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REPRESENTATIONS OF LANDSCAPE IN FILM:
THE (REEL) KOREAN DEMILITARIZED ZONE

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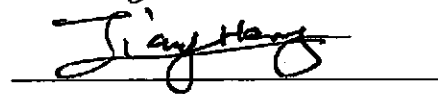
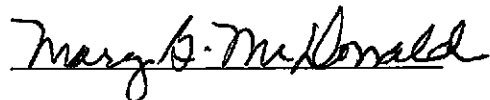


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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife, Sarah; and to our children, Abigail, Samuel, and Paul.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

President Bill Clinton labeled the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) “one of the scariest places in the world” during one of his official visits to Asia (Dudley, 2003: 18). In the age of globalization there are indeed very few places wherein a high ranking government official can stand toe-to-toe with a heavily-armed enemy of more than fifty years, a reminder for all that the Cold War literally never ended on one of its fronts. How did the buffer zone, which has fulfilled its intended purpose of preventing further significant military engagement between North and South Korea, become this “scary place” on the margin? How does Bill Clinton’s categorization and representation of the DMZ compare to other representations?

On July 27, 1953 General Mark W. Clark of the United States Army, Kim Il Sung¹ of North Korea, and Peng Teh-huai of the Chinese Volunteers signed the armistice agreement, formally ceasing all combat operations which had relentlessly devastated the Korean countryside and urban centers for three years (Fehrenbach, 1998). The truce agreement included the creation of a demilitarized zone—a swath of uninhabited territory four kilometers wide, stretching more than 243 kilometers from the west coast to the east coast (Bartz, 1972). At the center of the DMZ lies the Military Demarcation Line (MDL), perfectly preserving the actual line of contact between opposing forces when the

¹ Korean names generally contain three syllables. The first syllable is the family name, and the two remaining syllables comprise the given name. Many times in English language documents, Korean names are written with the given name first and the family name last according to Western style. Additionally, Korean names often appear with a hyphen between the two given name syllables when they are romanized. For clarity and consistency, this thesis will list all Korean names in Korean style, such that the first syllable will always be the family name. Furthermore, the names will be listed without a hyphen between the final two syllables.

cease-fire was signed (ibid.). The MDL is marked by 1,292 rusty yellow signs mounted on poles, each sign clearly visible from the next. No marker is more than 500 meters from its closest neighbor, and in some cases (where the MDL curves) the signs are only separated by 300 meters (Lee, 2001). Today, just as the first day they were erected in 1953, a series of barbed-wire fences mark the outer edges of the DMZ (figure 1-1). In total, more than a million and a half soldiers still stand guard on both sides of the Korean Demilitarized Zone.



Figure 1-1. The southern boundary of the DMZ

(Source: <http://www.indiana.edu/~ealc100/Group15/dmz.jpg>, accessed March 18, 2008)

Much more than an artificial border etched into the landscape by conflict, the DMZ is a complex, unique space which has gone largely unexplored (literally and conceptually) since its construction. What is the nature of this space delineated first on pen and paper, and since reproduced by fences and mines? A physical description of the landscape (commonly found in books on the geography of Korea) fails to capture the underlying meanings of the buffer zone created at the end of the Korean War. My

analysis of contrasting perspectives of the DMZ presented in movies from the United States of America and South Korea will examine the cinematic image(s) of this final front of the Cold War.

The North Korean perspective would provide for a fascinating comparison. However, available information indicates that a movie set in the DMZ has not been released by North Korea. Of the forty two North Korean movies listed by the Internet Movie Database, none relate directly to the landscape of the DMZ (2007). I have therefore elected to focus exclusively on the American and South Korean perspectives. A critical reading of three cinematic (re)creations of the Korean Demilitarized Zone will reveal some of the perceptions and biases “that are determinate in making a landscape” (Mitchell, 2000: 114).

A Cultural Geography of the Korean DMZ in Film

This thesis presents a cultural geography of the Korean Demilitarized Zone as expressed through American and South Korean films. My research therefore lies at the intersection of several subfields of geography. First, it takes a regional interest in (North and South) Korea. Second, it examines several conceptualizations of the DMZ through the lens of cultural geography, which Phil Hubbard argues, is defined by “the relationships of power and the politics of representation” (2005: 46). Third, it seeks to understand cultural and social representations of space and place in film—a crossroads which “offers a provocative research setting for geographers” (Aitken and Zonn, 1994: ix). Thus, the goal of this project is to provide an academic contribution to the regional geography of Korea, cultural geography, and film geography.

In recent decades, (English language) academic geographies of Korea have been rare. In the mid 1980s, David Nemeth wrote a dissertation on the peasant landscape of Cheju Island (South Korea) during the Yi dynasty, focusing on the Neo-Confucian ideology which dominated the discourse of environmental planners and geomancers (1984). In the past twenty years, a number of Korean geographers have published in English, but most of their work has focused on economic and developmental problems in South Korea. For example, Park Bae Gyoon has examined labor regulation in the context of the 1997 financial crisis in South Korea, the effects of globalization and economic liberalization on sovereign territoriality in South Korea, and the politics of local economic policy versus state-conditioned regional development (2001, 2003, September 2005, and December 2005). Kim Won Bae analyzed the center-periphery economic relationship between Seoul and the rest of South Korea, and concluded that local politics (not economic disparities) played a more significant role in regional schisms (2003). Park Sam Ock investigated the major triggers and consequences of the industrial restructuring of Seoul, strategies for regional development through Regional Innovation Systems, and the role of the state in forming industrial districts (1994, 1995, and 2001). While the aforementioned research is not an exhaustive list, it certainly demonstrates the need for more (English language) geographic research focusing on Korea, especially in the subfield of cultural geography.

Since the early 1990s, many cultural geographers have shifted from one view of culture and landscape to a postmodern approach, “refusing to privilege one cultural discourse above another, to see each as an equally meaningful representation...” (Cosgrove and Domosh, 1993: 27). This general departure from the cultural geographies

of the past (modernism, nostalgia, Sauerian geography, etc.) is often referred to as the “cultural turn” (Scott, 2004: 24). A field that was once defined by its search for a single, coherent interpretation of culture has now become “an unfolding dialogue of meaning” (Shurmer-Smith, 2002: 3). For Pamela Shurmer-Smith, this includes

thinking about how geographical phenomena are shaped, worked and apportioned according to ideology; how they are used when people form and express their relationships and ideas, including their sense of who they are. It also includes the ways in which place, space and environment are perceived and represented, how they are depicted in the arts, folklore and media and how these artistic uses feed back into the practical (ibid.).

Thus, cultural geography is an excellent prism through which this thesis will examine the perceptions and representations of the DMZ in film. In the following chapters I intend to show that while there is a single, dominant discourse which defines the DMZ, there is also a newly-emerging discourse which challenges the power structures behind the prevailing ideology. One important way in which this new discourse projects its alternate meanings is through film.

Chris Lukinbeal and Stefan Zimmermann suggested that film geography has moved from the peripheries of geographic research to a central issue—a shift which merits the creation of a new subfield of the discipline (2006). Tim Cresswell and Deborah Dixon also noted that because of its versatility as a pedagogical tool, film has become one of the most popular areas of research in the field of geography (2002). They argue that

geographers have deployed film as a mimetic of the real world, such that peoples and places can be represented in as authentic a manner as possible to peers and students; a series of images and sounds that relay intersubjective meanings; a medium that allows investigation of the production of dominant ideologies; and a site of resistance, in which the stability of any meaning is open to critical scrutiny (ibid.: 1).

Part of what makes film an interesting research medium is that it has the potential to “speak a universal visual language” to a global audience (Jane Chapman, 2005: 126). However, as Jeff Hopkins points out, film is not neutral entertainment, objective documentation, or simply a mirror of reality—film is “an ideologically charged cultural creation whereby meanings of place and society are made, legitimized, contested, and obscured” (1994: 47). For these reasons, film is an excellent medium in which to study the cultural values and ideologies of the society which produces the film. Thus, this thesis seeks to add to the body of academic research in film geography by investigating the representations of the landscape of the DMZ in American and South Korean films. My specific research questions aim to discover the intersubjective meanings and dominant ideologies that shape these representations, and explore the ways in which these cinematic images in turn reinforce the meanings and ideologies which formed them.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework I have selected to provide the structure for my research of the Demilitarized Zone is discourse of space and place. While many academic fields employ the term “discourse” in slightly different ways, the French linguist Benveniste

developed a general definition which neatly encapsulates most of the field-specific definitions. He asserted that any interaction involving a communicator, an audience, and an intention of the communicator to influence the audience is a discourse (Macey, 2000). Thus, any story told, any account given, or any place represented in any medium becomes a discourse. Geographers have applied this theory to the study of space and place. Rob Shields suggests that “spatialisation” is an interchangeable term with discourse of space, or “a fundamental system of spatial divisions (e.g. subject-object, inclusion-exclusion) and distinctions (e.g. near-far, present-absent, civilized-natural)” (1991: 46). In other words, our methods of conceptualizing and categorizing ideas, objects, places, and people are the discourses we create as a result of our lived experience.

One vital component of this spatial discourse is the “place-image,” or perception of a place perpetuated by various stereotypes, labels and over-simplifications of past visitors (Shields, 1991). Over time, more and more place-images coalesce to form landscape, “a social product that has come into being through (collective) human agency” (Verstraete and Cresswell, 2002: 126). Because both place-images and landscapes are culturally constructed, geographers recognize they are viewed and understood in specific, unique ways by different people. Thus, looking at a place (or space) necessarily means looking *through* a cultural identity. In order to gain a deeper knowledge of places and landscapes, one must explore several place-images from multiple perspectives. It is this discourse of place which will guide my analysis of the cinematic place-images which coalesce to form a unique landscape of the Korean Demilitarized Zone.

Chris Lukinbeal suggests that “landscape as text” has been the dominant metaphor in film geography because it facilitates the exploration of the intersection of narration and geography (2005: 4). For Lukinbeal however, this metaphor falls short of representing all of the reel landscape’s functions on screen. Instead of accepting the limitations of “landscape as text,” he advocates the examination of four different functions of landscape in film: landscape as space, landscape as place, landscape as spectacle, and landscape as metaphor. An explanation of each function follows.

“Close-ups of characters with blurry backgrounds, shots that remove the landscape from view revealing only an object and the sky, or action shots that move rapidly through a landscape, are examples of landscape as space” (ibid.: 6). This function of landscape minimizes the importance of geographic realism, as a blurry background could be anywhere without detracting from the narrative. The details of place are either panned over too quickly for the viewer to take notice, or they are obscured from view by the actors, lighting, or camera angles. Here the landscape is merely the inconsequential, unrecognizable, “placeless” space where the story occurs (ibid.).

Landscape as place refers directly to the geographic location of the narrative. “In film, events take place and transform it into narrative space” (ibid.: 7). The setting becomes an integral part of the story. Thus, the geographical location in a film “holds the action in place” (ibid.). Taken from the context of place, the narrative would lose its meaning. Geographic realism is essential in maintaining the audience’s willingness to suspend their disbelief, especially when the landscape is the subject or purpose of the film. For Stuart Aitken and Leo Zonn, place even becomes one of the characters in the film as opposed to scenery in the background (1994). In light of this function of

landscape, it therefore becomes possible to analyze “the sense of a place” through its reproduction in film.

The third function is landscape as spectacle. “Here, landscape is either a spectacle of beauty or a spectacle because it generates curiosity and interest” (Lukinbeal, 2005: 11). The landscape itself can serve to satisfy “a voyeuristic appeal created by the narrative” (ibid.). This function also includes what Gillian Rose calls “the scopic regime,” or “the ways in which both what is seen and how it is seen are culturally constructed” (Rose, 2001: 6). Most contemporary films employ the scopic regime through “the god-trick,” which removes the spectator completely from any contact with the characters, allowing the viewer to “maintain omnipresence in filmic space” (Lukinbeal, 2005: 12). Laura Mulvey has argued that Hollywood’s scopic regime is centered on the patriarchal gaze. Anywhere the male characters look, the audience also looks, while the audience looks at female characters (ibid.: 11). Ultimately, the director decides for the spectators what will be seen and how through the spatial organization of landscape, characters, and objects in each frame, or *mise-en-scène*.

The final function is landscape as metaphor. “Through the use of metaphor, meaning and ideology are appropriated into the landscape, the most common example of which is the attribution of human or social characteristics to landscape” (ibid.: 13). Lukinbeal calls this process of attribution “naturalization,” wherein the narrative portrays the cultural as natural (ibid.). The result is an image which is natural only to the dominant, or target audience. Using this logic, a South Korean representation of the DMZ in film would differ from the United States representation since the cultural metaphors which inform the production and storytelling processes are unique. There is

room for commonality within the landscape as metaphor function, however. Lukinbeal divides metaphors into small and large metaphors. Naturalization occurs within large metaphors, which “structure common ways of seeing the landscape for a social or cultural group” (ibid.: 14). Small metaphors, on the other hand, are “rhetoric devices or literary tropes” such as the state of darkness for covering secret or illicit actions, or rain to signify sadness (ibid.). For Lukinbeal,

Whether the emotional landscapes of cinematic memories, the downtown marquee of a dying cinema, the filmed locations in our neighborhoods, or the globalized spectacle of Hollywood, cinematic landscapes are not mere representations but are working landscapes involved with cultural production and reproduction (2005: 17).

Daniel Arreola also discusses cinematic landscapes in his essay on John Sayles’ movie, *Lone Star*. Citing the specific landscapes of Mexican border towns, he argues that stereotypes come to life in films (2005: 23).

Cinema about Mexican border towns has largely been preoccupied with the stereotype of the place, how border towns are dens of iniquity, staging areas for illegality, and, therefore, less about the places as communities of common experience (ibid.: 25).

Arreola further identifies three major “location themes” in understanding place in border films. The themes are border as a place of refuge and corruption, border as a transient space, and border as an authentic space (ibid.). At first glance, the North-South Korean border bears no similarities to these themes. The DMZ is neither a place of refuge for criminals or fugitives, nor a place of where visitors are enticed to abandon integrity for

corruption. The DMZ is not a high-traffic area where myriads of people cross back and forth between North and South Korea. And finally, the DMZ encompasses no border towns and very few border people, therefore lacking the “real, not stereotyped, characters” necessary for an authentic place (ibid.: 27). But on further inspection, the DMZ is a place of refuge for wildlife, and some would argue, the last vestiges of Korean-ness (see chapter 2). The DMZ is also a transient space for the soldiers who temporarily occupy guard posts. When their tour of duty is complete, they move out of the DMZ. It is also a transient space for migrating birds which use the DMZ as a breeding ground (also in chapter 2). Finally, a movie which explores human relationships inside the DMZ could, according to Arreola, make “the effective transition to the border as authentic place, not simply as a backdrop” (ibid.). My analysis of three DMZ movies will highlight this transition (or lack thereof).

It seems obvious that in addition to holding a place in the borderlands discourse, the DMZ would also qualify as one of Rob Shield’s “places on the margin.” Says Shields,

To be ‘on the margin’ has implied exclusion from ‘the centre.’ But social, political, and economic relations which bind peripheries to centres, keep them together in a series of binary relationships, rather than allowing complete disconnection. In this way, ‘margins’ become signifiers of everything ‘centres’ deny or repress; margins as ‘the Other,’ become the condition of possibility of all social and cultural entities (1991: 276).

In his book, Shields addresses the marginal landscapes of northern Canada and northern England, but altogether ignores northern Korea. (The North-South Korea divide even

matches his pattern in name). When the DMZ was enforced by armistice, a culturally homogenous people were arbitrarily divided by foreign powers. The result was an instantaneous transformation—a margin where one did not exist before. Those who were friends and family only moments before suddenly became “the other” with whom no form of contact was allowed by either side. In fact, the National Security Act (enacted by South Korea in 1948) states that “sympathizing” with communists or communism is a punishable crime (Len, 2004). Thus, the DMZ became the (marginal) place of North Korea and North Koreans, who were denied or repressed in the South. In other words, North Korea and its citizens were marginalized by the establishment of the DMZ and the signing of the National Security Act in South Korea. Yet, for some reason, the marginal landscape of the Korean Demilitarized Zone has gone largely unnoticed by the field of geography. I argue that an analysis of this marginal place will fill a void in cultural geography’s discourses of place and space, as well as in human geography’s wider discourse of places on the margin.

Another vein within the discourse of place and space addresses the relationship between places on the margin, borderlands, buffer zones and the politics which create and reinforce their existence. David Newman and Anssi Paasi identify four major (but by no means exhaustive) areas of academic focus within “boundary studies: 1) the suggested ‘disappearance’ of boundaries; 2) the role of boundaries in the construction of sociospatial identities; 3) boundary narratives and discourse; and 4) the different spatial scales of boundary construction” (1998: 191). Central to these related themes is the concept that boundaries are constructed at all scales through the narrative, which in turn, defines who or what is “us” and “them” (ibid.: 196). Newman and Paasi explain,

This landscape concretizes and attempts to legitimize relations between territorial structures. In this discursive landscape, a boundary has a dual role, reflecting both collective and individual consciousness. The boundary does not limit itself merely to the border area or landscape itself, but more generally manifests itself in social and cultural practices and legislation, as well as in films, novels, memorials, ceremonies and public events (ibid.).

In the following film analysis chapters, three of Newman and Paasi's boundary categorizations will emerge as discursive themes as I deconstruct the DMZ narrative on the big screen. *JSA*'s narrative shows the disappearance (or absence) of the boundary between the Koreas in several scenes, while challenging the North Korean sociospatial identity that permeates the dominant discourse of the DMZ. The narratives of *Stealth* and *Die Another Day*, on the other hand, show the boundary as an ever-present barbed-wire fence guarded by armed North Koreans. These narratives reinforce the discursive North Koreans identities by representing them as the communist other.

Newman and Paasi conclude their essay by proposing an agenda for the study of boundaries. Among the proposed guidelines for the study of discourse, the dynamic nature of boundaries, the multicultural and multidimensional nature of boundaries, the incorporation of nature itself in boundary studies, Newman and Paasi declare that "geographical studies of boundaries should reinsert the spatial dimension of these phenomena more explicitly back into the discussion" (ibid.: 200). An exploration of the perceived spatial dimension of the DMZ is central to my analysis.

As Newman and Paasi pointed out, boundaries reflect a collective consciousness. In the case of the Korean Demilitarized Zone, this consciousness is unquestionably dominated by political discourse. Therefore, in examining the DMZ, it is critical to explore the geopolitical influences which have shaped the place-images of the Korean border. David Campbell emphasizes “the relationship between *site* and *sight*” in geopolitical discourse, arguing that visual images structure our conceptualization of the Other (2007: 361, Campbell’s emphasis). Campbell cites several analyses of newspaper photos taken during various African crises. For him, the camera angle, subject of the photo, lighting, and other factors combine to form a “metaphoric symbol,” which conveys more information than a sign (ibid.: 379). Campbell notes,

The plethora of refugee photographs does not just tell us that there are millions displaced. They tell us how we should feel about Darfur as a place where the innocent are displaced and appear before us in ways that recall earlier conflicts (ibid.: 380).

This concept also applies to images of the DMZ. Each image builds on the one seen previously, reinforcing the visual geopolitical message and reminding us how to feel about it. The message also magnifies the “distance between self/other, civilized/barbaric, North/South, developed/underdeveloped...” (ibid.).

Sean Carter and Derek McCormack locate this same geopolitical discourse on the silver screen. Referring to the American foreign policy of interventionism, they note that “codes and signs” are perpetuated through the medium of film (2006: 232).

Witness for instance the cinematic refrain of the ‘good war’ in many Second World War films...this notion of the ‘good war’ was central not

only to Hollywood portrayals of combat (at least until the 1970s) but also to the production and reproduction of discourses of American national identity and national purpose rooted in more general and nebulous ideas about the defence of freedom (2006: 232).

There are also codes and signs associated with the Cold War, which for more than forty years, deepened the divide between East and West, capitalism and socialism, and “us” and “them.” Chapters Three and Four will explore in detail these visually represented geopolitical messages which still exist in films created more than a decade after the end of the Cold War.

Departing from the reel and returning to the real, the discourse of space and place finds another interesting dimension in the work of Don Mitchell. He argues that we are engaged in “culture wars” wherein we seek to define “identity (personal, ethnic, and national), social values, and control over meaning...” (2000: 5). Mitchell compares this cultural struggle to more “traditional” forms of war which involve the use of military power in the conquest of land for political or economic reasons (ibid.). In the case of the DMZ, however, Mitchell’s comparison has a dual meaning—metaphoric and literal. It remains as a physical symbol of the political and economic differences between North and South Korea. Arguably, that symbolic meaning extends beyond the peninsula, representing the political and economic differences between socialism and neoliberalism at the global scale.

At the same time the DMZ (although its name suggests otherwise) endures as a (potential) traditional military battleground. Any new hostilities would require passage into, over, or under the buffer zone. Mines, fences, and signs remind soldiers and visitors

that the war has not officially ended. Thus, the landscape of the DMZ gives further depth to Mitchell's observation that culture wars, like other wars "literally *take place*" (ibid., Mitchell's emphasis) In the end, the project of culture, as Mitchell argues, is to "advance social reproduction (or societal integration) through the making and marking of differences" (ibid., 88). Perhaps there is no other place on earth where the differences are marked as literally and clearly as they are by the barbed wire, guards, fences, and land mines of the DMZ.

Another prominent theme within the subfield of cultural geography is that landscape is text which can be "read." Although Lukinbeal finds the metaphor "landscape as text" to be restrictive, I find Pamela Shurmer-Smith's discussion of this metaphor particularly enlightening. She observes that "landscapes are best 'read' by groups of people, rather than individuals..." (2002: 91). By conflating several readings of the text of a given landscape, we gain a "sense of place." Shurmer-Smith, like Mitchell, also reminds us that different meanings will emerge from the landscape for people with differing vantage points—constant reminders of the omnipresence of culture (the lens through which we see place and space) on landscape. While it would be an exercise in futility to lay claim to an "expert reading" of any landscape, it is far more useful to find meaning in the *ways* people read place and space (ibid.). Thus, the scope of this project does not include assigning meaning to the space of the DMZ itself. Rather, in order to uncover the underlying cultural place-images, I have analyzed various ways the landscape is interpreted and (re)presented through visual imagery, which is "both complex and immensely powerful" (ibid.: 190).

As a final segment of the theoretical framework, I turn to geography's examination of deserts as places. Many scholars have written on the meaning of deserts. There is an immediate, interesting parallel in the spaces of deserts according to Inge Boer and the space of the DMZ:

The geographical expanses called deserts evoke two related responses: one is to consider deserts as empty, devoid of signs of life, and the second is to subsequently move in, conquer, traverse or colonize them by putting in boundary markers (Verstraete and Cresswell, 2002: 155).

The DMZ is almost entirely empty of human life. The only exceptions are the few villagers of Taesongdong (South Korea) and the soldiers who are transitory residents on either side of the DMZ (Kirkbride, 2003). Except for the occasional lookout post, the space inside the fences of the DMZ is generally void of signs of human life. Roads and crop fields have been reclaimed by nature.

Another intriguing parallel is Boer's conclusion about deserts. It is only from the outside that deserts seem empty of life and meaning, because "in the desert empty space does not exist" (Verstraete and Cresswell, 2002: 170). With over one million mines hidden sporadically below the surface, wildlife, and round-the-clock military patrols, the DMZ is anything but empty space (C. Kim, 2001). Boer's reference to boundary markers in the desert also rings true in the case of the DMZ. Both sides are marked clearly by barbed wire fences. The Military Demarcation Line is also clearly marked by signs.

Finally, a phrase commonly used in referring to the desert, "no-man's land," evokes similar images in phrases such as "the loneliest outpost in the world" and "Bridge

of No Return” inside the DMZ (Verstraete and Cresswell, 2002 and Kirkbride, 2003). Chapter Three will explore the theoretical link between deserts, militarized landscapes, conflict, and existential emptiness as presented in the cinema.

While the concept of the DMZ has useful connections to other militarized borders, I argue that the Korean DMZ is a unique space. In comparing the DMZ to the Berlin Wall, for example, two key differences arise. First, the Berlin Wall was constructed primarily to keep East Germans from leaving East Berlin. Officials called it the “Anti-Fascist Protection Rampart” (Pfennig, 2001). The DMZ, by contrast, was created to prevent further hostilities between two nations still at war—a buffer zone, not a barrier (Kim, 2001). A second difference is the spatial aspect of each militarized border. The DMZ consists of land (space) between two boundary fences. The Berlin Wall, on the other hand, was a feature (place) of the urban landscape—there was no land *in* it. While the Berlin wall was an object one could see, or paint on, or even visit, it was not a space one could occupy. Contrastingly, the DMZ is not an object—its whole is comprised of objects (like its fences and mines), but the zone becomes a landscape. Thus, the intended purpose of the DMZ and its geographical area contribute to its distinctiveness as a unique militarized border.

In summary, a discourse of space and place represents the most powerful theoretical structure for framing my research on cinematic representations of the Korean Demilitarized Zone. Drawing from several place-images to create a multi-layered landscape, the American and South Korean film industries have (re)produced culturally informed versions of space and place. An analysis of these varying representations of the DMZ will yield a more complete sense of space and place.

Research Questions

In order to focus my research, I have selected the following research questions. The overarching question is what is the nature of the DMZ as presented in movies? To explore that issue, I have selected the following sub-questions. First, how do American movies represent the DMZ? To what degree is the DMZ presented as a place? To what degree is the landscape humanized? How are North Koreans portrayed? What is the role of genre in the film? Second, how do South Korean movies represent the DMZ? To what degree is the DMZ presented as a place? To what degree is the landscape humanized? How are North Koreans portrayed? What is the role of genre in the film? These questions provide the basis for a comparison between the differing representations of the DMZ. The following analysis chapters (Chapters Three and Four) consist of a plot summary, genre analysis, sense of place analysis, examination of the portrayal of North Koreans, and identification/exploration of themes for each selected film.

Selected Films for Research

The two American films I have chosen are *Die Another Day* (2002) and *Stealth* (2005). I selected these movies primarily for one reason: they each have scenes inside the DMZ. In order to study the landscape in film, I argue the importance of considering movies which have scenes inside the DMZ. A simple reference to the landscape through

dialogue would be insufficient for my research requirements. The DMZ must appear in the mise-en-scène. Similarly, any Korean War movie set prior to the signing of the armistice agreement which created the DMZ would also be insufficient. The DMZ simply did not exist prior to or during the Korean War. I also selected these films based on their relatively recent release dates. Newer films will present a more current sense of place. While each film could arguably fit into the broader “action” genre, I intend to compare subtle differences within more specific sub-genres. For my research, *Die Another Day* represents the James Bond sub-genre of the action thriller movie and *Stealth* represents a science fiction movie.

Although few (if any) would argue that *Stealth* is an American film, some might challenge the American label I have attached to a James Bond movie. After all, Bond has become “the world’s foremost idea of what a British hero should be” (James Chapman, 2005: 141). Yet, there is more to defining the national identity of a film than simply pointing to the location of the production studio or the nationality of the director. The globalization of Hollywood has complicated the process of classifying films by national identity. Richard Maltby noted that

Convergence and globalization have resulted in the American film industry no longer necessarily being owned by Americans, although its product has, if anything, become more exclusively American in perspective (2003: 215).

Die Another Day is an excellent example of Maltby’s observation. Although it was distributed by an American company (MGM), the filming and production took place at locations in the United Kingdom (including Pinewood Studios), Spain, Iceland, and

Hawaii. The director (Lee Tamahori) is a New Zealander, the producers (Barbara Broccoli and Michael G. Smith) are Americans, and the actor (Pierce Brosnan) portraying the quintessential British hero is not British at all—he is Irish. Yet, despite the international composition of *Die Another Day*'s cast, crew, and production, I argue that its geopolitical perspective is unequivocally American. In order to calibrate my categorization of the films as “American,” Chapter Two will examine the US print media's (specifically the *New York Times*'s) view of the DMZ. Chapter Three will then show that the American print media's perspective is reproduced in both *Stealth* and *Die Another Day*. Thus, for the purposes of my research, the films' geopolitical perspectives define them as “American.”

Die Another Day (figure 1-2) is another narrative in the official James Bond spy-thriller series. In this movie, Bond, who is on assignment to break up an illegal weapons-for-diamonds trade ring in North Korea, is betrayed by an unknown mole within the British intelligence community. After his mission fails due to sabotage, he is captured in North Korea and suffers repeated torture for killing a North Korean colonel. Following his exchange for a North Korean political prisoner, Bond is kept under surveillance by his own intelligence community upon suspicion of his betraying England during captivity. Bond escapes, proves his loyalty to the crown, and once again receives the assignment to dismantle the weapons trade network. In the process, he discovers a super weapon being developed by a North Korean posing as a British playboy. The weapon has the ability to destroy mine fields from space, which will aid North Korea's planned invasion of South Korea. The DMZ is depicted in several scenes throughout the narrative.



Figure 1-2. *Die Another Day* movie poster

(Source: <http://www.biocrawler.com/encyclopedia/Image:007DAD1.jpg>, accessed March 18, 2008)

Stealth (figure 1-3) is the story of the United States Navy's future unmanned fighter jet, codenamed "EDI" (Extreme Deep Invader), which was designed to replace all human pilots. New technological advances led to the development of a computer brain which has the ability to learn from humans. A U.S. Navy research program placed the artificial intelligence in a new stealth fighter jet. EDI is positioned on an aircraft carrier to learn from three human pilots during various mission profiles. On one training mission EDI is struck by lightning, which damages its circuits and causes it to disregard orders and select combat missions on its own, a personality trait it learned from one of the human pilots on a prior training mission. After EDI refuses to return to the aircraft carrier, the human pilots must locate EDI and destroy it before it attacks real targets, starting a chain reaction war of retaliation. As the pilots locate EDI and attempt to escort it back to base, one pilot crashes, and one is forced to eject from her aircraft over North

Korea. The last human pilot must destroy EDI before it attacks any targets, and he must rescue his friend from North Korea before she is captured or killed.



Figure 1-3. *Stealth* movie poster

(Source: <http://www.thezreview.co.uk/posters/posterimages/s/stealth.jpg>, accessed March 18, 2008)

The South Korean film (figure 1-4) I selected for analysis is *JSA* (2000). (*JSA* is the acronym for the Joint Security Area, a neutral negotiation site inside the DMZ). This film is a murder mystery set almost entirely between the fences of the Demilitarized Zone. The story unfolds through a series of flashbacks as different characters relate the details of the shoot-out at the border. A Swiss officer (female), whose father was North Korean by birth, is the lead investigator. She immediately discovers there is much more to the story than either North or South Korea wishes to acknowledge. As the investigator pieces the truth together through forensic evidence and testimony, a narrative of cross-border brotherhood and friendship begins to take shape. She uncovers a nightly pattern of illicit meetings between two South Korean soldiers and two North Korean soldiers. Finally, as she discovers how and why the shoot-out took place, one of the implicated

South Korean soldiers affirms her theory. Her step-by-step discovery of the actual events, however, ends tragically as those soldiers involved in the incident eventually sacrifice their own lives (and the lives of their friends) to preserve the secret.



Figure 1-4. *Joint Security Area* movie poster

(Source: <http://www.kdolphin.com/wp-content/uploads/2006/02/jsa.jpg>, accessed March 18, 2008)

Methodology

As Pamela Shurmer-Smith reminds us, “An awareness of the multiplicity of readings is important to cultural geographers because it permits access to the various elements of understanding that can be generated by people who are able to communicate with each other” (2002: 124). For my project, this communication takes the form of motion pictures. There are several methods to access the many-layered meanings of the visual images presented in film. In light of the strengths and weaknesses of each method, I have employed a combination of several methods, which suits my research better than any single method. In her book, *Visual Methodologies*, Gillian Rose discusses in great

detail the various approaches to analyzing image-texts. My analysis draws from three of the methods she outlines.

The first approach to finding meaning in moving images is “compositional interpretation” (Rose, 2001: 48). This method depends largely on the development of specific contextual skills, which Rose calls “visual connoisseurship” and Irit Rogoff calls “the good eye” (ibid.: 33). This approach requires an understanding of the image itself, as opposed to the meanings conveyed by the image. James Monaco discusses the language (or “good eye”) of film at length in his book, *How to Read a Film*. He argues that one must first grasp the organizational principles of mise-en-scène (the space of the frame) and montage (time or movement through the film) in order to understand the message of the film (Monaco, 2000). The mise-en-scène encompasses several elements of structure such as planes, focus, angles, points of view, lighting, and camera movements (ibid.). The montage, or “how the shots of a film are put together,” relies on several techniques of movement between shots. The ways scenes are pieced together have a significant impact on the film’s effect (Rose, 2001: 50). The final components of a compositional interpretation are the narrative structure, or the story the movie tells to the audience, along with the sound. While compositional interpretation is very useful in defining the technical components of an image, it cannot sufficiently address the cultural meaning of the image. In order to meet my research objective, “it thus needs to be combined with other methodologies...” (ibid.: 52-53).

The second method I have incorporated in my research is semiology (also referred to as semiotics). This analytical approach is concerned with signs. According to Mieke

Bal and Norman Bryson, “human culture is made up of signs, each of which stands for something other than itself, and the people inhabiting culture busy themselves making sense of those signs” (1991). Ferdinand de Saussure argued that signs consist of two parts—the “signified” (concept or object) and the “signifier” (word or image attached to the signified). Through the exploration of this distinction between a thing and its meaning, and the relation between signs found within visual images, the underlying meanings of the images begin to emerge (Rose, 2001). This approach applies to any visual image, as every image is composed of signs.

Michael Giannetti explained semiotics in relation to the film industry as “a theory of cinematic communication which studies signs or symbolic codes as the minimal units of signification” (2002: 461). My semiological approach to DMZ films consists of the identification of signs which are present in the films, determining what those signs signify themselves, exploring the relationship of the signs, and examining the how the signs are connected to “wider systems of meanings” (ibid.: 91). The use of this visual method, of course, is inseparably intertwined with the use of compositional interpretation, a method which shares many terms. In fact, Christian Metz defines the “basic figures of the semiotics of the cinema” as “montage, camera movements, scale of the shots, relationships between image and speech, sequences, and other large syntagmatic units...” (1974: 94). In her discussion of compositional interpretation, Rose also references the methodological linkage in pointing out that Monaco’s *How to Read a Film* borrows terms from the field of semiology (2001). My research methods depend on the strength of combining these two complementary approaches with the third and final approach—discourse analysis.

“Discourse analysis takes its place within a larger body of social and cultural research that is concerned with the production of meaning through talk and texts. As such, it has affinities with approaches such as semiotics...” (Tonkiss, 1998: 246). This methodology is concerned with the ways in which social meanings and identities are created and reproduced by language and texts. Michel Foucault placed importance in the analysis of the relations between statements themselves as well as groups of statements in order to shed light on the discourse. According to Rose, this involves discovering how particular words or phrases are given meaning, and how groups or clusters of words and images are related (2001). Discourse analysis, therefore, connects the meanings of the film’s signs, mise-en-scène, and montage to the larger, socially-constructed understanding of the space of the DMZ.

A particularly interesting approach within discourse analysis is the rhetorical organization of discourse, which explores the authoritative and privileged positions of certain speakers and forms of knowledge (ibid.: 250). Thus, the discursive messages of films can be analyzed according to who conveys them and in what capacity they are conveyed. This is especially important in my research, wherein the setting of the films is a place most people have not experienced in person, and must therefore rely on other visual (re)productions to form a personal conceptualization of that place.

As a final note on research methodology, I call upon the concept of “the good eye” in introducing my position as the author of this thesis. I lived in South Korea on two occasions for a total of three years, during which time I experienced life (as a civilian) in small villages, provincial cities, and the megalopolis of Seoul. I speak, read,

and write Korean. I also experienced American military life in Korea, which (in addition to providing another perspective) afforded me two opportunities to visit the Joint Security Area (where I briefly crossed the border into North Korea), portions of the DMZ (western and central), and one of the North Korean infiltration tunnels discovered in the DMZ. My “good eye” for evaluating reel representations of the DMZ is therefore calibrated by my experiences of the real DMZ. Moreover, my training in the Korean language and exposure to South Korean culture has heightened my sensitivity to nuances (in *JSA*’s dialogue) that subtitles do not always capture.

Conclusion

In summary, many scholars have analyzed the events surrounding the Korean War, from before the first shots were fired across the 38th parallel to the signing of the armistice agreement. Very few (especially cultural geographers), however, have focused on the space created between the Koreas. What is the nature of that borderland? How is it presented in South Korean films? How do the American filmmakers conceptualize this space? To answer these questions I have applied three visual methods (compositional interpretation, semiology, and discourse analysis) within the theoretical framework of discourses of space and place in analyzing three films set in the Korean Demilitarized Zone. The visual text (along with other elements of film such as sounds, dialogue, and music) of each film reveals the nature(s) of the DMZ as (re)produced by two film industries. This research project will fill a significant gap in the discourse of space and place and will add another dimension to the discussion of marginal places.

CHAPTER TWO THE KOREAN DEMILITARIZED ZONE

Historical Geography

Following Japan's unconditional surrender on the *USS Missouri* in August 1945, the United States and Russia chose "the 38th parallel to serve as a temporary line of demarcation dividing the Russo-American responsibility for the Japanese surrender" on the Korean peninsula (Fehrenbach, 1998: 19). As a matter of practicality, the United States and the Soviet Union selected the 38th parallel as the line of delineation, primarily because it "cut the peninsula almost in half" geographically (ibid.). This moment in time was the beginning of Korea's division after World War II, but it was not the first time in history the peninsula was divided politically. Prior to the Yi Dynasty (1392-1910), the land had been internally divided numerous times as different kingdoms rose and fell (Bartz, 1972). In 1592, the Japanese victoriously invaded, demanding "the cessation of two southern provinces of the peninsula, Gyeongsang-do and Jeolla-do" (Choi, 2001). A partition of Korea also became the subject of discussion between Russia and Japan prior to the Russo-Japanese War in 1905. The Russians considered the 39th parallel while the Japanese suggested the 38th parallel as the line of demarcation—an interesting foreshadowing of the solution agreed upon nearly fifty years later by United States and the Soviet Union (ibid.).

Both the United States and the Soviet Union initially planned for the Koreans to have their own unified government within five years. To that end, both nations ultimately withdrew "all but a handful of advisors" by 1949 (Feffer, 2003: 30). However, the rising tensions of "the Cold War quickly froze the temporary administrative decision

into a permanent border between two hostile states” (Carpenter and Bandow, 2004). Politicians fueled by competing ideologies jockeyed for positions of power in the north and south. The Republic of Korea (ROK) was established on August 15, 1948 in Seoul and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) soon followed on September 9, 1948 in Pyongyang. Both newly-formed governments claimed administrative jurisdiction over the entire peninsula, setting the stage for war (Bartz, 1972).

Less than two years later, the Korean War officially began when the Korean People’s Army (NKPA) invaded the Republic of Korea (ROK) on June 25, 1950. The invasion was rapid, relentless, and effective. The NKPA pushed the ROK and United Nations forces to the southeastern corner of the peninsula. With reinforcements (mostly from the United States Armed Forces, UN combat operations recaptured South Korea’s formerly held territory and pushed the NKPA to the Chinese border. Just as the conflict seemed to be ending, the Chinese Army streamed across the Yalu River to rescue North Korea and counter Western imperialism. Both China and the United States (backed by the UN) had intervened to protect strategic interests, and both lent their manpower at the most critical times (Fehrenbach, 1998). By July 1951, the front line of battle coincidentally stabilized near the 38th parallel. Peace talks began on July 10, 1951 (Bartz, 1972). Then,

At 1000 hours 27 July 1953, after two years and seventeen days, 575 regular meetings, 18,000,000 words, the Korean Armistice Agreement was signed at Panmunjom. Twelve hours later the guns were silenced along the front lines and troops began to fall back behind the four-kilometer-

wide buffer zone. Thus ended the longest truce talks in world history.

(Vatcher 1958: 1)

The fighting with bullets and bombs was over, but the ideological and physical divide endured. “More than two million human beings had died, forty thousand of them American soldiers and airmen, in what was a skirmish, nothing more. Nothing had been won, nothing gained—except that the far frontier had been held” (ibid.: 451). Although the DMZ does not precisely follow the 38th parallel, its close resemblance to the pre-war line of division is both tragic and ironic. Both communism and democracy held their ground, as did North and South Korea.

The truce agreement included the creation of an integral component of peace—a demilitarized zone, or a swath of uninhabited buffer zone four kilometers wide, stretching more than 243 kilometers in length, from the west coast to the east coast (figure 2-1). This time, the agreement included something the division along the 38th parallel did not—space. Instead of a two-dimensional imaginary line of latitude marking the new international border, the Koreans (along with the Americans, Russians, and Chinese) now built fences and laid minefields in a three-dimensional border space. In the South, the government voluntarily added a further spatial buffer. Extending up to twenty five kilometers south of the southern border of the DMZ is the Civilian Control Zone (CCZ) which was adopted to restrict and control civilian activities to effectively defend against a North Korean attack. There has been little commercial development in this area until recently (Hwang, 2001).

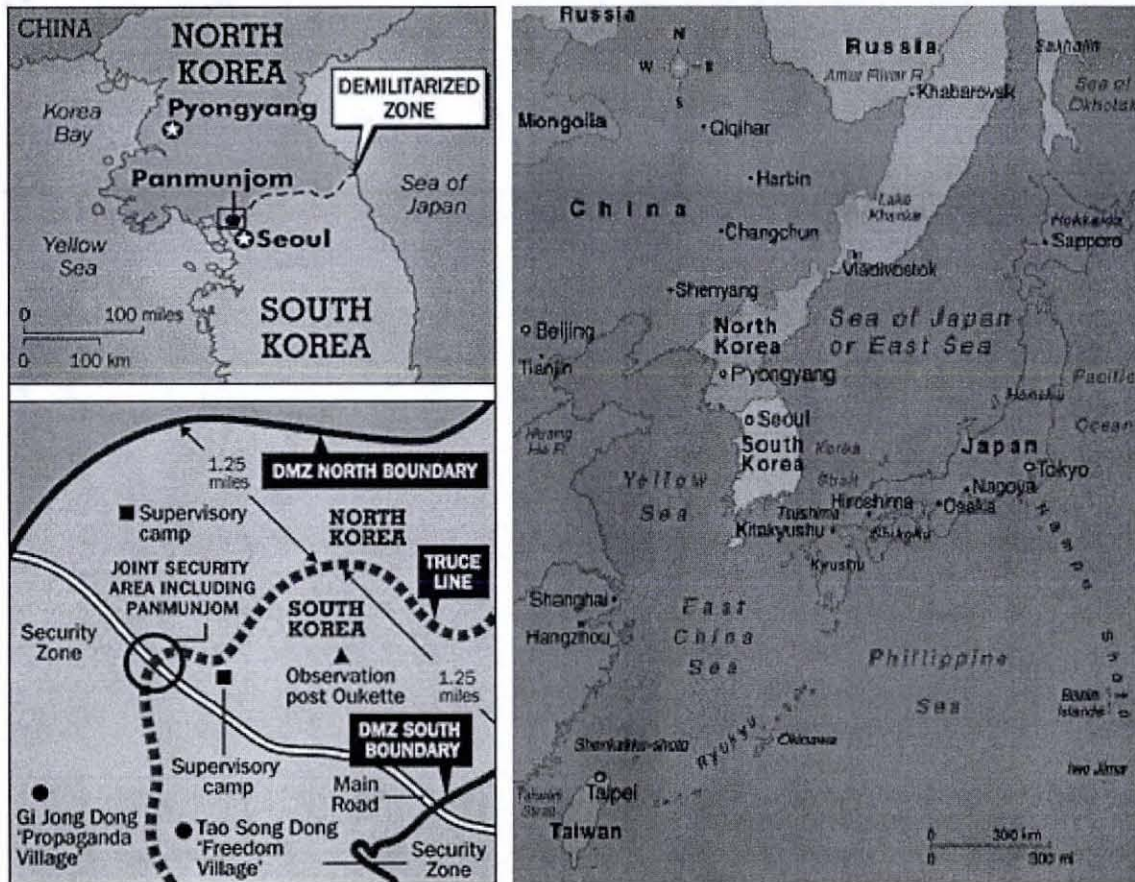


Figure 2-1. The Korean Demilitarized Zone.

(Source: left image: <http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/0310/csmimg/p9b.gif>, accessed March 26, 2008; right image: <http://bta.or.kr/eng/images/photography/geography/SKlocation.gif>, accessed March 26, 2008)

One final feature of the DMZ merits further examination. A small footbridge straddles the MDL in the southwestern corner of the Joint Security Area. The bridge's simple construction matches its simple purpose—the exchange of prisoners. As part of the armistice agreement, each side's prisoners of war (POW) were given the option to refuse repatriation and remain with their captors. If a POW chose repatriation, he returned to his country via this bridge. However, the option for political asylum was a one-time offer—once a prisoner crossed the border on the bridge, the offer was void (Barton, 2000). Thus, the bridge became known as the Bridge of No Return (figure 2-2).



Figure 2-2. The Bridge of No Return
(Source: Author's photograph)

In recent decades, the DMZ has become a popular tourist destination. Since the turn of the century, the number of annual visits (foreign and domestic tourists combined) to the JSA has regularly topped 150,000 (*Korea Times*, 2002). A tourist can choose from a number of South Korean travel companies, but all tours are subject to the same level of rigid control inside the DMZ. All movements are coordinated, and no visitors are allowed to break from the group during the tour. JSA visitors must adhere to a strict dress code—no t-shirts with lettered profanity, ripped or frayed jeans, flip-flop sandals, revealing clothing (such as sheer blouses or miniskirts), etc. All tourists must sign a release form which absolves the US and ROK governments of any liability in case of North Korean hostility (ending in a tourist's injury or death). Absolutely no interaction (speech, gestures, etc.) with North Korean soldiers is tolerated. Photographs are prohibited, except in specific places when authorized by the military tour guide. On one of my trips to Panmunjom, the guide warned our group as we crossed over Freedom

Bridge (the gateway to the DMZ from the south) that if one person snapped an unauthorized photo, the whole group would be forced to surrender all film, both used and unused rolls. For citizens of the host country, the tour is even more restricting. Before a South Korean tourist can enter the JSA, he/she must obtain permission from the National Intelligence Service—a process which takes at least three months (*Korea Times*, 2002).

The DMZ in US Print Media—Reinforcing a Stereotype

Article 1 of the Armistice Agreement defines the purpose of the DMZ as follows:

A Military Demarcation Line shall be fixed and both sides shall withdraw two kilometers from this line so as to establish a Demilitarized Zone between the opposing forces. A Demilitarized Zone shall be established as a buffer zone to prevent the occurrence of incidents which might lead to a resumption of hostilities (J. H. Lee, 2001: 136).

Theoretically, the DMZ has accomplished its ultimate purpose—there has not been an all-out war in Korea since 1953. However, in practice the buffer zone has failed to prevent several incidents which may have contributed to a general perception of the DMZ and North Korea. In a report for Congress, Dick Nanto outlined several North Korean border incursions and other incidents including firing at soldiers in the DMZ, hijacking civil airliners, assassination attempts, shooting down American war planes, seizing the *USS Pueblo*, murdering United States Army officers with axes in Panmunjom (figure 2-3), digging tunnels under the DMZ, blowing up a South Korean airliner, and supporting international terrorism (2003). In Nanto's estimation, more than 120 separate incidents of provocation have occurred in the past five decades and more than 3,600 armed North

Korean agents have been discovered and arrested in South Korea (ibid.). These incidents, combined with the DPRK's communist ideology (especially during the height of the Cold War) begin to form a perception (based on reality) of North Korea as "a rogue state" in the print media (Carpenter and Bandow, 2004: 33). A brief examination of newspaper articles about the DMZ shows a pattern of reportage which has contributed to the creation and re-creation of a negative North Korean image, or in other words, the establishment of the dominant discourse of North Korea.

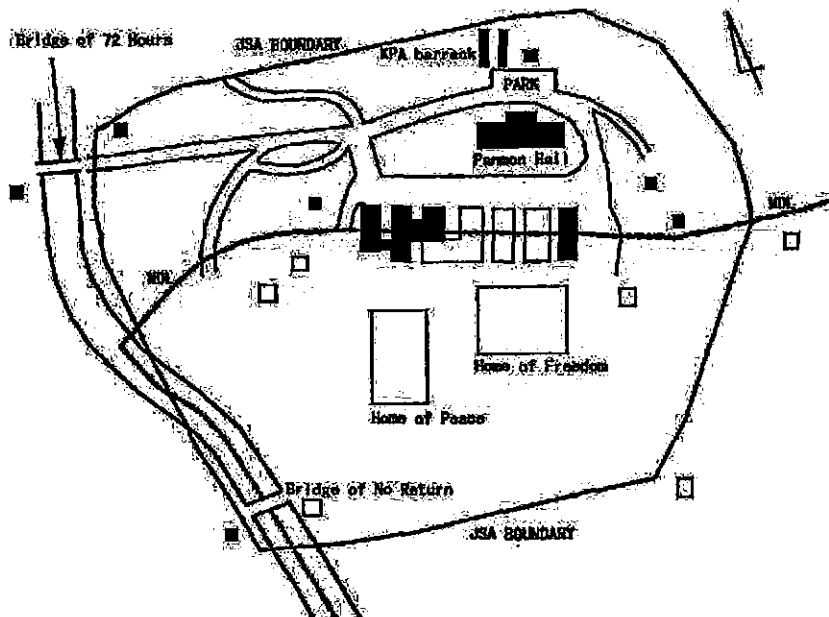


Figure 2-3. Panmunjom and the Joint Security Area

(Source: <http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/Joint+Security+Area>, accessed March 26, 2008)

The scope of this project does not include a comprehensive comparison of all articles addressing the DMZ. Rather, the purpose is simply to demonstrate how the print media has portrayed the DMZ in the past, and how that portrayal is related (or unrelated) to the cinematic versions of the DMZ. I chose articles from the *New York Times* because of its large circulation (currently third among newspapers in the United States of

America) and its reputation as a well-respected news source (more than 90 Pulitzer Prizes awarded) among the print media (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2007 and Pulitzer Prize, 2007). Lastly, I chose articles from each decade between the 1950s and the 2000s in an effort to better understand how descriptions of the DMZ and/or North Korea may have changed (or remained the same) over time.

The first selected article from the mid-1950s reported that “Two Soviet-built North Korean jet fighter planes attacked two slower South Korean fighter planes yesterday and apparently shot one down” (*New York Times*, November 8, 1956). The information indicated that “the attack occurred several miles below the demilitarized zone,” which the author refers to later in the story as follows: “South Korea has twenty combat divisions, estimated at 280,000 men, deployed along the demilitarized zone” (*ibid.*). The subtitle, positioned directly beneath the headline, included the phrase “North Korean jet pounces” (*ibid.*). The second article from the 1950s reported that “North Korean and Chinese Communist trucks believed to be carrying weapons and ammunition had been rolling towards the truce front in increasing numbers” (*New York Times*, November 10, 1956). Other phrases included “Communist troops,” “illegal buildup,” and an incident between North and South Korean ground troops who “‘clashed’ on the east central front early today” (*ibid.*). Thus, from its first decade of existence the DMZ became associated with aerial dogfights, illegal weapons buildups, masses of combat-ready soldiers, communism, attacks, and clashes.

Articles from the 1960s prove to be similar. One journalist stated that “the North Koreans had opened fire on the 10-man party—nine Americans and a South Korean—with automatic weapons and small arms...” (Shabecofe, 1969). The 10-man party was

replacing damaged demarcation signs inside the DMZ. This article also used the words “battle,” “fight,” and “clash” to describe the events (ibid.). Another news story began, “About 300 North Korean infiltrators have been killed or captured thus far this year” before concluding that “there was increased North Korean military activity near the demilitarized zone” (*New York Times*, October 27, 1968). The title of that article referred to North Koreans as “Korean Reds” (ibid.). A final article from the 1960s described an “exchange of gunfire” between North Koreans and Americans in the DMZ (*New York Times*, March 12, 1969). In this incident, the North Koreans “fired their machine guns from one of their guard posts in the northern half of the two-and-a-half-mile-wide demilitarized zone at an American post...” (ibid.). Thus, the theme of clashes, battles, and fights along the border continued into the 1960s. Communists were still “Red” and infiltrators, border skirmishes, and machine guns were connected to the DMZ.

In 1974, the North Koreans fired on two United States Army helicopters flying near the DMZ. Major General William E. McCleod (U. S. Army) called the incident “indiscriminate firing,” “completely unjustifiable,” and “a complete disregard” of the armistice agreement (*New York Times*, May 15, 1974). The North Koreans claimed self-defense in employing “automatic weapons” against the helicopters engaging in “espionage activities” (ibid.). Later that year during a United Nations general assembly meeting, South Korean Foreign Minister Kim Dong Jo “charged the Communists with committing 25,000 violations of the 1953 Korean armistice agreement” (Teltsch, 1974). Kim also “insisted that they continued to carry out ‘forceful Communization of the South’” (ibid.). These articles seemed to focus more on the motivations and attitudes of the North Koreans, rather than the location. The place (the DMZ) faded slightly into the

background as the “indiscriminate” and “completely unjustifiable” violations of a political agreement became the focal point. I argue, however, that these images of North Koreans and their lack of regard for prior agreements are closely related to images of the DMZ, since the DMZ remains one of the few places of interaction between North Korea and its largest foes: South Korea, Japan, and the United States of America. Still, the 1970s articles made use of familiar terms like automatic weapons, gunfire exchanges, and various (accurate) descriptions of North Koreans behaving badly.

The pattern (perhaps convention by now) continued into the 1980s:

A South Korean soldier was wounded today when North Korean troops opened fire inside the demilitarized zone, the South Korean Defense Ministry said. A ministry spokesman, Brig. Gen. Lee Hung Shik, said South Korean troops fired back. The clash was the second this year inside the demilitarized zone, which snakes along a 151-mile border that has divided the Korean peninsula for the last four decades (*New York Times*, November 22, 1987).

Again, the North Koreans became the aggressors in the DMZ as shots were fired across the border. Following this particular engagement, however, South Korea accused the North of “trying to create social instability” during a presidential election campaign described as a “supercharged political atmosphere” (*ibid.*). This sentiment further solidifies the link between the DMZ and political actions of the North Koreans. Earlier in 1987, the “Pyongyang radio, the Korean Central News Agency, the Communist Party newspaper and a clandestine radio station have particularly sought to stir up nationalistic and anti-American feelings among South Koreans...” (Halloran, 1987). One radio

broadcast from Pyongyang declared that “South Korea is a latter-20th-century miserable living hell that had been plagued by the most barbarous fascist dictatorial system among U.S. colonies” and the students of South Korea should not be “duped by the crafty ruse of the imperialists” (ibid.). The author of this story chose the phrase “enmity to U.S.” to describe North Korea’s political goal in South Korea. While the usual gunfire exchanges took place in the DMZ in the 1980s, the link between action inside the DMZ and political action in Seoul became more defined. Thus, to the list of previous DMZ descriptors, the 1980s added propaganda and political manipulation.

In 1994, the head of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Lieutenant General James R. Clapper, stated that “North Korea will be the critical, major military threat for the next few years” (Gordon and Sanger, 1994). The proximity of the DMZ to the South Korean capital played a critical role in this policy:

More important, over the last several years the North has positioned much of its striking power virtually on South Korea’s doorstep. According to intelligence officials, North Korea has stationed more than 8,400 artillery pieces and 2,400 multiple rocket launchers within 60 miles of the border. The demilitarized zone is marked by minefields, tank traps and observation posts, and much of the artillery is so close to the zone that Seoul, which is 30 miles from the border, is within firing range (ibid.).

The article continued to describe how little warning time the American and South Korean forces would have in the event of a North Korean attack which would lead to “a very bloody, largely ground war” (ibid.). In this article, the DMZ becomes the launching pad for discussing North Korea’s military might and battle plans. Later that year, more

destructive capabilities would be added to North Korea's arsenal: the nuclear bomb. "The South Korean intelligence agency presented what it said was a high-level North Korean defector who said that, despite repeated denials, the Government in Pyongyang had five nuclear bombs and might soon develop five more" (Sterngold, 1994). Although Defense Secretary William Perry "said the Pentagon was taking the defector's report seriously" he maintained the current U.S. estimate that "the North probably had reprocessed enough plutonium to build one or two nuclear explosive devices, not five" (ibid.). A final article from the 1990s reported that Kim Il Sung "ruled North Korea for 40 years with an iron fist" (*New York Times*, July 9, 1994). This same article, written in conjunction with Kim's death, also labeled the DMZ as "the most heavily-armed outpost of the Cold War" and included a quote from a former U.S. congressman who called Kim Il Sung's regime "the most ruthless and tyrannical anywhere in the world" (ibid.). With the discovery of North Korea's secret nuclear weapons program and the death of Kim Il Sung, North Korea was at the center of the international community's attention in the mid 1990s.

The occasional exchanges of literal and political bullets continued into the 2000s. In late 2001, the *New York Times* reported that a North Korean soldier "fired two or three bullets at a South Korean outpost in the demilitarized zone about 25 miles northeast of Seoul" (Kirk, 2001). This was the first incident of the decade, but it would not be the last. Just two months later, President George W. Bush grouped Iran, Iraq and North Korea "as members of an axis of evil whose support for terrorism seeks to acquire and spread weapons of mass destruction..." (Sanger, 2002). The "axis of evil" label, though meant as a stern warning, did not prevent North Korea from pursuing a nuclear weapons

arsenal. In 2005, “North Korea declared publicly on Thursday for the first time that it possessed nuclear weapons and would refuse to return to disarmament talks” (Sanger and Brooke, 2005). Although the U.S. intelligence community knew that North Korea had possessed nuclear weapons (at least by 1994), this was the first time President Kim Jong Il acknowledged the program, adding more concrete evidence to North Korea’s negative image. A final example comes from 2006:

North Korea issued threats against South Korea on Sunday over a border incident but did not mention a planned nuclear test. The Joint Chiefs of Staff in South Korea said its soldiers fired warning shots on Saturday at five North Korean soldiers who had climbed over the military demarcation line at the heavily fortified border between them, despite warnings over loudspeakers. On Sunday, North Korea warned of catastrophic consequences if South Korea's military engaged in more ‘unforgivable military provocation’ (*New York Times*, October 9, 2006).

As if to remind the readers what kind of place the DMZ is, the article concludes by explaining that “more than a million troops stand guard on both sides of the demilitarized zone separating the Koreas, with each pointing a huge arsenal of artillery and missiles at the other” (ibid.).

To reiterate, these articles are not the only examples of the print media’s coverage of the Korean DMZ. They are instead a representative cross-section of reports which, I argue, becomes useful in determining how the print media have formed a dominant discourse of the DMZ since 1953. It seems clear that after decades of (accurate) descriptions such as ‘infiltrators,’ ‘evil,’ ‘rogue,’ ‘Communist,’ ‘terrorist,’ and ‘gunfire,’

combined with the visual images of soldiers patrolling near a barbed-wire fence, guards with guns in towers, mines and tripwires, blockades, and soldiers facing off across a visible border; the DMZ has become a place of war, fear, and danger. And perhaps more importantly, the DMZ has endured as a literal and figurative front in an ideological war (against communism, tyranny, and humanitarian disaster). An official in the Bush administration recently provided a comprehensive encapsulation of this general perception (discourse) of the DMZ: “The 38th parallel serves as a dividing line between freedom and oppression, between right and wrong” (Feffer, 2003: 107). This general image of the DMZ exists in the print media today as it did in each decade since the 1950s. I would argue, however, that although the militarized nature of the DMZ and the realities of a brutal regime in North Korea are indisputable, ignoring other aspects results in a limited understanding of the DMZ as a place and a lived space. Thus, while the print media’s facts about the DMZ and North Korea are correct, the place-images they have helped to create are somewhat incomplete. The result is an oversimplified, abstract image of North Korea and the DMZ—a stereotype. Although North Korea has repeatedly reinforced this image through the decades, there is added value in searching for meaning beyond the stereotype. To find alternate meanings it is necessary to consider perceptions of the DMZ which understand it as a place and a lived space, not an abstract concept: the (North and South) Korean perspectives.

North Korean Conceptualizations of the DMZ—an Incomplete Picture

The identification and categorization of North Korean conceptualizations and/or policies toward the DMZ is problematic—Pyongyang has not given a clear, consistent

position. In 1992 the DPRK showed public support for the concept of preserving at least a portion of the DMZ as a bio-sanctuary, but has since withdrawn its initial interest (Westing, 2003). Eight years earlier the DPRK proposed a series of irrigation networks within the DMZ, suggesting agricultural development (Haas, 1989). In some cases, the official government position does not even acknowledge the existence of the DMZ. The DPRK published a brief geography of Korea shortly after the end of the war. Fascinatingly, this book avoids the term “DMZ” altogether, and refers only once to the Military Demarcation Line:

With the devision [sic] of the country into two parts by the military demarcation line, which is a result of the aggressive policy pursued by the American imperialists, the railway that had run through the whole length of the country has been cut” (1957: 113).

There is no physical description or visual representation of a strip of land that covers a total of 992 square kilometers—an area, which by itself, is larger than 24 different countries (Allen and Leppman, 2004). None of the book’s eleven maps depict the DMZ—a curious omission by a government which maintains “seventy percent of their active force, to include 700,000 troops, 8,000 artillery systems, and 2,000 tanks...” within 100 miles of its unmarked, yet heavily-guarded southern boundary (James Lee, 2001: 102). And more recently, the North Korean government published an administrative map of Korea (figure 2-4) which (predictably) includes the entire peninsula under DPRK jurisdiction—a testament to the regime’s ideological commitment unified Korea under communist rule. This map does not represent or acknowledge the location of the DMZ or MDL (DPRK, 2002).

Therefore, due to the severely limited availability of North Korean perspectives, the DMZ land use analysis in this chapter will focus solely on the South Korean perspective. Moreover, since *JSA* is a South Korean movie, comparing its DMZ to South Korean perspectives is congruent with my approach in comparing American movies to American perspectives. Perhaps in the future, North Korea's conceptualization of the DMZ will come to light via official government documents (the North Korean media could be included in this category) and/or North Korean cinema. A comparison between the place-images created by North Korean government documents and the landscape of the DMZ in North Korean cinema would add another fascinating layer to our understanding of the DMZ.

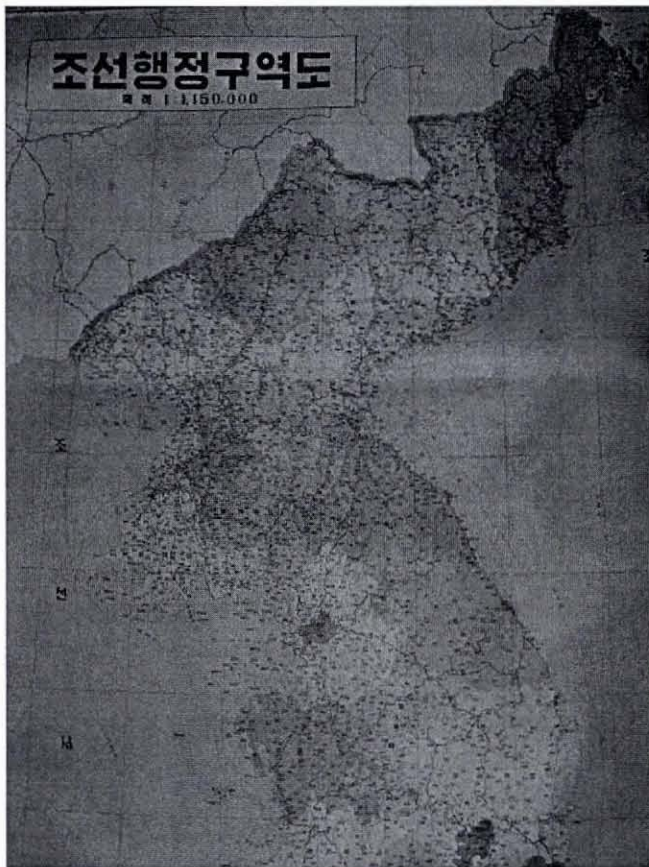


Figure 2-4. North Korean map with no DMZ or MDL
(Source: Author's photograph. See references for detailed map information.)

South Korean Conceptualizations of the DMZ—Toward Reunification?

Just as the US media section shows the dominant discourse as the background for *Stealth* and *Die Another Day*, this section will show an alternate discourse which informs *JSA*—specifically the collective desire for peaceful reunification, and the connection of the (unified) Korean identity to the natural landscape of Korea. For many years the South Korean perception of the DMZ mirrored the Western print media's discourse. But for a number of reasons, tension between the Koreas has eased over time and the sense of danger seems to be fading into the past. Opinion polls "indicate that fewer and fewer South Koreans believe that the two countries will ever again go to war" (Brooke, 2006). Chung Dal Ho, a South Korean diplomat recently stated, "We don't think North Korea is capable of attacking South Korea, because South Korea is strong" (ibid.). The shift in perception manifested itself politically through former (South Korean) President Kim Dae Jung's "sunshine policy" (open dialogue based on peaceful reunification and reconciliation) in dealing with North Korea. On June 15, 2000 President Kim met face-to-face with North Korea's Kim Jong Il in an unprecedented peace conference. It was the first time since the DMZ divided the peninsula that the highest level of leaders of both Koreas had engaged in open dialogue (Dudley, 2003). Recalling one of the more sensitive points of negotiation, President Kim Dae Jung remarked, "When I listened to Chairman Kim's reply, I could not help feeling that our ancestors were leading us on the path to lasting peace" (D. Kim, 2003: 146-147).

One intriguing project that materialized at the 2000 peace convention was a joint construction effort to reconnect the Koreas via railroad. Although it laid the diplomatic groundwork, Kim's administration did not see the tracks connect during its tenure—it

took another three years for the completion of the project in 2003, and another four years beyond that for North Korea to agree to a one-time trip (Choe, 2007). Seven years after the project's conception, one train traveled north across the western DMZ while one train traveled south across the eastern DMZ. Speaking of the historic border crossings, the South Korean Minister of Unification, Lee Jae Jung, remarked, "These are not just test runs. They mean reconnecting the severed bloodline of the Korean nation. The trains carry our dream of peace" (ibid.).

No trains have crossed the border since May 18, 2007, but South Korea's head of state has. Roh Moo Hyun, only the second South Korean president to visit Pyongyang, symbolically walked across the Bridge of No Return, and then traveled to the North Korean capital by automobile (Lim, 2007). South Korean reporters indicated that Kim Jong Il appeared much more subdued for this visit (as compared to Kim Dae Jung's visit in 2000) until Roh presented Kim with a collection of 150 DVDs. Among the titles given to Kim was *JSA*, as Lee Young Ae (Major Sophie Jean) is believed to be Kim's favorite South Korean actress (ibid., BBC, 2007). Perhaps it was the DVDs that broke the diplomatic ice—Kim and Roh formally agreed to seek a lasting peace regime, which would include a declaration of the end of the Korean War (Park, 2007). Since the summit, Lee Myung Bak has taken Roh's place as president. President Lee indicated that his administration intended to continue the face-to-face talks with Kim Jong Il (Kravlev and Salmon, 2008).

As with most political issues, there is more than one way to view relations with North Korea. Many South Koreans (and American officials) oppose the sunshine policy in its most recent form, and many still view North Korea as a threat. After all, as long as

the DMZ exists as a buffer between two countries that have signed an *armistice*, and not a peace *treaty*, the possibility of renewed combat operations is ever-present. Generally, however, the anxiety of the Cold War has waned. Over five decades the danger of an imminent war has transformed into the hope of a peaceful reunification—an important part of Korean identity or Koreanness (Taylor, 2003). By and large, South Koreans no longer (want to) believe the North Koreans will attack. “Across the board, that concern is gone” (Brooke, 2006). Many South Koreans have even started referring to Korea using an old term, *Chosun*—the name given to the land during the Yi dynasty (1392-1910), the first and last time the peninsula was under a single united Korean rule (Bartz, 1972). (Incidentally, North Korea has always referred to Korea as *Chosun*).

It is from this political climate that a changing image of the DMZ has emerged. As South Korean entrepreneurs, environmentalists, and peace groups eye the potential reunion with the North, the DMZ has become the center of a national land use debate. While there are many proposals for land use within the DMZ, I have condensed the range of proposals into four categories which will be addressed: farmers, culturalists or monumentalists, industrial developers, and ecologists or conservationists. Just as understanding the US print media’s portrayal of the DMZ is necessary in analyzing the images of the DMZ in *Stealth* and *Die Another Day*, understanding the current DMZ land use debate in South Korea is necessary in analyzing the portrayal of the DMZ in *Joint Security Area*. By exploring the ways in which South Koreans are conceptualizing the DMZ for future use, I aim to show that in South Korea, new ideas are emerging which contest the dominant discourse.

It should be noted that most of the reunification scenarios rely on some critical assumptions. First, the land between the fences of the DMZ would most likely be annihilated in the initial stages of combat operations if the armistice agreements were to break down. The mines and tanks would certainly destroy a significant percentage the soil, vegetation, and animal habitat through the main avenues of advance. These land use proposals, therefore, assume one of two peaceful scenarios. The first assumed scenario is characterized by the peaceful, diplomatic reunification of Korea, resulting in one government for the entire peninsula. In this scenario the DMZ would be of no further use and would therefore dissolve, its use decided under a new constitution.

The second assumed scenario would involve the peaceful co-use of the DMZ prior to reunification. In this case, South Korea would require North Korean cooperation in restructuring the armistice agreement, which restricts the use of the land inside the DMZ. According to the agreement, the United Nations Military Armistice Commission (UNMAC) has absolute jurisdiction over human activity inside the DMZ. While both North and South Korea actually *own* the land, the UNMAC *governs* its use (J. H. Lee, 2003). Therefore, any proposed use of the land inside the DMZ while it still exists as a buffer zone under UNMAC control would require a restructured agreement of use signed by all involved parties.

Farmers' Conceptualization of the DMZ

The farmers in question are primarily those who own land inside the Civilian Control Zone. After the Korean War, the record of land ownership rights for the areas

covered by the DMZ and CCZ was either lost or destroyed. Due to the unclear status of land ownership, squatter's rights became the new rule of law for those plots of land within the CCZ (C. Kim, 2001). The land within the DMZ, of course, remained under UNMAC control. Therefore, no farmer maintains a legal claim to the land inside the DMZ. Since the signing of the armistice, the South Korean government has restricted development in the CCZ in order to guarantee space for military training and to control civilian access to the DMZ itself—two crucial components of the strategic framework of national defense. According to the land use law, all visitors except residents can be forbidden to enter, photography and conducting questionnaires are prohibited, and the buying and selling of real estate is banned by the government (Hwang, 2001). All of these activities will presumably become legal again when the DMZ and CCZ are dissolved.

Some of the farmers have expressed a desire to sell their land to developers as soon as the real estate buying and selling ban is lifted (John et al., 2003). Those who plan to maintain ownership of their farms, however, have a different concept of the DMZ: anything *except* conservation. For the past fifty years, two species of cranes (red-crowned or Manchurian cranes and white-naped cranes) have been feeding on the residual rice grains in the farmers' fields in the CCZ by day, and roosting in the safety of the DMZ by night (figure 2-5). Consequently, "the local farmers regard the cranes as a potential threat in their livelihood rather than as an ecological member sharing the same ecosystem resources" (ibid.: 174).



Figure 2-5. Manchurian Cranes in the DMZ

(Source: http://www.natureinterface.com/e/ni05/P060-061/0105_060+01.jpg, accessed March 18, 2008)

Besides the direct competition with the birds there is another dimension to the farmers' distaste for the preservationists and conservationists. There is a growing sense of mistrust among the farmers who see themselves as victims of exploitation. In their eyes, the preservationist/conservationist groups with large sums of money and Nongovernmental Organization (NGO) endorsement are the "haves" and the farmers with only their land are the "have-nots" (C. Kim, 2001). For these farmers, the land is their life and they would rather not compete with endangered species. In a survey conducted in northern Kyonggi Province (inside the CCZ and bordering the DMZ), only 10.6% of the people expressed the need for a "natural ecology park," and only 12.4% wanted "parks and green areas" (ibid.). When questioned about the establishment of a "Borderline Area Support Law," 35.1% wanted the inclusion of "environmental

prevention countermeasures” (in other words, a means to counter the environmentalists), revealing their aversion to the conservation movement (ibid.).

Alec Brownlow identified this same issue at the core of the land use debate in the Adirondack Mountains of upstate New York. In that case, farmers opposed the re-introduction of wolves (which had been eradicated decades ago) in the mountains because they posed a threat to livestock. For those local landowners, the re-introduction of the wolf represented “the latest attempt by an urban-based conservation ideology to dictate local landscape meaning, and subsequently, land use and property rights” (Brownlow, 2000:154). An immediate parallel emerges in comparing the DMZ to the Adirondacks. In both cases, the presence of a certain species of animal was a direct threat to the means of farmers’ prosperity. There is, however, one important difference. In New York, the wolf had been long removed from the landscape. During the years that the wolf was gone, a new meaning (and use) of the landscape emerged—one that did not include the wolf. Conversely, the cranes were never eradicated from the DMZ, and therefore, have been a part of the landscape and its meaning for thousands of years—long before the barbed-wire and mines made the land inaccessible to humans (Drohan, 1996). In New York, a convincing argument can be made from both the conservationists’ and farmers’ perspective—each can claim historically that the wolf either belongs or does not. (After all, how far back in time do you look to find the “original” landscape?) In the DMZ, there is no question—the fences and mines are relatively new, but the cranes have eaten from the farmers’ fields as long as the farmers have planted them.

The South Korean government has recently developed a plan in response to the farmers’ concerns. In addition to paying for damages and potential loss of profit

associated with the DMZ's designation as a protected area, the government plans to pay farmers for preserving grain to feed the endangered cranes and other species (C. Kim, 2001). Perhaps with time the crane may become more valuable to the farmers. If ecotourism continues its trend, the economic benefits will "spread through the regional economy" and farmers will be rewarded for employing "resource-conserving actions" (John, 1998). For now, however, it is likely the farmers will be forced to settle for monetary compensation—the government can adequately meet the farmers' financial needs, and the other groups with interest in the lands of the DMZ have relatively louder voices. It appears that for the foreseeable future, the cranes will continue to visit each winter against the farmers' wishes.

Culturalists' and Monumentalists' Conceptualization of the DMZ

President Kim Dae Jung's sunshine policy was not restricted to the realm of politics. It gradually spread to other sectors of South Korean society as well. Several cultural events over the years have further contributed to a more relaxed general attitude toward North Korea. One of those events was the South Korean Red Cross' and the North Korean Red Cross' joint effort in 1985 to reunite families torn apart by the war. Conferences were held in Seoul and Pyongyang, allowing separated family members to reunite, if only for a few hours (Kirkbride, 2003). Five years later, the "Pan-National Reunification Music Festival" was held in Pyongyang. Seventeen South Korean delegates crossed the DMZ at Panmunjom to participate in the cultural exchange. Two months later, North Korea sent thirty-three delegates to Seoul as a reciprocal gesture

(ibid.). As another facet of the “sunshine policy,” cross-DMZ family reunions were negotiated and carried out during President Kim Dae Jung’s time in office (D. Kim, 2001). The two Koreas also marched (but did not compete) under one flag (white field with a blue silhouette of the Korean peninsula) at the 2000, 2004, and 2006 Olympic Games as a symbolic gesture of reunification (People’s Daily Online, 2006).

These events and other influences have inspired South Korean culturalists and monumentalists to propose the preservation of portions of the DMZ as “cultural place[s] symbolizing the reunification of the Korean people or freedom after the reunification” (J. H. Lee, 2001: 129). Ideas range from the construction of cultural theaters and museums to the establishment of a “free city” as the first place of reunification and a “place for harmony” which would become the new capital city of a unified Korea (ibid.: 129-130). None of the cultural or monumental proposals would require a significant portion of the DMZ’s land, leaving the remaining area for other uses. All of these types of proposals, however, involve using the DMZ as a monument *before* reunification. Assuming permission would be granted from all parties (DPRK, ROK, and UNMAC) construction on a monument could begin tomorrow. It is hard to imagine a scenario from this perspective which would not be inclusive of other land use conceptualizations. For this reason, it is practical to suggest the culturalists and monumentalists will likely see at least some part of the DMZ become a lasting symbol of Korean unification.

Still, it seems ironic to create a monument to unity in the place of enduring division. Yet for Koreans, to memorialize the DMZ may be the only way to heal the scars of separation. After the historic peace summit between the Koreas in 2000, “polls show[ed] that most of South Korea’s 46 million people want[ed] to unite” (Dudley, 2003:

125). Moreover, “the desire to reunite the nation stems from the Korean people’s deepest soul-searching” (Yang, 2001: 148). As demonstrated in the past, cultural exchanges and events can take place in any venue in either North or South Korea. Likewise, a monument to reunification can be erected anywhere on the peninsula. But, many culturalists see perfect symbolism in reuniting the people at the very place of their division. The memorialized landscape of the DMZ would become a “self-conscious cultural construction,” representing the “paradise regained” version of the Edenic narrative as explained by William Cronon (1996: 39, 37). The horrors of armed conflict and post-war alienation embodied by the DMZ for more than half a century would yield to paradisiacal reunification and restoration commemorated by the same landscape. Like Apache place-names, the DMZ as a cultural place would serve to “transform distressing thoughts caused by excessive worry into more agreeable ones marked by optimism and hopefulness” and “heal wounded spirits” (Basso, 1996: 100). A monument in any other place would lose the power of its spatial duality (war and peace, alienation and re-integration). In other words, the cultural scars of conflict and familial separation, when removed from the landscape of the DMZ, simply lose their context. For most Koreans, the space of the DMZ is both the space of war and peace. It is the place of division and unity. To commemorate the “paradise regained” (reunification), the “paradise lost” (establishment of the DMZ) must be remembered. Beginning and ending this chapter of Korean history in the same space, place, and landscape is necessary to retain its cultural context. It is closure.

Industrial Developers' Conceptualization of the DMZ

Perhaps the loudest voice in the conceptual debate, or clearest image (in terms of intent) of the DMZ belongs to the industrial developers. No other conceptualization has progressed further from theory to practice. A new LG Philips industrial plant worth more than ten billion dollars sits six miles from the DMZ. (Brooke, 2006). In April 2006, a 65-acre English learning experience theme park called English Village opened in the city of Paju (inside the CCZ) (Gyeonggi English Village, 2007). Due to low real estate prices and the newly lifted ban on development, Paju's population doubled from 150,000 to 300,000 people in just three years (2003-2006). Three industrial parks are under construction north of Seoul. One planned city of 150,000 is also under construction. The city will be called "Ubiquitous City" because all the apartments will feature high-speed internet access (Brooke, 2006). Perhaps best describing the developer's general conceptualization of the DMZ and its surrounding land, one real estate agent remarked, "We are a small country. We can't restrict development" (ibid.).

The development free-for-all has not been confined to the southern CCZ. In 2000, Hyundai (a major South Korean corporation) obtained "exclusive business rights for a period of thirty years" to develop "Social Overhead Capital" projects in North Korea (Gaffney, 2006). The two flagship projects are the Mount Kumgang tourist resort and the Kaesong Industrial Park, both located north of the DMZ. In 2005 these projects combined to contribute more than one billion dollars in North-South trade, making a strong economic case for the development of the land surrounding the DMZ (ibid.).

Hyundai has also looked to the land between the fences of the DMZ. There is a plan on the drawing boards to create a \$660 million dam on the Imjin River. Others have

suggested building a nuclear power plant inside the DMZ (J. H. Lee, 2001). The prospect of untouched land is proving to be a huge temptation for South Korea's population, which is reaching 50,000,000 people crowded into country smaller than Virginia (Brooke, 2006). With the staggering costs of a peaceful reunification looming over the southern half of the DMZ, many "fear that a South Korea that puts economic development first and a North Korea that has no environmental movement could together lead to the zone's rapid destruction" (Onishi, 2004). Publicly announced development plans give a glimpse, but time will tell how corporations and other developers perceive the land between the fences. At this stage, their conceptualization of unused land falls in line with Horace Walpole's, who claimed "an open country is but a canvas on which a landscape might be designed" (Dubos, 1980:127). Whatever landscape Korean developers choose to design, however, will forever be their legacy. Perhaps their legacy will be that of environmental degradation and wasted opportunities. But perhaps the developers will undertake "environmentally sensitive development" in concert with other proposed uses for the DMZ (K. Kim, 2002).

Ecologists' and Conservationists' Conceptualization of the DMZ

For the past three decades, the integrity of Korea's ecosystems and landscapes has systematically been compromised. In South Korea, most natural ecosystems, including large sections of the coastline and salt marshes, have been converted into industrial estates and urban centers. In North Korea, rampant deforestation has caused severe soil erosion and

flooding, along with environmental degradation by military operations (K. Kim, 1997).

As a result, the collective cultural image of the landscape, known to Koreans as “keum-su-gang-san” or “land of embroidered rivers and mountains” has been almost completely destroyed (ibid.). There is, however, a serpentine corridor in the middle of the peninsula which has been immune to development and deforestation. “Having been left to the whims of nature for almost half a century now, the Korean DMZ has become a flourishing *de facto* bio-sanctuary” (Westing, 2001: 163). Many plants and animals have burgeoned in this undisturbed environment. According to one study, half of the world’s remaining red-crowned cranes and white-naped cranes spend time and find habitat in the DMZ. Ninety percent of the world’s remaining black-faced spoonbills breed inside the DMZ. And the white stork, which is locally extinct in Japan, thrives in the DMZ (Shore, 2004). “Indeed, roughly one-third of the 2,900 higher plant species of the Korean peninsula can be found in the DMZ, as can roughly one-half of the peninsula’s 70 mammal species, and roughly one-fifth of the peninsula’s 320 bird species” (Westing, 2001: 164). Those totals are staggering, especially in light of the DMZ’s total area—roughly 992 square kilometers—which is only 0.5% of the total area of the peninsula.

Perhaps nobody recognizes the ecological and cultural value of preserving the DMZ as a bio-sanctuary more than Kim Ke Chung. He argues that “the DMZ has, in fact, become a unique nature reserve containing the last vestiges of Korea’s natural heritage” (1997). To preserve the last of Korea’s nature, Kim proposed the Korean Peace Bioreserves System (KPBRs). This concept consists of a series of interconnected wildlife preserves, international parks, and managed ecosystems, each with varying

degrees of human accessibility (Drohan, 1996). Crucial areas, such as roosting sites for endangered birds, would not be available for public use. Other areas would be suitable for ecotourism. The largest hurdle, as Kim recognizes, is the perception of the land. The KPBRs will only find acceptance “if local citizens and both governments realize that the land is worth more if developed for long-term sustainable use” (ibid.).

One study conducted in the late 1990s showed that the total use and non-use value of the ecotourism destination of Cheolwon Valley (one of the critical crane habitats) was approximately \$18.4 million per year. Over the span of fifty years, that value would total \$152.8 million (John, 2003). Clearly, it is in the best interest of the farmers and land owners to facilitate this activity, but the lure of development profits is strong. The land use valuation survey concluded the following: “The difficulty in changing landholders’ behavior is that the rewards of a bio-reserve program, although lucrative in the long-run, might be negligible compared with the more immediate attractive profit potential of resource-consuming development projects” (ibid.: 178).

But long-term economic prosperity and endangered species may not be enough to slow developers. Korean environmentalists may need a more effective weapon to combat the waves of bulldozers waiting to break down the fences of the DMZ. Perhaps that weapon can be found in the “spiritual geography” of the DMZ. Kathleen Norris defines spiritual geography as “the place where I’ve wrestled my story out of the circumstances of landscape and inheritance” (2001: 2). For Norris, that place was the Great Plains of the Dakotas:

Family farmers and monks cultivate living lightly on the land, the farmers because they love it and want to preserve it for their children, the

Benedictines because their communities put down permanent roots.

Neither are frontier people in the exploitative sense of the word—those who take all there is from a place and then move on. As it becomes increasingly obvious that the human race will eventually run out of places to move on to, their wisdom and way of life may prove important to us all (2001: 120).

The DMZ can be described in the same terms. It is certainly the place where Korea has wrestled its story out of the landscape and inheritance. It is also the last place to “move on to” in Korea. “As a last refuge for species no longer seen elsewhere, and off limits to all but a few Koreans, [the DMZ] represents a spiritual loss to some” (Onishi, 2004). The landscape of the DMZ embodies the sense of “suffering of the Korean people” (Yang, 2001: 148).

The metaphor of the Korean spirit also takes the form of an animal many believe may yet survive in the DMZ—the Amur (or Siberian) tiger. While there are no substantiated sightings of tigers inside the DMZ, “farmers who live next to the DMZ have seen pug marks, the scratches large cats make to mark their territories, and locals have also reported animals apparently mauled by a large predator” (Pearl, 2006). To find a tiger in the DMZ would be an enormous spiritual victory for the (unified) Korean identity. One man, a former television cameraman and documentary filmmaker named Lim Sun Nam, quit his job so he could devote all his time to finding a tiger in the DMZ. Mr. Lim noted, “I am searching not only for the tiger, but the spirit and soul of Korea. Because the DMZ is not polluted—it’s preserved—the Korean spirit is still alive there” (Onishi, 2003). Lim’s sentiment is not uncommon. When given the task of finding a

mascot to represent the nation on the international stage, the South Koreans chose the tiger—a symbol of the (unified) Korean soul. “The tiger’s importance in Korean culture was underscored during the 1988 Seoul Olympics, when it was chosen as South Korea’s mascot” (Onishi, 2004).

Thus, there are many layers of cultural values projected onto the relatively small landscape of the DMZ. The (unified) Korean spirit, (unified) Koreanness, or (unified) Korean identity lives in the landscape itself and in the tiger—an animal which may have survived the colonial Japanese hunters who were said to have killed the last of them (ibid.). The tiger is at once the symbol of a unified Korea, the self-appointed image of South Korea on the international stage, and the symbol of nature’s triumph over man’s desecration of the environment. To find a tiger in the DMZ is to reunite Korea, defeat colonialism at last, and to free a (unified) Korean identity which has been fenced in (or out) for more than fifty years. If valuation studies, or endangered species, or the “land embroidered with rivers and mountains” cannot, perhaps the tiger, or even the possibility of the tiger, can stay the bulldozers.

Ignoring the Mines

After the signing of the armistice agreement, the US Army and ROK Army mined the southern portion of the DMZ and North Korea mined the northern portion, each side qualifying the action as a defensive measure. The International Campaign to Ban Landmines estimates the number of mines in the US-ROK section of the DMZ to be between 1.15 and 1.2 million mines (2002). Although North Korea has acknowledged mining “solely for defensive purposes,” there is no current estimate for the number of

mines north of the MDL (ibid.: 678). Yet, noticeably missing from each South Korean conceptualization of the DMZ was the discussion of de-mining the landscape. All proposals would certainly require at least some level of mine removal.

For culturalists and developers looking to build a monument or industrial park, an effort similar to the 2002 de-mining of the roadway and railway linking North and South Korea might be expected. In September 2002 the South Korean Army and other agencies began clearing two 250 meter paths through the southern half of the DMZ using a combination of heavy equipment, metal detectors, and de-mining specialists. South Korea's half of the railroad construction project was completed in June 2003 (BBC News, 2002 and Railway Technology.com, 2007). The total area cleared of mines was 4.3 square kilometers—a testament to the tedious nature of de-mining. By any estimate, it would take years to de-mine the rest of the DMZ.

Still, planners, culturalists, and ecologists mention mines only when describing the DMZ. No mention of the threat of mines or de-mining is made in reference to their projects. Most likely, the different groups simply assume the government will oversee the de-mining process, just as it did in the 2002-2003 construction project. After all, none of the competing groups is either equipped for or trained to handle mines. And at a cost of \$1 million to \$2 million per square kilometer de-mined, few groups would (or could) volunteer to finance the mine clearing process (University of Western Australia, 2000). Therefore, the common assumption among planners is likely that the group's project would begin *after* the area is de-mined.

But perhaps the intentional omission of mines means something else. At first glance, the details of the DMZ scenario resemble the toxic waste dump converted into a

national park at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal, where for nearly forty years the government placed byproduct chemicals in land fills. Today, both the DMZ and the Arsenal harbor flourishing wildlife populations due largely to limited human contact. Both require significant clean-up projects to make the areas safe for humans. William Cronon recognized the paradoxes of such places as “endlessly fascinating” (1996: 28). Speaking of the Rocky Mountain Arsenal he remarked, “we face the dilemma of deciding whether to clean up its waste dumps even if doing so might endanger the creatures that now make their homes there” (ibid.). Perhaps this paradox weighs heavily on the DMZ project planners as well, who seem to focus on selling the positive aspects of their plans. Certainly the existence of mines conflicts with the image of “keum-su-gang-san.” In any case, it is interesting to note the various plans’ lack of attention to mines.

Conclusion

Since the final bullets were fired across the front lines in the Korean War, the DMZ has divided the peninsula geographically, ideologically, economically, and culturally. For the West, information about the DMZ has come mostly through the print media. With good reason, the print media’s image of the DMZ includes barbed-wire fences, land mines, security patrols, acts of terrorism, infiltrators, illegal tunnels, troop buildups, firefights, hostages, and murders. These images, combined with geopolitical labels such as “axis of evil” and “rogue state” (which North Korea seems hopelessly obliged to validate through acts of international terrorism and nuclear weapons saber-rattling) combine to form an overall stereotype of the DMZ. While some South Korean

perceptions of the DMZ mirror the Western perceptions, some see a different space when they look at the militarized border:

Excluding humans from the DMZ has allowed an unexpected and extraordinary experiment with nature to unfold. In this four-kilometer-wide corridor, stretching 250 kilometers across the peninsula, wild habitats have luxuriantly rebounded from war's destruction. The fallow land on the western section has reverted to thick prairie and shrubs. Rich green forests adorn the eastern mountains. Endangered and rare plant and animal species have found homes there (Shore, 2004: 32-33).

Others envision the DMZ as a place for factories and plants, or a place of cultural heritage. The competing land use proposals offer a glimpse into South Koreans' perceptions of what the land means to them. As the next two chapters will demonstrate, differing perceptions (discourses) of the DMZ have been reproduced in the conceptualizations of the DMZ in *Stealth*, *Die Another Day*, and *Joint Security Area*.

CHAPTER THREE

THE KOREAN DMZ IN AMERICAN CINEMA

Introduction

This chapter will explore the representations of the Korean DMZ in two American films, *Stealth* (directed by Rob Cohen) and *Die Another Day* (directed by Lee Tamahori). The analysis of each film will begin with a brief introduction to the film's genre followed by a plot summary. Lastly, a discussion of the scenes set in the DMZ will focus on the following concepts: the degree to which the DMZ is presented as a place, the degree to which the landscape is humanized, and how the North Koreans are portrayed. The analysis will also include an examination of some of the general themes of each film which add depth and meaning to the representations of the DMZ.

The Role of Genre in Film

Before examining a specific genre, it may be useful to make a few observations about genre in general. First, one could argue that it is much easier to recognize a genre than to define one (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001). For example, a casual fan of the cinema might readily categorize *The Sound of Music* (1965) as a musical. But defining the musical genre is a much more complex task. While most scholars agree that one firm definition for a given genre does not exist, there are recurring themes, conventions, plots, and other cinematic elements which help place a film in a genre (or two). For example, a musical's essential convention is the musical number wherein "characters burst out in song and dance in the middle of a scene without easing into the number with a plausible pretext" (Giannetti, 2002: 227). A list of a western's themes might include "the frontier,

individualism, the land, and law and order versus anarchy...” (Monaco, 2000). Thus, while many disagree on what makes up a genre, few disagree when it comes placing specific films in a genre.

In any case, genre is an influential tool for both the movie producer and the viewers. For the film industry, genre can be a guideline for what kind of films to produce. The movies which fit neatly into genres currently in style are more likely to be financed than films in a less popular genre (ibid.). As genres cycle in and out of popularity, Hollywood producers seek the scripts that put people in the seats. For the viewer, film genre tells her what landscapes, icons, and objects she will see on the screen. If a movie fits into the gangster genre, the viewer anticipates a drive-by shooting in an urban landscape, or the image of a Tommy gun emerging from a suitcase. The same moviegoer would have a different preconceived expectation of landscape and props in a western film.

Genre films also reproduce narrative meanings based on social norms and values.

[T]heir ideological function, in fact, is precisely to organise perceptions of the world in such a way as to elicit acquiescence and assent to the proposition that this is not only the way the world is, but the way it ought to be – or even the only way it ever could be (Langford, 2005:21).

Thus, genre becomes a way to address social problems through narrative meaning. The audience in a gangster movie re-learns the notion that “crime does not pay” through the fate of the gangster (ibid.). Barry Langford also points out that genre also might be employed to present a narrative meaning that opposes the dominant societal values. As the analysis of *JSA* (Chapter 4) will demonstrate, a pro-North Korean narrative

challenges the mainstream perception of North Koreans. It presents the audience with a new set of values and a new lesson to learn.

Bordwell and Thompson aptly describe why genres and their power to categorize have become a dominant, central element of cinematic discourse:

They shape what we expect to see and hear. They guide our reactions. They press us to make sense of a movie in certain ways. Shared by filmmakers and viewers alike, these categories are a condition for film art as we most often experience it (2001: 108).

The Science Fiction Genre

What, then, can a viewer expect from a science fiction movie? J. P. Telotte suggests that the science fiction film's key identifiable element is "the technology we typically encounter, the spaceships, robots, ray guns, futuristic architecture, and so on, which mark the form" (1999: 17). John Brosnan agrees that the "scientific element" (usually associated with advanced technology) is the "*raison d'être* for a science fiction story" (1978: 9). For him, however, the technological element is a "hard" science, and only half of the overall scientific element. The other half, or "soft" science, includes elements such as biology, sociology, psychology and so on (ibid.). Noreen Herzfeld's discussion of artificial intelligence (AI) in science fiction films builds on Brosnan's softer side of science:

The artificially intelligent computer in science fiction film is not a prop but a character, one that has become a staple since the mid-1950s. These characters are embodied in a variety of physical forms, ranging from the

wholly mechanical (computers and robots) to those that look as if they were completely biological (androids).

In examining *Stealth* we find specific examples of each of the aforementioned elements of a science fiction film. Telotte's futuristic architecture is visible in the physical structure and performance of the unmanned combat air vehicle, EDI (or extreme deep invader, pronounced "eddie"). The shape, color, and flight capabilities of EDI more closely resemble a spaceship, not a U.S. Navy fighter jet. Shots of an actual aircraft carrier (*USS Nimitz*) and real fighter jets (FA-18s) provide a juxtaposition which underscores EDI's futuristic design (figure 3-1). Brosnan's hard and soft sciences meet in the narrative when EDI, after being struck by lightning, learns to feel human emotions. And EDI, a computer with the ability to learn, would certainly qualify as one of Herzfeld's mechanical characters.

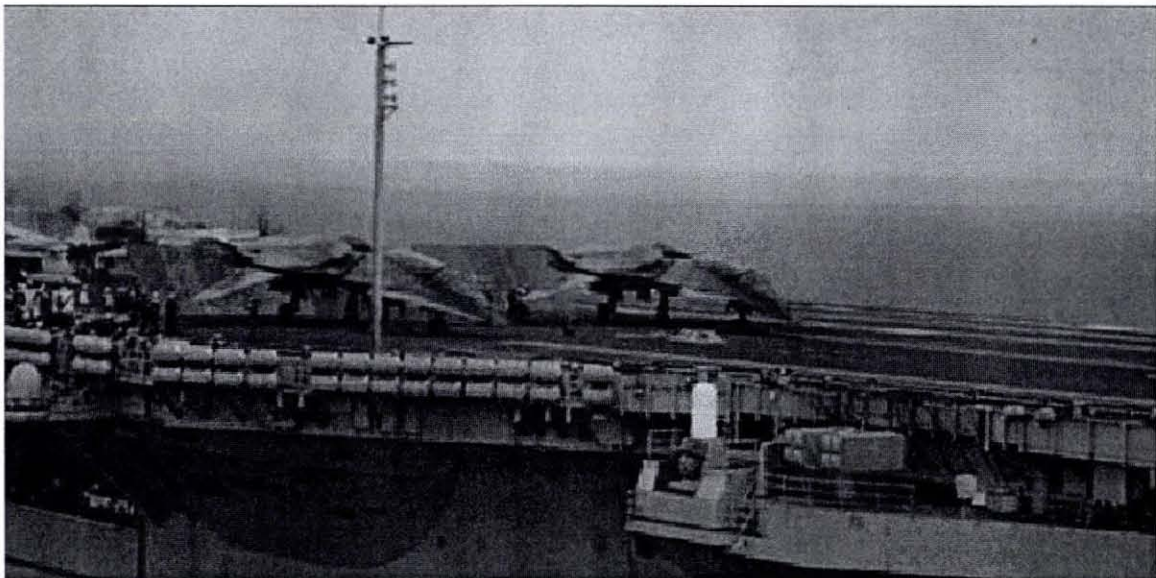


Figure 3-1. Mixing the future with the present

(Source: <http://photos.bielfan.com/displayimage.php?album=187&pos=195>, accessed March 19, 2008)

Along with the iconic conventions of robots, AI, spaceships and the like, science fiction themes help to define the genre. Identifying one major theme, Judith Hess Wright proposes that “the science fiction film provides a solution to the problems presented by intrusion—that is, they tell us how to deal with what may be called ‘the other’” (1986: 46). In the world of science fiction, technology often takes the form of the adversary (or serves as the vehicle for bringing the adversary closer) and the result is a hyperbolic representation of the rift between “us” and “them” on the screen. Wright points out that in many American science fiction films, the communists become the others against the backdrop of the Cold War, usually in the context of an arms race (ibid.). As the next section will show, this particular theme resonates in *Stealth*.

A second prominent trope is the inherent moral struggle that accompanies advancing technology. Margaret Tarratt explains:

Most writers in English on science fiction films view them as reflections of society’s anxiety about its increasing technological prowess and its responsibility to control the gigantic forces of destruction it possesses (1986).

Thus, the threat of apocalypse is common in science fiction films. The protagonists must fight epic battles to harness, overcome, or demolish the malfunctioning technology their own societies created. Losing the battle means that “humanity will be replaced or destroyed by what it has made” (Rushing and Frenz, 1995: 5). Simply stated, the convention becomes: man builds technology, technology becomes too much for man to handle, technology turns against man (seeking to overthrow his sovereignty), and man must fight his own creation to save himself. *Stealth* employs this general sequence:

Captain Cummins builds EDI, EDI learns things he (EDI has a male voice) should not, EDI disobeys direct orders and selects his own targets, and the human flight team must fight EDI to stop a global war.

Noreen Herzfeld makes an interesting observation about the humanization of technology theme that is commonly found in science fiction movies depicting AI. She asserts that AI is really addressing the larger question of what it means to be human. The goal of AI, Herzfeld argues, “is to create an ‘other’ in our own image. That image will necessarily be partial, thus we must determine just what it is in ourselves that computers must possess or demonstrate to be considered our ‘mind children’” (2002: ix). In *Stealth*, EDI cannot really be a part of the human flight team until he possesses a human sense of morality. At first EDI rationally chooses mission accomplishment over morality (the radioactive cloud from his target causing the death of innocent civilians). Later in the narrative, however, EDI has learned to feel. This new (human) ability enables EDI to sacrifice himself to save the rest of his flight team. Thus, *Stealth*’s AI suggests that to be human is to choose morality over rationality.

As a final note on the science fiction genre, I suggest that the elements of fantasy and imagined technologies in science fiction films do not necessarily undermine other realistic elements of the narrative. In fact, many science fiction films rely on a realistic representation of a specific place in order for the narrative to resonate. For example, images of a Martian invasion of some unknown planet in *The War of the Worlds* (1953) would not have been nearly as provocative as the image of the smoldering ruins of Los Angeles and a crumbling Taj Mahal. The same logic holds true for the blockbuster *Independence Day* (1996)—images of the Empire State Building, the White House, and

other iconic buildings being destroyed by giant spaceships had to be realistic to draw the audience into the narrative. In *Steath's* case, Cohen clearly relies on the realistic portrayal of places the audiences can recognize (Nevada, Russia, Alaska, and North Korea to list a few). Because his narrative takes place in the “not too distant future,” even his choice of antagonists must be realistic (Myanmar—a communist country, Russia—a former communist country, and North Korea—a communist country). Many science fiction movies do not rely on realistic places, characters, or storylines. Yet, even the most unrealistic fantasy world can be an important pedagogical tool in conveying real messages to the audience. After all, “every movie – no matter how wacky, heart-tugging, disturbing, or far-fetched – has an underlying message or philosophy that it means to leave with us by the final credits” (Hamlett, 2005: 11).

Plot Summary—*Stealth*

In the not-too-distant future, the United States Navy begins testing a new stealth fighter jet developed to counter the threat of global terrorism. The top secret weapons system development project is directed by Captain George Cummins (Sam Shepherd). Three of the U.S. Navy’s best pilots, Lieutenants Ben Gannon (Josh Lucas), Kara Wade (Jessica Biel) and Henry Purcell (Jamie Foxx) were selected to fly the new aircraft. After training in Nevada, the pilots receive their first assignment aboard the *USS Abraham Lincoln*, an aircraft carrier deployed to the Philippine Sea, where a new squadron mate will meet them on board the ship.

The flight team soon learns the fourth pilot is not a fellow human, but an unmanned combat air vehicle (UCAV) called EDI. The EDI concept was designed

around a computer system with unprecedented AI capabilities. During the first training flight with EDI, Cummins receives orders to conduct a quick strike on a high-value target (assembly of terrorists) in Rangoon, Myanmar. He relays the target information to the flight of four stealth aircraft.

Initial calculations indicate the fighters cannot carry out the strike, but EDI offers a viable target solution which is too risky for human pilots. Gannon, however, pretends to have communication problems, disobeys a direct order, and drops the bomb precisely on its target. The mission is a success, but EDI learns there are no consequences for disobeying orders. As the flight returns to the ship, EDI is damaged by a lightning strike.

Before EDI can be fully repaired, another target of opportunity (arms dealers smuggling nuclear warheads) arises in Tajikistan. Upon learning that Cummins plans to launch EDI with the rest of the squadron, Gannon confronts Cummins, who dismisses Gannon's trepidation and orders him to conduct the mission. EDI only needs one more mission to validate the program. Gannon agrees reluctantly, but his doubts about Cummins begin to grow.

Upon reaching their target in Tajikistan, the team determines that striking the nuclear warheads will cause too much collateral damage to a nearby farming community. Gannon decides to abort the mission, but EDI refuses the order and carries out the attack, killing many innocent civilians. As EDI rejoins the formation, Gannon chastises him for disobeying an order. EDI replies that he learned that technique from Gannon on the previous mission. EDI then selects another target from his target database and departs the formation. Cummins orders the human pilots to intercept the UCAV and return it to the ship in one piece.

Henry Purcell finds EDI first and attempts to shoot the UCAV down after EDI refuses to surrender. The AI, however, can fly the aircraft better than the humans, and EDI causes Purcell to fly into a mountain. Wade sustains severe damage to her aircraft when it flies through the debris cloud created from Purcell's impact. Unable to control her aircraft, Wade ejects over North Korea. Meanwhile, Gannon locates EDI who has violated Russian airspace. Four Russian fighter jets attack and EDI sustains critical damage. Gannon strikes a deal with EDI: if the UCAV surrenders, Gannon will extinguish the fire on EDI's wing. EDI accepts the deal, but due to insufficient fuel, the aircraft cannot return to the ship. Cummins diverts the flight to an uncharted landing strip in Alaska.

After a crash landing in Alaska, Gannon discovers that Cummins set him up when an assassin posing as a doctor attempts to kill him. In the mean time, EDI's creator, Dr. Keith Orbit (Richard Roxburgh) discovers that EDI has learned to feel emotions. He makes some critical repairs, allowing Gannon and EDI to escape. Now realizing the extent of Cummins' cover-up plan, Gannon contacts the captain of the *USS Abraham Lincoln* to expose Cummins. When confronted and threatened with arrest, Cummins commits suicide.

Gannon and EDI locate Wade's last known location and attempt to extract her from North Korea. Wade evades her North Korean pursuers as she travels toward the DMZ. Close to the border, Wade is spotted by North Korean guards, who fire machine guns at her. Just then, EDI and Gannon arrive and suppress the enemy. Wade and Gannon are reunited, but now face a North Korean attack helicopter. As the helicopter fixes on the Americans, EDI crashes into the helicopter, destroying himself along with

the threat. The pilots walk through a gap in the DMZ fence to safety. War is averted, the rogue technology is contained, and humanity triumphs.

The DMZ in *Stealth*—Sacrificing Reality for Dramatic Effect

Although the DMZ is mentioned several times either by name or simply as the border, there is only one scene which depicts the landscape of the DMZ. The scene's establishing shot shows a flare rocketing into the night sky. By filming this scene under conditions of darkness, director Rob Cohen suggests the DMZ is a secretive, mysterious, and forbidden place. Before he can continue the narrative, he must provide the viewer with illumination—he must present the DMZ to those who cannot visualize it. The darkness also adds an element of anxiety for Lieutenant Wade, who can no longer see her hunter or what lies ahead. An unseen (and therefore unknown) enemy is much more fearsome. Consequently, the darkness of the DMZ subtly widens the gulf between “us” and “them.” The DMZ becomes a place of the others.

As the artificial illumination casts its light upon the landscape, the audience sees barren, gently-sloping hillside surrounded by trees on three sides. As the flare flickers and fades, Cohen keeps the DMZ illuminated with floodlights mounted on a barbed wire fence and a slowly moving spotlight positioned on a guard tower. The fence and the tower form the fourth edge of the visible landscape, completely closing in the space of the DMZ. As Cohen's *mise en scène* confines the landscape, the actual spatial dimensions of the DMZ (approximately 972 square kilometers) are collapsed and the DMZ becomes a prison. The four bound sides, the open space in the middle, the guards wielding automatic weapons on watchtowers, the roaming spotlight, the floodlights, and

even the German Shepherd suggest that Wade is a prisoner trying to escape. The monochromatic tone of the sequence also conveys a sense of bleakness and hopelessness. This scene might easily have come from a prison break movie, or perhaps a movie about the Berlin Wall.

After this ominous establishing shot, Cohen reveals more of the details of the landscape. The open area between the trees and the fence is a no man's land (reminiscent of Inge Boer's discussion of desert landscapes). Scattered across the ground are rusty hulks of various war machines, shot-up concrete slabs, enormous piles of twisted, dead trees, and the skeletal remains of buildings that were once houses. These images convey a sense of death, or in other words, a place that can no longer sustain life. The once productive vehicles which could move freely through the landscape are now anchored to ground by their immovable, useless forms. The trees which once thrived in the soil now litter its surface with lifeless limbs and branches. The concrete slabs which once served a purpose now mark the ground like pitted, weathered headstones (figure 3-2). The silence and the fog confirm the DMZ is a graveyard.

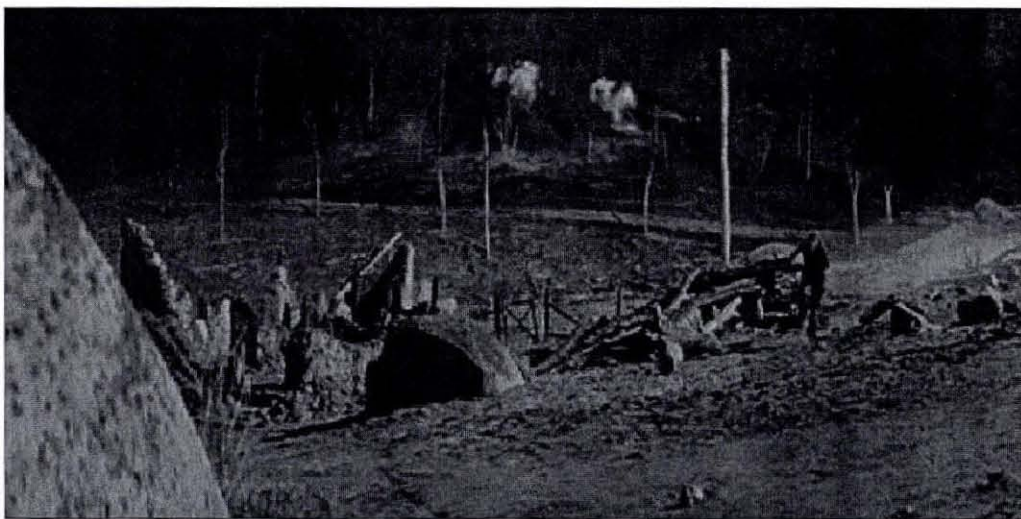


Figure 3-2. Lieutenant Wade (Jessica Biel) runs through the DMZ

(Source: <http://photos.bielfan.com/displayimage.php?album=187&pos=336>, accessed March 19, 2008)

Perhaps the most interesting image is the ruin of a house. As Wade makes her way from the northern tree line to the fence, the far-reaching beam of the spotlight finds her exposed in the open. She darts for safety as the machine guns break the silence. Diving over one of the waist-high rock walls, she finds temporary shelter in a place that was once a permanent shelter. But the DMZ is a prison and a graveyard. It can no longer tolerate freedom or sustain life. It can only remind Wade that she is a prisoner and that her freedom and her way of life are dead. The destroyed house is the memory of past Korean lives and past Korean freedoms, lost forever to communism in the space of the DMZ. Wade and the audience experience that loss of freedom and life together, but only momentarily as she inhabits the ruin. She (and we) cannot stay because it is the place of the other. If she wants to live, she must leave the DMZ and escape the North Koreans. In the beam of the spotlight nobody can rebuild the house. As long as the fence, guards, guns, and lights are there, the DMZ is a landscape of death. The only hope is escape.

Noticeably absent from Cohen's DMZ landscape is the South Korean presence. His double fence has towers, lights, and military equipment along the north side only. He shows the audience the North Korean flag waving from a guard tower. There are no South Korean troops, equipment, or flags. Thus, Cohen reinforces the dominance of the other in this space. It is not a neutral zone, as it is in reality. It is completely controlled by the North Koreans whose authority goes unquestioned in this space. Therefore, the DMZ is again a landscape of repression and bondage. It is also interesting to note that Wade cannot free herself from the DMZ. She needs external support to escape North Korea. Furthermore, her safe return to freedom is not assured until EDI makes the

supreme sacrifice. Here Cohen suggests that freedom from communism has a steep price, but that price must be paid.

Although there are accurate elements of Cohen's image of the DMZ (the guard tower is precise), clearly he has exercised some artistic freedom in creating the landscape. The following excerpt from a documentary contains Cohen's vision of the DMZ in his own words:

The DMZ in our imagination and the DMZ in real life are completely different...The irony of the DMZ in real life is that because no one can go there, it's become like a wildlife sanctuary. Well, that's not what I wanted for the climax of the film. I didn't want Jessica Biel crawling through the Garden of Eden. I wanted it to be more like what I had seen in pictures of World War I battlefields (2005).

Knowing images of the real DMZ landscape could not convey the emotions and themes of his film, Cohen chose to create a reel landscape which better suited his needs. Because he incorporated enough of the real elements, however, his DMZ becomes believable to the audience, which has been pre-conditioned by the images and articles in the printed news (as discussed previously). A fence, a tower, some North Korean soldiers with guns, and a tense border are all elements in Cohen's DMZ and in the *New York Times*' DMZ. Therefore, the audience's previous geopolitical knowledge of the DMZ is reinforced by Cohen's imagined landscape on the screen, which now becomes the dominant image for the viewers. Although Cohen knows the DMZ is a wildlife sanctuary teeming with life, his audience knows the DMZ as a desolate prison, a war-torn graveyard, and a no-man's land.

North Koreans in *Stealth*—A Portrait of the Primitive Other

The portrayal of North Koreans in *Stealth* adds another layer to the meaning of the DMZ. The first encounter with North Koreans occurs when Lieutenant Wade stumbles into a village after surviving a treacherous ejection from her aircraft.

Contrasted with Keith Orbit's ultra-modern luxury suite in Seattle (shown in the previous scene), the North Korean village is primitive in every way (figure 3-3). A large iron cauldron simmers over a cooking fire outside a humble traditional house from which peppers and corn are hanging. A drying rack made of bamboo stalks lashed together displays the clothes of peasants. There is no electricity here. The women wear dull, modest clothes, but they are smiling and happy.

These images are not threatening in the way that the images of the DMZ were, yet they emphasize the difference between the audience and the North Korean other. Cohen effectively magnifies the divide by juxtaposing this scene with the images of Orbit's apartment. The on-screen transition from Seattle to North Korea is abrupt. One moment the camera is focused on Orbit's face, and suddenly it is in North Korea. This transition-free montage effect facilitates comparison. Cohen first shows the modern self to the viewer and then shows him the primitive other. Still, for a brief moment, the audience can connect to the North Korean women doing their laundry near the babbling brook. But the connection is lost when a young girl screams at the sight of Lieutenant Wade. Here Cohen's primitive North Koreans exhibit a fear of the protagonist, and therefore by extension, a fear of the audience itself. (In most cases the viewer sees himself/herself as

the protagonist. The hero's experiences are also the viewer's by proxy). Again, the gulf between us and them is widened.

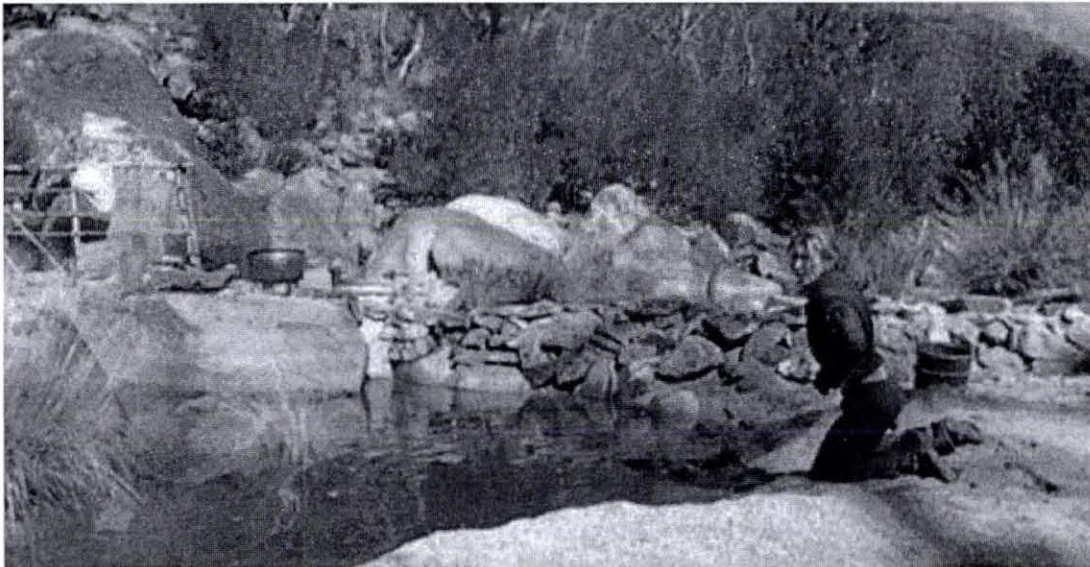


Figure 3-3. The primitive North Korean village

(Source: http://www.hotflick.net/pictures/005STL_Jessica_Biel_029.html, accessed March 18, 2008)

Sometime after the girl screams, Cohen introduces the North Korean commando squad led by Colonel Yune (Jason Lee) whose mission it is to find and kill the downed American pilot. The soldiers are all dressed alike, except their leader. He wears neither steel helmet nor hat, exposing his stereotypical high-and-tight haircut. His facial expression never changes—it is a constant scowl, complete with furrowed brow and pursed lips. Large red stars are prominently displayed on his collars, reminding the audience what ideology drives this stoic killer. These initial images of Colonel Yune convey his robotic, heartless, cold, and automatic nature. He embodies the communist other.

Cohen makes an interesting choice in presenting the North Koreans' dialogue. The villagers rarely speak, even when they are showing Yune the flight jacket which

once belonged to Wade. When their speech is audible, Cohen does not provide subtitles. Therefore, the American audience (presumably) cannot understand the dialogue. The lack of subtitles acts to distance the viewers from the North Koreans. By making their language inaccessible to the audience, Cohen makes the North Koreans inaccessible, which adds to their otherness. Yune's dialogue, albeit very brief, also has no accompanying subtitles. In his case, however, there is a different dynamic at work. Unlike the classic Bond villain who invariably announces his (and in one case, her) evil intentions, Yune remains mostly silent, except for a few commands he barks at his soldiers. Here the combination of stoic, cold silence and a few terse shouts in an unintelligible language serves the same purpose as the Bond villain's monologue: it simultaneously underscores his villainy and dehumanizes him.

The science fiction themes in *Stealth* are obvious. Man has created technology with unlimited destructive power, but he loses control and places the world in peril. On the surface Cohen seems to be warning us of the dangers of replacing humans with machines. There is, however, a deeper meaning. EDI is the product of an overambitious military leader (with high political connections) whose mission is to protect the world from terrorism at all costs. Thus EDI, as an extension of Cummins, has been programmed to execute the mission with rational discipline. His design included no compassion, no restraint, and no remorse. He (like Cummins) has learned to apply the doctrines of war without a moral conscience. Miraculously, however, EDI learns to feel emotion after Gannon saves him from sure destruction. The interaction with other humans besides Cummins has exposed EDI to morality and ethical thinking. In the end, as EDI chooses to act against his rational nature by sacrificing himself for his squadron

mates, Cohen suggests that we can learn to use restraint in war. If we can learn to feel as EDI did, we can maintain our morality. However, if we cannot overcome the rationality of war (and politics), our own ambitions (or the communist other) will destroy us.

To conclude, *Stealth* presents the DMZ as a no man's land, a prison, and a graveyard. It is an uninhabitable place and (for Wade) a barrier to freedom. The spatial scale of the DMZ is drastically reduced to enhance the dramatic elements of the plot, but with the shrinkage comes a message of confinement. Real images of the DMZ are incorporated only in part (in the form of props, not landscape), and when these elements are combined with the audience's preconceptions, a seemingly accurate portrayal of the DMZ appears on screen. As Cohen admits, the real DMZ and the reel DMZ are two different places. Additionally, Cohen's North Koreans are one-dimensional characters. They are either primitive village people, or they are military automatons who wear their ideology on the sleeves of their olive drab uniforms. Their audible dialogue is very limited and serves only as a background sound, since the target American audience presumably cannot understand Korean. In her criticism of the portrayal of Native Americans in film, Jacquelyn Kilpatrick describes this kind of one-dimensional stereotyping as creating an "inarticulate caricature" instead of a well-rounded character (1999).

The James Bond Genre

One could certainly make the case that several Bond movies, including *Die Another Day*, might be considered science fiction movies. Regarding Bond movies, Bennett and Woollacott observe

...it has been argued that their popularity can be attributed, variously, to their developed and highly distinctive use of technological gadgetry; to their sheer visual spectacle, particularly the destruction of expensive sets and scenery; or to the opportunity they afford for escapism into a universe governed by the laws of fantasy (1987: 14).

The Bond villains' weapons of choice almost always introduce a technology beyond the current reach of science—a hallmark of the science fiction genre. Like many science fiction films, several Bond movies are either set in outer space or show images of super-weapons orbiting the earth. Furthermore, Bond simply cannot embark on his heroic missions without first visiting Q's laboratory for a demonstration of the latest gizmos designed to give the British spy the upper hand in any situation he may encounter. Almost without exception, Q's devices surpass current technological capabilities. Therefore, Ian Fleming's fantastic technology (both Bond's and the villains' toys) places Bond films in the science fiction genre. However, there is much more to Bond than imagined technologies.

Since the 1960s, "the figure of James Bond has remained a known component of the cultural landscape, a household word" (ibid.: 15). Bennett and Woollacott refer to this widespread, enduring popularity as "the Bond phenomenon," which they argue can be attributed to Bond's ability to accurately reflect the ideological and cultural values of the time. Twenty one films (the next installment is due to be released in 2008) and more than forty years later, the James Bond films occupy their own genre (Simpson, 2007). Viewers know exactly what clichés to expect in the next James Bond movie. Dennis Allen writes:

One knows in advance that there will be gadgets and Bond girls and M and Q and familiar taglines (“Bond...James Bond”) and directions for the proper way to mix a martini, all of which will implicitly but definitely ensure that there is an order to the universe (2005: 39).

The Bond movies also have a recurring geopolitical theme which helps define the genre. “Indeed, Bond can be seen, at least initially, as a central figure in the paranoid culture of the Cold War” (Black, 2001: 4). Patrick O’Donnell argues that Bond films are “thinly veiled political allegories” which highlight the confrontation between East and West, democracy and communism, and good and evil (2005). He suggests that audiences equate Bond with freedom, the West, and democracy and the villains (such as Dr. No, Goldfinger, and Blofeld) with Khrushchev and Mao, the East, and totalitarianism (ibid.). It is indeed interesting to note that a decade after the Cold War officially ended, *Die Another Day* found a way to resurrect this Cold War binary in the last place on earth where the Cold War lives on—the Korean peninsula.

Another recurring political theme materializes in Bond’s relationship to his (usually American) NATO allies. In all cases, Bond is shown as the dominant spy—the one giving orders to the obedient others. Much of the time the other spy is Felix Leiter, an American CIA operative. James Chapman observes,

the professional and personal friendship between Bond and Leiter represents the ‘special relationship’ which has supposedly existed between Britain and the United States since the end of the Second World War, though, in a quaint reversal of the real balance of power, it is the American Leiter who is the subordinate partner to the British Bond (2000: 39).

The fantasy of British dominance carries over from Bond to British intelligence in general. As Chapman notes, Britain is always depicted as the West's first line of defense against the schemes of the East. To support this theme, the Americans are shown as less-capable (intellectually and technologically) spies who are dependent on MI6. In *Die Another Day*, the American (Jinks) not only needs Bond's gadgets to rescue her from drowning inside her hotel room, she also needs Bond to breathe life into her body. As the two intelligence agencies decide how to address Graves/Moon's plan to invade South Korea, the contrast between the level-headed M and her bumbling American counterpart also highlights the positioning of MI6 above the CIA. The unrefined, brash American yields to the polished, methodical M, who has decided to send Bond into North Korea. Thus, *Die Another Day* joins the rest of the Bond films in constructing an imaginary world wherein the British Empire's status as a world power has not declined (ibid.).

The villain also deserves more mention as a central and essential element of a Bond film. Jeremy Black argues there is much more to a Bond villain than just an evil character. He (or she) is the sum of an evil person, an evil plot, and the technology employed in carrying out his/her twisted plans (2001). While James Bond represents life, freedom, manhood, and mobility, the various villains embody death, bondage, entropy, and paralysis (O'Donnell, 2005). Very often there is a physical deformity or malady that corresponds to the villain's evil nature, granting the audience a constant visual reminder of his sinister designs. In *Die Another Day*, Zao's face (figure 3-4) is deformed by the explosion of a briefcase full of diamonds (which he chooses to leave embedded in his flesh). Graves/Moon has developed permanent insomnia as a result of his genetic replacement therapy (total deformation from his original appearance).

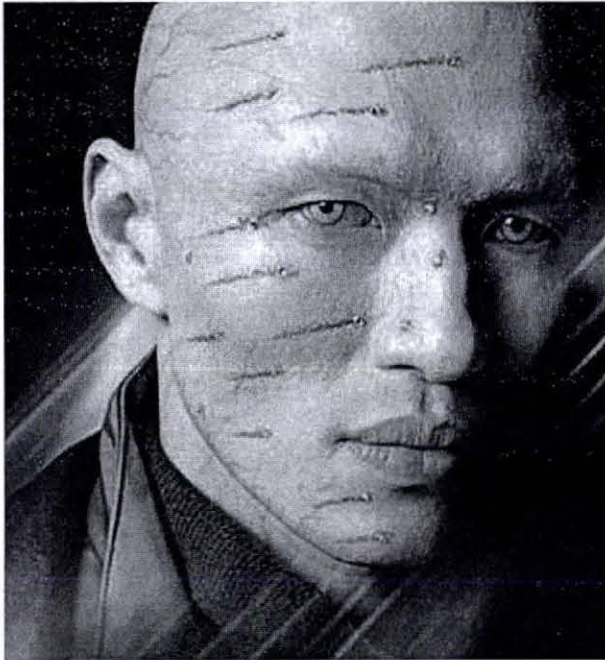


Figure 3-4. The disfigured Zao (Rick Yune)

(Source: http://www.bondcollection.com.ar/figuras_de_accion/fig_act/zao/zao_teaser.jpg, accessed March 19, 2008)

In a habitual display of ruthlessness, the Bond villain also subjects 007 to torture (through various instruments). There is a noteworthy connection between Bond's ritual humiliation by torture and the humiliation experienced by the male heroes of other genres, especially westerns. Lawrence and Jewett note that the scene depicting the physical battering of the protagonist is "but a prelude that dramatizes the inevitable, violent resolution in which the restored superhero slowly recovers from his beating and kills the villainous torturers" (2002 :161). Indeed, each time James Bond is captured and tortured by the villain, he escapes, recovers, and exacts his violent revenge. *Die Another Day* wastes no time in fulfilling its generic expectations—the scorpion-themed torture scene serves as the backdrop to the film's opening credits.

Ultimately, the contrast between Bond and the villain is summarized in one of Bond's own realizations: "in order to tell the difference between good and evil, we have

manufactured two images representing the extremes” (Fleming, 1953: 136). In other words, in order for the audience to clearly recognize right from wrong, Bond must be an extreme example of good (or what is valued in society) and the villain must be an extreme example of evil (what society deploras).

Plot Summary—*Die Another Day*

The film begins with a shot of the heavily-fortified North Korean coastline. James Bond (Pierce Brosnan) and two accomplices surf huge waves toward the shore. Inside North Korea, Bond trades places with an illegal diamond dealer. His mission is to find and kill a rogue North Korean colonel named Tan-Sun Moon (Will Yun Lee) who has been trading weapons for conflict diamonds. The mission is compromised, but Bond still manages to kill (he believes) Moon, sending his hovercraft over a waterfall. Arriving at crash scene, General Moon (Kenneth Tsang), who is Colonel Moon’s father, blames Bond for his son’s death.

For the next fourteen months, Bond is tortured in a prison in North Korea. Following the capture of a North Korean terrorist named Zao (Rick Yune), England and North Korea arrange a prisoner exchange. General Moon escorts Bond from his prison cell to a foggy bridge where Bond believes he will be executed. At the Bridge of No Return, Bond realizes he is being traded for Zao (the late Colonel Moon’s right hand man) whose face bears the diamond-encrusted scars of their DMZ encounter.

As soon as Bond crosses the bridge, he is sedated and whisked away to a medical holding facility. The entire MI6 organization, including M (Judi Dench), believes that Bond gave information to the North Koreans. Bond, realizing that he can trust nobody,

escapes from British custody by calming himself into a state of cardiac arrest—a skill he learned to cope with torture. Bond emerges from his medical holding cell on a Hong Kong harbor, jumps into the water, and swims away to freedom.

After checking into his usual Hong Kong hotel, Bond strikes a deal with Chinese intelligence, offering to kill Zao (who killed Chinese agents) if they could locate him. The Chinese find Zao in a Cuban clinic. While surveilling the clinic, Bond meets Jinks (Halle Berry) who, unbeknownst to Bond, is also looking for Zao. Both Jinks and Bond manage to gain access to the DNA replacement therapy clinic, where Bond finds Zao engaged in therapy. After a scuffle, Zao escapes and the clinic is destroyed. During the fight with Zao, however, Bond takes his pendant which contains conflict diamonds. The diamonds are marked with Gustav Graves' (Toby Stephens) corporate logo.

Next Bond travels to London to learn more about Graves and his diamond mine in Iceland. Bond meets Graves at a fencing club, where the two engage in a sword fight for money. Graves, the gracious loser, pays his debt to Bond and invites him to a demonstration of his new invention, Icarus. As Bond leaves the fencing clubhouse, he receives a package from M who requests a meeting in an abandoned Underground (subway) station. During the meeting Bond is reinstated, and he learns that Miranda Frost (Rosamund Pike) is an MI6 agent serving as Graves' assistant. M sends Bond to Iceland to attend the Icarus demonstration.

At the diamond mine and ice hotel, Graves reveals the power of Icarus, a sophisticated space vehicle which can direct sunlight anywhere on earth. Bond, newly reunited with Jinks, learns that Graves is really Colonel Moon who has completed DNA replacement therapy to change his appearance. Bond confronts Graves, but learns that

Frost has betrayed him (again). Graves orders Frost to kill Bond, but the hero escapes.

After evading Icarus, Bond returns to the hotel, kills Zao, and saves Jinks from drowning in the melting ice hotel.

Bond and Jinks then travel to the DMZ where the British and American intelligence agencies are monitoring Graves' actions. M decides to send Bond into North Korea to assassinate Graves after learning that the North Koreans have mobilized over 80,000 troops along the border. Intending to assassinate Moon, Bond and Jinks skydive into a North Korean airbase. The plan fails, forcing Bond and Jinks to board Graves' airplane—the platform he has chosen to show Icarus' power to his father. During the demonstration, Graves reveals his true identity. General Moon, however, rejects the use of Icarus to invade South Korea. After a struggle, Graves kills his father. In the meantime, Bond and Jinks plan to stop Graves. Bond confronts Graves and Frost confronts Jinks. The struggle continues as the cargo plane flies through Icarus' ray which is carving a path toward the DMZ. Bond and Jinks prevail, and when Graves gets sucked into an engine, the remote control for Icarus is destroyed. The destructive beam stops just short of the border and disaster is averted. The world is safe again thanks to James Bond.

The DMZ in *Die Another Day*—Highlighting the North Korean Threat

Director Lee Tamahori gives the audience its first glimpse of the DMZ at Colonel Moon's headquarters. Starting with a close-up of a moving wheel, the camera zooms out revealing a group of army trucks full of soldiers driving through a concrete gate stenciled with a North Korean star. Beyond the gate is a large concrete structure. As the trucks

drive through the gate, the camera angle changes from behind the truck at eye level to the side of the truck at ground level. From this angle, the viewer sees coils of barbed wire in the foreground and guard tower in the background as the truck passes. The camera angle changes back to behind the truck at eye level just in time for the viewer to watch the top portion of the stenciled gate descend automatically to the ground to form a tank barrier. Tamahori completes the series of images with a view of the whole compound complete with tanks, trucks, marching troops, sandbag barriers, and barbed wire fences.

In this brief sequence there is constant motion. Except the concrete building, the sandbags, and the tanks, everything is moving—the trucks, the soldiers, the flags, the smoke in the sky, the trees, the descending concrete barrier, and the sliding fence. Even the muddy ground moves as the truck wheels splash and scatter the mud. This is a place of motion, activity, and preparation. The stenciled red star on the gate and the North Korean flag remind the audience that communism lives here in the DMZ. And the scene's motion (especially the flag and the star) reminds the viewers that communism's war machine is not resting.

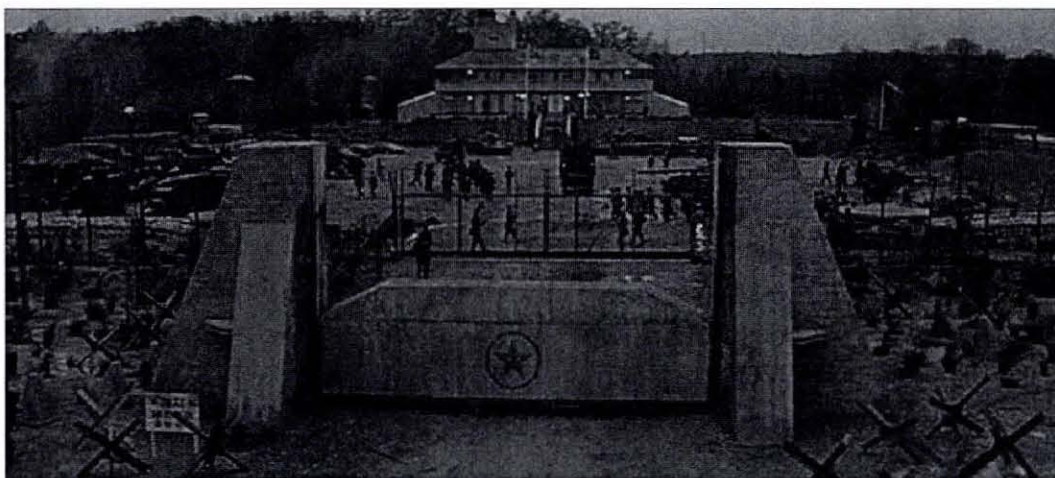


Figure 3-5. Colonel Moon's headquarters in the DMZ

(Source: <http://www.bondmovies.com/stills/dad/4.jpg>, accessed March 19, 2008)

Tamahori reinforces and expands this message throughout the remainder of the scene. Arriving by helicopter to meet Colonel Moon, James Bond observes several high-end sports cars parked (being polished by soldiers) in the compound. Moon makes a disparaging comment about Western hypocrisy, and Bond retorts with a reference to Moon's expensive Western car collection. Here Bond suggests that Moon, not the West, is the hypocrite (He proscribes the Western lifestyle for his people, but lives it himself). There is, however, a deeper meaning to Bond's suggestion—Tamahori has done his homework. The collection of luxury cars is an unmistakable, direct reference to Kim Jong Il, who has been "painted as a spoiled child and playboy, with a fondness for alcohol, cars and parties" (Pollack, 1994). In fact, it was reported that Kim spent \$20 million on Mercedes S-class sedans in 1998 (Wiseman, 2003). While Moon and Kim are living it up, however, their countrymen are not. For this reason, Moon must hide his hypocrisy (the Western car collection) in the DMZ—a place to which the starving North Koreans have no access.

The next exchange between Bond and Moon adds depth to the connection between the DMZ and the cars. In addition to the presence of expensive cars, Bond questions Moon's practice of hiding weapons illegally in the DMZ where there are so many landmines. (South Korea has often accused North Korea of having illegal weapons in the DMZ). Moon responds by stating that his hovercraft can float right over them. Thus for Moon, the DMZ serves a dual secretive purpose—it conceals his hypocrisy from his people, and it conceals his illegal weapons stockpile from the West. The presence of the cars and the weapons stockpile shows that the North Koreans cannot be trusted and they do as they please (without recourse) in the neutral zone. The hovercraft's

capabilities also suggest Moon's intention to use the weapons to establish a unified Korea under communist rule. He has chosen a weapons platform to defeat a specific threat—mines. Therefore, the DMZ becomes a place of mistrust and hypocrisy. It is no longer the neutral zone the West assumes it to be—it is now a place secretly dominated by the North Korean military. As the communist hovercraft glide effortlessly over the landscape, the South (and West) imagines its mines will slow or stop an attacking force. The mines intended to deter a North Korean advance, however, no longer have a deterring effect.



Figure 3-5. James Bond (Pierce Brosnan) pilots a hovercraft through the DMZ
(Source: http://www.allmoviephoto.com/photo/DAD_Pierce_Brosnan_015_big.html, accessed March 19, 2008)

Tamahori's DMZ (in this scene) is an open landscape with a wide, flat road and plenty of room to maneuver. Throughout the dizzying hovercraft chase (figure 3-5), he shows the viewers no images of the border and no South Korean, American, or other Western presence in the DMZ. The propaganda signs on the roadside suggest to the viewer that North Korea has claimed the DMZ, where there is (literally and figuratively)

no sign of the West—a message echoed in *Stealth*. By showing the open landscape (easily traversed by the communists) with no border and no defenses to oppose the North Koreans, Tamahori simultaneously calls attention to the spatial proximity of the North Korean threat and the West's profound vulnerability to that threat. His DMZ gives North Korea the strategic advantage.

Tamahori presents the next visual image of the DMZ when Bond and Zao are traded across the border. The scene begins with a close-up shot of the North Korean flag waving over the landscape. This image re-establishes a sense of place, informing the audience that Bond is still in North Korea. The camera pans to the right and tilts down, revealing an army truck approaching the ruined remains of a small village. The crumbling walls overgrown with vines, the dilapidated tin roofs, and the piles of rubble are a stark contrast to the sleek, shiny sports cars, the state-of-the-art gym, and the modern design of Colonel Moon's headquarters. Here the DMZ is abandoned, occupied only temporarily by the soldiers and trucks who have come to exchange prisoners. The trucks stop and Bond is brought to a bridge. He cannot see what is on the other side of the bridge, as it is temporarily obscured by fog (here employed as a symbol of uncertainty or confusion). After one last exchange, General Moon orders Bond to turn around and start walking on the bridge. As Bond continues across the bridge, the silhouette of a man appears in the fog. When Bond recognizes Zao and realizes he is being traded for Zao, the fog (uncertainty) begins to clear. By the time Bond has crossed the bridge, the audience can see across the bridge from South Korea into North Korea. The dilapidated village has new meaning. Here, in this particular area of the DMZ, the North Koreans can be observed by the West. Therefore, they must project the image of abandonment

and dilapidation. But Tamahori's audience has already seen Colonel Moon's facilities. Once again, the director suggests the DMZ is a place of deception.

A couple of interesting images appear as Bond reaches the South Korean side of the bridge. First, Tamahori presents the actual border (military demarcation line) as a single chain link fence with barbed wire at the top. Curiously, the MDL is not in the center of the bridge—it is at the South Korean end of the bridge. In reality, the MDL bisects the Bridge of No Return (clearly the bridge being represented in the film). By shifting the MDL closer to the South Korean side, Tamahori enlarges North Korea's spatial influence in the DMZ. He assigns them control of more of the landscape, subtly re-establishing their dominance in the DMZ, even in the portion which the West can observe.

The next image is an extension of the first. A team of medical professionals dressed in biohazard suits sedates Bond and places him on a stretcher—a sequence accomplished largely by close-up shots. As the team wheels Bond away, the camera angle changes to a longer shot. In the background there is a large white sign which reads “HALT...DMZ...DO NOT ENTER.” This sign presumably marks the southern boundary of the DMZ. One or two meters behind this sign, the viewers see the fence marking the border. A yellow sign marked “MILITARY DEMARCATION LINE” hangs on the fence. In the real DMZ, the MDL is two kilometers from the southern (and northern) boundary. Tamahori condenses this distance to two meters. The contrast is enlightening. While the DMZ in the north is a wide, boundless landscape, the DMZ in the south is a two meter wide strip of land. Thus, the audience sees North Koreans stockpiling illegal weapons, conducting training exercises, and maneuvering freely in

their portion of the DMZ. The West can do nothing in their scrap of land. Tamahori's DMZ is lopsided, exaggerating the North Korean threat.

The next mention of the DMZ comes near the end of the film. The camera (staged inside) shows a jeep entering a large aircraft hangar. The subtitle informs the audience that this hangar is the US command bunker in the southern portion of the DMZ. The inconsistencies with earlier depictions of the DMZ are glaring. The only other time the viewers have seen the southern DMZ is when Bond crossed the MDL. That DMZ was only two meters wide. But timing in the storyline is everything. Earlier in the film Tamahori uses visual images of the DMZ first to establish and then to exaggerate the North Korean threat. He cannot show the West's response to the threat until the plot is fully developed; otherwise the threat would be diminished. Therefore, he waits until the end of the film to reveal that the West also maintains a presence inside the DMZ. By the end of this scene, however, he again solidifies the North Korean threat. When the missile attack on Icarus fails, the US command bunker suddenly becomes a very bad place to be. The technology housed in the bunker is rendered impotent by the North Korean weapon. The seemingly impenetrable underground fortress is now directly in Icarus' line of fire. Tamahori shows a couple of shots of the destructive powers of the beam as it rips through the DMZ. Giving up their stake of the DMZ, the American soldiers flee the beam. The DMZ is dominated by the North Koreans once more.

Like *Stealth*, *Die Another Day* incorporates real elements of the DMZ in its representation on the screen. The landscape shots (filmed on the back lot of Pinewood Studios in England) include propaganda signs, barbed wire fences, Czech hedgehogs (anti-tank obstacles resembling large jacks), guard towers, and fortified firing positions.

Both movies exaggerate these aspects to create more drama. Both Tamahori and Cohen also distort the spatial aspects of the DMZ to fit their plots. In the end, when these visual images are combined with prior conceptualizations (based almost exclusively on media exposure), the result is a convincing, seemingly realistic depiction of the DMZ.

North Koreans in *Die Another Day*—A Biography of a Kim Jong Il?

The audience's first encounter with a North Korean occurs during the scene inside Colonel Moon's headquarters. Moon appears to be working out with a punching bag in his gym. He orders the bag to be opened and his anger management counselor falls to the floor. Immediately the audience sees this North Korean as a vicious tyrant who will not listen to criticism ("That will teach you to lecture me."). As previously stated, ruthlessness is a recurring characteristic among classic Bond villains. Moon (and later Graves) fulfills the villainous expectations throughout the film, ultimately killing his own father in the film's climactic scene. This portrayal of a Moon as being a ruthless leader is not meant as a commentary on all North Koreans. It is directed at one North Korean in particular: Kim Jong Il. From his ruthless treatment of dissenters within the regime (Kim is believed to hold more than 200,000 political prisoners in concentration camps) to his collection of fine cars, Kim Jong Il bears several similarities to the fictional Colonel Moon (Pukas, 2006). Furthermore, both Kim and Moon are living in the shadow of their more-respected fathers. The cinematic parallel was accurate enough to garner a response from North Korea when *Die Another Day* was released. The Secretariat of the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland released a statement calling for the movie to be pulled from all theaters around the world. The statement called *Die*

Another Day “a dirty and cursed burlesque aimed to slander North Korea and insult the Korean nation” and “a deliberate and premeditated act of mocking at and insulting the Korean nation” (Booth, 2002).

There is another element to the Moon/Graves character that goes beyond the Kim parallel. The audience must remember that when they are looking at Graves, they are really looking at a North Korean. The purpose of the genetic transformation was to facilitate Moon’s evil plot to reunify Korea and rule the world. He is merely masquerading as the British tycoon (similar in many ways to the real British tycoon, Richard Branson), Gustav Graves—a completely manufactured image modeled on Western ideals. His true identity is still that of a North Korean tyrant, no matter how Western he appears. The message is clear—whatever North Korea appears to be doing to appease the West, their true underlying intentions are sinister. They cannot be trusted. Thus, *Die Another Day* resurrects the Cold War themes of us versus them, East versus West, and capitalism versus communism. This villain (North Korea) is different, but the conflict is the same.

Tamahori also shows the North Koreans torturing James Bond. For fourteen months he is dunked in freezing water, electrocuted, beaten, and exposed to the venomous stings of scorpions. Bond’s prison is wet, dirty, gray, and cold. His clothes are torn and bloody, he walks with a noticeable limp (his feet wrapped in cloth, not shoes), and he has not shaved or had a haircut in more than one year. When Bond passes Zao on the bridge, there is a moment of compelling contrast. Zao is clean-shaven and his hair is styled and combed. He is wearing a clean, well-fitting orange jumpsuit and shoes that fit properly. This image suggests Zao’s treatment as a prisoner of the West was

ethical. The audience knows James Bond's treatment was not. Thus, the contrast between Bond and Zao further condemns the North Koreans' use of torture and treatment of prisoners.

Finally, Tamahori's depiction of General Moon is noteworthy. When the audience is first introduced to General Moon, they see a military leader who is respected (and perhaps feared) by his son. As the story unfolds, Tamahori presents General Moon as a wise and level-headed leader who does not condone torture, nor engage in the practice himself. Instead of exacting immediate revenge when Bond appears to have killed his son, General Moon exercises restraint. One might argue that Moon needed information from Bond, and therefore needed him alive. But Bond noticed something about Moon's disposition that he remarked upon later. In the US bunker scene at the end of the movie, Bond tells the group that General Moon would not invade South Korea. The group agrees, but notes that Moon has been arrested by the "hard-liners." Earlier in the movie, Moon himself referred to some of the North Korean hard-liners, stating that Bond's spy mission into North Korea validated their stance on the West. In both uses of the phrase "hard-liners," Moon was purposely excluded. Thus, Tamahori shows the audience that Moon is really one of the good guys. This idea becomes more evident in the scene on the Antonov cargo plane (figure 3-6).

As the Americans and British reported, General Moon is arrested and held captive on Graves' airplane. When Moon enters the airborne command and control room, he sees three high-ranking North Korean Army officers who glance away, apparently ashamed for having betrayed General Moon. The arrest/betrayal combination shows that Moon is there against his will and that he has no part in the plot to invade South Korea.

He also tries to stop his son from invading South Korea. Therefore, he represents the calm, reasonable North Korean who seeks to avoid conflict. However, Tamahori sends another more powerful message about North Koreans when Graves kills his own father: the ruthless, bloodthirsty North Korean will overpower the dissenting, weaker North Koreans. Moon cannot stop his son from starting a war. It is inevitable. In the end, only James Bond (the West) can stop Graves (Kim Jong II). In other words, to neutralize Icarus (North Korea's WMD program), the leader must be destroyed.



Figure 3-6. Graves (Toby Stephens) tries to impress his father (Kenneth Tsang)
(Source: <http://www.bondmovies.com/stills/dad/47.jpg>, accessed March 19, 2008)

In conclusion, the DMZ in *Die Another Day* is place of deceit and mistrust. The lop-sided spatial dimensions of the DMZ favor North Korea, suggesting a greater, more pressing danger posed by their forces. The North Korean scenario follows a common Bond genre trope—the ideological struggle of the Cold War—capitalism versus communism, good versus evil, and East versus West. The North Koreans in the film embody the ideology of the East. They are shown as ruthless, calculating terrorists bent on world domination. Furthermore, Tamahori's Gustav Graves is based loosely on Kim

Jong Il. Although he suggests (through General Moon) that not all North Koreans have evil designs, Tamahori also shows that those who dissent in North Korea have no real influence. The West should beware the ideologically blinded communists of North Korea.

As a final note, an interesting theme—freedom from tyranny—emerges in comparing the villains of *Stealth* and *Die Another Day*. Both Captain Cummins and Colonel Moon/Graves are overambitious military leaders with visions of attaining world domination at all costs. Both develop, test, and operate a super weapon (Icarus and EDI) with vastly superior technological capabilities which gives them the ability to achieve their despotic goals. Part of Moon/Graves' motivation is to please his father (authority figure), or to regain his approval. Likewise, Cummins is driven by his desire to please his boss (authority figure) on Capitol Hill. When Moon/Graves realizes he cannot attain his father's praise, he kills his father. Cummins, on the other hand, kills himself in similar circumstances. Thus, death hides a father's shame and a political failure. Although Cummins would disagree ("Just so you never confuse the difference between politicians and warriors, listen up"), the patricide and the suicide are both displays of cowardice. Neither villain could accept the responsibility of failure, so both chose the easy way out—death.

By showing the audience the destruction of the tyrants and their super weapons, these films celebrate the ideal of freedom from tyranny. *Die Another Day* preserves our freedom from North Korean oppression, and *Stealth* preserves our freedom from U.S. military authoritarianism. While *Die Another Day*'s theme can be seen as the typical James Bond Cold War binary (the communist other), *Stealth*'s message is directed at a

different perceived threat—the military other. In their fascinating analysis of portrayals of the U.S. military in motion pictures, Powers, Rothman and Rothman found the following:

In short, if we examine their goals and motivations, we are left with the impression that most U.S. military personnel are selfish, irresponsible, often vicious, and rarely concerned with the interests of their country, much less the ordinary decencies (1996: 96).

Accompanying this generally negative image of the military in Hollywood is the plot convention of the rogue military officer with ruthless plans. Thus, Hollywood projects its fear of unchecked military power on the screen. In any case, the message is that neither the communist playboy nor the power-hungry navy captain is wanted in America. The images on the silver screen reinforce that to preserve our freedom from these tyrants, we must subdue their evil plots and defeat their super weapons.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE KOREAN DMZ IN SOUTH KOREAN CINEMA

Introduction

This chapter will explore the representation of the Korean DMZ in the South Korean film, *Joint Security Area* (directed by Park Chan Wook). The analysis will begin with a brief introduction to contemporary Korean cinema and a discussion of the detective/murder mystery genre. As in the previous chapter, a discussion of the scenes set in the DMZ will focus on the following concepts: the degree to which the DMZ is presented as a place, the degree to which the landscape is humanized, and how the North Koreans are portrayed. The analysis will also include an examination of some of the general themes in Park's film which add depth and meaning to his representation of the DMZ.

Contemporary (South) Korean Cinema

To understand contemporary (South) Korean cinema, it is necessary to understand what Julian Stringer calls "the dominant narrative of South Korean society in the twentieth century" (2005:3). The narrative, he argues, was shaped by a series of "national traumas" which include Japanese colonial rule, the division of the peninsula at the end of World War Two, the Korean War, and decades of post-war authoritarian rule characterized by brutal acts of state violence (ibid.). At the center of these hardships was perhaps the most influential factor in defining the (South) Korean social narrative—the international political climate:

The two Koreas also became proxies for the ideological split between socialism and capitalism that underlaid the Cold War. Fiercely antagonistic both Korean states developed political cultures that were narrowly defined by their primary Other: the South's virulent anti-Communism in response to the North, and the North's unique brand of socialist self-reliance and enmity toward the South as a dependency of global capitalism (Robinson, 2005: 16-17).

Another name for this anti-communist paranoia in South Korea is nationalism. Even though the government of South Korea was officially a constitutional republic, authoritarian presidents ruled with unchecked power during most of the first four decades. Fear of the communist other justified political and social repression. Critics of government policy and dissenters were labeled communists or communist sympathizers, and were either silenced or imprisoned (*ibid.*).

The discourse of extreme nationalism impinged on the film industry as well. A Public Ethics Committee was given the authority to censor or modify films before their release to the theaters (Paquet, 2005). The committee routinely cut scenes and banned films with questionable content. Occasionally, the penalty for cinematic indiscretion was more severe than censorship. In the 1960s, two directors were arrested (on separate occasions) and imprisoned temporarily for making movies which were deemed to be "sympathetic" to communism (*ibid.*). Many directors and film producers chose to self-censor by simply avoiding controversial themes. Others constantly tested the limits of censorship, especially during times of increased social tensions (student uprisings, labor strikes, etc.). Thus, despite the widespread repression and censorship, the foundation for

a “New Korean Cinema” had been laid during the mid 1980s and early 1990s (K. H. Kim, 2004).

Military authoritarianism came to an end in 1992 when South Korea elected its first civilian president. For filmmakers, a new era of political and social liberties “meant a new-found freedom to explore themes and ideas that had been banned for decades” (Paquet, 2005: 32). Without the threat of censorship, New (South) Korean Cinema engaged in socially relevant projects which viewed past struggles (such as class contradiction, rapid urbanization, and military rule) with a critical eye (K. H. Kim, 2004). With its newfound freedom of expression, New (South) Korean Cinema soon began to explore the issue of a divided Korea, eventually leading to the birth of the reunification theme in South Korean films (Paquet, 2005).

In analyzing three South Korean movies (Park Chan Wook’s *JSA*, Kang Je Gyu’s *Swiri*, and Kim Hyung Jung’s *Comrade*) which explore reunification, Kevin Choong observes that people on both sides of the border essentially “partake of a communion with those they have yet to see, but whom they perceive of as constitutive of their socio-political identity” (2005: 333). The result is an “imagined community,” or an imagined (unified) Korean nationalism based on common language and culture (Anderson, 1983). Thus, the reunification films suggest that a “unified Korean” identity can replace the antiquated Cold War binaries of anti-communist nationalism in South Korea and anti-capitalist nationalism in North Korea.

As the previous few paragraphs have briefly outlined, post-democratization (South) Korean cinema encompasses the legacies of social struggle, government censorship, Cold War political ideologies, and a new sense of (unified) Koreanness.

These different and often competing themes, however, did not develop at the same time, at the same rate, or in the same place. Thus, New Korean Cinema cannot be considered a distinct movement with a specific birth date (Stringer, 2005). It is, rather, an expression of the collective (South) Korean experience shaped by a series of national traumas as experienced by the (South) Korean subject.

Detective/Murder Mystery Genre

The *Almanac of Korean Movies (Hanguk Yeounghwa Yeonngam)* classifies *JSA* as a “mystery drama” (2001: 183). While this classification is certainly accurate, it is a bit too broad for this analysis. Under the mystery drama umbrella, there is one particular sub-genre which best describes *JSA*—the detective film. While *JSA*’s detective equivalent (Major Sophie Jean) is not a private eye by profession, she nevertheless assumes the detective’s duties during her military investigation. Moreover, her character employs many common detective film tropes through the course of the narrative. Joseph Reed’s discussion of some of the conventions of “private eye pictures” substantiates the compelling evidence for placing *JSA* in the detective sub-genre (1989: 242).

Reed argues that the private eye picture is dominated by “the detective’s journey to the underworld” where he (or she) must go because a crime has already been committed (ibid.). This underworld is best characterized as a place of “inverted morality, destroyed character, and continual testing” (ibid.). In *JSA*, Sophie takes this journey from her Swiss homeland to the underworld of the DMZ, where a gruesome murder has taken place. Reed also argues that the detective must compromise principles in order to discover the truth. At the end of the narrative, Sophie’s career in the military has been

compromised. Her superiors take her off the case because her neutrality is questioned and because her quest for the truth uncovered secrets that were too damaging to both the North and South Korean governments. By the end of the film, Sophie, like Reed's detectives, has become jaded precisely because "the quest is not at all what [s]he thought it was going to be when [s]he set out, because the rules have changed with geography" (ibid.). Here in DMZ, Sophie discovers that the rules of forensics and other empirical evidence do not trump ideology. Finally, the private eye's (or Sophie's) tragic flaw is the inability to escape from the underworld without being "touched by the corruption" found there (ibid.). Sophie's corruption comes in the form of withholding the true story from her replacement investigator. By keeping the truth hidden, Sophie shows that she has acquiesced to the ideology of the underworld—she has chosen the status quo over revealing the true sequence of events.

A final convention of the private eye film that bears mention in this analysis is the use of flashbacks to reveal information in the story. Maureen Turim noted, "We can easily suggest that the flashback developed as a means of mimetic representation of memory, dreams, or confession" (1989: 6). While flashbacks are obviously not restricted to the detective genre, they occupy a solid place within it. *JSA*'s flashbacks are used to reveal the contents of the depositions collected after the shootout, therefore representing the memory of the deposed individual. Flashbacks also occur when Sophie discovers more evidence that contradicts early information. In this way, the flashback is used to update the truth throughout the narrative. Lastly, Lee's suicide is a clear example using a flashback as a confession. When Lee pulls the trigger, the audience sees (through Lee's final memory) that he, not Nam, killed Jung. The flashback completes Lee's confession

of guilt, although only the audience (Sophie cannot see the flashback) experiences the whole confession.

Also useful to consider is what the audience expects from a detective movie. A typical private eye narrative must withhold key information from the audience so that as the investigation progresses, the audience and the detective discover the clues simultaneously. As the evidence mounts, “the viewer is stimulated into forming retrospective hypotheses about the events leading up to this moment, and tension or suspense is derived from this anticipatory process: the viewer is anxious to discover the murderer and his or her motives” (Kievit, 1994: 94). Detective films often incorporate deceptive evidence (red herrings), leading the private eye (and the audience) down false paths, which only acts to increase the tension. In *JSA*, the details of the murder change many times throughout the narrative as more evidence mounts. Each change amplifies the audience’s anticipation of the full truth. Thus, the engaged audience is encouraged to participate in the narrative by forming its own opinions based on the on-screen evidence.



Figure 4-1. Sophie (Lee Young Ae) inspects the evidence

(Source: <http://images.movie-gazette.com/albums/20050329/joint-security-area-12.jpg>, accessed March 19, 2008)

The detective (and viewer) solves the case by piecing together facts through interrogation, investigation, and deduction (ibid.). For the audience, the facts must make sense—the evidence itself and the means of collecting the evidence must be believable (figure 4-1). The detective's role is to employ logic and reason in determining the truth about the crime. But the detective also must have a special quality or ability which allows him/her to perceive that which cannot be rationally deduced. In *JSA*, Sophie's special skills are her gender and her heritage. As a female investigator, she detects friendship and domesticity in the (masculine) militarized landscape. As the daughter of a North Korean general, she can identify with the North Korean perspective. A combination of logical deduction and special personality traits enables the private eye to solve the crime.

Thus, when the final piece of evidence fills in the last knowledge gap (the audience now knows who did it, how he/she did it, and why), the big picture, as a sum of its parts, should be able to stand up to reason. Private eye investigations are therefore meant to be plausible in both the reel and the real worlds. Since audiences are engaged in uncovering the truth, realism is essential in creating and maintaining tension and interest through the film.

Plot Summary—*Joint Security Area*

A recent border skirmish inside the DMZ has sparked an increase in tension between the governments of North and South Korea which had been engaged in diplomatic talks involving North Korea's nuclear weapons program. While both Seoul and Pyongyang agree that two North Korean soldiers were killed in a shootout in the

Joint Security Area, they cannot agree on the specific details and motivations. Seeking to avoid an escalation to war, North and South Korea agree to allow the Neutral Nations Supervisory Committee (NNSC), the United Nations organization charged with overseeing the armistice agreement, to conduct an independent investigation.

The NNSC chooses to bring Major Sophie Jean (Lee Young Ae) from Switzerland to head up the investigation. Although her father was Korean, Sophie was born in Switzerland and has never been to Korea before. During the initial investigation briefing inside the Joint Security Area, Major General Bruno Botta (Christoph Hofrichter), the Swiss commander, informs Sophie that they have already obtained a confession from the South Korean sergeant and she need only discover the motive.

As Sophie reads the depositions, several conflicting stories unfold. Sergeant Soohyuk Lee (Lee Byung Hyun) claims he was knocked unconscious on the South Korean side of the Military Demarcation Line (MDL) and carried across to the North side. When he awoke, he worked his hands free from the rope which bound him, found a weapon, and shot his way to freedom. The surviving North Korean sergeant, Oh Kyeong Pil (Song Kang Ho), however, insists that Lee crossed the border on his own, entered the North Korean guard shack, and began firing his pistol with no provocation. Both accounts claim that only four soldiers (three North Koreans and one South Korean) were at the guard shack when the shooting occurred.

By visiting the scene of the shootout and viewing the bodies of the dead North Korean soldiers, Sophie soon discovers that the forensic evidence supports neither Lee's nor Oh's deposition. She notes that the number of bullet wounds in the corpses plus the number of unused rounds in Lee's weapon should add up to fifteen. There is, however,

one extra bullet hole, suggesting the presence of another South Korean Beretta M9 pistol. This discovery leads to more evidence implicating a second South Korean soldier, Private Nam Sung Shik (Kim Tae Woo).

The events leading to the deadly shootout unfold through a series of flashbacks which establish Lee's relationship with Oh and his comrade, Private Jung Woo Jin (Shin Ha Kyun). The audience witnesses the first encounter as a South Korean patrol inadvertently crosses over the MDL during a night exercise. Lee, who has paused to urinate, is left behind by his squad when they discover they are in North Korea. Trying to catch up to his patrol, Lee walks into a tripwire which arms a nearby landmine. Sergeant Oh and Private Jung find Lee stranded on their side of the border and Oh disarms the mine. After some time has passed, Lee decides to initiate communication with Oh.

The two begin to correspond by throwing messages tied to rocks across the border. Lee soon decides to visit the North Koreans in their guard shack. The first visit leads to more and more, and soon it becomes a nightly occurrence for Lee to cross the border into North Korea when Nam has gone to sleep. After Nam discovers what Lee has been doing each night, Lee offers to take Nam with him. Before long, both South Koreans are crossing the border each night to spend time with their new North Korean friends. The visits come to a tragic end one night, however, when a North Korean officer arrives at the guard shack unannounced. A stand-off ensues and the tension in the room becomes unbearable. Nam misinterprets a movement by the North Korean officer, fires a bullet, and the shootout begins.

Although Sophie has discovered the truth about the shootout (Nam killed the North Korean officer and Jung, Jung shot Lee's leg, and Lee shot Oh's shoulder), she is relieved of her investigatory duties when General Pyo (Ki Ju Bong) questions her neutrality after discovering her father was a North Korean general in the war. She decides to take her information with her instead of passing it on to her replacement, thereby assuring the truth would never be discovered. Sergeant Oh receives a discharge from the North Korean Army, and Sergeant Lee, viewing his own death as the only way to preserve his secret (both his illicit friendship and the fact that he, not Nam, killed Jung), takes his own life.



Figure 4-2. Sergeant Lee (Lee Byung Hyun) limps across the Bridge of No Return (Source: <http://images.movie-gazette.com/albums/20050329/joint-security-area-13.jpg>, accessed March 19, 2008)

The DMZ in *Joint Security Area*—Locating (unified) Korean Identity

Park's opening shot is a close-up of an owl, which after surveying the dark landscape, flies away into a bright moon framed by opaque clouds on a cold October

night. In the next moment, the audience looks down the span of a concrete foot bridge with a forest of leafless trees in the background. Rain begins to fall and the camera cuts to a shot positioned at the left edge of the bridge where the presence of a rusty yellow sign informs the (South Korean) audience that the bridge is the infamous Bridge of No Return (figure 4-2) and the landscape in the background is the Joint Security Area inside the DMZ. The viewers can barely make out the form of a guard shack at the other end of the bridge. Next, Park sets up a long shot from a higher angle which allows the audience to see the bridge and the guard shack more clearly. The viewers' eyes follow the bridge from the foreground to the background. Suddenly, a single gunshot disrupts the peaceful sound of raindrops falling to the ground. As a bullet rips through a wooden window in the shack, the owl, now resting in a different tree, turns its head toward the sound. The camera, now just outside the shack, moves along the exterior wall toward the single ray of light escaping from the new bullet hole in the window. As the camera reaches the light, the screen fades to white, and Park's narrative begins.

For *JSA*'s plot to resonate, its cinematic representation of the real landscape of the DMZ has to be impeccable. The (primarily South Korean) audience is very familiar with images of the DMZ, the JSA, and Panmunjom. More and more South Koreans are visiting the JSA as tourists, as evidenced by the recent installation of the first ever automated teller machine (ATM) in the Post Exchange inside the Joint Security Area. According to the National Agricultural Cooperative Federation (*Nonghyup*), the financial institution which owns the ATM, Panmunjom now receives more than 150,000 tourists annually (*Korea Herald*, September 7, 2007). While tourists have access to the JSA, film crews and their equipment do not. Unless, that is, the film crews visit the JSA as tourists.

Park and his production team, dressed as tourists, made several research trips to Panmunjom, meticulously documenting every detail within the JSA's 800 square meters of land. When Park's team had enough photos and measurements, they constructed a full-scale reproduction of the JSA on the lots at the Yangsuri Film Studios situated in the eastern outskirts of Seoul. Beginning in 1999, the set's construction lasted over one year and cost nearly one million (US) dollars, but the result was well-worth the investment of time and money (Tour2Korea, 2008). The on-screen landscape (90% of a complete 1:1 replica of the JSA) is practically indistinguishable from the real landscape of Panmunjom (Koreanfilm.org, 2004).

In addition to the militarized aspect of the landscape (Park shows us the soldiers, guns, mines, and fences), *JSA* presents the DMZ in a different light. To achieve this alternative narrative, Park's cameras venture beyond the heavily-guarded truce village and its bridge to nowhere. Outside of the reconstructed Joint Security Area set, the cinematic DMZ is also practically indistinguishable from the real—Korean wilderness. Park chose to film *JSA* in the super 35mm format (larger image frame than standard 35mm, but same overall width of the film) which effectively “extends the shots and draws viewers even more deeply into the movie” (M. Kim, 2000). *JSA* is indeed a visually stunning film which showcases the natural beauty of the DMZ. Park's sweeping landscape images evoke the old Korean term for their homeland, “keum-su-gang-san,” (or “land of embroidered rivers and mountains”). The viewers are reminded that one place (and arguably the *only* place) on the peninsula where that landscape of old has survived unchanged through time is inside the DMZ. Park's DMZ is Korean nature in its purest form, the Garden of Eden—but only outside of the JSA, away from the tense

border village. Beyond the gaze of ideology is where Park shows the beauty of the DMZ's landscape. The lost (or perhaps only forgotten) Korean identity, he suggests, lives in the moonlit meadows and on the snow-covered mountains. Thus, his cinematic landscape scenes reconnect the misplaced Korean identity to its sense of place—a unified peninsula with no borders, no divisive ideologies, and no North or South distinctions. In experiencing the landscapes of *JSA*, the audience simultaneously longs for the beauty of a Korea past while hoping for a restoration of that beauty in the future.

Park's connection to nature in the DMZ is not restricted to images of the hills, trees, and snowy mountains. Park first shows an owl (opening scene) and then a flock of geese flying in front of a bright moon in the night sky. First, the contact between Lee and Oh must take place under conditions of darkness so they are not discovered. By setting their contact at night, Park underscores the secrecy of the relationship and its need to be concealed from outside observation. Next, the symbolic use of birds has a few layers. Generally, "flight represents freedom from the physical restrictions of earth-bound life, and the ascent of the soul to the gods, either through mystical experience or death" (Fontana, 2003: 143). Inside the DMZ, the restriction exists in two forms—the political border and the ideology which fortifies it. Thus, the flight of Lee's message through the sky (in front of the moon) represents the freedoms his new friendship and cultural exchange afford him. Here Park suggests (South) Koreans could experience freedom (unified Koreanness) if they, like the birds, could only liberate themselves from their earth-bound restrictions (ideology).

This image (birds/messages in flight) becomes the visual metaphor for the illegal exchange of friendship across the border (and perhaps the entire message of the film), but

it also foreshadows Lee's death. Shamed by Sophie's discoveries, Lee becomes acutely aware of his own weaknesses (in contrast to Oh's strengths). For him death serves two purposes: it hides his shame forever, and it sets him free from his ideological chains. Thus, the image of the birds represents Lee's soul escaping this life for the next, where perhaps he might discover the freedoms he could not find in the DMZ.

Also significant is Park's portrayal of the military demarcation line—the actual border which divides Korea. The audience's first visual image of the border comes via a nighttime shot of the Bridge of No Return, which connects the Koreas in the village of Panmunjom. Arguably the most iconic image of the DMZ, the bridge seems at first to uphold the print media's image of tension in the DMZ. The border is very prominent on the bridge. It is represented (on film and in reality) by a strip of metal which bisects the bridge widthwise. This feature is highlighted in the first scene wherein Sergeant Lee takes Private Nam to the north side of the border. A close-up shot shows two sets of boots walking together along the length of the bridge. As the camera follows the boots laterally, the metal plate border enters the screen from the right. One set of boots (Lee's) crosses over and disappears to the right while the second set (Nam's) stops mid-step at the border, as if there were some physical force holding them on the southern side. The first boots reappear from the right, and are now facing the other boots across the border. Lee convinces Nam that they, in crossing the border, are blazing the road to reunification (a borrowed line from Private Jung). The camera angle changes from the boots-only shot, to a birds-eye view. In this shot, the metal strip bisects the bridge and the cinematic frame from top to bottom, clearly showing the two distinct sides and their spatial

separation. In this shot, Park's mise-en-scène visually reveals Nam's inability to transcend the ideological border.

As the scene progresses, the North Koreans arrive to greet the newcomer. Park shows Private Nam's initial reaction to seeing the North Koreans through a close-up shot of his hand easing away from his holster (an omen for the shootout in the shack). The audience immediately understands that Nam's instinct was to draw his weapon. But, at Lee's prodding, Nam extends his hand (against his better judgment) to shake the North Korean's hand. Sergeant Oh not only shakes Nam's hand, he pulls him closer for a hug. Oh responds playfully, "You're warm after all." Park effectively depicts the North side of the border to be the friendly side where South Koreans are met with open arms instead of firearms. Thus, Park's border is clearly more of a psychological barrier for his South Koreans than it is for his North Koreans.

The friendly exchanges across a reified border recur in another part of the landscape as well. As on the Bridge of No Return, the border is very clearly delineated inside the Joint Security Area. Here the line of division is a raised section of concrete extending between the buildings which straddle the military demarcation line. In one scene, the new found friends are shown laughing and spitting on each other's shoes across the border while still trying to maintain a sense of military bearing. For those viewing the scene from a distance, the soldiers are merely holding their positions of security. But for the camera and the audience, these soldiers are strengthening their brotherhood and friendship across a border which no longer exists for them in the same way. Before Lee crossed the bridge for the first time, the border in the JSA represented the limit to South Korea's sovereignty, which must be protected from the communist

other. Guards keep their posts on the border to keep the North Koreans from invading South Korean space. Yet, after the nightly meetings took place, the visible border in the JSA became a place for the new friends to meet during the daylight hours. Ironically, the border served to bring them together, not divide them as it was intended.

Perhaps even more revealing are the border scenes set outside the heavily-guarded Joint Security Area. In the previously referenced mine scene, the South Korean patrol becomes disoriented and ventures over the border. This is plausible precisely because there is no visible border outside the JSA (in reality and in the film). Park's landscape features tall grass, waving in the wind and masking the surface of the ground below. The grass also covers the yellow MDL marker signs placed every 500 meters. The only visual cue in the landscape that signifies the lost patrol has gone too far to the north is a guard tower tucked neatly in a distant tree line.



Figure 4-3. The absence of a physical border in the landscape

(Source: <http://images.movie-gazette.com/albums/20050329/joint-security-area-25.jpg>, accessed March 19, 2008)

In the following winter scene, the same South Korean squad stumbles across the North Koreans hunting in the woods during a light snow flurry. Park shows the soldiers lined up on their respective sides, facing each other a few meters apart as the leader of each patrol advances to exchange a cigarette. Although the *mise-en-scène* allows the audience to imagine a border between the two lines of soldiers separated by white open space, the deep snow covers the ground and (presumably) the MDL signs as well (figure 4-3). There is no physical border immediately between the soldiers, and the viewers can look into the distant landscape and see no border there as well. In both *Stealth* and *Die Another Day*, the Korean border is always present and visible, shown exclusively in the form of a barbed-wire fence or series of fences. This image, while consistent with the print media's image of the DMZ as a militarized landscape, is accurate for the southern boundary of the DMZ itself, but not for the actual border between North and South Korea. Contrastingly, Park shows the audience a more accurate physical border (and lack thereof). His only two shots of barbed wire fences are the following: Sophie's car ride to the DMZ—the fence is shown as the car enters the southern boundary of the DMZ; and the mine field burning scene wherein Lee and Nam watch from a distance behind a fence—again depicting the southern boundary of the DMZ and not the MDL. By omitting a visible political border, Park not only shows an accurate physical landscape, he also suggests that there are no divisions between the North and South Korean characters when they are in the land of embroidered rivers and mountains of the DMZ. Combining a realistic image of the DMZ with his narrative, Park has created a space wherein characters have the potential to act outside the bounds of political ideologies.

As a final thought about the landscape of the DMZ, it is interesting to note the degree of domesticity Park assigns to the buffer zone. Except for two scenes (Sophie's arrival montage and Sophie's interview with Nam's sister), the entire plot unfolds somewhere between the northern and southern boundaries of the DMZ. Although the military assignment to Panmunjom (which has no permanent residents) is temporary for all the characters, a sense of home emerges from the narrative as the illegal friendship progresses. The soldiers gather around a make-shift table in the North Korean guard shack, much like a family or friends would gather around the dinner table in an apartment in Seoul. They play card games, draw pictures, tell stories, listen to music, shine shoes, and smoke cigarettes together. They even have a pet dog in their DMZ domicile. Outside they play children's games as though they were in a neighborhood playground. The effect for the audience is a feeling that the space of the DMZ is an embodied, lived space in addition to being a contested, militarized space.

North Koreans in *Joint Security Area*—Enemies or Heroic Brothers?

As Chapter Two revealed, the reportage covering North Korea in the past six decades has generally been negative, and at times, even harsh. *JSA*'s director creatively employs this prevailing negative image of North Koreans in the beginning of the film in order to juxtapose his own alternative, positive image later in the narrative. The contrast between what the audience expects (and gets at first) and what they encounter later gives Park's North Koreans added depth of character. In one of the film's first scenes, Sophie meets the South Korean commander, General Pyo, inside the DMZ. He tells her that there are only two kinds of people in the world: "Commies," and "Commies' enemies."

Immediately Park forces the audience to choose sides—they must either be with the North Koreans (and communism) or they must be enemies of the North. This typical “us versus them” discourse aligns with the representation of North Koreans in the US print media².

This particular exchange between Sophie and Pyo builds on the film’s second scene—the montage depicting Sophie’s arrival in Korea by airplane, stroll through the airport, and her journey to the DMZ by car. During this sequence, a South Korean newscaster describes the shootout in the JSA and the resultant increase in international tension, which has already been at a high level due to North Korea’s suspected nuclear weapons program and recent American naval exercises. General Botta summarizes the situation best when he warns Sophie that the relationship between the Koreas is like a dry forest, and one tiny spark could burn the whole forest down. Thus, Park generates tension for the audience at the beginning of the movie. He first shows the audience what they already know by reinforcing the print media’s image, and then shows the viewers how and why their perceptions are wrong.

The first encounter Park’s audience has with a North Korean is inside the Joint Security Area in the village of Panmunjom, where a US Army-led tour of the area is in progress. A tour group exits one UN building and makes its way to another. While the tourists are outside, a gust of wind blows a woman’s baseball cap over the border. The

² Although Chapter 2 only analyzed articles from the US media, South Korean media was, if anything, more antagonistic toward its neighbor to the north. There was a good explanation for anti-DPRK media coverage prior to 1992: the Korean Central Intelligence Agency positioned representatives in editors’ offices. Any questionable material was censored on the spot. Still today, the government exercises significant control over the media in the form of the National Security Act. For these reasons, we can confidently assume a negative image of North Korea prevails in South Korea (Steinberg, 2000).

hat comes to rest in the North Korean dirt, and a pair of black shoes and some olive trousers enter the frame from the top. As the North Korean soldier retrieves the hat from



Figure 4-4. Sergeant Oh (Song Kang Ho) at the border

(Source: <http://images.movie-gazette.com/albums/20050329/joint-security-area-03.jpg>, accessed March 19, 2008)

the ground, Park slowly tilts the camera up to the soldier's face, which is stoic and scarred (reminiscent of the classic Bond villain's facial disfigurement). Immediately the audience feels the tension of six decades, and subsequently expects a reaction from the North Korean that would fit the "enemy" stereotype. Park's North Korean, however, dusts the hat off and extends it across the border in a surprising gesture of good will. There is even a pleasant smile on his face as he suspends the hat over the border. The tension dissipates as the American soldier/tour guide takes the hat and thanks the North Korean in his own language. Thus, while the olive drab uniform and the scarred face

match the audience's imagined expectations of a North Korean soldier; the act of kindness does not. Park introduces the viewer to a different North Korean capable of compassion, and by so doing, skillfully sets the stage in the following scene for another unlikely exchange between the North and the South—an exchange which initiates Park's alternative narrative of the nature of North Koreans.

The South Koreans are on a night patrol somewhere inside the DMZ. Momentarily disoriented, the squad leader checks his tactical map for coordinates which have been omitted. Discovering his navigational mistake, the South Korean squad leader directs his soldiers to hurry back to their side of the border before they are captured. Sergeant Lee, however, has ventured away from the others so he can urinate. As Lee turns to rejoin the group, he steps into a tripwire for a landmine which will detonate as soon as the pressure on the wire is released. Here Park creates a vulnerable position for a South Korean, wherein death is a very real possibility—if not by the mine, then certainly by the hand of the North Koreans. Since Lee is actually in North Korea (although Lee does not know this himself), the audience assumes the North Korean soldiers will discover him eventually. The Cold War tension builds again for the audience as the North Koreans find Lee immobilized by the mine.

Rather than killing Lee, or even leaving him to solve his own dilemma, Sergeant Oh elects to disarm the South Korean, disarm the mine, and ultimately save an enemy combatant. The print media's North Korean would be incapable of this display of mercy and sanctity of human life, but Park's is not. Sergeant Oh unselfishly risks his own life to save his foe's. Here Park demonstrates the North Korean's superior technical knowledge in disarming the mine (later in the film the audience learns that Lee told his fellow South

Korean soldiers that he disarmed the mine himself) and superior moral courage in risking his life to save another. Sergeant Oh reprimands the less-experienced Private Jung for thinking only of himself, using the moment to teach him about being a good person. Meanwhile, Sergeant Lee (like the audience) is left standing in amazement at both the skills and compassion of the North Korean sergeant. As Oh gives the disarmed mine fuse to Lee, Park symbolically repositions the moral high ground on the Northern side of the demarcation line, away from its (expected) usual place on the Southern side.

This scene serves as the point of departure for Park's further development of Oh's character. Later the North Korean sergeant comments on how nice it is to be called "brother" after years of hearing only "comrade." By way of nightly exchanges across the border, Oh develops a taste for South Korean music, junk food, and other cultural items, which further endears him to the South Korean audience. (By showing Oh's immediate acceptance of and desire for South Korean food and music, Park also suggests that reconciling the cultural differences between the North and the South may not be as difficult as some skeptics of reunification have claimed). And, as the flashbacks occur throughout the film, Park reveals from whom Lee has gained the battlefield wisdom he pretends is his own—from Sergeant Oh.

This on-screen exchange becomes a metaphor for the potential exchange that would accompany reunification. For many South Koreans, the biggest concern of reunification is cost. In a recent survey, 62 percent of the people interviewed believed that reunification would worsen economic conditions in South Korea (BBC, 2006). One estimate suggests that South Korea would need to spend \$850 billion (about 6 percent of the GDP) during the first decade if reunification happened in 2015 (Jung, 2007).

Through Sergeant Oh, Park presents a possible solution to this particular South Korean fear. He suggests that North Koreans have much to offer in terms of wisdom, technical proficiency, and Koreanness. Thus, South Korea would be getting something in exchange for their reunification money.

All of these relatively small details steadily coalesce to form Oh's total character as the narrative progresses. One scene, however, particularly reveals the complexity of Park's North Korean hero. After the evidence appears to refute the depositions, Sophie brings Oh and Lee together inside one of the UN's negotiation buildings in the Joint Security Area. Intending to discover the true sequence of events, she presents forensic evidence and a video taped confession (in the form of an attempted suicide at the mention of a polygraph test) from Private Nam. As the obviously weaker Lee breaks down emotionally at the sight of Nam's attempted suicide, the calm, collected Oh quickly develops an ingenious plan. In order to preserve their secret, Oh momentarily assumes the stereotypical North Korean identity—brainwashed, robotic, and almost rabid (Park shows a close-up shot of spit flying out of Oh's mouth during his tirade). He violently kicks the table over and shouts obscenities at Lee while swearing allegiance to his leader and country.

The irony is brilliant: Oh demonstrates calmness under pressure by acting like a crazed lunatic, and Oh (and now by extension, North Koreans in general) is actually nothing like man he is pretending to be. He merely acts the part to preserve the secret of his friendship. Sergeant Oh understands that his brotherhood with the South Koreans cannot be comprehended through the ideological lens that those in the room cannot escape, and therefore, it must not be revealed. He cleverly assumes his assigned

ideological stereotype to mask the truth. Through this ironic twist, Oh reminds the viewers that he is simultaneously aware of his stereotype and completely unlike it.

Sergeant Oh's calmness under pressure and strength of character also take center stage in the climactic shootout scene wherein the audience learns the true (at least truest version at that point in the movie—Lee's narrative-ending suicide flashback reveals the whole truth) version of what transpired in the North Korean guard shack. When the North Korean lieutenant discovers the illegal gathering of friends, a stand-off ensues. It is Sergeant Oh who initially calms the group. It is again Sergeant Oh who quickly thinks of an explanation of the South Koreans' presence. Then, as the situation deteriorates, he courageously kills his own supervisor in order to save the two South Koreans. He does not attempt to avenge the death of Private Jung. Rather, he takes the weapon from Private Nam, slaps him in the face to bring him back to reality, and wipes the weapon clean (of blood) before returning it to Lee.

When all other characters forfeit their friendship and revert to their ideologically formed identities (as evidenced by the shootout), Sergeant Oh remains the only character who escapes his assigned ideology. Through these events, Oh becomes the hero of Park's narrative. He alone has the courage to value brotherhood above political duty, and friendship above ideological division. Sergeant Oh embodies everything that Park wants South Koreans to believe about (some) North Koreans³. All the others, while able to

³ Clearly Oh does not represent the institutions of North Korea. In fact, his rank of sergeant (5th level from the bottom of enlisted ranks) after so many years of service suggests that he had either disciplinary or administrative problems in the past. By contrast, Lee had attained the same rank in less than two years' time. Furthermore, Lieutenant Choi (the embodiment of the North Korean Army) kicks Oh into the reservoir, demonstrating the divide between Oh and the institution. But not until Oh kills Choi does the audience fully comprehend Oh's separation from the institution.

suppress their deeply-engrained ideology for a short time, tragically lose everything when they ultimately cannot overcome their political limitations.

Park also uses Private Jung and his puppy to add depth to *JSA*'s North Korean characters. Oh and Jung first discover Sergeant Lee because Jung's puppy has momentarily wandered away from him in the tall grass. In this scene the lost puppy (combined with the lost South Korean patrol) literally brings the soldiers of the North and South together. At the same time, the puppy metaphorically brings the audience and the North Koreans together by providing some common ground. Private Jung's interaction with the dog (in this and other subsequent scenes) mirrors the way any South Korean (or Westerner for that matter) would play with and care for a pet. The result is an instant (and unexpected) bond between the audience and the newly humanized North Korean characters. In *Stealth*, the evil North Koreans use of attack dogs (as a weapon) underscores their cold, ruthless nature. In *JSA*, the use of an adorable puppy (as a domestic pet) emphasizes Jung's humanity. Park also utilizes the puppy in subsequent scenes which portray Jung playfully interacting with his pet, further endearing him to the audience through light, comedic moments.

In addition to the general softening effect of the puppy, Park presents another more subtle message about his North Koreans by way of the dog. Many recent reports from nongovernmental agencies indicate that North Koreans are on the brink of starvation due to severe food shortages. A combination of self-imposed food aid restrictions, international sanctions, perennial flooding or other natural disasters, and a reduction of foreign aid keep North Korea dangerously close to widespread starvation year in and year out. An estimated forty percent of children under six years old are

chronically malnourished (Alford, 2006). But Park, by depicting a dog as a soldier's pet and not as his meal, subtly questions these reports, suggesting more favorable conditions in North Korea (at least for the military) than were previously reported. The South Korean audience expects that starving men would have eaten the puppy, especially in Korea where dog is in fact on the menu.

Park further uses this expectation to highlight Jung's love for his puppy. When Jung's supervisor hears the puppy barking at the guard shack, he tells Jung to eat his dog for lunch the next day. Horrified at the thought of eating his puppy, Jung can only whimper, "What?!" When the lieutenant leaves, Jung attempts to send the dog across the demarcation line on the Bridge of No Return, telling him to watch out for mines and that there is more food on the other side. The puppy refuses to cross the border, and to the audience's (ironic) delight, runs instead the other way across the bridge to his home in North Korea. Park's narrative could have easily sent the puppy to South Korea. Likewise, after the cross-border friendship progressed, he could have just as easily sent the North Koreans across the bridge. But Park's cinematic message is not about one or two North Koreans defecting for a better life in Seoul, it is about Korean reunification (Park even hangs a banner in the North Korean shack that reads "*tong il*" or "reunification").

For the puppy and for his North Korean masters, simply walking across a border would not address the true problem—the political ideologies of both North and South Korea. In conveying this message, Park might have easily become lost in his idealistic view of North Koreans. Instead he chooses to highlight the barriers to reunification. In the narrative, both North and South Korea present conflicting explanations for the border

incident, yet Park shows the audience that neither side *really* wants to discover the truth. Both merely want the NNSC to assign blame to the other side and move on quickly—a sentiment echoed by General Botta in his comments to Sophie upon her arrival to the NNSC headquarters in the JSA. Ultimately, officials from the North and South Korean militaries were seeking only to maintain the political status quo, and therefore preserve the border. According to Park’s NNSC commander, ignoring the truth in favor of the status quo is how peace is preserved between the Koreas.

Although Park showed that it is possible to break through the ideological barriers (or more accurately, transcend them temporarily) at the individual level, in the end his tragically flawed characters could not escape their own ideology. The eternally skeptical Private Nam shoots first—a physical manifestation of his inability to fully accept the North Koreans as friends and brothers. As the shots ring out, the audience recalls when Nam first meets Oh and Jung, he instinctively reached for his gun instead of reaching for Oh’s hand. It comes as no surprise that he is the first to shoot. Before the shootout, Nam seems to harbor doubt about the North Koreans—even after the friendship has developed.

At one point Nam verbalizes his concern. While Lee and Nam are shooting at targets made to look like North Korean soldiers, Nam mentions that he heard the North trains their border troops to lure South Korean soldiers across the border. Lee dismisses the notion by reminding Nam that Oh saved his life in the minefield. Although he says nothing more, Nam is still not convinced. His distrust of the North Koreans emerges one final time in a scene just before the shootout. Nam is taking a photo of the other three who are wearing each other’s hats. Portraits of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il are hanging on the wall in the background. Nam ducks down and urges the friends to squeeze closer

together for the picture. His intent is clearly to hide the portraits safely behind the soldiers. He takes the photograph only after the communist leaders are no longer visible in the frame. Then, during the tense moments of the standoff inside the guard shack, Nam voices his distrust of the North Koreans—he repeats that something is not right and that it could be a trap. Because Nam cannot operate outside of his ideology, he assumes the worst and shoots the North Korean lieutenant who was only reaching for his radio.

Perhaps most tragically, the one character who has gained so much from the illegal friendship (his life), Sergeant Lee exhibits his flawed character in the shootout scene, claiming he no longer needs his North Korean “brothers” because they are “enemies” after all. Completely blinded by his ideology, Lee aims his pistol at Sergeant Oh’s forehead at point blank range, and then pulls the trigger several times. In that moment, Lee fully intends to kill Oh, but the malfunctioning weapon does not fire. In this display of Lee’s betrayal, Park still has one more lesson for Lee (and the audience). Now, with more justification than ever, Oh has the opportunity to exact revenge on Lee and Nam. Instead, the North Korean sergeant destroys the incriminating evidence, wipes the blood from the South Korean pistols, and tells Lee and Nam to get back to their side of the border. He even provides them with a reason for having been in North Korea. As a wounded Lee stumbles across the Bridge of No Return, he physically crosses a border which he could never fully transcend ideologically.

Later, as Sophie reveals to Lee that she knows exactly what happened in the guard shack, Lee begins to comprehend his own weakness. He knows that Sergeant Oh will never betray him, so his secret is safe north of the border. That Sophie knows the truth is also of no consequence to Lee because she is a foreigner from a neutral nation, and she

has been removed from her post—nobody would believe her anyway. Thus, there is one way for Lee to simultaneously protect his secret forever, avoid inevitable charges of treason (since the National Security Act prohibits any contact with North Koreans), and mask his shame—suicide. A cinematic message which might have been “reunification is an achievable goal” instead brilliantly becomes a rhetorical question for the audience and for Koreans in general: “is reunification possible if ideology is more important to us than friendship and brotherhood?” Park’s construction of North and South Koreans leaves the audience with a sense of tragic loss, both for the characters who died and for the reunification potential they squandered.

Furthermore, Park’s DMZ is an embodied space where a sense of (unified) Koreanness and a natural connection to the landscape defines identities instead of political ideologies. His near-perfect representations of the buildings, bridge, and guard shacks of the JSA and the mountains and meadows of the DMZ facilitate his message of reunification. Park uses the presence and absence of a visible border to demonstrate the potential of cultural exchange between North and South Korea. While Park’s interpretation of North Korean soldiers and vision of what might happen in the DMZ may be questioned by some, his precise physical representation of the DMZ leaves little room for debate. Realism in the landscape adds depth to Park’s argument for the real potential of reunification.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION: BEYOND THE REEL DMZ

The purpose of this research was to discover the nature(s) of the Korean Demilitarized Zone as presented in the movies *Stealth*, *Die Another Day*, and *Joint Security Area*. The analysis of each film consisted of an examination of the role of genre, the degree to which the DMZ was presented as a place, the degree to which the landscape of the DMZ was humanized, and how the North Koreans were portrayed. In the following sections, I will summarize the research findings and draw comparisons between the American and South Korean cinematic representations of the DMZ and North Koreans. I will also address the implications of my research and suggest a possible direction for further research.

Three Movies, Three DMZs

Rob Cohen's *Stealth* depicts the DMZ as a no-man's land. The hulks of war-ravaged vehicles and the ruins of old houses are strewn across an open dirt field. At the far side of the field, two barbed wire fences mark the border between North and South Korea. Soldiers with automatic weapons, searchlights, and binoculars scan the open field for any sign of movement. Cohen's cinematic demilitarized zone clearly does not serve the same purpose as the real DMZ—a neutral zone which creates spatial separation between military forces. Rather, it is inhabited, guarded, surveilled, and controlled exclusively by the North Koreans. He shows the audience no South Korean buildings, guard towers, nor soldiers; not even on the southern side of his fence-border.

Cohen has also spatially collapsed the real DMZ from its nearly one thousand square kilometers to only a few hundred square meters in his cinematic version. The drastic reduction in size contributes to the image of a prison from which Lieutenant Wade must escape. The open field surrounded on all sides by obstacles further increases the tension of the chase—the smaller the area, the easier the North Koreans can find her. As the analysis of *Steath* in Chapter 3 revealed, Cohen knowingly constructed a false (yet still plausible) image of the DMZ to accentuate the film's climax.

Lastly, *Stealth*'s conceptualization of the Military Demarcation Line (MDL)—two parallel fences with concertina razor wire—more closely resembles the perimeter of a prison compound than the real MDL (which, ironically, is only conceptually real—there is no physical line). On the real border, there are no fences, no barbed wire, and no checkpoints. There are only yellow MDL signs placed three hundred to five hundred meters apart. In the end, Cohen's DMZ shares many elements with the print media's predominant version of the DMZ (fences, guards in towers, guns, etc.). Thus, for most Western viewers, the images on the screen match the common stereotype presented in the print media. The result is a believable representation of the DMZ. A real to reel comparison, however, reveals that Cohen's DMZ is as fictitious as his narrative.

Director Lee Tamahori's DMZ is buzzing with North Korean military activity. There are fortified compounds, fences, troops, trucks, hovercraft, and mines—emphasizing the militarized component of the landscape. His DMZ, unlike Cohen's, is spatially realistic, but not completely accurate. In *Die Another Day*'s DMZ there is enough space to house a large North Korean command compound, a stockpile of illegal weapons, and a collection of exotic sports cars. Tamahori's DMZ is not a single open

field like Cohen's. The true size of the DMZ is shown to some degree in the high-speed hovercraft chase scene. Tamahori is not consistent with his spatial accuracy, however. In the prisoner exchange scene, his southern DMZ is only one or two meters wide. In reality, the DMZ is uniform in the northern and southern halves—each extends two kilometers from the MDL.

There is also a strong element of deception in this DMZ. The North Koreans are stockpiling weapons illegally in places that cannot be observed. In Panmunjom, however, where the South Koreans and Americans can look across the border, the North Korean buildings are dilapidated. This façade of ruins masks the North's true state of readiness and capability to bypass the South's defenses. While the details bear no significant resemblance, Tamahori's on-screen deception hints of North Korea's actual plan of deception. "Intelligence officials say North Korean President Kim Il-sung ordered invasion tunnels built in the early 1970s around the time the two Koreas began their first conciliation talks" (Breen, 1993). While the North Korean diplomats were cooperating on the surface (literally and figuratively), North Korean soldiers were digging infiltration tunnels under their feet. UN forces have discovered four tunnels beneath the DMZ, but intelligence experts believe North Korea may have completed 16 more tunnels (Kauffner, 2000). In both the real and the reel case, the North Koreans appeared to be doing one thing, while secretly planning to do another.

Unlike *Stealth*, *Die Another Day* incorporates the (arguably) most iconic image of the DMZ's landscape—the Bridge of No Return in Panmunjom. The cinematic version's physical structure, however, does not resemble the real Bridge of No Return at all, and the MDL which should bisect the bridge is instead represented by a fence on the

South Korean end of the bridge. In the real Panmunjom there is no fence near the Bridge of No Return. The border is marked only by the yellow MDL signs or the raised concrete slab between the UN buildings in the Joint Security Area. While the physical attributes of the bridge and its immediate surroundings are completely inaccurate, Tamahori correctly shows the bridge as the place where prisoners are exchanged between North and South Korea. Because Tamahori successfully links his cinematic bridge with historical fact, the image resonates with the audience enough to make the reel seem real.

Although the *Die Another Day*'s representation of the DMZ is far more accurate than *Stealth*'s representation, it still depicts the landscape of the DMZ inaccurately. Tamahori shows the audience a North Korean controlled DMZ in order to emphasize the Cold War binary. He uses the landscape to widen the gulf between the West and the communist other. Distorting the DMZ's spatial dimensions, Tamahori exposes and exaggerates the South's vulnerability to a North Korean attack. Once again, an American film's perspective is one-dimensional—a view which cannot seem to look beyond the militarized aspect of the DMZ. Instead of exploring other characteristics of the DMZ's landscape, Tamahori focuses on the one which provides the clearest picture of us versus them. And, like *Stealth*, *Die Another Day* delivers a counterfeit DMZ that reinforces the prevailing (mis)conception.

Park Chan Wook's reel DMZ, on the other hand, is nearly flawless. He introduces the audience to the DMZ by showing Sophie's journey from the airport to Panmunjom. The viewers experience the road trip as though they were inside Sophie's car. Park shows images of the actual highway (not a set) that leads from Seoul to Panmunjom. The car montage reinforces the realism of Park's narrative. Because many

in his South Korean audience have been to the JSA, Park must be as precise as possible in his representation. The full-scale reproduction of the Joint Security Area's buildings, trees, roads, signs, and bridge does not disappoint—it is very accurate (figure 5-1).

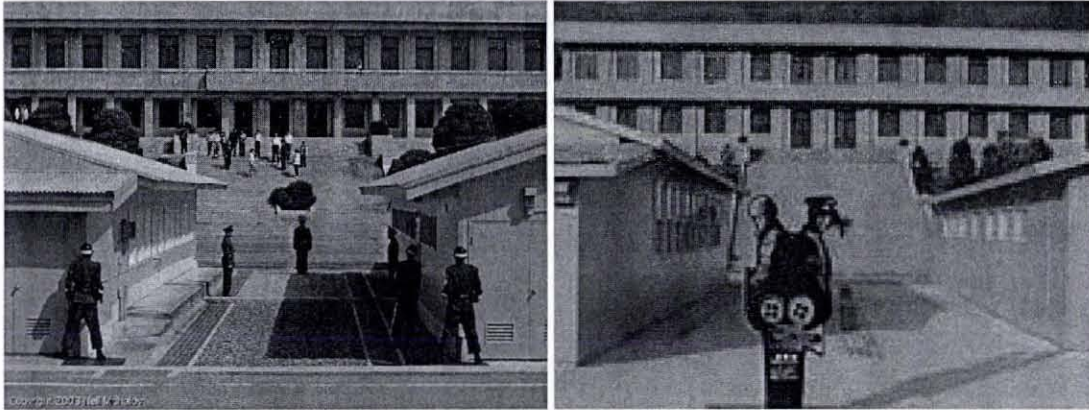


Figure 5-1. The real JSA (left) compared to the reel JSA (right)

(Sources: left photo: http://www.mishalov.net/korea30sept03/pictures/img_1357.html, accessed March 19, 2008; right photo: movie.cca.gov.tw/cinema/images/app_123.jpg, both accessed March 19, 2008)

But Park's realism is not confined to the JSA. His sweeping landscape shots provide a glimpse of the natural beauty of the land between the fences. He begins the movie with a nature scene (the owl and moon) and carries that theme throughout the narrative. He shows beautiful fields of tall grass, thick forests, and snow-covered mountains. Yet, in his efforts to show the natural splendor of the DMZ, Park does not ignore the reality that it is also militarized space. His moonlit meadow hides a minefield. His characters always wear a uniform and they are never without a weapon.

Park's depiction of the border also adds to *JSA*'s realism. Inside the JSA, the reel border is indistinguishable from the real border. Between the UN buildings both borders are a raised strip of concrete. On both *Bridges of No Return* the border is a rusted metal plate which lies directly across the center of the bridge. Park's is the only of the three films to include an accurate image of a rusty yellow MDL sign (*Die Another Day*'s sign

is yellow, but it's the wrong size and shape, and it's affixed to a fence instead of a single pole). Unlike the fence-borders in *Stealth* and *Die Another Day*, there is no reified border outside the JSA in Park's DMZ scenes. He correctly shows the audience that once they are inside the DMZ, there is no fence between North and South Korea. Thus, the South Korean squad crossing the border without realizing it (until they see the guard shack) and the North and South Korean patrols coming in close contact in the DMZ are two entirely plausible events.

While the images of the landscape in *JSA* do not require the audience to suspend its disbelief, Park's suggestion of what takes place inside the DMZ does require a leap of faith. South Korea maintains a compulsory military service program for all able-bodied men. The conscripts serve in the armed forces for 24 to 28 months, depending on their branch of service (CIA, 2008). Thus, Park's primary audience (men for the detective genre) is very familiar with military service and procedures. The idea that a South Korean soldier could leave his post and cross the border for hours at a time without being discovered by his own chain of command is, in reality, extremely unlikely. Regular reports to higher command and recorded duty logs would prevent a guard from leaving his post except for scheduled security checks. Interestingly, Park shows the North Korean supervisor (Lieutenant Choi) checking in on the guard post, yet he never shows the South Koreans checking in on Lee and Nam.

A group of South Korean veterans took issue with Park's portrayal of the soldiers stationed in Panmunjom. Shortly after the film was released, they staged a violent protest outside Myung Films' office in Seoul. They demanded an apology for *JSA*'s "slandorous depiction" of the soldiers who have been assigned to Panmunjom (*Korea Herald*,

September 28, 2000). The group of retired veterans protested for three hours, throwing furniture and breaking windows of the office building. They finally stopped when Myung Films executives agreed to add a disclaimer to the beginning and end of the film stating that the events were fictitious (ibid.). In the end, while Park's representation of the physical landscape of the DMZ is precise, his interpretation of what might take place between North and South Korean soldiers in that landscape is hardly plausible.

Will the Real (not Reel) North Koreans Please Stand Up?

Rob Cohen introduces two categories of North Koreans to the audience. The audience first sees North Korean peasant women peacefully doing chores in their primitive village. The bucolic serenity is shattered by a North Korean girl's scream in reaction to meeting Lieutenant Wade. In this scene Cohen shows the viewers how different they are from North Koreans by displaying their pre-modern lifestyle. He furthers the divide between us and them when his villagers report the foreigner to the army. This action by the villagers suggests their devotion to their socialist motherland, and therefore, their opposition to the West.

If the audience cannot identify with the villagers, it certainly cannot relate to Colonel Yune and his death squad. Cohen's North Korean assassin is a cold, robotic killer who hunts Wade on her journey south. Yune only shows one facial expression (a scowl), and when he speaks, he barks orders. Cohen elects to leave Yune's lines in Korean—there are no subtitles for his (mostly) American audience. The result is the viewers' heightened sense of fear for Yune. He embodies the enemy, the communist other. In general, *Stealth* depicts North Koreans as one-dimensional slaves to ideology.

The villagers' response to Wade's arrival is reporting her presence to the authorities—they fulfill their duty to the communist state. Likewise, Yune, with symbols of communism on his sleeves, is a mindless weapon in Kim Jong II's military machine. Thus, Cohen's reel North Koreans are both informed by, and reproduce the dominant discourse.

The portrayal of North Koreans in *Die Another Day* is similar. Tamahori's North Koreans, particularly Zao and Colonel Moon/Graves, are a bit more multi-dimensional than Cohen's characters, but only because Zao and Moon/Graves play more central roles and the audience has more exposure to them. Still, the underlying theme behind the North Koreans is animosity and antagonism toward the West. Graves/Moon, while fulfilling the expectations of a typical Bond villain, exhibits all the qualities of an ideological enemy. He is deceitful, ruthless, and he tortures those who question his authority. His unquenchable thirst for power is manifest in his scheme to reunite the two Koreas via Icarus, and then force the West to submit to his supreme power.

To underscore his commentary on North Korean leadership, Tamahori presents Graves/Moon's father as the benevolent voice of reason in an ideologically confused country. As a stark contrast to his son, General Moon does not condone torture, wants to bridge the gap between North Korea and the West, and above all, does not want to engage in a war with South Korea. Thus, through General Moon, Tamahori suggests that favorable attitudes may exist in North Korea, but those who oppose the regime will not survive. They, like the good general, will die at the hands of the dictator. For the viewers, Graves/Moon's patricide is a two-edged sword. Not only did the one good North Korean die, but he died at the hands of his own son. Here Tamahori underscores

the villain's evil nature by showing that to the communist other, ideology is more important even than filiality.

But Tamahori also suggests that there is more than the ideological dimension to Graves/Moon's character. The James Bond genre calls for villains who are "pure evil, and often insane," and Graves/Moon embodies both (Leach, 2004: 99). While his evil nature is revealed early in the narrative, Graves/Moon leaves the audience guessing whether he is a genius or a psychopath—that is until he deploys Icarus and kills his father. As I argued previously, this Bond villain has a real-life parallel in Kim Jong Il. President George W. Bush gave Kim Jong Il the evil label (in his axis of evil speech), and many experts have debated for years whether Kim is "crazy, or crazy like a fox" (Moore, 2006). Thus, through Graves/Moon, Tamahori's narrative suggests that Kim is both evil and insane, and only Western intervention can save the world from a sinister, deranged dictator. Once again, the American film's perspective reinforces the North Korean stereotype.

The overall message of Park Chan Wook's *JSA* could not be more different. His hero is a North Korean who exhibits superior strength of character and above all, the ability to act independently of ideology. Sergeant Oh returns a tourist's hat across the border in the *JSA*, disables a mine, remains calm in several tense situations, and even assumes the stereotype of a North Korean soldier when it becomes necessary to preserve the secret of the cross-border friendship. Park humanizes his North Koreans through Sergeant Oh's status as the hero of the narrative, but also through the comedic moments featuring Jung and his puppy. Unlike the American movies, *JSA*'s audience can identify with the North Koreans. They are "us," not "them" in this narrative. Park shows his

viewers the opposite of what they have become accustomed to reading in the print media—the North Koreans are not brainwashed automatons. They are Koreans separated from their brothers and sisters by an imaginary divide.

So who are the real North Koreans? Since access to North Korea is severely restricted, the best source for inside information is either defectors or captured soldiers. Many of the North Korean defectors have indicated that the general population is subjected to continual indoctrination with pro-Kim propaganda amidst their deplorable living conditions. One North Korean orphan who escaped to China recalled, “I witnessed many executions. They did it to terrorize people. Small children would watch them too. But you got used to seeing dead people everywhere” (Becker, 2006). Many other defectors speak of harsh conditions in North Korea, noting widespread famine, disease, and tyrannical rule (Kirk, 2007). Though the defectors left for differing reasons, they almost always agree that life was bleak in North Korea.

Another eye-opening example of a lost North Korean soldier provides a glimpse of the extent of ideological programming within the military ranks. In 1996, Chong Kwang Son (20 years old at the time of the incident), fell asleep while guarding a North Korean diving barge in the Yellow Sea. While he slept, his barge drifted into South Korean waters and he was taken into custody by the Maritime Police (South Korea’s version of the Coast Guard). At first he resisted with a hatchet, refusing to board a South Korean vessel. Later he refused to accept bread, milk, and cigarettes from investigators, and shouted for them to turn off a television program. According to his own wishes, Chong was repatriated (across the Bridge of No Return) a few days later, but not before making an impression on the South Korean investigators. One investigator noted that he

was “terribly shocked at North Korea’s ideological education” (BBC, November 29, 1996). Chong’s own statement provides a glimpse of that ideology:

The North Korean army is more formidable than any sort of missile because it is composed of five million rifles and guns protecting Kim Jong Il. We can certainly defeat the South Korean army because we are all completely armed ideologically and can turn our bodies into guns dedicated to that purpose (ibid.).

Evidence of collective brainwashing in North Korea is not restricted to this incident. In the early 1980s, a South Korean fishing vessel was captured by the North Koreans. The crewmen were held for 244 days in a North Korean “concentration camp” where they were introduced to the revolutionary ideas of Kim Il Sung (BBC, 1981). One remarked, “They forced us to worship Kim Il Sung and his son and heir apparent, Jong Il, and asked us to translate into action what they taught us when we return home” (ibid.). The North Korean captors also threatened that if the crew did not follow through with their orders, their families would be in danger.

We certainly cannot characterize all North Koreans as brainwashed ideologues, but we cannot ignore the reality of life in North Korea either. With absolutely no exposure to the outside world, Kim’s people have no choice but to believe what he and his government tell them. For them, the Dear Leader’s birth was marked by the appearance of a new star, a double rainbow, and a swallow descending from heaven to announce the arrival of “a general who will rule the world” (Goodspeed, 2006). His place in society is best described by an official North Korean publication:

For the immortal exploits he scored for the revolution and construction in Korea, Comrade Kim Jong Il has enjoyed absolute authority as the leader of the revolution and boundless trust and respect of the Korean people (DPRK, 1998: 143).

If any one of Kim's fellow revolutionaries is suspected of violating that trust, he and his family will be shipped of to one of the (estimated) 12 or more gulags and join the ranks of the 200,000 political prisoners who are sentenced to hard labor for life in the concentration camps (Barnett, 2004).

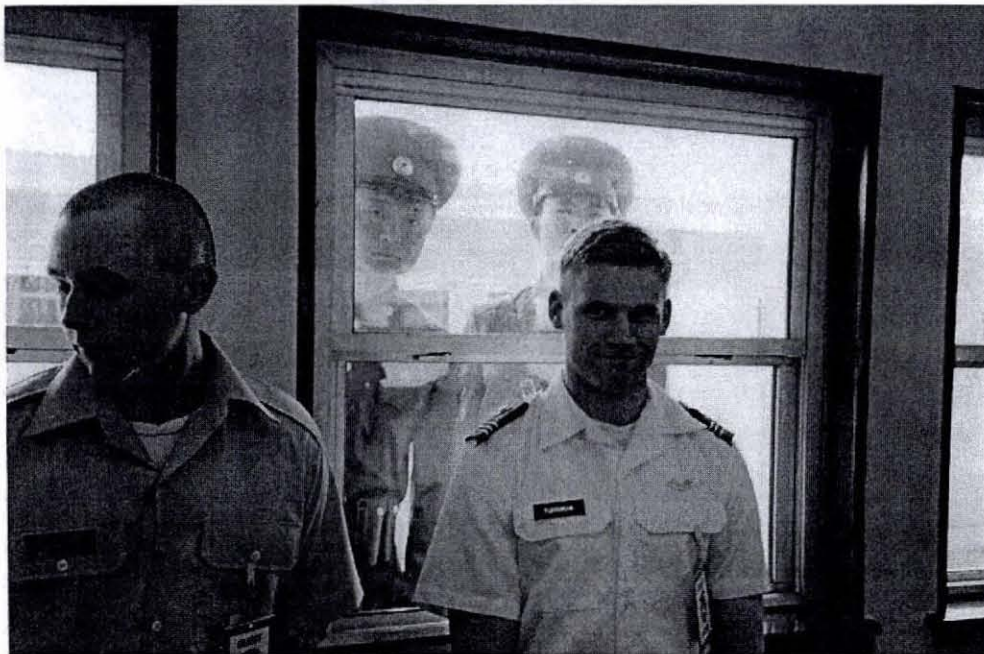


Figure 5-2. (Real) North Koreans looking through a window in the JSA
(Source: Author's photograph)

Thus, we are left to decide which reel North Koreans most closely resemble real North Koreans (figure 5-2). Cohen and Tamahori both have news reports (Australian, British, Canadian, American, and South Korean), military, diplomatic, and other forms of government intelligence, human rights groups' observations, and defectors' testimonies

to corroborate their representations. Park has no historical evidence to support his views. In fact, the history of interaction between the North and the South Korean soldiers at Panmunjom confirms quite the opposite. In the JSA, North Korean guards are known for their attempts to rouse the South Korean and American guards by spitting across the MDL, making throat-slashing gestures, and extending their middle fingers (*Daily Telegraph*, 2006). Thus, from most indications, real North Koreans have been extremely limited by the ideology enforced by the Kims (father and son). We are left to conclude that in this case, the dominant discourse is generally the most accurate. Still, I find the discourse problematic in one regard: it eliminates the *possibility* of different kind of North Korean by emphasizing the divide between “us” and “them.” This point is not entirely lost on Park, who shows the North Korean institution to be part of the problem in his movie. Yet, he gives the audience an exception to the rule—a possibility. Park’s attempt to show Sergeant Oh as complex, intelligent individual able to transcend his assigned ideology is a fresh viewpoint worthy of further exploration, and it represents a possible departure point for finding meaning in a unified Korean identity.

Finding Meaning in the Reel DMZ

To conclude, I return to Pamela Shurmer-Smith’s notion of a “sense of place” which materializes as a particular landscape’s meaning is understood by groups of people (2002). In *Stealth*, *Die Another Day*, and *JSA*, the cinematic landscape of the DMZ combined with the representations of North Koreans formed three differing place-images. Yet in the sum of these contrasting place-images a sense of place emerges. The DMZ

becomes much more than an imaginary line on a political map, and much more than the most militarized border in the world. Rather, it becomes a contested space wherein multiple discourses seek to project their meanings. It is simultaneously a no-man's land for Westerners who have no ties to the land, and a land of embroidered streams and mountains for those whose souls are connected to that landscape. It is a place of cold, robotic soldiers who are slaves to ideology, and a domestic space where Koreans can nurture friendship and brotherhood beyond the gaze of ideology. It is a place of division where the capitalist self meets the communist other, and a place of reconciliation where "North" and "South" becomes "Korean." It is the last frontier of the Cold War, and the final refuge for a unified Korean identity.

Denis Cosgrove argues that landscape "is not merely the world we see, it is a construction, a composition of that world. Landscape is a way of seeing the world" (1998: 13). On the silver screen, directors dictate which landscape the audience sees. Or, in Cosgrove's terms, directors can dictate the way the audience sees. As we have discovered in all three movies, the landscape is "an ideological concept" (ibid.: 15). The cinematic place-images are both created and projected through the lens of ideology. The finished image is an ideologically charged landscape. Thus, understanding the underlying ideology is essential in understanding how people assign values to landscape. The American way of seeing the DMZ is clearly outlined in *Stealth* and *Die Another Day*. The predominant South Korean (print media's) way of seeing the landscape aligns with the American way, but *JSA* provides an alternate South Korean perspective that is gaining popularity. The missing piece is the North Korean landscape.

More research is needed to discover and analyze the North Korean perceptions and representations of the DMZ. Perhaps with the passage of time, more North Korean materials will be made available for research. As the North Korean films become accessible, analyses of their landscape images will reveal their underlying cultural and ideological values. And a greater understanding of the other's core values and ideologies may open the door for more effective diplomacy. Perhaps then it will be in the landscape (both the place and the way of seeing) of the DMZ that Koreans will be able to realize reunification after all. With the mines and fences removed, the Korean tiger and the unified Korean identity it represents will be free to inhabit the entire peninsula once again.

The aim of this thesis was to present a cultural geography of the Korean Demilitarized Zone as expressed through American and South Korean films. Drawing on discourses of space and place (specifically landscape as a text, marginalized places, boundaries, and the geopolitics of film) to frame my research, I read the landscape of the DMZ in two Hollywood films and one South Korean film to find the following: First, the dominant discourse perpetuated by the US print media has effectively marginalized the landscape of the DMZ, and by extension, North Koreans. This discourse is reflected (or more accurately, projected) in the representations of the DMZ and North Koreans in *Stealth* and *Die Another Day*.

Second, much has been written suggesting the disappearance of boundaries at many scales, including international boundaries. I have argued that *JSA*'s depiction of the DMZ shows the audience a (possible) landscape without boundaries, where the differences between North and South Koreans (like the border between them) have

disappeared. But, I have also argued that *Stealth* and *Die Another Day*'s DMZ reifies the MDL (in the form of barbed-wire fences) between North and South Korea, and by extension the West and North Korea. Thus, both the physical and the ideological boundaries are fortified by the dominant geopolitical discourse. Third, that same discourse has, in part, leveraged the powerful images of the DMZ in forming a sociospatial identity for North Koreans. As *Stealth* and *Die Another Day*'s narratives separate "us" and "them" with fences, *JSA*'s narrative unites Koreans in a borderless landscape. Thus, I have shown that the role of boundaries (or lack thereof) is indeed a vital component of identity construction.

I would also submit that film geography provides an excellent prism through which to study culture and ideology. I have demonstrated how differences in representations of landscape on the silver screen reflect differences in cultural and ideological values. I have also argued that films still have the power project a clear national identity (via geopolitical perspective) despite the globalization of the film industry and the internationalization of production teams. I therefore conclude that film is a valuable pedagogical tool for exploring the dominant geopolitical, cultural, and social discourses and the identities they create. But film is also a platform from which geographers can study how marginalized sectors of societies contest the (dominant) discursive meanings of their assigned identities and places on the margin. In any case, film geography deserves a permanent place in geographic curricula across the world. No other subfield in the discipline is better suited to analyze cinema's "meaningful reflection of society" at 24 frames per second (Manchel, 1990: 61).

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Filmography

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Lee. Seoul, South Korea: CJ Entertainment.

Stealth. 2005. Widescreen two-disc special edition DVD. Directed by Rob Cohen.
Produced by Mike Medavoy. Culver City, CA: Columbia Pictures.