

**Making the Global Visible: Charting the Uneven Development of Global Monsters in Bong Joon-Ho's *Okja* and Nacho Vigalondo's *Colossal***

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Ju Young Jin,

**"Making the Global Visible: Charting the Uneven Development of Global Monsters in Bong Joon-Ho's *Okja* and Nacho Vigalondo's *Colossal*"**<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol21/iss7/5>>

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**Abstract:** In her essay, "Making the Global Visible: Charting the Uneven Development of Global Monsters in Bong Joon-Ho's *Okja* and Nacho Vigalondo's *Colossal*," Ju Young Jin examines the entanglement of the global and the monstrous in two recent films that position Korea on the cusp between Cold War politics and global capitalism: Bong Joon-Ho's *Okja* and Nacho Vigalondo's *Colossal*. The Korean filmmaker Bong Joon-Ho and Spanish filmmaker Nacho Vigalondo offer viewers films that challenge conventional notions of monster by fusing it with a coming-of-age plot of the female protagonist that takes place on a global scale, which contests the bildungsroman form that valorizes the nation-state in tracing a person's growth and social integration. By using the critical frameworks of postcolonial bildungsroman and Kaiju (Japanese monster films such as Godzilla) genre, I highlight how these films stage the broader tensions and radical discontinuities of globalization informed by the complex Korea-US relationship. My term "global monsters" is meant to refer, on one hand, to the discursive act of charting the uneven development and mobility of the monsters shown in the two films and, on the other hand, to the indexical act of making visible the process and force of globalization. Exploring the entanglement of the global and the monsters in the two films then is tantamount to delineating an abstract space of globalization and radical discontinuities therein writ large.

## Ju Young JIN

### **Making the Global Visible: Charting the Uneven Development of Global Monsters in Bong Joon-Ho's *Okja* and Nacho Vigalondo's *Colossal***

In this paper, I examine the entanglement of the global and the monstrous in two recent films that position Korea on the cusp between Cold War politics and global capitalism: Bong Joon-Ho's *Okja* and Nacho Vigalondo's *Colossal*. The Korean filmmaker Bong Joon-Ho and Spanish filmmaker Nacho Vigalondo offer viewers films that challenge conventional notions of monster by fusing it with a coming-of-age plot of the female protagonist that takes place on a global scale, which contests the bildungsroman form that valorizes the nation-state in tracing a person's growth and social integration. The two films' reimagining of monsters and reworking of the bildungsroman form also suggest that the unruly and uncontrollable forces of globalization can generate zones of undecidability that can precipitate formations of new identity and solidarity across class, gender, and cultures. The presence of monster and female protagonists striving to achieve some sort of social integration either by dispelling or keeping the monster are important commonalities found in both films. By using the critical frameworks of postcolonial bildungsroman and Kaiju (Japanese monster films such as *Godzilla*) genre, I highlight how these films stage the broader tensions of the Cold War legacy and globalization informed by the complex Korea-US relationship.

Globalization now connotes a sense of something incalculable, colossal, and a totalizing force that connects and integrates people across nations. Yet it is also placeless and deterritorialized in the sense that globalization refers to no single place but the abstract conditions and processes that make up global interactions. Fredric Jameson delineates these two senses of global deterritorialization. In the geographical sense, globalization denotes the traceable process whereby "capital shifts to other and more profitable forms of production, often enough in new geographical regions". On the other hand, Jameson argues that globalization also refers to "the ultimate deterritorialization, that of territory as such—the becoming abstract of land and the earth, the transformation of the very background or context of commodity exchange into a commodity in its own right" (153–54). While the former sense of globalization is a traceable movement of capital and labor across geographically locatable contexts, the latter sense refers to an abstraction of space as such, a multi-directional exchange of commodity, technology, ideas, and data. For Jameson, globalization, in this latter sense, is "a kind of cyberspace in which money capital has reached its ultimate dematerialization, as messages which pass instantaneously from one nodal point to another across the former material world" (154). Understood as a dematerialized cyberspace, the global has become a monstrous abstraction of endless circulation and exchange, in which neither autonomous speaking subjects nor tangible spaces of inscription exist as such. In order to capture this abstraction, my term "global monsters" is meant to refer, on one hand, to the discursive act of charting the uneven development and mobility of the monsters shown in the two films and, on the other hand, to the indexical act of making visible the process and force of globalization. In this double sense, both making the global and the monster visible dramatized in the two films can be seen as a co-constitutive process. Exploring the entanglement of the global and the monsters in the two films then is tantamount to delineating an abstract space of globalization and the radical discontinuities therein writ large. My interest in the similarities between the two films does not stem from what they are but rather what they *do*: because they dramatize global confluence and conflagration embodied in the presence of monsters reminiscent of *Godzilla* and its origin in the Cold War, and because they trigger further investigation of Korea as a contested site of post-Cold War which animates a narrative of forestalled maturity or arrested development.

Both Gloria in *Colossal* and Mija in *Okja* exemplify failed attempts at social integration and forestalled maturity, qualities often found in postcolonial bildungsroman. The two films' prominent featuring of small town/the pastoral in the age of globalization and homeland security seems odd at first glance. In fact, the return to the provincial town is central in bildungsroman, a literary genre about an individual's development and about the development of a historical consciousness. Bakhtin views that bildungsroman as a necessary literary genre in an expanding capitalist modernity. The project of bildungsroman "is primarily one of overturning and demolishing the world view and psychology" of contained localities which "proved increasingly inadequate to the new capitalist world" (Bakhtin 234). James Hardin, in considering the original German form, extends this description to point out that Bildung—the root of the Bildungsroman that translates into formation or development—refers to the "cultivation" of spiritual, moral, cultural, and psychological maturity that nourishes the protagonist's place in society (1991, xi). When the protagonist's Bildung is connected to the interests of the nation, the novel and the protagonist's journey become symbolic of the anxieties and growth of the nation.

Whereas in its classical form, the individual remains attached to a fixed social space, in the modern bildungsroman the individual is defined by "mobility" (Moretti 4) because the individual "belonging" to a singular, stable space is "possible *only in the precapitalist world*" (Moretti 27, italics original). As modernists and their successors show us, one alternative is to focus on the very crises and contradictions that enable the aspiration toward Bildung in the first place. If the failure of Bildung can be transformed into the knowledge of failure, Bildung can rediscover itself as the production of an ironic consciousness and as the assumption of human finitude, while the bildungsroman can become the narrative of impossibility of attaining maturity and social integration. Jed Esty, in *Unseasonable Youth*, takes a similar position as a starting point in his readings of bildungsroman in "colonial contact zones" (2) which frequently feature narratives of forestalled maturity, in other words, a failed attempt at achieving Bildung in the classical bildungsroman's sense. For him, the bildungsroman of the colonial contact zones tells narratives of failure largely because of historical pressures (uneven capital development, the dangers of settler colonialism, the Anglo-Irish War) that made Bildung itself untenable. Thus, the bildungsroman genre was forced to accommodate diachronic temporalities, "stories of stasis, regression, and hyper development" (Esty 25). Within these colonial contact zones, a "postponed modernity" (Esty 166) offers only extremes: self-foreclosure or the frenzied acceleration of capitalist development.

In an ideological reversal of *Okja*, the ending of *Colossal* shows Gloria's unexpected maturation and emotional growth, resembling the classical form of the bildungsroman. Given that the bildungsroman genre is primarily a genre invested in foregrounding the historical and hegemonic mediations that make up the global space, charting the uneven development of Gloria in *Colossal* and Mija in *Okja* then can make the monstrous and uncontrollable forces of the global legible and visible.

### 1. Arrested Development in *Colossal*

*Colossal* stages the arrested development of Gloria, a 30-something social misfit whose irresponsible heavy drinking prompts her to return to her childhood home in a small town located in New England. To parallel everyday demons such as addiction with a monster with deeper roots in history, *Colossal* borrows from Kaiju genre whose representative monster is Godzilla: a reminder of nuclear fear and America's uneasy relationship with Northeast Asia.

Godzilla, both the character and the film franchise, is a reflection on the Japanese experience at the end of World War II: destruction beyond imagining, and a lurking sense that "We brought this on ourselves" somehow, even without meaning to. Cultural expressions such as Godzilla have allowed the Japanese to express what cannot be stated in the political realm. What is also interesting in Godzilla is that it can be read as a stand-in for a stereotypical Asian American male, "as a strong, silent type, an early model of Japanese pop culture icon who (like the nation from which it came) remained essentially passive and voiceless on the global stage" (Tsutsui and Ito 5). In the American version of the Godzilla movie, Dr. Serizawa, the Japanese scientist whose contribution was essential to the creation of the atomic bomb, decides to destroy his research notes and commits suicide in the course of killing Gojira, thereby proving himself to be more ethically engaged and concerned for others than the implicitly negligent American scientists. Susan Napier also points out the therapeutic element in the Godzilla movie for the Japanese: "Godzilla is vanquished through Japanese science—may, therefore, be read as a form of cultural therapy, allowing the defeated Japanese to work through the trauma of the wartime bombings in the scenes to reimagine and rewrite their devastating defeat" (Napier 10).

It is through Gloria's performance of the Godzilla-like figure terrorizing downtown Seoul that the film underscores the monster's connection to the legacy of the Cold War. The first time Gloria hears of the Godzilla rampaging in the capital of South Korea (Yongsan district, a well-known US army base) on the news, she has just woken up with a hangover, continuing her immature way of life. As the film progresses, Gloria gradually puts together that she somehow controls the monster ravaging Seoul, and that the monster corresponds to every move she makes, down to her personal tics, for a brief window of time every morning on a playground in her hometown. In *Colossal*, a playground in small town America is equated with the densely populated capital of South Korea.

At the start of *Colossal*, a little girl in South Korea witnesses the coming of a Godzilla-like monster. Then a title says "25 Years Later," and cuts to an apartment in New York, and the main protagonist Gloria is introduced. Fed up with Gloria's constant drinking and irresponsible behavior, her boyfriend tells her that she must leave the house. As soon as Gloria returns to her family home in a small New England town, a gigantic Godzilla materializes in Seoul. There's a small children's playground on Gloria's route home from her childhood friend Oscar's bar. The parameters of the playground give her a mini version of downtown Seoul to stomp through, and while she is in it, the monster will mimic any movement that she makes. Gloria confides in Oscar, who at first seems skeptical of her story but eventually accompanies her to the playground to see for himself. When Oscar stomps into the

playground, however, suddenly a giant robot appears next to Godzilla and terrorizes the innocent people of the city. That robot is connected to Oscar the same way as Godzilla is to Gloria. The rest of Gloria's story involves her trying to stop Oscar from hurting helpless Koreans, while simultaneously struggling with herself to stop drinking and be responsible. It is however important to note the sociopolitical underpinnings of the melodramatic bickering between Gloria and Oscar who is meant to serve as an embodiment of "toxic masculinity" clutching onto his privileges slipping away. The externalization of Gloria's personal demons such as her addiction and her attempt to convalesce and Oscar's harassing of her then can be a receptacle to the potent political points made by the Kaiju genre in dramatizing the remnants of American hegemony in North-East Asia. From this angle, the film's depiction of adults who are unable to let go of their childhood anxieties or recognize consequences of their actions can be read as a not-so-subtle critique of the legacy of the Cold-War and the American century.

*Colossal* is about the production and reproduction of Gloria's small town past as much as it is about replicating U.S. hegemony vis-à-vis Korea. Downtown Seoul literally collapses into a children's playground in small town America. The film insinuates that the show's global audience in both U.S. and Korea is as manipulated as Gloria. The daily news coverage of the monster produces the global community and the legacy of US hegemony. Just as Gloria is interpellated by the small town, so too is the film's global audience. Gloria's evolution, made visible first in Hathaway's body choreography, part spastic and part aching, and then displaced onto the monster's contortions, becomes a global media spectacle featured in the daily news coverage. In this sense, *Colossal*, for all its attention to Gloria's troubles and life lessons, becomes an allegory that illustrates the ways that media create reality effects, the hegemony they confirm, and the questions they disregard. The audiences in Oscar's bar who cheer and boo at the monsters treat the violence and destruction as sources of spectacle and visual pleasure. The film cuts from their astonished faces to the crowds in Seoul running for their lives whenever the monster goes on a rampage, and then stopping to applaud when Gloria's monster unleashes her anger at Oscar's monster who is bent on creating mayhem in Seoul. Entertaining as they are, these evolving spectacles illustrate how TV audiences are unable to sympathize with victims as they only seek thrills or laughs. The viewers of this global media spectacle are not dissimilar from the monster who "never looks down", apparently oblivious to the carnage it leaves in its trail. It is important to note the film's sarcasm when Oscar responds to Gloria's concern about "all those innocent victims" in downtown Seoul by commenting "how lucky we are to be watching." The arc of Gloria's moral awakening and her subsequent trip to Korea to counter Oscar's robot is as impressive as it is unexpected. Her appearance in Seoul displaces Godzilla to the American playground, enabling her to overpower Oscar. What is ironic here is that Gloria's act of empathy and sacrifice is only meaningful in the context of Gloria's character. The spectacle of Koreans trampled to death is less a global catastrophe than a reason for Gloria to finally become a responsible adult, to achieve social integration, Bildung. In other words, the cold war legacy of First World irresponsibility or roguish behavior becomes synonymous with a redeeming savior who takes the trouble to cross the border to do the right thing.

## 2. *Okja*: The Monster in the Global Village

*Okja* also features a monster, albeit in a different sense. The first few sequences of *Okja* narrate a fairy-tale like bildungsroman of Mija who at first peacefully co-exists with Okja, a genetically modified super pig raised in the bucolic mountains somewhere in South Korea. Then, halfway into the narrative of the genuine emotional bonding between Okja and Mija, the film's tone dramatically changes from a fairytale-like display of interspecies love into a harrowing tale of kidnapping and torture. Mija, who at times becomes dangerously closer to the image of the vulnerable Cold War orphan<sup>1</sup>, eventually retreats into the unreal and timeless pastoral setting. Mija's failed social integration is necessitated by the logic of global capitalism, since it functions as a supplementary narrative to sustain the wholesome brand image of global food corporation Mirando. In the age of the U.S. global empire, the idyllic mountains offer an imaginary that mediates and mystifies the workings of Mirando and their GMO product.

Set in 2007, *Okja* begins with a televised PR campaign led by Lucy Mirando, a new CEO of a global corporation Mirando, introducing the corporation's newest venture "superpigs" as a revolutionary new food source that will solve the world's hunger. Lucy ensures that the superpigs are eco-friendly, 100%

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<sup>1</sup> In the aftermath of the Korean War (1950–1953), American public sympathized with the plight of thousands of homeless Korean children, both GI babies and full-blooded war orphans. This sympathy was amplified by the sentimental coverage of the middlebrow U.S. media which promoted what Christina Klein has described as "Cold War Orientalism" (Oh 35). Christina Klein views these emotional ties Americans felt with Koreans as "[a] sentimentalized version of American exceptionalism," which posited America "as [a] benefactor and protector, as well as a nurturer of democracy and modernizing reforms" (Klein 30).

natural, and non-GMO and that 26 of her miracle piglets are being delivered to the 26 locations all over the world where Mirando offices are located to be raised by expert local farmers. Lucy then announces that in 10 years' time, the greatest superpig will be selected and awarded with its farmer. Next the film dissolves to the title that reads "10 years later, far from New York," and we meet Mija and Okja in the idyllic mountains, where nature and a self-sufficient eco-system are championed over progress and innovation, the logic of global capitalism. Conveniently, South Korea is discursively transformed from a historically and geographically specific space into the abstract and deracinated pastoral.

The pastoral in *Okja* signifies a contained village in the middle of historical change. In an age of global capitalism defined by radical instability, insecurity, and displacement, the isolated mountaintop home in *Okja* offers what global capitalism rendered obsolete: stability, predictability, and containment. Okja, a GMO mutant pig, does not enter with a big thud like typical monsters in Kaiju genre. In fact, it is hard to note Okja's monstrosity since she seems perfectly in harmony with nature as well as her human companion Mija<sup>2</sup>. It is only when Okja is taken out of the pastoral and placed into the busy Seoul Metro to ram into people and things that we are made aware of her monstrosity. The background music used in the Metro chase sequence is John Denver's "Annie's Song" which heightens a sense of nostalgia as well as a sense of out-of-placeness. Patricia Gorbman observes how the film's use of the song "evokes a utopia that's impossible now, when the reality of civilization has more to do with greed, death, and stupidity" (Gorbman 25). Coupled with the slow-motion technique, "Annie's Song" decelerates the tempo of the chase and places Okja in the affective gaze of Mija whose desperate reach toward Okja is always just a notch short of rescue. Along with the lyrics—"You fill up my senses/Like a night in a forest/Like the mountains in springtime"—the song harkens the audience back to Okja and Mija's carefree frolicking in the mountains, thereby making it clear that Okja is a misfit, a monster outside the mountains. Rosi Braidotti argues that monsters can "also represent the in between, the mixed, the ambivalent as implied in the ancient Greek root of the word *monsters*, *teras*, which means both horrible and wonderful, object of aberration and adoration" (Braidotti 1994 77, italics original). Indeed, Okja is a liminal being, the radical otherness, a super pig and a super pet at the same time.

Finding out that Okja has been selected as "the best pig" for a global media event orchestrated by Lucy Mirando, Mija embarks on a journey to Seoul, then to New York to bring Okja back home. Along the way, she finds help in the form of the ALF (Animal Liberation Front), headed by Jay. But it turns out that ALF's priority is to expose Mirando's GMO lab and animal cruelty. Unfazed by Mija's plan to rescue Okja, Lucy Mirando decides to capitalize on Mija's potential as an attractive corporate mascot: "She's young, she's pretty, she's female, she's eco-friendly, and she's global. She's a godsend!" To a great degree, it is Mija's role as an auxiliary to sustain the workings of global capitalism and her lack of agency at the ending of the film that make her safe return to the pastoral with Okja seem so fairytale-like. For ethnic or post-colonial subjectivities often characterized by their displacement and liminality, finding a cultural space is tantamount to achieving Bildung. Such a "space" for Mija, as suggested in the ending of the film, is not in the dominant consumer culture nor in some type of "authentic" traditional Korean culture but rather a fairytale-like pastoral fabricated by global capitalism. One way to bring a sense of closure to the turbulent development shown in the postcolonial bildungsroman is to put the protagonist back into their hometown and contain the problem therein, giving it the "incurably *fairytale-like* quality" that Moretti observes in the bildungsroman genre in its final stage of development (213, italics original). Viewed from this angle, Mija's return to the fairytale-life contained space of the mountain top home precludes reading it as anything other than a failure of social integration marked by her lack of agency. In contrast, afforded by her global agency found in Korea, Gloria represents two different cultures coming together in empathy to achieve social maturation. Gloria uses the agency opened by her empathy to mobilize herself and act as a defender of people she has never met before.

Both *Colossal* and *Okja* show us the effects of globalization through their global mobility and their return to small town home, which offers us a chance to reconsider how the idea of "global village" is ideological through and through. "Global village" was first coined by the media theorist Marshall McLuhan

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<sup>2</sup> It is interesting that Okja, as a GMO mutant pig, is the only machine in the garden. In *Machine in the Garden*, Leo Marx identifies the antithetical relationship between the pastoral and the machine in American literature. The pastoral "has been used to define the meaning of American ever since the age of discovery, and it has not yet lost its hold upon the native imagination" (3). However, in the twentieth century the American pastoral has become a nostalgic trope: "The soft veil of nostalgia that hangs over our urbanized landscape is largely a vestige of the once dominant image of an undefiled, green republic, a quiet land of forests, villages, and farms dedicated to the pursuit of happiness" (Marx 6). The pastoral imaginary, an insular, contained imaginary, gains its legibility by opposing the machine, the symbol of global capitalism. In this sense, the American struggle between the machine and the garden is now being outsourced to South Korea, which nonetheless provides fuel for the U.S. led global capitalism.

in the 1960s to describe a world becoming more interconnected and intimate due to new media technologies. Gayatri Spivak argues that the global village imaginary is "colonialism's newest trick" (330), and Sue-Im Lee elaborates that the global village has become "the dominant term" for expressing a global co-existence altered by transnational commerce, migration, and culture" (316). The global village ideologically transforms globalization from a contested and contradictory historical process into a fixed and unitary phenomenon. The global village presupposes and perpetuates a "singular, collective 'we'" (Lee 316). This 'we' is not a democratic, inclusive and multivocal community, but the economic elite speaking on behalf of the rest of the world. First world villagers become situated as "universal" subjects, and their lifestyles, habitus, and ideologies assume a universal value.

The much-debated sequence about the importance of translation in *Okja* in fact portrays this privileged First world perspective and how it speaks on behalf of "we," thereby glossing over the radical discontinuities. The moment happens when Jay, the leader of ALF, along with other animal rights activists, ostensibly rescue Okja from the Mirando Corporation. However, it soon turns out that ALF plants a chip in Okja to use her as a mole to expose Mirando's scheme to cover up their inhumane treatment of animals and creating GMO animals with defects. To serve this end, ALF sends Okja back to the lab to get real-time video streaming of Okja receiving abusive treatments by Mirando. Jay, however, is adamant in obtaining Mija's consent before proceeding with the plan. Since Jay does not speak Korean, he relies on a fellow ALF member named K who is a Korean-American and speaks fluent Korean. When K asks Mija about the plan, she says that all she wants is to go back to the mountains with Okja. K lies to Jay by mistranslating Mija's answer, saying that she has agreed to go along with the plan, much to the delight of Jay and other ALF members. Thinking that they have obtained permission from Mija, each ALF member then jumps out of the truck into the Han River below, with K the last to go. According to the subtitles, his parting words to Mija are "Mija! Try learning English. It opens new doors!" Then the film's director Bong Joon-Ho includes a mistranslation which only makes sense to people who speak both English and Korean: While the English subtitle reads "How's my Korean?", what K actually says is "Mija! Also, my name is Koo Soon-bum." The fact that this is a mistranslation can only be apparent to those who can speak both languages. What is ironic here is that this unfaithful translation is meant to weaken the hegemony of English. The mistranslated subtitle urges Mija to learn English thereby confirming the supremacy of English, but this message gets lost unless you speak Korean as well. Similarly, Mija seems to be at a disadvantage in her first interaction with the ALF, because she has to rely on K's unfaithful translation to communicate. However, even with her limited English, Mija nonetheless successfully negotiates a business deal with Nancy Mirando—who ousts Lucy Mirando and becomes the new president of the Mirando Corporation. In fact, Mija makes a business deal in the only language Nancy, who is an epitome of neoliberal capitalism, knows by offering her a pure gold pig to buy out Okja from the slaughterhouse. In making yet another ironic reversal, Mija eventually learns the language of the First world, albeit not English: capital. Giving up the gold pig also cancels out the previous deal between Mija's grandfather and the Mirando Corporation since the gold pig was originally given to him in exchange of Okja. The point is, however, not that *Okja* attempts to subvert or confirm preexisting hegemony, or even introduces global capitalism's new entrepreneurial subject-in-the-making in the figure of Mija. Instead the point is that Mija's process of incorporation into the global food industry that started with her attainment of global mobility ends with her return or retreat to the mountains of South Korea; her being denied of social agency shows us the process of globalization which issues certain demands of inclusion and incorporation, while cancelling out and casting away others.

As we have seen, the uneven development of global monsters depicted in the two films reflects the preexisting hegemony such as class positions, historical traumas, and First world privileges that the global village imaginary mystifies but is nonetheless part and parcel of globalization. The uneven subject positions and the attainment of a cultural space and Bildung unfurled in *Colossal* and *Okja* attest to this. The global in fact shapes the economically available and institutionally validated political agency. What becomes of paramount importance then is to consider who can speak on behalf of "we" as in "We are in this together" as Rosi Braidotti calls for a need for a non-unitary, nomadic subject: "This general and widespread call for new global values, popularized in terms of global civil society, lends strength to my main argument: namely, that such a web of localized universalisms and global claims to rethink the fact that 'we' are in *this* together, would benefit from and also help implement a non-unitary vision of the ethical subject" (Braidotti 2006 36). The biggest challenge to this call is perhaps to define what the non-unitary vision is in lieu of globalization which is a totalizing levelling force, more so than to assume the ethical subject position. Even in the case of *Okja*, a GMO superfood which involves a series of ethical concerns such as global food safety and animal rights issues that can affect everyone across nations, ALF's vision allows no flexibility in assuming that their vision is the only correct one. This is demonstrated by Jay's blindness when he censors Mija from accessing the truth on her own when ALF hacks into Lucy

Mirando's media publicity show and broadcasts the animal abuse scenes pictured inside the Mirando lab. Jay, who acts as a voice of reason throughout the film, nevertheless presumptuously shields Mija from watching the video footage of the harrowing abuse of Okja on screen when Mija is turning her back against it and facing him instead: "Mija, don't look back! Just look at me." Judging from the audience's shocked responses and gasps, Mija can apparently sense that something horrific is being shown on the screen behind her, but she does not turn around to see it for herself, complying with Jay's demand. Just as Jay and ALF, operating as First world but universal symbols of the ethical mission, speak on her behalf, Mija ends up letting them, along with the audience, "see" on her behalf.

What I would like to emphasize here is how the effects of globalization result in naturalizing the First world concerns and agenda as the most urgent ethical issues by naturalizing their point of view, their perspective as the universal one. That is to say, the global in globalization is in fact none other than a peculiar way of seeing the world through the most privileged perspective whose view has been naturalized as the rest of the world. If globalization and the global village imaginary generate reality effects that have profound material consequences, then the necessary first step would have to be to denaturalize our habit of assuming this privileged vision by trying to make the uneven and discontinuous context of the global itself visible.

### 3. Picturing the Monster, Making the Global Visible

Given that both *Colossal* and *Okja* feature the heroines' act of projecting the monsters literally and figuratively, we can focus on their acts as enacting the representation of the global by tracing the global (im)mobility of the two monsters. Of course, it is critical to approach the uneven development of global monsters as a legible trace to reenact the powerful style of representation that globalization reproduces. We can start by imagining how such an act of seeing can take place by imagining a subject, not yet properly inducted in the correct way of representing truth, who has to learn for his or herself. This is necessarily a fictional, as distinct from an empirically retrievable, scenario because no archive gives access to the way the global was imagined prior to its institution as the habitual mode of thinking. This exercise may illuminate how we might "defamiliarize" our habitual and instituted ways of thinking and seeing. The task of producing different or alternative perspectives can in this sense join hands with the practical task of reworking or displacing the production of perspectives in ways that repeatedly undo this First world sight with none other than global sight. Sanjay Krishnan succinctly elucidates the instituted and naturalized perspective of Western/European imperialism in his "Reading Globalization from the Margin": "Imperial institutionalization of this powerful and indispensable mode of thematizing the world has resulted in the naturalization of this perspective as 'correct' seeing: the global as thing. The 'global' therefore does not point to the world as such but at the conditions and effects attendant upon institutionally validated modes of making legible within a single frame the diverse terrains and peoples of the world" (41). By bringing our attention to the process of how the seeing is taking place, Krishnan proposes to "study the global as an instituted perspective that brings objects into view and makes them available for and as truth" (41) by explicating Martin Heidegger's essay, "Age of World Picture"<sup>3</sup>.

Heidegger argues in his seminal essay "Age of World Picture" that what characterizes modern knowledge production is the grasping of the world as picture: "When we reflect on the modern age, we are questioning concerning the modern world picture [Weltbild]" (128). Written after WWII and the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Heidegger posits the "gigantic" as a colossal destruction that is an instantly perceivable and graspable thing, like pushing a detonate button at one's command. Similar to globalization, science has reached the paradoxical point whereby it is simultaneously advanced and reduced: "the world itself, the world as such, what is, in its entirety, just as it is normative and binding for us" (Heidegger 129). Since globalization means the accelerating consolidation of planetary space, people are no longer bound by the ontological limits set by vast distances. In this manner, the most specialized technology and science become conceptually accessible and universal. Thus Heidegger views that the world grasped as a picture is what distinguishes the modern age from the preceding one: "The world picture does not change from an earlier medieval one into a modern one, but rather the fact that the world becomes picture at all is what distinguishes the essence of the modern age" (130). This is not to suggest that hard science was replaced by a visual gimmick, that the real thing was replaced by a mere representation. Rather, it is that the dropping of bombs marked the pivot of the progress of science and technology which makes itself invisible since its workings are inaccessible to most of us:

<sup>3</sup> In a similar vein, Rey Chow, in her book entitled *The Age of the World Target*, also explores Heidegger's analysis which "offers valuable insights into the philosophical underpinnings of the United States' hegemony as a military superpower and its will to world domination in the twentieth century" (Chow 12).

A sign of this event is that everywhere and in the most varied forms and disguises the gigantic is making its appearance. In so doing, it evidences itself simultaneously in the tendency toward the increasingly small. [...] The gigantic presses forward in a form that actually seems to make it disappear. (Heidegger 135)

Hence the comprehensive representational power of the global derives from the fundamental conceit that it makes itself invisible. What essentially characterizes the modern age is not the transformation of the real world into a false simulacrum, but the world conceived and grasped as a controllable picture. The technological metaphysics of planetary calculation, then, does not simply mean a picture of the world, where the world stands over against us as an object. It is, rather, that objects as well as subjects each fall into a system of ordering which sets all beings to have their standby for effective and flexible use. In consequence, the subject-object relation does not disappear, but, rather, achieves its pure relational character in which both the subject and the object are subsumed under as part of the global system which in turn have them on standby. Heidegger here is concerned with those procedures that bind the world to the procedures of knowing:

"To get the picture" throbs with being acquainted with something, with being equipped and prepared for it. Where the world becomes picture, what is, in its entirety, is juxtaposed as that for which man is prepared and which, correspondingly, he therefore intends to bring before himself and have before himself. (Heidegger 129)

The discourse on globalization remains operated by this modality of representation as truth, which is a general condition of modern knowledge production.

In this sense, the representational structure of both *Colossal* and *Okja* strives toward conformity with the modalities of a scientific discourse whose object is, to draw on Heidegger, brought forth and set "over-and-against" the presenter, who is in turn constituted as the subject by means of the capacity to represent in such a manner. *Colossal* takes shape against the backdrop of the American Century and Cold War politics. With this "picture" in mind, let us return to the issue of perspective as it is broached in the projection of global monsters in *Colossal*. Gloria learns to adopt a perspective of South Korea by projecting the monster onto the opened space of the world picture/the global. Gloria's act to projecting herself in the open space of the busy, densely populated urban space of Seoul and also onto the global mediascape is not dissimilar from what Heidegger posits as representing the world as picture:

Here to represent [*vor-stellen*] means to bring what is present at hand [*das Vor-handene*] before oneself as something standing over against, to relate it to oneself, to the one representing it, and to force it back into this relationship to oneself as the normative realm. Wherever this happens, man "gets into the picture" in precedence over whatever is. But in that man puts himself into the picture in this way, he puts himself into the scene, i.e., into the open sphere of that which is generally and publicly represented. (Heidegger 131-2)

The perspectival shift from the American to the Korean/marginal is Gloria's way of enacting an act of defamiliarization, naturalizing the unfamiliar way of seeing by projecting it as the seen, reality. This new way of seeing, which is tantamount to making the global visible, is possible only when Gloria has learned to adopt the Korean/marginal and a non-First world perspective. In this way, the global can be activated by means of discontinuous and endless continuation of negotiations between the privileged and the marginalized. No longer deployed solely as a perspective-transcending viewpoint that is then productively mistaken for a real projection or object, the global can be made visible: it invites a critical practice that attends to the strategic and situated possibilities of worldly making and remaking.

The narratives of forestalled maturity dramatized in *Colossal* and *Okja* put emphasis on development in terms of "space" instead of development in terms of chronological, linear time like the classical Bildungsroman. As capitalism accelerates and expands as a dehumanizing process, the idyllic village appears more frequently as a reactionary island community and a space of purity. David Harvey observes that "capitalist hegemony over space puts the aesthetics of place very much back on the agenda" (303). The aesthetic production of place is frequently a reactionary process grounded in the desire to escape from the conditions and logic of global capitalism. For this reason, Mija's forestalled maturity serves as an illuminating countertext to Gloria's attainment of Bildung. It is precisely the pernicious system of global capitalism, the appropriation of Korea's actual physical geography (and the continued occupation of the space of *Okja* and Mija through pervasive American hegemony) that hinders

Mija's ability to achieve Bildung by denying her social agency. Mija occupies a pre-adolescent and pre-industrial pastoral space, a space specifically assigned to her by the logic of US hegemony and global capitalism.<sup>4</sup> Thus, for Mija, living with Okja is not a fulfilling or satisfying realization or a recognition of her place within a larger community, as it is for Gloria, but instead involves isolation and immobility. Gloria becomes a monster only to dispel another monster/robot, whereas Mija, in her rearing of a monster, becomes trapped, attaining monstrosity herself. Globalization, therefore, is not a source of connection for Mija but a site replicating the pre-existing hierarchy and systems of mastery.

The formal disjunction in *Colossal* and *Okja* as evidenced by the two female heroines' modes of projecting the monsters and their uneven development and attainment of Bildung offer insights into a distinct yet sympathetic way of reading them, which encourages us to view the global in terms of how the legacy of the Cold War and American century at once interfere with and supplement each other. Far from being assimilable to a naturalized discourse of Bildung or social integration, Gloria's and Mija's uneven developments show how the effects of globalization code and configure the radical other, the cast-away: the monsters. Gloria projects a monster in Seoul to counterattack Oscar's monster in small town America which is a trope for the Global Village imaginary. Mija, in contrast, makes a separate peace which is not dissimilar from a preindustrial, pre-globalization fantasy space: a monstrous anomaly outside its locale. More importantly, the global as an incalculable and untraceable process is indexed in their efforts to project and to coexist with the monsters. Hence the global viewed as an effect of mixed and uneven modes of subject positions and political agency simultaneously invites us to consider both the way it is set up and how, in specific contexts, these flowing and overlapping perspectives might be open to being turned or displaced. *Colossal* and *Okja* make visible the complexity of the uneven global terrain upon which the monsters are projected. This act of projecting the global is essential for the production of truth that will procure merit in the legacy of American century and the Cold War politics. In this light, Gloria and Mija are producing neither Bildung nor isolation, but a way of seeing that illuminates the workings of globalization that encompass both. And it is precisely this new vision that charting the uneven development of global monsters shown in the two films affords us.

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<sup>4</sup> Joseph Jonghyun Jeon argues in his insightful study of Korea's IMF cinema's role in helping make visible the asymmetric power dynamic between US and Korea that "US hegemony at this moment late in the American century reveals both its autopoietic fantasies and the reality of its weakening global position" (124). According to Jeon, what we can observe in both *Colossal* and *Okja* is "a final recognition of the inequities of the asymmetric system that no longer require metaphors" (184).

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