특수교육저널: 이론과 실천
The Journal of Special Education: Theory and Practice
2014. 12. 제15권 4호, pp. 365~396.

Disability as a Political Stand-In and Shield: Anxious Masculinity in a Korean Film, *Marat'on*(2005)

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《 Abstract 》

This paper explores the cinematic representation of disability in a highly praised Korean film, *Marat'on*(2005), directed by Chŏng Yunch'ŏl, and illuminates the process by which disability, as a political identity and embodiment of lived experience, is co-opted by patriarchy and neoliberalism. In doing so, the paper first situates the film within the context of the "male in crisis" believed to be caused by the 1997 Korean economic breakdown. Then, it employs three theoretical concepts to critically read the film. Lastly, it textually analyzes the film in light of its narrative structure, character development, genre, and styles. The paper has two main arguments. First, Marat' on reflects and reinscribes a hegemonic idea of disability and gender. In the film, the dominant ideologies of patriarchy and neoliberalism are rearticulated by way of blaming a mother of an autistic son and remasculinizing the son with the familiar trope of "supercrip." Second, disability as a representational strategy works to connect remasculinization and neoliberalization. In the film, the disabled son embodies the link and faithfully serves as a vehicle for disseminating neoliberal masculinity. The paper further suggests that disability becomes a visual signifier for (nondisabled)male suffering brought on by the economic crisis as well as an object that needs to be overcome for a new masculinized subjectivity. More importantly, overcoming disability is a rationale for subjugating another fellow marginalized group, especially a woman.

Key Words : Disability Studies, disability representation, *Marat'on*, *male in crisis*, hegemonic masculinity, narrative prosthesis, gray area

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The current article is part of the author's PhD dissertation completed at the School of Education, Syracuse University, USA.

I. Introduction

Disability is by no means new to Korean film and literature in the 20th century.** Numerous characters with all forms of disabilities were often manifested as a trope of the nation's trauma imposed on the body/mind by the Japanese Colonial Rule(1910−1945), the Civil War(1950−1953), industrialization and urbanization, and military dictatorship(1961−1987) (Choi, 2001; Woo, 2012; Yoon, 2003). In an analysis of Korean novelist Kang Kyŏng'ae's *Underground Village*(1936), Choi(2001) identifies an "inseparable relationship between the literary imagination and the historical and political situation of Koreans as colonized subjects." She further suggests that "the trope of disability surfaced largely within a sociopolitical perspective that emerged in response to a sense of national crisis"(p. 438). Likewise, the representation of disability in literature and film was perceived to demonstrate the subjugation of the Korean identity to the foreign powers(Yoon, 2003). Also, disability worked to signify Korean people who were immobilized and oppressed by rigid and repressive military governments and their policies.

In one way or another, disability remained a symbol, a metaphor, or a rhetorical strategy. It rarely extended to or reflects the materiality of the disabled and their points of view. It rarely questioned or challenged a social structure which shapes a hegemonic vision of disability and negatively affects disabled people, either. However, recent disability films are no longer limited to tropes for the damaged self/nation. In the new century, now that Korean democracy has been stabilized through out consecutive civilian governments, disability as the national experience appears less frequently. Instead, these films seem to individualize disability. Since the

** Korean literature and films with disabled characters include *Samyong, the Mute*(벙어리 삼룡 1925), *Atata, the Idiot*(백치 아다다, 1935), *A Story of Female Shaman*(무녀도, 1936), *Turbidity Current*(탁류, 1938), *Ordeals of Two Generation*(수난이대, 1957), *Yŏng Cha's Heyday*(영자의 전성시대, 1975), *Sŏp'yŏnche*(서편제, 1976), *A Dwarf Launches a Little Ball*(난장이가 쏘아올린 작은 박공, 1978), *Abe's Family*(아베의 가족, 1979), *Nŭmi*(느미, 1980), *A Parrot Cried with Its Own Body*(앵무새 몸으로 울었다, 1981), *Come Down to a Lower Place* (낮은데로 임하소서, 1982), *A Village in the Mist*(안개마을, 1982), *Polluted Ones*(오염된 자식들, 1982), *Hello! God*(안녕하세요! 하나님, 1987), *The Yŏng Ku Series*(영구 시리즈, 1989−1991), and so on.

artistic and commercial achievement of Oasis(2002), a number of films with main characters with various disabilities, what is referred to as the Post-IMF disability films, have emerged.*** One of the most important films in the group is Marat' on(2005).

This paper explores the cinematic representation of disability in a highly praised Korean film, *Marat'on,* directed by Chŏng Yunch'ŏl. It mainly focuses on how disability is used and appropriated by structural forces, patriarchy and neoliberalism. *Marat'on* is an overcoming-disability story about an autistic young adult, Ch'owŏn and his nondisabled mother, Kyŏngsuk. The film demands a more critical intervention and analysis for several reasons. It received artistic and commercial success. With more than five million admission tickets sold, the film rendered itself the 4th most attended Korean film of 2005. It garnered critical acclaim, earning the six 2005 Tae Chong Film Festival awards, including best picture and best leading actor honors. In addition, the film's enormous success led to help spread an awareness about disability and promote the rights of disabled people in Korea. Can the film's impressive success and subsequent impacts be viewed as a sign that signifies more favorable attitudes towards and environments for disabled people? A hasty appreciation of what the film has brought to fails to grasp the social phenomenon in its complexity. The film provides an important site for understanding the specificities and complexities of disability issues. Considering that disability intersects with gender and other social markers and informs our conception of "normal"

*** The Post-IMF films involving disability include *Oasis*(오아시스, 2002), *Oh, Brother*(오, 브라더스, 2002), *Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance*(복수는 나의 것, 2002), *Who Are You?*(후아유, 2002), *A Tale of Two Sisters*(장화, 홍련, 2003), *A Smile*(미소, 2003), *Bye! UFO*(안녕, 유에프오!, 2004), *Witch Board*(분신사바, 2004), *Marat'on*(말아톤, 2005), *Apartment*(아파트, 2006), *Barefoot Kipong*(맨발의 기봉이, 2006), *Love Me Not*(사랑 따윈 필요 없어, 2006), *My Teacher*(스승의 은혜, 2006), *I'm a Cyborg, But That's OK*(사이보그지만 괜찮아, 2006), *Bunt*(날아라 허동구, 2007), *Herb*(허브, 2007), *Mr. Tae Han, Mr. Min Kook*(대한이, 민국씨, 2007), *The Elephant on the Bike*(파란자전거, 2007), *With a Girl of Black Soil*(검은 땅의 소녀와, 2007), *The Fool*(바보, 2008), *Iri*(이리, 2008), *I am Happy*(나는 행복합니다, 2009), *Mother*(마더, 2009), *My Love, By My Side*(내사랑 내곁에, 2009), *Sex Volunteer*(섹스 볼란티어, 2009), *Sky and Ocean*(하늘과 바다, 2009), *My Mother is a Whore*(엄마는 창녀다, 2010), *Elbowroom*(숨, 2010), *Themselves*(바다, 2011), *Glove*(글러브, 2011), *Blind*(블라인드, 2011), *Champ*(챔프, 2011), *The Crucible*(도가니, 2011), *Only You*(오직 그대만, 2011), *The Peach Tree*(복숭아나무, 2012), *The Weight*(무게, 2012), *Miracle in Cell No. 7*(7번방의 선물, 2012), *The Five*(더 파이브, 2013), *My Brilliant Life*(두근두근 내 인생, 2014), *Madam Ppaengdŏk*(마담 뺑덕, 2014), *and Late Spring*(봄, 2014).

bodies and minds(Meeuf, 2009), it is necessary to fully engage with the film. In order to approach the film in multi-dimensional ways, the paper first situates the film within the context of the 'male in crisis' believed to be caused by the 1997 Korean economic breakdown. Then, it employs three theoretical concepts to critically re-read the film. Lastly, it textually analyzes the film in light of its narrative structure, character development, genre, and styles.

This paper is little concerned with stereotype identification, a simplistic storyline and/or character analysis without film language and social contexts, or a binaristic medical and social model application that scholarships in Korea often employ in studying disability representation(Han, 2012; Kim & Lim, 2012; Lee, 2007; Yang & Noh, 2013; Yoo, 2011). These approaches have been criticized in disability studies scholarship(Ellis, 2008; Garland-Thomson, 1997; Hoksema & Smit, 2001; McRuer, 2006; Mitchell & Snyder, 1997, 2001). As the discourses of disability in popular media are very often contradictory and ambiguous, the discourses in themselves disallow simplistically binaristic approaches, such as positive/negative and medical/social model analyses and rather invite critical and complex responses and engagements. Therefore, the paper aims at a comprehensive approach considering the aesthetics, social backgrounds, and more importantly theoretical interpretation of a film. Because it is humanities-based and theoretically-driven, the paper enables reimagining disability(Garland-Thomson, 1997). The reimagination shifts attention away from the view that disability is a mere medical condition and requires medical/rehabilitational/instructional correction, towards the one that disability is social construction and oppression against those with different bodies and minds and therefore reclaims social justice and human rights. Such theoretical reimagination has a significant implication for special education scholarship in Korea. As Kang(2009) and Shin(2014) stress, the scholarship needs more diverse theoretical endeavors and active engagement with other disciplines for its full maturity. In this sense, the paper not only helps facilitate such a dialogic move and provides an 'inclusive' forum where disability is more critically approached and analyzed under the inter- and intra- disciplinary contexts.

One of the most important abilities films have is to imaginatively

address, resolve, or complicate social contradictions and tensions that are irreconcilable in the social realm from which they emerge(Jameson, 1981). Likewise, many of the disability-themed films, including *Marat'on*, respond to the historical moment of their production in unique ways. *Marat'on* allegorizes the Post-IMF crisis Korea through a dysfunctional middle-class family. Similar to the film's pathological construction of the son's autism, his family is so "impaired" that it must be remediated with individual success. The film identifies his disability and mother's non-traditional femininity as the main causes of the family's dysfunction. Such dysfunction is corrected only when she returns to a submissive gender role and he overcomes his disability on his own. Hegemonic masculinity represses her unique social locations as a mother of a disabled son, while it reshapes and reconstitutes his disabled subjectivity through neoliberal-oriented mentality, such as self-government, self-determination, autonomy, and progress.

Likewise, *Marat'on* reveals how, complicit with the neoliberal reforms engendered by the financial crisis in Korea, hegemonic masculinity not only legitimized its position even in a time of male crisis, but relegated women, lower class, and disabled people to the margins. Hegemonic masculinity remained intact by adopting new neoliberal values: efficiency, free competition, self-help, and survival of the fittest, while the statuses of non-conforming identities were downgraded. Thus, in order to effectively understand the oppressive marginalization of disabled people, situating the films in the context of neoliberalism is necessary.

Neoliberalism is a set of economic and social policies and processes originated in the 1970s that serve to maximize the free market and minimize government expansion of social programs. Premised on the principle that the markets can and should advance human well-being as well as social good, neoliberalism values competitive markets and the freedom of individual choice and devalues governmental attempts to provide social resources(Cooper & Randall, 2008; Harvey, 2005; Kumashiro, 2008). The financial crisis(1997-2001) in Korea was due in large part to the sudden withdrawal of money by foreign investors and signaled the end of the government-driven economy and the advent of the globalized neoliberal economy. Throughout the crisis, Koreans did see the powerlessness of their government and the collapse of eleven *chaebŏls*(family-owned

conglomerates), both of which were perceived to be the main engine for the nation's rapid economic success over the previous decades. In the face of accumulated foreign debts, the Kim Yŏngsam administration was left with no choice but to turn to the IMF for a bailout. The IMF(The International Monetary Fund) agreed to lend $56.5 billion to Korea on the condition that the nation must follow even stricter neoliberal reforms by restructuring its own financial and governmental systems. In response, the next civilian government—the Kim Taechung administration(1998–2003)—opened up financial markets for foreign investment, increased the flexibility of the labor market, decentralized and restructured the financial sectors of the *chaebŏls*, and cut its public budget(Ha & Lee, 2001; Shin, 2010).

Koreans themselves were not only shamed by such foreign invasion, but also suffered enormously from its social consequences, including: mass unemployment, unparalleled rises in poverty, diminished social services, rising school dropout rates, increasing suicide rates, and divorce and domestic violence(Kim, 2004; World Bank, 1998). Along with these consequences, the crisis caused Koreans to witness the collapse of the preexisting values and institutions that had upheld male patriarchy and family systems. Countless families were disintegrated; their male breadwinners, now jobless, were even displaced from their families, and some parents sent their children to orphanages or, worse, just abandoned them on the street due to severe economic hardships.

While, in a crisis like this, male privilege might have been subject to criticism, Modleski(1991) claims that "male power is actually consolidated through cycles of crisis and resolution, whereby men ultimately deal with the threat of female power by incorporating it"(p. 7). Masculinity is armed with a self-defense mechanism that can constantly overcome and incorporate its own perceived crisis. In a Korean context, the strong tradition of patriarchy constructs the nation in androcentric terms. Jeong(2006) notes that "a threat to the nationhood of Korea can also, by extension, be interpreted as a threat to the Korean masculine subject"(p. 16). In a similar vein, Joo(2007) comments that the family is an important site where male subjectivity is cultivated and reinforced. Thus, male struggles within family are dramatically manifested and allegorize the nation's crisis in power and authority. Joo further argues that in turbulent

social upheaval situations, many Korean films emphasize the importance of family values and patriarchy by presenting remasculinized male heroes(pp. 213-219).

However, the traditional concepts of masculinity are recreated and rebuilt in accordance with shifts from government-controlled economy to a global market-driven economy. Both masculinity and neoliberalism are compatible with each other in that their coalition can effectively control and exploit marginalized groups for their mutual benefits. Neoliberalism promotes self-reliance, rugged individualism, untrammeled self-interest, and privatization, equating a lack of state interference and labor market efficiency with human freedom(Sewell, 2009). In short, by ridding the concept of the public good and the community and replacing it with individual and familial responsibility, neoliberalism calls upon individuals to sever from their group identities.

In a similar vein, during and after the crisis, popular media exhibited symptoms of remasculinization and neoliberal collusion. Media narratives included the collapse of the nuclear family and anxiety over the breakdown of patriarchal gender relations. At the same time, individual success stories about overcoming the crisis and participating in global competition prevailed as well(Cho, 2008; Chung & Diffrient, 2007; Lee, 2002; Song, 2006). The narratives worked to neutralize the discomfort resulting from both internal and external threats. This paper draws a parallel between the disability texts and other symptomatic texts of "anxious masculinity," "remasculinization," and "neoliberal fantasy" during and after the economic crisis, such as family disintegration narratives featuring "bad" females and physically/mentally weak males, and global success narratives, such as those of sport stars.

First, in relevant media in this era, tragic middle class husband characters were often employed as signifiers of the crisis, while irresponsible, immoral, and over-consuming female figures were represented as conduits of Western cultural and capitalist penetration, bringing irredeemable shame and destruction to the male characters and their families. Lee(2002) reveals that in the 1990s media texts, ailing, middle-aged salary men in middle class families were canonized as altruistic and patriotic victims of the Korean modernization project. They were considered to be the driving force of the phenomenal economic

growth, and the subsequent economic failure was symbolically linked with problems of health and body.

The popular media also supported the symbolically castrated husbands by blaming wives for their overzealous consumption habits and lack of loyalty to their husbands(Chung & Diffrient, 2007). Song(2006) found family breakdown discourse was popular in the crisis period. According to Song, the breakdown in the family results from fathers not being able to fulfill their leadership role as economic providers and decision makers within the family due to the social crises, and thus their lack of patriarchal control leads to a dysfunctional family. Paradoxically, neoliberalism and patriarchy are framed as not responsible for the family collapse. Rather, the discourse identifies the causes of the family breakdown as wives and mothers who do not conform to the traditional caregiver roles.

Other interesting popular media featured individual success stories on a global scale in spite of the national crisis. Pak Ch'anho, a MLB(Major League Baseball) player, and Pak Seri, a LPGA(Ladies Professional Golf Association) golfer, came to national prominence during the crisis period and their great success drew huge public attention. Their great performances represented the nation's capability for overcoming the crisis, as well as a symbol of Korean supremacy. Analyzing the media coverage of the two national celebrities, Cho(2008) found that Korean professional athletes' worldwide success highlights individual responsibility over social responsibility and independence over interdependence which strongly reflects neoliberal tendencies and covers up the sources of the crisis.

How is the emergence of disability-themed films in the post-crisis period understood and do they fit into the male/national crisis narratives? Many of these disability narratives are situated in between family breakdown and individual success narratives as disability conveniently travels across anxieties and desires expressed by both narratives. Disability becomes more visible and useful as an explanatory metaphor for "masculinity in crisis," and the family/nation plagued by globalization, while disability (e.g. in inspiring stories) also dramatically embodies neoliberal subjects who "aspire to and accept the burden of managing their personal formation for a changing world with no governmental and communal support"(Abelmann, Park, & Kim, 2009, p. 229). Therefore, in these

disability narratives, suffering male protagonists often seek to restore their undermined masculinity by disciplining female bodies and, at the same time, by re-engineering disabled bodies, including their own, to fit a neoliberal subjectivity wherein time and effort are voluntarily put into overcoming their own perceived deficiencies.

II. Theoretical background

Using these three theories, McRuer's(2002, 2006) "compulsory able-bodiedness," Cornell's(1995) "hegemonic masculinity," and Mitchell and Snyder's(1997, 2001) "narrative prosthesis," this section seeks to demonstrate how female subjectivities, including motherhood, are used to normalize otherwise deviant identities, such as disabled people, especially a disabled male. The section also examines how disabled male subjectivities are used to ultimately affirm male/able-bodied identities as superior. In other words, the three concepts helps unearth the structure where patriarchy, deeply rooted in sexism and ableism, can thrive by rejecting all that is "unmanly" and "non-able-bodied." McRuer's concept of compulsory able-bodiedness helps illuminate the ways in which the disabled subject is pressurized and absorbed into the normalized subject through linking with another compulsory identity, "compulsory heterosexuality." The scholar(2002) defines compulsory able-bodiedness as the "destructive, normalizing requirement placed on disabled bodies by society"(p. 300). The systems of compulsory able-bodiedness necessitate sameness and passing as the unmarked essential way of nature(2006, p. 8). McRuer(2002) states that the compulsory able-bodiedness "casts some identities as alternatives," and ironically "buttresses the ideological notion that dominant identities are not really alternatives, but rather the natural order of things"(p. 301). Kafer(2003, pp. 79-81) aptly shows how compulsory able-bodiedness plays out for disabled people in two ways: first through the use of physical forces, such as forced sterilization, screening for disability, and hate crimes against disabled people; and second, through the cultural presumption of

able-bodiedness, or denial of disability for visually unmarked disabled persons and a constant dialogue on questions of cure, loss, and disavowal for those with apparent disabilities. She notes, "This assumption serves to isolate people with disabilities by masking the pervasiveness of disability throughout society"(p. 80).

Heterosexuality and able-bodiedness, as institutionalized techniques of normalization, are often combined in a mutual effort to conflate and regulate disability and homosexuality. Although *Marat'on* does not explicitly address homosexuality, such heteronormative requirements are everywhere in *Marat'on* and most conspicuously manifested through vilifying a domineering mother, who transgressees against "normal" heteronormative culture anchored in heterosexual families. In a word, the compulsory able-bodiedness concept in addition to compulsory heterosexuality, reveals how disability as an embodied experience and political identity is contained and destroyed under the project of difference-erasing "sameness."

Connell's(1995) hegemonic masculinity is also very useful in that it not only investigates the relationship between masculinity and disability, but also reveals previously oppressed people's participation in the oppression of others(e.g., disabled male's subjugation of female)(Razack, 1998, pp. 13-14). Connell(1995) explains hegemonic masculinity as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees(or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women"(p. 77). In other words, hegemonic masculinity is society's normative ideal, and its practices of masculinity are designed to institutionalize men's dominance by suppressing female subjects. In addition, hegemonic masculinity extends to other subordinate individuals and groups. Hegemonic masculinity is "constructed in relation to women and to subordinate masculinities"(pp. 185-186). The notion of hegemonic masculinity is important for understanding inter-and intra-gender power relationships. Masculine hegemony exists over women(external hegemony) and over subordinate masculinities(internal hegemony). Hegemony is accomplished, therefore, through the differentiation between "normative" and "non-normative" masculinities. However, hegemonic masculinity is never a complete project, since it requires the absolute suppression of

non-conforming men(disabled, homosexual, unmanly, lower class, non-white, etc.) and non-conforming women(disabled, homosexual, unfeminine, etc). At the center of hegemonic masculinity is an understanding of power relations that sustain control, whether in relation to women or to other men. Like compulsory able-bodiedness, hierarchical power structures of hegemonic masculinity are most often found buried behind an "assumed normativity"(Gagen, 2007, p. 526).

By nature, hegemonic masculinity is very fluid. Because of its fluidity, it sustains its dominance over subordinate groups. These days, hegemonic masculinity takes multiple forms, very often assimilating characteristics of other non-hegemonic identities through its own hybridization(Demetriou, 2001). In spite of its fluid boundaries and hybridization, the essential virtues of hegemonic masculinity remain intact. In an examination of US media coverage of legendary baseball player Nolan Ryan, media studies scholar Trujillo(1991) describes hegemonic masculinity as a cultural or idealized masculinity that filters itself into the common sense of a society. The scholar argues that "the media repeatedly cast Ryan as a hegemonic masculine hero, reproducing archetypical notions of manhood"(p. 1). By examining media representations of Ryan, he further illustrates five distinguishing features of hegemonic masculinity: 1)physical force and control; 2)occupational achievement; 3)familial patriarchy; 4)frontiersmanship; and 5)heterosexuality.

Following in the footsteps of deconstructing hegemonic masculinity, Atkinson and Calafell(2009) add one more important trait of hegemonic masculinity to the list, what they term "a gray area," that protects a male from responsibility for his "immoral and often violent actions"(pp. 1-2). In order to support their provocative thesis, they analyze representations of Anakin Skywalker/Darth Vader in the *Star Wars* prequel trilogy(1999, 2002, 2005). They contend that the Anakin Skywalker/Darth Vader character can escape responsibility from his own atrocious actions and emerge as a heroic figure because the narratives emphasizes his selfless past, external threats, and the deceptions that limit his agency. The dark guise can thus be blamed for his most egregious actions(p. 15). In other words, the Anakin Skywalker/Darth Vader character redeems himself from what he did wrong under aegis of the narrative protection.

Similarly, in *Marat'on*, the autistic male character Ch'owŏn's (non)physical

violence against females can be justified mainly due to his assumed innocence, which is often stereotypically associated with those with cognitive disability, non-hegemonic masculinities as disabled, and finally his irrational behaviors against female characters(understood medically rather than socially). Importantly, the two scholars imply that the gray area is not entirely limited only to films. Rather, they suggest that the gray area, evasion of responsibility, is a predominant example of male defense, which "creates spaces of permissiveness for physical violence, sexual violence, harassment, and various forms of discrimination"(p. 17).

Therefore, one question is left to answer: what factors make it possible for disempowered figures, such as Ch' owŏn, to be eligible for a proxy to hegemonic masculine culture? While Anakin Skywalker/Darth Vader as able-bodied male is a privileged figure who can move up the social ladder, in reality, the chance for developmentally disabled men to be socially mobile is tenuous. However, unlike the Star Wars figure, a cognitively disabled character is deemed to possess two contrasting, yet interrelated attributes, hypermasculinities and vulnerabilities. Such dually perceived attributes enable hegemonic masculinity to conceal its sharp teeth and hide its hostility towards women, justifying domination over those considered non-hegemonic. In a time of male crisis, disadvantaged males, including disabled males, serve as metaphorical signifiers to reflect individual, social, or cultural breakdown.

Here Mitchell and Snyder's(1997, 2001) ideas about "narrative prosthesis" can help to provide a useful framework for investigating representational strategies and practices surrounding disabled male characters. Mitchell and Snyder(2001) contend that disability operates in Western literature as a stock feature of characterization and as an opportunistic metaphorical device to reframe, disrupt, and critique society. Narrative prosthesis is meant to indicate that disability/disabled characters function as a "crutch upon which literary narratives(and authors) lean for their representational power, disruptive potentiality, and analytical insight"(p. 49). Disability is "constructed as the embodiment of corporeal insufficiency and deviance […] becom[ing] a repository for social anxieties about such troubling concerns as vulnerability, control and identity"(Garland- Thompson, 1997, p. 6). In other words, disability is the stand-in for what is collectively

feared and denied in society, aiding in completing what is considered able-bodied, normal, and desirable. Disability in literature betrays personal and collective desire to be/approximate normal, while symbolizing deviant and non-idealized otherness. Therefore, disability becomes a powerful metaphor to examine the "gap between the real and the ideal"(Yoon, 2003, p. 5).

In the words of Siebers(2008), "disability has provided the public imagination with one of its most powerful symbols…but it always symbolizes something other than itself"(p. 48). To some extent, the exclusive use of disability as metaphor is an empowering and even radical approach to social issues. However, disability as metaphor, when facilitated by a patterned mode of characterization and a mere plot-forwarding device, fails to create complex character development within literary and filmic texts and to echo the materiality of disabled people in society(Mitchell & Snyder, 2001, pp. 2-3). Moreover, it widens the distance between disabled people and other minorities by enabling other minorities to downplay the oppression of disabled people because disability is seen as the "other other that helps make otherness imaginable"(Siebers, 2008, p. 48).

Narrative prosthesis offers a good vantage point for discussing the ways hierarchical power dynamics are at play, in light of disability representations in/outside *Marat'on*. Narrative prosthesis plays out in two ways: between(non)hegemonic groups and within non-hegemonic groups. Within the film, a disabled male character is rehabilitated and remasculinized through objectifying his narrative prosthesis, a (non)disabled female. The female character conversely aids his male opposite in developing insights in his own lives. Similarly, outside the film, appropriating the perceived vulnerabilities and hypermasculinities of disabled male character, their narrative prostheses, able-bodied audiences successfully normalize their presumed marginalization and reconfirm their hegemonic masculinity and ablebodiedness. Woo(2012) investigates nondisabled audiences' understanding of *Marat'on*. After interviewing the nineteen participants' the author found that the disabled male body/mind in the fillm is a site where the participants articulate both their insecurity and desire in order to feel more masculine and ablebodied themselves. He concludes that not having its own place, disability is made lifeless and plays the sidekick to prosthesize other identities(e.g., gender and sexuality) in the participants' narratives.

III. A Re-reading of *Marat'on*

Based loosely on the true story of Pae Hyŏngchin, a well-known autistic swimmer and runner in Korea, *Marat'on* tells about an autistic male in his early 20s, Yun Ch'owŏn(Cho Sŭngu), who completes a full marathon race with the help of a mother, Kyŏngsuk(Kim Misuk), and a coach, Chŏnguk(I Kiyŏng). As a young mother, Kyŏngsuk went missing Ch'owŏn at a family outing. When the young Ch'owŏn was found at a zebra pen, a guilt-ridden Kyŏngsuk vowed to herself that she would stay by his side until he died.

Since the event at the zebra pen, Kyŏngsuk has become overprotective of Ch'owŏn, hoping that Ch'owŏn will forget his abandonment. A few years later, Kyŏngsuk, discovering that Ch'owŏn has a special talent to run great distances, believes running can alleviate his disability and decides to prepare him for a marathon. She hires a gruff former marathon champion, Chŏnguk, who trains Ch'owŏn to race in the marathon.

Meanwhile, the mother's preoccupation with Ch'owŏn causes trouble with all the male characters in the film: her husband, second son, and Ch'owŏn's coach. Followed by these conflicts, another significant incident takes place when she loses Ch'owŏn in a subway station. This event leads Ch'owŏn to confess that he remembers his past abandonment, and that the abandonment was the reason for his obedience to his mother's instructions and wishes. Shocked and withdrawn, she gives up her ambition for Ch'owŏn to be a marathon runner and decides to pull him out of the competition. In spite of her disagreement, Ch'owŏn secretly leaves the house and successfully finishes the race.

1. Undeserved suffering and villainous transformation

Generically, *Marat'on* is a sport film with melodramatic elements. Baker(1998) states that "in sport film, sport per se is not the most important aspect of the film with the emphasis being placed upon the individualized melodramatic element contained within the story"(p. 130).

Very often sport films portray sport as the means through which individuals attempt to overcome their social situation or problem. However, in *Marat'on*, Kyŏngsuk plays a melodramatic figure who fights against values and prejudices that denigrate her disabled son to a second class citizen. Kyŏngsuk is a suffering melodramatic heroine. She has to struggle with those in and outside family about the way that she chooses to raise Ch'owŏn? How should her suffering be understood?

In her discussion of Victorian melodramas, Rossman(2003) writes that pain is gendered mainly due to the distinctive demands that ideology places on men and women. She points out that "suffering conceals the strategic use of masochism as a form of agency"(p. 25). Accordingly, "masochism is a performance staged by the sufferer, designed to convince an audience that the sufferer deserves sympathy"(p. 24). So, under Rossman's premise, is Kyŏngsuk's emotional distress subversive? Do audiences sympathize with her suffering? What does she gain from her suffering? Like most female heroines in melodramas, Kyŏngsuk, the only female main character in the film, is doubtlessly suffering. It is not because she is a helpless victim, but because she does not conform to a typical mother role which caters to all of the family's needs as a caretaker. In studying Korean nondisabled mothers who raise children with developmental disabilities, Oh and Lee(2009) reveal that these mothers experience a high level of caregiver burden due to increased disability-related costs, maternal factors, and less social/familial support(p. 149). Despite the fact that Kyŏngsuk's suffering derives from the problems inherent in the system of patriarchal family and society(e.g., women having the burden of responsibility for child care), this film does not provide much space to critically engage with or deconstruct her suffering. As she transforms, she begins to function more as a villain, and audiences are invited to ignore the social dimensions of her suffering.

Up to the midway point in the film, Kyŏngsuk is portrayed as a woman who witnesses and fights against social prejudices and discrimination against disabled people or at least negotiates Korea's compulsory ablebodied system anchored in the patriarchal family and society. Whenever Ch'owŏn is put at a disadvantage, her suffering is validated: she acts out and critiques social intolerance towards disabled people. But after the midpoint of the film, with her subversive agency and voice suppressed and

usurped by several male characters, including Ch'owŏn, Kyŏngsuk degenerates into a monstrous mother who prevents Ch'owŏn from crossing over into the manhood. In the narrative, she is not given agency or a certain amount of authority with respect to her suffering. Rossman's premise does not apply to Kyŏngsuk's suffering: hers is not politically subversive and does not elicit approvals from audiences, either. All she gains from the suffering is a pathological obsession with her own son. Such depoliticized suffering is mainly due to the male bonding that Chŏnguk and Ch'owŏn build up as the narrative proceeds. Representations of male bonds rationalize their emotional torturing of Kyŏngsuk.

2. Male bonding and aggression against women

Homosociality refers to non-sexual attraction for members of one's own sex(Lipman-Blumen, 1976). Bird(1996) adds that homosociality encourages clear distinctions between hegemonic masculinities and non-hegemonic masculinities by means of the segregation of social groups(p.121). In *Marat'on*, all the male characters, including Ch'owŏn, directly or indirectly participate in the misogynistic acts directed at Kyŏngsuk or other women. Though such abusive acts may not involve explicit physical violence, they are serious enough to transforms Kyŏngsuk into a domineering woman in the narrative and, thus, to delegitimize her social injuries. As Atkinson and Calafell(2009) points out, the gray area of hegemonic masculinity works to shield these males from punishments and allows them to safely hide their misogynistic attitudes and practices. The gray area is in support of the film's narrative strategy and stylization. It is designed to underscore her maternal guilt at the abandonment and her pathological obsession with her disabled son, while it maximizes Ch'owŏn's innocence and vulnerability to conceal his hostility towards women.

In the film's initial abandonment sequence, Kyŏngsuk is constructed as selfish and cold, instead of a young mother of a disabled child, struggling without any familial or social support. In the sequence, we see Kyŏngsuk vacantly sitting, barely holding Ch'owŏn's hands in a long shot with passers-by foregrounded on the screen. The camera cuts to the close-up

shot of the hands of Ch'owŏn and Kyŏngsuk which are almost separated, and we see Kyŏngsuk shout out, through crowds in a high angle, "Ch'owŏn is missing!" Though passers-by block off what happen between the two, the above-mentioned techniques would leave audiences a feeling that she deliberately abandoned him. At this point, Kyŏngsuk does not know that Ch'owŏn has been aware of his abandonment.

With Ch'owŏn's real father, Hŭigŭn, marginalized in the narrative, Chŏnguk, a bitter and washed-up former marathon champion, assumes, or is made to assume, the role of surrogate father and mentor, guiding Ch'owŏn into manhood. He is obligated to teach a physical education class at Ch'owŏn's special school as community service. Nothing more than a lazy drunk, he eventually gives in to the mother's continual pleading and becomes Ch'owŏn's private coach. Expectedly, he begins to ignore and takes advantage of Ch'owŏn during the initial part of the whole training. As part of the special training, Chŏnguk takes Ch'owŏn to highly masculinized places—horse-race track, bar, and public spa—so that Ch'owŏn may get a glimpse of the rugged manhood. Using feminist film studies criticism, Lee(2006) comments that the spa scene is very important in that a fictive father/son relationship between Chŏnguk and Ch'owŏn is forged as soon as they confirm their phallus in the spa(p. 301). In order to strengthen their homosocial bonding, the film, employing Ch'owŏn's innocence and genuine purity(very often associated with cognitive disability) attempts to humanize Chŏnguk to fit in with the surrogate father role. In one scene, Ch'owŏn's preoccupation with running is so strong that he accidentally runs 100 laps around a soccer field when Chŏnguk tells him to do that without literally meaning it.

Feeling guilty that Ch'owŏn is tired and grabbing his heart, Chŏnguk asks him if his heart is hurting. Ch'owŏn suddenly takes Chŏnguk's hand to his heart and lets him feel the heart pounding. In a reverse angle shot exchange, each shares meaningful stares. In another scene in which Chŏnguk trains Ch'owŏn for the race, they respond to each other by running side by side in a slow motion as if ritualizing and solemnizing their male bonding. They become inseparable with their faces overlapping on the screen. Finally, being tired, they lie on the grass together, Ch'owŏn says, "my heart is pounding and I like it" and passes a water bottle to Chŏnguk.

This film also capitalizes on a buddy film genre where the central plot involves two adult men engaging in an exploration of friendship. It has been argued that the emergence of this film genre is a response to deny the destablizing effects that 1970's feminist activism brought about and to shore up the institution of homosociality itself(Gates, 2004). The resulting effect of adopting the formula in this film is to expand hegemonic masculinity to marginalize female characters and to collapse "intermasculine differences(between disabled boy and nondisabled adult) by effecting an uncomfortable sameness, a transgression of boundaries between self and other, inside and outside, and legitimate and illicit"(Fuchs, 1993, p. 194). The film attempts at avoiding homosexual anxieties evoked by representation of the homosocial bond between Ch'owŏn and Chŏnguk. More concretely, two male characters not only exchange the meaningful looks, but also homoerotic physical contacts.

However, the film minimizes the anxieties associated with homosexuality, channeling that energy into symbiotic "growth" of both characters and emphasizing the "healing" power of their friendship: Ch'owŏn's ability to cure a symbolically "impaired" Chŏnguk character and Chŏnguk's capability to initiate Ch'owŏn's latent masculinity. Moved by Ch'owŏn's innocence and enthusiasm, Chŏnguk gradually sees promise in Ch'owŏn, not just as an athlete, but as a human being. Not to mention, Chŏnguk himself is humanized. In return, he gives Ch'owŏn the skills he needs to win the race. By showing men who are able to express their emotions without being feminized, the buddy films often "valorize a model of masculinity that celebrates both strength and intimacy", and it shows relationships where "male bonding can suggest an erotic charge without the associated anxiety such relationships often trigger within the Hollywood action genre"(Sandell, 1999, p. 24).

Later on, Ch'owŏn and Chŏnguk, the coach, cement their homo-social bonding, which undermines Ch'owŏn's affinity with Kyŏngsuk. As hegemonic masculinity achieves its boundaries through the articulation of out-groups(Whitehead & Barrett 2001), there is no room left for Kyŏngsuk in the male bonding. Two scenes highlight Kyŏngsuk's marginalization in the male bonding. In one scene, Kyŏngsuk, with her back to the camera, uneasily observes Ch'owŏn and Chŏnguk warm up in a field in the distance

and then the camera cuts to the full shot of Kyŏngsuk taken from behind as she walks away, lonely. Feeling uncomfortable with Chŏnguk's close relationship with Ch'owŏn, Kyŏngsuk dismisses him after all. In another scene where she announces his dismissal, Chŏnguk tells her that the marathon ambition is not for her son's benefit but her own. His critique not only exacerbates her inner struggle about her raising Ch'owŏn, but ensures audiences that she is obsessed with her own son. While Kyŏngsuk and Chŏnguk argue, Ch'owŏn's father, Hŭigŭn, observes them in a distance and does not intervene in the dispute. It signifies that he is unable to help guide Ch'owŏn into the manhood.

Hŭigŭn's inability and Chŏnguk's disappearance to train Ch'owŏn make Ch'owŏn's status vulnerable because he is in Kyŏngsuk's hands. At this point, she is transformed into a domineering woman. Kyŏngsuk's transformation into such a woman is supported by the camerawork. Without Chŏnguk, Kyŏngsuk pushes Ch'owŏn too much hard and has him compete for the full marathon race. However, he has to quit in the middle of the race since he does not know how to pace himself. Despite the fact that Ch'owŏn earns a medal for participating, when he clamors for the medal, she lies to him that the medal is reserved for winners only. On screen, a hostile foreground Kyŏngsuk, comes between Ch'owŏn and audiences and then the camera cuts to the close-up shot of Kyŏngsuk's hands hiding the medal behind her back. Such photographic arrangement works to make audiences feel insecure or isolated because domineering Kyŏngsuk blocks off the audiences' view of Ch'owŏn(the character that audiences likely identify with), and audiences naturalize her as an obsessive mother. Kyŏngsuk's suffering as a political/cultural embodiment is severely damaged by the film's treatment of her guilt at having abandoned Ch'owŏn as well as overlooked other family members.

Since Ch'owŏn's abandonment and recovery in a zebra pen, he has been preoccupied with anything relating to zebras. The zebra foretells his soon-to-be revived masculinity as well as Kyŏngsuk's secret. His fixation on a zebra creates conflicts with others, mostly women. For example, Ch'owŏn touches a woman's zebra-striped handbag and another woman's mini-skirt with a zebra pattern, but the narrative highlights his vulnerability and innocence, the presumed medical and stereotypical traits often

associated with autistic people. These examples represent his hostility towards women. A handbag and a mini-skirt, typical female possessions, are perceived as fetishized objects of male gaze. He develops the skills to be manly even while his masculinity is restrained by his overbearing mother.

The accidents caused by such preoccupation also serve to step up the tension between Ch'owŏn and Kyŏngsuk. In a subway station, while Kyŏngsuk is not attending to him, Ch'owŏn goes down to the platform. He spots a woman wearing a skirt with a zebra pattern and touches it. Kyŏngsuk, desperately searching for him, finds him just in time to see him beaten up by the woman's boyfriend. She holds Ch'owŏn in her arms for protection. Unexpectedly, Ch'owŏn shakes off her arms, bloodied and in pain, and shouts out, "This boy[himself] is a defective[disabled] child," which is Kyŏngsuk's routine language for explaining her son's abnormal behaviors to other people. In addition, Ch'owŏn reveals directly to his mother that he remembers his childhood abandonment. Subsequently, a flashback leads to the past incident in which audiences see Kyŏngsuk vacantly let go of Ch'owŏn's hand in a long shot. The flashback reconfirms her abandonment of Ch'owŏn and underscores her intentionality. His revelation leaves her physically and emotionally vulnerable and hospitalized. By practically removing his "domineering mother" in the narrative, Ch'owŏn finally occupies space in the whole frame and acts like a person with agency. He becomes a patriarchal successor.

3. Supercrip and illusive fantasy

Marat'on follows a typical mythic narrative of a hero cast out by family and/or society and later redeemed and reconstituted as masculine(Frank, 1993) and clearly relies on the trope of the "supercrip," the term popularized by Shapiro(1993)to describe the over-representation of high-achieving disabled people whose achievements are almost impossible for others to live up to. The film's dependence on supercrip along with mythic trajectory works to make anxious masculinity invisible since Ch'owŏn's embodied disability is sutured into normative discourses of physical prowess, courage, hard work, and perseverance.

The prevalence of the "supercrip" trope in the media, is critiqued by the disability community because it fosters "unrealistic expectations about what people with disabilities can achieve, what they should be able to achieve, if only they tried hard enough"(Berger, 2008, p. 648). This trope ignores "the material realities and discrimination faced by disabled people"(Meeuf, 2009, p. 89). The supercrip mystique may have some negative impacts on the non-disability and disability community alike. Internally, unintended social fissures develop between disabled people and undermine their collective voice and solidarity(Woo, 2012). Externally, it encourages the public to adopt "self-made man" and "blaming-the-victim" ideologies(Ryan 1971) that work against progressive social change and implementation of the social model(Smart, 2001; Woo, 2012). In a word, the supercrip trope erases the disability and its interaction with society, "banishing it to the realm of the invisible, replacing it with raw power and heroic acts of derring-do in a hyper masculine frame"(Alaniz, 2004, p.307).

How is the supercrip trope treated in popular narratives? Jodlowski(2007) states that the supercrip storylines bear a resemblance to a mythic narrative structure in which male protagonists departs from a community, experiences many hardships, and then returns home with knowledge, growth, and empowerment acquired from their journey. In addition, she attributes the mass appeal of the storylines to two representations of mythic male protagonists as wounded storyteller and cyborg. According to her, the wounded storytellers garner the power of their wounds in order to tell their stories, while either physical or metaphoric mechanical body parts function as tools to overcome their struggles.

Similarly, *Marat'on* follows the mythic narrative that a male hero passes the oedipal trajectory of growing to maturity and achieves personal and social identity with a help of his surrogate father figure. Ch'owŏn's journey begins when his autism creates chaos and disorder, and he has to overcome formidable obstacles and moral dilemmas that come with his disability and finally accomplish morality, affirmed by his family and society. In this sense, Ch'owŏn is a wounded storyteller because of his symbolic and material wound, autism. Autism is a source of his power as well as a drive to tell his story, although his authorship is questioned. In terms of the body parts, Jodlowski explains, Ch'owŏn does not have any kind of

mechanical aid to enhance his body functions. Instead, he relies on symbolic and natural aids attached to his body and mind.

To begin with, a zebra serves as a signifier of his masculinity once traumatized by his mother's transgression(abandonment and obsession) and plays a magical role in empowering and remasculizing Ch'owŏn. From its beginning, the film highlights his fascination with a zebra. He recites a text from TV show, *Animal Kingdom*(2004), about how a mother zebra raises her children, "A mother zebra disciplines her children in order to survive in a wild forest in which their natural enemies are crowded." His act of recitation instills masculinity in his mind and foretells his soon-to-be revived masculinity. Also, Ch'owŏn's unmediated legs and gorgeous body shape, signifiers of efficiency and super human ability, are used as a tool to overcome his cognitive disability. In other words, his super-powered legs and body shape are compensatory gifts or powers assumedly resulting from his mental impairment. His supposed naturalness and innocence are depicted as machine-like and his body, especially legs, is a medium which excludes his machineness. Ch'owŏn's unmediated yet machine-like body parts are sanctified by his mother, coach, and even himself who often say, "Ch'owŏn's legs are worth a million dollars and Ch'owŏn's body is outrageous." In addition, his formidable concentration is always embodied by his unmediated legs. In summary, taking a full advantage of his unmediated leg power and zebra amulet he succeeds in instilling masculinity into his mind/body. However, his suffering as disabled, while anesthetized and fetishized, is absorbed into a mythic nature.

Ch'owŏn successfully completes a marathon, in spite of struggling with adverse circumstances during the race. The race is a battlefield on which he abandons his disability(signifying femininity or weakness fostered by his mother) and "inscribes masculinity into his body and mind"(Jodlowski, 2007, p. 5). The film's dependence on supercrip serves to make anxious masculinity invisible, since Ch'owŏn's social suffering as disabled is deeply sutured into normative discourses of physical prowess, courage, hard work, and perseverance.

The completion of the race proves that Ch'owŏn falls into the categories of "fit" body(able, young, and male) and mind(positive, individualistic, determined and goal-oriented), which are considered

standards of normality. With his individualistic goals, masculinity, and ability affirmed, Ch'owŏn seems to be a liberated figure. However, Garland-Thomson(1997) warns that the "visual rhetoric of images of disabled people simultaneously makes disability visually conspicuous while politically and socially erased"(p. 56). In this film, there remains no space for disability as an identity and embodied experience to breathe, as it is suffocated by a socially constructed healthy body and mind enforced upon Ch'owŏn.

Ch'owŏn's newly formed subjectivity(healthy, determined, and masculine) is an illusion, made possible only through his individualized imagination, in addition to his denial of disability. The race sequences that constitute the climax of the film demonstrate how bodies and minds of disabled people are exploited to fabricate the supremacy of ablebodiedness. In this respect, two fantasy sequences that occur during the race are significant in that they reveal the patriarchal tactics in collaboration with the neoliberal logic. The first fantasy reaffirms that the Ch'owŏn's newly achieved subjectivity constantly requires the oppression of others, especially Kyŏngsuk. During the race, Ch'owŏn reaches his physical limitation and falls on the ground. At the moment, a seemingly female hand holding a chocolate cookie comes into the frame. We do not know who she is as her body is outside the frame and she disappears immediately. The audiences are unexpectedly invited into his imagination, hearing Kyŏngsuk's voice and seeing her face covered in haze. The camera cuts to a close-up on his hands holding the cookie. Recuperated by his mother's audio-visual image, Ch'owŏn resumes running with the cookie in his hand. However, upon gaining momentum, he throws it down on the ground. The cookie was used as the mother's reward to discipline the young Ch'owŏn; it also signifies her time and effort put into caring for Ch'owŏn. By implication, he not only separates himself from two paralleled weaknesses, disability and femininity, but removes the potential of alliance-building between disabled people and women.

However, Ch'owŏn's first fantasy inadvertently lays bare the susceptibility of his remasculinized subjectivity. Although his subjectivity may be validated within a family setting, it does not guarantee that the subjectivity is endorsed by the mainstream society filled with prejudices and discrimination against disabled people. In this vein, the second fantasy

effectively eliminates such discomfort by simulating an "ableism" free society in a highly depoliticizing way. In the fantasy, Ch'owŏn abruptly imagines himself running to the cheers of the crowd, including the woman's boyfriend who beat him up. Amid cheers from the crowd, he is running around a swimming pool, baseball stadium, subway station, and store—the public places where he experienced attitudinal and social barriers. Finally, he is running with his favorite animal, a zebra, in the Serengeti, in Africa. These imagined places and people prompt him to run faster and cross the finish line, in under three hours. Ch'owŏn attempts to make an inaccessible society pass as free of any social defects. Siding with the neoliberal logic, which separates individuals from their historical and social contexts, Ch'owŏn denies the brutal social realities faced by disabled people. In this illusive society, disability is an individual or familial problem, not a social one.

Ch'owŏn's social suffering as disabled is overshadowed by the neoliberal ideas of meritocracy that a person will succeed if he or she works hard. As if to prove the validity of this myth, Ch'owŏn becomes the most successful neoliberal subject who faithfully accepts the neoliberal logic, subjugating himself to the patriarchal system without his own critiques and his own forms of subjection. Through disciplining himself, Ch'owŏn takes care of his body, soul, and mind alone and assumes the responsibility for his care, thus largely relieving the nation from its obligation to take care of post-crisis social issues like disability, poverty, and the welfare of the people.

The fantasy sequences may have significant implications for audiences, They reassure the superiority of able-bodiedness. Prior to the sequences, audiences are uncomfortable with a series of disability hate and misogynistic incidents(zebra-related incidents and suffering mother). Audiences may even feel their own complicit with a rigid patriarchal system. However, the fantasy sequences imbued with ability- and neoliberal-oriented tones do not allow audiences to challenge social injustices imposed on disabled people. For them, Ch' owŏn is a mere conformist spectacle which facilities the story of pleasurable escapade and more importantly reassures their statuses as able-bodied and, thereby, relieves them from the burden of forming emotional attachments with Ch' owŏn and his mother. Deflected from the social roots of Ch' owŏn and Kyŏngsuk' s pains and injuries, audiences take cautionary messages from

the film. First, Ch' owŏn must overcome his disability for his personal growth, a manly man. Second, Kyŏngsuk must not stray from her traditional gender role in the family.

IV. Conclusion

By applying the three theoretical concepts to an exploration of *Marat'on*, this paper highlights the process by which Ch'owŏn, a disabled son, is normalized and remasculinized at the expense of his mother and reads the film as part of social project of pacifying patriarchy made anxious by the 1997 economic crisis in Korea, what Jeffords(1989) terms the "remasculinization." In addition, the paper illustrates how such pacification is constituted by neo-Confucianism(rigid gender roles, women's subordination within the family, and family as a core of social well-being), and neoliberal values(independence, self-development, individual responsibility, and competition). Under the radar of the project, progressive elements in the film are turned over to the dominant system. The film actively participate in the oppressive system where Kyŏngsuk is blamed for her intensive mothering and gender role reversal, Ch'owŏn is enforced to be normalized with the familiar trope of "supercrip," and male aggression against females is condoned. As a result, the two characters' social suffering as disabled and/or female is individualized and invalidated.

Moreover, situated in the male crisis brought on by the Korean economic turmoil, the film also discloses neo-Confucian patriarchy's attempt at maintaining its privileged status and its complicity with the neoliberalism. Ablebodiedness operates in this ambitious project complicit with neoliberalism and completes the project of remasculinization by effectively containing and eliminating the difference perceived as non-conformist(female and disabled) and generating the sameness perceived as conformist(male, fit body, mind, and society). The film uses fantasy sequences as an epitome of ablebodiedness to step up the project and give birth to a neoliberal mode of subject. The collusive alliance between neoliberalism and patriarchal

masculinity is critical in covering up the real victims of the crisis, minority groups, and suffocating their voices. In addition, in order for neoliberalism and patriarchy to be absolved of their social responsibility and thus to secure their interest, "the social safety net is reduced to bare minimum in favor of a system that emphasizes personal responsibility"(Harvey, 2005, p. 76). The alliance has a significant implication for historically disenfranchised groups, including disabled people. Since, within the neoliberal framework, individuals should be in charge of finding their own solutions to their lack of health care, education, and social security, disadvantaged groups who hardly receive social support often fail, only to find themselves blamed and marginalized in the illusive neoliberal logic. Even if some of the disadvantaged group members successfully manage such requirements, they are unlikely able to avoid carrying the burden of engaging in endless self-assessment and self-development to stay relevant to the fast-changing free market. In the mean time, male and capitalist dominant positions are redefined and bolstered and disadvantaged groups are stigmatized as social drains, relegated to the periphery.

The successful alliance between the two relies heavily on the depoliticization of disability. In the process, disabled people are reduced to a visual metaphor to signify the perceived marginalization of ablebodied people and a living means of proving able-bodied supremacy. The agency and voices of the groups, especially disabled people, are suppressed and usurped, only to find themselves as an imaginary signifier of perceived (nondisabled)male suffering partly caused by the economic crisis. The circumstances of the less-privileged are problematically read as evidence of the privileged male suffering. In other words, several disabled characters in the recent disability-themed films are appropriated for remasculinization purposes.

One who overcomes disability is recognized as a better person, someone who is respected and appreciated as well-rooted and competitive in the wake of the crisis. Ability is considered to be a tool for social inclusion in a broad sense: a conduit for economic and social advancement. In reality, to disabled people, proving ability is not a ticket to the full inclusion into the neoliberal/remasculinized terrain because disability as an individual and group identity must be contained or removed to achieve the

goals demanded by remascilinized and neoliberal projects. The neoliberal turn caused by the economic turmoil aggravates an already present ableist and misogynistic tendency in Korean culture. Furthermore, as *Marat'on* intensely demonstrates, it delegitimizes disability as a political identity and embodied experience, and prevents coalition-building between traditionally marginalized groups, including disabled people and women. By challenging the privileging of ability and masculinity, we must recognize and penetrate the complex dynamics of such tactful alliance between male patriarchy and neoliberalism.

This paper calls for more research and comprehensive understandings of cultural representation of disability. First, as this paper relies substantially on textual determinism, it overlooks the meaning-making process between audiences and the film. Much of the textual investigation of representations of disability in film could be enriched by more critical dialogue with qualitative audience research. Second, in future research, a film should be more thoroughly examined, according to film grammar, genre, and political/social/cultural contexts. Even though this paper analyzed the film, with all the above criteria considered, it may lack more intensive and extensive exploration of the criteria. Whether separately or not, future research should incorporate more films and different genres, while situating them within more complicated contexts.

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정치적 대리인과 방패막이로서의 장애: 한국영화 <말아톤>(2005)에 재현된 “남성의 위기”

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<요 약>

본 연구는 정윤철 감독의 영화 <말아톤>(2005)에 나타난 장애 재현 분석을 통하여 정치적 아이덴터티와 체화된 경험으로써의 장애가 어떠한 방식으로 가부장제와 신자유주의로 동화·흡수 되는지 밝히고자 한다. 이를 위해 세 가지 전략을 취할 것이다. 첫째, 영화 <말아톤>은 IMF 경제위기라는 시대적 상황으로 문맥화되어 IMF 사태가 초래한 “남성성의 위기”와 연계될 것이다. 둘째, <말아톤>은 세 가지 이론(강제적 비장애성, 헤게모니적 남성성, 서술보정장치)을 사용하여 비평적으로 문제화될 것이다. 셋째, <말아톤>은 서사 구조, 캐릭터 분석, 장르와 영화기법을 고려하며 분석될 것이다. 본 연구에서 세 가지 결과가 도출되었다. 첫째, <말아톤>은 우리 사회에 만연하는 장애와 젠더에 관한 헤게모니적 사고와 관행을 반영·강화·재생산한다. 지배 이데올로기인 가부장제와 신자유주의의 연합은 영화 속에서 발달장애 자녀를 둔 어머니(경숙)를 상징적으로 처벌하고, 스테레오타입화된 슈퍼장애인 이미지를 차용하여 발달장애 아들(초원)을 재남성화 함으로써, 공고해진다. 둘째, 재현 전략으로써의 장애는 재남성화와 신자유주의화의 연합을 구체화하는 수단이 된다. 초원의 발달장애는 가부장제와 신자유주의의 연합 자체와 폭력성을 감추고 촉진시키는 역할을 하며 재남성화된 신자유주의적 주체성을 전파하는 지점이 된다. 본 연구의 결론은 다음과 같다. 첫째, <말아톤>에서 장애는 IMF 경제 위기로 초래된 “남성성 위기”를 표상하는, 즉 비장애인 남성의 심리적 불안과 체화된 고통을 내포하는, 상징적 메타포인 동시에 재남성화된 주체성 확립을 위해 반드시 극복되어야 할 대상으로 격하된다. 둘째, 이러한 장애극복은 여성에 대한 억압을 요구하고, 억압을 통한 여성의 종속화는 장애극복을 전제로 한 남성성 회복의 중요한 근거 및 증거가 된다. 마지막으로, 메타포를 통한 장애의 비정치화는 남성 장애인(아들)이 남성과 비장애 중심 지배이데올로기의 관행을 답습하여 같은 소수자인 여성(어머니)을 억압하는 형태로 나타난다. 그 결과 소수자들의 연대의식 수립은 어려워지고 지배와 종속 관계는 더욱 강화된다.

주제어 : 장애학, 장애재현, 말아톤, 남성성 위기. 헤게모니적 남성성, 서술보정장치, 회색지대

논문 접수: 2014. 11. 05 **심사 시작:** 2014. 11. 10 **게재 확정:** 2014. 12. 15