

Socio-cultural Interpretation of the Bow and Arrow in Digital Media: “The Hunger Games” vs. “War of the Arrows”

Dal Yong Jin

Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada, djin@sfu.ca

Abstract: By critically engaging with contemporary films utilizing the bow and arrow as their signifiers, this paper analyzes two films, “The Hunger Games” and “War of the Arrows”, in tandem with digital technologies in order to find distinctive characteristics of Western movies and non-Western movies. This paper comparatively investigates the ways in which the major themes of these two movies have developed and what their representations are, either internally or externally. It especially examines how the bow and arrow symbolize socio-cultural issues in the movies, either within a country or between countries, to map out the major differences that the bows and arrows portray.

Keywords: “The Hunger Games”, “War of the Arrows”, Hollywood, Korean cinema, Comparative Analysis, Digital Media

Acknowledgement: This work was supported by the Academy of Korean Studies Grant (AKS-2014-R14).

1. Introduction

The bow and arrow have been projectile weapons that can be seen throughout the ages, and they have been used continuously as tools for protagonists in defeating enemies and/or villains in Hollywood blockbuster movies over the last several decades. On the one hand, the bow and arrow have been a staple of entertainment since the early days of cinema as proven in several “Robin Hood” movies (1922, 1973, 1991, and 2000) and more recently in “Lord of the Rings” (2001–2003), “King Arthur” (2004), and “Avatar” (2009). On the other hand, bows and arrows have become primary weapons symbolizing sometimes the poor and at other times the wise who fight against the villains and the foes whose weapons are stronger than arrows, including swords and guns. The early 2010s especially saw an upsurge in the lo-fi weapon that took the sport of archery to the front of pop culture consciousness with several movies utilizing the bow and arrow, including “The Hunger Games” (2012) (Patches 2012), which was one of the biggest hits both nationally and globally.

The enthusiastic interest in the use of the bow and arrow in films is catching on beyond Hollywood (Alexander 2012). Several national movie industries, including Korean cinema, are following these Hollywood predecessors and select the bow and arrow as the prime weapon featured in their movies, partially because they have learned the success of these Hollywood movies. While there are several Korean movies using the bow and arrow, including “Unbowed” (*Bureojin Hwasal* 2012), one standout proceeding from the formula of Hollywood’s archery trend is “War of the Arrows” (*Choejongbyungki Hwal*) produced for Korean cinema and released in 2011. It was the first Korean movie using the bow and arrow that became a top local box office hit.

There are several similarities and differences between these two movies (The Hunger Games and War of the Arrows) produced in two different countries’ movie industries. Although they were produced in the early 2010s, the time periods portrayed in these two movies are very different: one (The Hunger Games) represents the unknown future of the U.S., and the other (War of the Arrows) depicts past history in East Asia. The bows and arrows used are not the same in terms of their shape and function, and their representations are also distinctive. Both of them, however, commonly portray the class struggle in capitalism to contemporary moviegoers through the bow and arrow so that these movies historically prove that class struggle continues, from past history portrayed in “War of the Arrows” to the future

depicted in “The Hunger Games”. These two movies became huge successes during the Occupy Wall Street movement, which mainly started in November 2011, when many people were fighting against social and economic inequalities worldwide. People enjoyed these movies depicting class struggle, and therefore, inequalities in society.

Although the situation is not the same as Marx predicted, it is certain that the contemporary social milieu can also be analyzed by using a Marxian perspective. Marx viewed the structure of society in relation to its major classes, and the struggle between them as the engine of change in this structure (Rummel 1977). “The class struggle between labor and capital in the period of the globalization of capital has also become the principal contradiction of capitalism on a world scale in both the imperial centers and the Third World” (Berberoglu, 2003, 54). Of course, the rhetoric of liberalism and anticommunism argues that the notion of class disappears in the post-industrial society, although it arguably remains. In this regard, film scholar and Marxist Jameson (1977, 35–36) pointed out:

this form of rhetoric tries to take advantage of the emergence of the new stage of monopoly capitalism, which is the transition of modern capitalism into a more purely consumer state on what is a global scale, to suggest that classical Marxist economics is no longer applicable. According to this argument, a social homogenization is taking place in which the older class differences are disappearing, and which can be described either as the embourgeoisement of the worker, or better still, the transformation of both bourgeois and worker into that new grey organization person known as the consumer....[However], what is becoming clearer today is that the demands for equality and justice projected by several groups are not intrinsically subversive.

While several movies are adopting the bow and arrow as the major projectile weapon symbolizing class struggle, Yong Tang (2011, 659) takes the example of ‘Avatar’ and argues that “although ‘Avatar’ takes place in the year 2154 on Pandora, it shows a clear cinematographic manifesto of Marxism, because class struggle between capitalists and proletarians is evident throughout the movie’s whole narrative structure” (Tang 2011, 657).

By critically engaging with the Marxist notion of class struggle embedded in contemporary films utilizing the bow and arrow as their signifiers, this paper textually analyzes the two films in order to find distinctive characteristics of Western movies and non-Western movies. Since the textual analysis becomes very important to understanding how media texts might be used in order to make sense of the world we live in—meaning it is significant to contextualize it within our life and/or society as Mckee (2001) point out—the present paper investigates the ways in which the major themes have developed and what their representations are. It therefore compares and contrasts these movies in terms of their major themes, in particular the ways in which these two films portray capitalism, either internally or externally. It especially examines how the bow and arrow symbolize class struggle either within a country or between countries in order to map out the primary distinctions that the arrows represent. It then analyzes how Korean cinema politicizes the local movie through the battle against capitalist imperialism.

2. What Do Arrows Symbolize in Hollywood Movies

In several Hollywood movies, major actors or actresses use the bow and arrow as exotic weapons against swords and guns in the midst of the continuing popularity of gun movies. While there are a few different meanings, in these movies, such as “Robin Hood” and ‘The Avengers,’ shooting arrows symbolizes several significant contexts, in particular, two major commonalities, which are heroism and capitalism, but is not a typical Hollywood mannerism representing violence. “The Hunger Games” is not exceptional. As in many Hollywood movies, “The Hunger Games” touches on a falling in love between a man and a woman, resulting in the representation of heroism; however this movie also emphasizes a serious conflict between the general people and the nation-state.

As a Hollywood blockbuster movie with a production cost of \$78 million, “The Hunger Games” garnered \$408 million in U.S./Canada alone, which made it the third biggest hit of

the year, only behind Marvel's "The Avengers" and "The Dark Knight Rises" during 2012 (Motion Picture Association of America 2012, 21). Based on the bestseller by Suzanne Collins, "The Hunger Games" takes place in the unknown future in a post-apocalyptic world, and the dystopian nation of Panem consists of a wealthy Capitol ruling 12 poorer districts, all of which are presided over by the Capitol, which is a technologically advanced, utopian city where the nation's most wealthy and powerful live. As punishment for a past rebellion and as a way to demoralize these districts to quell social uprising, each district is forced to provide two tributes (one boy and one girl). The evil government picks 24 kid-gladiators to kill each other until only one is left standing; therefore, the movie is a tale of violence and corrupt power. Of course, the tale of "The Hunger Games" hangs on emerging virtues of courage, selflessness, and commitment to the common good. People want reassurance that in the midst of horrible loss and suffering, nobility of spirit triumphs and in the end all will be well (McPhee 2012).

Katniss Everdeen (Jennifer Lawrence), the heroine of "The Hunger Games", voluntarily takes her younger sister's place when she is selected through a lottery system in a televised fight to the death. Toward the end of the movie, Katniss also helps a wounded little girl from another district, which jeopardizes her own life, and she persists to die in order to save Peeta (Josh Hutcherson), a male tribute from the same district. Katniss' heroic actions make her acquire a great deal of support from game makers and people in several districts. In tandem with heroism, "The Hunger Games" is also about "hope" signifying the possibility of survival from the man hunting game. Of course, survival is not a simple hope, but the hope that people believe they can overcome the disastrous political system and miserable life conditions.

Meanwhile, the film depicted capitalism. Even since "Robin Hood" characterized the hero who became known for robbing from the rich and giving to the poor, several Hollywood movies utilizing the bow and arrow have been seemingly against capitalism in order to make an equal and even society through class struggle. If people wanted to help the poor, regardless of whether they are poor or not themselves, a bow is the way to go. There is a very large precedent, so people might as well tap into that (Fox 2012). In fact, several previous movies, including "Robin Hood" and "Avatar", feature a protagonist who betrays the capitalist system and joins the working class. In "The Hunger Games", people in the Capitol of Panem representing capitalist interests are cast in an extremely negative light. They are greedy and have no compassion. By contrast, "as the exploited underclass, people living in the 12 districts are sympathized and even romanticized" (Tang 2011, 659). In a nation where catastrophic wealth imbalances have led to a widening chasm between the rich supporting a totalitarian regime and the poor who struggle to find their next meal through the black market, the class struggle capitulating to the capitalist system is evident.

When Mark Fisher (2012, 28–29) analyzed "The Hunger Games", he argued, "the movie is about the first stirrings of revolutionary consciousness, but its relationship to capitalism is less clear than it might initially appear." He pointed out that the Capitol extracts wealth via direct expropriation rather than through the market. It exerts its power directly, via an authoritarian police force of white-uniformed Peacekeepers, which inflicts punishment summarily; therefore, it is not the same form of exploitation. Fisher did not understand what the real capitalist system is, because it needs not only the market but also other major components, including regulation, capitalists, and labor forces. As the 12 districts are controlled by Peacekeepers who are royal servants to the President, they are the ruthless executors of regulation and law decided by the authoritarian regime, which fully benefits from the capitalist system. The class struggle between the Capitol of Panem and people in the 12 districts continues to play a central role in the process of capitalist accumulation, and Peacekeepers are nothing but the militant force to maintain the capitalist system (Petras 2011). The workers in the 12 districts consist of the labor force as the primary component of capitalism but they are exploited because their values are not properly received. "The Hunger Games" clearly signifies class struggle in the capitalist system as it moves to the end of the trilogy.

However, "The Hunger Games" not only portrays the class struggle against the capitalist, but it is also aptly appropriating the capitalist system to defeat capitalism, which is unique. "The Hunger Games" could not resist the benefit of capitalism, although it symbolizes anti-

capitalism, primarily because the hero/heroine must get the help of the capitalist system in order to defeat capitalists or capital-driven social structure. As a big-budget blockbuster movie, “The Hunger Games” relentlessly criticizes the capitalist system; however, the film could never build its success at such a massive level without such a system. Therefore, “The Hunger Games” consciously appropriates the capitalist system (Tang 2011). The dual nature of capitalism was certainly well represented in “The Hunger Games”, which is among the most successful films in utilizing capitalism.

More specifically, the evil government and people living in the Capitol of Panem enjoy the glory and luxury based on their appropriation of 12 districts in which people work hard as miners and farmers. In order to continue their glory, the President of Panem offers the annual hunger game. The survival game with or without media is not unusual in the film industries, as several previous Hollywood films, including “The Running Man” (1987) and “The Condemned” (2007), and a Japanese movie, “Battle Royale” (*Batoru rowaiaru* 2000) already appropriated this form of survival game. What makes “The Hunger Games” matchless is the strategic involvement of the game maker who controls the entire process. Through the televised media event, the game maker programmed and manipulated several battles not only between game participants but also between participants and unknown natural disasters. There is no way to escape from the game of death, meaning there is no hope to survive. Contestants are victims of modern capitalism.

Katniss Everdeen has little to rely on, other than her hunting skills and sharp instincts, in an arena where she must weigh survival. Katniss’ major weapon is her arrow and bow (Picture 1).

In other words, while Everdeen is allowed to defeat her foes through all sorts of methods, her most favourite is her trustworthy bow and arrow (*Huston Chronicle* 2012). As one of the major assets for survival is earning some sponsors who provide necessary items as capitalists, Katniss must earn supports by showing her skill during the exhibition before the actual game. During their train trip to the capital from District 12, a former survivor in fact gave a tip to Katniss and Peeta by saying:

you really want to know how to stay alive. You get people to like you. Oh, not what you are expecting. Here, in the middle of the game, you are starving or freezing. Some water or a knife, even some matches can make the differences between life and death. And those things only come from the sponsors. And to get the sponsors, you have to make people like you.

There are several attempts to earn sponsors. For example, for the opening ceremonies, Cinna and Portia (stylists) decide to dress their tributes in complementary costumes. Every tribute’s costume must reflect his or her district’s principal industry; for District 12, this means coal. Katniss worries that they will either wear miners’ jumpsuits or, worse, appear completely naked and covered in black dust. Instead of emphasizing coal, though, Cinna and Portia focus on fire, dressing them in black unitards and capes of red, orange, and yellow. The tributes get into their horse-drawn chariots and wait to be announced to make their way through the streets (Collins 2008). As planned, they win the crowd over, and Katniss relishes the love and affection from the crowd.

In addition, at the end of the third day of training before the battle, the tributes privately showcase their special talents to the game makers. The Districts go in numerical order, so District 12 is last, and Katniss is the last tribute. When she enters the gymnasium, she can see that the game makers are tired of watching, that they’ve had too much wine and don’t really care to see what she can do. She grabs her bow and arrow, takes aim, and misses. She struggles at first, trying to get a feel for the weapon, and then finds her rhythm and puts on a display of fantastic shooting. When she looks up, though, she sees that only a few of the game makers are paying attention, which angers her, especially since her life is on the line. The rest of the game makers are eyeing the roast pig that has arrived at their banquet table, so Katniss aims at the apple in the roast pig’s mouth and strikes true, pinning the pig to the wall. Katniss thanks them, bows, and exits (Collins 2008). Through these strategies, she

gets both the crowd and the sponsors, which means that she capitalizes on her personal attraction and survival skill, which eventually keeps her alive by receiving some necessary helps during the actual battle among 24 tributes.

After successfully acquiring several sponsors, Katniss as the representative of the poor and underprivileged working class makes her battle against peer working class members from other districts; however, her journey to survive leads her to a battle with the authoritarian regime (as the trilogy continues). Again, since survival is also not a simple hope, but the hope that people believe they can overcome the disastrous political system and miserable life conditions in modern capitalism, whenever Katniss shoots an arrow, they (both people in the 12 districts who watch the televised game and people who watch the movie at theaters) sympathize with Katniss. For them, the arrow symbolizes their hope, which is not only about the survival of their favourite female competitor in the game, but also about the victory of the underprivileged against the authoritarian government fully appropriating the capitalist system, as Katniss aims for.

3. How the Bow and Arrow Work in Korean Cinema

‘War of the Arrows’ is a 2011 Korean historical action film starring Park Hae-il, Ryu Seung-ryong and Moon Chae-won. By dealing with sensitive weapons in their own historical milieu at a time when most Korean movies released in the early 2010s repeated several successful genre formats (crime action, comedy, and melodrama), ‘War of the Arrows’ stands out as a historical drama that depicts the lives of the general people and their struggle to survive during the invasion of Manchu. It was a proven hit at the Korean box office, with admissions piling up beyond the seven million mark—somewhat surprising for a historical drama/action of its kind (Korean Film Council 2011). More importantly, this movie became the prelude to the recent boom of Korean historical action dramas (*Sakuk*), such as ‘Masquerade’ (*Gwanghae, Wangyidoen Namja* 2012), ‘The Face Reader’ (*Gwansang* 2013), and ‘The Admiral: Roaring Currents’ (*Myeongryang* 2014), because people have begun to enjoy this particular genre of movie since ‘War of the Arrows’ was released in 2011.

The movie became Korea’s most successful film of 2011, marching up the ranks to eventually bank 7.45 million admissions. ‘War of the Arrows’ was one of the blockbuster movies in terms of production cost (\$9 million) made in 2011. During the same year, the Korean film industry produced 146 movies, and the average production cost was \$2.2 million, including marketing costs. The low budget movies whose production cost was \$1 million or less, usually made by independent producers consisted of 56.2% (82 movies) and mid-sized movies whose production cost was less than \$7 million accounted for 30.1% (44 movies). ‘War of the Arrows’ domestically made \$55.8 million in revenues at the box office (Korean Film Council 2012).

As in many of Korea’s blockbuster movies, such as ‘The Host’ (2006), ‘D-War’ (2007), ‘Haeundae’ (2009), and ‘The Admiral: Roaring Currents’ (2014). ‘War of the Arrows’ utilized several cutting-edge digital technologies and borrowed some ideas from Hollywood films, including ‘Apocalypto’ (2006). ‘War of the Arrows’ has exceptional production values crowned by impressive digital technologies, including digital sound design that capitalizes on the versatility of the titular weapon (Lee, H.W. 2012). ‘War of the Arrows’ producers also used Phantom Flex, which is a 2.5K digital cinema camera providing exceptional flexibility in all areas of high-speed image-capture in order to aim and catch the flight of arrows, for the first time in Korean cinema history. Since the Phantom Flex captures up to 2,400 frames per second, the new camera takes up flies in the blink of an eye, the movement of the arrow, and a curved flying of the arrow (Kim, S.Y. 2011). With the aid of computer-generated images (CGI) (see Lee 2006), ‘War of the Arrows’ clearly relied on digital technologies.

It is also important to understand that the contemporary economic milieu surrounding the Korean film industries has deeply influenced Koreans’ movie watching trends. As Korea has continued to experience the economic recession in the early 2010s, although it is not comparable to the one the country went through during the late 1990s, people increasingly go to theaters because they have nothing to do. During one of my interviews conducted in October

2014, one Korean film scholar explained, “the surge of movie viewership in the early 2010s reflects the economic turmoil, which makes people go to theaters. Watching movies is a pastime during the economic recession, as indicated in several historical junctures.”

Most of all, a little historical background is helpful to comprehend this movie. Set after the Second Manchu (currently part of China) invasion of Korea (Joseon Dynasty) in 1636, known as *Byungja-horan*, the film is about an archer who risks his life to save his sister from slavery under Prince Dorgon’s rule. The Manchu Qing Empire was invading Korea for the second time and within this setting director Kim Han-min created a local hero in Nam-yi (Park Hae-il) to stand up against the invaders, save his beloved sister (Ja-in played by Moon Chae-won) from her captors, and honour the memory of his slain father.

The Qing invasions of *Joseon* in the seventeenth century arguably constituted the most humiliating defeat by a foreign force in the entire history of Korea, with Korean King Injo surrendering to the Manchus with a kowtowing ceremony only two months after the infiltration of the border and his own son, Crown Prince Sohyeon, was taken as a hostage. More than half a million Koreans were forcibly relocated from their homes due to the second Manchu invasion.

This implies that “War of the Arrows” features a classic national struggle beyond national borders, between Manchu and *Joseon*, in the 17th century; therefore, this movie critiques imperialism and capitalism.

As discussed, “The Hunger Games” depicts a classic class struggle between people in the Capitol in Panem and people living in the poorer 12 districts, which is an internal struggle. “War of the Arrows” portrays an anti-imperialist connotation. For the Korean moviegoers, the struggle between their own nation, here the Joseon Dynasty, and the former Chinese imperialists easily appeals more than the internal struggle represented in “The Hunger Games”, because this Korean film shows international politics although the main actors/actresses don’t represent the nation per se. In this Korean historical movie, it is rather a classic class struggle beyond national borders, although nationalism works well in that both hostages wanted to plan to come back to Joseon by themselves and Nam-yi, the main character of the movie used *Pyeon-Jeon* (split arrow), which was also called *Aegit-sal* symbolizing Joseon’s power (Shin 2015), at the same time. As Marx (1976, 873) argued, “colonialism is another form of capitalism because capitalists used colonization as a means to achieve primitive accumulation, the original sin of capital.” As Lenin’s Pamphlet (1917) also pointed out, “imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism.” While both ‘Hunger Games and “War of the Arrows” portray a cinematographic description of the class struggle between the working class and the capitalists, the Korean movie especially deals with the power struggle between the lay people in the colony and the powerful imperialists/capitalists in the colonizer.

In the movie, Nam-yi, the son of a military officer killed during one of the Joseon court’s factional struggles, is living as a game hunter, adopted by his father’s friend along with his sister.

As in “The Hunger Games”, Nam-yi is something of an archer prodigy, yet has turned cynical toward the world. His sister, however, is tired of leading a fugitive’s life and decides to marry her stepbrother Seo-gun (Kim Moo-yeol). It just so happens that their wedding day turns out to be the day of the second full-scale invasion of Korea by the Qing Empire (Kim, K.H. 2011).

Unlike many Hollywood movies using arrows, the major theme of “War of the Arrows” is not about heroism, but brotherhood. Of course, this does not imply that Hollywood films with bows and arrows only reflect heroism, because brotherhood is also a key element in these movies, including “Robin Hood”. What I argue is that “War of the Arrows” portrays brotherhood as a main theme, instead of emphasizing heroism. In fact, Nam-yi is courageous enough to hunt down Manchu villains; however, his original purpose for his war against them was personal: rescuing his sister from them. “The Hunger Games” also starts with sisterhood, as Katniss Everdeen has become a heroine in cooperating with another young lady and eventually fighting against the system; however, in “War of the Arrows” the main character primarily starts with his intention to rescue his beloved sister and ends with the mission.

The local archer Nam-yi did not hesitate to begin his own war against Manchu warriors through his shooting skill, although Nam-yi's character is far away from the concept of heroism. Before the second invasion of Manchu he did not study nor practice sword-fighting. Out of desperation, because of his personal situation as the son of a killed military officer, he never dreamed of changing society unlike many in Hollywood movies using the arrow and bow. In other words, he never stood against the old style authoritarian regime relying on the capitalist system. When Seo-gun wanted to marry his sister, he originally did not allow it due to the potential disaster for both families. Likewise, when Ja-in and Seo-gun got married, he did not want to see it. Rather, he was hunting deer. During the wedding ceremony, the Manchu warriors unexpectedly invaded his village in Joseon and captured many people, including Ja-in; that's why Nam-yi had to follow the Manchu warriors to rescue his sister. He was not a hero, but "*Zzizilnam*", meaning "you are a loser" or "you are not cool". He later shines because the film adopts the "family ties that are the only worthwhile thing formula that Korean blockbuster-wannabes time and time again fall back on," abandoning the potentially much more interesting angle of expanding on the philosophical or spiritual aspects of Nam-yi's attachment to archery (Kim, K.H. 2011).

As a movie, "War of the Arrows" precisely recreated the major characteristic of Korean cinema. Korean cinema as one of the most distinguishable Third World cinemas has traditionally portrayed the lives of the general people; their sorrow, anger, and love (Abelmann 2003; Jin 2010; Paquet 2011), as this movie is about familism and sacrifice. The protagonists do not care about the country and the king, but through doing their small, important daily routines; they love their family and society. This implies that Nam-yi represents the general people's desire, even that of contemporary moviegoers. The general audiences feel the same outrage and sorrow with Nam-yi, and they badly hope that the hero who might represent them wins the battle against the invaders. This movie consequently depicts class struggle between the underprivileged Korean lay people and the Manchu warriors representing the imperialist. Korea's small but agile and Manchu's heavy strong arrows symbolize them differently, so when Nam-yi fires the arrow, they fully sympathize with his moves. There is nothing complicated here and the story's simplicity is mirrored in its structure.

Unlike "The Hunger Games", therefore, it is not a major actor/actress who represents heroism.

Normally when a hero possesses remarkable skills there is some form of motif or montage accompanying it as a form of understanding. In this movie, there is little that justifies Nam-yi's incredible ability. He does wield the bow of his respected and valiant father and with it the memory and honour of his family (Wheeler 2011). As for heroism in the movie, it is rather Seo-gun who bravely turns out to be a heroic icon in providing hope for people to dream of coming back home.

On the one hand, regardless of the fact that Ja-in is the daughter of the military officer killed—meaning the noble family collapsed—Seo-gun courageously wanted to marry her, which is very unusual because this means that he might give up his own career as *Yangban* (noble class in English) in the 17th century. What Seo-gun proves in his heroic activity is hope, not substantial, but achievable. For example, during the long journey to Manchu, Manchu warriors who drag Korean hostages played a man hunting game. They said that the hostages can go back to their hometown and asked them to run away. However, this was a fake motive for their man hunting game. While watching Korean people dying, Seo-gun told to his servants who were captured together by the Manchu warriors, "I have to go. If one person is able to go back home, people won't discard their hopes to come back home alive."

On the other hand, after the defeat of Jushinta by Nam-yi, Seo-gun, who survived with Ja-in also courageously returned to Korea. When the Korean prisoners prepared to cross over a river into Manchurian territory one of their leaders reminded them that anyone who crossed the river would be regarded as a traitor. Therefore, Seo-gun knows that when they (alongside Ja-in with Nam-yi's dead body) cross back into Korean territory they will be regarded as somehow tainted. However, Seo-gun did not hesitate to cross back into Korean territory.

"War of the Arrows" especially portrays confrontation against capital imperialism. As Kim and Cheo (2013, 250) aptly put it, "local films almost always necessitate a subversive ma-

never that cuts across the boundary between egomania (colonizer) and servitude (colonized) because of their capability to inauthenticate or erase the original source and thereby the actual divide between subject and its mimicked object.” However, the movie creators did not intend to try to erase local mentalities. The movie itself is about the opposition to imperialism or colonialism, which can be seen in several third world cinema films, produced in Latin America and Asia. At a basic storytelling level, “War of the Arrows” is about the resistance to the ruler by the underprivileged as in many other arrow movies. Regardless of the reason for Nam-yi’s personal intention for the battle with Manchu warriors, the movie turns out as a form of the battle between the imperialists and local forces, which has resulted in the creation of the third space—the creation of unique culture based on the hybridization process (Bhabha 1994), in that it politicizes the historical milieu tactfully. Many Korean movies are often criticized as lacking the power to control their cultural politics and leaving everything in the hands of transnational corporations and their market decisions as a result of global de-politicization, meaning they do not consider the localness in local popular culture (Chin 2003).

However, Han-min Kim clearly adopted local history and local culture embedded in the power struggle beyond national borders to create a distinguishable local popular culture. As Yazdih (2010, 31) points out, “globalization has both expanded the reach of Western culture and allowed a process by which the West interacts with the East, appropriating [local] cultures for its own means and continually shifting its own signifiers of dominant culture,” and consequently, local culture loses its own cultural uniqueness in many cases. However, Han-min Kim certainly creates local popular culture (although as a hybrid as it mixes local history and digital technologies) in that the local cultural producer interacts and negotiates with global forces, using them as resources through which local people construct their own and/or local-driven cultural spaces (Shim 2006).

More specifically, “War of the Arrows” shows more dramatic fights than Hollywood movies, both structurally and ideologically, against the capital imperialist with the bow and arrow. In this movie, both heroes and villains select the bow and arrow as major weapons, which is rare because in many archery movies, while the hero/heroine selects the arrow and bow as his/her own main weapon, the foes find other weapons, including swords and guns. The ingenuity of most of the sequences in the movie revolves around archery, at which both the heroes and villains excel. What makes the difference is the contrast between the bigger, heavier Manchu arrows versus the lighter, more agile Korean ones (*The Hollywoodreporter* 2011). In fact, Jushinta used *Yuk-ryang* arrow (Heavy arrow), which was 240g in weight while the average weight of an arrow was only 10g. Unlike other arrows whose shape is round, *Yukryang* arrow’s shape is triangular, which can destroy heavy armor (Picture 2).

Compared to this, Nam-yi used two Korean arrows, including *Pyeon-Jeon* (split arrow), which was also called *Aegit-sal* (baby arrow) (Picture 3). Since its length was only about one third of that of an ordinary arrow, it required the use of *tonga*, a tube made from a bamboo tree trunk, as an arrow guide (Chung 2014). Due to its small size, about 30cm, it was nicknamed “baby” arrow. It was said to be capable of flying over one thousand bo (1,200 m) (Kim 2003; Kim, K.H. 2013). As a special arrow of Joseon, *Pyeon-Jeon* has a strong penetrating power. When Nam-yi did not have any ordinary arrows in the midst of his combat with many Manchu warriors, he improvised to make several *Pyeon-Jeon* to shoot them, which worked well.

During the period between the 15th–17th centuries, the imaginative enemies of *Joseon* were both the Jurchen tribe of Manchuria in the north and the Japanese in the south:

Pyeon-Jeon, then, as well as cannons, became the most frightening weapons to Jurchen. *Pyeon-Jeon* was almost impossible to avoid because their size was so small and speed was so fast. As a result, the kill rate was very high. Consequently, they were frightening weapons for Jurchen and Japanese whose major arrows were not this kind. Maybe because of this efficiency of *Pyeon-Jeon*, they were regarded along with the Chinese spear and the Japanese matchlock as the best weapons in East Asia, right after the Japanese Hideyoshi Invasion in the late 16th century” (Kim 2003, 5).

In this movie, Nam-yi's Pyeon-Jeon especially implies a dual role, which includes a feeble and underprivileged-subordinate as well as a wise and strong local warrior against the capital imperialist represented by Jushinta's *Yuk-ryang* arrow.

4. The Politicization of Anti-imperialism in Korean Cinema

While "War of the Arrows" strongly portrays sentiments against capitalist imperialism, the movie aptly develops local-mentalities deeply embedded in national culture. In "The Hunger Games" and other Hollywood movies, bows and arrows are cool, but they are not guns or swords or god hammers (e.g. "Thor"). The Western entertainers certainly depict commercial values through maximizing killing and fighting. For example, digital technologies-heavy "The Hunger Games" never shows any peaceful and calm stage, meaning heroes/heroines never experience an enlightened mind reflecting the world without reacting to it with discrimination or judgment. Instead, what they portray is mainly fear, anger, and the intention to kill each other. This made the movie into commercial and entertaining popular culture, differentiating itself from "War of the Arrows", which features a contemplative and calm local popular culture, including Buddhist philosophy.¹ Most of all, both movies commonly depict class struggle, but as Marx described (1867), the form of a judgment day through class struggle is much different.

Unlike the bow and arrow in many Hollywood movies, the bow and arrow in "War of the Arrows" signify the conciliation of its beliefs being both religious and against capital imperialism. Arrows are not a weapon of mass destruction, and Nam-yi even releases a villain during his chase of Manchu warriors by saying "killing someone is not the goal of my arrow." In the middle of the movie, he also did not kill Jushinta chasing Nam-yi in the cliff, although he could easily do it. The goal of the bow and arrow in this movie is not to kill other than only targeted villains one after another.

"War of the Arrows" entertains the audiences. As usual, no matter how fast one is at it, the archer is very vulnerable. Each movie with archery plays up that moment where the hero is standing, bow cocked, completely defenseless to any attack. There is vulnerability in that pregnant pause that draws the audience (Fox 2012). Due to the vulnerability, nobody can predict who is winning, especially in the middle of the forest, as trees are hurdles in the movie. Even in the plains area, it is not predictable due to heavy wind that must be overcome.

In fact, the most memorable scenes were when the Manchu general Jushinta and his elite guards were pursuing Nam-yi through the woods and mountains to finally emerge in a field for the film's final showdown. Here is where the piece shines and its high entertainment value is found. The line between the hunter and the hunted is blurred as Nam-yi demonstrates his mastery over the bow and the arrows he lets fly. These scenes are fluid and kinetic, adding suspense and excitement to the chase, as blood is shed and the conflict begins to narrow to a sharp and bloody dripping point (Wheeler 2011). The final scene in the plains sets the stage for the magnificently fierce battle between Nam-yi and Jushinta. Nam-yi finds Ja-in who left for *Joseon* with Seo-gun in a plain field. They are about to reunite when Ja-in sees Jushinta aiming at Nam-yi from a cliff. But before the arrow hits, Ja-in shoots the horse and Nam-yi falls. As Nam-yi and Jushinta face off, Ja-in runs in between them. Nam-yi's arrow

¹ In the Korean context, movies with articulate Buddhist beliefs have not consisted of a significant proportion of Korean cinema; however, several films, such as "Mandala" (1981), "Come, Come, Come Upward" (*Aje Aje Bara Aje*, 1989), and 'Why has Bodi Dharma left for the East' (*Dalmaga dongjok-euro gan kkadakeun*, 1989) previously reflected some of the major Buddhist religious ideologies running through their texts. A few movie directors made films based on Buddhism because Buddhism is the study of life and film is a utensil for that study (Khyentse 2008, cited in Cho 2010, 162). "War of the Arrows" is not what we call a Buddhist movie, unlike these previous ones. It does not directly reflect Korean Buddhism, but it indirectly reflects Buddhist philosophy. Han-min Kim, director of the movie, is a sincere Buddhist and planned the plot of the movie while discussing it with a monk at *Sim Kok Am* (Temple) in *Bukhan* Mountain located in Seoul; therefore, the movie is able to portray some basic, if not profound, Buddhist religious ideologies (Ha 2011).

barely touches Ja-in's dress, but Jushinta's finds its mark. Despite Ja-in's protests, Nam-yi pulls the arrow out and shoots Jushinta who falls to the ground, finally killed.

This final confrontation implies the victory of the underprivileged over the imperialist, which is a clear political consideration. At this moment, Jushinta asks Nam-yi, "whether you are able to calculate the wind," meaning it is almost impossible to hit Jushinta standing behind Ja-in due to heavy wind. By asking this, Jushinta especially wanted to confirm that the underprivileged could not defeat the imperial Manchu warrior. However, Nam-yi shoots Jushinta to hit his neck passing by Ja-in and says "fear, you simply face it straight on. The wind is not to be calculated but to be overcome."² This is one of the most significant moments for the audience because the moment is not only the triumph of the hero, Nam-yi, over the villain, Jushinta, but also the victory of the underprivileged working people in a small country over the privileged capitalist/imperialist in an invader country.

Furthermore, when Nam-yi falls down because he was already hit by Jushinta's arrow, Ja-in catches him in her lap. Nam-yi says that they should go back to their old home in Seoul. His eyelids then flutter and close—forever. Nam-yi fulfills his duty as a brother, and at this moment, he also finds his place within the harmony of the universal order. He does not show any anger, regret, and fear of death, because anguish and contentions instantly disappear. Ja-in lays Nam-yi into a boat and she and Seo-gun set sail for Seoul, just as Nam-yi requested. As the starting point of the Manchu's invasion is the borderline between China and Korea, the ending location is the river running through China and Korea. Furthermore, it implies that they are heading for Seoul in which the story started.³ At that moment, the local hybrid film creates the third space through the appropriation of local politic against capital imperialism, because it was forbidden for Korea to receive returning people from Manchu back then.

As such, "War of the Arrows" is a well-designed Korean movie converging Korean mentalities with sentiments of capitalist imperialism. Cultural consilience in Korean cinema is happening as local cultural producers interact and negotiate with, not only locally-driven ideologies but also globally adapted anti-capitalism in the early 2010s. The situation of local adaptation of global formats is somewhat different in this film. As with music, local creative talent tends to pull moviemaking formulas from abroad to help with storytelling and visual engagement. In some instances, these directors, writers, and actors have been trained in Hollywood and made their names there (Havens and Lotz 2012). The story is told in such a manner—with clear villains from Manchu and heroes in Korea, a climactic battle scene between two arrow shooters, and uses such a variety of visual techniques, including the Korean

² This final scene also reflects the Buddhist ideology, as Han-min Kim expressed that "War of the Arrows" was created based on his Buddhist philosophies. In fact, Nam-yi's narration "fear, you simply face it straight on. The wind is not to be calculated but to be overcome" implies Buddhist ideologies, in particular, *Hwaom* Thought developed by Uisang in the 7th century because it means that we need to look at cordiality instead of leading by delusion (Ha 2011). Uisang presented to himself his own mandala drawing, known as *Haein Do*, summarizing the *Hwaom* teachings, referring to the way that an enlightened mind peacefully reflects the world without reacting to it with discrimination or judgment, like the reflection of the moon on a perfectly calm sea (Mason 2013; Jin 2015). In *Hwaom* philosophy, in order to reach the world of enlightenment, there should be no waves in the sea. The sea with waves can't mirror the marks of myriad particulars. Since the wave is caused by the wind, once the wind dwindles, the sea becomes calm and reflects the myriad particulars (Odin 1982; Jin 2015). In this final scene, "War of the Arrows" mirrors the endless grass with wind in the plain field, but no wind in Nam-yi's mind, to reflect the enlightened world people can find throughout the journey.

³ This is another significant reflection of *Hwaom* Thought. When Nam-yi fulfills his duty as a brother, again, he also finds the place within the harmony of the universal order. For him, the world is seen as full of harmony and peace. Therefore, this scene aptly reflects Uisang's Buddhist ideology, which encapsulates the inmost heart-mind of the *Hwaom* of *Huayan* metaphysical vision, while forming a beautiful Buddhist mandala or "mystic circle," where both beginning and ending are at the center of the *Haein Do* (Odin 1982, xiii). Nam-yi also acts as if he comes into the enlightenment stage. Everything is very calm, and he eventually fulfills his goal by passing through several stage developments as *Hwaom* Thought implies. While dying on his sister's lap, Nam-yi finishes his journey to bring the cosmos together in order to deliver beings from suffering in the mundane realm, unlike "The Hunger Games" which is filled with anger and barbaric killings.

and global cinema star system, the construction of elaborate, historically accurate sets, and the use of special effects and spectacular battles to grab the viewer's attention—"that it is clearly identifiable as a global blockbuster, because it follows a formula that we have come to associate with these kinds of films" (Havens and Lotz 2012, 239).

However, "War of the Arrows" is not such a case. This local blockbuster movie was produced and created by Kim Han Min, a locally-trained director who tells a distinctly Korean story about one of the historical facts of Korean society. "War of the Arrows" points to a promising future for Korean cinema amid the opening of big-budget films one after another only to offer fast, forgettable entertainment. It demonstrates that honest and original writing for the screen is still possible by weaving thoroughly Korean values and sentiment into Hollywood scenarios (Lee, H.W. 2012). "War of the Arrows" has extensively used local forces, e.g., local history, local actors, a local director, and local culture—to develop a new form of cultural meaning and production embedded in local politics. In the midst of neoliberal cultural transformation, the success of this movie implies that the local cinema is able to develop its own unique popular culture when it encompasses domestic cultural specificity in tandem with some Western digital technologies and cultural genres.

What made "War of the Arrows" noticeable is that this movie clearly converges several elements driven by local forces, including local producers and local mentalities, as well as Asian-based Buddhist thoughts with Western-based digital technologies and storytelling in terms of using the arrow and bow which has often appeared in Hollywood films. It is especially politicized in that it historicized the second invasion of Manchu, which was an imperial country at the time, and portrayed the roles of average local people confronting the Manchu warriors. "War of the Arrows" shows the political conflicts between the ruler (Manchu) and the ruled (Joseon) and portrays political resistance, although it is not systematic but based on individual efforts.

5. Conclusion

This paper has comparatively analyzed two movies, both of which used the bow and arrow as their major features. These two movies, one being "The Hunger Games" made in Hollywood and the other "War of the Arrows" in Korea, depicted the bow and arrow used by the protagonists defeating the enemies, and they represented the pivotal role of the working class against capitalists in a historically critical juncture. As the enemies in these movies represent either capitalists or imperialists, both movies contain either an anti-capitalist or an anti-imperialist overtone. Through these movies, "a Marxist undercurrent clearly runs, which means that the conflict between evil capitalists and good working people is present in both movies. They commonly stand with the warm-hearted and heroic proletarians in their fight against the greedy capitalists" (Tang 2011, 664).

There are several differences in these two films in the form of class struggle, but their appeal to the moviegoers seems to be similar. "The Hunger Games" portrayed class struggle in conjunction with American ideologies, both commercialism and heroism, and "War of the Arrows" touched on sentiments that were anti-capital and anti-imperialist, which are felt beyond national borders. The stories of both movies also take place in far distant times: one is the unknown future, and the other is the past. Regardless of these differences, for people living in the modern age, these movies are the story of their own. The underprivileged class' resistance against (imperial) capitalist hegemony with the bow and arrow, mainly symbolizing sometimes the poor and at other times the wise, deeply appealed to moviegoers. The people sympathized with the marginalized and disadvantaged when the Occupy Wall Street movement occurred worldwide.

In particular, "War of the Arrows" successfully, at least partially, if not entirely, creates a new space emphasizing power to challenge and break the dominant culture of capital imperialism. As a movie produced in non-Western cinema, the director of the movie had to utilize Hollywood style action and techniques as well as digital technologies; however, he wrote the transcript and interpreted Korea's political history, focusing on class struggle between the colony and the capital imperialist. It is too early to determine whether domestic popular cul-

ture creates its own unique cultural space, differentiating itself from the Hollywood style of commercial movies; however, it is certain that it proves the possibility of the construction of local popular culture driven by local forces.

References

- Abelmann, Nancy. 2003. *The Melodrama of Mobility: Women, Talk, and Class in Contemporary South Korea*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003.
- Alexander, Bryan. 2012. Hollywood's Weapon of Choice: A Bow and Arrow. *USA Today*. 3 April. <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/life/movies/news/story/2012-04-04/archery-in-filmtv/53980782/1>.
- Bhabha, Homi. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Berberoglu, Berch. 2003. *Globalization of Capital and the Nation-State: Imperialism, Class Struggle, and the State in the Age of Global Capitalism*. Lanham, Maryland.
- Chang, Hae Eun. 2014. Archery in Joseon Kingdom. *The Korea Times*. 21 July.
- Chin, Yik Chan. 2003. The Nation-State in a Globalizing Media Environment: China's regulatory policies on transborder TV drama flow. *Javnost-the Public* 10 (4): 75–92.
- Cho, Francisca. 2010. Buddhism. In *The Routledge Companion to Religion and Film*, edited by John Lynden, 162–177. New York: Routledge.
- Cho, Hyun Woo. 2012. Pyeon-Jeon. 19 September. <http://blog.daum.net/dls68x1f/78>
- Collins, Suzanne. 2008. *The Hunger Games*. New York: Scholastic Books.
- Craig, Amanda. 2012. The Hunger Games and the Teenage Craze for Dystopian Fiction. *The Telegraph*. 14 March. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/9143409/The-Hunger-Games-and-the-teenage-craze-for-dystopian-fiction.html>.
- Fisher, Mark. 2012. Precarious Dystopias: The Hunger Games, in Time, and Never Let Me Go. *Film Quarterly* 65 (4): 27–33.
- Fox, Jesse David. 2012. Arrow: Why Are Film and TV Obsessed With Archery? *Venture*. 11 October. <http://www.vulture.com/2012/10/arrow-why-are-filmtv-obsessed-with-archery.html>.
- Ha, Jung Eun. 2011. *BulGyo Shinmun*. 31 October. <http://www.ibulgyo.com/news/articleView.html?idyno=114202>.
- Havens, Timothy and Amanda Lotz. 2012. *Understanding Media Industries*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- The Hollywoodreporter. 2011. *War of the Arrows: Busan Film Review*. 11 October. <http://hollywoodreporter.com/print/2467477>.
- Houston Chronicle. 2012. *New Films Opening this Week: The Hunger Games*. 21 March. <http://www.houstonchronicle.com/life/article/New-films-opening-this-week-3424157.php>.
- Jin, Dal Yong. 2010. Critical Interpretation of Hybridization in Korean Cinema: Does the local film industry create the Third Space. *Javnost-the Public* 17 (1): 55–72.
- Jin, Dal Yong. 2015. The Mediatization of Buddhism in Digital Media: the Contemporary Reflection of Uisang's Hwaom Thought. *Journal of Media and Religion* 14 (4): 196-210.
- Kim, Kyu Hyun. 2011. *2011 Korean Movies*. <http://www.koreanfilm.org/kfilm11.html>.
- Kim, Kyu Hyun. 2003. *The Archery Tradition of Korea*. <file:///G:/Korean%20arrow%202003.pdf>.
- Kim, S. Y. 2011. Arrow, The Ultimate Weapon. *No Cut News*. 9 August.
- Korean Film Council. 2011. *Korean Cinema Today*. Seoul: KOFIC.
- Korean Film Council. 2012. *2011 Korean Film Industry Annual Report*. Seoul: KOFIC.
- Korea's Martial Art Movie. 2012. *Choejongbyungki Hwal*. <http://blog.daum.net/blog/BlogTypeView.do?blogid=0YMq7&articleno=349>
- Lee, Jae Hyun. 2006. Digital Films and Realism as Digital Aesthetics. *Journal of Communication Research* 42 (2): 41–65.
- Lee, Hyo Won. 2012. Arrow Aims for New Horizons. *Korea Times*. 4 August.
- Lenin, Vladimir. 1917. Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism. In *Essential Works of Lenin*, 177–270. New York: Dover.
- Lin, Ying Chia. 2011. Playing as producing: convergence culture and localization of EA digital games in Taiwan. In *Global Media Convergence and Cultural Transformation: emerging social patterns and characteristics*, edited by Dal Yong Jin, 311–325. Hershey, PA.
- Mason, David. 2013. Haein Temple, the Historic Dharma-Jewel Monastery. *The Korea Times*. 3 January.
- Marx, Karl. 1867. *Capital*. Volume I. London: Penguin.

- McKee, Alan. 2001. *A Beginner's Guide to Textual Analysis*. Metro Magazine: Media & Education 127/128, 138–149.
- McPhee, David. 2012. *Hunger Games and Buddhism*. Practical Buddhism Blog. 25 March. <http://www.practicalbuddhism.net/2012/03/hunger-games-and-buddhism.html>.
- Motion Picture Association of America. 2012. *Theatrical Market Statistics*. Los Angeles, CA: MPA.
- Odin, Steve. 1982. *Process Metaphysics and Hua-yen Buddhism*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Paquet, Darcy. 2011. *An Insider's View of a Film Industry in Transition: Darcy Paquet's Mediations on the Contemporary Korean Cinema*. *Acta Koreana* 14 (1): 17–32.
- Patches, Matt. 2012. *2012: How Hollywood's Archery Obsession Actually Impacted the Sport*. Hollywood.com. 27 November. <http://www.hollywood.com/news/movies/45089206/2012-how-hollywood-s-archery-obsession-actually-impacted-the-sport>.
- Petras, James. 2011. *Capitalism and Class Struggle*. Global Research. 25 April. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/capitalism-and-class-struggle/24487>.
- Shim, Doo Bo. 2006. Hybridity and the Rise of Korean Popular Culture in Asia. *Media, Culture and Society* 28 (1): 25–44.
- Shin, Won Seon. 2015. Two Nationalist Codes Embedded in War of the Arrows. *Modern Film Research* 21: 91–124.
- Rummel, R. J. 1977. *Understanding Conflict and War*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications. <https://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/CIP.CHAP5.HTM>.
- Tang, Yong. 2011. Avatar: A Marxist Saga on the Far Distant Planet. *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* 9 (2): 657–667.
- Wheeler, C. J. 2011. [HanCinema's Film Review] *Arrow*. The Ultimate Weapon. 17 December.
- Yazdihaj, Haj. 2010. Conceptualizing Hybridity: Deconstructing Boundaries through the Hybrid. *Formations* 1 (1): 31–38.

About the Author

Dal Yong Jin

Dal Yong Jin is Associate Professor in the School of Communication at Simon Fraser University. He finished his Ph.D. degree from the Institute of Communications Research at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign. His major research and teaching interests are on social media and platform technologies, mobile technologies and game studies, media (de-)convergence, globalization and media, transnational cultural studies, and the political economy of media. He is the author of several books, such as *New Korean Wave: transnational cultural power in the age of social media* (University of Illinois Press, 2016), *Digital Platforms, Imperialism and Political Culture* (Routledge, 2015), *De-convergence of Global Media Industries* (Routledge, 2013), and *Korea's Online Gaming Empire* (MIT Press, 2010). He has also edited several volumes, including *Mobile Gaming in Asia: Politics, Culture and Emerging Technologies* (Springer, 2016), *The Political Economies of Media: the transformation of the global media industries* (Bloomsbury, 2011) and *Global Media Convergence and Cultural*