiences have been equally unsympathetic to his films and none of his films have been commercially successful in South Korea, except *Bad Guy* (2001). Even the marginal success of

Bad Guy is attributed to the main character played by actor Cho Jae-hyun, who was famous because of his role in a popular television drama that appeared after the completion, but before the release of the film.¹

Despite his reputation as an artistic and provocative director, the discussions of his films are still rare and have centered disproportionately on their graphic violence, especially violence against women. A quick survey of Kim's films proves why many film critics have been compelled to talk about misogyny in his films.

His first film *Crocodile* (1996) features a girl who tries to commit suicide after being sexually abused and betrayed. A man called Ag-O, which is literally "crocodile" in Korean, saves her only to rape and abuse her. However, despite physical and sexual exploitations, the girl remains with him and forms a family until her eventual suicide. His second film *Wild Animals* (1996) set in Paris includes a couple of female characters who hopelessly depend on their male counterparts, despite their physical abuse. His third film *The Birdcage Inn* (1999) features two females as main characters; one is a college student, whereas the other is a prostitute. The college girl has to live with the prostitute under the same roof because her family owns a small inn which hosts the prostitute. Consequently, the proud college girl at first despises the prostitute, and then begins to understand, sympathize, and imitate the prostitute. At the end of the story, the prostitute

¹ While Kim finds little difficulty in financing his films thanks to his reputation overseas and the low-budget production, the lack of support from a domestic audience has troubled him. His recent project *Time* (2006) was a scandal in South Korea because Kim decided not to release the film in his home country. He said bluntly in many interviews, "If you want to watch the film, import it." The film was released eventually in South Korea but disappeared from theatres quickly.

becomes ill and is unable to accept a client; thus, the college girl works instead of her. The next morning is the lone happy moment in the entire film, with the whole family and the prostitute preparing for the day happily exchanging a smile. Korean feminist film critics took it personal and were furious about its all-woman-is-prostitute myth (Ju).

Violence against women becomes even more graphic in *The Isle* (2000), which features an infamous fishhook scene, in which the main female character pushes fishhooks fastened with string into her vagina and then pulls the string. Set in a small town located near a US military base in South Korea in the seventies, *Address Unknown* (2001) also depicts gruesome violence against women. In this film, one of the main characters loses an eye as a child while playing a sort of game of William Tell with her brother. Later, she is sexually involved with an American male soldier, who promises to fix her eye. After surgery, she regains her eyesight and must endure the soldier, who has become relentless and violent. During a fight, the soldier decides to carve his name on the girl's breast, but she returns the favor by poking her eye with a knife. Consequently, she owes him nothing and there is no reason to endure his violence. Although the film does not graphically show the actual poking of her eye, the scene makes most audiences shudder. The film *Bad Guy* (2002), which is an apt title for a director who has earned the nick name of "the bad guy of Korean cinema," tells a story of a female college student who is trapped by a small gang and forced into prostitution. At first she tries to escape, but eventually settles down with one of the thugs and accepts her fate. Even after they depart the brothel as lovers, the thug continues to profit from her sexual labor.

Moreover, the happy ending is given a surprising religious gravity, concluding with the gospel *Day by Day* sung in French. In *Samaritan Girl* (2004), director Kim Ki-duk dares to go further by introducing an under-age prostitute, who thinks her sexual labor is akin to an Indian prostitute named Vasumitra whose clients, as the legend goes, have become devout Buddhists.

In most of Kim's films, female characters are prostitutes in one way or another and victims of abuse and violence. Their bodies are sadistically violated, abused, scarred, raped, and punished. Justifiably, the voice of Korean feminist film critics has been the loudest in South Korea. It is understandable that Korean feminist film critics, who are fully aware of real life violence against women, have become hostile to Kim's films, which seem to exploit women's misery without punishing the aggressors. I agree that we need to examine the way in which gender and sexuality are represented in film images, and the way audiences perceive, understand, receive, and utilize them. I am also aware of the necessity of feminist film criticism which makes salient the way in which gender and sexuality are represented in film images. However, in this study, I am less concerned about the degrading portrayal of the female gender *per se* than the peculiar way director Kim presents both men and women apart from their familial and social grids.

Most of Kim's characters appear without much personal or social background. Even the minimal traits they carry at the beginning of the film soon disappear and become inconsequential. Furthermore, their actions often defy their roles in society and thus appear to transgress the moral codes set by society. In fact, many of Kim's characters seem to have no moral center. They commit unethical

violence without guilt or responsibility, and their actions are not always properly punished. In addition, their actions often lack any narrative motivations which might make their atrocity acceptable or, at least, understandable. In other words, Kim asks his audiences for neither acceptance nor understanding. Rather, Kim confronts his viewers by disallowing them to interpolate their sense of morality into his films. Consequently, the films of Kim often have no character with which an audience can easily identify. Moreover, Kim's characters refuse to talk and they have no interest in *explaining* their motivations and actions. By foreclosing the easy application of the audience's sense of morality, Kim's films create a space for a new ethics which is not codified beforehand.² I suggest Kim's films can be read more productively not by engaging in the transcendental morality asking "What *must* they do?" but by grounding in the immanent *ethics* asking "What can they do? What are they capable of doing?" Kim's characters are not moral beings; they are *ethical* bodies involving inter-connection with other forces. Their encounters often result in conflicts and clashes. Violence and cruelty are part of this process, the process to *become*.³

² According to Deleuze, *morality* "presents us with a set of constraining rules of a special sort, ones that judge actions and intentions by considering them in relation to transcendent values." Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972-1990* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995) 100. On the other hand, *ethics* involves a creative connections and an expansion of possibilities of life. For the influences of Spinoza and Nietzsche on Deleuzian *immanent ethics*, see Daniel W Smith, "Deleuze and the Question of Desire: Toward an Immanent Theory of Ethics," *Parrhesia*.2 (2007).

³ For the relation between "ethics" and "becomings" in Deleuze, see Rosi Braidotti, "The Ethics of Becoming-Imperceptible," *Deleuze and Philosophy*, ed. Constantin V. Boundas (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006).

Beyond the recognitions of brutality and cruelty, the images of Kim's films force us to think. They are what Deleuze terms "signs," which are no longer objects of recognition, but objects of a fundamental "encounter." These images open an experiential dimension that is prepersonal and pre-representational. Deleuze's approach to the arts, particularly his concepts of "affect," "sensation" and "becomings," supplies a set of tools to apprehend this encounter. They allow us to weave through Kim Ki-duk's films in a manner that is otherwise than territorialized, constrained, and subsumed by matters of meaning and representation.

Before outlining my specific dissertation chapters, let me discuss more generally Deleuze's relation to film studies and the complexity of the theoretical terms he uses in his works both on and beyond the cinema.

After the death of Gilles Deleuze, Serge Toubiana wrote that "of the great French thinkers who have counted these last thirty years, Deleuze was the only one who *truly* loved cinema" (qtd. Bogue 1). However, despite Deleuze's love of cinema and two major publications on cinema, his thoughts on cinema still remain an afterthought in the US film communities.⁴ David Rodowick cites that Deleuze sets himself against Saussurean semiology and Lacanian psychology, which are the twin pillars of contemporary film theory (Rodowick xi). Gregory Flaxman points out the overwhelming breadth that the Cinema books cover and the even more intimidating

⁴ Some may argue otherwise. However the fact that only a dozen or so books on Deleuzian inquires on Cinema have been published in English suggests that Deleuzian film theory is not exactly flourishing, even taking into account the downturn of interest in theories in general in past decades.

Deleuze's entire *oeuvre* on which Cinema books are based (Flaxman 2). The successful application of Deleuze's discussion on cinema to an individual film analysis is quite rare, partly because, as Robert Stam points out, Deleuze theorizes *with* the cinema rather than giving us theories *about* the cinema (Stam 258). While Deleuze creates concepts such as the "movement-image" and the "time-image" *alongside* the cinema, he leaves little room for his readers to use his discussions for analyses of other films.

Typically, Deleuze was simply added to a chapter at the end of a recent anthology, *Studying Contemporary American Film: A Guide to Movie Analysis* (2002). Written by two respected film scholars, Thomas Elsaesser and Warren Buckland, it has nine chapters and Deleuze shares the last chapter with Feminism and Foucault. Even in the small section in which *The Silence of the Lambs* (Jonathan Demme, 1991) is analyzed, the central concept Elsaesser and Buckland borrow from Deleuze is "The Body without Organs," which is not quite the main idea which Deleuze develops in his Cinema books.

Throughout his writings, Deleuze often uses the term "art" and provides definitions such as "art... is not a matter of reproducing or inventing forms, but of capturing forces" (Deleuze Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation 56) or "art preserves... a bloc of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects" (Deleuze and Guattari What Is Philosophy? 164). However, such key terms as "force," "percept," "affect," and "sensation," which might help us examine our everyday experience of cinema, have very limited usage in the Cinema books. In particular, "sensation" is mentioned only a few times in passing, even though the

notion of sensation was fully developed in *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (originally published in 1981) which was published right before *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (originally published in 1983) and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (originally published in 1985). The disappearance of key terms of arts in the Cinema books results in many film theorists and critics using concepts developed elsewhere such as “The Body Without Organs” to explain a film text, rather than using, let’s say, the “reflection-image” from the Cinema books.

Actually, Deleuze and Guattari state that “Art is a false concept, a solely nominal concept” (Deleuze and Guattari *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* 300-1). Although they continue to add that “this does not, however, preclude the possibility of a simultaneous usage of the various arts within a determinable multiplicity” (302), it would be naïve to think that the philosopher of the rhizomatic gives us a system of arts. Deleuze’s strategies set themselves precisely against any schemas or systems that are systematic, ordered, ready-made, pre-determined or postulated. Thus, Deleuze describes the objectives of the Cinema books:

The job of criticism is to form concepts that... relate specifically to cinema, and to some specific genre of film, to some specific film or other. Concepts specific to cinema, but which can only be formed philosophically. (Deleuze *Negotiations, 1972-1990* 57-8)

Deleuze describes his Cinema books as a logic of the cinema which isolates certain cinematographic concepts. Unfortunately, these cinematographic concepts do not necessarily refer to either the “percepts,” the “affects” or the “sensations” that art preserves as he claims in *What Is Philosophy?* (1994). The Cinema books do consider “percept” and “affect” briefly in a couple of chapters which deal with the “perception-image” and the “affection-image.” However the books never give any rigorous theoretical attention to the term “sensation.” It seems that Deleuze is so occupied with the cinematic issues of the “movement-image” and the “time-image” that he considers any inquiry of the aesthetic experience of sensation as a distraction. Are Deleuzian thoughts on art and cinema incompatible? Is it wrong for a Deleuzian to think cinema as an art and to claim that “*cinema* preserves a bloc of sensations, a compound of percepts and affects”? Why can’t we use “sensation” for film analysis? Can we utilize the Deleuzian notion of “sensation” for film analysis, even though Deleuze does not endorse such an attempt? Under what conditions can we use the notion of “sensation” for cinema?

I believe that Deleuze’s basic approach to cinema actually opens the door to make the study of cinema part of a more general Deleuzian inquiry of art. In the preface to the English edition for *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (1986), Deleuze states that:

[T]he cinema seems to us to be a composition of images and of signs, that is, a pre-verbal intelligible content (*pure semiotics*), whilst semiology of a

linguistic inspiration abolishes the image and tends to dispense with the sign.

(viii)

Although Deleuze does not elaborate this statement any further, he returns to the assertion in the conclusion of *Cinema 2*. He claims that “Cinema is not a universal or primitive language system [*langue*], nor a language [*langage*]” and that “cinema is composed of images and signs that come before language” (262).

This claim goes directly against the cornerstone of traditional film theories which have been developed, as Stephen Heath famously formulates, through “the encounter of Marxism and psychoanalysis on the terrain of semiotics” (Heath 511). Deleuze’s complaint against Christian Metz and other advocates of the semiological paradigm is that they reduce the image to an utterance, as it were, to part of a syntagmatic chain. The syntagmatics apply because the image is an utterance which is subject to syntagmatics. The circular relationship between utterances and syntagmatics has been substituted for images and signs, to the point where the very notion of the sign as an image tends to disappear from the semiology. In other words, semiology allows the image to be regulated by linguistic structures in the form of syntagmas and paradigms. Thus, the image is reduced to an analogical sign belonging to an utterance, which then allows the codification of these signs, in order to discover the inevitable linguistic structure underlying the image.

Deleuze’s hostility toward the Saussurean and Lacanian foundations, which is also evident in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateau*, helps to explain the slow incorporation of Deleuzian film theory in the English-speaking film communities.

However, by setting the cinematic image as a “pre-verbal intelligible content,” Deleuze allows us to incorporate the cinematic image under the broader investigation of the sign. In other words, if “a pre-verbal intelligent content” belongs to his study of signs which includes literature, painting, and music, we may use the “pre-verbal intelligent content” as a linchpin to connect cinema with other forms of art.

Then, what is “a pre-verbal intelligible content?” Or as Deleuze often formulates, what does it do? This question is one of the fundamental questions Deleuze engages with throughout his *oeuvre*, although the question appears as a different register in a different guise, depending on the subject in which the question appears, whether that subject is philosophy, linguistics, painting, literature, or cinema.

As Deleuze starts *What Is Philosophy?* with “there are no simple concepts” (15), his concepts are not always meant to be clear and they are never exactly “about” something, but a sort of toolbox. However, how can we pick up a saw from the toolbox instead of a wrench if we do not know what a saw does? My strategy is to pick up the simplest tool and to move on to a more complicated one. In this way, we may establish a connection between those tools, and in doing so we may find the possibilities and the limits of each tool.

The nature of the “pre-verbal intelligible content” is first discussed in Deleuze’s *oeuvre* under the notion of “event” which becomes one of the main concepts in *The Logic of Sense* (originally published in 1969). The event is an incorporeal, complex and irreducible entity at the surface of things. It is the logic of

the event (and its linguistic expression, sense) that gives his study of signs and images in the arts a special status; that is, signs and images are irreducible to language or code. Thus the Deleuzian idea of sense entails a pragmatics of language prior to the postulates of generative grammar or Saussurian *langue*.

His other works further complicate the event or sense by associating them with the terms such as affect (cinema), sensation (painting), and becomings. By recapitulating the event, the affect positions itself as a pre-linguistic singularity or a pre-verbal intelligible content, which undermines the grip of semiology. The affect short-circuits the attempt to interpret images in a film by using an already existing set of values, morals, and meanings. Sensation can be discussed in the same way. It does not perceive sign as a representation, rather it sees sign in its pure movement, duration and rhythm, unhinged by the relation of subject and object. Thus, Deleuze's concept of the event provides an important starting point for dealing with the images in question, without recourse to semiotic or psychoanalytic doctrines.

The first goal of this thesis is to follow the itinerary of the event in various works written by Deleuze and explicate the event's relationship with other concepts. Secondly, while tracing the conceptual movement from the event to affect and sensation, this study also shows how each concept is used with a specific emphasis in the Cinema books while re-attaining the conceptual thrust of the earlier concept. In other words, Deleuze reformulates them in relation to "movement." Thus, "affect" appears when the movement decreases to a minimum, whereas sensation appears to mobilize the frozen movement.

The third goal is to find an answer to the disappearance of sensation in the Cinema books. While a small number of scholars have tackled the issues of affect and sensation developed by Deleuze, they often overlook that Deleuze himself uses the notion of sensation with a caution in the Cinema books.⁵ Deleuze admits that

⁵ Steven Shaviro's polemic *The Cinematic Body* declares the bankruptcy of semiotic and psychoanalytic paradigms and proposes a "non-signifying image," which is the "incorporeal materiality." Steven Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) 34. Thus, he emphasizes the cinematic experience as a bodily experience, primarily tactile and visceral. Shaviro says, "We neglect the basic tactility and viscosity of cinematic experience when we describe material processes and effects, such as the persistence of vision, merely as mental illusions. Cinema produces real effects in the viewer, rather than merely presenting phantasmic reflections to the viewer" (51). Shaviro claims that the viewing experience is one of physiological excitations, a kind of "physical affliction, an intensification and disarticulation of bodily sensation" (52). In fact, following Bergson, Deleuze has already claimed that all matter, including that of the human subject, exists as images. Within each living center, there exists a delay between the moment of perception and the moment of action, in other words, a gap between stimulus and response, which Shaviro calls "between the imprinting of a sensation and its reception" (51), and this gap is nothing but the brain – "the center of indeterminacy in the acentred universe of images". Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) 63. Brian Massumi also argues for the primacy and autonomy of affects in the reception of images. He equates affect with intensity and emphasizes the gap between the affective moment when the image first assaults us and the moment we make meaning. Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, Post-Contemporary Interventions (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002) 23-45. Barbara Kennedy also expands the cinematic body into physiological human body that explains the cinematic as material force, not as a text to be interpreted. Barbara M. Kennedy, *Deleuze and Cinema: The Aesthetics of Sensation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000) 112. She emphasizes the sensation "which is based upon the molecularity of matter, and functions through the materiality of the body of work in relation to other bodies (115). Recent scholarship of digital media emphasizes the role of the audience's body in the process of affect and sensation. For example, Mark Hansen disagrees with Deleuze's (mis)reading of Bergson, claiming, "Deleuze's neo-Bergsonian account of the cinema carries out the progressive disembodiment" of the human, reinforcing a notion of the machine or the post-human. Mark B. N. Hansen, *New Philosophy for New Media* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004) 5. However, despite numerous examples these authors cite from various scientific fields such as psychology and physiology, it turns out to be awfully difficult to clarify the complex processes of exchanges between affects,

film images as “automatic movement” can communicate vibrations directly to the cortex through sensation (Deleuze Cinema 2: The Time Image 156). However, Deleuze also cautions that “the shock would be confused, in bad cinema, with the figurative violence of the represented” (157). In other words, the shock of the image can easily degenerate into figurative violence or glib exploitation, as many contemporary Hollywood films attest. Thus, this project claims that Deleuzian notion of “sensation” which is developed through *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* should be used in the context of cinema in conjunction with other Deleuzian ideas “event,” “affect” and “becomings.” In the Cinema books, the concept of “sensation” is retained through the discussion of signs and images, but buried under the notions of the “affection-image” and the “impulse-image” because of the way “sensation” is conceptualized in *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* and because of the worry that “sensation” might be confused with the “sensational.” Although many commentators of Deleuzian sensation emphasize the physiological and psychological excitement of viewers, Deleuze seems to be reluctant to discuss sensation of an audience, at least, in the context of cinema. Cinematic sensation might be better called “sensation without organs.”⁶

The fourth objective is to put Deleuze’s concepts side by side with Kim’s films so that they can initiate mutually beneficiary discussions. Among the fourteen

sensations, feelings and cognition. While these authors have significantly advanced the Deleuzian theories of affect and sensation, their emphasis on the material impact on the viewer (whether it is prepersonal or embodied) is often at odd with the texts they analyze. Moreover, the fact that Deleuze uses “sensation” only sparsely in the Cinema books complicates their usage of it in film analysis under his name.

⁶ This expression first appears in Orrin N C Wang, "Coming Attractions: *Lamia* and Cinematic Sensation," Studies in Romanticism 42.Winter (2003). 479.

films Kim made, his first film *Crocodile*, his fourth film *The Isle*, and his ninth film *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring* will be analyzed in detail. Each of these three films represents each stage of Kim Ki-duk's own transformation as a director, and corresponds to Deleuze's own deployment of the event into affect, sensation, and becomings. Although each of these films portrays a different story, there are remarkable similarities and consistency, just like Deleuze's concept of the event reappears with subtle variations throughout his *oeuvre*. Finally I move to three Hollywood films to see how the tools developed through the encounter between Kim Ki-duk and Deleuze can be used for analyses of popular Hollywood films.

Chapter two first illustrates a brief history of Korean cinema and the film industry. Since the Korean War, government policies have been the most important factor of Korean cinema and the Korean film industry. The Motion Picture Law of 1962 and its subsequent revisions in the eighties are discussed in relation to their impacts on Korean cinema and the Korean film industry. Since the early nineties, Korean film industry has undergone tremendous changes. New production and distribution systems have been introduced, and these changes have also invited a new generation of filmmakers and producers who are playing pivotal roles today. The second part examines the current success of Korean cinema both in Korea and abroad. It identifies the success of *Shiri* (1999) as the turning point of contemporary Korean cinema which was able to capture the collective experiences and memories of Korean audiences. The next part of Chapter two puts director Kim Ki-duk in the context (or the lack of) of Korean cinema. While Kim Ki-duk is considered one of

the best-known Korean directors outside of Korea, his relationship with Korean cinema and the Korean film industry has been a disjunctive one. This chapter also describes the reception of Kim Ki-duk in Korea and abroad. Particular attention is given to the Korean feminist film critics who have been the most outspoken opponents of Kim's films. It also recalls several concepts of Deleuze such "molecular" and "micropolitics," and shows how Kim's films deterritorialize, rather than strengthen, gender binarism.

Chapter Three explores in detail the Deleuzian notion of event and its relationship with sense and affect. Borrowing from the Stoics, Deleuze introduces the event as a "surface effect" which does not exist *per se* but rather subsists on the surface of a thing or a state of affairs. Primarily as an ontological term, "event" criticizes the foundation of Western philosophy based upon substance and essence. Deleuze simultaneously discusses "sense" as a linguistic expression of event in *The Logic of Sense*. As the event anchors substance and its representation ontologically, the sense makes our propositions such as denotation, manifestation, and signification possible. The cinematic expression of event/sense comes by way of Spinoza's discussion of "affect (*affectus*)" and "affection (*affection*)."¹ Once again, Spinoza's philosophical terms are translated by Deleuze into aesthetical one as the "affection-image" which appears as enveloping the affect in *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*.

The affection-image is most evident in close-up of face, but Deleuze also suggests that the affection-image can be obtained by any-space-whatever. Kim Ki-duk's first film *Crocodile* seems to strive to attain any-space-whatever, a space

abstracted from spatio-temporal coordinates. Characters are introduced without personal or social backgrounds, and their actions defy narrative causality. The setting is also obscured by eliminating all spatio-temporal coordinates. In *Crocodile*, violence and death are thus presented neither for the narrative nor to control the audience's emotional response, but to present them as events.

Chapter Four first examines the similarities and differences between *Crocodile* and *The Isle*. While they share many similarities, they also differ in terms of the world they respectively present. While *Crocodile* can be characterized as an impersonal space, that is, “any-space-whatever,” the world of *The Isle* takes an “originary world,” the world of instinct and impulse. While the affect is achieved in *Crocodile* by arresting movements through the affection-image, the sensation *The Isle* evokes is attained by freeing movements through the impulse-image. The difference between affect and sensation in terms of movement is confirmed by examining Deleuze's study on Francis Bacon. The second part of Chapter Four deals with *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring*. While it still investigates its similarities and differences with the other two films, it expands the discussions to the plane of consistency which characterizes the cinematic space of *Spring*. Deleuzian ideas of “fold” and “becoming-animal” tie Deleuze's concepts with Kim's films.

Chapter Five compares Kim Ki-duk's films to three popular Hollywood films. It considers how Deleuzian ideas surveyed in the discussions of Kim's films can be applied to the images of violence in contemporary Hollywood cinema. Since one of the interests of this project is to find a way to utilize Deleuzian concepts in

the analysis of popular Hollywood films, I exclude more easily comparable non-Hollywood films and concentrate on three films which highlight violence against the male body. The main criteria of the selections are that each film should be considered as violent as Kim's films I have discussed, but each film should be analyzed differently under the limited tools I have.

At first, Chapter Five introduces the notion of "nooshock," a broad sense of sensation. Deleuze always uses this word with a caution because of the danger of misunderstanding it as "the sensational." Thus, the first film *The Passion of The Christ* (Mel Gibson, 2004) shows how affect and sensation can be easily canceled out by the simple shot/reverse shot and becomes "sensational". The second film *Reservoir Dogs* (Quinten Tarantino, 1992) shows how affect and sensation move back and forth and how "nooshock" can be a part of that exchange. Finally, the third film *Fight Club* (David Fincher, 1999) is analyzed in terms of sensation and the body. While Kim Ki-duk's films achieve affect, sensation, and becomings by making his isolated characters either stop or move, *Fight Club* achieves the same result through the body and pain. It shows that Deleuzian notions of affect and sensation not only give us the tools to understand the logic of cinematic images but also allow us to avoid the conventional vocabularies such as masculinity and gender in dealing with the violence of images.

Chapter Two: Kim Ki-duk and Contemporary Korean Cinema⁷

1. Introduction

Over the past decade, the Korean film industry has witnessed an explosive growth, which is evident in both Korea and abroad. The year 2004 was particularly productive. The domestic market share of Korean cinema reached 60%, surpassing Hollywood films. In the same year, both the Berlin International Film Festival and the Venice Film Festival gave director Kim Ki-duk the best director's awards, followed by Park Chan-wook's *Oldboy* (2003) which received Grand Prize of Jury from the Cannes Film Festival. Within a six-month span, a large scale Korean cinema retrospective was held in Washington D.C, New York and Paris. The Korean film industry has been billed as the world's most dynamic, wide-ranging and creative film industry for quite some time.

Although Korean cinema has been enjoying its status as home of the national cinema garnering global attention, the Korean film industry was in a perpetual crisis from the early 1970s to the late 1990s. Just a decade ago, the Korean film industry was on the verge of collapse. Korean cinema had been left without oxygen for too long and no life support was in sight. The domestic market share of Korean films reached close to a single digit percent point, and the number of domestic film produced in a year had been continuously shrinking from over 200 films in the 1970s to about 43 films in 1998, its lowest point.⁸

⁷ Korean cinema refers to "South Korean cinema" throughout this project.

⁸ All raw data related to the Korean film industry can be found at the Korean Film Council (KOFIC) website: <http://www.koreanfilm.or.kr>

The crisis of Korean cinema, however, was not well-known outside Korea. Although the history of Korean cinema dates back to the 1910s,⁹ Korean cinema was virtually non-existent in the international scene until the late nineties. Film historian Robert Sklar published a nearly 600-page-long world film history book, *Film: An International History of the Medium* in 1993. In this massive book, he mentions the word “Korea” only a couple of times: when he discusses a Japanese film *Death By Hanging* (Nagisa Oshima, 1968) which is about a man who was born in Japan to Korean parents, *The Manchurian Candidate* (John Frankenheimer, 1962) which has the Korean War as its backdrop and Robert Altman’s *Mash* (1970) which is supposedly set in the Korean War, though the ubiquitous conical hats suggest otherwise. (The conical hat, which is the iconic image of Vietnam, cannot be found in Korea.) Film Scholar Geoffrey Nowell-Smith compiled a massive volume of film history book called *The Oxford History of World Cinema* in 1999. It has almost 1,000 pages with two columns on each page. There are sections on American Cinema, European Cinemas, and cinemas of rest of the world, which includes small chapters on Indian cinema, Chinese cinema, Hong Kong cinema, Taiwanese cinema, Japanese cinema, Australian cinema, and Latin American cinema, as well as lesser known national cinemas such as Indonesian cinema,

⁹ A kino-drama *Uirijok Gutu* (Royal Revenge) (Kim Dosan, 1919) is known as the first Korean film and *Wolhau Maengse* (Promise under the Moon) (Yun Baeknam, 1923) is known as the first Korean feature film, although these claims are still contested. See Chapter 2 of Eungjun Min, Jinsook Joo and Han Ju Kwak, Korean Film: History, Resistance, and Democratic Imagination (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2003).

Turkish cinema, Arab cinema, cinemas of sub-saharan Africa, and Iranian cinema. However, it failed to mention anything about Korean cinema.

This chapter gives a brief history of Korean cinema with an emphasis on its recent success. Since the Korean War, government policies have been the most important factor of Korean cinema and the Korean film industry. Since the early nineties, Korean film industry has undergone tremendous changes. New production and distribution systems were introduced, and these changes have also invited a new generation of filmmakers and producers. The Renaissance of Korean cinema started with them. The current success of Korean cinema both in Korea and abroad is discussed in detail.

The next part deals with director Kim Ki-duk and puts him in the context of Korean cinema. While Kim Ki-duk is one of the best-known Korean directors outside of Korea, his position in the Korean film history can be best described as an “outsider.” Kim does not share his political view and aesthetics with any present or past Korean director. He also makes his films mostly outside of Chungmuro (Korean equivalent of Hollywood). The final part deals with the reception of Kim Ki-duk in Korea and abroad.

2. A Brief History of Korean Cinema

A large part of early Korean Cinema history remains unknown, even to Korean film historians. Under the Japanese occupation (1910 – 1945), filmmaking was tightly controlled by the Japanese colonial government. Korean filmmakers were forced to use Japanese instead of Korean, and many filmmakers had to work

under pseudonym, or without credit. Thus, written records are both rare and often in dispute. Most of all, other than two recently found and restored films, *Turning Point of the Youngsters* (Ahn Jong-hwa, 1934) and *Sweet Dream* (Yang Joo-nam, 1936), no pre-1945 film has survived in its entirety. A quick build-up of the film industry after the Liberation was also crushed by the Korean War (1950 – 1953). Only five films have survived from the devastating war.

After the cease-fire in 1953, then South Korean president, Rhee Syngman, attempted to revive the film industry by giving cinema tax exemption and by channeling foreign aids into the film industry. The result came quickly, as the South Korean film industry enjoyed a boom period, known as The Golden Age of Korean Cinema during the late fifties and the early sixties. It was a time when the government controlled the number of foreign film imports (this protectionist mechanism continued until 1985) and the television set was still a luxury item for average citizen, though television broadcasting started in South Korea in 1956. Without any strong competition from foreign films or other media, and with the influx of young talented people into the film industry, Korean cinema became the most important entertainment medium for the general public. The number of domestic productions in a year jumped from the single digit to over one hundred, and there was an even bigger jump in audience numbers. Particularly during the brief period from 1960 to 1961, between the collapse of the Rhee government after the student revolution known as April Revolution and the military coup led by general Park Jung-hee which toppled the newly elected government, the Korean film industry enjoyed what Korean film historians often refer to as “the freest

moment” (Min, Joo and Kwak 47), a rare combination of minimal governmental regulations and massive creative energy from young directors. However, Park’s regime wasted no time in starting to control the film industry. The Motion Picture Law of 1962 required all film companies to register with the Ministry of Culture and Information, setting up rigid requirements for registration including:

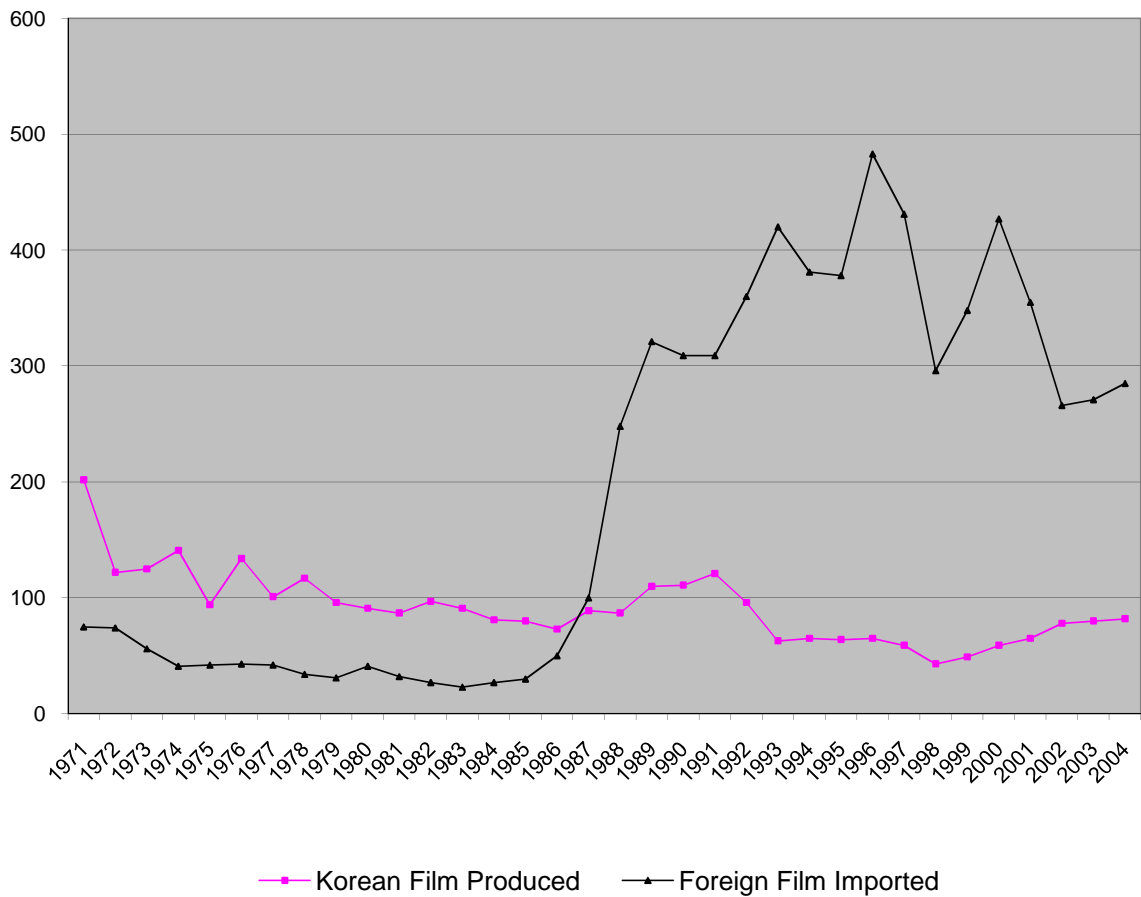
Studio space of more than 791 square yards, sound recording capabilities, film laboratory facilities, a lighting system of more than 60kw of power, more than three 35 mm cameras, two full-time exclusively employed film directors, and more than two exclusively employed actors and actresses.

Registered companies were required to produce a minimum of 15 films each per year. (47)

While some companies survived by merging, most small companies could not meet these requirements and simply disappeared. This Motion Picture Law not only restructured the entire film industry but also determined the quality of Korean films for decades to come. First of all, the registration requirement made independent filmmaking impossible. Secondly, the registration requirement entailed, for the registered film companies, a complete cooperation with government ideology and policies, since the government could simply revoke the registration of any film company. Socially and politically conscious subjects could not pass the initial scenario check up, and violence and sexuality were also off-limits (48). Under strict censorship, creative minds were stifled, and the Golden Age quickly turned into the

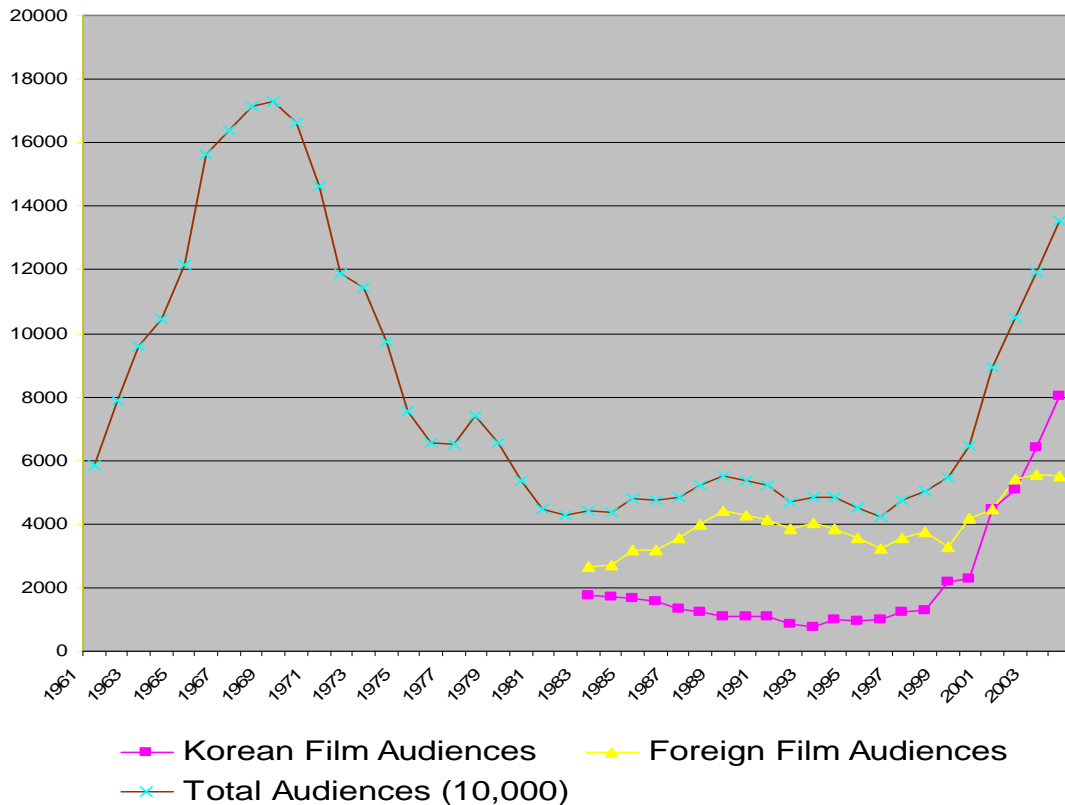
Dark Age. The Law was supposed to protect and foster Korean cinema by allowing only qualified film companies to produce films and by giving them the right to import foreign films as a reward. However, rather than facilitating domestic film production, this policy resulted in producing a large number of cheaply and hastily made domestic films, because the imported films were far more profitable than the domestic ones. Since the policy was intended to encourage film companies to make high quality films, they were officially called “quality films,” but most Koreans derided them as “quota-quickies.”

Figure 1: The number of films produced and imported (1971 -2004)



As [figure 1] shows, while the number of foreign film imports remained low until 1985 due to the import restriction, the number of Korean film productions was also declining throughout the seventies. The Motion Picture Law forced the film industry to structure itself around the high-profit foreign films and the cheaply made and unprofitable domestic films. In the seventies, censorship got even harsher; filmmakers simply lost their creativity and many of them left the film industry for good. The most damaging result was that domestic audiences lost their faith in Korean cinema. For many, a Korean film equaled an inferior film. The free fall of Korean cinema was evident in the dramatic dip of the number of total admissions from the early seventies to the early eighties.

Figure 2: Total Admissions (1961 - 2004)



In the sixties, the amount of domestic production increased because film companies had to meet the government requirements, as did the number of total admissions. However from the early seventies, admission numbers started to decline, showing a lack of interest from Korean audiences in domestic films. Considering the high popularity of Hollywood cinema, the decline of Korean cinema was even greater than what [figure 2] shows.

Conceding to the US demand in 1985, a new Motion Picture Law was introduced, which severed the tie between production and import and abolished the import quota. In 1987, faced with the pressure from Washington and Hollywood, the Korean government revised the same law to allow foreign companies to produce and distribute films directly in South Korea rather than working through local partners. As [figure 1] shows, the number of imported films skyrocketed from 1986, while the domestic film production was stagnant. Although the Korean film industry could retain a “screen quota system,”¹⁰ many felt that the policy change was the final blow to Korean cinema: no proven domestic audience, no export to foreign countries, no accumulated capital to weather the hard times, no governmental subsidy, no answer to Hollywood films and other foreign films.

¹⁰ Screen quota system restricts not the number of imports of foreign films but the number of days each theatre must show Korean films in a given year. Since its introduction in 1967, screen quota system has undergone many changes. In 1985, the number of days which South Korean theatres must show Korean films was 146 days, but reduced to 106 days in 1996. Currently it is 73 days.

While film producers, filmmakers, and actors staged a demonstration against the new Motion Picture Law for their survival, many South Koreans became politicized and started to see the demands from Washington and Hollywood as clear signs of cultural imperialism. Hollywood cinema seemed, for many South Koreans, to be like the title *Fatal Attraction* (Adrian Lyne, 1987), the first foreign film distributed directly by foreign company. When *Fatal Attraction* was shown on two theatres on the outskirts of Seoul in 1988, filmmakers and protesters picketed everyday in front of the theatres. Although these incidents politicized people in the film industry and, to some degree, the general public, everybody knew that the Korean film industry was in a dire crisis. When the first civilian government was established in 1993, the Korean film industry hit rock bottom. Korean film's domestic market share fell to 10% for the first time since the Korean War, and the number of films produced that year was also the lowest since the Korean War. Although the democratic government loosened censorship, the Korean film industry seemed to have passed the critical point for recovery long ago. Domestic audiences, while sympathetic to the struggle of Korean film industry, seemed to have lost any interest in Korean cinema even before that.

The revisions of the Motion Picture Law in the eighties shook up the entire film industry. The stable production system under the umbrella of government protection that was enjoyed by a handful of oligopolistic production companies was gone. They had to enter the open market and compete with Hollywood films. However this new environment was also a new opportunity for some as a new

generation of filmmakers and new kinds of capital started to flow into the film industry.

Except for the Golden Age cinemas which boasted diverse genres and experimentation with new approaches to the film medium, the main genre of Korean cinema was melodrama. It was not only a commercially safe genre, but also was the only genre which filmmakers could work with without worrying too much about censorship. As the melodrama genre film often does,¹¹ some of these films touched on various social problems without making them too obvious to draw censorship. However, new filmmakers who entered the film industry in the mid-eighties (most notably Park Kwang-soo and Jang Sun-woo) started to address social issues more directly. They were the film buff generation and developed their interest in film through college cine clubs which saw cinema as a medium of change, influenced by theories and practices of Third World Cinema. They started as independent/underground filmmakers and eventually entered the main stream known as “Chungmuro,” the Korean equivalent of “Hollywood.” Often dubbed the “Korean New Wave” or “New Korean Realism,” they not only addressed social issues as a part of the massive political and social movement of the eighties, but also tried to find new aesthetics to express those issues. While “Korean New Wave” showed a possibility to revive Korean cinema and gave birth to *auteurism* in Korea, the current success of Korean cinema started only with the influx of new capital and with the advent of the Korean blockbuster.

¹¹ See Thomas Elsaesser, “Tales of sound and fury : observations on the family melodrama.” Barry Keith Grant, Film Genre Reader II, 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995).

From the mid eighties to the mid nineties, many non-traditional ways of funding for film production, such as “open public investment” and “venture capital,” started to appear. However, the main financial influx to film industry came from big Korean conglomerates. Particularly, electronics companies such as Samsung and Daewoo gave the Korean film industry a temporary life support. As VCR and videotape makers, they needed cheap contents to facilitate VCR sales. While they usually financed small budget films, they occasionally supported bigger projects. When the Asian Financial Crisis (known as the IMF crisis) hit South Korea in 1997, most of the companies pulled out their investments from the film industry. However, the last project financed by Samsung left a lasting impression on the film industry.

3. Resurrection of Korean Cinema

In 1999, South Korean news headlined with the title, “One small fish called ‘Shiri’ sunk the Titanic.” After *Titanic* made new box office records in the United States and elsewhere, the South Korean blockbuster *Shiri* (Kang Jae-Kyu, 1999) outperformed the success of *Titanic* in South Korea, by breaking the box office records *Titanic* had made. As *Titanic* captured the imagination of the general public who rarely visited movie theatres in the US, *Shiri* became a cultural phenomenon which attracted Korean people who rarely went to theatres. In the time when the pain of the Asian Financial Crisis was still vivid and when the South Korean film industry was hit particularly hard, the financial success of *Shiri* rescued the Korean film industry from its financial hemorrhage.

Shiri is for all accounts an average action melodrama between a North Korean female spy/sniper and a South Korean special agent. In spite of public enthusiasm about the film, the critical reviews were lukewarm. It is perhaps better than most other Korean films of that time in terms of production values. For an action-melodrama genre film, however, Korean audiences have seen many better ones (or at least film critics have thought so).¹² However, what every South Korean viewer immediately realized, but critical reviewers failed to understand, was that there is something *uncanny* in *Shiri*. For the first time, South Korean viewers could see North Korean characters on a big screen not as “commie bastards,” but as human beings who suffer from the burden of ideology, just like many South Koreans do. The simple realization that North Koreans are also all human beings came as a surprise to many South Koreans, as if they found something hitherto unknown for the first time. Although *Shiri* proved the possibility to make a commercially successful film, the meaning of the success was not immediately clear to the film industry. It thought that the action-packed Hollywood style thriller was the answer to the Hollywood blockbusters, and thus produced several big budget action films which eventually failed at the box office. It did not realize that *Shiri* had something that only a Korean film could offer. In other words, *Shiri* appealed to the collective memories, history, and national identities of Korean people, which Hollywood films could not offer. Recent top box office films prove this:

¹² J. Hoberman of *Village Voice* wrote, “the script was reportedly rewritten a dozen times... either 11 times too many or else too few” (*Village Voice*, Feb 6-12, 2002).

Table 1: Top-grossing films in the South Korean box-office.

1999	<i>Shiri</i> (Korea)
2000	<i>JSA: Joint Security Area</i> (Korea)
2001	<i>Friends</i> (Korea), <i>My Sassy Girl</i> (Korea), <i>Kick the Moon</i> (Korea), <i>My wife is Gangster</i> (Korea), <i>Hello Dalma</i> (Korea), <i>Shrek</i> (US)
2002	<i>Lord of the Rings: Two Towers</i> (US)
2003	<i>Memories of Murder</i> (Korea)
2004	<i>Tae Guk-gi: Brotherhood</i> (Korea), <i>Silmido</i> (Korea)
2005	<i>Welcome to Dongmakgol</i> (Korea)
2006	<i>Host</i> (Korea), <i>King and the Clown</i> (Korea)

Since 1999, except for *Lord of the Rings: Two Towers* in 2002, Korean films have topped the box office every year. In 2001, the top five films were all Korean films and *Shrek* was the distant sixth. Among these top grossing films, *Shiri*, *JSA*, *Tae Guk-gi: Brotherhood*, *Silmido*, and *Welcome to Dongmakgol* are all North Korea related films, whether they are about the Korean War, the cold war or re-unification. *Friends* and *Memories of Murder* appeal to the collective but painful memories of the early eighties. *King and the Clown*, set in the early 16th century, revisits a tragic story of Yi dynasty. In other words, Korean cinema has succeeded in attracting domestic audiences by recounting their memories, experiences and stories. It might seem that there is nothing remarkable that Korean films tell Korean stories to

Korean audiences. However this simple realization was precisely the key to success of Korean cinema. It allowed the Korean film industry to build its success on the domestic market, rather than on a couple of directors or on a particular genre or on a particular film movement. In other words, unlike other national cinemas which have enjoyed considerable success for some time, Korean cinema did not confine itself within a particular genre or a style. Korean cinema is *diverse*.

For example, Japanese postwar cinema and Chinese Fifth generation films attracted international audiences with their exotic costume dramas. Hong Kong films did that with its knack in martial arts films and cop movies. Iran has become a cinematic hotbed with its innocent, pollution free films with subtle political messages. Taiwanese films did it with an artistic flavor and became art house favorites for some time. However, these film traditions and movements were short-lived, particularly because their success was not based upon their own domestic market. Film history has proven that any film movement without support from the domestic audience is fleeting. Particularly when these movements were the only viable forces in their respective countries, the entire film industry went down when they started to lose their glamour.

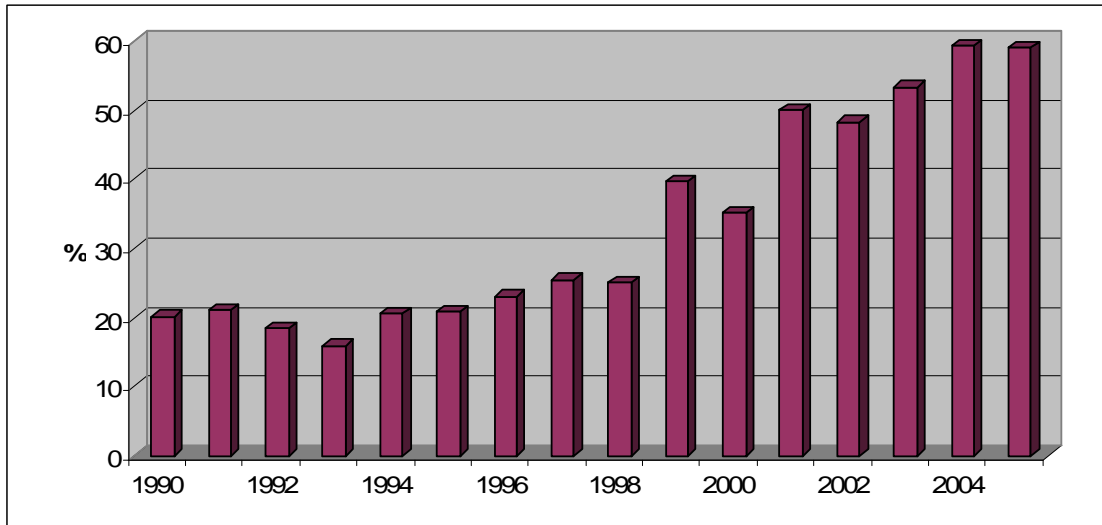
Unlike other national cinemas, current Korean cinema lacks any unifying characteristic. Rather Korean cinema offers all. Director Im Kwon-taek, a father figure of Korean cinema who finished his 100th film last year, still makes costume dramas; young director Yu Seong-wan, who idolizes Jackie Chan, makes martial arts films; female director Lee Jung-hyang was a huge success with *The Way Home* (2002), which is reminiscent of Abbas Kiarostami of Iran. Hong Sang-su, whose

films are often compared with Taiwanese filmmaker Hsiao-hsien Hou, makes even drier films than Hou does.

Korean film industry also offers a truly full range of filmmaking, not only in terms of diverse genres but also in terms of diverse modes of filmmaking such as documentary, animation, experimental film and commercial film. Hong Kong is notorious for its lack of non-commercial filmmaking, while Taiwan does not have viable commercial filmmakings. Thus, Chris Berry calls Korean cinema a “Full service cinema” (Berry). He implies that the Korean film industry and film culture are highly diversified. Korean cinema includes mainstream feature films, an active documentary movement, art cinema, animation, film festivals, an archive with an active screening program, many film schools, and so forth. It is not coincidence that the countries which have highly successful film industries, such as the US and France, also have this full service cinema model.

The recent success of Korean cinema domestically and internationally is quite impressive. The domestic market share of Korean films has reached almost 60%, which makes the Korean film industry one of the only three countries (the others being U.S. and India) in the world that dominates its own market. What is more impressive is that Korea has become the only nation in film history to have taken back its audience after it had once lost them to foreign films.

Figure 3: Korean Film Market Share in Korea



These numbers are quite remarkable, if they are compared to other major film industries.

Table 2: Market Share of National Films in Major Film Countries (%).

Country	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	5 year average
India*	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	95.00
U.S.	93.4	95.7	94.3	96.3	95.1	94.96
Korea	39.7	35.1	50.1	48.3	53.5	45.34
France	32.4	28.9	41.4	35.1	35	34.56
Japan	31.9	31.8	39.0	27.1	34.0	32.76
Italy	24.1	17.5	19.4	22.2	21.8	21.00
Germany	14.0	12.5	18.4	11.9	17.5	14.86
Spain	14.4	10.0	17.9	13.7	15.8	14.34

England	16.5	19.6	4.9	8.3	10.2	11.90
Australia	3.0	7.9	7.8	4.9	3.5	5.42

* The market share of Indian films in India is estimated.

The success of Korean cinema goes beyond the domestic market. While Korean film export was virtually non-existent just a decade ago, the dollar amount of the Korean film export has almost doubled every year since 2000, though Korean film export is most visible in Asian countries. The dramatic increase of Korean film export to Asian countries coincides with the growing influence of *hallyu* (often translated into “Korean wave” or “Korean Fever”) in Asia. *Hallyu* refers to the phenomena that people in Asia (notably Japan, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Vietnam) avidly enjoy and consume Korean pop culture including music, television dramas, fashion and cinema since the late nineties. Although Korean cinema joined the forces of *Hallyu* after the success of other pop cultures, it quickly gained momentum causing importing countries to feel that the growing popularity of Korean cinema was a threat to their own film industries.

A couple of years ago, the leading English Newspaper in Viet Nam, *Viet Nam News*, lamented that many film theatre owners refused to show the Vietnamese film *Song Trong So Hai* (Living in Fear) which had received the best director and best movie awards from the Viet Nam Cinematography Association. According to the Newspaper,

Galaxy [theatre] was the only moviehouse willing to screen *Living in Fear*.

But after only one day of screening, Galaxy’s cinema management board

decided to withdraw the film's slot to more commercially popular
Hollywood and South Korean movies. (Thu)

Although the report came from Hanoi, not from New York or Paris, it is still remarkable to see another Asian country puts Korean films next to Hollywood films, because the same complaint was common in South Korean newspapers just a decade ago.

Because the breathtaking transformation of the Korean cinema from near extinction to an unprecedented success is still undergoing, it is difficult to have a clear picture of the whole landscape. It is customary to divide contemporary Korean cinema into three categories: producer-centered "package cinema," Korean blockbusters and director-centered *auteur* cinema (B. Kim 8).¹³ However, the line between blockbuster films and art films is far less clear than that of other countries. For example, many top-grossing blockbusters such as *JSA*, *Welcome to Dongmakgol* and *King and the Clown* were at first produced and financed as independent art films, but later were expanded to the multiple theatres and became blockbusters. Recent blockbuster film *D-War* (Shim Hyung-rae, 2007), which was the Korean top box office hit in 2007 and opened on more than 2000 screens in the US, was initially financed through independent investors. In a sense, Korean cinema

¹³ "Package Cinema" started with remaking of production and distribution system in the late eighties. New production companies which lacked both stable investments and distribution channels made a package deal with investors and distributors with detailed plans including synopsis, market research, star system, director, promotion plan and sponsorship. These films became highly market-oriented and commercial films, though a package sometimes included blockbuster films and/or art films.

has succeeded in combining commercial appeal and artistic quality, which might explain the strength of Korean cinema.

The aesthetic topography of Korean cinema is murkier than the industrial map. Since the late eighties, a great variety of new and talented directors have entered the film industry. Unlike pre-1980 directors who were trained in the *Chungmuro* guild system, these new directors were mostly film buffs (most notably The Korean New Wave directors) or film school graduates (most post-1996 directors). While The Korean New Wave directors were inclined towards realism, later generations preferred hybrid genre films with their own distinctive style to the traditional genre films. Kim Ki-duk debuted in 1996 between these two generations.

4. Kim Ki-duk in the context of contemporary Korean Cinema.

The year that Kim Ki-duk debuted with *Crocodile* was an uncertain time in Korean film history. While the film industry was reeling, it also started to see new talents and capitals coming into the film industry. Hong Sang-soo, who graduated from the US film school, made his first film *The Day A Pig Fell into the Well* (1996), which immediately received rave praises at home and abroad. Another celebrated director Lee Chang-dong, then already renowned novelist, released his first film *Green Fish* (1997) soon after. Although the real transformation of the entire film industry had to wait a couple more years until the release of *Shiri* (1999), these new directors and Korean New Wave directors, who were re-inventing themselves, were the main forces of Korean cinema, and their influences can be easily found in many young directors working in Korea today.

However, when *Crocodile* was released in 1996, nobody paid much attention to it. Director Kim had no previous experience in filmmaking at any level, had no formal education in filmmaking (nor any higher education) as many his contemporaries did, and had no visible tie with the film industry. The film itself was considered a crude and poorly made independent film. Were it not for the steady invitations from the international film festivals, Kim could not have made another film after that and his name could have been easily buried in the statistics.

It is not easy to situate Kim Ki-duk within the discussion of contemporary Korean cinema. Using Kim Ki-duk's film as a proof of diversity of current Korean cinema is one thing, but putting Kim in the context of contemporary Korean cinema is another. First of all, Kim Ki-duk's films are different from other Korean films in terms of their lack of domestic appeal. While the current success of Korean cinema is primarily buttressed by its success at the domestic box office, Kim's films rarely break even at the domestic box office. Rather than referring to actual historical events and times in Korean history, as other commercially successful films do, his film gives few clues to the actual time and space. Kim manages to alienate domestic audiences enough so that they feel his films are exotic. Furthermore Kim is not afraid to go abroad to shoot, as he did with his second film, *Wild Animals* (1996). He also uses non-Korean actors for major roles as in *Address Unknown* (2001) and in *Breath* (2007).

In the eighties, Korean New Wave directors started their career with a strong sense of the social responsibility of cinema under the harsh political oppression of that time. Although it was never a unifying movement, they started to make socially

conscious films by injecting issues of social injustice. The progressive political ideas have been shared by many contemporaries well beyond the eighties and the nineties. However, Kim does not fit in this framework, either. At first glance his political view seems to point to the opposite direction, since his films try to steer away from the social/political structures and issues, even when they are the obvious themes of his film. (*Address Unknown* set in a small town near a US military base has been analyzed many times unsuccessfully from the point of view of postcolonialism.) While Kim usually has working class characters, they never break out of their socio-economic positions. While contemporary Korean cinema in general pursues both artistic quality and commercial appeal, Kim continues to prefer a low-budget independent film to the high production value. Thus, his film is often too crude to be artistic and too violent to be commercially successful. No one in Korean film history has made a film similar to Kim's. Thus, Kim is a complete outsider of Korean cinema from every angle whether it is politics, aesthetics or a production system. Kim's film is a nuisance, a vexing point which disrupts any neat explanation of contemporary Korean cinema. Several books on contemporary Korean cinema have been published in recent years. However most of them mention Kim only in passing or ignore him completely.

The first Korean cinema history book, *Korean Film: History, Resistance, and Democratic Imagination* (Min, Joo and Kwak, 2003), never mentions Kim Ki-duk and his films. Kyung Hyun Kim's fine work on contemporary cinema, *The Remasculinization of Korean Cinema* (2004), leaves Kim Ki-duk untouched, though Kim's characters seem to fit well into the overall theme of the book: "South Korean

cinema renegotiated its traumatic modern history in ways that reaffirm masculinity and the relations of dominance” (K. H. Kim 9).¹⁴ A recent publication, *New Korean Cinema* (Shin, 2005), analyzes a dozen contemporary Korean films but Kim’s film is not one of them. While most agrees that Director Kim Ki-duk is one of the most important directors currently working in South Korea, he is an outsider of Korean cinema. He does not belong to the current production/distribution system, nor share aesthetics with other past or present Korean directors. It is not an exaggeration when New York Post film critic V.A. Musetto writes in a review of *Time* (2006), “I do know that Kim is more popular in New York than in Seoul.” Thus, when Kim is discussed as a Korean director in Korea, it is usually in the context of international film festivals.

5. The receptions of Kim Ki-duk

While Kim’s films have been met with polemical reception at home, they have enjoyed considerable success on the international film festival and art house circuit. Although a serious study on director Kim Ki-duk has yet to be written, it is not difficult to find favorable reviews of his films among Western film critics. For example, Roger Ebert of *The Chicago Sun-Times* finds poetic quality in *The Isle* that mixes with a somber warning of brutality (Ebert), and Stephen Holden of *The New York Times* writes, “*The Isle*... is a movie of extremes, and that goes for its aesthetics. As gory as the scenes of torture and self-mutilation may be, they are

¹⁴ Kyung Hyun Kim explains that the omission of Kim Ki-duk is simply because the design of the book was defined too early to include Kim in depth. However Kyung Hyun Kim has a chapter on Hong Sang-su who debuted the same year with Kim Ki-duk.

pitted against shimmering cinematography that lends the setting the ethereal beauty of an Asian landscaping painting” (Holden).

However, the only lengthy article about Kim Ki-duk in English is less celebratory. “Sexual Terrorism: The Strange Case of Kim Ki-duk,” written by Tony Rayns in the November-December, 2004 issue of *Film Comment*, is an unforgiving assault on Kim’s films, his success, and himself. The article was a surprise to many because it appeared in a special issue of *Film Comment* that was devoted to the recent success of South Korean Cinema in conjunction with the New York Korean Film Festival held at Lincoln Center in 2004. Additionally, the article was written by Tony Rayns, a well-known Asian film expert and film festival organizer, who was responsible for introducing Kim’s unknown films to the international film festivals.¹⁵ In the article, Rayns claims “all of Kim’s movies are directly and indirectly autobiographical,” and, “to the best of my knowledge, Kim himself doesn’t beat up women or force them into prostitution, but these protagonists are all in some sense surrogates for the director” (Rayns 50). After a brief remark on the similarities between Fassbinder and Kim, Rayns adds, “If Kim is a Korean Fassbinder, he’s a Fassbinder without the questioning intelligence, without the cinephile knowledge of his own antecedents, and without the kind of self-awareness that allows personal trauma to be turned into viable drama” (51). Rayns blames Western film critics for the undeserving international success of Kim, stating: “It’s as if they’re so hung up on the ‘otherness’ of Oriental cultures that their bullshit

¹⁵ Kim Ki-duk’s first film *Crocodile* was invited to the Vancouver International Film Festival in 1996 and Tony Rayns was one of the programmers of the festival.

detectors stop working” (52). Rayns’ rather harsh comments are oftentimes problematic themselves. For example, his reference to Orientalism is puzzling, since none of Kim’s films rely on anything remotely resembling “oriental” culture, except *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring*.

The comparison between Fassbinder and Ki-duk is also bamboozling. As is well-known among well-versed Korean film connoisseurs, Kim is a junior-high dropout, who spent most of his teens and early adulthood in various factories, and served a prolonged term in the Marines. On the other hand, Fassbinder spent most of his childhood in movie theatres and cultivated his artistic taste and knowledge as a member of Munich’s Action-Theatre, later known as *Anti-Theater (antiteater)*. (Rayns, as the author of *Fassbinder* (1980), fully knows of these biographical facts.) It might therefore be true that Kim is incapable of articulating his cinematic vision with a vast knowledge of film theories and film history. However, it is unfair to compare Kim to Fassbinder in terms of their “cinophile knowledge,” when Kim claims his first movie going experience was watching *The Lovers On the Bridge* (Leos Carax, 1991) in his thirties in France.

As Deleuze reiterates in many places, directors invent images just as philosophers invent concepts (Deleuze Cinema 1: The Movement-Image x), and inventing images is neither less important nor less difficult than inventing concepts (Deleuze Negotiations, 1972-1990 125). If Kim can invent images tantamount to those of Fassbinder without the knowledge and the history of cinema or the intellectual questioning, then Rayns’ claim in fact elevates Kim to the romantic

ideal of a genius.¹⁶ One might argue that because Kim has been less exposed to cinema, he could look through the camera with less clichés burdening him.

Nevertheless, the loudest outcry against Kim's films can be heard from feminist film critics in Korea. Unlike Rayns' claims, Korean feminist film critics' displeasure with Kim has more substance. Kim's film can certainly be condemned for its graphical and thematically degrading portrayals of the female gender. In most of his films, female characters are prostitutes in one way or another and victims of abuse, violence, rape, and humiliation. Kim seems to be fascinated by the rape-is-so-romantic fantasy and the misogynistic virgin-whore dichotomy. Each time his film comes to a theatre, Korean feminist film critics voice their opinions. One such critic, Sim Young-sup, who is also a practicing psychiatrist, comments in a Korean weekly film magazine *Film 2.0*, after watching *The Isle*: "The male desire of *The Isle* resembles the revenge-impulse of a severe psychosis. What I am not so sure is that whether it is the impulse of the character or the director" (Sim). Another well-known militant feminist film critic Ju Yu-sin writes in a review for *Bad Guy* (2001), in the leading South Korean newspaper *Dong-A Ilbo* (Dong-A daily): "This kind of film is a threat to women. If anybody approves this film for any reason, it is an insult to all women" (Ju).

Although I share their concern about the degrading portrayals of women, I also worry that the moralistic judgment of image might foreclose any further

¹⁶ The essential characteristic of genius for Kant is originality. According to Kant, originality has two aspects. One is non imitative production and the other is discovering what cannot be taught or learned. See Immanuel Kant and James Creed Meredith, The Critique of Judgement (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952). §46-49.

discussion. I am not suggesting that 1970s feminist film criticism, which concerns the negative and positive depictions of women in film, is now irrelevant. The practices exemplified by Molly Haskell (*From Reverence to Rape* 1974) and Marjorie Rosen (*Popcorn Venus: Women, Movies, and the American Dream* 1973) are still resonant in the discussions of gender, race, ethnicity and sexuality. However, it is not clear to me what it means simply to label a film as misogynistic, particularly when the misogynistic images and stories are so evident. If misogyny is laid bare, what is the point of uncovering it? It is difficult to believe that the misogynistic images of Kim's films produce a misogynistic audience or that an audience blindly accepts and approves any malicious gender politics that Kim's films might suggest. In fact, the misogynistic images and stories are so blatant that it is difficult for anyone to take them for granted, without being appalled by them. One might argue that feminist film criticism makes salient the category of gender and gender hierarchy which could be hidden in the film text. Kim's films might have a more sinister structural imbalance of gender than the simple misogynistic images. However, as Steven Shaviro suggests, behind this argument lies an assumption that we can free ourselves from ideology and oppression by identifying and theorizing our entrapment within them (Shaviro 11). In other words, the more people subsume events under transcendental conditions such as gender hierarchy, the more they end up reinforcing and amplifying those conditions. Shaviro thus writes that "Mulvey's analyses of fetishism and scopophilia in mainstream Hollywood cinema end up constructing an Oedipal, phallic paradigm of vision that

is much more totalizing and monolithic than anything the films she discusses are themselves able to articulate” (12).

It might sound reasonable to assume that we are fully equipped in advance to gauge and to determine which images constitute misogyny. However, this process of recognition, which is based upon what Deleuze might call “common sense” and “good sense,” reinstates the reified category of the gender binary, which feminism presumably intends to overcome. Moreover, the rigid segment between men and women cannot be undone by the same binary machine which identifies men and women in rigid terms. While many Korean feminist film critics have pointed out the negative representations of woman such as female subservience, passivity, and masochism from the viewpoint of female identity, little has been said about the equally degrading portrayals of males in Kim’s films. In fact, Kim’s male characters fare far worse than their female counterparts. Kim has no intention to glorify misogynistic male behavior or to provide any ground to justify them. For example, *Bad Guy* could be a simple melodrama if the film had ended with the prostitute and the thug being separated and the thug’s punishment. Instead, Kim lets the pimp continue to profit from her sexual labor and effectively closes off any possibility of atonement or salvation. The pimp starts as a villain and remains as one.

I do not mean to imply that the negative representation of women can be somehow compensated by the equally negative representation of men. Instead of grounding the female subject by opposing her to the male subject, I suggest, following Deleuze, that we look at the molecular movement which constitutes subjectivity that is mobile and active, and which challenges the binary of gender

itself.¹⁷ Refusing women's subjectivity to function as a ground, Deleuze suggests micropolitics or the molecular line, which analyzes more subtle and flexible flows and "escapes the binary organizations, the resonance apparatus, and the overcoding machine" (Deleuze and Guattari A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia 216). Deleuze and Guattari insist that both men *and* women must become-woman in order to deterritorialize the binary organization of sexuality (276).

Kim's films can be read more productively in terms of molecular becomings. In fact, Kim's films make it difficult for an audience to bring already codified gender binarism. As I mentioned earlier, one of the most noticeable characteristics of Kim's film is the muteness of main characters. Particularly in *The Isle*, *Bad Guy*, *3-Iron*, and *The Bow*, the main character of each film does not have a single

¹⁷ The simple way to understand the molar/molecular pair is to think it as Physics does; "molar" usually refers a body of matter as a whole and "molecular" as a simple or elementary structure pertaining to molecules, although Deleuze and Guattari insist that size does not matter in molar/molecular distinction. A clear cut definition of molar/molecular is nowhere found in their writings; but Deleuze and Guattari tend to use molar in terms of the production of the same (being), while molecular is often associated with the disruption of the production-of-the-same (becoming). Also, "molar" often refers to a coded whole while "molecular" often calls forth a series of other concepts such as haecceity, singularity, and event. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, they do point out that "May 1968 event" in France was a molecular mass event, because despite social "classes (molarity)" crystallize "masses (molecularity)" masses are constantly flowing or leaking from classes. Thus, the event of May 1968 is an eruption of pure virtuality from which something new were created; that is why politician, the parties, the unions, and even many leftists, who mostly had concerned molar lines such as "class," could not anticipate its development. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987) 213.

speaking line.¹⁸ These silent faces refuse to accept the social segmentations and they engage with each other without the already codified and valorized language. When they do speak, their language *stutters*.¹⁹ The male character in *Bad Guy* first appears with his throat marked with the long lash of a scar and never speaks until almost the end of the film. When he finally speaks, we hear a shrieking sound, a kind of primitive, stuttering language. Language literally *stutters*. According to Deleuze, “stuttering” foregrounds the minority status of language, that is, the becoming-minor of language itself. In a world devoid of meaning, language remains a surplus. By refusing to take a part in major language, Kim’s characters engage in a molecular relationship in which the rigid molar binarism is deterritorialized.

The stuttering signs and images create lines of rupture and escape. Devoid of easily recognizable identity, whether it is familial, social, gender or class, Kim’s characters collide with each other and frequently become violent. Thus, their relationship is not always clear to the audience, and we are often left without a clue for apprehending their relationship. It seems to me that what critics really find unsettling about Kim’s films are not their political incorrectness but the molecular

¹⁸ In an informal interview between director Kim and me which was held in Washington DC in 2004, he attributed the lack of dialogue in his films to his experience in France in the early nineties. Before his directorial debut, he was an aspiring painter drawing on the street of Paris. He could not speak a single French word but could make friends who were also non-French speakers, mostly immigrant workers from Africa and the Middle East. He recalled that he had felt strong connection, even though verbal conversation had not been possible.

¹⁹ According to Deleuze, “Stutter” is “an affective and intensive language” which disturbs the language system. Stuttering does not start with words which are embedded in the language system. It sets a language system in motion. Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997) 107-9.

becomings which escape our traditional theoretical grids. While film criticism attempts to apply concepts already provided by theories, Kim's films destabilize ready-made ideas.

In *The Coast Guard* (2002), for example, the main female character Mi-yung loses her boyfriend while making love on the beach because a coast guard misconceives the boyfriend as a northern spy. After watching her lover brutally blown to pieces by a hand grenade, she goes insane. Later many coast guard troops rape her one by one. When she turns out pregnant, the troops kidnap her to perform an abortion. After the operation, still bleeding from the crotch, she submerges herself in a fishtank, biting the head of live fish and turning the water red. As is often the case in Kim's films, the woman's body becomes the object of sexual and physical violence. It can be conveyed that this is another example of Kim's propensity to brutalize female bodies. However, this particular fishtank scene exceeds any semiotic or psychological interpretation. Her action cannot be explained by recourse to the psychic mechanism in play, nor semiotic meshes of the fishtank, water, blood, live-fish, or biting. There is no narrative or psychological logic to explain her action. Instead these images disturb identity, system, and order; and thus threaten our complacency to the meaning. Beyond the recognitions of who she is and what happens to her, these images force us to think. They are what Deleuze terms as signs, which are no longer objects of recognition, but objects of a fundamental encounter.

Thus, Kim's images which are devoid of language open an experiential dimension that is presubjective and prepresentational, which Deleuze associates

with various terms such as event, sense, affect, sensation, and becomings. To criticize Kim's films in terms of gender opposition is to re-instate the molar gender hierarchy into the molecular plane which belongs to a logic of sense and event, rather than of representation, signification, or meaning.

Kyung Hyun Kim, the author of *Remasculinization of Korean Cinema*, looks at the modern history of Korea as a series of traumas – Japanese colonialism, national division, the Korean War, the US presence, military dictatorship, rapid Westernization, Asian Financial Crisis, and so forth. He argues that the repressive modern history of Korea is represented through male traumas which become the central narrative and visual motif of contemporary Korean cinema. Informed by Slavoj Žižek's definition of "trauma" as "an impossible kernel which resists symbolization, totalization, symbolic integration" (K. H. Kim 4), Kyung Hyun Kim reformulates the trauma as "lack." Thus, Korean cinema represents "the desire for psychic wholeness and the putative recovery from the male lack" (22). According to him, while the female gender has been subject to much more severe social, economic and political oppressions as well as patriarchy, Korean cinema finds only the psychologically and physically traumatized (thus demasculinized) males and their attempts for remasculinization. Kyung Hyun Kim concludes that in contemporary Korean cinema "gender roles have remained remarkably consistent such that the representation of the woman is still caught between the mother and the

whore, and the crisis is a male one – in which the man must resort to violence in order to recover himself from trauma” (258).²⁰

At first glance, Kim Ki-duk’s male characters seem to be an easy fit to Kyung Hyun Kim’s paradigm. Most of Kim’s male characters are marginalized and disenfranchised, and cannot find a stable place or relationship in main stream society. Stripped from the possibility to re-enter society, they rely on their corporeal mastery at the expense of women’s misery. However, these characters are not such molar subjects categorized by class, gender, nation or history that Kyung Hyun Kim suggests. They may occupy the lowest ladder of the Korean society, but their interest is not in climbing up the ladder. They may gain a control over the female counterpart for a moment, but the remasculinization through the establishment of patriarchy is not in their agenda. They not only lose their control immediately, but also prefer to stay as a minority. To make Kyung Hyun Kim’s thesis work, an audience should sympathize with the male character. The viewer should understand the character’s trauma and feel bad about his sense of “lack.” However, as I have said earlier, it is unlikely that an audience sympathizes with Kim’s male characters; nobody feels sorry for their trauma and their lost masculinity.

Again, Kim Ki-duk is the consummate outsider of Korean cinema. Even the very credible gender paradigm cannot contain him. Kyung Hyun Kim bypasses him

²⁰ While Kyung Hyun Kim’s book is the most engaging study on Korean cinema to date, its heavy reliance on Lacanian psychoanalysis is often too reductive. As I wrote elsewhere, “Kim... finds everywhere he goes a phallus, a lack, a fetish. When the theoretical framework only allows females the castrated position, it is impossible to find a female outside the triad of “father-mother-me.” Hyunjun Min, “The Remasculinization of Korean Cinema (Book Review),” The Journal of Asian Studies 63.4 (2004): 1157.

and wonders why Korean cinema cannot have independent and strong female characters. If he has included director Kim Ki-duk in his inquiry, he might have heard the voice from the outside, the voice which undermines the masculine/feminine dichotomy itself.

Chapter Three: From Event to Affect in *Crocodile*

1. Introduction

Deleuze once confessed in an interview with Raymond Bellour and Francois Ewald, right after the publication of *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (1993): “I’ve tried in all my books to discover the nature of events; it’s a philosophical concept, the only one capable of ousting the verb “to be” and attributes” (Deleuze *Negotiations, 1972-1990* 141).²¹ Deleuze is not talking about “event” in terms of its dictionary definition, as “something that happens” or “something spectacular,” nor in our everyday usages of it, such as “media event” or “political event.” Instead, Deleuze uses the notion of “event” to constitute his ontology by replacing any primary appeal to “substances,” which have played a central role in western metaphysics, as the fundamental reality qualified by predicates.

The first section of this chapter introduces the Deleuzian notion of event and its relationship with sense through the reading of *The Logic of Sense*. Following the Stoics, who distinguish between actual bodies and incorporeal effects, Deleuze introduces event as a “surface effect” which does not exist *per se* but rather subsists on the surface of a thing or a state of affairs. Primarily as an ontological term, “event” criticizes the foundation of Western philosophy based upon substance and essence. Deleuze simultaneously discusses “sense” as a linguistic expression of

²¹ “Events” also have been a very contentious topic among many contemporary philosophers such as Jae-gwan Kim, Donald Davidson, David Lewis, and W.V.O. Quine. In the tradition of analytic philosophy, their questions are geared to the conditions of event.

event: the expressed of the proposition. As the event anchors substance and its representation in Ontology, the sense makes our propositions such as denotation, manifestation, and signification possible. Although Deleuze does not associate the event exclusively with any type of event, his usage of event clearly signals “a traumatic event” such as violence, wound, and death. The event *confronts* us because its meaning cannot be given either subject or object, either essence or appearance.

The next section introduces Kim Ki-duk’s debut film *Crocodile* and shows how it challenges our habitual viewing experiences and calls for a different paradigm for analysis. Deleuzian idea of “the affection-image” is introduced to meet the challenge. Spinoza’s distinction between “affect (*affectus*)” and “affection (*affection*)” helps us understand the logic of “the affection-image” which envelops the affect. The affection-image is most evident in close-up of face, but Deleuze also suggests that the affection-image can be obtained by any-space-whatever freed from spatio-temporal coordinates. The final section puts *Crocodile* and the affection-image side by side. In *Crocodile*, characters are introduced without personal or social backgrounds, and their actions often defy narrative causality. The setting is also obscured by eliminating all spatio-temporal coordinates. Thus in *Crocodile*, violence and death are presented not for the narrative or to control the audience’s emotional response but to become events.

2. The Deleuzian Event

The “event” appears in Deleuze’s writings as early as in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (originally published in 1962) and is further developed in *Difference and Repetition* (originally published in 1968).²² However, it was in *The Logic of Sense* (originally published in 1969), where the “event” becomes one of the central subjects of his inquiry. Nevertheless, the task to define the event proves a cumbersome job. Deleuze suggests that the attempt to make the event obvious is similar to Lewis Carroll’s “Snark Hunt” – the hunt for the fictional monster that is unimaginable (Deleuze *The Logic of Sense* 20). In a lecture humorously entitled “A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event,” Jacques Derrida echoes the same sentiment:

The event’s eventfulness depends on this experience of the impossible. What comes to pass, as an event, can only come to pass if it’s impossible. If it’s possible, if it’s foreseeable, then it doesn’t come to pass... A predicted event is not an event. The event falls on me because I don’t see it coming. (Derrida 451)

²² In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze introduces the notion of “sense (and non-sense)” as “what is expressed by a proposition” (154). To distinguish sense from the object and from the proposition, Deleuze claims it should be stated in infinitive or participle form such as “to-be-God or God-being, the being-blue of the sky” (156). Deleuze calls this complex as an ideal event; “It is an objective entity, but one of which we cannot say that it exists in itself: it insists or subsists, possessing a quasi-being or an extra-being, that minimum of being common to real, possible and even impossible objects” (156).

The main reason of the elusiveness of the event is that, according to Deleuze, it defies our representational thinking; namely, it cannot be represented by our usual propositions, such as denotation, manifestation and signification.

Let's say "September eleventh" is an event. The comprehension of the event entails the assumption that its meaning (terrorist attack) and its significance (the beginning of the war on terrorism) might be reconstituted by available discursive resources (Islamic resentment against the US), concepts (Jihad), images (the collapse of the World Trade Center), conventions (national security), and so on so forth. Moreover, this comprehension occurs within a narrative, order, or code that is already recognized. Therefore, the comprehension of an event imply the existence of a pre-constituted apparatus which serves not only to provide the instruments for naming or explaining what has happened, but also an anticipatory framework to be ready for the future event. If one comes to recognize or reckon with the event only by recourse to these apparatus, then at bottom we always apprehend the event in advance, before it even takes place.²³ From the framework we have, we may say "9/11 was an event involving a series of coordinated suicide attacks by al-Qaeda upon the United States." However if someone says "9/11 was a victory of Jihadism," that someone has a different framework. The important point is not to claim how this insight makes the truth of the event relative but to see how comprehending the

²³ Right after 9/11, Derrida also says in a dialogue with Giovanna Borradori "[9/11] is to a large extent conditioned, constituted, if not actually constructed, circulated at any rate through the media by means of a prodigious techno-socio-political machine... [this event] remains ineffable, like an intuition without concept... We do not in fact know what we are saying or naming in this way 9/11." Giovanna Borradori, "9/11 and Global Terrorism: A Dialogue with Jacques Derrida," Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 2003).

event tells us more about the framing apparatus of the event than anything purely about the event itself.

This process of comprehension is based upon, according to Deleuze, our “common sense” and “good sense,” which he sees as two essential yet unexamined presuppositions of Western thought. “Common sense” usually takes the form of “everybody knows” and reduces thinking to recognition. For example, we look at a “dog” and recognize it as a “dog,” because we have already perceived or remembered it as a “dog.” However, in this process of recognition, we dismiss any unimportant details of that particular dog. In common sense, we fail to encounter that particular “dog” and settle for a general “dog,” which represents our pre-existing idea of “dogness.” “Good sense” is basically the process of prediction by way of maintaining one direction. It is the recognition of a “dog” as a “dog” and the expectation to see the same “dog” tomorrow (Deleuze Difference and Repetition 131-34).²⁴

The subsuming the particular under the universal is sustained by three distinct propositions: as “denotation,” which links the proposition to particular things or external state of affairs; “manifestation,” which links the proposition to the speaker who utters it while expressing desires and beliefs; and “signification,” which links the proposition to universal or general concepts. Deleuze argues that each of these propositions presupposes the other two; thus when we seek the primary relationship we find ourselves in “the circle of the proposition” (Deleuze

²⁴ For Deleuze, the event is not something beyond our reach like Kantian thing-in-itself. The event belongs to the virtual which is as real as the actual.

The Logic of Sense 17). None of these relations will function as the principle of the proposition, or as the condition of the possibility of the proposition that links the proposition to what is external to it. The insufficiency of these propositions becomes evident when we encounter nonsense, absurdity and paradox. Nonsense words, exemplified by the work of Lewis Carroll, have no existence apart from language; they do not denote real objects, manifest the beliefs and desires of real individuals, or signify meaningful concepts. Nevertheless, they convey “sense” and in so doing affirm the immanence of sense to language itself. This “sense” is the final dimension to the Deleuzian proposition; “sense” functions as the condition of the possibility of denotation, manifestation and signification, as that which serves as the link between propositions and events. Sense, what Deleuze calls as “*the expressed of the proposition,*” is an incorporeal, complex, and irreducible entity at the surface of things; it is a pure event which inheres or subsists in the proposition (19). Deleuze asserts what is *expressed* by sense is the event and treats them almost identically by saying they are “two sides without thickness” (22).

Gottlob Frege’s notion of “sense (*Sinn*)” is useful to understand Deleuze’s own notion of “sense.” In his seminal article, “On Sense and Reference (*Über Sinn und Bedeutung*)” written in 1892, Frege distinguishes between the “mode of presentation” of a sign and that “which the sign designates”; the former he calls “sense” and the latter “reference.” For example, “the morning star” can refer Venus as its reference but at the same time, due to the mode of representation that “the morning star” takes, it is different from saying “the evening star” (Frege 57). We may say the morning star is the evening star; however in addition to its reference,

each expression possesses what Frege calls a “sense,” which is not an attribute of the referent. Although this “sense” cannot be found in the object, Frege ascribes to sense objective existence, noting that the sense is different from “the associated idea,” which is “wholly subjective” (59). For Frege, senses are objects every bit as real as tables and chairs, and their existence is not dependent on language or the mind. Frege concludes this because, though senses are obviously not physical entities, their existence likewise does not depend on any one person’s psychology. In other words, it can be, and is, interpersonal. Different people are able to grasp the same sense and communicate them, and it is even possible for expressions in different languages to express the same sense or thought.²⁵ Frege concludes that senses are abstract objects, incapable of full causal interaction with the physical world. They are actual only in the very limited sense that they can have an effect on those who grasp them, but are themselves incapable of being changed or acted upon. They are neither created by our uses of language or acts of thinking, nor destroyed by their cessation. In short, according to Frege, between meaning and referent, “there lies the sense, which is indeed no longer subjective like the idea, but is yet not the object itself” (60). Although many commentators of Deleuze point to Frege’s notion of sense as a conceptual approximation of Deleuze’s notion of sense, Deleuze bestows a more fundamental role to sense than Frege does. While Frege cannot think of nonsense, Deleuze sees it as essential resource of sense.²⁶

²⁵ Frege equates “sense” with “thought.” However, “thought” is not understood as the result of a mental activity of a thinker but something that a thinker “grasps.”

²⁶ See John Rajchman, The Deleuze Connections (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000) 64.

The Stoics were the first to create a philosophical concept of the event. They drew a fundamental distinction between actually existing bodies (tensions, physical qualities, actions and passions, state of affairs) and incorporeal effects, which are not things or facts, but events (Deleuze The Logic of Sense 4). If events are not physical qualities, properties, or things, but are surface effects or incorporeal entities, then Deleuzian “events” seem rather inconsequential. If they are mere surface effects, it means that they are unrelated to essence or at least far away from it. However the implication of the Deleuzian “event” is far greater than it seems, as it questions the very notion of essence as a ground for further philosophical inquiry.

Plato’s dualism, for example, consists of Idea and matter, essence and appearance, or models and copies. The real motive of Plato’s dualism is, according to Deleuze, to sort out between true and false copies; namely, a copy which receives the action of an Idea and a false copy (Plato’s *simulacra*) which fails to receive this action. In other words, there are bodies (matters, copies) which represent the eternal essence of the pure forms by participating in that essence; and there are bodies that are merely copies of copies, simulacra, and illegitimate copies (Deleuze’s events). Therefore, Platonic dualism accomplishes sending what “remains rebellious [simulacra]... repress[ing] it as deeply as possible, to shut it up in a cavern at the bottom of the Ocean” (259). Deleuze’s rebellion against Platonism is to propose different dualism of bodies and events and to make the false copy, which eludes the Idea, climbs to the surface.

Events can be best expressed by infinitives, such as “to cut” or “to die.” For example, the precise moment of death is ungraspable. A person is either about to die

or already dead. When a knife cuts flesh, it is impossible to isolate the exact moment of cutting; either the knife has not yet cut or has already cut the flesh. Similar to Zeno's paradox, the knife never reaches the flesh, but it cuts. The event of "to cut" is instantaneous and insubstantial with no present, but always divided into past and future.²⁷ Still, the sense of "to cut" determines the meanings of "about to cut" and "being cut."

Also, when the knife cuts the flesh, there is an *intermingling of bodies* which can be explained by saying that cutting is an attribute of the knife and the state of being cut is also an attribute of the body. However, the statement, 'The knife is cutting the flesh' expresses "*incorporeal transformations* of an entirely different nature (events)" (Deleuze and Guattari *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* 86), because "it does not simply represent the world but acts upon it or intervenes in it in certain ways" (Patton 13). The event of "to cut" is a change of an entire equation involving the knife, flesh, and the cutting. This event does not belong to either the knife or flesh. Thus, as a product of the synthesis of forces, events signify the internal dynamic of their interactions. An event is not a thing, not a particular state or happening itself, but something made to subsist in the state of affairs or happening itself. In other words, an event is the potential immanent within a particular confluence of forces. In this sense, the event is not an inconsequential non-being, nor a disruption of a stable state, but an "extra-being" which underlies

²⁷ I am indebted to Brian Massumi's *A user's guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia* for this interpretation of Deleuze's concept of "events." Brian Massumi, *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Deviations from Deleuze and Guattari*, A Swerve ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992) 20.

the state and transforms it. In this sense, as stated by Deleuze, events *are* essence: “they are no longer corporeal entities, but rather form the entire Idea. What was eluding the Idea climbed up to the surface, that is, the incorporeal limit, and represents now all possible *ideality*” (Deleuze The Logic of Sense 7).

Although Deleuze often talks about the event of “May 1968 in Paris,” other events he talks about are less eventful, similar to the many examples of the Stoics, from which Deleuze develops his concept of the event. The event can be as eventful as “The Great Pyramid” and as uneventful as “its duration for a period of one hour, thirty minutes, five minutes...” (Deleuze The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque 76). However, most of Deleuze’s other examples of the event involve a certain type of wound, pain, suffering, and death. The prime example of Stoics which Deleuze frequently adopts is “to cut” (Deleuze and Guattari A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia 86). In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze starts the section on the event (“twenty-first series of the event”) with the quote from Joe Bousquet who “apprehends the wound that he bears deep within his body in its eternal truth as a pure event” (148). The translator Tom Conley of *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* interprets the event close to “trauma” in the discussion of the near death experience of Montaigne (Conley 303-07). Foucault also takes similar examples when he comments on Deleuze’s *The Logic of Sense* in *Theatrum Philosophicum*:

The event – a wound, a victory-defeat, death – is always an effect produced entirely by bodies colliding, mingling, or separating, but this effect is never of a corporeal nature; it is the intangible, inaccessible battle that turns and

repeats itself a thousand times around Fabricius, above the wounded Prince Andrew. The weapons that tear into bodies form an endless incorporeal battle. Physics concerns causes, but events, which arise as its effects, no longer belong to it. Let us imagine a stitched causality: as bodies collide, mingle, and suffer, they create events on their surfaces, events that are without thickness, mixture, or passion; for this reason, they can no longer be causes. (Foucault 349)

Deleuze eventually asks himself “Why is every event a kind of plague, war, wound, or death?” (Deleuze The Logic of Sense 151). That is because they are results of actions and passions, in other words, results of mixtures and colliding. Considering that the event has to confront common sense and good sense, it is understandable that event evokes a certain violence, shock, alienation-effect, or cruelty. In fact, “violence” is an exemplary event in Deleuzian sense. Violence occurs when bodies collide. When violence is discussed, it does not belong to either subject or object, weapon or body. When flesh is cut by a scalpel in an emergency room, this physical happening of “being cut” does not constitute violence. In other words, “violence” is an “extra-being,” which does not belong to either scalpel or flesh, but still exists on the surface of colliding bodies.

Although the notion of the event might be in use immediately for the discussion of the cinematic images of violence, it is not tailored for the discussion

of arts.²⁸ Rather it belongs to philosophy whose task is, according to Deleuze, to create concepts. Creating concepts is none other than “to extract an event from things and beings, to set up the new event from things and beings, always to give them a new event” (Deleuze and Guattari What Is Philosophy? 33). Although the event is not an aesthetic term but a philosophical one, its similarity to “affect” is unmistakable, as it will be discussed in the following sections. In short, Deleuze uses almost the same language for both “events” and “affects.”

3. *Crocodile*

In many interviews, director Kim has confessed that he had to learn how to make a film by making his first film *Crocodile* (K.-D. Kim 81). In fact *Crocodile* has all the clumsiness which we can expect from a first time director’s low-budget film. In retrospect, however, *Crocodile* seems to have all the elements, which constitute the uniqueness of Kim’s films. Particularly important coordinates are the

²⁸ A different route can be taken. In “What Is an Event?” Deleuze gives conditions that make an event possible: “Events are produced in a chaos, in a chaotic multiplicity, but only under the condition that a sort of screen intervenes”. Gilles Deleuze, The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) 76. Subsequently, film images are in a fundamental sense events. Film at its basic mechanism filters chaos to make something emerge from it. Framing is a fundamental intervention of cinema in reality, and images captured by camera lens are liberated from their milieu, that of the actual. Furthermore, film can be characterized by multiple collisions such as the encounter between camera and pro-filmic reality and the relation between film images and viewers. Viewers confront film images as a singular power by dissolving oneself as an observer. If we do not bring clichés of viewing and interpretation to a theater, we might encounter events in the cinema. Viewers are in a privileged position to encounter and grasp events impersonally, because events befall on screen, not onto us.

notions of “muteness,” “setting and location” and “wound and death,” which his later films repeat, revisit, and modify.

Crocodile's main character “Ag-O” (literally “crocodile” in Korean) is a homeless man living under one of the many bridges in Seoul. He lives with an old man who is a soda-can-collector and an orphan boy, a street peddler selling chewing gum. Similar to The Golden Gate Bridge or Niagara Falls, the Han River bridges have been the location of choice for many suicide victims in South Korea. The colloquial expression “going to the Han River Bridge” in Korean means “I want to commit suicide.” Traditionally, the Han River has been the symbol of energy, prosperity, and the history of Korea. However, after decades of pollution from rapid industrialization and from the ever expanding and overpopulated mega city Seoul, the Han River has become a gigantic sewer; a symbol of the dark side of modernity. Similar to the Han River, which collects the end of Capitalism's circulation, its industrial and household wastes, Ag-O collects the end of life. His job is to fish out dead bodies of suicide victims and selling them to the family of the deceased. Just as the crocodile lives in both water and land, Ag-O lives in both the realms of the living and the dead. Similar to a real crocodile patiently ambushing its prey, Ag-O waits patiently for his prey until he exhausts all his options.

At the beginning of the film, there is a peaceful night shot of the Han River reflecting city lights. Suddenly, something plunges into the water with a splash. The camera cuts to a medium shot of Ag-O looking for the source of the splash with a telescope. He slowly pulls out a cigarette and lights it. Then he spends all the time in the world to give the suicide victim enough time to die, before jumping into the

water. Unsympathetic to the suicide victims and to their families, Ag-O makes a living out of their misery. If somebody jumps off the bridge to commit suicide, he waits until the suicide victim completes his mission. Subsequently, he jumps into the river to locate the body and to find out if the victim has any money in his pocket, then hides the body. The next morning when police, rescue divers and family members are frantically looking for the body, he waits until their anxiety reaches despair and asks for a reward for information of the missing body.

One day, when a beautiful young girl jumps off the bridge, Ag-O rescues her instead of letting her die. The first thing Ag-O does, after he rescues the main female character out of the river, is to rape her while she is still unconscious. Despite the disapproving looks of the old man and the orphan boy, Ag-O forcefully rapes her and she suddenly regains consciousness. The old man moves away after a little protest and the boy, who already likes the girl, bites the exposed buttock of Ag-O, while he is still engaging in sex. Ag-O continues to rape her anyway. The violence in this scene is unwarranted, uncalled for, unjustified, and mostly gratuitous. There is no moral message, no hidden meaning. It does not even satisfy audiences' voyeuristic desire; rather it disturbs them.

As it is often the case in dealing with Kim's films, *Crocodile* frustrates the viewer with its under-developed characters and the lack of motivation for their actions. The film never explains why those three people live together or why each of them has become homeless. They sleep at the same place, eat together, and occasionally help each other. Although they form a sort of family, they are not related, nor do they particularly enjoy each other's company. They appear without

any personal history or social background and their actions often lack clear motivations. Other minor characters appear and disappear without any explanation. For example, after squandering his money at an illegal gambling site, Ag-O rescues a girl on a busy street, who is being harassed by a street thug. As soon as he has a chance to be alone with her that night, it is his turn to rape her, although his attempt is thwarted by a couple of hoodlums who appear out of nowhere. The film does not tell whether the girl is safe or whether she is in even deeper trouble.

The central story line of *Crocodile* is that Ag-O slowly develops affection toward the girl he has rescued and finds out the reason of her attempted suicide. Then he seeks a revenge on her ex-fiancé, who is responsible for her misery. It turns out that she has tried to commit suicide, because she was gang-raped, and that the rape was orchestrated by her fiancé. Without knowing his involvement, she attempted suicide out of shame and guilt. However, the film never explains the reason for her decision to stay under the bridge, after the failed suicide attempt. Nor does the film explain the reason why she eventually commits suicide, after she feels a deep connection with Ag-O.

In general, screen violence is often tolerated, if portrayed in a certain manner or justified by certain moral imperatives and legitimized by certain narrative structures. However Kim makes no effort to make violence in a socially and culturally sanctioned manner, with the proper aesthetic and narrative coding. In *Crocodile*, many scenes of violence have no real narrative logic. This lack of narrative cause and effect leaves the viewer without a clue of what will happen next. After Ag-O dives into the water following the main female character, the

camera follows him to the bottom of the river where the girl lies. As experienced viewers, we can easily expect a point of view shot of Ag-O looking at the girl and a reaction-shot of him enthralled by her beauty. However, Kim uses one continuous long shot to capture the entire rescue scene, avoiding the subjective point of view shot. There are not many dialogues in this film, which further frustrates an audience. The characters keep silent at the very moment when an audience expects a verbal explanation. In fact, most dialogues in *Crocodile* are inconsequential, because they neither give an audience necessary information, nor advance the narrative. The audience is forced to accept whatever happens on screen. Because of the lack of careful character developments, compounded with their unmotivated bizarre, violent, and often despicable behaviors, the viewer is easily alienated from the story. This alienation of the viewers does not necessarily draw our attention to the form or structure of the film itself, or the absurdity of the situation, as, for example, Jean-Luc Godard's films often do for political purposes. Rather, Kim seems to make a choice not to make a coherent narrative and not to engage the viewer emotionally. Instead of asking approval and understanding, Kim's film confronts the viewer. It asks viewers to bring a different set of expectations to a theatre.

Just like artists who often repeat a cliché, viewers bring their own set of clichés to a theatre. What is worse is “we... normally perceive only clichés” (Deleuze Cinema 2: The Time Image 20). According to Deleuze, we do not perceive the image in its entirety. We always perceive less of it because of our economic, ideological, psychological interests and demands (20). With regards to

Crocodile, the morally suspicious characters put the viewer in an uncomfortable position. Why do they (the orphan boy, the old man and the girl) stay together while tolerating his violence? Will they change the behavior of Ag-O with love? Why do they have to die one by one?²⁹ Our own expectations about causality and redemption are in conflict with the film. Consequently, there is no one to sympathize within the film.

Our normal viewing experiences and expectations are based upon, what Deleuze calls “the action-image.” “The action-image” is narrative oriented, the dominant mode of commercial filmmaking. It establishes the relationship between the environment or *milieu* and various modes of behavior. A difficult situation is given to the character, and he reacts in response to the challenge by changing the situation or his relation with the other characters. The character must raise his mode of being to the demands set by the situation. He must achieve a new kind of consciousness, attitude, or power. If based upon these familiar criteria of “the action-image,” *Crocodile* is simply a clumsy production which does not deserve any critical consideration. However, for Deleuze, “the action-image” is simply one possibility among many other images to relate movement to a center of indetermination.³⁰

²⁹ In the later part of the film, the old man gets a broken coffee vending machine for free. He hides himself inside the vending machine and sells coffee manually. One day he witnesses a murder which is completely unrelated to the main story. The killer, who later realizes there is a witness, lures the orphan boy to shoot the vending machine as a target practice and to kill the old man.

³⁰ Deleuze’s idea of “the movement-image” is based upon the identity of the image and the movement. The living image (our brain) is unique in the sense that it contains an interval, the gap between action and reaction. Deleuze thus calls the

The lack of a coherent narrative is not a deficiency, according to Deleuze, but one of the major symptoms of the crisis of the action-image. Most notably, Italian Neo-realist film, which appeared around the Second World War, has that characteristic. Deleuze identifies the setting of post Second World War films such as Italian Neo-realism as “deserted but inhabited, disused warehouses, waste grounds, cities in the course of demolition or reconstruction. And in these any-spaces-whatever a new race of characters was stirring, [a] kind of mutant” (Deleuze Cinema 2: The Time Image xi). The lack of causality is due to the situation which “we no longer know how to react to” and spaces “which we no longer know how to describe” (xi).³¹ If, however, we account for neo-realism in terms of its political interests (to be anti-fascist) and the purpose of its documentary-like production (to be anti-studio, anti-‘white telephone’ comedies³²), Kim’s film situates itself on the opposite side of everything neo-realism exemplifies. However, despite the clear differences in styles and themes between neo-realism and Kim Ki-duk’s *oeuvre*,

brain, following Bergson, “a center of indetermination in the acentred universe of images.” Deleuze, Cinema 1: The Movement-Image 62-63.

³¹ Tom Conley claims that the dividing line of the movement-image and the time-image is “the event”; “The event, a point that had been central, decisive, even unique in the regime of the movement-image, suddenly “multiplies” and “proliferates” in the new world of the time-image.... All of a sudden, in the time of the crisis of the “action-image,” cinema was not able to transcribe events that had already happened, but had to attain the event as it was happening”. Tom Conley, “The Film Event: From Interval to Interstice,” The Brain Is the Screen: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Cinema, ed. Gregory Flaxman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000) 307.

³² *Telefoni bianchi* (white telephone) films refer to 1930s’ Italian comedy films made under the Italian Fascist government. Since their sets were furnished with white telephones which signified the conspicuous wealth, “white telephone” later became the symbol of ignorance of those comedies which refused to comment on urgent social issues. Robert Sklar, Film: An International History of the Medium (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1993) 225.

they share the same attitude toward their incomprehensible surroundings. Kim's characters feel the same way about reality as those of post-Second World War films.

Kim always locates his films at the edge of society such as under a bridge (*Crocodile*), a decrepit rural inn (*The Birdcage Inn*), a remote fishing lake (*The Isle*), a military camp on the seashore (*The Coast Guard*), a temple in a deep mountain (*Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring*), or a boat in the middle of ocean (*The Bow*). These places are inhabited by characters that are stuck in their inescapable habitation. The red bus which cannot move in *Address Unknown* is the perfect example of their immobility. Even when they are able to leave, they refuse. When they do leave, they keep coming back to their places, though what is waiting for them is violence, pain, misery, or death. They appear without much personal or social background, only with scars which have inscribed past events and memories on their bodies. They feel lost and they no longer know how to give a coherent description of the world around them. Their actions are instead driven by primordial desires and instincts.

4. Affect and the Affection-image

In *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, Deleuze describes his study of film as “a taxonomy, an attempt at a classification of images and signs” (xiv) and identifies, initially, the tripartite division of the movement-image into “the perception-image,” “the affection-image” and “the action-image.” The perception-image shows, most notably with a long shot, how a character or the camera observes the world. The

action-image displays, with a medium shot, the actions and reactions between characters themselves, and between characters and elements. The affection-image occupies the interval between the perception-image and the action-image. It converts external movements in space into movements of expression with a close-up shot. Deleuze further identifies three more images that complicate this tripartite division: the impulse-image, the relation-image and the reflection-image. The underlying principle of this classification belongs to the early 20th American semiotician Charles Peirce.

Peirce distinguishes basically three kinds of images, which he calls “firstness,” “secondness” and “thirdness.” Firstness is “something that only refers to itself, quality or power, pure possibility.” Secondness is “something that refers to itself only through something else, existence, action-reaction, effort-resistance.” Thirdness is “something that refers to itself only by comparing one thing to another, relation, the law, the necessary” (Deleuze Cinema 2: The Time Image 30). Firstness corresponds to “the affection-image,” secondness corresponds to “the action-image” and thirdness goes to “the relation-image,” which is an image of delay or hesitation – a sort of mental image. “The reflection-image” is between action and relation, and “the impulse-image” occurs between affection and action. Although a film never consists of a single kind of image – even a simple movement of camera can change the image from one kind to another – it is still possible to say a certain film or a certain director has a dominant type of image. In case of *Crocodile*, it is “the affection-image” of Peircean firstness. The relationship between Peircean division of images and Deleuze’s taxonomy of images can be summarized as follows:

Table 3: The relationship between Peircean division of images and Deleuzian taxonomy of Images

<i>Peirce</i>	<i>Deleuze</i>	
	Perception-image	
Firstness	Affection-image	
		Impulse-image
Secondness	Action-image	
		Reflection-image
Thirdness		Relation-image

The affection-image can be easily identified by the close-up of the face: “*The affection-image is the close-up, and the close-up is the face...*” (Deleuze Cinema 1: The Movement-Image 87). A face usually plays three roles in film. First “it is individuating (it distinguishes or characterizes each person); it is socializing (it manifest a social role); it is relational or communicating (it ensures not only communication between two people, but also, in a single person, the internal agreement between his character and his role)” (99). However, the close-up of the face, according to Deleuze, loses all three roles; whereby, it deterritorializes the face; it “abstracts it from all spatio-temporal coordinates” (96). The face either reflects what the face sees, in other words, reflects what is happening in the cinematic space (quality), or expresses the intensity by making a minute movement, from one quality to another (power). In both cases what is expressed is not the face itself, but something else, which Deleuze later identifies as *affect*.

The affect is the entity, that is Power or Quality. It is something expressed: the affect does not exist independently of something which expresses it, although it is completely distinct from it. (97)

Notice that this definition of “affect” repeats almost verbatim the definition of the “sense/event” in *The Logic of Sense*.

Let us consider the complex status of sense or of that which is expressed. On one hand, it does not exist outside its expression. This is why we cannot say that sense exists, but rather that it inheres or subsists. On the other hand, it does not merge at all with the proposition, for it has an objective which is quite distinct. What is expressed has no resemblance whatsoever to the expression. Sense is indeed attributed, but it is not at all the attribute of the proposition – it is rather the attribute of the thing or state of affairs. (Deleuze The Logic of Sense 21)

Just as the event/sense results from the mixture of bodies but independent from them, the affect which is expressed by the face is independent from its spatio-temporal coordinates. In this way, “affect” expresses something else, which is not represented and cannot be represented. Thus, the affection-image makes visible what Peirce calls firstness, a quality or power considered for itself, without reference to anything else, independent from actualization. Deleuze acknowledges that even for Peirce firstness is difficult to define “because it is felt rather than

conceived: it concerns what is new in experience, what is fresh, fleeting and nevertheless eternal” (Deleuze Cinema 1: The Movement-Image 98). However, because the affection-image is abstracted from spatio-temporal coordinates and the face is abstracted from individual, we can say “the affect is impersonal and is distinct from every individuated state of things” (98). It is singular. It is the quality of possible sensation, but not a sensation yet.

Affect is neither a personal feeling nor an emotion. Feeling is personal and biographical because it is already checked and interpreted by the person’s own personal and biographical data. Emotion is social because it is a social display of a feeling. Affect is something like the emotion an infant shows. Even though it might resemble adult emotion, it is an affect, insofar as the infant does not have the experience to check and to interpret coming affects. In other words, “affect” is prepersonal. As discussed earlier, “event” is an ontological term which elevates itself to essence, thus anchors both, what Western philosophy calls, “essence” and “appearance.” “Sense,” which is a linguistic expression of “event,” is neither denotation nor manifestation nor signification, but nonetheless makes these propositions possible. Likewise, affect resides between the action and the reaction (feeling and emotion).

Since Deleuze does not define “affect” in any practical way in the Cinema books, it is necessary to look at his other work. The most extensive contemplation by Deleuze on his theory of “affect” can be found in one of his lectures given in

1978.³³ The proximity between the event and the affect becomes clearer in this lecture. Deleuze explains an “affect” in relation to an “idea” following Spinoza. For Spinoza, what is called an “idea” is a mode of thought, which represents something, in other words, a representational mode of thought. The idea, insofar as it represents something, is said to have an objective reality. On the contrary “affect (*affectus*)” means any mode of thought which does not represent anything. For example, the idea of triangle represents the triangle, the objective reality, but there is no way to represent “a pain” or “a love.” There is an idea of someone in pain or a loved thing, but a pain or a love as such represents nothing. “Idea” and “affect” are two kinds of modes of thought which differ in nature, which are irreducible to one another, but simply taken up in a relation such that affect presupposes an idea, however confused the idea may be.

Spinoza also distinguishes “affect” from “affection.” According to Spinoza, “affection (*affectio*)” is a state of a body insofar as it is subject to the action of another body. Therefore, *affectio* is a mixture of two bodies; whereby, one body is said to act on another, and the other receives the trace of the first. When a body reacts to another body, the affection indicates the nature of the affected body much more than it does the nature of the affecting body. For example if a knife cuts my skin, this encounter tells about skin’s capacity to be cut rather than knife’s capacity to cut. Since the affected body knows the “effect” of the affecting body, but only knows effect (not the cause), Spinoza says that affection-ideas are representations of

³³ <http://www.webdeleuze.com/php/sommaire.html>. *The Logic of Sense* was originally published in 1969, *Anti-Oedipus* in 1972, *Thousand Plateaus* in 1980. The Cinema books came later in 1983 and 1985.

effects without their causes. They are inadequate ideas, according to Spinoza, but nonetheless they are still ideas. An affect (*affectus*) refers to the passage from one state to another, taking into account the correlative variation of the affecting body. Whether it is joy or sadness, an affect marks the passage from one state to another; as an increase or decrease in the body's power as a function of its affection. The affection envelops an affect. In other words, within the affection there is an affect. We can find the relationship between the events and the affected bodies (or states of affairs) are same to the relationship between the affect and the affection.

In Deleuze's Cinema books the difference between affection and affect are not always emphasized and Deleuze often treats them as same, even though the Cinema books came after his publications on Spinoza (*Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (originally in 1968), *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (originally in 1970), and a series of lectures on Spinoza in the late seventies and in the early eighties. However, following his lecture, we may think "the affection-image" means the image which *envelops* an affect, which is not actualized, and which thus still remains as a possible sensation. Although Deleuze calls both poles of the close-up (quality and power) as affects, considering Spinoza's definitions of affection and affect, the "reflexive face" which is basically an immobile receptive plate, which, in other words, expresses wonder, should be named as an "affection" because it is the affected body in Spinozian term. The "intensive face" which is an intensive series of micro-movements of expression is strictly speaking an affect because it expresses the change of capacity of the body.

Also, since affect refers to a moment of passage, it necessarily demands an interval, which Deleuze describes as “a motor effort on an immobilized receptive plate” (66). Thus, the in-betweenness of the affection-image is not only taxonomical (between the perception-image and the action-image) but also temporal. That understood, we are now ready to consider how the affection-image illuminates, and is illuminated by Kim’s *Crocodile*.

5. Any-space-whatever and *Crocodile*

The close-up abstracts the face and extracts a pure quality. If the close-up of the face is a sort of “effacement” then the close-up of any object may extract such a quality. Furthermore the close-up tends to flatten the background, which might be still present behind the face, and make it unrecognizable or incomprehensible; which Deleuze calls “any-space-whatever.” Deleuze also mentions in discussion of Dreyer’s *Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928) that it is possible to “treat the medium shot and the full shot *as* close-ups – by the absence of depth or the suppression of perspective” (Deleuze Cinema 1: The Movement-Image 107).

Any-space-whatever is not an abstract universal, in all times, in all places. It is a perfectly singular space, which has merely lost its homogeneity, that is, the principle of its metric relations or the connection of its own parts, so that the linkages can be made in an infinite number of ways. It is a space of virtual conjunction, grasped as pure locus of the possible. (109)

It is through the sense of any-space-whatever that *Crocodile* exemplifies Deleuze's affection-image, rather than being a film populated by facial close-ups.

The setting of *Crocodile* is, in Deleuzian sense, any-space-whatever. The main space of *Crocodile*, under the bridge, is presented as an isolated, disconnected space from outside world. Although characters move in and out the location, their entries and exits are always presented as entries from off-screen space and exits to off-screen space. The space loses its own coordinates and its metric relations. It can be assumed that it is under one of the Han River Bridges, but there is no marker that can validate the assumption. The camera usually takes direct frontal shots of characters against the huge wall (a part of bank), which flattens the space as well as characters. Still there is a possibility that viewers can make easy assumptions about the space, because the term "under the bridge" already has a number of cultural and social connotations. Kim thwarts those assumptions by transforming the familiar space into a sort of museum. There is a clear affinity between the cinematic affect and the Russian formalist notion of defamiliarization, in terms of transforming something familiar to something unfamiliar.³⁴ However, while defamiliarization in general works by forcing the audience to take a different perspective, the Deleuzian affect exists even without a perceiver. The affect may suspend audiences' process of

³⁴ Defamiliarization is usually understood as an aesthetic technique to force the audience to see common things in an unfamiliar way. In an influential essay "Art as Technique" Shklovsky claims that art exists in order to recover the sensation of life which is diminished in the familiar routine of everyday experience. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis, Russian Formalist Criticism; Four Essays (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965) 3-24. See particularly pp 12-3.

recognition, but it does so not to frustrate them but to guide them to the matter-of-factness of the event.

Crocodile is a low-budget mediocre film with second-rate actors, an inexperienced director and a poorly written screenplay. Most parts of the film are in fact forgettable. Nevertheless, Kim's latent talent becomes evident when he is away from actions and lets images become the affects. As it becomes more evident in his later films, Kim's films are full of the creative uses of living and non-living bodies freed from normative significations. Every object can make creative connections, and can be diverted to more painful uses. In *Wild Animals* the frozen fish in the freezer is not food for the body but a weapon to abuse a helpless body and to eventually murder another body. In *The Isle*, fishhooks are used to catch fishes, but at the same time, they are suicide devices. In *The Bow*, the bow is simultaneously a musical instrument and a killing device. A less painful but equally creative use of the tail of a cat appears in *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring*. The title *3-Iron*, although the original Korean title is *Bin-jip* (literally "empty house"), highlights Kim's keen interest in a creative usage of an object. As anyone who plays golf might understand, a 3-iron is probably the least used club in the bag; in other words, it has no use-value. Freed from its usual usage, "3-iron" becomes the only item the main character steals from the many break-ins of empty houses, who transforms it into a weapon.

In *Crocodile*, the creative usage of objects is most evident in the main setting. The place is humble and dirty, but is full of peculiar items such as a luxurious Italian style sofa repainted with abstract patterns, a plaster torso of naked

woman that Ag-O uses as a pillow, a broken billboard of a Moulin Rouge type cabaret, a tent painted in bright colors. The wall is also full of exotic images and letters such as two gigantic unknown faces of a man and a woman, a huge open mouth with highlighted red lips, scribbles, and graphite. They are not related in any way to narrative, nor are they composed by any internal logic. Any attempt of semiotic interpretation cannot but help feel the possibility of futility. What do the images mean? This is not the right question. The right question is, what do they do? They transform the place of cliché into a singularity; that is, any-space-whatever. The lack of coherent narrative and character development does not hurt, either. Because things and actions are not necessarily tightly connected by any underlying logic, they freely collide with each other. As such, the image's indeterminacy prevents fixity and it resists structure, analysis, and meaning. Without meaning, the space is turned into a collection of affects.

Kim also transforms wound and death into affects. The opening sequence shows a close-up of Ag-O with a big bruise on his left cheek. His bruise stays there untreated, and he adds several more bruises. Throughout the film, Ag-O is at the center of violence. He commits violence against the weak such as the boy, the old man, and the girl and receives even more violence from many others who are stronger than him. We do not know where Ag-O gets his first bruise. It is useless to ask the origin of violence in this film which is characterized by an ongoing dynamic in which one gratuitous violence is constantly followed by another. Violence just happens. In most cases, the meaning of it is in suspense; violence does not question, nor answer. Violence presents itself in-between the cause and the effect as an affect.

We get the affect of violence but are off-limit from its meaning. In any-space-
whatever, Kim's characters are presented neither as pre-determined entities nor as
manifestations of a certain character type. Rather, they collide with each other.
Without much dialogue, violence becomes their language. However this language
does not entail meanings for an audience. Viewers are not forced to identify with
any character in the film and violence appears as impersonal.

The affect of death is particularly prominent because of the presence of the
Han River coupled with the film's ubiquitous violence and wounds. Although death
is never actualized until the final sequence of the film, death as an affect is lurking
all the time. The beautifully filmed final scene completes the affect of death. This
final sequence is rather carefully set up, as if the whole film is constructed to show
this scene. In the middle of the film, Ag-O throws the Italian sofa into the river out
of rage. Later, he hangs a picture frame which he stole above the sofa in the water.
Ag-O makes a gracious living room under the water.

With the help of Ag-O, the girl realizes that her fiancé is responsible for her
misery and finally opens her heart and makes love with Ag-O. That night while Ag-
O is sleeping, she jumps into water and commits suicide. Ag-O soon follows her,
but he is too late. Ag-O drags her to the underwater living room, then puts her on
the Italian sofa and sits beside her. He puts handcuffs on her and on himself and
drowns. They build a picture perfect family in death. This fantasy place might
signal the unattainable stability and the impossibility of making a secure family.
Before any interpretation and any judgment, however, this fantasy image grasps our
attention by inventing new affects from every single item in the frame. Nothing is

supposed to be there. Everything including the human bodies is out of place. This place is supposed to be sewage: the filthiest place you can imagine. However, unlike the dirty surface, this bottom of the river is clean and lights pervade iridescently. Death and beauty coexist or rather they collide. There is nothing sad or happy about death. Kim does not glorify death, nor condemn the dead. The death does not make it an unhappy ending. Since viewers have not made any emotional investments to the characters, their death does not appeal to our emotion. The death sequence does not bring about any narrative conclusion, because there is no narrative logic explaining why the characters have to die. However the death in *Crocodile* is exhausted of content and gives birth to affect, a pure event.

Still a question lingers. Why does Deleuze talk about the affect exclusively with the affection-image? Affect is basically a becoming [“Affects are becomings” (Deleuze and Guattari *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* 256)]; it is an increase or a decrease of the capacity of the body. Therefore it already implies a certain movement. Shouldn’t the film image itself be the affect? It seems Deleuze is reluctant to use the affect on a medium of movement. The close-up is the least mobile shot in film. When the close-up of the face fills the screen, there is no room for movement. Furthermore the close-up not only arrests the face but also movement itself. However at the same time only when everything else stops, the slight movement of the face can be felt. Deleuze seems to find that it is almost impossible to talk about affect in the moving image; he needs to stop the motion to have the necessary interval between action and reaction. Thus, as Deleuze says, “art preserves” and the affect “is preserved in itself” (Deleuze and Guattari *What Is*

Philosophy? 163). *Crocodile*'s lack of causality, whether it is intentional or unintentional, creates any-space-whatever in which the link between action and reaction is suspended. It draws our attention to the surface of the image in which signs, freed from their significations and meanings, collide with each other and create affects.

The final underwater death scene also prefigures Kim's later films as well as Deleuzian sensation. In the scene, water makes everything move as if they were alive. While everything is dead, everything is also moving. When everything is supposed to stop moving, Kim makes them move again. At this point the affect of death becomes "sensation," which I will explain further in the next chapter.

Chapter Four: Sensation and Becomings in *The Isle* and *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring*.

1. Introduction

A man (Hyun-sik) hides in a floating house-raft on a fishing lake after he kills his wife (or girlfriend) and her lover. One day local policemen come to check up the floats one by one to see whether any fugitive is hiding. Realizing he has nowhere to run, he tries to kill himself by swallowing fishhooks and pulling out the attached fishing line violently. A woman (Hee-jin)³⁵ who runs the fishing lake finds him vomiting blood in pain. She hides him in the water and later, after the police have gone, pulls him out of water using the fishing rod to which the fishhooks are connected. Several days later, the man who has survived and recovered decides to leave the lake. The girl, who has developed affection for him and now is in dismay, thrusts fishhooks into her vagina and pulls out the connected fish line as if her vagina is the mouth of fish. Then, she stands up in a white skirt soaked with blood and collapses into the lake. Hearing the sharp scream of the woman, the man hurries back and pulls her out of water with the fishing rod, which is connected to the fishhooks, as if he is fishing.

These horrifying scenes in *The Isle* (2000) have given director Kim Ki-duk an instant fame as well as notoriety. A mystic aura was added when some press members at the premiere of *The Isle* at the Venice Film Festival (2000) screamed, vomited and passed out. Since then, the screening of *The Isle*, even in the film

³⁵ Although the ending credit sequence identifies two main characters as Hyun-sik and Hee-jin, their names are not revealed in the film.

festival setting, is usually preceded by a festival programmer's in-person disclaimer advising audience members to leave the theater if the intensity of the images become unbearable. It is true that these scenes are visceral enough to make viewers quiver. However, the visceral reaction of viewers of *The Isle* seems especially peculiar, since anyone can easily name one or two films which are much gorier, blood-drenching, and ultra-violent films. What makes these scenes so visceral?

There are some signs in *The Isle* that invite a psychoanalytic reading. A hypothetical psychoanalytic interpretation of *The Isle* might work like the following. *The Isle* is about a mute woman working as a manager of a fishing lake and as a prostitute, and a fugitive who hides from his double murder. They meet, feel affection, and escape together. At first, they meet as criminals outside of the family and the Law. They fall in love and are re-Oedipalized by building a new "home" (symbolically presented as painting a yellow float in the film). When this re-Oedipalization is halted because they have already transgressed the Law, they regress to the pre-Oedipal stage; woman becomes Nature itself, and man returns to the origin, the womb. If we read *The Isle* through such motifs within a psychoanalytic framework, then we can see a trajectory comprised of Freudian ideas on origins, repetition-compulsion strategies, the death instinct and its allegiance to desire as the need for a return to lost plenitude. The film might be read as such, in terms of traditional film theory, using the two basic paradigms of conventional representation, subjectivity and identity.

However, such psychoanalytic readings, which are concerned with the molar plane of organization such as family and Law, limit the film as a plane of

organization, through which the problematic nature of gender relationships are encapsulated and re-enforced while losing the sight of the molecular plane of immanence, or the perceptual and fluid semiotics upon which Kim's film draws. Notice that the psychoanalytic reading of *The Isle* has little to talk about many violent scenes in the film. The girl rips off a live frog and feeds it to a caged bird. A fisherman fillets the sides of a live fish to feed sashimi to his girl before throwing it back into the water. What about the two scenes which involve fishhooks? My claim is that these scenes refuse to be subsumed simply in the Oedipal paradigm or to be symbols of ultimately something else. These scenes do not allow us to seek and to be satisfied with the meaning of this image or the underlying meaning of that image. In *The Isle*, these images do not call for meaning. Meaning is mute like many characters in his films. Or like the letters in *Address Unknown*, those images do not have pre-determined destinations or recipients (we the audience do not even know what the content of the letter is). While the meaning is held in abeyance, those bodies, which are big or small, live or dead, or fast or slow, collide and interact with each other. They mutate and transform into something other than themselves. Traditional film theories seem inadequate in being able to deal fully with them.

Before turning to Deleuze, let us first consider similarities between *The Isle* and *Crocodile*. Hee-jin rules the lake like Ag-O does in *Crocodile*; Hyun-sik fishes and Ag-O fishes dead bodies; Hyun-sik comes to the lake to commit suicide, so does the unnamed beautiful girl who jumps off the bridge; Ag-O builds a living room at the bottom of the river and Hyun-sik and Hee-jin decorates the floating house-raft on the lake, although both houses are rootless and unstable. Like

Crocodile, small items are put into use for different purposes. Hyun-sik makes small items such as a bicycle and a swing out of a steel wire. In other words, he creates new affects out of steel wire by nullifying its signification. Kim's characters relate each other by creating and sharing such affects. In *Crocodile* the first non-violent relationship between Ag-O and the girl comes when the girl draws a portrait of Ag-O and Ag-O paints the shell of a small turtle. The same affective movement of drawing connects them. In *The Isle* the affective relationship between characters comes when they share the figurines and that is why Hee-jin and the prostitute want his figurines. However if the relationship between human beings consists of various affects, that relationship is not always clear to an observer of both *Crocodile* and *The Isle*. The themes of "muteness," "setting and location" and "wound and death" also play important parts for each respective story, whose elements are repeated again by *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring* (2003), though no other film has generated so much controversy and polarized so many viewers as *The Isle*.

The difference is that the sense of abstraction and impersonality which pervades in *Crocodile* disappears in *The Isle*. In other words, the any-space-whatever of *Crocodile* is turned into a naturalistic setting, though a not too familiar one. Still, the dominant images of *The Isle* are not "the action-image" in which qualities and powers of the affection-image are actualized in states of things. Although they do not obscure the setting and location deliberately, still they are not exactly determined in spatio-temporal co-ordinates. There is an uncomfortable mixture. While the cinematic world of *The Isle* seems to be more concrete than *Crocodile*, the world of *The Isle* seems to hide something ominous, although it is

not immediately clear what brings about this tension. Is this unsettling but unidentifiable impression the same “affect” which we saw in *Crocodile*? Earlier, the affect is expressed basically through freezing the movement figuratively and literally. In other words, *Crocodile* severs semiotic, linguistic and spatio-temporal links between the space of *Crocodile* and the off-screen space (the world). Every sign in the film loses its meaning and floats on the flat surface. The world devoid of meaning also thwarts our nominal understanding of human relationship and ethics and rushes toward death. The affect reveals itself by way of disjunction and through the increase/decrease of the capacity to affect or to be affected. However, *The Isle* achieves the affect not by severing itself from the outside world (although the fishing lake is already separated from the society to some degree) but by revealing something hidden. Thus, while *Crocodile* achieves its effect by freezing the motion, *The Isle* does that by giving movement to something dormant. Deleuze calls this type of affect “sensation.”

Some scholars influenced by Deleuze claim that the film image is basically tactile and visceral, and our cinematic experience is bodily sensation.³⁶ However, the problem is that Deleuze himself does not use the word “sensation” in his two cinema books, even though they were written (1983 and 1985) right after the publication of *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (1981). Why did Deleuze avoid “sensation” in his discussion of cinema? In what condition, can we appropriate it for our purpose? I will try to answer these questions by recourse to

³⁶ See Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body* 51 and Kennedy, *Deleuze and Cinema: The Aesthetics of Sensation* 109.

examining *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* and “the impulse-image” which is developed in *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*.

This chapter first explains how Deleuze conceptualizes “sensation” in his study of Francis Bacon’s paintings. Deleuze identifies “isolation” and “violent movement” in Bacon’s paintings as the main vehicles of sensation which is transmitted directly to our nervous system. However despite the affinity between the technique of isolation and the close-up, Deleuze never associates sensation with cinema. The second part of this chapter seeks the link between sensation and cinema through a close reading of “the impulse-image” which appears in *Cinema 1* and the reason why Deleuze is reluctant to use the term sensation in cinema. The next section identifies Kim Ki-duk’s film *The Isle* as an impulse-image which is the cinematic equivalent of sensation in painting. The violent images of *The Isle* are explained through “impulses” which reveal “originary world.” The next film *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring*, while it shares many similarities with *The Isle*, transforms the clash between “originary world” and “derived milieu” into the plane of consistency, in which various becomings occur. The notion of the plane of consistency is explained through “haecceity” and “fold” using the floating temple as an allegory. Finally it discusses the beoming-animals in *Spring* and how it goes toward to becoming-imperceptible.

2. Sensation in painting

In *What Is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari claims that art preserves “a block of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects” (Deleuze

and Guattari What Is Philosophy? 163-4). As usual, Deleuze is less interested in defining what something *is* than describing what it *does*. An art is able to “undo the triple organization of perceptions, affections, and opinions in order to substitute a monument composed of percepts, affects, and blocs of sensations that take the place of language” (176). According to Deleuze, “percepts” are not perceptions, which means percepts are independent from the perceiver;³⁷ and “affects” are not feelings or affections, which means that “affects” go beyond the subject who experiences them. Thus, to extract sensation from representation is to discover something impersonal in it, prior to the “I think” or the “we judge,” unhinged by the relation of subject and object supposed in the conception of “representation,” and by the subordination to judgment.

While the word “affect” has been widely used for various subjects, Deleuze narrows the usage of “affect” so as to apply it to only art in *What Is Philosophy?*. He adds that affects are harmony, consonance and dissonance, harmonies of tone or color. Meanwhile Deleuze suggests sensations as *the vibration* which is the simple nervous sensation, *the embrace or the clinch* which means the resonance between two sensations, and *withdrawal, division, distention* which is separation of two sensations (168). Although Deleuze gives us an overview to utilize his concepts, he does not discuss cinema at all in *What Is Philosophy?*. Those three elements of

³⁷ Then, Deleuzian idea of percept is, in a sense, reminiscent of phenomenology, since we can say phenomenology also strives to rescue “sensation” from the enclosure in representation, or its subordination to the subject of representation. However Deleuze, who is always critical to phenomenology, thinks it still rest upon the division of subject and object, and more importantly, in essence, it imposes transcendence onto the “life-world.”

sensation might be useful for sculpture as they are intended, but it is not clear whether they can be used in cinema too.

Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation gives us better examples of how Deleuzian sensation might relate to the cinematic image. Deleuze notices in Bacon's paintings that those painted on the canvas have nothing to do with representation; they are neither figurative, nor narrative, nor illustrative; they are figural, in other words, "Figures."³⁸ Imagine any painting of the crucifixion of Jesus. In most cases, we may immediately identify cross, Jesus, and the Virgin Mary, and also easily recall the story behind the event. It is difficult to escape from these denotational signs and accompanying narratives as Deleuze cautions that "a story always slips into, or tends to slip into, the space between two figures in order to animate the illustrated whole" (Deleuze *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* 3). However it is possible to paint the same event by obscuring those figurative elements and by drawing our attention to its lines and colors, those are what Deleuze calls the "Figures."

To get a pure Figure, Deleuze says, there are two possibilities – abstraction and isolation. One is pursuing an abstract form as in the paintings of Wassily Kandinsky or Piet Mondrian. However, Deleuze finds this method problematic,

³⁸ According to John Rajchman, The Deleuzian distinction between "figurative" and "figural" is indebted to Lyotard. For both Lyotard and Deleuze, "figurative" is related to "representation," while "figural" is something freed from the visible, the sensible, representation, or "discourse" traditionally associated it. Thus, the figural problematizes the cores of Western thought – discourse and representation – and "exposes something "indigestible" a public can't easily "consume," appealing to another public or another view of what is public. John Rajchman, "Jean-Francois Lyotard's Underground Aesthetics," October 1998: 9.

because abstraction necessarily goes through the brain. The other way to get the Figure is exemplified by Francis Bacon's paintings. He starts *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* with the explanation of "isolation," which gorges out the Figure from figuration, illustration, and narration, as the Lyotardian figural does.³⁹ Isolation is necessary to get to the Figure. Without isolation, the Figure tends to be figurative. Deleuze says, "the entire surface is already invested virtually with all kinds of clichés, which the painter will have to break with" (11). Therefore, the Figure should be earned by fighting against representation, narration and illustration. In Bacon's paintings, we often find the distorted, deformed, monstrous images. These images resemble the object of reference, but they never stay in the world of resemblances; they tend to become something else – animals (by way of dismantling the face)⁴⁰ or a zone of indiscernibility. Bacon's Figure is not simply

³⁹ Lyotard describes the figural as the primary processes of the unconscious, similar to what Freud called the *id*, versus the discursive that he describes as the secondary process, or similar to what Freud called the ego. Thus, what Lyotard suggests in the term of the figural in art is the "de-codification" and subsequent "de-colonization" of the libidinal energies that language, text, and the intellect codify, censor and repress. To do so, Lyotard claims that postmodern art switches from modernism's emphasis on signifiers to an emphasis on the signified and thus the preference of image over narrative. With this collapse and de-differentiation of signifiers into the signified comes a loss of meaning, of depth, and interpretation, because no longer is there an interplay between representations of reality (signifiers) and reality itself (signified). This de-differentiation increases the impact of the art, because no longer are there signifiers that mediate, distance, and disinvest viewers' desire. Art becomes then a participatory experience, one in which the audience receives, and handles as they may, the flows of libidinal energies which the artist set free.

⁴⁰ "Bacon is a painter of heads, not faces, and there is a great difference between the two... It is not that the head lacks spirit; but it is a spirit in bodily form, a corporeal and vital breath, an animal spirit. It is the animal spirit of man: a pig-spirit, a buffalo-spirit, a dog-spirit, a bat-spirit." Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (London: Continuum, 2003) 20.

distorted representation; it is also an active deterritorialization of signification. For example, Bacon often draws a human body with a head but without a face, because the face is not only the privileged part in human body but also the foundation of signification and subject formation. By dismantling the face, Bacon escapes from the codification of the human body, and subsequently deterritorializes the subject. Once the Figure is obtained, “sensation is that which is transmitted directly, and avoids the detour and boredom of conveying a story” (36). The sensation, Deleuze says, acts “directly upon the nervous system” (36). In other words, the Deleuzian principle of aesthetics is that there is “sensation” prior to the establishment of codes, languages, and mediums.

It is interesting to see that Deleuze does not mention anything about the close-up of cinema in his discussion of isolation in painting or vice versa, despite the obvious similarities between the technique of isolation in painting and the cinematic practice of the close-up. Similar to the round contours that isolate the Figures in Bacon’s paintings, the close-up in film isolates and abstracts the face. The close-up is the easiest way to achieve the affection-image, just like the round area is simplest technique to isolate the Figure in Bacon’s painting. Are they same? Is the Deleuzian affection-image an example of Deleuzian sensation?

Deleuze notices those Figures in Bacon’s paintings are not spectators. They are not waiting for something to happen but something inside is already moving:

Now it is inside the body that something is happening; the body is the source of movement. This is no longer the problem of the place, but rather of the

event.... It is not I who attempt to escape from my body, it is the body that attempts to escape from itself by means of... in short, a spasm. (15)

In other words, when the close-up in film isolates the face, it tends to freeze the movement of the body, while the isolation in Bacon's paintings rather prepares a violent eruption. There are a series of paintings of Bacon in which the body attempts to escape from itself through one of its organs in order to escape the contours. Thus, the answer to the question about sensation and the affection-image is both yes and no. The close-up and the isolation both produce the Figure, however they do so for exactly the opposite purpose.

Let's first look at the similarity between Bacon's paintings and Kim's films and how extensively Kim employs the sense of isolation. As mentioned earlier, Kim Ki-duk is not, by any means, a director of the close-up. He does not use close-ups frequently, nor does he use them in conjunction with any considerable long-takes (as in Carl Dreyer) or with any conspicuous techniques (as in Jean-Luc Godard). However he elevates his characters to Figures through "isolation" by way of location and setting. The most prominent location setting for Kim is water, whether it is a lake, a river, sea, or a small fish tank. In *Crocodile* Han River in the middle of Seoul is the main background. *Wild Animals*, which features Koreans on French soil, visits the river Seine repeatedly. *The Birdcage Inn* is a small seaside Inn and *Bad Guy* revisits the same seaside. *The Coast Guard* is set on the coast. *The Isle* and *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring* are shot on a lake and *The Bow* is set in the middle of ocean. *Samaritan Girl* repeatedly shows a public bathhouse. These

settings sever the cinematic space from the rest of society. On top of that, Kim's films repeatedly emphasize the image of confinement, which incarcerates characters even more tightly. The design of the inn which compactly encloses the characters in *The Birdcage Inn*; the peep-show room in *Wild Animals*; the dog cages which are used to keep dogs and sometimes human beings in *Address Unknown*; the room of the prostitute with an adjacent surveillance room in *Bad Guy*; the barb wired military camp, the barb-wired boxing ring and the fish tank in which the traumatized female confines herself in bleeding in *The Coast Guard*; a small prison cell in *3-Iron*; a single boat in the middle of ocean in *The Bow*. The list goes on. Isolation is the most ubiquitous and conspicuous visual motif of Kim's film. Let me explain more in detail Kim's sense of visual isolation by using *The Isle*.

The film opens with an extreme long shot (*ELS*) which portrays a picturesque lake and house-rafts in the early mystic morning. In general, the *ELS* gives an audience information about the time and space of the setting. However in this case, the *ELS* obscures the setting; there is no marker to tell where it is and when it is. Nothing occupies the center of the frame and nothing peculiar grabs out attention; rather the early morning mist covers the entire area, further obscuring its spatio-temporal clues. The subsequent long-shots (*LS*) show an isolated lake on which fishing house-rafts, separated from each other, are floating. (The title *The Isle* is a misnomer since there is no "isle" in the film; the name, however, highlights the sense of isolation that the movie produces.) This opening sequence establishes the location as a Deleuzian singular plane.

Isolation works not only at the level of visuality, but also at the level of each character. All characters are presented without either personal history or memory. Only a brief flashback, which glimpses the dead bodies slain by the main male character (Hyun-sik), ties him to his past. Besides that, there is no social, personal, or psychological background for spectators to weave through the events. The only connection between the isolated characters is a small motor-boat which traffics from one float to another to carry food, water, bait for fishing and the female bodies for sexual appetite. The sense of isolation is further enhanced by the lack of dialogue. Like all his other films, dialogue is minimized to the degree that the main female character (Hee-jin) in *The Isle* does not have a single line. Characters are mute and isolation becomes a complete breakdown of verbal communication. Thus, there are many evidences that *The Isle* and Bacon's paintings share the same visual motif of isolation. If it is so easy to connect Bacon's technique of isolation to a film, why didn't Deleuze utilize the notion of "sensation" in the Cinema books? Can we call Kim's films "the cinema of sensation"?

3. Sensation and the Impulse-image

In *Francis Bacon*, Deleuze never mentions anything about cinema. On the other hand, he mentions the name Francis Bacon only once in his two Cinema books in passing, when he discusses "the impulse-image" and the violence of Joseph Losey's film:

In Losey, what appears first is a very special violence which permeates or engulfs the characters, and precedes any action. It is the opposite of the realist violence of action. It is a violence in act, before coming into action. It is no more linked to an image of action than it is to the representation of a scene. It is a violence which is not merely internal or innate, but *static*, whose only equivalent is that of **Bacon** in painting, when he summons up an ‘emanation’ which arises from an immobile character. (Deleuze Cinema 1: The Movement-Image 136– original italic and my bold)

Like a lightning flash, Deleuze recalls the name Bacon in the discussion of Losey’s violence under the category of the impulse-image, but never looks back at it again. The brevity might be explained by the word, *static*. It not only explains the brevity of Bacon’s sudden appearance but also the exclusion of the term “sensation” in the Cinema books. A painting cannot move; it can only show still images. However the reason that Bacon’s painting interests Deleuze is that it not only gets a Figure away from the figurative, but it also makes the Figure strive for escape: “The important point is that they do not consign the Figure to immobility but, on the contrary, render sensible a kind of progression, an exploration of the Figure within the place, or upon itself” (Deleuze Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation 2). Thus, Deleuze says that sensation is what passes from one “order” to another, from one “level” to another, from one “area” to another. This is why sensation is the master of deformations, the agent of bodily deformations (36). Deleuze adds in the chapter named *Athleticism*, “the body is the source of movement” (15).

The reason that Deleuze completely ignores sensations in his discussion of cinema is that cinema has always been a medium of movement. Therefore there is no reason for Deleuze to use “sensation” whose primary goal is to give a still image movement (sensation of movement). However the *static* violence of Losey reminded him of Bacon, as if Losey’s image of violence is not moving at all and needs “sensation.” In the previous chapter, we have already seen the affects do the opposite for film images. Since the affection-image (the close-up) abstracts the face from its spatio-temporal coordinates, it tends to lose its mobility. But if the image itself is not moving, if it is *static*, it might need sensation. That is why the last scene of *Crocodile* in which the dead bodies seem to move because of the current is sensation prefigured in the film of affects.

While the Cinema books allude to sensation with a brief reference to Bacon, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* also has a very subtle reference to “the impulse-image” which was yet to be written. While cautioning that sensation is not “sensational,” that is “the figuration... which provokes a violent sensation” (38), Deleuze suddenly evokes “naturalism”: “Sensation has one face turned toward the subject (the nervous system, vital movement, “instinct,” “temperament” – a whole vocabulary common to both **Naturalism** and Cezanne) and one face turned toward the object (the “fact,” the place, the event)” (34 – my **bold**). Coincidentally, naturalism reappears in Deleuze’s discussion of the impulse-image.

Deleuze locates “the impulse-image” in-between Piercian firstness and secondness; “it is no longer the affection-image, but is not yet the action-image” (123). It appears as the “Orinary Worlds/Elementary Impulses pair” between “the

Any-Space-Whatevers/Affects pair” of the affection-image and “the Determined Milieux/Modes of Behaviour pair” of the action-image. Although it is positioned between two major images,

this new set is not a mere intermediary, a place of transition, but possesses a perfect consistency and autonomy, with the result that the action-image remains powerless to represent it, and the affection-image powerless to make it felt. (Deleuze Cinema 1: The Movement-Image 123)

The originary world, according to Deleuze, coexists within the real milieu (the world derived from the originary world). Although usually hidden, it can be marked by “the artificiality of the set (a comic opera kingdom, a studio forest, or marsh)” or “a preserved zone (a genuine desert, a virgin forest)” (123). In other words, the originary world has no existence independent of the real milieu, but the real milieu is in fact a world derived from the originary world. Thus, while people live in real milieu (the derived world), they still carry the impulses and fragments of the originary world. Deleuze sees an affinity between the impulse-image and literary Naturalism, where an originary world of instinctual force is combined with a derived world of language and history:

Naturalism in literature is essentially Zola: he had the idea of making real milieux run in parallel with originary worlds. In each of his books, he

describes a precise milieu, but he also *exhausts* it, and restores it to the ordinary world. (124)

Although naturalism is not opposed to realism, it “accentuates its features by extending them in an idiosyncratic surrealism” (124). Thus, the setting of the impulse-image represents the co-existence of the real milieu and ordinary world and the sense of excess is the characteristic of the impulse-image.

Deleuze confesses that the impulse-image is not only difficult to reach but also difficult to define or identify (Deleuze Cinema 1: The Movement-Image 134). Deleuze mentions only three directors (Luis Bunuel, Eric von Stroheim, and Joseph Losey) under the category of the impulse-image, which makes it the most selective category among his images. Deleuze calls them the great masters of naturalism in cinema. Film history usually associates Luis Bunuel with surrealism, Eric von Stroheim with psychological realism and Joseph Losey, tentatively,⁴¹ with naturalism. While Deleuze admits that their styles are quite different from each other, he sees from all of them the implosion of impulse onto the real milieu. Deleuze makes a relatively clear distinction between the impulse-image and the action-image: “the action-image represses the impulse-image, which is too indecent because of its brutality, its very restraint, and its lack of realism” (134). However, there is no attempt to separate the impulse-image from the affect-image. In fact, it is very difficult to distinguish them on the level of each image without considering

⁴¹ No one in film study hesitates to call Bunuel and Stroheim great directors. However what about Losey? Dan Callahan says emphatically “no” to the question. Dan Callahan, "Joseph Losey," Sense of Cinema (2003).

whole film to locate the originary world. The difference between the affection-image and the impulse-image can only be measured by whether it increases or decreases the movement. The difference between affect and sensation can be explained in the same way.

Although Deleuze never gives a clear-cut definition between affects and sensations, there are several paragraphs in *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* from which we can *extract* the difference between them. Deleuze says “sensation has one face turned toward the subject ... and one face turned toward the object” (34). This is an extraordinary statement considering it is made by Deleuze, because he seldom uses the “subject” and the “object” as if they are separate entities. Since sensation is a virtual concept, it is absurd to put them somewhere in relation to the subject and the object. Deleuze quickly corrects himself “Or rather, it has no face at all... I *become* in the sensation and something *happens* through the sensation” (35). Thus, Deleuze consistently uses sensation as if it is always on the move, while affect always refers to an interval or a pause. In a sense, the relationship between affect and sensation is similar to that between event and sense. As event and sense are “two sides without thickness,” affect and sensation refer to the same impersonal experience with two different speeds of movement.

4. *The Isle* and the Impulse-image

Many casual reviewers point out either an excess or a deficiency of *The Isle*.⁴² Some grumble about the excessive violence, the unfiltered excessive emotion,

⁴² See Park Sung-su, “*Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring* or naturalism in cinema” Sung-II Chung, ed., *Kim Ki-Duk: An Untamed or a Scapegoat* (Seoul: Happy Reading, 2003).

and excessive colors, while others complain about the lack of coherent narrative, the lack of character development, or the lack of motivation. The co-existence of excess and deficiency might be the key to understand *The Isle*. Simply, the lack of information of *The Isle* accentuates the sense of excessive violence. The excess of *The Isle* can be understood as an equivalent to the *exhaustion* of naturalism. As the excessive description of naturalism eventually exhausts the sense of realism and heads towards the originary world, the excessiveness coupled with the deficiency in narrative coding in *The Isle* accentuates the violence and brings about the originary world.

The primary function of the Figures is to make invisible forces visible (Deleuze Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation:58). Deleuze mentions that “the task of painting is defined as the attempt to render visible forces that are not themselves visible” (56). In Bacon’s paintings, this rendering of invisible forces means “to paint the scream more than the horror”: not the representation of horror but a scream which forebodes the invisible forces. When Bacon paints the screaming Pope (“Study after Velasquez’s Portrait of Pope Innocent X, 1953”) he does not include the cause of horror, as if the Pope himself sees nothing, and screams *before the invisible* (8). The invisible forces become more visible when Bacon’s Figures undergo deformation by the forces of pressure, inertia, weight, attraction, gravitation, and germination. However, it does not mean that Deleuze wants to make a theology out of such “invisibility,” as though it were the mark of some Law, or some transcendental void or emptiness. The force is at the most basic level the difference itself. For a body to affect another body or to be affected by

another body, those bodies should be different bodies. This difference is called throughout Deleuze's *oeuvre* by many different names: event, sense, intensity, duration, affect or sensation. They are virtual entities but appear by way of different encounters in various situations. And that is the moment of becomings in Deleuzian philosophy. The reason that Bacon's paintings fascinate Deleuze is that Bacon makes the invisible forces visible through their effects on the flesh and through the relationship of materials and forces, not the relationship of form and matter. Bacon's painting expresses the invisible forces on the body, which undergoes becomings such as the body's becoming-animal by losing its human traits and becoming-imperceptible by losing its contours.

The impulse-image is designed to show the invisible force; it is the image of the impulse of the originary world. Because the originary world is not always clearly revealed, it needs what Deleuze calls symptoms or idols (or fetishes). Symptom designates the qualities or powers related to an originary world defined by impulses. Deleuze asserts that "impulses are *extracted* from the real modes of behavior current in a determinate milieu, from the passions, feelings and emotions which real men experience in this milieu" (124). Kim's characters are not conscious decision makers. Things happen without human controls, like the golf ball, which is tied to a tree for swing-practice in *3-Iron* (2004), and that sets itself free and hits a moving car and its passenger. Violence finds its course and characters can only respond to it by instinct and impulse. The more they try to play their given roles, the more they become inadequate to the roles. The soldier in *The Coast Guard* (2002) tries to fulfill his duty by killing the intruder whom he misidentifies as a North

Korean spy, but who turns out to be a local punk. They are unable to anticipate coming events. Things go off in unforeseen direction, and characters act as if certain violence has engulfed or permeated them.

Impulses have the same goal and the same destiny: to smash into fragments, to tear off fragments, gather up the scraps, form the great rubbish dump and bring everything together in a single and identical death impulse. Death, the death impulse – naturalism is saturated with it. (Deleuze Cinema 1: The Movement-Image 130)

Likewise the death impulse overwhelms other impulses in *The Isle*. When the death impulse dominates, other small impulses lose their layers and become simplified. That is why even the sexual impulse takes a violent form. More precisely, the sexual impulse comes with the death impulse. This violence cannot be attributed to simply the aggressor and the victim or to “the return of the repressed” as psychoanalysis often interprets such action. Nor can this violence be determined by fixed qualities, nor by the real it represents, nor by a certain essence. Swallowing fishhooks is not a result of a conscious decision. However, for those characters that live in a world devoid of meaning and overwhelmed by the death instinct, the only way to become aware of what is happening to them is to suffer themselves. Not because pain is pleasurable in some sadomasochistic way, but because it is the only language they can share.

Here the characters are like animals... because their acts are prior to all differentiation between the human and the animal. These are human animals. And this indeed is the impulse: the energy which seizes fragments in the originary world... It is thus a world of a very special kind of violence. (Deleuze Cinema 1: The Movement-Image 124)

Secondly, fetishes (or idols) are the fragments torn away, by the impulse, from a real milieu. So they correspond to an originary world. In *The Isle*, “fishing” is the fetish. In a determined milieu, fishing is a sport or a hobby. However, it also reminds us of the cruelty of the originary world, because after all it is the life and death struggle between fisherman and fish. Pulling fish out of water is akin to pulling out an originary world onto a derived milieu, with the fish strings connecting the two worlds. It is a violent and painful process; the more the fish tries to escape, the more the fishhooks pierce its skins and organs. The desperate writhing is transmitted to the hands of fisherman. The sign becomes tactile and the originary world gets nearer. Hee-jin teaches Hyun-sik how to fish, in other words, how to open up an originary world of impulse and instinct. However this ritual is double-edged; Hyun-sik becomes violent to the degree that he chops the live fish but, at the same time, the violence engulfs him and pain soon becomes his own. The ritual is completed by their respective rescue sequence, which connects one’s agonizing pain to the other through the vibration of the fish pole.

Sensation depends on a sort of clashes. These clashes can be the result of various techniques such as isolation, of visibility and invisibility, of mobility and

immobility, excess and deficiency, or becomings. From these clashes a rhythm is generated. The basic rhythm of *The Isle* is created by the clash between the water and a house-raft. The house-raft is an unstable fetish of the derived milieu. Despite its house-like external appearance, it has a flap door on the floor. It is not a coincidence that two fishhook scenes happen when a character either fails to escape from the float or does escape from it. If I borrow Deleuze's language on Bacon's painting, the clash is between the systolic force, which moves from the field (that is, that background) to figure, and the diastolic force, which moves from the figure to the field as the body undergoes intensive pain. Subjectivity is distanced, or subsumed, through a process of flux and oscillation of forces, rhythms, movements and intensities.

Sensation is also experienced by the becoming-fish. The whole film is about, in short, becoming-fish. At first, fish has no affect to Hyun-sik; he has no interest in fishing. When he catches his first fish with the help of Hee-jin, he lets it go. In his botched suicide attempt, his becoming-fish starts, although he refuses to acknowledge it. However, when he mangles fishes, he encounters the fish being filleted for sashimi and then released. Right before the encounter, Hyun-sik has made a hangman with steel wires and Hee-jin shows her preference – drowning. It is at this point that he realizes that his becoming-fish is his destiny.

When the visual sensation confronts the invisible force that conditions it, it releases a force that is capable of vanquishing the invisible force, or even befriending it. Life screams *at* death, but death is no longer this all-too-

visible thing that makes us faint; it is this invisible force that life detects, flushes out, and makes visible through the scream. (Deleuze Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation 62)

Although he sometimes resists and shows his intention to leave, she disagrees and they fight. While Hee-jin electrocutes fish out of the fishtank without any apparent reason, Hyun-sik's becoming-fish continues. Thus, the second fishhook scene can be explained as Hee-jin's becoming-fish. If he feels affects from fish, then she can be one by hooking herself with fishhooks.

The final scene of *The Isle* completes their becoming-fish. Hyun-sik suddenly appears in a gigantic swamp and finds a shelter in a rove of reeds. The camera catches his move from aerial point of view, and we see the naked woman is lying down in a boat full of water. It is obvious that he has disappeared into her womb. The important point is not that man returns to his origin as a psychoanalytic approach might interpret, but that he becomes invisible. As Deleuze says, all becomings start with becoming-woman and goes on to becoming-imperceptible. Such an explanation, consisting of "sensations" and "affects," does not impose narrative onto a block of sensation. It is an explanation of a series of paratactic events that eschew causality.

Admittedly, those two fishhook sequences are closer to the action-image rather than the affect-image or the impulse-image because of their analytical editing style. They use conventional technique, such as several successive close-ups for the fishhooks, Hyun-sik's eyes, open mouth and his face in pain. Yet, those scenes

differentiate themselves from typical Hollywood cinema. Hyun-sik draws the curtains before he swallows fishhooks, and Hee-jin pushes fishhooks into her vagina, after Hyun-sik, the only person in the vicinity, has left the float. In other words, there is no other witness to the violence except the filmic viewer. Both scenes avoid a witness who fixes the emotional response and meaning for viewers: a witness I would call “the embedded spectator”. I will explain this dominant motif of conventional mainstream cinema using Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ* in the next chapter.

At the beginning of this chapter, I asked whether the visceral reaction of audiences can be explained by sensation. If an audience has responded bodily to the fishhook scene because the images are gross, “sensational” is the right word to explain that reception. However if an audience has reacted to those scenes because they are incomprehensible, then the “sublime” might be a better term to describe their response. If those scenes have forced an audience to think about the invisible forces of the ordinary world, such as the death instinct or becoming-animal, only in that case, can we use the word “sensation.”

5. *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring* and Becomings

At first glance, *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring* (2003) looks by Kim Ki-duk’s previous standards to be a much milder film. There is no rape and no abuse. Although a murder is committed, it is only referred to by an article in a newspaper. Set entirely on and around a tree-lined lake in which a tiny Buddhist temple is floating, *Spring* captures the tranquility and beauty of Jusan Pond amidst

an exquisitely beautiful landscape in North Kyongsang province in South Korea.⁴³ The film is divided into five segments with inter-titles “Spring,” “Summer,” “Fall,” “Winter,” and “...And Spring.” Each segment is about a decade or so apart, corresponding to “childhood,” “adolescence,” “adulthood,” “middle-age” and “old-age.”

A complicated narrative has never been associated with Kim. In *Spring* the simplicity reaches its bare minimum. The spring segment introduces an old monk and his child disciple. While exploring the world on and around the lake, the child monk plays an innocent but cruel game: torturing small animals by tying them to a pebble. The old monk punishes the child by weighing him with a stone, and tells him that if any of the creatures die “you’ll carry the stone in your heart for the rest of your life.” In the summer segment, the monk, now a young man, meets a girl who comes to the temple to recover her health. They are drawn to each other and become involved sexually. The old monk discovers their relationship and lets the girl go, who is now healthy enough to leave. The young monk follows her. In the fall segment, the monk who is now an adult returns to the temple as a fugitive after killing his unfaithful wife in a fit of passion, and soon police follow. After his arrest, the old monk enters nirvana. With winter, the younger monk, now in middle-age, returns and atones for his past actions. An unknown woman leaves her baby at

⁴³ The film’s production company had to negotiate with South Korean Ministry of Environment for six months for permission to build that floating monastery set on Jusan Pond, because the pond, which was artificially made more than 200 years ago, was in a national park. After shooting, the production company had to remove the set right away (from personal interview).

the temple and dies by accident. With a new spring, the cycle starts anew. In the tranquility of nature, human actions also achieve serenity.

Leslie Felperin of *Sight & Sound* writes that *Spring* is “a poetic departure” and David Jays of the same magazine calls it an “anomaly” in Kim’s *oeuvre*, “a complete departure from the violent canvases of his earlier work.” They are not alone. Although some missed the excessive and visceral violence that Kim’s films usually offer, most film critics inside and outside of Korea welcomed Kim’s new film and considered it a change in Kim’s style, a significant departure from his tormented world, and a sign of an artistically mature Kim Ki-duk.

When director Kim Ki-duk visited Washington D.C to promote his film *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring*, he met several local film critics and reporters for one-on-one interviews.⁴⁴ Many questions were asked based on each interviewer’s interest and knowledge of director Kim and his films. One question, though, was asked repeatedly by all of them: “Where did you get the inspiration for the film *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring*?” Considering the unique setting and exotic rituals (exotic even to native Koreans, because they are not traditional Korean or Buddhist rituals), it was a legitimate and expected question. To the translator’s surprise, he gave each interviewer a different answer, ranging from one of his dreams to his accidental trip to Jusan Pond which has become the location of the film. The real inspiration might be one of them, all of them or none

⁴⁴ I accompanied him during his stay in DC and worked as a translator from March 23 to 25, 2004. I was also able to interview him myself for this project.

of them. Regardless, it seems that *Spring* recalls his early film *The Isle*, although many reviewers see a dramatic break from, rather than continuation, his earlier film.

After his first film *Crocodile*, which pays homage to Léos Carax's *Les Amants du Pont-Neuf* (*The Lovers of the Bridge*, 1991)⁴⁵ with the story of a tramp and a girl on the bridge, Kim's films have become increasingly inter-textual, frequently citing each other. For example, in the later part of *Bad Guy* (2001), the main characters visit the same inn in *The Birdcage Inn* (1998). (Although prostitution is the central motif of both films, the characters and stories are not connected in any meaningful way.) In *Time* (2006), the main character is shown editing a scene from *Real Fiction* (2000) on his computer. *Breath* (2007) uses the head statue used in *Wild Animal* (1996) again as a simple ornament.⁴⁶ Although there is no direct quote, *Spring* has many noticeable similarities to *The Isle*. Both films are set on a lake guarded by a goddess or an old monk. Both of them stage an uprooted and unstable house in the middle of a lake. Most actions happen either on a floating house-raft or a floating temple. In both films, a man commits a murder

⁴⁵ His second film *Wild Animals* casts Denis Lavant who was also in *Les Amants du Pont-Neuf*.

⁴⁶ Like the title *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring*, Kim often recycles his theme with an interval. For example, *Crocodile* (first film), *The Isle* (forth film), *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring* (eight film), and *The Bow* (eleventh film) have similar setting and theme. *The Birdcage Inn* (third film), *Bad Guy* (seventh film), and *Samaritan Girl* (tenth film) all deal with "prostitution." *Wild Animal* (second film), *Real Fiction* (fifth film) and *3-Iron* (eleventh film) separate themselves from other films in terms of character mobility, while *Address Unknown* (sixth film) and *The Coast Guard* (2002) are set around military camps.

and hides in the lake, and policemen follow him. Beside these apparent similarities, the Deleuzian impulse-image is the dominant image of both films.

In *Spring*, each segment opens with an intertitle telling the name of the season followed by an opening of a gate at the lake's entrance with a laboriously creaking sound. This gate-opening reveals a floating-temple in the middle of the lake. This shot, repeated with every new segment, tells that *Spring* remains in a naturalism similar to *The Isle*. Deleuze says, "the originary world may be marked by the artificiality of the set (a comic opera kingdom, a studio forest, or marsh) as much as by the authenticity of a preserved zone (a genuine desert, a virgin forest)" (Deleuze Cinema 1: The Movement-Image 123). While the gate and the floating-temple show a strong artificiality, the extreme long shot captures the temple and accentuates the authenticity and remoteness of the location with the depth of the field. The gate opens itself and no human being is in sight. This odd mixture of artificiality and authentic nature makes the setting what Deleuze calls "a pure background" or "a without-background" which is the characteristic of the impulse-image (123).

Although both films belong to the impulse-image, there is a difference. While the originary world only seeps through a crack in *The Isle*, like the flap door used as a lavatory in the floating house-raft, the originary world overwhelms the derived world in *Spring*. High water claims the giant gate leading to the dock and frozen water freezes the mobility of the temple. The gate no longer guards the derived milieu because it has no wall. It marks only the trace of it. Thus, in the world of *Spring*, the derived milieu and the originary world are indistinguishable. If

the analytic codeword for *The Isle* is the crash between excess and deficiency, the codeword for *Spring* is *indiscernibility*. Rather than clashing with each other, the originary world and the derived world blend with each other to the degree that the subjective point of view shot becomes indistinguishable from the objective point of view shot.

As a technique of continuity editing, the shot/reverse shot not only makes the fragmented nature of editing invisible, but also guides our gaze during the storytelling and through the narrative space of the film. This type of suturing device has been an object of intensive scrutiny in film studies because of its ideological implication, and many politically inspired directors have either tried to avoid, deconstruct or play with it.⁴⁷ In *Spring*, Kim rarely uses the shot/reverse shot formation. Although it is partly due to the lack of dialogue, Kim uses it only briefly when it is absolutely necessary and moves to the different camera setup quickly. The reason is not out of a modernist interest that intends to prevent an audience from emerging within discourse; rather, Kim does so in order to minimize the subjective point-of-view shots.

In general, the point-of-view shot consists of two shots; a shot is taken with the camera placed where the character's eyes would be and a shot of the character is looking before or after the first shot. Because of its affinity to the first person narration, it is also called a subjective point-of-view shot. In *Spring* the subjective point-of-view shot is minimized. Moreover, many seemingly subjective point-of-

⁴⁷ See Dayan, Daniel. "The Tutor-Code of Classical Cinema" and Silverman, Kaja. "On Suture." Early films of Godard such as *Breathless* (1960) show playful deconstructions of continuity editing.

view shots turn out to be, after all, non-subjective. In the interior scene right after the outdoor opening shot, the camera first shows the small stone fishtank and fishes in the close-up, then tilts upward to reveal the small statue of Buddha, as if somebody is watching fishes and moving its head upward to see the statue of Buddha. The camera cuts to the close-up of old monk praying with bowing movement from the Buddha's point-of-view. This shot confirms our speculation that the first shot was the old monk's point-of-view shot imitating his upper-body movement. The next shot is the long-shot with depth where we can see the old monk praying to Buddha with eyes *closed* while the child is still sleeping in the background. The first shot which is supposed to belong to old monk turns out to belong to no one. Thus, many point-view shots in *Spring* take *non-human* positions. They are not simply non-subjective point-view-shots; they are non-human point-view-shots such as the Buddha's point-of-view shot and the gate's point-of-view shot.

Kim also often puts obstacles between the camera and the object to be seen. When the child monk walks toward the camera with the stone tied on his back, he stands in-between the camera and the old monk and masks the old monk. In another scene, when the young monk pulls out the girl out of water, she is hidden by the boy. A simple camera movement or a different setup of camera could have easily solved this kind of problem. Instead of taking the best seat in the set, Kim's camera accepts its limitations. Kim deliberately gives the camera a certain consciousness. This type of image is what Deleuze calls, a *dicisign*, or what Pasolini calls a "free indirect proposition"; a perception in the *frame* of another perception (Deleuze

Cinema 1: The Movement-Image 76). These images appear as neither too expressionistic (no oblique angle, no impossible camera position, etc.) nor too realistic (an audience still can feel the presence of the camera). Although these point-of-view shots may be understood as a self-reflexive device that reveals film's own production mechanism, Kim's usage of the point-of-view shot is aligned with "the plane of consistency" which is opposed to the plane of organization and development:

Organization and development concern form and substance: at once the development of form and the formation of substance or a subject. But the plane of consistency knows nothing of substance and form: haecceities, which are inscribed on this plane, are precisely modes of individuation proceeding neither by form nor by the subject.... In another sense, consistency concretely ties together heterogeneous, disparate elements as such: it assures the consolidation of fuzzy aggregates, in other words, multiplicities of the rhizome type. (Deleuze and Guattari A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia 507)

Kim's characters always lose their social traits in the film. They often appear without recognizable social subjectivity. Even when they enter the screen with traces of society, they quickly lose them in Kim's cinematic space. The suicide girl in *Crocodile* who might be a "normal" (Deleuze might call *subjectified* [262]) girl becomes a different girl in the film after being rescued. She does not bring the

social codes into the filmic space. Thus the first scene in which the girl and Ag-O make a connection is presented by their movements; the girl draws a portrait of Ag-O and Ag-O paints the shell of a small turtle. In *The Isle* Hyun-sik the ex-policeman arrives at the fishing lake as a fugitive. However, as the film goes on, the facts that he was a policeman and he is a fugitive are not important anymore. *Spring* also gives us as little information as possible about characters' backgrounds, pasts, and social roles. Kim even intentionally covers the face of the woman who leaves her baby in the winter segment. Characters act not from their conscious subjectivities but by the interactions they make with other characters, animals, organic and non-organic things, and nature. Kim pushes the fixed plane of cinema to the state where forms dissolve and the remaining particles communicate each other based upon their movement and rest and speed and slowness. In other words, they are Spinozian bodies:

A body is not defined by the form that determines it nor as a determinate substance or subject nor by the organs it possesses or the functions it fulfills. On the plane of consistency, a body is defined only by a longitude and a latitude: in other words the sum total of the material elements belonging to it under given relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness (longitude); the sum total of the intensive affects it is capable of at a given power or degree of potential (latitude). Nothing but affects and local movements, different speeds. (Deleuze and Guattari *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* 260)

Deleuze calls this type of nonpersonal individuation a *haecceity*; “there is a mode of individuation very different from that of a person, subject, thing, or substance. We reserve the name *haecceities* for it” (261). Thus, the plane of consistency which is the opposite of the plane of organization and development is teemed with *haecceities* which are not subjects but degrees of intensity that, by combining with other degrees of intensity, brings about individuations. Thus *haecceities* consist entirely of movement and rest, and they have the capacity to affect and to be affected. Even a season, a winter, a summer, an hour, a date can be *haecceities* as long as they consist entirely of relations of movement and rest between molecules or particles, capacities to affect and be affected. Although Deleuze does not clarify anywhere in his writings, we may conclude that “longitude (movement and rest, speed and slowness)” signals “sensation” and “latitude (power and quality)” refers to “affect.” Thus, *haecceities* embody both sensation and affect in the plane of consistency.

Kim’s characters often exhaust themselves physiologically, losing their names, their memory, and their purpose in a decomposition of the self; individuality loses its contour and dissolves into the background. If a character develops a certain consciousness, it is through the encounters with *haecceities*. There is no essence or subject. Thus, individuality appears as “sensations” and “affects.” Then, there is no difference between characters and other organic and non-organic things in film: animals, water, trees, temple, boat, statue, etc. The entire film then is an assemblage of *haecceities*. The camera does not give characters any privilege.

The senses of nonhuman individuation and indiscernibility become particularly palpable by the design of the temple in which the inside and the outside are effectively merged. Deleuze calls this merging the *fold*. The notion of the fold is developed through two books published in the same year of 1986: *Foucault* (1988) and *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (1993). While typical accounts of subjectivity presume relatively stable “interiority” and “exteriority” or “essence” and “appearance,” Deleuze’s fold proclaims that the interiority is not so secure since the inside is nothing but the folded outside. This concept of the fold allows Deleuze to produce a new kind of subjectivity, a particularly non-human form of subjectivity. Deleuze uses the idea of a “house” as an allegory to illustrate his concept. According to Deleuze and Guattari, the house is where:

[T]he forces of chaos are kept outside as much as possible, and the interior space protects the germinal forces of a task to fulfill or a deed to do. This involves an activity of selection, elimination and extraction, in order to prevent the interior forces of the earth from being submerged, to enable them to resist, or even to take something from chaos across the filter or sieve of the space that has been drawn. (Deleuze and Guattari *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* 311)⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Almost the same description appears in *The Fold* as a way to explain “events”: “Events are produced in a chaos, in a chaotic multiplicity, but only under the condition that a sort of screen intervenes.” Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* 76.

This general description of house is developed into what Deleuze calls *Baroque House*, an allegory to explain how the Baroque mind folds. According to Deleuze, the Baroque house is a humble two stories building. The lower level is composed of organic matter with several small openings (five senses) and the upper level is where the folds of the soul reside without windows (Deleuze The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque 5-8). The lower level and the upper level are connected by the “low and curved stairs that push into space” (4). The stairs are the space where events are not yet represented and apprehended but no longer purely bodily. They are the folds in the proper sense: neither inside nor outside, neither body nor thought, but something that emerges when both body and mind leave themselves. As Helene Frichot explains, “the event wanders about, ghost-like, ungraspable, in-between floors, surveying the flexible membrane that has been developed by Deleuze and Leibniz” (66). It is upon this surface that we discover the circulation of events and the creation of innumerable surface effects. There are folds within folds, infinitely scaled like fractals, in which matter never dissolves into atomistic grains. Deleuze affirms that it is this surface that renders things possible (66). Thus, the fold not only explains the connection between mind and body, but also explains, as an operative function, a becoming.

In all three Kim’s films we have discussed, the “house” is an allegory of the fold. In *Crocodile*, neither the resident area under the bridge nor the underwater living room has walls or rooms. They are only the traces of house. The underwater living room has no entrance, no wall; only the remaining furniture and the picture frame tell that there was a house or the house has never been built from the first.

Allegorically, the space lacks a filter or a sieve. There is no room for the soul; no wonder the residents of the room are dead bodies. In *The Isle*, although the house-raft has walls so that it can protect the inside from the outside, it has only one room. The lack of ground floor makes not only the filtering difficult, but also communication impossible. The inside and the outside continue to clash on the small foyer on the raft where all the violence happens.

With the floating temple in *Spring*, Kim achieves the Baroque house better than Deleuze's own allegorical Baroque house, with the inside and the outside becoming truly indiscernible. The temple does not have an upper floor, and it does not have a proper foundation because it is floating. Although it has two rooms, they do not have walls, which would separate the inside into different chambers and rooms. However, the floating-temple is different from the floating-raft because the outside is already folded into the interior of the temple. In other words, the temple is made of, borrowing Deleuze's allegory, only stairs, in which the inside (mind) and the outside (body) are indiscernible.

Inside the temple, we see a stone statue of Buddha with a small stone fish bowl in which a couple of small fishes swim. If we zoom out, we see now how the temple takes the position of the Buddha and a bit larger stone bowl on the outside floor in which a couple of carps play. In a bigger picture, the whole floating-temple becomes the Buddha and the lake becomes a fishbowl. At the end of the film, the camera climbs nearby mountain and captures the entire lake and temple in a spectacular aerial view. The stone statue of Buddha now takes the entire lake as a fish bowl and the tiny temple in the middle of the lake takes the position of the fish.

If we follow the reverse direction, the temple, although it is uprooted and floating, contains the whole world within itself. This is what Brian Massumi, following Deleuze, calls a fractal.⁴⁹ The originary world and the derivative milieu become indistinguishable. While the title *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring* gives us a strong sense of time with its chronological but circular connections, the film is more topological than chronological.

6. Becoming-imperceptible

The ending sequence of *Spring* is reminiscent of the ending in *The Isle*. In Kim's earlier film, the man disappears into a turf of grass, and subsequent aerial point of view shot reveals that turf of grass covers the woman's pubis, who is lying inside of the submerged boat. The lake becomes a boat, and a turf of grass becomes an island. When Hyun-sik and Hee-jin in *The Isle* are caught in an Oedipal trap (symbolized by the domestic painting of the house-raft), they seek a line of flight, a means of transforming a situation through their becoming-fish. They do not imitate fish, nor do fish become assimilated to them. However a mutual deterritorialization occurs. Hyun-sik does not turn into fish, but remains a man-becoming-fish, engaged in an deterritorialization of the human which leads him towards becoming-*imperceptible*.

⁴⁹ Massumi calls fractal as "a web of proliferation fissures in infinite regress toward the void." Massumi, *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Deviations from Deleuze and Guattari* 22. While a fractal is a momentary suspension of becoming, it is also the principle of becoming which should be coupled with a "dice throw" (21-23).

The motif of disappearance can be found in many of Kim's films such as *The Coast Guard* (2002), *3-Iron* (2004) and *Time* (2006). In *The Coast Guard*, the accidental killing of a local boy drives not only his girl friend insane but also the trigger-happy soldier. After being discharged from the military service because of his mental condition, he reappears at the military camp like a ghost in the pitch-black night and starts to shoot other soldiers. At first, his point-of-view is marked by the green vision of his night-vision goggles. However, soon every soldier wears night-vision goggles; the green vision does not solely mark the presence of the insane soldier. In the end, neither soldiers nor audiences can tell who is who. Everyone goes insane, and the killer becomes literally *indiscernible*. The later film *3-Iron* goes even further by figuratively making the main character a ghost; he becomes invisible by training himself to conceal himself. *Time* tells a story of a girl who continuously remakes herself through repeated plastic surgeries to the degree that she loses her face.

Against the predominant and unjustifiable focus on being and identity in western thought, Deleuze claims that being is becoming. In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze lays out his project of overturning Platonism by the affirmation of becoming and simulation. In other words, there is no longer an origin or being that then becomes or goes through a process of simulation. This means we pass over the idea that there is a foundation of being, and lean toward the idea that there is only a becoming without ground or foundation. In other words, there is nothing other than the flow of becoming. If anything looks stable, it is, according to Deleuze, just a

relatively stable moment in a flow of becoming. This idea of becomings is further developed in *The Thousand Plateaus*. Deleuze lays out various becomings:

On the near side, we encounter becomings-woman, becomings-child (becoming-woman, more than any other becomings, possesses a special introductory power; it is not so much that women are witches, but that sorcery proceeds by way of this becoming-woman). On the far side we find becoming-elementary, -cellular, -molecular, and even becomings-imperceptible. (248)

In *Spring* the most prominent becoming is becoming-animal. Confusion arises when we think “becoming” in the “actual” world. When Deleuze says “becoming-animal,” it does not mean suddenly a human being starts walking on four-feet or starts flying. What Deleuze says is a *becoming*-animal and not a *being*-animal. This process is to be understood in terms neither of imitation nor of assimilation. Deleuze is not speaking of a mimetic relationship between man and animal, but of “a zone of indiscernability, of undecidability, between man and animal” (Deleuze Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation 20). It is a-parallel evolution of two beings which have absolutely nothing to do with one another. In other words, “becoming” means exchanging affects among multiplicities: “these multiplicities with heterogeneous terms, cofunctioning by contagion, enter certain *assemblages*; it is there that human beings effect their becomings-animal” (Deleuze and Guattari A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia 242).

In *Spring* each season has its own animal: a dog for spring, a rooster for summer, a cat for fall, a snake for winter, and a turtle for another spring. The important point is that these animals have no intrinsic connection with each respective season. For example, a dog refers neither culturally nor linguistically to either spring or childhood in Korea. The cycle of seasons, the prominent theme of the film, suggests these animals might be parts of the Chinese Zodiac that is also used in Korean culture. However, the cat and the turtle do not belong to the zodiac table. In other words, these animals are picked solely by because they are different resistors of speed, and because they have the capacity of affecting and being affected. The same goes to the other set of animals that the child monk ties the stone to: the fish, frog, and snake. There is no hidden meaning, cultural or religious connotation or narrative logic behind the choice of these animals. They are *haecceities*. Those seasonal animals appear in each segment based upon the speed of each animal. As the monk ages and becomes slower, so does the animal he accompanies. The sole purpose of the animals tied with a stone is that by death they make an alliance with the child monk.

The death of various animals sticks with him, as the old monk prophesizes: “you’ll carry the stone in your heart for the rest of your life.” The boy ties himself with a large stone in his becoming-animal. As Deleuze says in the story of Hofmannsthal, “This is not a feeling of pity... nor is identification. It is a composition of speeds and affects involving entirely different individuals” (258). The weight of the stone slows him and it hurts him; he is the *Spinozian* body in the middle of his becoming-animal. Surely, there is a resemblance between man and

animal when the child monk carries a stone. However, this resemblance is just secondary. In the winter segment, he carries the stone to the top of the mountain, just like those animals did. Admittedly the stone is a statue, but that does not matter as much as its presence as a weight that merges with the monk's own speed or force. He does not become an animal by imitating the characteristics of the animal. His movement resembles the affect those animals had, resembling them only in terms of their movement and rest, speed and slowness not by the imitation of a subject or a proportionality of form.

The girl in the summer segment appears as a threat to his becoming-animal, because she represents the great molar power of family and conjugality: borrowing Deleuze's words in his explanation of Willard in the Hollywood horror film *Willard*: "Willard [the boy] then experiences a pause in his destiny, in his becoming-rat [becoming-animal]" (233). Through sexual and emotional encounters, the young monk enters Oedipalization. This violation is particularly highlighted by his transgression of the invisible wall inside of the temple. This violation shakes off the plane of consistency and concludes the halting of becoming-animal. Appropriately he sets the rooster free when he leaves the temple for the Oedipal Law of the outer world.⁵⁰

His becoming-animal continues when he returns to the temple, by tying himself to a big stone. By climbing the mountain with the stone, his becoming

⁵⁰ It is still possible to interpret those animals which represent each season as an allegory of the monk. The dog symbolizes the youthfulness of the child monk, the rooster is the finding of desire which should be free, and the cat's agonizing body when its tail is used as a writing brush resembles the adult monk's body. The snake is re-incarnation of the old monk, etc.

becomes a “becoming-imperceptible”. The notion of becoming does not simply refer to the fact that the self does not have a static being and is in constant flux. More precisely, it refers to an objective zone of indistinction or indiscernibility that always exists between any two multiplicities, a zone that immediately *precedes* their respective natural differentiation.

What are they [various becomings] rushing toward? Without a doubt, toward becoming-imperceptible. The imperceptible is the immanent end of becoming, its cosmic formula... Becoming-imperceptible means many things. What is the relation between the (anorganic) imperceptible, the (assignifying) indiscernible, and the (asubjective) impersonal? (279)

Becoming-imperceptible is a molecular style of perception that transforms our notion of freedom. Becoming-imperceptible is the challenge of abandoning or transforming the perceived image of thought or point of view from which we judge and order life – perception opens beyond itself. Becoming-imperceptible means no longer knowing who or what we are; it means seeing with greater openness the differences, intensities and singularities that traverse us.

For the most part, we do not perceive becoming. However it is possible, especially through art, not just to refer our sense experiences to a world of experienced thing, but the experience of sensibility itself. Deleuze refers to this as the ‘being of the sensible’. A singularity is just this becoming of the sensible, the virtual power of the sensible, its untimely possibility.

In all of Kim's films one particular kind of image stands out. The camera is often stationed underwater and looks up at the film characters through moving water, or if the characters are underwater, the camera captures them from the above. The result is that the human face keeps changing its contour, and that the boundary between the face and its surroundings becomes blurry. In *Crocodile* the last scene is the underwater scene in which two drowned bodies slowly move following the current. In *The Birdcage Inn* the last scene shows two female characters at the top of the diving board in the middle of ocean. These two young women sit side by side and laugh as if they mock the world. This scene is captured by the underwater camera. The only time these characters are out of the stultifying confinement to open water, they become indistinguishable from the vast sky. In *Spring* this signature frame appears in the first outing of the girl. Her face is filmed by the underwater camera through water while a couple of fishes swim. In these scenes, Kim's characters slowly lose their contours, are blended into surroundings and undergo becoming-other.

"Becoming" does not mean one being becomes the other being. Becoming-fish does not mean a human being develops gills and swims like a fish. Sense, affect, sensation, and becoming all have their conceptual origin in the event, and the event is an *incorporeal entity*. Thus, becoming-other means exchanging affects and sensations with the other party. Once the exchange is established, they both undergo virtual changes. It might not be a physical change but nonetheless it is real. In short, *Spring* is the compound of nonhuman forces, of man's nonhuman becomings.

Chapter Five: Three Hollywood Films

1. Introduction

This chapter considers how Deleuzian ideas surveyed in the discussions of Kim's films can be applied to the images of violence in contemporary Hollywood cinema. Since one of the interests of this project is to find a way to utilize Deleuzian concepts in the analysis of popular Hollywood films, I excluded more easily comparable non-Hollywood films such as *Funny Games* (Michael Haneke, 1997), *I Stand Alone* (Gaspar Noé, 1998), or *Japón* (Carlos Reygadas, 2002).

The main criterion of the selection is that each film should be considered as violent as the Kim's films that I have discussed. The second criterion is more tactical than strategic. I pick films which highlight violence against the male body to maintain a consistency. Last but not least, these three films relate to "affect," "sensation," and "becomings" in different ways. Thus each film should be analyzed differently using and expanding the tools of the Deleuzian model I have discussed.

The first film *The Passion of The Christ* (Mel Gibson, 2004) shows how affect and sensation can be easily canceled out by the simple shot/reverse shot. The second film *Reservoir Dogs* (Quinten Tarantino, 1994) demonstrates how affect and sensation moves back and forth and how "nooshock" can be a part of that exchange. Finally the third film *Fight Club* (David Fincher, 1999) deserves more attention. As the most complex film among those three, it opens another possibility of presenting affects and sensations in cinema. While Kim Ki-duk's films achieve affect, sensation, and becomings by making his characters isolated, *Fight Club* achieve the

same result by making an isolated character come out of his subjectivity through pain.

I in no way claim that *all* film should be read through Deleuzian ideas; nor do I mean to negate the significance of film's semiotic or psychoanalytic plane (the plane of organization). Although Deleuze oftentimes privileges one over the other in many dyads he proposes (such as molecular over molar, rhizomatic over arborescent, and becoming over being), it does not necessarily mean that, for example, "molecular" is *always* better than "molar." Likewise I am not interested in saying that the impulse-image is *better* than the action-image. Most Hollywood films can be categorized according to Deleuze as "the action-image." Movement is actualized and situated, and action takes place in a determined milieu. However Deleuze does not set up the action-image, that is, Hollywood cinema, into some argument about the reprehensible shortcomings of dominant cinema. Still, we can build upon our study of Deleuze and Kim Ki-duk to begin to explore one defining trait of Hollywood cinema, the filmic representation of violence.

Although numerous articles and books have been written about media violence and its impact on society, violence has received less critical attention in film studies. One reason is that violence seems to arouse the viewer's bodily response and film studies in general have tried to avoid the question of viewer's bodily response. As Massumi says, there might be a fear "of falling into a 'naïve realism,' a reductive empiricism that would dissolve the specificity of the cultural domain in the plain, seemingly unproblematic, 'presence' of dumb matter" (Massumi Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation 1). Linda Williams

writes that any genre that excites the body of viewer and brings up unmitigated and un-socialized emotions is considered as vulgar, and that subsequently the contemporary film theories put hierarchy in genres, which results in such body genres such as “weepie melodrama,” “horror” and “pornography” at the bottom of the ladder (Williams 28-9). In other words, films which make the viewer respond bodily by crying, screaming or being sexually aroused are considered less artistic, less serious, less valuable, and not worthy for a critical investigation. Steven Shaviro also notes that contemporary film theories “tend to equate passion, fascination, and enjoyment with mystification... as if there were something degrading and dangerous about giving way to images, and so easily falling under their power” (Shaviro 14-5). Film theories in general have tried to ward off the allure of the film image and to distance themselves from the emotional effects given by the image.

Tom Gunning’s pioneering work on early cinema, what he calls as “the cinema of attractions,” can be considered as an exception. Unlike traditional film history which theorizes early cinema under the hegemony of narrative films, he argues that pre-1906 films directly solicit spectators’ attention and stimulate them by “inciting visual curiosity, and supplying pleasure through an exciting spectacle – a unique event, whether fictional or documentary, that is of interest in itself” (Gunning 384). He also argues that the system of attraction remains an essential part of popular filmmaking as evident in musical genre or chase film. He finds similar attractions in contemporary films of Spielberg, Lucas and Coppola, which he calls a cinema of effects – cinema of tamed attractions (387). In other words even in

narrative cinema, we do not simply respond to narrative logic and realism. We engage with and make sense of film through our sensory experience.⁵¹

Gunning adopts his term “attraction” from Eisenstein; so does Deleuze when he picks up his idea of cinema’s ability to produce “a shock to thought,” which he calls “nooshock” (Deleuze Cinema 2: The Time Image 156). This is the first time Deleuze explicitly puts an audience into his discussion of cinema. The audience which Deleuze has only implied in *Cinema 1* is discussed in relation to the sensation. Still Deleuze does not use the word “sensation” but his definition of nooshock - “producing a shock to thought, communicating vibration to the cortex, touching the nervous and cerebral system directly” (156) – is almost identical with the definition of “sensation” developed in *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*.

Deleuze believes that cinema – the automatic movement – has the possibility to give viewers the shock wave or the nervous vibration. Viewers no longer say “‘I see, I hear,’ but I FEEL, ‘totally physiological sensation’” (158). There are three possible reactions of viewers when they feel physiological sensation. One is to force viewers to produce a concept from the images, another is to make viewers realize that they are powerless to think or are unable to think, and the other is “to give discourse to the body” (172).

⁵¹ Jonathan Auerbach cautions, however, that Gunning’s “the cinema of attractions” posits a “seamless circuit, at once visually assaulting and assaulted” between early film form and its spectators. Jonathan Auerbach, Body Shots: Early Cinema's Incarnations (California: University of California Press, 2007) 3. The result is that Gunning tends to “render the human body inert” (5). While Gunning has tried to break with the old apparatus theory which situates spectators within film text, Gunning’s later article “An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)Credulous Spectator” ends up “evacuating the early cinema image of form or content, a position curiously akin to the apparatus theorist” (4).

The first route was developed by, most notably, Eisenstein. He believed that cinema could impose the shock on the masses through montage which produces a higher order from the given images. However Deleuze points out this kind of unmediated cinema of immediacy was dead almost as soon as it came into being, and that the early pioneers “foresaw that cinema would encounter all the ambiguities of the other arts” (157) with the pure power and immediacy of the nooshock being only, “a pure and simple logical possibility” (157). In fact, Deleuze is more concerned in degradation of cinema – experimental abstractions, ‘formalist antics’ and commercial configurations of sex and blood. Deleuze says;

The shock would be confused, in bad cinema, with the figurative violence of the represented instead of achieving that other violence of movement-image developing its vibrations in a moving sequence which embed itself within us. (Deleuze Cinema 2: The Time Image 157)

When the violence is picked up by mediocre directors, the violence simply is the image of the represented. It becomes a “blood-red arbitrariness” (164). In other words, the intellectual montage becomes a sheer inflation of the represented and the masses simply accept the represented rather than give birth of thought. The nooshock becomes a tool for propaganda. Deleuze even links Hollywood to Hitler:

The mass-art... has degenerated into state propaganda and manipulation, into a kind of fascism which brought together Hitler and Hollywood. (164)

Deleuze considers the second possibility following Artaud. Deleuze thinks that violent images should be akin to the *sublime*, in which “imagination suffers a shock which pushes it to the limit and forces thought to think the whole as intellectual totality which goes beyond the imagination” (157). Artaud saw a link between the spiritual automaton of cinema and automatic writing, “a higher control which brings together critical and conscious thought and the unconscious in thought’ (165). For Artaud cinema is not the association of clear-cut ideas through intellectual montage, but on the contrary a radical de-association, an ambiguous linking of unclear ideas, a decentred conflation of multiple voices and viewpoints, that cannot be assimilated into a unified whole. The nooshock for Artaud is a purely “neuro-physiological vibration’ brought about by the movement and speed of the images passing through the project. Cinema makes it impossible to think, because before we can interpret one image it is already replaced by another. Before we can grasp an image it is already passed, the process of association is constantly interrupted, deconstructed, dislocated. Thus, what cinema advances is not the power of thought but its ‘impower’ (166).

Deleuze argues that contemporary cinema is still capable of creating affect, as Artaud’s violent nooshock confront us with a fundamental gap in our thinking – the inability of thought to think whole, rather than leading us into thinking a unified whole. However, this physiological response must be produced through images in and of themselves, without narrative structure to qualify them. Thus we can conclude that Deleuze, while retaining the basic tenet of sensation which he

develops through the study on Francis Bacon, posits a rigorous condition for sensation to work.

The third route is based upon the assumption that “we no longer believe in this world” (171). When the world looks like a bad cinema, in other words, we can no longer believe in a world, what is possible is to believe in the body; “it is giving discourse to the body, and, for the purpose, reaching the body before discourses” (172).

In the following sections, however, I will analyze three films corresponding to the three routes Deleuze suggests.

2. *The Passion of the Christ*

Reaching theatres under the cloud of the extremely polarized 2004 presidential election, oftentimes coupled with Michael Moore’s *Fahrenheit 911*, Mel Gibson’s unexpected blockbuster hit *The Passion of The Christ* has posed a number of questions for film historians, film theorists, theologians, psychologists, religious leaders, Jewish studies scholars, and political commentators. Gibson tries to make *The Passion of the Christ* an authentic representation of the last day of Jesus. Instead of English, he braves to use Latin, Hebrew and now-defunct Aramaic with subtitles, which the Hollywood industry considers as a financial suicide. Because of its claim to be authenticity, many debates has quickly converged into its historical (or biblical) accuracies of the film. Particularly, when the question went to “who killed Jesus?” the film garnered an extreme interest from the media questioning whether it was anti-Semitic.

I am not in the position to discuss its accuracy or its religious meanings. Neither do I plan to discuss Gibson's political agenda, though it looms large. What interests me is the ways this film presents violence. In *Braveheart* (1995), Gibson as a director has already shown a penchant for spectacular images of war, tortures, and human sufferings. However, *The Passion of the Christ* surpasses not only the level of brutality of *Braveheart*, but also that of all other films which depict the life of Jesus. No other film of Jesus has ever been so relentlessly gory. No other artistic or cinematic Jesus has suffered more than Gibson's Jesus.

In *The Passion*, Gibson focuses only the passion, neither the life nor resurrection of Christ. By doing so, he leaves out most of stories which are well-known to both Christian and non-Christian audiences. According to theologian Zev Garber, the brutality of *The Passion* comes from *The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, a controversial diary written by Sister Anna Katharina Emmerich, which Gibson utilizes in addition to the four gospels (Garber 2). Public debates have quickly moved from charges of anti-Semitism to criticism of the film's violence. Jamie Russell of *Channel4 Film* calls her viewing experience as "the agony without any of the ecstasy"⁵² and David Edelstein of *Slate Magazine* calls the film "The Jesus Chainsaw Massacre" (Edelstein).

What is interesting in *The Passion of Christ* is that the film shows religiosity through bodily pain, even though, for many religious ascetics, the body is a dangerous enemy of spiritual perfection. The film reminds us of how much the narrative of the scriptures is primarily based upon bodily pain. The Old Testament

⁵² <http://www.channel4.com/film/reviews/film.jsp?id=128424§ion=review>

has numerous examples of bodily pain, which results from the wrath of God. Unforgiving pain and its fear are transformed into a belief system. First it signifies the difference between God and its creature, as one has no body and the other has the body. The power and authority of the former is attested by its capability to wound the latter (Scarry 181-83). Since God has no body, it is immune to pain. Subsequently, human being is woundable or already deeply and permanently wounded. God's invisible presence is asserted, made visible, by the signs He brings about in the human body. In a sense, the New Testament is an attempt to understand the brutal event, by giving the event a meaning.

If the underlying theme of the film is spirituality, which defies representation, it must be affects expressed by religious spirituality. The crucifixion of Christ is, in a sense, a historical event. Gibson's *The Passion* could be an attempt to renew the event by inventing new concepts to call forth the event. Particularly, one of the longest torture sequences in film history also would allow the filmmaker ample opportunities to produce affects through colliding bodies. However, *The Passion* fails to achieve any of these possibilities. Rather than reviving spirituality, the film's overemphasis on the body and pain undermines it.

At first, Gibson's *The Passion* seems to share many characteristics of Kim Ki-duk's films. Like most films of Kim's, the narrative of *The Passion* is minimized. Partly because Gibson's film is a modern presentation of a "Passion Play" and partly because the last day of Jesus is well-known to most people, the director could make a film which is not reliant on the narrative *per se*. Thus, *The Passion* has no narrative arc: there is no rise and fall, only entropy. *The Passion*

spirals unrelentingly downwards through despair, humiliation and torture, to agony, both physical and spiritual, and finally to gruesome death. Thus, the viewing experience of *The Passion* is not the viewing pleasure associated with narrative development and resolution, but the pure impact of images.

However the similarity between Kim and Gibson ends there. The images in *The Passion* cannot be called either the affection-image or the impulse-image. Admittedly, Gibson uses numerous close-ups in *The Passion*. However the role of the close-up is different from that of the affection-image. In the previous chapter, I discussed how the close-up or “any-space-whatever” abstracts the image from its spatio-temporal coordinates. By doing so, the affection-image arrests the movement to produce *affects* which refuse to enter the action-image and challenge our habitual viewing experience. The close-up *is* the affection-image; however the close-up, unlike the affection-image also can be easily actualized in a determinate milieu, as Deleuze cautions us:

We must always distinguish power-qualities in themselves, as expressed by a face, faces or their equivalents (affection-image of Firstness) and these same power-qualities as actualized in a state of things, in a determinate space-time (action-image of Secondness). (Deleuze Cinema 1: The Movement-Image 106).

Gibson never allows his close-ups to be freed from the narrative plane. There are basically two types of shots in *The Passion*: one is the shot of action and the other is

the reaction of the first shot. In the flogging sequence, for example, there are numerous close-ups which show the contact between a weapon and the body of Jesus. These brutal close-ups produce, without a doubt, strong sensations. However Gibson does not allow the audience to encounter unrepresentable pain and suffering. He has to remove any pause or any intervals. In other words, for Gibson, power-qualities should be actualized immediately at any cost.

Thus, every blow of flagellation is followed by the close-up of the witness. These second type close-ups do not abstract faces, either, but fix them not only in their spatio-temporal coordinates, but also in their social and historical grids, such as that of Jewish priest, Roman soldier, Mary, Madame Magdalene, and Satan. Gibson relentlessly links the suffering body of Jesus with witnesses, and they register different reactions to the action. On one side, there are Satan, Jewish priests, Roman soldiers, and the crowd, and, on the other side, there are Mary and Mary Magdalene. We audiences become voyeurs. We track Jesus as witnesses do in the scene. Gibson also forces us to identify with one witness among others; Mary, who is the surrogate spectator. She interprets and gives meaning of the event to the passive voyeurs.

The surrogate spectator, which I call as the “embedded spectator” is one of the main characteristics of the action-image, represented by American cinema. In the action-image, the suspensiveness and non-actuality of the affection-image becomes intolerable and movement should be actualized and situated. To prevent the image-movement drifts away, American cinema often embeds a witness with whom audiences are forced to identify. Thus, in *The Passion*, affects and impulses

“only appear as embodied in behavior, in the form of emotions or passions which order and disorder it” (Deleuze Cinema 1: The Movement-Image 141).

Rather than capturing the spiritual transformation of becoming-God, which is what *Passion* should be about, the film wastes no time in giving meaning to those scenes and characters, and subsequently to eliminate the chance of encounter for an audience. The potential sensation of affect and impulse becomes *sensational*. We feel guilty but it is not necessarily the kind of guilt Gibson might have intended to evoke.

Eventually Gibson’s close-ups remain as simple shot-reverse shots which maintain the relationship from one face to another; whose shots belong to “the action-image” rather than “the affection-image.” This is the point where the *sensational* diverges from sensation through subordinating the affect under narrative and signification. Thus, the more the film succeeds in presenting the unbearable pain, the more it undermines affects and subsequently its spiritual message of an ordinary world of the divine. In other words, while it is a religious film which aims to revive spirituality, it fails to extract affects which might preserve the invisible presence of God and transform the suffering body into spiritual entity. It stays as a sensational film *par excellence*. Before it becomes an affect, it quickly moves to the action-image.

Gibson’s *Passion* is full of violent images which might become “nooshock.” Rather than producing a shock to a thought, however, those images force viewers to accept a simple religious equation: the suffering of Jesus and our sin. However this “sin” has nothing to do with its religious gravity. The viewer’s guilty comes from

his position as a voyeur. It also fails to evoke *sublime*; every event is organized in the narrative and every affect is checked by the identification with the witness. It has become a propaganda film.

3. *Reservoir Dogs*

Quentin Tarantino's celebrated debut film *Reservoir Dogs* (1991) seem to stand for everything Kim's debut film could not have: a film-buff's film with excellent acting, dialogue colorfully written in vulgar gangster vernacular, the intricate narrative structure combining several flashbacks and the high production value. At the same time, there are also a couple of similarities. First, it features six career criminals with white shirts in black suits. The protagonists are strangers who address each other using false names assigned by the heist's organizer. Like many Kim's characters, their social and personal backgrounds are unknown not only to each character but also to the viewers. The actual heist is never seen, either. Thus, the film intentionally frustrates viewers by hiding the *supposedly* main event of the gangster genre convention. The hidden identities are enhanced by their conversations. They do not talk about gangster stuffs; they ramble about whether to tip a waitress. Secondly violence is gratuitous. As Mr. Blonde gleefully announces, he tortures Mr. Orange regardless of whether he confesses what he knows or not.

As we said earlier, Deleuze finds the crisis of the action-image in Italian Neo-Realism, particularly in its setting. Deleuze also finds an equivalent in 1970's Hollywood cinema:

The sensory-motor action or situation has been replaced by the stroll, the voyage and the continual return journey. The voyage has found in America the formal and material conditions of a renewal. It takes place through internal or external necessity, through the need for flight. But now it loses the initiatory aspect that it had in German journey (even in Wenders' films) and that it kept, despite everything, in the beat journey (Dennis Hopper and Peter Fonda's *Easy Rider*). It has become urban voyage, and has become detached from the active and affective structure which supported it, directed it, gave it even vague directions. How could there be a nerve fiber or a sensory-motor structure between the driver of *Taxi Driver* and what he sees on the pavement in his driving mirror? (Deleuze Cinema 1: The Movement-Image 208)⁵³

These seventies heroes are no longer tied to the actual milieu and moves from one place to another aimlessly. Deleuze calls this setting of the modern voyage “any-space-whatever” (208). In *Reservoir Dogs*, this space is the warehouse in which the survivors converge to find out who is the rat when the heist goes awry. Gormley claims, however, the role of any-space-whatever in *Reservoir Dogs* is different from seventies cinema. While seventies' cinema is characterized by the rootless protagonists, the gangsters of *Reservoir Dogs* are “powerless to leave” and “powerless to control” (Gormley 154). Those gangsters are in an awkward situation,

⁵³ I am indebted to Gormley for the link between any-space-whatever and *Reservoir Dogs*. Paul Gormley, The New-Brutality Film: Race and Affect in Contemporary Hollywood Culture (Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2005).

because they know one of them is an undercover cop but they cannot leave the place. Considering that for Deleuze immobility and an unfamiliar location are key elements of any-space-whatever, the warehouse certainly belongs to the place in which affect is created. However, Gormley treats the space as a mere backdrop for the power struggle between the gangsters. However, it seems that the warehouse setting plays a much bigger role.

Crucially the interior of the warehouse is very theatrical. The existence of the erect coffins and a covered hearse in the background transforms the claustrophobic space into a doomed space. Also it has an irregular shape completed with a slanted doorway. Although it should be somewhere in LA, the camera never shows outside which might give the place a certain spatial coordinates. The sense of isolation is coupled with the sense of incomprehension of the inside space. No close-ups are given to any small props in this place, either. Thus, the setting of *Reservoir Dog* resembles that of *Crocodile*. Although their locations can be assumed, they are presented as disconnected from the outside and their interiors are full of unusual props.

Up until the infamous torture scene, the camera captures most actions in the long-shot with great depth, emphasizing the relationship between characters with almost no movement. The camera frees itself when the infamous torture scene starts. Mr. Blonde sat on an abandoned hearse jumps from his perch. The camera quickly takes his point-of-view and imitates his movement. As he moves closer to the cop, the camera movement gets faster, becoming unhinged from characters' perspectives. Then, Mr. Blonde pulls out his gun and aims to the cop and we can see the struggle

of the cop to escape the line of fire. Interestingly at this point, the camera stops movement and catches both of them with a long-shot. This long-shot is quite effective because we can see an almost spasmodic body movement on the left side of screen and no movement at all on the right side. The reason that this shot looks more violent than an actual slapping or beating scene is because of the difference of movement within a single frame.

We can see the camera movement and the movement of the character produce rhythms and vibrations. When the camera stops, the body starts to struggle; it brings about the sensation, as the sudden movement of the floating temple in *Spring* produces a rhythm and vibration. Next, we see an even more dramatic change of speed of the camera movement. The camera cuts to a close-up of Mr. Blonde's boot as he takes out a razor. Until he actually cuts the cop's ear, the camera repeats the same movement as before. However, in that exact moment of cutting, the camera pans away from the torture scene to the shot of alley and stands still, until Mr. Blonde finishes his job. Audiences can still hear the muffled cries of pain. This shot is without a doubt much more effective than showing every action, because audiences experience a sudden change of movement and a sudden switch of sense from the visual to the aural. The movement is arrested and the affect of pain lingers.

The gangsters are powerless to leave, and no one has the decisive power to change their situation. The cop tied to the chair and being tortured cannot move, either. The result is the strong mimetic connection between the cinematic body of Mr. Orange and the body of the viewer. The temporal structure in which Orange is

imprisoned with no escape except death is the same as that of the viewer. The shock of images is transferred directly to the viewer's nerve system, because the viewer does not have necessary information to understand the situation. The identity of cop is not revealed yet, and the violence is gratuitous. The sudden random eruptions of violence which even the gangsters cannot control result in the powerlessness which an audience has to feel being tied in his chair. These attempts make the viewer's body act through an involuntary impulse and give it a shock.

This shock is, however, not the shock coming from a forced identification as in *The Passion*. In the way this film sets itself up, there is no one to identify with, much as in the case of Kim Ki-duk's films. The viewer can identify with neither the victimizer nor the victim, and is thus put in the position of the disaffected observers. Violence is not necessarily tied with narrative; it neither advances, nor delays narrative. The torture scene becomes a stand alone, song and dance spectacle of musical.

The sensation of watching a brutal torture in a warehouse of any-space-whatever, coupled with a fragmented plot animates a particular kind of cinematic affect. While the identification is not possible, the body of viewer mimics the actions on screen. As Deleuze argues, the affect is created through physiological response without narrative structure to qualify them.

Still *Reservoir Dogs* differs from Kim's films, because the unknown identity becomes an important narrative device of the film, as the story advances itself to find out who the undercover cop is. The neat ending in which everybody is effectively killed does not leave any room for becomings, either. Thus affect and

sensation wane quickly before they invoke the powerlessness of the sublime, or force us to think.

4. *Fight Club*

While Kim Ki-duk's films have been criticized as misogynistic, David Fincher's *Fight Club* (1999) has been condemned by many as an excessive display of masculinity. In *Newsweek*, under the title, "It's *Thelma & Louise* for Guys," Susan Faludi compares David Fincher's *Fight Club* (1999) to Ridley Scott's *Thelma & Louise*; as *Thelma & Louise* crystallized the common experience and pain of women, *Fight Club* does that for men. She concludes "beneath the violent surface of the controversial film *Fight Club* is a surprising message about how to be a man today" (Faludi 89). Faludi notices the frustration of modern males behind the bare-knuckled fighting; nowadays men are trapped in a cubicle in an anonymous corporate job, trying to scrape together an identity from Ikea brochures, entertainment magazines, self-help gatherings and, most of all, "fatherless". *Fight Club* exploits much of its tormented male characters' sense of abandonment. Tyler Durden (Brad Pitt) says in the film, "We're a generation of men raised by women... We are God's unwanted children." The male species is on the verge of extinction. Understandably, the main story evolves around the underground boxing club that desires the revival of "lost" masculinity.

Masculinity is, without a doubt, the most visible issue in *Fight Club*: the sign of "Remaining Men Together" at the entrance of testicular cancer self-help

group meeting, Bob (who has big breasts) sobbing “We’re still men,” the gory depiction of underground boxing scene in which half naked guys fist-fight each other, the ubiquitous billboard images of sexy males in underwear, and to the final single frame insert of penis. Subsequently, masculinity has been almost a unanimous choice of topic among film critics of the film. However, the issue of masculinity guides many film critics to be disgusted by the disturbing sign, signaling the evolution of a previously unseen cinematic articulation of masculinity, which is, to them, dangerously close to *fascism*. Particularly, the transformation of “fight club” into “project mayhem” worries many film critics. By recourse to Deleuze and Guattari’s terminologies, Diken and Laustsen deplore how fight Club “functions as *a line of flight* from the stratified society... Yet, in spite of a deterritorializing start, Fight Club ends up transforming into a fascist organization with a new name: Project Mayhem” (Diken).

In “Fascinating Fascism,” Susan Sontag identifies several characteristics of works of artists who embraced fascism. Firstly, fascist aesthetics valorizes two contradictory states, “egomania” and “servitude.” The relation of domination and enslavement takes the form of a characteristic pageantry: the massing of groups of people: the turning of people into things: the multiplication of things and grouping of people/things around an all-powerful, hypnotic leader figure or force. Secondly, the fascist dramaturgy centers on the orgiastic transaction between mighty forces and their puppets and its choreography alternates between ceaseless motion and a congealed, static, and “virile” posing. Also fascist art glorifies surrender, it exalts mindlessness, and it glamorizes death (Sontag 39-40).

Fight Club, in fact, fits well with these characterizations of fascist works. Tyler recruits people and turns them into de-individualized parts for his project. Tyler is obviously the powerful and mystic figure; he and his army constitute a strong dominant/dominated relationship. Furthermore, to be a part of Tyler's army, "Fight Club" members should pass the "stay-still test" and endure the humiliation before the induction. They do glorify the death of one of their members; they hypnotically recite, "His name is Robert Paulson, his name is Robert Paulson...."

Not every film critic, however, finds the political message of *Fight Club* dangerous. In case of Amy Taubin, the narrative conclusion of *Fight Club* to some extent alleviates her worries. The image of the bombing of financial corporate headquarters is, for her, enough evidence to prove the tragic consequence of fascistic masculinity, though she does not give us the reason why the ending works as a self-criticism of film. The ending is the culmination of "project mayhem" which Tyler (Jack's doppelganger) designs and performs, while Jack (Edward Norton) tries to stop the explosion in vain. In the scene, Jack is triumphant by killing his double but at the same time has to face the consequence that his double has successfully orchestrated. Perhaps the bombing does criticize the film's own fascistic tendencies. What happens, however, if we shift our focus away from a discussion of the significance of the film's narrative conclusion?

Whether it is a self-criticism or not, it is important to note that the significance of the film's narrative conclusion has been overrated. The moments that are remembered, the images that audiences may take from the cinematic experience, cannot be simply summed up within the terms of this or other moments

of conventional narrative resolution. For example, the usual final punishment of the *femme fatale* in *film noir* has a less lasting effect on the audience than the genre's extraordinary strong and seductive female image. Likewise, we arguably remember the spectacular scenes of surfing and skydiving of Patrick Swayze and his buddies in Kathryn Bigelow's *Point Break* (1991), much more so that what happens to the film's characters.

In the history of film criticism, the association of masculinity with fascism is not new. Yvonne Tasker makes an argument that suggests how the 80s' disciplined male bodies in violent action films have generated the anxiety of fascism "through their implicit invocation of fascist idealization of the white male body" (Tasker 1). The important point to note here is that the idealization comes through the *disciplined* body rather than the violence and power that the action hero exerts.

In contrast to the images of anarchic violence that have critically accompanies muscular movies, it is, in fact, the values of self-control rather than chaos, and the practices of training and discipline which are extolled as central terms in the definition of bodybuilding and in the image of the muscleman hero of 1980s cinema. (Tasker 9)

At first glance, *Fight Club* seems to be an another example of "muscular movies," – half naked male bodies under the dimly lit basement light, the mixture of bloody violence and muscle, homoerotic solidarity, and de-individualized males restrained under a fraternity-like organization – whose images film critics have consciously

and unconsciously associated with those of fascism. As the 80s' film critics found fascism in the *disciplined* male body, the late 90s' film critics seem to find the same in *Fight Club*.

However I suspect that the accusation of *Fight Club* as a fascist film actually speaks how film critics seem to have a certain anxiety about this film, similar to Korean feminist film critics have about Kim's films and their seemingly misogynistic images. In Kim's films, female characters are victims of physical and sexual abuses. However, it is not because they are women caught in a sexual imbalance, gender hierarchy or misogyny. Although they often enter the filmic space as socially and conventionally stratified subjects, they soon undergo the event of becoming-other. In the process of various becomings, they often resort to their bodies and pain to communicate. If they resemble victims, that is simply the stratified reification of their weak intensity, just like the many animals in Kim's films who become victims of violence from men, women and even children. The violence is simply how two bodies affect each other and are affected by each other on the plane of consistency, because their collisions happen on the molecular plane rather than on the genderized stratified plane. In fact, *Fight Club* spends most of its time trying to crack open the plane of organization, which is symbolized first and foremost in the film as a ubiquitous consumer culture.

I am not closing off the possibility that *Fight Club* might be understood by some as a fascist film and that it might bring detrimental effects to the society. However, if finding the female subservience everywhere can result in simply

reaffirming the already existing structure, looking at the masculine body as always the fascist body might bring the same result.

Fight Club does display bodies insistently and obsessively. However, the images of bodies in *Fight Club* are far from being the transparent signifiers of a simplistic sexual, racial and class hierarchy that some critics take them to be. *Fight Club* presents those bodies in their multiplicity but in an unsparingly visceral way. It shows the body in its crude, primordial materiality; it denies the myth of textual or signifying autonomy; it turns the signification back into the physiological and affective conditions. This is what makes the film so disturbing. What is even more disturbing is the fact that bodies arise in *Fight Club* through physical pain. Pain is the invitation to corporeality and it is the story of the body.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault vividly describes pre-modern public punishment in which the power structures were maintained and reinforced by the display of corporeal punishment. Through the visual display of punishment, the state could manifest the control of both body and soul of the people, while the body became the surface on which social control was played out, on which power was invested and maintained. However the scars, wounds, cuts and chemical burns in *Fight Club* are not a return to the pre-modern form of inscription of power. Rather, they are affects, which resist the plane of organization and which disturb our complacency to meaning.

Jack is big auto company “recall coordinator.” Working in an office and flying through different time zones, he almost loses a sense of time and space. Understandably, he develops insomnia. Living in-between sleep and wake, he buys

things from catalogue, most notably from “Ikea.” Being repulsed by the corporate take-over of culture, he speaks, at the same time, into a phone sitting on the toilet, “Yes, I’d like to order the Erica Pekkary dust ruffles.” Jack explains to himself through voice-over narration: “I would flip through catalogs and wonder, ‘what kind of dinning set defines me as a person?’ We used to read pornography. Now it is the Horchow Collection.” Consumerism is the defining lifestyle in Jack’s world. However, satisfaction never comes closer. Tyler angrily declares, “We have been raised by television to believe that we will be millionaires and movie gods and rock stars – but we won’t... And we’re very, very pissed off.” Jack is a victim of the dehumanizing and desensitizing power of contemporary society in which identity is shaped by consumer culture.

In the computer generated scene that Jack orders things and, at the same time, those goods immediately fill the room, the room transforms itself into the printed Ikea catalogue while Jack is floating through the room. By blending with the advertisement image, Jack becomes a part of consumer culture; the hyperreal spectacular consumer culture consumes him. However, it also suggests this total immersion into consumer culture allows him to connect with his belongings in unforeseen way. He is not the owner of his belongings, but he is a part of it. In other words, he retreats to the molecular level losing his subjectivity. Jack makes himself into the Deleuzian Body without Organs (BwO).⁵⁴ In the preceding chapter, I used

⁵⁴ The Body without Organs is one of the key concepts introduced by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* (particularly in the sixth Plateau “November 28, 1947: How Do You Make Yourself a Body without Organs?”). Considering one of the main concepts of BwO is its reference to “egg” (egg as an “intensive multiplicity”), we may trace BwO to *Bergsonism* (1968),

the term “plane of consistency” instead of BwOs, because in *Spring* various becomings result from various elements including animals, a temple, and human-beings, which make connection as heterogeneous haecceities. However *Fight Club* puts the bodies at the spot light that compose the plane. Deleuze and Guattari, in fact, treat BwO and the plane of consistency same thing, although they often say as if BwO belong to the plane of consistency.

Deleuze and Guattari’s term “the Body without Organs” is somewhat misleading. The “body” in BwO does not necessarily refer to the actual body, nor does “without Organs” entail the removal of organs. The BwO does not necessarily mean that we have to create bodies that no longer have any organs at all. Probably the better name is The Body without an Organism. Considering BwO’s reference to

which equates “becoming” with “multiplicity.” If we consider the opposition between a plane of organization (a structure of organs developed in an overdetermined evolution) and a plane of composition (which goes beyond organs to pure materials that enter into various combinations), then we find the seed of BwO in *Difference and Repetition* (1969). Thus we may safely say that the idea of BwO is one of those ideas Deleuze has continuously developed throughout his *oeuvres*. However, it was in *The Logic of Sense* where that idea of BwO finds its expression thanks to Antonin Artaud. “November 28, 1947” in “November 28, 1947: How Do You Make Yourself a Body without Organs?” is the date Antonin Artaud’s radio play “To Have Done with the Judgment of God” was commissioned for French Radio. It was scheduled to air on February 2, 1948, but was cancelled by the director of French Radio, due to its scatological, vicious and obscene anti-American and anti-Catholic pronouncements. The radio play which Artaud wrote after a long stay in psychiatric institutions is close to a rave from schizophrenia. Although it is almost incomprehensible, there are several segments which might have interested Deleuze. At first Artaud makes a dubious claim saying American children have to deposit their sperm before they enter into public education to produce armies when it is necessary. Whether it is true or not in the 1940s’ US, what makes Artaud grunt is the implication that human body can be made for already determined purpose. Deleuze cannot agree more with him, whose idea of the body is based upon Spinoza’s idea of body – “we don’t know what the body is capable of”.

the body, we may consider BwO akin to the Spinozian body which challenges or resists fixed identities. BwO does not oppose the organs but rather opposes the limits of the organism and makes multiple connections that go beyond the organism's organization as it is traditionally defined. *Fight Club* is about making a body without organs through pain and doing a deterritorialization of subject. On the other hand, it fills the plane of consistency with schizophrenic desire, which is the condition of becomings.

Pain is paradoxical. Pain destroys the self in its sheer aversiveness. The annihilating power of pain is visible in "dying and death" or in "serious pain" where "the claims of the body utterly nullify the claims of the world" (Scarry 33). However, at the same time pain affirms the existence of the self by intensifying existence. In a day when many would dissolve the self without residue into historical and social relations, the inescapable quality of pain reveals that subject is burdened with its being. It does indicate the materiality of existence, a materiality that is not accidental to the self and that is not comprehensible in terms of an opposition of the self to the body. Therefore pain is the general condition of being alive, a state of sensation, a sensual monitoring of the body, a care or awareness of its health and its status, an attention to what are sometimes known as "raw feelings". However it does not mean pain reclaims the subject through its affirmation of flesh. Rather it is a pure affect which resists subjectification.

Pain first comes to Jack as the lost senses of space and time. In insomnia, Jack feels nothing real; everything seems distant and far away; the world nullifies itself in his pain. In front of the burned car in which the fat of the victim is burned

to the seat, one inspector says, “[it is] very modern art.” While Jack is sympathetic neither to the disturbing wreckage nor to the even more disturbing comment, he feels nothing. Everything is like “a copy of a copy of a copy”. While everything lacks reality, pain is the only sign that marks his existence, however uncertain it may be.

The uncertainty of Jack's pain is because it is only his own. Pain has perplexed many philosophers and others alike due to its inexpressibility. While pain exists as a sheer certainty to the one who is under extreme pain, its existence is elusive to others who must confirm the pain that one is experiencing. In *Cries and Whispers* (1972), director Ingmar Bergman tells the stories about a dying woman, Agnes, who is under extreme pain, and her two sisters and a maid. While the constant screaming and mourning suggest the existence of extreme pain, actually experiencing others' pain is an utter impossibility. For the observers, the only way to relate Agnes's pain is to recall the most painful memories of their own. The film alternates between the “cries” of present pain and the “whispers” of past pain – the observers, in turn, have their own flashback sequence which starts with a close up of a face and inaudible whispering. As in Bergman's film, Jack's pain is unknown; the doctor does not recognize his pain and refuses to give him a sleeping pill. Instead his doctor suggests, “Do you want to know what real pain is? Swing by First Methodist Tuesday nights.” The self-help group meeting, which Jack's doctor recommends him to check out, is notably a testicular cancer group – a group of males whose hormones physically altered their bodies into unmanly shapes. This support group among others is particularly significant because pain is here

externalized onto the body and the externalization adds more pain on already unbearable pain.

The exposed pain of others puts Jack's own pain off-guard. His pain is not something which needs regulation and needs to be hidden, but it is something to be shown. It becomes clear that the only way that Jack can regain a sense of individuality is by pulling the primeval and barbaric instincts of pain and violence out of his imaginary cave. Jack not only reveals his pain but also actively makes it. One day Tyler asks Jack to hit him as hard as possible. Jack hits him and Tyler returns the favor. After repetitive fights, fighting becomes an addiction. They are exhilarated by violence and they discover through fight, the corporeality of their existence that consumer culture disguised. Broken teeth, bruises, chemical burns and bullet hole are not symbolic cuts, as psychoanalysis might suggest. Rather they are cracks of the social stratification and the hyper reality dominating our society. The stunning "brain ride" credit sequence opens with the sweeping movement of camera from molecular images of inner organ to the mouth of Jack, might be read as a journey from a molar subject to molecular one.

The world which "Fight Club" fights against is a postmodern world, in which, as is often understood, simulacra devours reality. However, this overpowering of simulacra does not mean a total annihilation of reality. As Deleuze and Guattari (1983) suggest, simulacra disqualifies both the original and the copy: "It carries the real beyond its principle to the point where it is effectively produced" (Deleuze and Guattari Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia 87). *Fight Club*

produces precisely this real through the production of Tyler, who is a manic vision of schizophrenic but nonetheless undermines the existence of Jack.

A doppelganger is symbolic personification of Kant's idea that there are two wills or selves in Man – the phenomenal and noumenal self. In literature, it is understood as a motif that represents the faces of good and evil within a single individual as objectified in two characters at war with each other. Dr. Jeckyl and Mr. Hyde, the most well-known doppelganger, represent Jean-Jacques Rousseau's fundamental antithesis between Society and Man, where Man is alienated from his original nature and prevented from being his real self by the artificial uniformity that Society imposes. However, Jack and Tyler are not Dr. Jeckyl and Mr. Hyde in spite of their playful names – Jack/Jeckyl and Tyler/Hyde. While Dr. Jeckyl and Mr. Hyde is the result of a conflict between the ego and its *id*, and therefore are two separate individual subjects, Jack and Tyler presents themselves as an identical subject, which locates their difference in a sub-human, sub-individual level. Therefore, while the Jackyl/Hyde pair signifies the antithesis between society and nature, the Jack/Tyler dichotomy portrays a connection, a becoming in Deleuzian sense.

Once Jack produces Tyler, Jack himself is produced again through Tyler. The more Tyler becomes the Body without Organs, the more Jack becomes an organ-machine. While desiring-machines connect with other desiring-machines in a connective synthesis, there is a disjunctive synthesis which is the body without organs. The desiring-machines and the BwO coexist as two separate yet interrelated constituents of the psychic process of repulsion and attraction, antiproduction and

production, deterritorialization and reterritorialization, that extends beyond the individual and into the social world.

The BwO theory maintains that there is an ideal to which all human beings continually aspire, whether consciously or not. This ideal is the psychic state in which we experience ourselves as nothing other than a deterritorialized, antiproductive, and uninterrupted continuum of excitant desire: there is no production; there is only the electric fervor of desire. Simply put, all human beings wish to become a body without organs. The BwO is what remains when you take everything away. (Deleuze and Guattari A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia 151)

The Body Without Organs (BwO), it must be affirmed, “is not at all the opposite of the organs. The organs are not its enemies. The enemy is the organism. The BwO is opposed not to the organs but to that organization of the organs called organism” (158). Sitting beside Tyler, Jack reads out loud an article written by Organs in the first person narration. Increasingly, we see Jack refer to himself as various organs; “I am Jack’s medulla oblongata, I am Jack's colon, I'm Jack's kinky shadow...etc.”

The beauty of *Fight Club* comes from its refusal to refer back to some authentic original. The human figures portrayed as Jack/Tyler are all the more thoroughly “deoriginated.” Their radical ambiguity precedes and ruins any split between being and representation, any opposition between phenomenal presence and linguistic signification. Jack/Tyler represents the subject work-in-progress,

undergoing the continuous variation of becoming-other. It is therefore both nomadic (without home or refuge) and rhizomatic (without roots or anchorage).

Lines of flight cause the machinic production of human subjects to pass from paranoiac fragmentation to schizophrenic fractalization: nothing but movement, nothing but flux. They carry the ossified flows held within subject into open context of the entire real-history-of-the world, strangling arborescent hierarchies and instituting involuted rhizomes as they go: complication, experimentation, invention, singularity, alterity.

Considering the fate of the subject in contemporary discourses associated with the advent of poststructuralism and postmodernism, the subject is clearly dead. However, it is important to remember that the funeral of the subject is for certain types of subject, such as an immortal, ahistorical, incorporeal, universal, and abstract one. Outside of this long obituary lies the subject that is bound within and pinned down by a plethora of social apparatuses.

The theoretical dilemma of film representation, in which representation means the absence of the represented, has generated one of the fundamental questions of film studies. Deleuze's answer is "But, if cinema does not give us the presence of the body and cannot give us it, this is perhaps also because it sets itself a different objective... it affects the visible with a fundamental disturbance, and the world with a suspension, which contradicts all natural perception." Of course, the different objective means "producing" rather than "representing". The absent body is an opportunity rather than shortcoming, particularly when there is no body to represent. In *Cinema 2: Time-Image*, Deleuze characterizes the modern political

cinema as “the people are missing”. For classical cinema “the people are there, even though they are oppressed, tricked, subject, even though blind or unconscious” (216). Despite the rise of Hitler who subjected the masses subjected, and despite of Stalinism which replaced peoples with the tyrannical unity of a party, people were already there with the hope of revolution and democracy and with the hope to be a true subject. However, the people no longer or do not yet exist. Therefore modern and postmodern political cinemas bestow themselves a new task – to find or to make people.

Art, and especially cinematographic art, must take part in this task: not that of addressing a people, which is presupposed already there, but of contributing to the invention of a people. (217)

In the context of Deleuze and Guattari's texts, the invention of the schizophrenic tendency is the revolutionary tendency of capitalism. They are keen to stress, however, that it is not a case of identifying the revolutionary with the schizo, even if, in the course of their exposition, this is what they appear to be doing. They say, "this would be a bad reading, and we don't know which is better, a bad reading or no reading at all" (379). However what else can it be? Like their cautious warning, there is no guarantee of revolutionary-schizophrenia. At least we can find in Jack both deterritorialization and antiproduction, (and even destruction). Deleuze says,

Destroy, destroy. The task of schizoanalysis goes by way of destruction - a whole scouring of the unconscious, a complete curettage... Destroying beliefs and representations, theatrical scenes. And when engaged in this task no activity will be too malevolent. (Deleuze and Guattari Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia 311)

“Project Mayhem” is the turning point of “Fight Club.” Regaining the sense of the body allows them to look at the outside world from their own point of view, as schizophrenia looks at the world from its own point of view (“Doubtless each organ machine interprets the entire world from the perspective of its own flux, from the point of view of the energy that flows from it” (6).) Project Mayhem starts with harmless random fight with people on the street with the purpose to lose. Soon, Project Mayhem evolves into a Situationist guerrilla network. As the 1960s’ Situationists warned us not to make new image but to plagiarize already existing spectacles in order to undermine them, “Project Mayhem” destroys the postmodern image culture. They erase the security device of video store, break satellite dishes, bomb computer display-window. They destroy corporate art, change the meaning of billboard by altering letters, threaten city officials and ultimately bombs corporate office-structure in order to undermine the economic foundations of credit-card consumer society.

The obvious omission in our discussion *Fight Club* so far is the fact that *Fight Club* is presented mostly through the eyes of a schizophrenic narrator. *Fight*

Club plays with the idea of an “unreliable narrator.”⁵⁵ While most narrators in film, by convention, supply audience with most credible information and moral criteria, the narrator of *Fight Club* deceives audience until the last minutes. When film adapts the first person narrator as a prime vehicle of advancing its narrative, it is inevitable to expect a certain degree of distortion of information. However, sometimes this distortion goes beyond subjective opinion, experience, or personal bias. Like *The Sixth Sense*, *Fight Club* fools its audience for most of the time. Only when the character Jack realizes that he and Tyler are the same person, does the audience realize that the whole story has been delivered through the eyes of a schizophrenic narrator. In this sense, *Fight Club* forces audience to experience schizophrenia, or more precisely to be schizophrenic. According to Deleuze and Guattari, we *are* schizophrenics, though it is often hard to accept. Interestingly enough, in film history, this device has been associated with fascism. Robert Wiene's 1919 film, *The Cabinet of Dr. Calligari* is the prime example.

The Cabinet of Dr. Calligari has been a representative work of German Expressionism of early part of the twentieth century. As a part of modernist avant-garde movements, it emphasizes the highly psychologized narrative, and abstract but elaborate set design; it creates grotesquely distorted spaces, tilting houses, misshapen furniture. Later it turns out that the unrealistic setting is the vision of madman, who happens to be a narrator. Once the narrative reaches its point of revelation, the *mise-en-scene* changes into a “relatively realistic” form. However,

⁵⁵ The term, “unreliable narrator” (a teller whose evaluations and reports are not endorsed by the implied author) is coined by Wayne Booth. Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961). See pp 71 - 75.

The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari cannot be discussed without considering the authoritative interpretation of Siegfried Kracauer. In his earlier work, *From Caligari to Hitler* (1947), a study of the German cinema from 1919 to 1933, Kracauer traces the decline of German political cultures as reflected in the history of its cinema. From the tradition of realist aesthetics, Kracauer insists that it is the clear obligation and the special privilege of film to record and reveal, and thereby redeem, physical reality. By representing its story as a tale told by a madman, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* reflects the general retreat from the facts of German life as well as the abuse of power and authority characteristic of the German political institution. The total organization of Caligari's landscapes within studio walls, its scenery of the soul, reveals how the German cinema turns away from a reality which is haphazard, incalculable, and uncontrollable. In doing so, says Kracauer, German cinema helped prepare the way for Hitler's rise by subtly diverting the audience from a serious appraisal of social realities. By ignoring the claims of camera reality, according to Kracauer, the German cinema achieved the damnation, not the redemption, of German life. However, beside the use of an "unreliable narrator," it is difficult to make a case that *The Cabinet* and *Fight Club* share anything in common. Rather Susan Sontag's descriptions of aestheticization of the body in fascist arts highlight the difference between them.

Fascist art... is based on a utopian morality. Fascist art displays a utopian aesthetics – that of physical perfection. Painters and sculptors under the Nazis often depicted the nude, but they were forbidden to show any bodily

imperfections. Their nudes look like pictures in male health magazines: pinups which are both sanctimoniously asexual and (in a technical sense) pornographic, for they have the perfection of a fantasy. (40)

If, as Sontag suggests, fascist aesthetics emphasizes the ideal body, then, the aesthetics of *Fight Club* is quite the opposite of it. Rather than representing the immaculate perfect body, it engages a variety of bodily cuts, scars, and mutilation. The crude association of *Fight Club* and fascism is preemptive. It is not the “Fight Club” that reeks of fascism; it is the middle-urban-office-class commodity culture that is closely associated with the ego’s flight from coherence. Sontag admits that Riefenstahl’s pro-Nazi films are still effective in spite of its now well-documented complications with Nazism. It is because, according to her, their longing is still felt and because their content is a romantic ideal to which many continue to be attached. In this sense, *Fight Club* might be read as a direct critique of the longing itself rather than perpetuating it. It is not a Kracauerian flight from fascism, but a Deleuzian flight with the cultural industry of the Frankfurt School. *Fight Club* might best be understood as post-fascist, a rejoinder to fascism through psychosis, the response of a postmodern subject to the aestheticization of politics, which might actually be the ongoing impact of late capitalism on subjectivity.

5. Conclusion

Deleuze cautions that it would be a mistake to think that the painter works on an empty canvas. Rather, that surface “is already invested virtually with all kinds

of clichés, which the painter will have to break with” (11). For Deleuze, the role of art is to short-circuit our everyday perception and affection, and to draw our attention to what he calls “intensities.” For film, the task of setting itself free from figuration has proven to be more daunting, because, unlike modern abstract paintings, film images are mostly mechanical reproductions of the real. For both filmmakers and viewers, there is a danger to fall prey to “common sense” and “good sense” which tend to identify and recognize film images as their referents and meanings.

Deleuze’s warning is particularly palpable for the films of Kim Ki-duk because his films have been routinely understood through the conventional conceptual tools of narrative, symbolization, representation, and signification. Thus, his violent images are quickly interpreted as immoral male violence against women and effectively close off any further discussion. Thinking with the logic of sensation allows us to look at the flows of materials, forces, sensations and affects away from our usual edifice of subject and narrative.

The same argument can be made for a few “violent” films of Hollywood. While many violent films remains as “sensational” as Deleuze worries, David Fincher’s *Fight Club* effectively foregrounds the body in pain, retaining both the affect and sensation coming from the invisible forces. Just as the molecularity of the male characters of Kim Ki-duk problematizes the male centered narrative of contemporary Korean cinema, the bodies in *Fight Club* suggest the possibility of putting the discourse back into the body in a postmodern society which has increasingly become “a bad cinema.”

Filmography of Kim Ki-duk

1. [Soom](#) (2007)
... aka Breath (International: English Title)
2. [Shi gan](#) (2006)
... aka Time (International: English title)
3. [Hwal](#) (2005)
... aka The Bow (USA: festival title)
4. [Bin-jip](#) (2004)
... aka 3-Iron (Canada: English title) (International: English title)
5. [Samaria](#) (2004)
... aka Samaritan Girl (International: English title)
6. [Bom yeoreum gaeul gyeoul geurigo bom](#) (2003)
... aka Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring (International: English title)
7. [Hae anseon](#) (2002)
... aka The Coast Guard (International: English title)
8. [Nabbeun namja](#) (2001)
... aka Bad Guy (International: English title: literal title)
9. [Suchwiin bulmyeong](#) (2001)
... aka Address Unknown (International: English title)
10. [Seom](#) (2000)
... aka The Isle (International: English title)
11. [Shilje sanghwang](#) (2000)
... aka Real Fiction (International: English title)
12. [Paran daemun](#) (1998)
... aka The Birdcage Inn
13. [Yasaeng dongmul bohogyueog](#) (1996)
... aka Wild Animals
14. [Ag-o](#) (1996)
... aka Crocodile (literal English title)

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