

The Poetic Forgiveness in a Wounded World:

Lee Chang-dong's *Secret Sunshine* and *Poetry**

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〈Abstract〉

This article examines two recent films by Lee Chang-dong, *Secret Sunshine* (2007) and *Poetry* (2010), both of which constitute a distinct horizon for the Korean New Wave Cinema. Lee's films gravitate to cultural, political counter-memories and minorities in modern Korea, beginning with his early films: *To the Starry Island* (1993), *A Single Spark*(1996), *Green Fish*(1997), and *Peppermint Candy* (1999). Reflections on forgiveness, *Secret Sunshine* and *Poetry* show both continuities and discontinuities with his previous works. I consider the second film as a continuation of the first. While *Secret Sunshine* focuses on the victimized, *Poetry* invites the view to the side of the assailant. Notably,

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however, the two films speak to the same world where there is no transcendental mediator between the victimized and the victimizer, and forgiveness in the wake of histories of violence, loss, and pain should be found between secular beings. It is the world in which the public sphere appears hardly capable of bringing justice to individual conflicts thus forgiveness becomes the task of individuals. In this world, a scarred life continues without metaphysical hope for the ultimate reconciliation, that is, only with imperfect, fragile, historical compassion. However, only along with the impaired life does the search for sunshine, too, continue, which is foregrounded in the poem Mi-ja writes/reads for a girl who committed suicide by her grandson's wrongdoing, that is, a practice of becoming the other, especially becoming the victim, through poetry. Through analysis of the two films, this essay examines how "poetic forgiveness" is possible in a wounded world.

Key Words : Lee Chang-dong, Miryang, Poetry, Forgiveness, Immanent ethics, Becoming the other, Becoming the victim, Poetic forgiveness, Sovereignty

I. Who Forgives the Unforgivable?¹⁾: From the Vast Blue Sky to a Litter-strewn Ground

At the core of Lee Chang-dong's recent film *Secret Sunshine* (2007)²⁾ is the

1) This subtitle is a modified quotation from Jacques Derrida's essay *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*. Derrida argues that forgiveness is paradoxical in that pure forgiveness forgives only the unforgivable: "Forgiveness can only be possible in doing the impossible" (Derrida 32-33). *Secret Sunshine* echoes Derrida's idea of forgiveness.

2) The narrative of *Secret Sunshine* is originated from the novel *Böle iyagi* (*The Story of a Bug*), written by Yi Cheong-jun, a prominent novelist of Korea (Chong-jun).

question “Is it possible for the victim to forgive the assailant?” Parallel to his search for an answer to the question are the struggles Shin-ae (played by Jeon Do-yeon) goes through in a small town called Miryang—which literally means “secret sunshine.” After losing her husband in a car accident, she moves with her only son to the small city, actually her late husband’s hometown, due partly to her eagerness to escape from painful memories—including her husband’s infidelity as unveiled later in the film—in the bustling and distrustful life in Seoul and partly because of her hope for a new beginning in a site of old fond memories. Before long, however, she realizes through a life-shattering incident that Miryang is by no means a prelapsarian space where she can be relieved from hopelessness and find the sunshine she has been seeking: Her son is kidnapped and murdered by his own speech tutor. Her mind thus becomes overcome with despair and anger. Yet, after a while, the pendulum of her life swings to the opposite end when she finds the value of unconditional love in Christianity and the hope of redemption. Then, with the help of religious teachings, she grows devout enough to forgive her son’s murderer, which she thinks is a way of putting Christian teachings in practice and thereby reaching a redemption from secular desires. When she faces the murderer in prison and hears him claiming with a smile that he has also become a Christian and God has already forgiven his sin, she becomes so shocked that she throws up.

At that moment she realizes that forgiveness should have not been granted by the divine power. Forgiveness and being forgiven should have been enacted between the two particular singularities, the victim and the assailant, not by the transcendental entity. The prison scene thus forms a moment when Shin-ae swings back to uncontainable agony and anger. Unable to accept that the victimizer was forgiven even before the victim forgives him, she pursues revenge on God, who paradoxically annihilates her rights to actualize His

teaching, that is, God who nullifies her will and right to forgive her enemy. She questions, "If You exist, how could this world be filled with so many evil things? If You are righteous, how could I lose my sinless son?" She turns herself into a seductress to destroy His sons, church members, as her son was destroyed. She even destroys herself as an insult to God.

Some might suggest that Lee's reflection on where to find a stream of sunshine is, in the end, not without some positive reference points. The affection that Jong-chan (played by Song Gang-ho) feels for Shin-ae remains relentless to the end, even when she repeatedly fails to see his genuine compassion beyond his philistine and boorish façade and shows little attention to his sacrifice. It would not be completely misled to say that sometimes society needs some consolation from religion, that is, a belief in transcendental justice that is not necessarily an ideology of the ruler. What seems undeniable is that Lee Chang-dong's journey in search of sunshine is still incomplete.

Director refuses to provide any easy solution as evidenced in his repudiation of such narrative options as the spiritual comfort from religion and the romance maturing between Shin-ae and Jong-chan. In other words, Lee does not, or cannot, present any mediatory agency, whether transcendental like God or secular like the law, to realize justice between individuals in conflict; or he seems to insist that it is misguided to find a solution to the problem of historical injustice somewhere beyond the horizon of history. In other words, Lee calls for an *immanent ethics* to deal with the reality of historical injustices.³⁾ Quite symbolic in this respect, I think, the last scene where a variety of

3) Rather than "judging" actions and thoughts by appealing to transcendental or universal value, immanent ethics "evaluates" them by determining the mode of existence that serves as their principle. A pluralistic way of explanation by immanent modes of existence is made to replace the recourse to transcendental values. Lee's idea of the mode of existence, which is focused on agony and pain of the victim, negates any extra-worldly source. For general philosophical reflection on immanence, see Kerslake (Kerslake).

possibilities are juxtaposed without a synthetic coordination. Unlike the opening scene with the vast blue sky as a predominant image, the last sequence shows Shin-ae, having just returned from the hospital where she had stayed after a suicidal attempt, cutting her own hair, without paying any attention to Jong-chan holding the mirror next to her as if he does not exist. Her face is pale and emotionless, but underlying the expressionless face are insoluble pain and anger. Then the camera tilts down to the litter-strewn ground and captures her hair blown by the wind. And it is there that the sunshine falls silently and secretly. Defiant of a monolithic reading, however, this coexistence of different semantic strains without any synthesizing agency gives poetic power to the film.

Lee's search for historical justice is reminiscent of Walter Benjamin's observations on the Baroque paintings of 17th-century Germany: "Where as the painters of the Renaissance know how to keep their skies high, in the paintings of the baroque the cloud moves, darkly or radiantly, down towards the earth"(Benjamin 79). In other words, for the Renaissance painters, the life-governing principle was still from above, that is, the horizon of the transcendental. In the eyes of the Baroque painters, however, the transcendental perspective lost much of its weight, and their gazes were cast down to the ground, namely, the dimension of historical life. Likewise, for Lee, the transcendental vision is blocked—God with the sole authority to revenge is no longer visible and the law with the exclusive right to the use of force to settle conflicts between individuals is no longer effective. Accordingly, in search for sunshine, Lee's gaze cannot help being oriented toward the ground as the camera tilts down to the ground in the last sequence.

The immanent perspective, however, presents challenging questions. Above all, one may wonder who or which agency can bring justice to disputes between individual forces when neither God nor the law is available. Lee does not have any definitive answer; his journey to find an answer remains an

unfinished one. Jong-chan's companionship with Shin-ae may be interpreted as conveying some expectations for an emergence of a new communal life. Still, the question with which both Shin-ae and Lee struggle cannot be solved or nullified by Jong-chan's sacrifice; the insoluble awkwardness of the relationship between Shin-ae and Jong-chan is a sign of Shin-ae's ultimate solitude ensuing from both the inability to find a historically viable way of realizing justice and the refusal to rely on something like slave morality that turns the unobtainable into the valueless or the nightmare of this world.

Intimately tied to the question of justice—or perhaps more fundamental—is the question of salvation. In pursuit of ultimate justice, Shin-ae chooses forgiving over the law. The ethical implication of forgiving indeed extends far beyond the horizon of the law. It can give her what the law can never give her: a sense of salvation from the wounded and resentful life. Forgiving lifts her to a morally superior position; she is in a position “for” “giving” to someone what he or she needs, i.e., “forgiving.” Paradoxically, however, it is God who teaches the virtue of forgiveness that renders Shin-ae's act of forgiving meaningless; even before she forgives her son's murderer, God has already forgiven him for his sin. Unable to forgive or deprived of the right to do so, Shin-ae cannot gain salvation.

From this perspective, Lee's film echoes again Benjamin's notes on the redemption in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*: “Whereas the middle ages present the futility of world events and the transience of the creature as stations on the road to salvation, the German *Trauerspiel* is taken up entirely with the hopelessness of the earthly condition. Such redemption as it knows resides in the depths of this destiny itself rather than in the fulfillment of a divine plan of salvation.” (Benjamin 81) Just as, for Baroque allegorists, the very condition of redemption did not lie in a promise of a liberated future beyond the present but rather in memories of failure in the destiny of earthly life, for Lee as well,

the path for redemption is to be found in the depths of the historical reality. It is this allegorical gaze that becomes central in Poetry, which brings to further speculation questions articulated through *Secret Sunshine*.

II. How to be Forgiven: A Fragile Life, Becoming the Other, and Writing Poetry

Interestingly, the question of redemption in *Poetry* revolves around the interplay of forgetting and remembering. Mi-ja (played by Yoon Jeong-hee), the protagonist of the film, is an old woman who leads a self-created idyllic life detached from her harsh living conditions as if she were an adolescent girl with rosy dreams. It is not accidental to hear her habitually retreat to her childhood memories by saying, "When I was a child." Also noteworthy is the fact that she suffers from Alzheimer disease. This indicates, she is losing her memory, and thus linkages to the outside world as well. "If in living my life I configure it as a narrative," Paul Ricoeur writes, "I understand my life by refiguring it: 'the fragile offshoot issuing from the union of history and fiction is the assignment to an individual or community of a specific identity that we can call their narrative identity'" (Ricoeur 246). Seen from the point of view of life as a narrative, Mi-ja is approaching a point where her sense of identity through memory becomes increasingly ineffective; along with the decline of her memories, her identity is also vanishing into darkness. Besides, as an old, poor woman, she remains one of the most marginalized and unrecognizable beings; society has little memory of who she is and her life is little more than *bare life* derived from exclusion and continued under the screen of obscurity.⁴⁾

4) Without a doubt, Mi-ja's biological life as an old and poor woman with Alzheimer disease seems not to be protected by the form of socio-communal sphere that she belongs to. Indeed, she is the fragile figure of the Homo Sacer (Agamben 9). For Homo Sacer and

However, while she is forgetting and also being forgotten by the world of reality principle, she finds in poetry a door to another dimension of life. In other words, poetry becomes her means of recollecting a different world. The duality of her life, however, is far from harmonious; indeed quite challenging to the viewer is the stark dissonance between the two worlds in her life that dominates the entire film.

The duality of Mi-ja's life may be read as a critical comment on art out of touch with the social reality—an Adornian critique of art as an administered resistance in the capitalist culture. Lee, however, does not remain complacent with such a pessimistic view on art—poetry in the present context. His sarcasm for artistic establishments and literary clichés is easily noticeable: for instance, the dreary portrayals of a local poetry reading club where Mi-ja meets a group of helpless amateur poets are revelatory of Lee's satirical perspective on poetry's degradation in contemporary South Korean society. Still, the critique of poetry does not lead to a blind repudiation of poetry; it rather becomes a prerequisite for what really matters, that is, a rebirth of poetry. Noteworthy in this regard is the poetry class where poet Kim Yong-tak (played by Kim Yong-taek) poses queries on “what poetry really is and does” to his students including Mi-ja. He defines, “Writing poetry is finding beauty in everyday life. Beauty exists close to you. We all carry poetry in our heart and the poetry locked in our mind should gain its wings so that it can fly.” His romanticist conception, however, is quickly challenged or ridiculed by a remark from another poet Hwang Myong-seung (played by Hwang Byoung-seung) with whom Mi-ja becomes acquainted in her poetry reading club: “Poetry deserves to die.”

Notably, however, neither Kim's notion of poetic beauty nor Hwang's self-reflexive pessimism—both as clichés—appears relevant to Mi-ja's struggles.

its socio-political implication, see Durnataye (De la Durantaye 206-07).

As Kim teaches, she tries to find beauty in everyday objects such as a fallen petal, a crushed apricot on the ground, or even in a comb. Her will to see and live the beauty of everyday life, however, is always interrupted by the inescapable return of the real: the crime of his grandson that led to a girl's suicide. Mi-ja's life, which is supposed to be filled with poetic objects, is indeed filled with aggression, pain, hypocrisy, and distrust, and her will to accept the world through poetry is disrupted by the horrors of the real world.

Mi-ja's frustration, thus, embodies the need to reinvent the true value of the poetic, which is underscored through the strategy of the interplay between real and reel lives. The two poet characters discussed above are played not by professional actors but by real poets: Kim Yong-tak by Kim Young-taek, a veteran poet, and Hwang Myone-seung by Hwang Byong-seung, a new generation poet. Renowned in the South Korean literary scene, they are representative of distinct tendencies in Korean poetry today. While Kim is well known for lyricism, Hwang stands as a front-runner of avant-garde poetry. Kim's poems are largely based on the traditional emphasis on the harmony between nature and human life,⁵⁾ whereas Hwang's world has as a key characteristic an experimental spirit to nullify the distinction between poetry genres and the boundary between poetry and non-poetry as well, which led him to earn the name of "Miraepa"(futurism) or "NewWave" poet from his

5) One of Kim Yong-taek's best-known poems is "Sŏmjŏn Gang" (Yong-taek) In it, he described the beauty of the Sŏmjŏn River and simple lives of common people who live near the river. Some critics regard it as an exemplary work of Korean lyric poetry.

6) For more on Hwang Byong-seung's poetry, see Cho Kang-seok's criticism "Hyundaisiwa hyungsikelli mohŭm" (Kang-seok 59-80) and Hwang Hyun-san's "Wanjŏnsojung Shikoku" (Hyun-san 527-45). Especially for the naming, see Kwon, Hyeok-wung, *Miraepa: Semeŭn siwa sineŭl uilgyeŏ* (Hyuk-woong). Although this label was given to him due to his deconstructive approach to generic traditions of Korean poetry and efforts to invent new styles, it is not quite equivalent to the notion of Futurism as articulated in Marinetti's futurist manifesto. For Marinetti's definition, see Marinetti (Marinetti and Flint 39-44).

contemporary critics.⁶⁾

As in real life, the two poets on the screen also represent two distinct conceptions of poetry: romanticism and self-reflexivity. On the screen, however, they are seen from Mi-ja's standpoint, which has a *verfremdungseffekt* (distancing effect). Indeed, the focus of the film is not on the two professional poets but on the question—a simple, but fundamental one—originating from the everyday struggles of ordinary people: “How can we sing beauty when our everyday life is full of excruciating memories?” In other words, Lee urges the viewer to rethink the question of “what poetry is and does” through the life of the marginalized, such as Mi-ja, in which the more rigorously or desperately we look for ideals, the deeper we plunge into despair and darkness.

Lee's answer, as implied through Mi-ja's life, seems to be that poetry should be born from life, no matter how hard and painful it is to face it, not a pensive meditation on the beautiful or poetry itself. Mi-ja eventually writes a poem for the dead girl, a piece on her body floating on the river, not one for the beauty of the river. This may remind us of Adorno's declaration: “To write lyric poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric”(Adorno 34). Still, Lee's film marks a step forward in that it strives to answer how to write poetry or what poetry can do in an era when writing poetry can continue its existence only through relentless self-criticism.

Then, what would it mean to poeticize the life where poetry is impossible? What does Mi-ja do by dedicating the “Song of Agnes” to the girl victimized by her grandson's act of wrongdoing? Emil Staiger's note on lyric poetry provides a good starting point. For him, the essence of lyric poetry is *Erinnerung*. Although usually translated into “remembering,” the term has another meaning: “interiorizing.” It is the latter dimension that is central to

Mi-ja's poem. "Interiorizing," in Staiger's use, refers to the process by which the author and its object(s) become one. That is, through an interiorizing of the object, the barriers between inner and outer or subjective and objective are undone and they come to blend with each other (Staiger, Burkhard and Frank 80).

At the core of Mi-ja's poetry writing is, I would suggest, the act of interiorizing its object, i.e., the girl who had to take her own life and her agony. In other words, it is an act of being other than me to understand the girl and feel her pain, namely becoming the other. It is not accidental that in the last scene where Mi-ja visits the site of the girl's suicide, it becomes quite difficult, or meaningless, to determine who is reading the poem to whom; there is no clear distinction between Mi-ja and the girl, you and I, or dead and alive, and everything is drawn into a maelstrom of becoming the other and connecting with each other. Then, the scene closes with a line, "It's time to say goodbye, I will bless you," read in the dead girl's voice. Here it seems pointless to discuss who is forgiving whom, for from the perspective of becoming the other, there is no clear distinction between forgiving and being forgiven.⁷⁾

Becoming, as Ronald Bogue points out in expanding on Deleuze and Guattari, is becoming-other. Being is static and self-sufficient, while becoming requires change. Becoming is, in other words, a passage between beings or

7) "Interiorizing" in the discourse of poetic genres and "Becoming" in the Deleuzo-Guattarian context should be carefully differentiated. While "Interiorizing" emphasizes the inseparable relation of dichotomous elements such as the subject and the object or outer world and poet's inner world in the *stimmung* (poetic mood), "Becoming" highlights non-hierarchical symbiosis between heterogeneous entities. Deleuze and Guattari describe becoming as "non-symmetrical double deterritorialization" (Deleuze and Guattari 307). Despite their differences, "Interiorizing" and "Becoming" share the idea of blurring distinctive and identical entities and openness to others. For Deleuze and Guattari's notion of becoming, see Mark and Protevi (Bonta and Protevi).

states. Accordingly, the notion is defiant of binary oppositions, i.e., petrified distinctions between male and female, white and black, adult and child, human and animal, and so on (Bogue 1-20). In the present context, becoming takes place between good and evil or victim and victimizer. Mi-ja's position itself embodies the duality. As a person whose grandson is responsible for the girl's death and who joins a scheme to cover up the crime with money, she is a victimizer. At the same time, however, she is also a victim: the parents of other students who are also responsible for the girl's death abuse her naïve character for their cover-up conspiracy and she even allows her body to satisfy the lust of Mr. Kang (played by Kim Hee-ra)—an old paralyzed wealthy man she nurses—for the settlement money to protect her grandson from legal investigation. The agony she has to undergo indeed renders her status increasingly akin to that of the dead girl, which is suggested in, for instance, the strategy of sequencing her visit to the site of her suicide and the sex with Mr. Kang.⁸⁾ As a victim-victimizer, Mi-ja is what Deleuze and Guattari call a "zone of proximity," (Deleuze and Guattari 273) a space where the opposite proves to be not that opposite.

Mi-ja's "becoming the victim" is only possible in the field of aesthetics. The way in which she accesses and communicates with the dead girl is through continuously seeking the meaning of everyday objects and writing poetry. How does her writing poetry and seeking meaning pave the way for impossible forgiveness? Julia Kristeva may be a good reference for this. In her comprehensive and beautifully written book *Black Sun*, Kristeva insists that the superabundant compensation, which forgiveness yields, is available in the human capacity for creativity. Engagement with the creative process such as

8) Mi-ja is a contradictory figure in this scene. As the assailer's grandmother, she is at best the substitute of the assailer. However, in this scene, she became the victimized girl as well. This scene effectively uncovers her contradictory character in the film.

writing poetry, which Mi-ja does in this film, produces enjoyment. This enjoyment is pure excess because it does not fall into any category of *use-value* or *exchange-value*. More crucially, beyond the pleasure of creativity, Kristeva emphasizes the importance of the production of meaning (Kristeva 216). Even though Mi-ja is not good at finding the meaning of the World, writing poetry, eventually, gives meaning to Mija as the gift of forgiveness. Thus, forgiveness is mediated by creative poetic communication with the world and the victim. As Kristeva persuasively puts it, forgiveness is, indeed, “aesthetic” (Kristeva 206). We may call it “a poetic forgiveness.”⁹⁾

III. Ambivalence of Sovereign Authority: An Allegory of Judicial Justice

Still, the ethical instance cannot be the same as the legal level in practice. Indeed, *Poetry* undergoes a further complication when the legal dimension returns to the narrative structure toward the end. In an evening when things seem to have gotten back to normal, and Mi-ja plays badminton with her grandson, a detective walks over to them, who turns out to be the one from Mi-ja’s poetry reading club who offended her feelings with lewd jokes. Then he takes the place of her grandson and resumes badminton with Mi-ja. In the meantime, his associates take her grandson to a police car. Strikingly, Mi-ja continues to exchange the shuttlecock back and forth with the detective, with no emotional expression on her face.

Considering the profound disaffection toward legal establishments in Lee’s

9) I found Kelly Oliver’s discussion on forgiveness to be useful. She develops Julia Kristeva’s analysis on forgiveness (Oliver 186-94). For the refined definition and application of “poetic forgiveness” in the literary works, see Jill Scott (Scott 13-16, 147-50). For more philosophical investigation on forgiveness, see Charles Griswold (Griswold).

previous films, the image of a righteous legal authority is no doubt worth mentioning.¹⁰⁾ Could we say that Lee is reaffirming the credo that if society must be defended, it cannot be done without establishing the law? *Poetry* provides no definitive answer. Yet what is clear is that the domain of poetry cannot be confused with that of the law.¹¹⁾ Even after one reaches a horizon where poetry serves as a means to become the other and experience forgiveness, the legal distinction between victim and victimizer remains. If vengeance cannot be an answer for social justice, forgiveness is not yet an ultimate solution for social justice either; becoming the other cannot supersede the distinction between the criminal and the victim. Social justice thus requires an intervention of a mediatory agency.

The question foregrounded through Mi-ja's struggles, however, is not simply an isolated story; the vicissitude of her destiny is allegorical of social changes in South Korea. Characteristic of South Korean society in the wake of the transition from military to civilian rule in the early 1990s was, first of all, a pervasive sense that the antagonism between authoritarian rulers and civil society became no longer self-evident. In other words, the downfall of visible enemies caused it to be increasingly difficult to demarcate between the

10) Lee is interested in state-violence, ideologies, and the shade of society in Korean modern history from the beginning of his filmography. In the early 90's, he co-wrote, with director Park Kwang-su, two crucial films of the Korean New Wave: *To the Starry Island* (1993) and *A Single Spark* (1996) and then he started his career as a director with *Green Fish* (1997), which is a critique of society. His second film, *A Peppermint Candy* (1999), is a representative film dealing with an atrocious state-violence, the Gwang-ju massacre. *Oasis* (2002) deals with the minority of Korean society. Historical scars, isolated and fragile minorities, and helpless victims of the state-violence are represented in Lee's film works. It is important to note that Lee has cast doubtful gaze on the sovereignty and criticized the state-violence throughout his filmography. Considering his socio-political stance, Lee's ambivalent representation of the detective in *Poetry* is noteworthy.

11) In the terminology of Kristeva, poetry is one of crucial modes of aesthetic sublimation. Her own example of poet is Gérard de Nerval.

oppressor and the oppressed. On the other hand, new social developments often proved incapable of providing cures to traumatic effects from the past. The world seemed to have changed, but pain and frustration continued. Central to the social climate, thus, was the question of how to build a social system to deal with festering wounds from the past. The struggles of Lee's characters to find answers to violence beyond the good-evil binary are resonant with the struggles of the entire society to come to terms with the new era with unhealed wounds.

This is not to say, however, that an individual history is analogous to that of the political level. Lee's gaze is rather oriented toward small histories marginalized and obscured by official or grand narratives. Such social issues as forgiveness and justice emerge no longer from the domain of the good-evil opposition but from the dimension where the binary proves no longer necessarily legitimate. However, Lee's retreat from collective political imperatives is not a loss of political sight. His films become political not by addressing political events directly but rather by revealing the invalidity of old questions and by setting up new perspectives for the era when grand political narratives have lost their efficacy for an understanding of Korean society. Indeed, this is also what makes Lee's recent films deserve our attention as a distinct aspect of Korean New Wave.

IV. Conclusion

Lee's reflection on historical wounds hinges on three major axes: the transcendental, the historical-social, and the aesthetic. The transcendental is not simply an illusion; it is an outcome of human history. Yet when it becomes disconnected with history, it only gives us a false promise of salvation. The antinomy between the transcendental and the historical-social is not something

to be shunned away; a real redemption cannot be gained without the historical-social level. Still, the law or social system is not the ultimate horizon for justice. Above all, it has little to say about the realms beyond the good-evil distinction.

Herein lies the significance of the aesthetic; it is at the level of the aesthetic that one can come closer to forgiveness and redemption by becoming the other. As we saw earlier, the representative of the state can judge, but forgiveness has precisely nothing to do with judicial judgment. True forgiveness consists of forgiving the unforgivable (Derrida 32, 43) and this is not granted by a sovereign authority. If so, forgiveness provides over-compensation for the loss in the form of excess. It goes far beyond legal justice. In fact, "all things noble are as difficult as they are rare." However, literariness, represented by poetry in Lee's film, is the proper site for considering noble forgiveness because it is an imaginary and psychological sphere for creating the grounds on which forgiveness can take place.

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| Filmography |

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상처입은 세계, 시적 용서: 이창동 영화 『밀양』과 『시』에서의 “용서”에 관하여

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이 논문은 이창동 감독의 영화 『밀양』(2007)과 『시』(2010)를 통해 한국 뉴웨이브 영화의 새로운 지평평을 검토하는 것을 목적으로 한다. 이창동 감독의 영화는 한국 현대사회 속에서 문화적·정치적 저항기억을 형성하는데 기여해 왔다고 평가할 수 있다. 그러나 그의 최신작 『밀양』과 『시』는 기존의 한국 뉴웨이브 영화가 본격적으로 모색한 적 없었던 주제인 용서를 다룬다. 이 논문은 『밀양』과 『시』를 용서라는 주제를 연속적으로 다루는 2부작으로 파악한다. 『밀양』이 희생자의 관점에서 용서라는 문제에 천착한다면 『시』는 가해자의 관점에서 동일한 주제에 접근한다. 이 논문은 크게 세 부분으로 구성되어 있다. 첫 장에서는, 『밀양』을 중심으로, 희생자와 가해자를 중재해 줄 수 있는 어떠한 초월적 매개도 없는 세속적·역사적 세계에서 어떤 양태의 용서가 가능한지 살펴본다. 내재적 윤리의 가치와 가능성이 주요하게 다루어진다. 두번째 장에서는, 『시』를 중심으로, 연약한 주체인 주인공 미자를 통해 구현되는 용서의 구체적인 양태를 검토한다. “타자-되기”, 특히 “희생자-되기”,와 용서를 구하고 자기를 치유하는 미적 행위로서의 “시쓰기”가 논의된다. 그리고 왜 미적 영역에서 참된 용서가 가능하며 영화 『시』속에서 구현된 “시적 용서”의 구체적인 함의는 무엇인지 검토한다. 세번째 장은 『시』에서 알레고리적으로 표상된 주권적 권위와 사법적 정의의 의미를 검토하고 이를 기반으로 『밀양』과 『시』가 한국사회

의 어떤 변화를 반영하고 있는지 분석한다.

핵심어 : 이창동, 밀양, 시, 용서, 내재적 윤리, 타자-되기, 희생자-되기,
시적 용서, 주권성

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