Produced in the wake of George W. Bush’s January 2002 State of the Union speech designating North Korea as part of an “Axis of Evil,” *Die Another Day* (2002)—the twentieth film in the perennial James Bond franchise—reflects the current political zeitgeist in a way that few blockbusters in recent memory have. The film begins with British super-agent 007 surfing onto a beach in North Korea, where he battles a megalomaniacal colonel who, harnessing the destructive power of the Sun, seeks world domination. With the latest technology at his disposal, Bond—although imprisoned and tortured by his captors—inevitably emerges victorious at the end, sending a reassuring message to audiences that real-life dictator Kim Jong Il’s nuclear threats to the West can be easily surmounted. While the explosive action darts around the globe, from Cuba to England to Iceland, much of the narrative is geographically, politically, and thematically focused on the Korean peninsula—one of the last frontiers of the Cold War.

A U.K./U.S. coproduction, *Die Another Day* is an outgrowth of global capitalism and the “new international division of cultural labor.” The film was produced by Brits (Anthony Waye and Barbara Broccoli), directed by a New Zealander (Lee Tamahori), and shot in Pinewood Studios, London, as well as on location in Wales, Hawai’i, Spain, and Iceland. The multiethnic/multinational cast includes Pierce Brosnan (Irish British); Halle Berry (African American); Judi Dench, John Cleese, Rosemund Pike, and Toby Stephens (English); Rick Yune and Will Yun Lee (Korean American); Kenneth Tsang (Hong Kong Chinese); and Emilio Echevarria (Mexican). Two major Hollywood studios—MGM and 20th Century-Fox—were respectively responsible for the production and international distribution of *Die Another Day*, a film whose overhead cost reportedly climbed as high as $150 million. Twenty multinational corporate sponsors including Ford, Omega, British Airways, Visa, Revlon, Philips Electronics, and Sony spent more than $120 million on ads and cross-promotions highlighting the 40th anniversary 007 adventure (which self-reflexively pays homage to its predecessors through intertextual quotations and allusions). The exploits of Her Majesty’s Secret Service were likewise endorsed by Queen Elizabeth II herself, who sponsored a royal charity premiere in London’s Albert Hall on November 18, 2002.

Later that month, *Die Another Day* opened with great fanfare in theaters around the world. Headlines across North America and Europe trumpeted this latest entry in the Bond franchise as a box-office champion, having successfully outsold its chief nemesis *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. 
Die Another Day subsequently became the biggest Bond film of all time, grossing $450 billion worldwide. In marked contrast to world audiences’ celebratory reception, Koreans voiced their criticisms against the film’s foregrounding of North Korea as a high-tech rogue state and its problematic portrayal of South Korea as a provincial backdrop under U.S. military control. Die Another Day generated fierce protests in South Korea for what was perceived as an insult to national pride and a distortion of reality. Culminating with a sex scene set in a Buddhist temple, the film offended a diverse cross-section of Koreans, from leftist students to spiritual and religious leaders. Anti-007 boycotts intensified as part of a general anti-American movement triggered by the acquittal of two U.S. soldiers whose armored vehicle accidentally ran over and killed two Korean schoolgirls in June 2002.

This essay examines the ways in which the discourses surrounding the 007 controversy link the issue of representation (post-Cold War Orientalism in Euro-American coproductions) with the issue of politics (pan-Asian nationalism and anti-imperial “culture wars”) in the global context of media production, distribution, and reception. Despite the geographical and temporal specificity of the anti-007 movement in South Korea, acts of inter-Korea cultural resistance can be recuperated within the larger sphere of regional nationalism precisely because of the interchangeability of different Asian ethnicities, locations, and icons in hegemonic Western texts like Die Another Day. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural solidarity among Asian people from different national and ethnic backgrounds, united in their collective opposition to the hegemony of globalized Hollywood and its perpetuation of stereotypical Oriental imagery. This solidarity entails not only a disavowal of racist portrayals of Asians in Hollywood films but also a shift of spectatorial loyalty to local or regional films, as evidenced by the recent craze for South Korean cinema in pan-Asian markets.

Cold War Heroes and Villains in the World of James Bond

Before discussing the controversy swirling around Die Another Day in the context of post-Cold War Asia, it will be useful to examine the genealogy of Cold War themes in the James Bond series, the longest-running film franchise in history. While the connection between British author Ian Fleming’s 007 fiction and the Cold War seems self-evident, it is worth pointing out that the film versions took a slightly different path from their original sources. The first Bond novel by Fleming, Casino Royale, was published in 1953, the final year of the Korean War. Although this fratricidal clash replaced a direct military confrontation between two nuclear superpowers (the United States and the Soviet Union), the fear of communist expansion in Asia and Europe reinforced a “Cold War consensus” sweeping through the West. As James Chapman has noted, James Bond was “a product of the historical and ideological conditions of the Cold War” and Bond’s enemy was not “just a country (Russia) but an ideology (Communism) which presented a very real threat to the ‘free’ West.”

Out of seven Bond stories written in the 1950s—Casino Royale, Live and Let Die (1954), Moonraker (1955), Diamonds Are Forever (1956), From Russia, with Love (1957), Dr. No (1958), and Goldfinger (1959)—all but one of the villains therein are employed by the Russian government or its espionage agency SMERSH (an anagram of Smiért Spionam or “Death to Spies”).

Many commentators have observed that the film adaptations, undertaken by British producers Harry Saltzman and Albert R. Broccoli in conjunction with United Artists throughout the following decade, toned down the Cold War discourse so intrinsic to their sources, turning Soviet-backed villains into megalomaniacal terrorists with outsized ambitions of world dominance. For example, the first Bond film, Dr. No (1962), shifted the titular villain’s affiliation from Soviet-backed SMERSH to SPECTRE (Special Executive for Counter-Intelligence, Terrorism, Revenge, and Extortion), an organization introduced in Fleming’s later novels Thunderball (1961) and On Her Majesty’s Secret Service (1963). In the third Bond film, Goldfinger (1964), Red China—a cinematic surrogate for Fleming’s omnipresent Soviet Union—is cast as the sinister sponsor of Auric Goldfinger, a murderous bullion dealer who hatches a plot to knock over Fort Knox with an “atomic device” provided by communist Chinese agents.

Goldfinger also set a precedent—one that would be followed in Die Another Day—in its
foregrounding of Korean villain Oddjob (played by Japanese actor Harold Sakata), a boulder-shaped manservant/henchman who menacingly wields a steel-rimmed bowler hat as his unconventional weapon of choice. Celebrated as one of the most memorable villains in the series by “Bondophiles,” Oddjob is nevertheless a Cold War-era incarnation of the age-old, archetypal Oriental villain whose muteness and occasional animalistic grunt enhance his race-coded monstrosity. Ten years after the theatrical release of *Goldfinger*, another Korean connection was established in a Bond film when actor Soon-Tek Oh was cast for the role of a Hong Kong secret agent named Hip in *The Man with the Golden Gun* (1974). Unlike Oddjob, Oh’s character is an amiable sidekick who assists Roger Moore’s Bond in rooting out the notorious Cuban assassin Francisco Scaramanga’s Chinese employer (Hai Fat) in Thailand. Once again, the film pulls back the curtain to reveal Red China as a backer of evil conspiracy. Comparable to post-September 11 Afghanistan, communist China is depicted as a terrorist–harboring threat to international peace and security. Hiding out on a remote island in Chinese territorial waters under the protection of Red patrol guards, the murderous Scaramanga schemes to monopolize world solar power through the stolen “solex agitator.”

Although James Bond films of the 1960s and 1970s avoided pigeonholing the Soviet Union as an evil other, the series racialized the Cold War menace by substituting U.S.S.R and SMERSH with communist China and conflating the Red Scare with Yellow Peril. In the early–to-mid 1980s, as the Reagan–Thatcher era’s right-wing, anticommunist foreign policies began coloring popular culture, the 007 film series revived the Cold War themes of Fleming’s novels, actively recruiting Russian villains in *For Your Eyes Only* (1981), *Octopussy* (1983), *A View To A Kill* (1985), and *The Living Daylights* (1987). As if reflecting the thaw of the Cold War in the late 1980s, *License to Kill* (1989) substitutes Russian or Chinese enemies with an international drug syndicate lording over a paramilitary unit on a Latin American island. Although the Cold War officially ended following this film’s release with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet bloc, the spectral shadows of post–Cold War Russian and Chinese threats lingered on in such Bond films of the 1990s as *GoldenEye* (1995) and *Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997). *Tomorrow Never Dies*, however, recasts the former Chinese enemy as a potential partner in its representation of Mai Lin, a Chinese secret agent played by Hong Kong action star Michelle Yeoh, who joins forces with 007 to uncover a media baron’s evil plot to provoke a war between Britain and China.

**The Anti-007 Movement and Inter-Korean Nationalism**

In his review of *Die Another Day*, the *Village Voice*’s Michael Atkinson, one of the few Western critics to comment on the timeliness of revived Cold War politics, writes “A Cold War artifact that died with Sean Connery’s hair follicles but refuses to get buried, James Bond returns, again, using North Korea as a convenient archvillain just as Bush II has.” Following the lead of Atkinson, Manohla Dargis of the *Los Angeles Times* states, “Timely—and as demographically savvy as ever—James Bond enters his new adventure off the coast of North Korea….” Across the Atlantic, Michael Gove of *London Times* likewise observes, “The decision to locate much of the action in Korea…may come to seem wiser. As the US turns its attention from Central Asia to the world’s other rogue states, the salience of the threat from Pyongyang will move up the news agenda.”

For all the critical discourse generated in the West, a vast majority of South Koreans as well as North Korean officials found the film neither timely nor geopolitically savvy but, rather, outright offensive and degrading. The first Korean to criticize *Die Another Day*’s representation of the two Koreas was Ch’a In-p’yo, a television idol-turned-movie star. Ch’a was visiting Los Angeles for the location shooting of his latest romantic comedy, *Iron Palm* (2002), when he was contacted by MGM casting director Jane Jenkins and asked to audition for the role of *Die Another Day*’s Fu Manchu–like archvillain Colonel Moon. Three weeks after his screen test, the Korean actor received a congratulatory email from one of the film’s producers, Barbara Broccoli, informing him that New Zealander director Lee Tamahori had cast him for the role. Ch’a, however, demanded reading the entire screenplay before making a decision to appear in a film which heavily features North Korea. Having read the script sent
by MGM, the patriotic actor shocked his agent and MGM personnel by turning down the role, despite the prospect of a $500,000 to $1 million guarantee and international stardom. Posting a message on his online fan club in January 2002, he explained the reasons behind this decision:

As expected, Hollywood was once again using another country’s current climate for its own entertainment purposes. Especially when 007 arrived at the airport in Korea and went to the DMZ (demilitarized zone)..., there were no Korean military personnel present, and the US armed forces greeted 007. It seemed that the screenplay kept reminding the audience that North Korea was one of the most likely countries to commit acts of terrorism against the West. …I thought of a line of dialogue delivered by General Moon in the screenplay. When facing 007, he says “50 years ago, you people came uninvited and divided the Korean peninsula in two. After all that, what are you trying to teach us at this point?” The producers of 007 are creating the same situation as the dialogue written in their screenplay.5

A few days later the actor deleted his message from the Web site because it stirred unexpected controversy. However, by that time his writing had been translated into English and sent to a 007 fan-site by a Korean netizen, which resulted in the international circulation of a plot spoiler as well as eye-catching web headlines such as “The Man Who Said ‘No’ to Bond” and “Korean Actor Pulls out of New 007 Film over ‘Anti-Korean’ Script.” As rumors of his patriotic conduct spread, Ch’a was hailed as a national hero by many South Koreans, from young netizens to veteran politicians including Roh Moo Hyun (who, before taking presidential office in 2003, enthusiastically lauded him as Korea’s “new hope” in a National Assembly speech on February 5, 2002). Ch’a’s manifestation of Korean nationalism (traditionally associated with anti-imperial agendas, whether anti-Japanese movements during the colonial period or anti-American student movements of the 1980s) through cultural resistance effectively set the tone of the “anti-007 movement” to follow.

Even months prior to Die Another Day’s theatrical release in South Korea (on December 31st, 2002), thousands of netizens had already inundated cyberspace chatrooms and discussion boards with critical invectives against the film. Korean American actor Rick Yune, who had frequently appeared on Korean television commercials and had been popular enough to be invited as one of the 2002 World Cup emcees, suddenly morphed into an object of hatred and contempt for playing a monstrous North Korean villain in Die Another Day. The Korean Broadcasting System (KBS) even canceled plans to cast Rick Yune in a morning program due to the public’s negative reaction. As the film’s arrival in South Korea approached, netizens and civic groups began staging the “Do Not See 007” protest movement.

The expression of Korean nationalism through the boycotting of Hollywood blockbusters was not a new thing. When Titanic (1997) was released in South Korea in the wake of the IMF Crisis (a 1997 foreign currency crisis which resulted in a $57 billion International Monetary Fund bailout loan), many Korean audiences rejected the film and instead supported the Korean blockbuster Shiri (1999), which beat the box-office record of not only Titanic but of all previous Korean films. Whereas Titanic boycotts were staged for the sake of boosting the economy, Die Another Day boycotts were motivated by national pride and political agendas. Slogans displayed by hundreds of protesters picketing theaters read: “Stop showing 007! Stop degrading Korean people!”, “No more war in Korea! No more secret agent in Korea!”, “Gone is 007, which depicts North Korea as an Axis of Evil!”, and “Stop showing 007, which distorts the reality of the Korean peninsula!” Apparently, the “Do Not See 007” movement proved successful. By the third week of release, the number of theaters screening Die Another Day had precipitously dropped from 175 nationwide (40 in Seoul) to 27 (4 in Seoul).7 In most theaters, Die Another Day was taken out of circulation after the first four weeks and its total Korean box office record stopped short of 640,000 admissions (200,000 in Seoul). This statistic is indeed meager for a Hollywood blockbuster of that size, considering the fact that some popular domestic films, such as the playfully postmodern period piece Untold Scandal (Sŭk’aendŭl, 2003) and the Korean war epic Tae Guk Gi: Brotherhood
of War (T’aegũikki hwainallimyŏ, 2004), reached the one million admission mark over the first weekend of release.

One notable aspect concerning the anti-007 movement is its inter-Korea implications. Following the lead of Ch’a In-p’yo, protesters opposed the film on two grounds: for its portrayal of North Korea as a part of the Axis of Evil, a country terrorizing the world with weapons of mass destruction; and its suggestion that South Korea is little more than a rural, occupied land controlled by U.S. military forces.

The implausible storyline of Die Another Day can be summarized as follows: James Bond (Pierce Brosnan) infiltrates North Korea to assassinate Colonel Moon (Will Yun Lee), the son of an influential North Korean general and a graduate of Oxford and Harvard who harbors ambitions of reuniting Korea by force as well as conquering Japan and its Western allies. During the precredit fight sequence, Colonel Moon is presumed to be dead as he tumbles down a waterfall and disappears into the rapids following his pursuit of Bond. After being captured and tortured by North Koreans, our hero is released fourteen months later, in exchange for Zao (Rick Yune), Moon’s right-hand man who had been imprisoned on the sunnier side of the Demilitarized Zone. Eventually, Bond follows Zao to Cuba to uncover the identity of an informer whose betrayal contributed to the failure of his mission in North Korea. On the reclusive isle of Los Oganos, Bond finds Zao undergoing a DNA replacement operation, which will enable him to racially transform himself into a Caucasian. The painstaking procedure is interrupted as Bond infiltrates the clinic and attacks Zao who—now in the form of a half-yellow, half-white, chrome-domed monster with diamonds engraved on his face—escapes. Zao’s trail leads Bond to diamond king Gustav Graves (Toby Stephens), who turns out to be Colonel Moon in disguise. Having survived the deadly fall and changed his racial makeup in the Cuban “beauty parlor,” Moon has been developing “Icarus,” a satellite-operated solar laser weapon, behind the mask of a wealthy Scandinavian entrepreneur. Joined by an American agent named Jinx (Halle Berry), Bond eliminates Moon/Graves and his cohorts Zao and Miranda Frost (Rosamund Pike), the double spy responsible for Bond’s capture, halting the outbreak of a second Korean War in the nick of the time.

The threat posed by North Korea in the film is double: both as a surviving if not thriving communist nation and as a terrorist nation. “Red Scare” iconography and tropes associated with 1950s Korean War prisoner of war (POW) films are vividly recast during the credit sequence in which Bond is being mercilessly tortured in ice water and injected with scorpion venom by a North Korean brainwashing team. Although the cruelty of the torture sequence is toned down by its stylistic playfulness (digitized fire pixies and ice sprites careen across the screen to Madonna’s propulsive, picnoleptic title song), the allusion to POW trauma resulting from the Korean War is too obvious to miss. This striking sequence emphatically evokes the memory of The Bamboo Prison (1954), Prisoner of War (1954), The Rack (1956), The Manchurian Candidate (1962), and other films that explore the theme of POW brainwashing during the Korean War. Having survived torture, death marches, starvation, lack of medical care, and indoctrination by their North Korean and Chinese captors, 4,000-odd surviving American POWs were repatriated to the unreceptive arms of the U.S. government and a citizenry suspicious of wholesale collaboration and misconduct during their captivity. Under the influence of McCarthyism and Cold War paranoia, the popular media (particularly film and television) perpetuated the distorted images of treacherous Korean War captives as weak, pampered victims of “momism” and brainwashing. For example, The Manchurian Candidate features a fantastic and disturbing plot revolving around a Korean War veteran who, having been brainwashed into a communist killing machine, assassinates a presidential candidate.

In Die Another Day, James Bond undergoes an experience not unlike that faced by Korean War POWs: upon his release from North Korea through a prisoner exchange, the British spy gets the cold shoulder from his reprimanding boss M (Judi Dench), who suspects his collaboration in the communist execution of a top American agent, and is deprived of his triple-digit license to kill. Cruelly telling James Bond “You’re no use to anyone now,” M orders his transportation to the “Reevaluation Center.” To clear his name through
an independent operation, Bond attempts to escape the clinic on a British intelligence ship where he has been administered treatment for detoxification. A nightmarish memory of North Korean torture returns in a black-and-white montage, as Bond controls his mind to reduce his heartbeat so as to snare the medical team into an emergency alarm and set himself loose during the chaos. This breakout signals the recuperation of a familiar Bond image, that of a debonair, confident super hero—an antithesis to the beaten, discarded, and vulnerable ex-POW.

Seemingly anomalous early images of North Korean atrocities directed toward this cinematically idealized male body—a locus of Anglo-European masculinity for the past four decades—signify the return of repressed anxieties lurking beneath the Western male psyche. In this sense, *Die Another Day* is an uncanny postmodern text in which anachronistic Cold War paranoia is repackaged in state-of-the-art accouterments and ideologically retrofit for the twenty-first century. In the specific post-9/11 cultural context, the menace of North Korea (as construed by the U.S. Defense Department) exists not simply for its persistent adherence to Stalinist communism and vehement anti-Americanism, but also for its possession of biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons which might be used for blackmailing the Western world or could be sold to terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda. Although the production of *Die Another Day* was launched concurrently with Bush’s “Axis of Evil” speech as well as North Korea’s withdrawal from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (January 2002), and prior to the virtual nullification of the 1994 US-North Korea Agreed Framework (October 2002)—leaving no means of international monitoring of North Korean nuclear programs—it is hard not to notice the opportune timing of the film’s release at the height of the North Korean Nuclear Crisis, which has become a regular topic for international news carriers.

While Western critics were busy reading the film’s political allegory, Korean audiences were emotionally invested in their own agendas. *Die Another Day* was produced and distributed at a time when Korean nationalism was at an all-time high in the wake of the Kim Dae Jung government’s Sunshine Policy with Pyongyang, the national euphoria over the miraculous performance of the South Korean soccer team in the 2002 World Cup finals, and the growing civic discontent with the Bush Administration’s inter-Korea policy. Moreover, an explosion of nationalistic rage occurred after two fourteen-year-old Korean schoolgirls (Sin Hyŏ-sun and Sim Mi-sŏn) had been killed by a U.S. military minesweeping vehicle on June 13, 2002. After being acquitted of all charges in a U.S. military court...
on November 20, 2002, the two American soldiers
responsible for the accident (Sergeants Mark Walker
and Fernando Nino) were hurriedly sent back
home. This incident provoked Koreans to release
pent-up anger against U.S. military hegemony, so
tainted was it with numerous ignored, unpunished
cases of American soldiers’ violence against
Koreans civilians. Holding candlelight vigils,
ordinary citizens (from children to the geriatric set)
flocked to public squares throughout South Korea,
protesting the unjust verdict and demanding Bush’s
official apology as well as a revision of the unequal
U.S.-ROK Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA),
which delimits the Korean government’s rights to
prosecute American soldiers’ crimes.

Die Another Day thus arrived in South Korea
when the anti-American sentiment was at its peak.
The anti-007 movement became an integral part of
the widespread anti-American movement which
included not only the biggest street demonstrations
of its kind since the 1980s student movement era but
also everyday consumer boycotts of U.S. products
such as McDonald’s hamburgers and Coca-Cola.
In other words, the Korean reception of Die
Another Day became politicized precisely because
of realpolitik tensions surrounding South Korea,
North Korea, and the United States. Considering
this particular sociopolitical context, it is not difficult
to comprehend why Korean audiences directed
their anger toward Die Another Day, which depicts
the containment of a second Korean War through
the alliance of British and American super-agents,
James Bond and Jinx. Whereas North Koreans
are depicted as belligerent evildoers armed with
ultramodern weapons, South Koreans are shown
to be disempowered bystanders whose military
police forces are like puppets acting under U.S.
jurisdiction.

One of the most controversial images in the
film are fleeting shots of dumbfounded farmers
standing in a rice paddy where two Italian sports-
cars have dropped headlong from the sky, like
lawn darts, during Bond’s airborne confrontation
with the villain. As a visual gag dependent upon
the jarring juxtaposition of a candy-apple-red
Lamborghini and an anachronistic ox-plow (as
opposed to more plausible, less backward forms
of agricultural development such as a tractor), this
Third World image appeared condescending to a
majority of South Korean intellectuals and activists;
few of whom could regard the film purely as an
entertaining spectacle or fantasy when it contains
a scene in which an American general barks out
the order to “mobilize the South Korean troops” as
a North Korean megalomaniac launches an attack
across the DMZ. Derisive laughter and bitter
feelings pervaded movie theaters when Bond and
Jinx, dressed in South Korean civil reservist uniforms
(standing in for camouflaged North Korean military uniforms) infiltrate the northern side of the DMZ to save the world.

Although Colonel Moon's ambition to reunite Korea through violence fails due to Western intervention, the film itself ironically provided a communal ground for the two Koreas to solidify their cultural bonding. Criticizing the film's vilification of North Korea, South Korean boycotters and picketers in fact "spoke for" the North Korean public who do not have access to American films. Likewise, when North Korean officials announced their own condemnation through the Central News Agency, they resorted to the rhetoric adopted by South Korean protesters: "The U.S. should stop at once the dirty and cursed burlesque... a deliberate and premeditated act of mocking at and insulting the Korean nation"; "The film represents the real intention of the U.S., keen on war." North Korea even borrowed Ronald Reagan's Cold War rhetoric when labeling the United States as "an empire of evil" which disseminates "abnormality, degeneration, violence and fin-de-siècle corrupt sex culture."11 Dubbed "Dr. Evil" by *Newsweek*,12 notorious cinephile Kim Jong Il no doubt repressed his earlier-publicized attraction to the Bond series for the sake of inter-Korea cultural unity.

It seems that anti-Americanism functioned as a common denominator between North Korean and South Korean criticisms of *Die Another Day*. One might ask, then, if it is accurate to assume that *Die Another Day* represents American ideologies; or, at the risk of sounding more perverse, if it is in fact an American film at all. As mentioned in the opening, although the film was financed and distributed by Hollywood studios (MGM and the 20th Century-Fox), it is officially a U.K/U.S. coproduction involving the multicultural cast and creative personnel of different races, ethnicities, and nationalities (English, Irish British, New Zealanders, African Americans, Korean Americans, Hong Kong Chinese, and Mexicans). One British viewer complained: "What I don't understand is why the South Koreans are angry at the U.S. for the movie. U.S. Yanks had nothing to do with making it.... a growing anti-U.S. sentiment [in South Korea] should have nothing to do with the movie. They should be upset at the portrayal of Koreans (which they are too)."13 Was South Korean resentment simply misdirected, as this homegrown Bond fan points out? Perhaps both Korean protesters and the British public missed the broader transcultural implications of the 007 series in general and of *Die Another Day* in particular. As Tony Bennett and Janet Wollacott argue in *Bond and Beyond: The Political Career of a Popular Hero*, "Bond can be read as a hero of the NATO alliance. Acting in unison with either the American CIA (represented by Felix Leiter) or the French Deuxième Bureau (represented by René Mathis), Bond represents not just Britain... but the West in general, as the villain's conspiracy is usually directed against the West as a whole."14 In *Die Another Day*, this NATO union between Britain and the United States is stressed through the romantic, professional, and multicultural partnership between James Bond and Jinx. If the hero is a personification of the West (rather than specifically England), in the dialectical world of James Bond, the villain is in turn an embodiment of the non-West or the East (symbolized by classic Oriental villains such as Dr. No and Oddjob or by the abstracted menace of Red China). Considering the transnational tang of the film's ideology and production, its Korean reception should be understood in a larger cultural context, outside of the U.S./Korea dichotomy, involving the historical dynamics between global producers of Orientalist films and local audiences of (mis)represented cultures.

**Refusing to “Die Another Day”: Asian Questions in the Age of Globalization**

Let us now consider a perhaps radical proposition: the anti-007 movement in South Korea is, by extension, an expression of Asian nationalism despite its geographical and political particularities. Significantly, the film's title was shortened from *Die Another Day* to *Another Day* upon its South Korean release. This change might simply mean that 20th Century-Fox Korea deleted the negative word "die" from the film's Korean title in fear of upsetting audiences. In the film, James Bond kills Colonel Moon, the chief North Korean villain, twice: in the pre-credit sequence (as Moon/Will Yun Lee) and the final duel (as Graves/Toby Stephens). After discovering the North Korean's cross-racial masquerade, Bond confidently tells his opponent, aiming a gun at him: “So you lived to
die another day.”

This line of dialogue provides a self-reflexive moment, since the death of Asian villains and victims has been a recurrent theme of American motion picture and popular culture for the past century. Famed Chinese American star Anna May Wong once complained about her Hollywood career: “I was killed in virtually every picture in which I appeared. I died so often. Pathetic dying seemed to be the best thing I did.”\(^1\) In Marginal Sights: Staging the Chinese in America, James S. Moy likewise acknowledges this cultural phenomenon, stating that “both Fu Manchu and dragon-lady characters...would live on to die and die again, forever reinscribing the dangers of the Orient and miscegenation while spiraling through seemingly endless cycles of death.”\(^2\) As a quintessential white action hero and a guardian of Western imperialism, James Bond once again interpellates the death of an Oriental (as opposed to a specifically Korean) villain.

Hence, the critical issue at stake here has a transnational and pan-Asian flavor. When Korean audiences reinterpret “die another day” (i.e. the predetermined death of screen Asians) as “another day” (i.e. a time of cultural resistance), their counter-hegemonic spectatorship engages the concerns of Asian audiences of various ethnic extractions and from diverse cultures whose distinctions have been frequently blurred or ignored in North American and European films, television series, and stage plays. Thus, Die Another Day opens with a Pukch’ong coastal scene shot in Maui, Hawai’i while casting Hong Kong performer Kenneth Tsang as a North Korean general. Rick Yune’s character Zao likewise bears cross-ethnic characteristics. “Zao” is no doubt a Chinese name. In the Korean language, the “z” sound does not exist and the phonetic pronunciation of the name in Korean would be Cho. The mismatch between a Korean character and a Chinese name attests to the historical interchangeability of two ethnicities in Hollywood films.

The authenticity of Asian names seems to have been of little importance to mainstream producers and audiences alike, so long as they sounded foreign and were easy to remember. Some screen Asians do not even have names fitting their ethnic origin but are rather called by English nicknames (such as Dr. No and Oddjob, the latter parodied in Mike Myers’ Austin Powers series as Random Task). Like his predecessor Dr. No, a half-Chinese, half-German villain of the first Bond film (played by white actor Joseph Wiseman in yellowface), Zao is a generic Oriental villain whose ethnic identity is bleached. Zao’s ethnicity is further amalgamated through a DNA replacement operation, which aims to turn the North Korean into a German. When James Bond interrupts the operation, Zao emerges as a bald,
blue-eyed monster whose racial/ethnic affiliation is difficult to discern.

Not only are Chinese and Korean actors and appellations mixed, South Korea and Hong Kong also constitute mirroring images as subjugated territories in *Die Another Day*. While American military commanders and intelligence agents are shown determining the fate of South Korea at a time of national crisis, Hong Kong appears to be floundering under the heels of British control despite the 1997 handover to mainland China. When Bond, faced with collaboration charges, flees from a British intelligence ship positioned near the Hong Kong Harbor, he saunters into a deluxe hotel filled with affluent Caucasian patrons. In spite of his haggard look and improper dress as an escapee, Bond self-assuredly demands “his usual suite” and all the luxuries (wine, food, clothing, and a masseuse) are instantly prepared and put at his disposal. The hotel manager, Chang (Ho Yi), is later disclosed as a Chinese intelligence agent and Bond negotiates with him a means of tracking down Zao, who is hiding in Cuba. Although Chang initially resists the British encroachment in his city (declaring, “Hong Kong is our turf now”), he accepts Bond’s proposal to retaliate against three Chinese agents’ deaths at the hands of Zao, providing our hero faux travel documents.

Even after Hong Kong reverted to the People’s Republic of China in 1997 and became a Special Administration Region (SAR) where the capitalist system can be retained until 2047 under the “one country, two systems” policy, the Bond series still suggests Great Britain’s spectral imperial presence in the former colony. Reminiscent of the “Queen Elizabeth” in *The Man With the Golden Gun*—a half-submerged, completely wrecked ocean liner whose cockeyed compartments contain the British secret service headquarters in Hong Kong—a British intelligence vessel prolongs its presence at the post-1997 Hong Kong port as a reminder of sustained Western influence over the region. *Die Another Day* seems to imply that Her Majesty’s Secret Service can reclaim its privileges in Hong Kong at any time despite the PRC’s sovereignty.

The intercultural influx of filmic meanings is not exclusively confined to Korea, China, and Hong Kong. One of the remarkable aspects of the resistant forms of spectatorship emerging from *Die Another Day* is the awareness of regional or non-Western alliances. In fact, a number of Korean audiences critically reflected on their unthinking viewing experiences of other “villains” (Arabs, Latin Americans, and Eastern Europeans) in the past and realized the solidarity between “us” and “them.” Cinephile Cho Mun-sŏn of Daewoo Securities states,

> It is an old story that so-called Third World people have been stereotyped, by wholesale, as stupid terrorists in Hollywood films. However, this time I felt particularly disturbed because it was about our country. I am repenting now that I was not critical of other films which cast Latin America, the Middle East or Eastern Europe as villains.17

In his review of *Die Another Day* for *Cine21* (a leading Korean film magazine), Chŏn Han-sŏk offers a similar sentiment: “The pleasure we had for the films which featured Russian enemies and Middle Eastern conspiracies at once disappeared as the current political situations outweigh entertainment.”18 Another viewer, Pak Chŏng-yŏn (who is currently doing graduate study in Canada) compares her spectatorial position vis-à-vis *Die Another Day* with that of a Chinese audience a propos *Dr. No*. A year prior to the former film’s release, Pak had the chance to see *Dr. No* on video with a group of classmates including a Chinese female student who disliked a scene involving a Chinese “dragon lady” (given the Japanese name Taro) who seduces James Bond. Pak’s friend complained that the actress (Zena Marshall) was not Chinese, did not speak a word of Chinese, and her costume was not authentic. At that time, Pak thought, “This is just a movie. Why is she so heated up?” When *Die Another Day* was theatrically released, Pak went to see the film with her classmates. This time, Pak could identify with the Chinese student and felt the same way about Korean misrepresentations.19

Distributor 20th Century-Fox Korea’s excuses in the face of mounting criticisms against *Die Another Day* further reinforce the pan-Asian coalition. In his report on the anti-007 movement, Chŏn Min-gyu of *OhMyNews* (a web-based alternative newspaper) quotes 20th Century Fox-Korea’s responses to two controversial scenes: one featuring
the aforementioned farmers and the other the final lovemaking scene taking place in a temple. The distribution company maintained that there was no indication that either scene took place in South Korea, particularly drawing attention to the fact that the temple architecture was in Thai style. At the end of his article, Chŏng identifies *Die Another Day* as “a very peculiar, absurd film in which shabby-looking Asian farmers (whose ethnicity is presumed Korean but is nevertheless unclear) appear and a sex scene takes place in a temple allegedly located somewhere in Southeast Asia.”

In an attempt to defend the film, the Korean arm of 20th Century-Fox inversely admitted to its Orientalist foregrounding of exotic, Asian backdrops with no geographical and cultural specificity.

What needs to be stressed, however, is that Korean audiences did not protest the film’s Orientalism *per se* but its ideological positioning of the West as good and Asia (North Korea in this particular case) as evil. In a sense, the film gestures toward the moral schisms if not mythos of classical Hollywood westerns in which law and order are restored through the elimination or death of corrupt, malevolent forces. The “death” of Asia in *Die Another Day* furthermore has an uncanny link to 1930s melodramas such as *The Bitter Tea of General Yen* (1932), *Shanghai Express* (1932), and *The General Died at Dawn* (1936)—films that culminate with the demise of sinister and cruel Chinese warlords all played by white actors (just as British actor Toby Stephens takes over the role of Colonel Moon on the pretext of racial transformation in *Die Another Day*). The Chinese government and people resisted the deaths of their screen surrogates, banning the above-mentioned films and influencing Hollywood’s representations of Chinese through diplomatic pressures on the U.S. State Department.

Despite a seventy-year gap between the Chinese protests of the 1930s and the recent South Korean anti-007 movement, their intercultural resemblance is indisputable. Their contexts, however, are radically different. The Chinese cultural resistance arose within specific national boundaries, involving both governmental representatives as main negotiators. The South Korean protests, on the other hand, were led by netizens, quickly gaining momentum with the power of the internet and new technology. The latter movement should thus be understood in a broader context of techno-globalization.

Hollywood studios are no longer the self-sufficient, vertically-integrated corporations they were in the 1930s. New Hollywood is becoming increasingly global and transnational. In 1989, two major Hollywood studios were sold to foreign companies: MGM to Pathe Communication of France and Columbia to Sony of Japan. In 1990, the Japanese corporation Matsushita acquired...
Global Hollywood maximizes its cost efficiency by exploiting cheap cultural labor in such nations as Mexico and the Czech Republic, and more than half of its total revenue (including theatrical and televised screenings, as well as home video) derives from the international market.24 Despite Hollywood’s domination of most of the movie markets throughout the world (from 40 to 90 percent, with the exception of India, where it accounts for roughly 5 percent of the annual total admissions), the U.S. government continuously strives to lift the protection policies of other film industries through trade pressures. South Korea, the tenth largest market for U.S. films, is one of the few countries (along with France, Spain, Brazil, Pakistan, and China) to practice a screen quota system, under which the exhibition of domestic films for a certain number of days a year (146 days in Korea until recently)25 is guaranteed by law.

In the wake of the pan-Asian financial meltdown of 1997 and the subsequent IMF supervision of the South Korean economy, Washington’s pressure to abolish or reduce the Korean screen quota system only increased. Korean film producers and civic groups have regularly protested for the past several years, whenever their government gestured toward accommodating the U.S. demand in hopes of signing a bilateral investment treaty (BIF). During the same period, the Korean film industry has enjoyed an unprecedented boom with the coming of pan-Asian blockbusters such as Shiri, Joint Security Area (Kongdong kyŏngbi kuyŏk, 2000), My Sassy Girl (Yŏpgijŏkin kányŏ, 2001), Friend (Ch’ingu, 2001), Silmido (2004), and Tae Guk Gi. South Korea is one of the few countries in the world where the market share of indigenous films has risen as high as 59 percent (compared to 41 percent in France, 37 percent in Japan, 24 percent in the Czech Republic, 22 percent in Italy, 12 percent in Russia, 4 percent in Canada, and less than 1 percent in Taiwan).26

In this context, the anti-007 movement can be interpreted as cultural resistance not only to stereotypical representations of Asia but also to Hollywood’s global domination. As many critics point out, globalization is often a mere disguise for Americanization. Perhaps this equation is particularly true in the case of global Hollywood and its quest to lift local film industries’ protection policies through economic and diplomatic pressures of the U.S. government, the single world superpower in the post–Cold War era. South Korea’s anti-007 movement is symptomatic of Hollywood’s failure to fathom and respond to the complex geopolitics of local markets despite its near monopolistic status as the largest global supplier. In fact, the international market has always been important to Hollywood’s survival ever since its ascendancy in the world arena in the wake of World War I when the heyday of French and Italian silent films was beginning to wane. However, its attempt to incorporate “local flavors,” evidenced in the 1930s “China warlord” films or the 1940s “Good Neighbor Policy” films, only aggravated Chinese and Latin American audiences because of their stereotypical ethnic representations. The Die Another Day phenomenon demonstrates that situations have not improved much in contemporary Hollywood. What has changed, however, is the emergence of alternative local film industries, which can compete with Hollywood in both domestic and regional markets.

In a 2002 interview with Harvard Asia Quarterly, Hong Kong filmmaker Peter Chan anticipated a shift in the nexus of the Asian film industry: “Hong Kong was the center of Asian film 15 years ago, when Hong Kong films were made all across Asia. But in the future I don’t think this will be the case, because the Koreans are very strong.”27 Indeed, Asian audiences from China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, and countries in Southeast Asia have begun sharing their newfound love of hallyu (Korean Wave) culture in recent years. Coined by the Chinese media in 1999, this neologism denotes the contemporary inter-Asia phenomenon in which Korean entertainers are idolized and Korean cultural products are consumed as never before, resulting in not only a wider circulation of South Korean films, television programs, popular songs, and fashion items across national borders but also the popularity of hallyu tourism (the visiting of South Korea to tour location sites of movies or television shows and to catch up with new theatrical releases featuring hallyu stars such as Pae Yong-jun, Chang Tong-gŏn, Chŏn Chi-hyŏn, and Yi Yong-ae).28

The emergence of hallyu as a major inter-Asian...
A cultural force in the new millennium is all the more significant precisely because of South Korea’s peripheral status throughout the prior century as a nation dominated by Japanese and American imperial influences. Some critics have argued that the popularity of Korean culture in Asia is partly attributed to anti-Japanese, anti-American sentiments shared by many politically minded Asians. This assertion may be valid to a degree, but not entirely, as the hallyu movement is primarily propelled by star appeal and consumer desire rather than politics. However, one cannot deny that the phenomenon has contributed to enhancing cultural solidarity among peripheral nations without the mediation of hegemonic cultures. What further distinguishes this manifestation of hallyu from the previous pan-Asian craze for Japanese and Hong Kong cultures in the 1980s and the 1990s, at least from the film industry’s viewpoint, is South Korea’s institutionalization of an organizational network to represent and promote its own as well as other Asian cinemas. Inaugurated in 1996 through public investments, the Pusan International Film Festival (PIFF) has established a reputation among archivists and critics around the world for being the best venue to sample new Asian films. In 2003, PIFF announced its ambition to become “the heart of the Asian film industry,” inviting non-Korean production companies to participate in international sales meetings. Its grand plan for regional cinematic coalition also includes yearly cash awards to support new projects by promising Asian filmmakers (Kurosawa Kiyoshi of Japan, Aditya Assarat of Thailand, and Murali Nair of India were among recent recipients).

One might even speculate that if the Korean film industry’s momentum and leadership in the pan-Asian community continues, Hollywood’s dominance in the region could conceivably diminish as it did in South Korea this last decade. Taking notice of the growing regional popularity of Korean cinema, Hollywood is already making a move to cash in on the success through cross-cultural adaptations. Major studios (DreamWorks, Miramax, Warner Bros., Universal, and MGM) have thus far purchased remake rights to a dozen of South Korean films including My Sassy Girl, My Wife Is a Gangster (Chop’ok manura, 2001), Hi, Dharma (Talmaya nolja, 2001), Marrying the Mafia (Kamun ŭi yôngkwang, 2002), A Tale of Two Sisters (Changhwa, Hongryŏn, 2003), Marrying the Mafia (Oldû poi, 2003), and The Host (Kŏimul, 2006).29

In a metaphoric sense, refusing to “die another day” connotes the ethos of a post-financial crisis Asia facing pressures of restructuring its indigenous economic systems and opening its markets on all fronts. The regional coalition has become a matter not of choice but of necessity for survival in competition against NATO and EU nations. Perhaps it is this same imperative of the global age that compels one to read the anti-007 movement as a pan-Asian issue beyond the expression of Korean nationalism.

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Notes


2. Although it is arguable whether the Cold War really ended in Asia in light of current North Korean Crisis, in this essay I use the term “post-Cold War” in a conventional sense to refer to the new world order that emerged in the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the Soviet-bloc, and the market liberalization of mainland China.


8. Although only 14 out 565 men charged with misconduct faced actual court-martial (ten of them were convicted), many repatriates continued to experience harassment from FBI agents and military interrogators for years after they resumed civilian life. For more information, see Albert D. Biderman, March to Calumny: The Story of American POWs in the Korean War (New York: Macmillan, 1963) and Lewis H. Carlson, Remembered Prisoners of a Forgotten War: an Oral History of Korean War POWs (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 2002).


10. The candlelight demonstration reached its peak during the week of December 7–14, 2002, when nearly 100,000 citizens gathered in the Kwanghwamun Square in downtown Seoul.


17. Personal correspondence.


19. Personal correspondence.


TO ‘ANOTHER DAY’


25. The South Korean government reduced the screen quota by half (to 73 days a year) as of July 2006, succumbing to sustained U.S. trade pressure.

26. Market share statistics is based on 2004 data. For statistics of the Korean film industry, see the Korean Film Council website (http://www.kofic.or.kr).


28. According to a 2003 survey of 2,000 mainland Chinese, Hong Kong, and Taiwanese tourists conducted by the Korea National Tourism Organization (Han’guk kwangwang kongsa), 44.9% respondents visited South Korea to see film and television location sites, 20.7% to attend pop concerts, and 17.4% to participate in tour packages guided by popular stars. When one of the most popular ballyu stars, Pae Yong-jun, made his much-anticipated cinematic debut in Untold Scandal, an estimated 20,000 Japanese tourists crossed the Sea of Japan to see the film upon its release. 27.4% (711,236) out of all Japanese, mainland Chinese, and Taiwanese tourists in 2004 visited South Korea because of ballyu TV dramas, films, or stars. “Chungbisakwun sŏnbo yŏnaein ŏn An Chae-uk Kim Hū-i-sŏn [Favorite Stars in the Chinese-speaking World Are An Chae-uk and Kim Hū-i-sŏn],” Cho’ŏn ilbo [Chosun Daily], November 24, 2003; Yi Yŏng-jin, “Pae Yong-jun Sūkaendul pogi wihae Han’guk haneg? [Going to Korea to See Pae Yong-jun’s Untold Scandal],” Cine 21, November 20, 2003; “Chaknyŏn ilschung.taeman panghan kwankwanggak 27.4% ’ballyu kwankwango’ [Last Year 27.4% of Japanese, Chinese, Taiwanese Tourists Were Hallyu-related],” Tong-a ilbo [Dong-a Daily], January 13, 2005.

29. The first Hollywood remake of a South Korean film—the time-travel romance The Lake House, adapted from Il Mare (Sivŏlar, 2000)—hit American theaters in 2006. Other Korean titles whose remake rights were sold to Hollywood include Phone (P’on, 2002), Jail Breakers (Kwangbokjŏl ‘ŏksa, 2002), My Teacher, Mr. Kim (Sŏnsaeng Kim Pong-du, 2003), Into the Mirror (Kŏul sokâro, 2003), and The Doll Master (Inhyŏngia, 2004)

**Filmography**

*The Bitter Tea of General Yen* (dir. Frank Capra, USA, 1932)

*Shanghai Express* (dir. Josef von Sternberg, USA, 1932)

*The General Died at Dawn* (dir. Lewis Milestone, USA, 1936)

*The Bamboo Prison* (dir. Lewis Seiler, USA, 1954)

*Prisoner of War* (dir. Andrew Marton, USA, 1954)

*The Rack* (dir. Arnold Laven, USA, 1956)

*The Manchurian Candidate* (dir. John Frankenheimer, USA, 1962)

*Dr. No* (dir. Terrence Young, UK, 1962)

*Goldfinger* (dir. Guy Hamilton, UK, 1964)

*The Man with the Golden Gun* (dir. Guy Hamilton, UK, 1974)

*For Your Eyes Only* (dir. John Glen, UK/USA 1981)

*Octopussy* (dir. John Glen, UK/USA, 1983)

*A View to a Kill* (dir. John Glen, UK/USA, 1985)

*The Living Daylights* (dir. John Glen, UK/USA, 1987)

*License to Kill* (dir. John Glen, UK/USA, 1989)

*GoldenEye* (dir. Martin Campbell, UK/USA, 1995)

*Tomorrow Never Dies* (dir. Roger Spottiswoode, UK/USA, 1997)

*Titanic* (dir. James Cameron, USA, 1997)

*Shiri* (Ｓｗｉｒｉ; dir. Kang Che-gyu, South Korea, 1999)

*Joint Security Area* (Kongdŏng kjongbi kuyŏk; dir. Pak Ch’ŏn-uk [Park Chan-wook], South Korea, 2000)

*Il Mare* (Sivŏlar; Yi Hyŏn-sŏng, 2000)

*My Sany Girl* (Kŏnggŏl kŏnjŏ; dir. Kwak Chae-yong, South Korea, 2001)

*Friend* (Ch’ŏng’u; dir. Kwak Kyŏng-t’ack, South Korea, 2001)

*My Wife Is a Gangster* (Chop’ŏk manura; dir. Cho Chin-gyu, South Korea, 2001)

*Hi, Dharma* (Talmaya nolja; dir. Pak Ch’ŏl-gwan, 2001)

*Marrying the Mafia* (Kamun’ŭ yŏnggwang, dir. Chŏng Hŭng-sa’n, 2002)

*Die Another Day* (dir. Lee Tamahori, UK/USA, 2002)

*Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (dir. Chris Columbus, UK/USA 2002)

*Iron Palm* (Jŏn p’am; dir. Yŏk Sang-hyo, South Korea, 2002)

*Phone* (P’on; dir. An Pyŏng-gi, 2002)

*Jail Breakers* (Kwangbokjŏl ‘ŏksa, 2002)

*My Teacher, Mr. Kim* (Sŏnsaeng Kim Pong-du, 2003)

*Into the Mirror* (Kŏul sokâro, 2003)

*My Sany Girl* (Kŏnggŏl kŏnjŏ; dir. Kwak Chae-yong, South Korea, 2001)

*Siwŏl* (dir. Kang U-sŏk, South Korea, 2001)

*Untold Scandal* (Sŏk’arimul; Yi Chae-yong [E. J-Yong], South Korea, 2003)

*A Tale of Two Sisters* (Changbwa, Hongryŏn, dir. Kim Chin-un, South Korea, 2003)

*Oldboy* (Olt’ŏ po; dir. Pak Ch’ŏn-uk, South Korea, 2003)

*Untold Scandal* (Sŏk’arimul; Yi Chae-yong [E. J-Yong], South Korea, 2003)

*Tae Guk Gi: Brotherhood of War* (T’ayoongki hwainallim’yŏ; dir. Kang Che-gyu, South Korea, 2004)

*Silmido* (dir. Kang U-sŏk, South Korea, 2004)

*The Doll Master* (Inhyŏngia; dir. Chŏng Yŏng-gi, 2004)

*The Host* (Kŏsimul; dir. Pong Chun-ho, South Korea, 2006)

*The Lake House* (dir. Alejandro Agresti, USA, 2006)