

**REPRESENTATIONS OF DISPLACEMENT AND LIMINALITY
AS A FORM OF SOCIAL INTERROGATION
IN SOUTH KOREAN LITERATURE, FILM AND TV DRAMA**

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For Max (2001-2014)

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ABSTRACT

This thesis by publication presents a group of articles which address South Korean texts in order to examine how depictions of alienated subjectivity are constituted through representations of minds afflicted with a sense of unease and frustration brought about by limited agency. Narrative fictions which depict such alienated subjects offer insights into how a society envisages and interrogates subjectivities within processes of displacement and dislocation.

The chapters are connected by an overarching theme centred on those social forces which construct certain South Korean subjects as liminal or consign them to a state of liminality. The underpinning methodology brings together, to varying degrees, imagological analysis with concepts from cognitive studies, especially conceptual blending and script and schema theory, and/or from hauntology. The primary corpus is wide-ranging in textual modes – fiction, film, television drama, folktale – but the works largely consist of adaptations of supernatural tales: fairy tale, folktale and ghost stories.

The first three chapters lay the basis for the study by examining texts which deal with the turbulent first half of the twentieth century and its aftermath – the Japanese colonisation, the Korean War and subsequent social malaise perpetuated through the period of military dictatorship and the deep socio-economic and gender inequalities that persist in contemporary South Korea. The next three chapters explore texts in various media which depict the alterity of subjects displaced by supernatural circumstances, especially fox spirits and ghosts, whose liminality is a site from which dominant social formations may be interrogated. Analogies (with overlaps) between ghosts and young people foreground marginalisation by a society that oscillates between a modernised individualism and a persistent sense of hierarchy. In examining how young people are pushed to the social periphery, fiction and film challenge current social assumptions and directions. The final chapter examines some TV drama series involving the “innocent persecuted heroine” motif, and demonstrates how the blending of fairy tales from the Grimms, Andersen and local tradition functions as a comment not only on the obscene wealth of the families who control Korea’s economy, but also on the maintenance of an entrenched underclass which this concentration of wealth entails.

South Korean narrative fictions are apt to thematise a social and historical trauma which continues to haunt Korean society. They are a privileged mode for the representation of trauma, whether consciously experienced or repressed, because they locate them within meaningful structures and gain some degree of aesthetic approval from audiences. Further, the effectiveness of such representations derives from their place in an intertextual field – that is, by means of repetitions and resemblances any particular example evokes other related textual instances. Such familiarity, perceived in relationship with the historical record of social action and political decision-making, variously reflects, creates and challenges an era’s attitudes and mentalities.

STATEMENT OF CANDIDATE

I certify that the work in this doctoral thesis titled

**“Representations of Displacement and Liminality
as a Form of Social Interrogation
in South Korean Literature, Film and TV Drama”**

has not previously been submitted for a higher degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a higher degree to any other university or institution than Macquarie University.

I also certify that the thesis is an original piece of research and it has been written by me.

In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are appropriately acknowledged in the thesis.

Sung-Ae Lee
19 November 2015