

DMZ Crossing

North Korean Society

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DMZ as “forbidden line”

- Contacts between North and South Koreans is strictly forbidden except for official channels
 - South Korean National Security Law makes unauthorized contacts with North illegal
 - For separated families: no mail service, no phone calls, cannot meet except through rare official meetings under Red Cross auspices
- Paradox
 - Both North and South emphasize the homogeneity of the Korean ethnic nation (minjok ũi tongjilsŏng) yet strictly control contact between north and south
 - The state control of family contacts reveals anxiety about real differences

Who is able to cross the border?

- Separated family members in limited times and places carefully monitored by each side
- Defectors in both directions (though mostly from the north these days)
- Political activists trying to make a point (from the south only)
- South Korean tourists to Geumgang Mountains (1998-2008) and workers in Kaeseong (2002-2016)
- Government representatives of both sides
- (spies—kanch'ŏp—who figure in the South Korean imaginary)

Why patrol the border?

- Border control signifies the sovereignty of the state, and crossing it is a high stakes performative act
- Why is crossing the border so fraught with meaning?
 - Paik Nak-chung (백낙청) calls the two mutually hostile states on the Korean Peninsula a “division system”
 - Among the same people united by family and history affiliation is defined by what you oppose (communism in the south, imperialism and capitalism in the north)
 - Consequences of crossing might include ideological reorientation and re-territorialization

What makes crossing a performance?

- Border crossers act out enduring dramas
 - Family separation and reunification 이산가족찾기
 - Nostalgia for lost home town 실향민
 - High stakes Cold War drama?
 - Ambiguous performance of Korean identity
 - Here the tension is between people who look and act Korean, but might actually be North or South Koreans out of place (this dichotomy seen especially in spy films) 이중간첩

“citizenship”

- Western tradition
 - Entails political rights and duties conceived as a social contract among those who belong to the community
- Korean terminology
 - North—inmin (인민) means “people” (workers, peasants, soldiers, and working intelligentsia) that, in effect, are seen as the “children” of the leaders who should paternalistically take care of them and require their loyalty
 - South (old)—kungmin (국민) “people of the country” or “dutiful nationals”
 - South (new)—simin (시민) “city dweller” or “citizen” (i.e. “rights bearing citizen”)
- Sense of oneness “uri minjokkiri” (우리 민족끼리)—emotional citizenship and DPRK web site

Social drama

- Performer and witness both emotionally affected by the crossing
- Crossing borders destabilizes the boundary between the two states
 - Border crosses thus defy the states definition of the border
- Changnang-ho hijacking (1958) (창랑호 납북 사건)
 - DC-3 flying from Kangnŭng to Pusan to Seoul hijacked near P'yŏngt'aek and taken to P'yŏngyang with 29 passengers, 2 American pilots, and 3 stewardesses
 - Five hijackers (one a North Korean agent) and 2 female sympathizers stayed North, one American Lieutenant Colonel passenger was apparently murdered, hijackers and the plane stayed north while the rest of the crew and passengers returned through P'anmunjŏm
 - Airline almost went broke as a result of the incident

Thus Flows the Han River 1958

- Yu Ch'ijin 유치진 1905-1974
 - Studied at Rikkyo University in Japan, returning to Korea in 1931 to write social realist plays about rural Korea inspired by the Irish playwright Sean O'Casey
 - After liberation he became involved in more right wing circles but was important in developing drama in the ROK
- Thus Flows the Han River 한강은 흐른다 (written 1958, but not produced until 1987)
 - Begins with Seoul after the North Korean retreat near Tongdaemun Market
 - Cheol and Huisuk (철과 희숙) lovers separated by the War when Huisuk's older brother is taken by the North Koreans and Cheol seeks Huisuk in Seoul
 - To cross the border to save his brother-in-law or not was the question, and is a precondition for successful constitution of family with his beloved

What cannot happen in real life occurs spectrally

- Huisuk's inability to form a family (=becoming whole) symbolized by her wounds
- Jeongae's husband (Huisuk's brother) returns only in a dream (on a train)
- Jeongae's husband's kidnapping North breaks Jeongae's family while Cheol's deciding not to go north prevents family being reconstituted
- Mole (Dudeojwi 두더지) loses wife crossing from the north and is also crippled
- Cleopatra and Loach (미꾸라지) get Cheol to join pick pocket business, and it is Cleopatra that declares her love for Seoul p26, but kills Huisuk when she reconciles with Cheol

Division System and the Play

- Reproductive bodies and citizenship?
- 1987 first production added epilogue when people meet later in the 1980s and are hunky-dory
- In 1980s separated lovers were often used as symbols of the divided nation
- Play subversive because it contains the message that a divided Korea cannot be whole—it destabilizes the “division system”

Ten Years 1958

- Sin Kosong (1907-?)
 - Came from Yŏngnam (as did Yu Ch'ijin) and went to Japan returning in 1930s to join the proletarian literature movement
 - Arrested and forced to recant (chŏnhyang), wrote pro-Japanese literature until liberation at which time he joined the leftists and fled north becoming a prominent writer in P'yŏngyang
 - After 1959 when many communists of southern origin were purged he stopped publishing to drop from sight after 1962
 - 1950s was before Kim Jeong Il took control of the arts and created revolutionary opera

North Korea Family 1945-1958

- Three brothers Hyeongu, Hyeonggi and Hyeoncheol (the latter of whom is the narrator and crosses into South Korea in heroic attack)
- Two landlord brothers Jaegu (allied with South Koreans) and Jaegeun
- Mixed up romances
- American soldier crosses north and kills women, but Jaegeun kills his wife when she uncovers his plot to defect

The DMZ

- Park Sang-ho (1965)
- Two south Korean genres: melodrama and anticommunist film—but this one semi-documentary
- Children crossing the DMZ from North to South to find their parents
 - Children become “brother and sister” (wholeness), but play at division system (showing how arbitrary it is)
 - Boy gets separated and murdered by North Korean fleeing south to north
 - Girl crosses bridge between life and death (cf chinogwi kut)
 - Dreams of reaching the south but clutches a skull
 - Poem p 56 compares with Sǒp’yǒnje

The Changing and the Unchanging

- Sach'olga (Sŏp'yŏnje, p'ansori)
 - 이산 저산 꽃이 피니 분명코 봄은 찾아왔건만은 세상사 쓸쓸하드러
 - 나도 어제 청춘일러니 오늘 백발한심허구나
 - 내 청춘도 날 버리고 속절없이 가버렸으니 왔다 갈 줄 아는 봄을 번려 헌들 쓸데 있느냐?
- DMZ
- The mountains and rivers are always the same
- But the Demarcation line is still dividing our land

The Fates of Geumhui (Goldie) and Eunhui (Silverie)

- 1975—twins separated when their father dies while crossing the DMZ
 - Man at gallery thinks picture of Geumhui is his lost sister Eunhui
 - Hyeonsan explains he's Geumhui's adoptive father—flashback to the DMZ in the late 1940s where an artist is crossing to the north in hopes of socialist utopia and Byeongho as South Korean fisherman sympathizes—song entrusts children to KIS
 - Man dies—Hyeonsan takes Geumhui and Byeongho takes Eunhui
- Byeongho's son defects to North Korea after killing an evil capitalist while Eunhui languishes in dance halls that won't let her leave
- Geumhui finds out about Eunhui when she reads a letter left by Byeongho

Two films mirror images

- Division of the county and division of families equated
- DMZ is the line that divides and makes wholeness impossible
- South Korean film sees future as unknowable, while North Korean film blames it on the Americans
 - Thus the South Koreans are depicted as blameless children of Kim Il Sung unable to reunite with the motherland because of the Americans

Fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 Brought Hope for Unification to Korea

- Kim Il Sung demanded the US tear down its “concrete wall” with the north (imaginary)
- South
 - Nordpolitik and recognition by the Soviet block
 - 1998-2008 Sunshine/Peace and Reconciliation Policy
- 1980s student movement
 - Resurrected left-wing thought, and brought unification to the fore

Lim Sukyung Visits North Korea

- 1989 13th World Festival of Youth and Students in P'yŏngyang
 - Lim, in defiance of South Korea's National Security Law, visited P'yŏngyang
 - Earlier visits by Hwang Sŏgyŏng and Mun Ikhwan had seemed a propaganda coup for the north and so the south had cracked down
 - Delegate of South Korea's Jeondaehyeop (전국대학생협회)—made it via Japan and Germany
- Film made of her trip, *Lim Su-kyung, the Flower of Unification* (장하다 통일꽃 림수경)

Flower of Unification

- Question: how to fit an independent young South Korean woman into the narrative of North Korea dominated by the Kim family and male heroes
 - “Korea is one! Korea is one! Away with the South Korean military dictators and the American imperialists who want to perpetuate the division!”—South Korean leftist political rhetoric and unscripted, uninhibited speech
 - Greeted by Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il at Mayday rally in T-shirt and jeans
 - Later personally met in white chŏgŏri and black ch’ima (page 76)—docile “daughter of the Revolution”, and then marched through Revolutionary sites
 - But otherwise an autonomous subject—in a country in which “the people” are imagined as children in relationship to their benevolent leaders

Lim Su-kyung Poster

Lim Su-kyung, daughter of the nation who stands tall in history

The Fatherland is One

Her participation in the P'yŏngyang Festival is something that began with eagerness to advance the unification of the fatherland.



Crossing to South Korea

- Crosses at P'anmunjŏm on July 27, 1989 (36th anniversary of the armistice)
 - Met by Catholic priest representing (정의구현전국사제단), draped in South Korean and unification flag, and blocked by US soldiers (she goes back to P'yŏngyang)
- Crosses at P'anmunjŏm again on August 15, 1989 (44th anniversary of liberation)
 - Met by Mun Ikhwan who invokes God, and says Franciscan prayer for peace
 - Film covers Lim's arrest and trial for breaking National Security Law, but forgets Mun (Lim got 3 years in prison)

Ambiguity

- Propaganda tool of the North Koreans?
- North Koreans settled in South Korea
 - Lim's liberal speech and uninhibited manners struck them as free
 - Thought 3 years prison a light sentence (given 5, served 3) to ROK less repressive than they had been taught
- Revisited North Korea in 2001 under "Sunshine" with little publicity (flew directly in and out)
- Contrast with Euna Lee who crossing the northern border illegally and was arrested

Repatriation 송황 2003

- Documentary about unconverted North Korean spies freed and allowed to move north by South Korea
- Tries to disentangle the division system, the historical and the personal
 - Filmmaker Kim Dongwon sees them as innocent (grandfathers rather than spies)
 - 멸공방첩(滅共防諜) signs in the mountains, conversion teams since 1972 (전향轉向)
 - Bodies as battlegrounds of individual conviction and state authority, but returned in 2000
 - Return blocked by families of North Korean abductees
 - Later feted in P'yŏngyang as “eternal fighters of the General, the sons of the Sun”, given young wives (recuperation of patriarchy authority)

Displaying Historical Memory

- “Inside the DMZ: An Exhibition Commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the Korean War” (War Memorial of Korea, Yongsan, Seoul)
 - Zone 1: The Korean War—6.25사변
 - KIS, Stalin, Mao and American stopping northerners coming south
 - Zone 2: The Miracle on the Han 한강 위에 기적
 - From Seoul to the World, from the World to Seoul, dynamic Korea
 - Zone 3: North Korea Today
 - Wasteland of starving vagrants and political prisoners, prison-like feeling (p 115 “objects of the people’s envy, defectors”)
 - Zone 4: Inside the DMZ
 - Montage of photos and wildlife—a nature preserve

North Korean Historical Memory

- Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Museum 조국해방전쟁승리기념관
 - Full of spoils of war demonstrating North Korea's "victory"
 - No depiction of the DMZ
 - Opens with painting of the people admiring Kim Il Sung
 - Following by exhibitions of Americans training the South Koreans, and sign demarking the 38th parallel suggesting people wanted to go north
 - Central exhibit—the Battle of Taejŏn with North Korean soldiers in the south and northerners and southerners forming a circle to admire KIS

Real Crossers

- 1998-2008 Mount Kūmgang Tourist Area
- 2004-2016 Kaesŏng Industrial Complex

South Korean Borderlands

- Imjin'gak 임진각평화누리공원
 - Located on Imjin River in P'aju where railway north passes through, and closest place Koreans can view the DMZ—site of commemoration of non-crossing
 - “trauma tourism”—trauma sacred and tourism profane? 실향민