

meri aisala

TRANSLATING
k-공포
horror
TO THE WEST



THE DIFFERENCE IN FILM POSTER DESIGN FOR
SOUTH KOREANS AND AN INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCE

pro gradu

UNIVERSITY OF LAPLAND, FACULTY OF ART AND DESIGN

Title of the pro gradu thesis: Translating K-Horror to the West: The Difference in Film Poster Design For South Koreans and an International Audience

Author: Meri Aisala

Degree program: Graphic Design

Type of the work: Pro Gradu master's thesis

Number of pages: 65

Year of publication: 2018

Cover art & layout: Meri Aisala

SUMMARY

For my pro gradu master's degree, I conducted research on the topic of South Korean horror film posters. The central question of my research is: "How do the visual features of South Korean horror film posters change when they are reconstructed for an international audience?" I compare examples of original Korean horror movie posters to English language versions constructed for an international audience through a mostly American lens. My study method is semiotics and close reading.

Korean horror posters have their own, unique style that emphasizes emotion and interpersonal relationships. International versions of the posters are geared toward an audience from a different visual culture and the poster designs get translated accordingly, but they still maintain aspects of Korean visual style.

KEYWORDS: *K-Horror, melodrama, genre, subgenre, semiotics, poster*

I give a permission the pro gradu thesis to be read in the Library.

목차

CONTENTS

Summary	2
1. Introduction	4
1.1 Research problem and goals	4
1.2 The movie poster	6
1.3 The special features of K-Horror	7
1.3.1 Defining the horror genre	7
1.3.2 The subgenres of K-Horror	8
1.3.3 Melodrama	9
2. Study methods and material	12
2.1 Semiotics	12
2.2 Close reading	18
2.3 Differences in visual culture - South Korea and the West	19
3. Poster analysis and comparison	22
3.1 Posters 1&2: Bunshinsaba	22
3.2 Posters 3&4: Oldboy	27
3.3 Posters 5&6: Thirst	32
3.4. Posters 7&8: I Saw the Devil	38
4. Film as basis for poster examination	43
4.1 The visual world of the film	43
4.2 Movie and poster color palettes	43
4.2.1 Bunshinsaba	44
4.2.2 Oldboy	45
4.2.3 Thirst	46
4.2.4 I Saw the Devil	47
4.3 Comparing the film and its poster designs	48
4.3.1 Bunshinsaba	48
4.3.2 Oldboy	50
4.3.3 Thirst	52
4.3.4 I Saw the Devil	54
5. Conclusion	56
5.1 Findings	56
5.2 Methodological reflection	59
Sources	61
Appendix	66
Attachment 1: Plot synopsis for each movie	66
Attachment 2: Posters	72

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 RESEARCH PROBLEM AND GOALS

I first discovered Asian horror movies in 2008 when I came across a fan website that is specifically devoted to dark and scary films from Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Hong Kong, and various other Asian countries. The first of these movies I watched was *The Red Shoes* (분홍신, *Bunghongshin*, 2005), a South Korean horror movie. This marked the beginning of my obsession with all things Asian horror. In subsequent years, I became a sort of collector, not of physical copies of the films, but of viewing experiences, which I listed in an enormous list of currently over 300 different Asian horror (or similarly themed) movies.

My vast experience as a hobbyist of the film genre gave me the incentive to choose Asian horror movie posters as a subject for study in the field of graphic design. I chose South Korean horror movies specifically because of their almost unanimous, beautiful style. These posters often seem to share a very specific artistic style, including typography, composition, color, contrast, and texture. South Korean posters have their own, instantly recognizable look that I find very visually appealing. Some of this unique style of poster design is lost when the product gets translated for a new, worldwide audience. English language versions of posters for foreign movies often get much more than just a translation of text in their makeovers. Visual elements get switched around and changed to appeal to a different audience.

I did my bachelor's thesis on how the special visual features of South Korean Horror cinema appear within film posters. I defined what these cinematic features are and what they look like in poster form. In this research, I return to the subject and add a new layer of comparison to international poster advertising. I felt that writing my thesis in English would be fitting for the subject because I am examining products imported to an English-speaking audience.

I am conducting my research within the field of semiotics, using close reading as my method. Given the subject matter, I must also use some methods of cultural and cross-cultural studies. The authors of cultural studies take all sorts of social constructions of visual representation into account and consider the practices of representation to be inseparable from their culture of origin. (Lister & Wells 2001, p. 61)

South Korean horror is widely known by the fans as "K-Horror". I will be using this term for clarity throughout my thesis to refer to films that fall under the umbrella of

the genre. It should also be noted that whenever the term “Korea” is used, it is meant to refer to South Korea (officially the Republic of Korea), not North-Korea (officially the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea). I will also be using the terms “West/Western” and “Anglo-Western” interchangeably to refer to English-speaking areas and cultures, most notably the United States, Europe and other mostly developed nations to which these posters could spread.

In my examination of the subject matter of the films, I frequently use the terms *protagonist* and *antagonist*. For clarification, *protagonist* refers to the main character of the story. This character is most commonly considered the “good guy” of the story, but this is not always the case. The *antagonist* is the character who opposes the protagonist and goes against them, usually wanting to defeat them or see them fail. This character also does not necessarily need to be “bad,” even if they are usually presented that way¹. The main reason these archetypes are present in almost all stories is the juxtaposition of motives that creates conflict between opposing characters whose interactions create tension in the story.

I aim to determine how the visual features of South Korean horror film posters change when they are reconstructed for an international audience. I will look at a South Korean poster for a film, analyze it, look at an international poster for the same film, analyze that, and compare the two to each other. I will repeat this process for three other pairs of posters and compare aspects of all these posters to each other to discover similarities and differences in their visual expression.

I emphasize melodrama as a central quality in both the films and their posters. Melodramatic elements are apparent in the emotions, interpersonal relationships, and tensions between the movie characters as well as the observers. I am interested in how these features translate from the screen into the design components of the posters and whether the effect remains similar when the target audience is changed.

I chose four pairs of posters to analyze and compare to each other. The posters I picked are for the following films:

- 분신사바 (*Bunshinsaba*) / (*Bunshinsaba: Ouija Board / Witchboard*) (2004) Dir. Ahn Byung-ki
- 올드보이 (*Oldeuboi*) / *Oldboy* (2003) Dir. Park Chan-Wook
- 박쥐 (*Bakjwi*) / *Thirst* (2009) Dir. Park Chan-Wook
- 악마를 보았다 (*Akmareul Boattda*) / *I Saw the Devil* (2010) Dir. Kim Jee-Woon

These posters were mainly chosen based on the popularity of the films, the availability of suitable posters, and my own familiarity with the movies. I felt that four pairs of posters would be the minimum amount on the basis of which to establish patterns in the visual choices made to promote South Korean movies.

The first three of these films represent the golden era of K-Horror in the early 2000s. Korean horror saw a rise in popularity in 2002 when *Phone* (폰, Pon) by director Ahn Byung-ki was released and many more fan favorites were produced in the following

¹ <http://learn.lexiconic.net/characters.htm>

years. (Peirse & Martin 2013, p. 9) In fact, Korean cinema experienced a sort of rebirth between the 1980s and the mid-2000s. This era is known as “New Korean Cinema,” which was preceded by another reconfiguration of national filming known as the “Korean New Wave.” (Paquet 2009, p. 3) The film *I Saw the Devil* was made slightly later but earned its place in the K-Horror hall of fame as one of the most solid representations of the revenge film genre since *Oldboy*, following in the tradition established somewhere in the New Korean Cinema. I have included a comprehensive plot synopsis of each movie in the attachments because plot and character details are important to my analysis.

I did my best to pick posters that are most widely used to represent these films in South Korea and internationally. Because these movies are widely popular, in some cases it's not clear which version of the posters is the best known, but I did my best to pick the most widely used ones. I also had to choose posters based on what was available for me in print quality. I was unable to find large enough files for many of the English versions of posters I was considering for analysis. This is, of course, because these posters are often used primarily as small thumbnails for internet publication. I also did not want to pick posters that used the same base photo for both versions. This research is specifically focused on instances in which the international version was made different in some significant way for English-speaking audiences.

My analysis abilities are limited by my non-Korean cultural background and the fact that I do not personally know the language at all. Korean is written in a phonetic alphabet called *Hangul*, which consists of syllables that are put together into a form that can fit inside a square. (Eliot & Rose 2009, p. 118) My analysis of the posters will also be biased by my familiarity with the films. Having seen the movies, I cannot go into poster examination blindly; I will attach value from the contents of the films into each poster. I feel that this does not hinder my research because I will also be comparing the visual worlds of the posters directly to the movies in a later chapter.

1.2 THE MOVIE POSTER

A poster is a printed product that is used to convey some particular message. Usually, a poster is considered to be an advertisement for some product, event, idea, etc. A movie poster's primary task is to advertise a film. To understand an advertisement, we must adopt the identity of a consumer who desires the advertised product, which in this case, is essentially a story and an emotional and visual experience. (Chandler 2007, p. 187)

A poster is commonly designed and published before the publication of the film. The poster typically features an image that is somehow related to the film, its title, and the date of publication. Some names of the people involved in making the movie and short text excerpts are also common. There are no specific rules though, and elements can be used or discarded from posters whichever way the advertisers deem appropriate.

Best of Graphics: Poster (1993, p. 3) says that the elements of a poster are directly linked to the circumstances in which the poster is seen by people. If the audience is moving past the poster in a hurry, then the message must be clear and simple, focusing on the essentials. The poster achieves its impact mainly through its visual qualities. Condensed and minimized text usually has a supporting and strengthening function.

A horror movie poster seeks to create an advertising image for the movie and specifically bring forth the atmosphere of the film. The poster should inform the viewer that the movie in question is a horror movie. The impression of genre is created using pictures, color, text, and font. It is up to the designer to decide whether they want to be completely tied to the visual style and imagery of the film itself or to create a new, separate representation of the film, sending out related but not identical messages. (King 2003, p. 6)

The global poster has seen many changes in the 21st century, the most notable of which is a result of the rise of the internet. This new transcultural network has made it possible for designers and publishers alike to transfer images from one faraway country to another in the blink of an eye. (Guffey 2015, p. 231) The international audience mostly sees Korean movie posters spreading through the internet. Many South Korean movies have been given English language posters that gain more audiences for the films globally. The original Korean language posters are not likely to be seen in print outside South Korea. The international versions of the posters appeal to a different audiences than the originals, and therefore their visual appearances differ slightly from them.

1.3 THE SPECIAL FEATURES OF K-HORROR

1.3.1 DEFINING THE HORROR GENRE

When speaking of movie posters, one must take into account the films they represent. The whole purpose of a movie poster is to be an effective advertisement for its film. The movie is the main product and the poster exists as a complementary signifier of it.

The idea of genre in movies was introduced to Anglo-Saxon film criticism comparatively recently, in the mid-60s and early 70s. (Cook 1985, p. 58) The concept of “genre” is an attempt to compartmentalize films into little groups of movies with similar themes, visuals and/or subject matter. Genres were created because movies needed to be standardized and differentiated from each other, and the old generic forms were not enough to do that properly. (Cook 1985, p. 58) Rick Altman (1999, p. 14) defines genre as a complicated concept that works as a blueprint, structure, categorization, and a contract for the style and contents of a film.

The horror genre has its beginnings in 19th century Gothic literature, which inspired the old silent era movie monsters to be brought to life on screen. It took the genre less than a century to become one of the most dominant within the film industry. (Magistrale 2005, p. xi) The horror movie genre is now defined by recurring elements, like undead, bloody violence, and/or monsters, as well as its goal to frighten and revolt the audience. (Kawin 2012, p. 4)

Horror films have largely evolved from old black and white monster flicks and become highly complex, psychologically disturbing movies. Alongside the more complex and subtle subgenre of psychological horror, gory slashers and other movies that rely on jump scares and shocking imagery still retain their popularity. There are different methods of scaring an audience, and psychological horror seeks to do so by using elements that cause distress in the viewer by manipulating their subconscious, giving

them an impression of something not being quite right.

South Korean horror cinema has cultural qualities that differ from the Hollywood model that has become the norm for most Western people. In fact, connoisseurs of the strictly outlined Hollywood model of the horror genre don't know what to make of Korean movies and their differing view of what constitutes a "genre film." (Rose 2013)

Two of my four examples (*Oldboy* and *I Saw the Devil*) would not be primarily classified as horror, but rather wind up among other horror movies because of their horrifying and violent themes and imagery that exceed the expectations for a thriller.

1.3.2 THE SUBGENRES OF K-HORROR

The South Korean film has its own unique worldview that takes root deep in the country's rich cultural heritage. Andy Richards (2010, p. 93) calls the new wave of K-Horror unique in its elastic interpretation of the confines of genre. In this context, the term *horror film* functions as a loose umbrella term for many different forms of darkly-inclined movies that mix and match features from a multitude of different film categories. While Korean cinema has its roots in South Korea's history and culture, the resurgence of Korea's film industry in the 1990s is largely thanks to influence from Hollywood action-thrillers. The modern Korean film is a mixture of these cinematic cultures and, thus, also has appeal for Western audiences.

K-Horror is a parent to several subgenres, all of which have a strong basis in South Korean culture and folklore. I apply the term *horror film* quite loosely to include darkly-themed movies that showcase elements of horror, whether they are supernatural in nature or realistic. The revenge film, which is a uniquely-typical theme of several South Korean movies, is also counted among other horror subgenres by my definition. This type of film may not be considered to be horror by many, but I do because of their general dark mood, drama, and typically gratuitous violence. These films, while action-filled and bloody, are focused on conveying complex human emotions than the typical action movies of the West from which they draw influence. The violence in these films exists to accentuate the emotions of the story and characters.

There are a few typical subgenres of K-Horror. The revenge film (whether it is supernatural in nature or not) usually deals with an individual who devotes their life to seeking revenge for some gross wrongdoing they have suffered. This has been a popular narrative method in Korea since the 1960s. This type of movie is represented in my research in its purest form by *Oldboy* and *I Saw the Devil* as well as in its supernatural variety by *Bunshinsaba*.

The Korean giant monster movie, imitating the legacy of Japan's *Godzilla* from 1954 (Peirse & Martin 2013, p. 5), also came into the scene in the 1960's. Other types of monsters are not very common in modern Korean cinema. *Thirst* is a weird anomaly in the hall of fame of modern Korean horror because it focuses on a very Western-seeming vampire theme. *Thirst* is a perfect marriage between South Korean movie traditions and American influence.

High school horror became a hallmark in the 2000s. This type of movie concentrates more on themes of grief than fear. High schools have become popular settings in numerous genres of South Korean cinema. (Choi 2010, p. 21) High school functions

as a central environment for submission, anxiety, and romance. South Korean society places a great deal of pressure on its students in an endeavor to reach an increasingly high status as a highly educated nation. South Korea has topped many lists for having the best education systems and highest literacy and mathematics skills in the past². (Shepherd 2010)

The commonly used high-pressure education system of ranking all students against each other and publicly displaying test results has inspired many films that explore the negative effects of this system on the mind. These psychological issues sometimes manifest as supernatural entities in such films. *Bunshinsaba* is a prime example of this type of film, featuring a cast of high school girls, teachers, and the vengeful ghost of a student.

Peirse and Martin (2013, p. 2) talk about different phenomena within supernatural-themed K-Horror movies. These can include the female *gumiho* or nine-tailed fox, or *wonhon*, a female ghost returning from beyond the grave seeking justice for wrongful suffering. *Bunshinsaba* is a very typical modern example of a *wonhon*-themed film. Peirse and Martin (2013, p. 1) write: "The film narratives themselves are revealing; often preoccupied with *han* (a sense of agonizing grief at unfair suffering) and embedded in melodramatic plots – the single genre which underpins nearly all filmic moments of horror."

According to Peirse and Martin in *Korean Horror Cinema*, melodrama is a primary narrative form in South Korean film culture. (Peirse & Martin 2013, p. 5) Melodrama is present in all films produced in the country, regardless of genre. It is because of this overpowering omnipresence of melodrama, that genre classification is looser in Korean movies than in typical Hollywood films.

In Hollywood, a horror movie's primary focus is to scare the viewer, while Korean horror films can deal with more complex themes and are not necessarily as focused on traditional scariness. The main point of a Korean film with horror elements is to explore the inner turmoil of the characters. The reason I included movies that are often classified as action/thriller movies in this research is that these films deal with horrific and deeply unsettling situations in ways that cut deep into the viewer. Many K-Horror films make the viewer think about and solve parts of the plot in their own minds. Not everything is usually explained outright, and it is up to the viewer to read the plot to fully understand the implications of what is happening.

1.3.3 MELODRAMA

Melodrama is a primary feature both in the films and the posters that represent them. Because melodrama is important as a tool of storytelling in Korea, it should be highlighted in posters that attempt to get across the atmosphere of the film to the viewer. Melodrama is apparent in the emotions of the characters (as well as the viewers) and the relationships and tensions between the characters.

John Mercer (2004, p. 2) tells us that defining the genre of melodrama has been difficult since the term's inception in the 1970s and that there is still no single definition of what exactly melodrama is. Melodrama thusly remains an ambiguous term that categorizes

2 <http://www.master-and-more.eu/en/news-detail/news/top-40-education-systems-in-the-world/>

movies from many different genres. There has been some controversy over whether horror belongs to the confines of melodrama. According to Mercer, melodrama is not usually thought of as a genre in itself, but rather a type of movie that has also been called “a woman’s film.” (Mercer 2004, p. 35) While Western and gangster films have traditionally been geared toward men, displaying typically masculine forms of conflict and emotion, melodrama is more familiar to women, with its common issues of pent-up emotions, bitterness and disillusion. (Mulvey 1989, p. 39)

In his book, Mercer recites melodrama researcher Steve Neale’s definition of the main components of melodrama as such:

- 1) conflict of good and evil
- 2) eventual triumph of good over evil
- 3) hero, heroine and villain as principal types
- 4) demonstrative and hyperbolic aesthetic
- 5) episodic, formulaic and action-packed plots with fate, coincidence and chance playing a major role
- 6) ‘situations’ forming moments of dramatic revelation or display

(Mercer 2004, p. 30)

Neale asserts that these features can commonly be discovered within the concept of melodrama in the film industry that is used to describe gangster films, Westerns, as well as horror and war movies. (Mercer 2004, p. 6) The Cinema Book, edited by Pam Cook confirms that there is some argument over whether melodrama is better considered as an expressive code rather than a genre. (Cook 1985, p. 74) Melodrama can be classified as many things: a style, a mode, or even a sensibility. (Mercer 2004, p. 37)

The more fleshed-out and defined genre of tragedy seems similar to melodrama because of its themes and focus on emotion, but tragedy and melodrama are not one and the same. “Significantly, discussions of the difference between melodrama and tragedy specify that while the tragic hero is conscious of his fate and torn between conflicting forces, characters caught in the world of melodrama are not allowed transcendent awareness or knowledge.” (Mulvey 1981, p. 41) The tragic revelation that things were not quite as they seemed all along is a common feature in melodramatic stories.

While the basis of much of the research on melodrama has been done in the context of American and European cinema, many of the principles do not apply in quite the same way in Asia. Because of the existing cultural differences between the Anglo-Western and East Asian viewpoints, melodrama has taken on a different, culturally specific form in Asian countries. (Stewart 2014, p. 136)

In the South Korean film industry, melodrama has a special position, unlike that in the Hollywood tradition. Alison Peirse and Daniel Martin attribute most South Korean cinemato fall under the melodrama, regardless of genre. This is mostly thanks to the Japanese theater tradition of *shinpa*, which found its way into Korea during the colonial period. A common feature of the *shinpa* tradition is the telling of tragic stories about romance and female suffering. (Peirse & Martin 2013 p. 5)

The popularity of melodrama in cinema was further popularized in the golden age of

postwar Korean cinema. The effects of the Korean War (1950-1953) were felt deeply in the movement of the South Korean golden age of melodrama, which spanned from 1955 to 1972. (McHugh & Abelman 2005, p. 2) The movies from this era worked well to transform political, economic, and cultural conflicts of the time into personal narratives. (McHugh & Abelman 2005, p. 4) This narrative model has maintained such a stronghold in Korea that it has found its way all the way to the world of horror. (Peirse & Martin 2013, p. 5) American film researchers, like Steve Neale, also list horror as one of the genres that can be described as melodramatic. (Mercer 2004, p. 30)

Mercer claims that a specifically female point of view is central to melodrama and that 1980s feminists brought the woman's film strongly into the study of melodrama. Female-centric point of view and family melodrama live in both American and Korean melodramatic narratives. (Mercer 2004, p. 90) However, in the 1940s and '50s melodrama was taken to mean male-oriented thrillers, chillers, and action movies. (Mercer 2004, p. 28) At least two of the films I have chosen for my study material (*Oldboy* and *I saw the Devil*) can easily be classified using this outdated understanding of melodrama, despite being melodramatic products of the 21st century.

Because melodrama deals so heavily in emotion, it is a style that is well suited to movies that handle taboos, deep psychological suffering, and fear. The type of fear we see in melodrama is not usually the obvious kind, where the characters fear some particular thing because it poses an obvious, rational threat.

"Melodrama plays up irrational fear, which includes superstition, religion, and neurosis, more than "common sense fear – the fear of slipping on the ice or falling off a cliff. Fear aroused by melodrama is "paranoid." It is the feeling that "all things living and dead are combining to persecute us." (Rice 1961)

The juxtaposition between hero and villain are quite important for a melodrama to work in its traditional sense, even if the concepts of hero and villain have become blurred over time. Eric Bentley cites two emotional appeals of melodrama as being "pity of the hero and fear of the villain." (Rice 1961) In the movies in my material, this appeal still works, even though, for example, the "hero" in *I Saw the Devil* behaves in a violent, irrational manner and causes psychological and bodily harm, and even death to serve his selfish need for revenge. The audience still sides with him and understands his motivation, so he remains the hero of the story, despite his deeply problematic behavior.

2. STUDY METHODS AND MATERIAL

2.1 SEMIOTICS

Semiotics is a form of study that focuses on the meanings in notational systems. The notational systems I study are advertising images (movie posters). These meanings are found by examining the material within the theoretic framework posed by different influencers within the field. These central people have created their own schools of thought within semiotics, and I will go over the most important aspects of the main branches without going too far into the controversies between the different schools of thought.

I study posters as signifiers of cultural phenomena, and semiotic reading of cultural significance and meaning is used as a frame of reference in how I study the poster images and films in question. The culture in which an image is born determines what various icons, indexes, and symbols are meant to refer to, and looking at these from a different cultural point of view causes the meanings to warp into something else based on the viewer's own frame of reference.

Semiotics and close reading are fitting methodologies for looking at culturally-specific choices of visual representation in advertising posters. The cultural message of the poster images is the main object of interest in my analysis. I am interested in how the cultures of the different audiences are expressed in the poster, how they differ from each other, and in which ways they are similar.

“Semiotics as a discipline is simply the analysis of signs or the study of the functioning of sign systems.” (Cobley p. 4) Semiotics is a study of information and how it is communicated either in different mediums, such as text or images. In semiotics, culture is another tool for communication.

Signs are the focal point in semiotic research. Signs are manmade and, therefore, carry meaning within them, which can be interpreted based on the social and cultural understandings associated with the signs. The meaning of signs come from the way they are interpreted in relation to each other rather than just individual signs in isolation. (Chandler 2007, p. 147) The systems within which the signs are organized are codes. These codes and signs make up the foundation of the cultures in which they are used. Therefore, culture is always a significant factor in any semiotic research. (Fiske 1992 p. 61)

Umberto Eco says that in semiotics, all cultural processes are studied as processes of communication. This means that there are underlying systems of signification for each

of the processes. (Eco 1976, p. 8) Every culture has its own frame of reference, which has an impact on the perceived meaning of said communication and creates codes for how images are to be perceived.

Semiotics considers its subject to be a text even when the subject of analysis is an image. Therefore, the term “reader” is preferred to the term “receiver” when referring to the audience of said text. (Fiske 1992, p. 62) I also use the term “viewer” in my analysis for clarity. The reader is an active participant, creating meanings in the text as they read it. The reader is not, however, to see whatever they please in any given image. As proven by how advertising images are carefully calculated to direct the reader through the signifieds of an image, the image is able to guide the reader to a predetermined meaning by means of, often subtle, dispatching. (Barthes 1997, p. 40)

Images are rich resources for semiotic research, despite the study’s primary focus being language. Some people, however, that denounce images as “too weak” to contain meaning like language does, thinking of the image as rudimentary in comparison. (Barthes 1997, p. 32) That can hardly be the case in the same society that has the saying “an image is worth a thousand words.” In our current environment of an endless cacophony of images everywhere, we, as a society, are ever-growing as proficient readers of images, especially those in advertising.

“Semiotics involves the study not only of what we refer to as ‘signs’ in everyday speech, but of anything which ‘stands for’ something else.” (Chandler, 2007. p. 2) Symbols, icons, and indexes are examples of things that have broader meanings and associations than what is present at face value, and are, therefore, used to add meaning to a piece of media. The division of elements of a text or image into icons, indexes, and symbols is central to semiotics and the most fundamental way of interpreting signs. A simple example of a visual symbol is a skull that represents death. A thing becomes a symbol when it has been used in a wide convention in a way that allows it to represent something else. (Fiske 1992, p. 121) A skull represents death because an exposed skull has traditionally always meant that the person or creature it belonged to has died. These associations create meanings, and anything can function as a symbol, including color, light, composition, and direction of gaze. A symbol’s meaning is different from culture to culture, although some (like the skull example) are more universal than others.

Symbols are commonly understood as either cryptic markings in ancient books or vague connections between one thing and another that demand much brain power to work out. Those things are symbols too, but the true definition of a symbol is much simpler than that. A symbol is a sign that has a connection to the object that has been assigned to it. Every word is a symbol of the thing it represents, and every letter is a symbol of the sound to which it corresponds. (Chandler 2007, p. 38) A symbol’s meaning is fundamentally arbitrary or purely conventional and must be agreed upon and learned to be understood. (Chandler 2007, p. 36)

Because of the wide popular use of the term *symbol*, semioticians prefer to use other terms for other kinds of signs to avoid confusion. For example, things that resemble something are often called symbols, when the resemblance actually makes the sign partly iconic. These types of signs can be classified as symbolic icons. (Chandler 2007, p. 38)

An iconic image resembles its subject in some way. An example of this is a photo. There are two levels to iconicity: the abstract-iconic and concrete-iconic. Graphs and

diagrams are abstract-iconic and rely on a similarity of relations while concrete-iconic forms rely on the similarities between and among properties. (Stathi 2014, p. 140) The resemblance is to be recognizable in how the signifier looks, sounds, feels, tastes, or smells like the signified. (Chandler 2007, p. 36)

An index is directly connected to its subject, either physically or causally. (Chandler 2007, p. 37) For example, smoke is an index of fire. An index is different than a symbol in that a symbol has no true connection to what it represents. The meanings of symbols have been agreed on by people, whereas an index bears that meaning by direct association. The connection can be intentional or unintentional. (Chandler 2007, p-37)

“Semiotics recognizes the specificity of the audience.” (Tyler, 1992 p. 22 While the author of a text or an image makes deliberate decisions to deliver a specific message, that message will always be interpreted differently by each receiver. Semiotics seeks to find ways to make the interpretation of media structured, scientific and not subjective. The study of semiotics is done to define what parts of images are used for which purpose and how they are to be looked at.

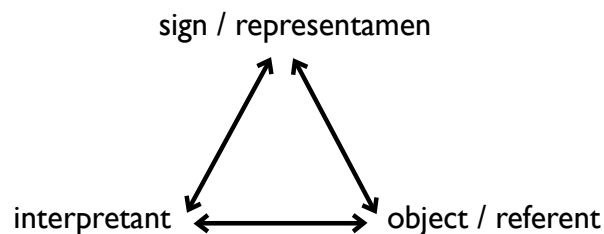


Figure 1: Peirce's model of the sign (Fiske 1992, p. 64) displays the triangle of semiosis.

One of the most significant influencers in semiotics is the American philosopher C. S. Peirce. He created a model (Figure 1) that consists of the sign or representamen, the form which the sign takes, the interpretant, the sense made of the sign, and the object or referent, which is something beyond the sign to which it refers. (Chandler 2007, p. 29) The double pointed arrows stress that each term can only be understood through its relation to the others. (Fiske 1992, p. 64) Peirce calls the interaction between the object and the interpretant semeiosis (or semiosis). (Chandler 2007, p. 30)

Here is an example of the process of semiosis or the decoding of the sign by one of Daniel Chandler's students, Roderick Munday from *Semiotics: the Basics*:

“The first three elements that make up a sign function like a label on an opaque box that contains an object. At first the mere fact that there is a box with a label on it suggests that it contains something, and then when we read the label we discover what that something is. -- The first thing that is noticed (the representamen) is the box and label; this prompts the realization, as well as the knowledge of what the box contains, is provided by the interpretant. ‘Reading the label’ is actually just a metaphor for the process of decoding the sign. The important point to be aware of here is that the object of a sign is always hidden. We cannot actually open

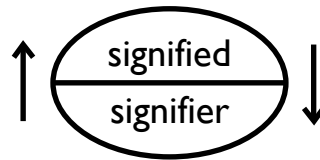


Figure 2: Saussure's model of the sign. (Chandler 2007, p. 14)

the box and inspect it directly. The reason for this is simple: if the object could be known directly, there would be no need of a sign to represent it. We only know about the object from noticing the label and the box and then 'reading the sign' and forming a mental picture of the object in our mind. Therefore the hidden object of a sign is only brought to realization through the interaction of the representamen, the object and the interpretant." (Chandler 2007, p. 31)

The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure is another influential name in the field of semiotics. Saussure's model (figure 2) defines a sign as being composed of a signifier and a signified. The signifier is the form that the sign takes, and the signified is the concept to which it refers. (Chandler 2007, p. 14) In the basic model, the signifier usually refers to a sound pattern, like that of a spoken word. The signifier can also be commonly viewed as a physical object or something else tangible, while the signified could refer to the meaning that people give that particular thing.

An example of a classic Saussurean linguistic model would be the word "movie," which would make the signified concept the contents of said movie. The signifier is usually seen as "standing for" the signified, but experts on Saussurean semiotics argue that there does not necessarily have to be a direct relationship between the signifier and the signified. (Chandler 2007, p. 22) In this way, the model can be seen as supporting the notion that language constructs reality, rather than simply reflecting it. (Chandler 2007, p. 25)

To use an example from within my research, in the reading of my poster images, the actors are seen as signifiers for their respective characters in the movie. The images are constructed to signify things that require the observer to suspend their disbelief to properly interpret the fictional message the posters portray.

A third notable person in semiotics is Roland Barthes, a French literary theorist. He writes more about the specific study of semiotics in images than the other two researchers mentioned previously. Denotation and connotation are two key terms in Barthesian semiotics. In *Rhetoric of the Image* Barthes explains the literal image as denoted and the symbolic image as connoted. (Barthes 1997, p. 37) He argues that, at least in advertising, we never encounter a literal image in a pure state. According to his reasoning, only a photograph can depict a truly denoted image, meaning an image that portrays reality as it truly appears. (Barthes 1997, p. 42) The line between literal reality and connotation is becoming increasingly blurred due to the increasing methods of photo manipulation. In today's society, even photographs are rarely believed to be fully unaltered copies of reality.

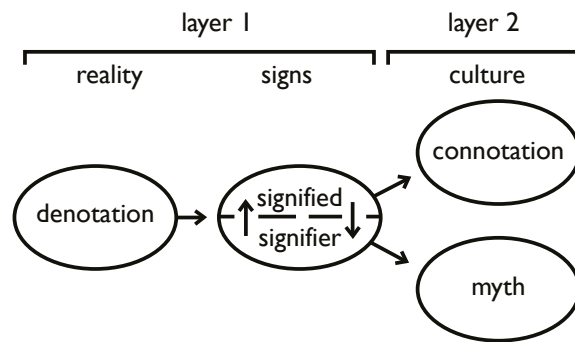


Figure 3: Barthes' model of the two layers of signification. (Fiske 1992, p. 116)

Denotation also refers to the most commonly accepted and most clear meaning of a sign. (Fiske 1992, p. 113) A photo of a person is a denotation of that particular person, while the word "person" denotates a human being.

According to Barthes, an image becomes coded if additional values and meanings are added to it in the way it is presented. (Barthes 1997, p. 43) Coded or symbolic images have connotations to other things. A connotation is something, like a feeling, idea, or association that is invoked in a person in addition to the word's (or in this case, image's) literal or primary meaning¹. Connotation comes from the interaction between signs and their users that imprint their cultural values and personal feelings onto them. (Fiske 1992, p. 113)

"In Barthesian visual semiotics, the key idea is the layering of meaning. The first layer is the layer of denotation, of 'what, or who, is being depicted here?'. The second layer is the layer of connotation, of 'what ideas and values are expressed through what is represented, and through the way in which it is represented?'" (Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 94) On this second layer, the signifier from the denotation layer becomes a connotative sign. (Fiske 1992, p. 114) In his model (Figure 3), Barthes illustrates the two layers of signification. The sign system of the first layer is combined with cultural values in the second layer. (Fiske 1992, p. 116)

If the process for creating the posters I study was picked apart, then for each we would first start with a real-life situation of actors posing in front of the camera, most likely in a studio environment. The connotation is later layered onto the poster image, starting from the photo-taking process and later through photo manipulation and added text. The creators of the posters do not want viewers to look at their posters as pictures of actors performing roles, but as pictures that function as a teaser for a story viewers would be interested in watching.

Barthes defines myths as one of the ways in which the sign functions on the second layer of signification. A myth is a story a culture uses to explain or understand some aspects of reality. (Fiske 1992, p. 116) Barthes includes mythology as a semiological system because a myth is a system of communication and a message, and it is defined by the way the message is delivered, rather than by the message itself. (Barthes 1991, p. 107)

¹ <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/connotation>

While the most primitive myths pertain to life, death, people, and gods, our modern myths are well developed and handle all sorts of issues, such as manhood, womanhood, and everything else under the sun. (Fiske 1992, p. 116) I include the aspect of mythology in my analysis because some of the movies and posters use tropes from well-known mythologies about vampires, ghosts, and even modern serial killers. There is an established lore for each of these things that the viewer needs to be aware of to understand all visual codes used.

Similar to Barthes' term of denotation, the term modality, as defined by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, p. 155), refers to the truth value of an image. While a camera depicts reality in an unbiased way, the person behind it does not. (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996, p. 155) An image's modality can be classified as high or low depending on how truthful and unaltered the image is. This truth value is dictated by the society that examines the image and dependent on what is considered "real" or "true" within the community. (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996, p. 156)

For example, a photo of a ghost can be considered to have a high modality for those who believe in the supernatural and truly believe the photo to be genuine and unaltered, whereas a skeptic would automatically deem the picture to have very low modality and suspect it to be fake, even if evidence of its apparent authenticity was provided. Because of this bias factor, even things like ghosts can be presented as realistic or unrealistic. Use of color can also affect a picture's modality. The more color is reduced, the lower the modality. (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996, p. 159)

Another, less biased, thing to look for in images is salience. Salience means prominence, noticeableness or import². The most noticeable or eye-catching element in a picture holds the highest salience, while things viewers do not notice have very low salience. When analyzing an image, the most salient part is the most important part, but all other elements need to be taken into account too.

Semiotics can also be applied to film. I touch on the films as a comparison point between the posters, so the visual world and plot content of the film is also analyzed in its relation its posters. Film is challenging as a subject for semiotic research and its use in the field has been debated heavily. The filmic language is difficult to define because it does not consist of a finite number of elements organized by a specific syntax. (Stathi 2014, p. 139)

Watching a film requires an affective and perceptual participation on the part of the viewer so that the impression of reality is achieved. (Metz 1991, p. 4) Movies, like photographs, have a quality of "unreal reality." (Metz 1991, p. 6) The element of narrative and moving images brings depth and complexity to semiotic analysis of films in comparison to that of photographs. Every narrative is a discourse – a statement or sequence of statements. (Metz 1991, p. 20)

All three categories of signs (icon, index, and symbol) are present in film as well as images. Cine-semiotics is its own branch in the semiotics field. (Stam 2005, p. 32) Cinema is not a language system in itself because it does not pertain to one specific code of reading. When one uses a language, it is used as a tool, but cinematic language must be reinvented when "spoken." (Stam 2005, p. 36)

2 <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/salience>

While the different schools of thought in semiotics have different views on how signs should be interpreted, the main point on the surface is similar enough that I can draw influence from the three I have summarized here. I feel that the terminology from all three models can be used in one analysis. I will treat these three models by Saussure, Peirce, and Barthes as three points of view that guide me in what to look for in various ways. I feel that the Barthesian model is the most all-encompassing and fitting for my analysis, so my semiotic frame of reference is based mostly on his ideas.

2.2 CLOSE READING

Close reading is a form of semiotic analysis that involves taking the time to pay close attention to the subject, uncovering layers of meaning that lead to deep comprehension. (Boyles 2013) The goal is to see as much as possible about the object of observation, catching every small discontinuity or contradiction. (van Looy & Baetens 2003, p. 9-10) Even in close reading, the interpretation of the text or image is not merely the consumption of already-encoded meanings, but the observer acts inevitably as an active participant in constructing the meanings of the text or image. (Bignell 2002, p. 100) I use semiotic terms as a base for my version of close reading. I have constructed my own method for analysis based on the material and semiotic theory.

“Close reading means not only reading and understanding the meanings of the individual printed words; it also involves making yourself sensitive to all the nuances and connotations of a language as it is used by skilled writers.” (Roy, 2004) Close reading, like all of semiotics, can be applied to both texts and images. The posters I am examining include both, and while I am taking the text into consideration, as a graphic designer, my main focus lies in analyzing the visuals and how the text may support or oppose the messages that are conveyed in the image.

I use color as a specific area of interest in my analysis of the posters and films, allowing me to link the two for mutual comparison. I use color palettes as a method for condensing some assets of the visual worlds of both films and posters, which gives me a clear platform for the examination and comparison of both media forms. The creation of a summarizing palette for a film that consists of thousands of frames functions as an aid for understanding the overall picture and style used consistently throughout the whole runtime of the movie. Color is an important facet of graphic design, and palettes are commonly used to outline what a visual product’s identity looks like and what messages it is supposed to convey.

I use the terms for social distance (relating to how far away a person is pictured) and sensory modality (relating to the saturation of color), as defined by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (2006) in my examination of the posters.

The same signs have different meanings in different cultures. For example, the colors of the Korean flag carry meanings, such as metal and west for white and water and north for black. Red represents the passionate energy of life, which is similar to how the color is seen in the West, but blue represents death as red’s opposite. (Kang 2017)

These interpretations create a difference in how audiences from different countries interpret the same images. A person with a Western background would not be likely to instinctively associate colors with different compass points and would likely

interpret the color blue slightly differently, as melancholy or calming, but not directly associate it with death in any particular way. It is impossible for a person without a Korean background to see images exactly the way a person born and bred in Korea would see them.

Another point of interest in my poster analysis is to see whether there are intertextual references to other elements of popular visual culture present in the posters. The most obvious intertextual connections present in all posters, of course, are the links between the posters and the movies they represent. In its own way, the poster is a signifier for the movie, but as separate pieces of media, all allusions from one to the other are intertextual³.

While the posters are my object of examination, I am also examining the movies in relation to the posters. The poster images are comprised of numerous indexes with a direct connection to the movie. I provide details about more direct visual parallels in a later chapter, but overall, the posters show some of the same things the movies do in a visually different ways. Different things work for different mediums, and also while the movie's goal is to tell the whole story, a poster is meant to leave you wanting more.

The movie and the poster usually feature many of the same elements, such as characters and settings. I look to the movie to see how these elements are shown and how the same things are presented in poster form. Do the characters seem the same in the posters as they do on screen? What do the posters show and what do they hide? Do the posters accurately represent the film? Having the movie to compare to enables a deep understanding through my analysis.

2.3 DIFFERENCES IN VISUAL CULTURE - SOUTH KOREA AND THE WEST

Given the nature of my research subject, I focus on the cultures where the posters come from. Culture shapes how images are made and seen by people. While I cannot fully understand the visual traditions of a faraway places like Korea, I have done my best to research what kind of different meanings their visual culture can hold. I also draw upon my 10 years of experience as a K-Horror fan and interest in various Asian cultures, which has provided me with a general understanding of facets of the culture of South Korea.

I am not an American, and English is my second language, but I live in a very Americanized culture with English-speaking media surrounding me, so I can claim to be very familiar with the visual codes of that wide, "Western" culture. South Korea has also taken much influence from American media and trends, so the two cultures are essentially mixed in all these posters.

The Western world imports a large majority of its popular culture from North America. The United States, especially Hollywood, is at the very center of global high budget film production, infecting everyone with its cultural ideas and conventions. Calling films "Hollywood" does not necessarily mean they were created solely in Hollywood, Los Angeles. Hollywood refers to the six major companies of Motion Picture Association of America: Paramount Pictures, Sony Pictures Entertainment, Twentieth Century Fox

3 <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/intertextuality>

Film Corporation, Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures, Universal City Studios, and Warner Bros. Entertainment. Rather than being confined to one place, Hollywood is an American-owned global industry. (Ibbi 2013, p. 96)

These companies are responsible for making American films, and many redistribute foreign films to Western audiences. The international poster for *Bunshinsaba* bears the logo for Buena Vista International, which is a company owned by Walt Disney Studios⁴. Hollywood has found a way to profit from foreign films by creating overseas divisions of their companies to produce films in other countries and languages. (Rampal 2005)

The Hollywood film, with its rich history and high budget threshold, is considered the standard of comparison for movies all around the world. When people from all over the world became increasingly exposed to Hollywood films, the demand for quality and style in domestic films outside of the United States were also raised. (Rampal 2005) In *The Nation*, Jerry Mander (1996) writes that 75% of the world's population is directly exposed to Western images and commercial values. He claims that the globalization of media imagery is the most effective way to make other cultures compatible with the Western corporate vision. (Mander 1996)

Culture functions as a main frame of reference in my study of the differences in images constructed for different audiences. Culture is the main phenomenon that creates meanings and, thus, signifiers in the images I study. If it were not for the difference in cultural frameworks, then the differences between posters would be mainly incidental and artistic.

“Korea’s rich artistic heritage has been formed by a remarkable blend of native tradition, foreign influence, sophisticated technical skill, and exuberant human spirit. Yet, of all the cultural and artistic traditions of East Asia, those of Korea have, until recently, received the least attention in the West.” (Hammer, 2001 p. 3) Americans and other Western nations have become aware of Korea’s visual culture somewhat recently with the rise of Korean fashion and pop culture. This relative newness and unfamiliarity with the visual traditions of the country may pose a challenge for an English-speaking designer tasked with creating a promotional poster for a Korean movie.

“The global in contemporary Korean culture is closely tied to notions of modernity and progress, in sharp contradistinction to the local.” (Beckett & Kim, 2014 p. 13) Modern Korean visuals are a mix of traditional values and Western influence, which is seen as cool and progressive.

“In contrast to the global, the local is the cultural representation of tradition, history and nation, and is therefore manifested in culture that is specifically Korean. The local is expressed in all the things that any small country holds dear – its food, its costume, its art and crafts – but it is more specifically denoted by a set of signifiers pertaining to tradition: a certain style of brush script (and typefaces based upon it), decorative latticework patterns based on vernacular architecture, the colours and tones of celadon ceramics, and the colours and emblem of the South Korean flag, to cite some of the most common and characteristic examples.” (Beckett & Kim, 2014 p. 14)

4 <https://www.bloomberg.com/research/stocks/private/snapshot.asp?privcapId=30826092>

Movie posters are advertising images, and these images are created within different cultures. Advertisements must pertain to cultural methods of visualization so that the audiences can interpret them correctly. Ads seek to add interest by utilizing culturally significant meanings. (Lehtonen 1991, p. 38) The advertiser must examine the cultural context of the product in order to find the best-suited dimensions of value that can be associated with the product. (Lehtonen 1991, p. 41)

3. POSTER ANALYSIS AND COMPARISON



Figure 4: *Bunshinsaba* Korean poster.



Figure 5: *Bunshinsaba* International poster.

3.1 POSTERS 1&2: BUNSHINSABA

Bunshinsaba, translated for the English version as *Bunshinsaba: Ouija Board* or *Witchboard*, is a high school horror movie with supernatural elements, featuring a fairly typical *wonhon* type ghost among other elements. (I have included synopses of all the movie plots in the appendix for added context.)

The Korean poster features two close-ups of female faces with a full body female figure in between them. The girl stands straight, with her head tilted to the left. The standing

girl's head is surrounded by blue smoke that turns an orangey red as it rises, symbolizing fire. The figure is dressed in a white button-up shirt, black skirt, white socks and black shoes – a typical schoolgirl uniform, as seen in the movie. Her eyes are completely black. She looks to be floating in the darkness above the smoke. Her feet may or may not be in a standing position, but there is nothing for her to stand on.

The large faces looming in the background have intense facial expressions. The face on the left that belongs to the ghost character Kim In-sook, is slightly higher than the face on the right, which is positioned behind hers. The face on the left, that of the main character, Lee Yoo-jin, is also at a slightly more upturned angle, facing the viewer with an intense, stern stare. Her expression is that of intimidation. The face on the right has its chin angled more to the front than the girl on the left. Yoo-jin's expression one of alarm and fear. Her eyebrows are expressively furrowed to show anguish, her visible eye is wide open, staring, and her mouth is slightly open. All characters are very pale. The left-to-right reading of the facial expression gives the viewer a mini story, from the intimidating face on the left to the scared face on the right. All three faces are partially obscured by shadows, smoke, or the figure of the girl in front. The partially obscured faces create a sense of mystery.

In the terms of social distance, as defined in *Reading Images*, the closer a person is pictured to the camera, the more the audience is invited to be in pseudo-social interaction with that person. The big faces shown here are at an intimate distance, whereas the full-bodied figure is small and far away at *a far social distance*. (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006, p. 124-125) This positioning paired with the imaginary eye contact experience created by the positioning of the girls' eyes allow us to feel almost like we are directly interacting with the close-up faces we see, while the full body figure is more of an object of observation, not as close. When a person in a photo looks directly toward the viewer, the person seems to be directly addressing the viewer and creating engagement. This also constitutes an image act, where the subject demands the viewer to enter some kind of imaginary relationship with them. (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006, p. 117-118) In the case of this poster, the relations could be defined as intimidation or challenge for Kim In-sook on the left and a cry for help from Yoo-jin on the right.

The faces are separated from each other by the figure in the middle. It is difficult to determine her identity for certain, but it seems like she could also be Kim In-sook, the ghost. She forms a line between the faces, creating a divide between the characters. Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen theorize that the key message of an image read from left to right lies on the right side. The left side presents the "given," what we already know, and the right side is reserved for the "new." (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006, p. 180) The image is a collage of three separate pictures and, therefore, could be called a sort of triptych, where there is "given" on the left, and "new" on the right, and the center works as a mediator between the two. (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006, p. 198) In this way, the story portrayed by the poster could be read as a ghostly presence bringing two girls into one story. The collage style of the image makes it disconnected from the idea of reality. The image is doctored, not what we would see in real life.

Everything in the image is surrounded by tendrils of blue smoke. The smoke functions as a margin to the center and a base for the text. The waves of the smoke guide the viewer's gaze around the image in a clockwise motion. The background of the smoke is inky black. The color contrast is dark and strong. The whole poster is very heavily

blue toned, apart from the orange in the trail of the smoke from the standing girl's head and reflections of orange light in both of the girls' eyes. Blue is commonly used in horror imagery. Paired with the smoke and pale faces, the color scheme gives a ghostly impression. The smoke also helps viewers associate orange with fire. Red is heavily associated with fire in both Korean and Western cultures. (Kang 2017) It can be confirmed from the movie itself that fire is implied through these elements.

Blue is one of the colors of the Korean flag, all of which are considered the most important symbolic colors in Korean culture. "In the Korean flag, blue symbolizes *Eum* or Yin, which is cool, feminine energy. *Eum* energy is associated with the moon and is passive, yielding and receptive." (Kang 2017) This meaning is complementary to the all-female cast of characters portrayed in the poster. Blue can also be attributed as a symbol of creativity, immortality, and hope in Korean culture. (Shin, Westland, Moore & Chung 2012, p. 50) Of these, the only applicable meaning for the poster is immortality in the form of a ghost.

The bluish colors are slightly grayish and less saturated than in reality, almost pastel. This gives the image a medium sensory modality. (Bell 2001, p. 30) The blue tint gives the image the feeling of being unreal. The pale, blue tones in the faces that make them look unsaturated give an aura of ghostliness. (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006, p. 159)

The school uniform worn by the ghostly girl is a signifier of academia, propriety, and adolescence. All school children and teenagers in Korea are required to wear uniforms and conform to strict rules about what is appropriate to wear as a person who is representing the school. When wearing a uniform, one must act according to the rules of the establishment and maintain or improve its reputation. The uniform strips the person of their individuality and makes them part of a homogenous mass. Many East Asian countries have communal cultures, where the community is more important than the individual. This is also signified by the uniform and black hair. Many schools forbid the dyeing of hair, even though light browns and other unnatural hair colors are fashionable in Korea. (Larkin)

While the uniform presented here is so basic that it could just be an individual choice of clothing, giving the age of the people pictured in the poster, most people familiar with similar school dress codes would immediately assume it to be a uniform for a high school student. South Korea, as a culture, is very focused on academic success, and these values are attached to the uniforms of academia.

In this picture, the person wearing the uniform is not carrying it in the usual way. She appears to be dead, a supernatural creature from beyond the grave, with smoke enveloping her head and black eyes. Her otherworldliness and scariness paired with the uniform show us that she died too young, perhaps as a victim of the highly pressured, competitive school system of the country. Being a ghost in a uniform means she most likely died in a school setting, which makes her death the school's responsibility. The fact that she is a ghost in this uniform tarnishes the school's reputation.

The typography of the film title is stylized with visible brush strokes. The gaps in the strokes where the paint did not touch the paper give the effect that the text was written hastily but precisely. The shape of the letters mirrors the tendrils of smoke surrounding them. The title is white while other pieces of text are in very subtle, desaturated reds and blues. These bits of text are laid out in more standard *Hangul* typography.

The text above the title translates as “The terrifying word you can’t dare say...,” and the text underneath it says “The third extreme horror director Ahn Byung-ki made after <Nightmare> & <Phone>.” (Translation by Chel Woong Kim) The text that advertises the scariness of the movie is in red, emphasizing the message, while the text that advertises the popular director is in a neutral blue.

The English language version implies fire much more heavily than the original poster through flame imagery and a warm color palette. The poster features one young girl, Kim In-sook, wearing a white button-up shirt, staring intensely at the viewer. The photo is framed from just above her eyes (below the eyebrows) down to her chest. In social distance terms, this framing would put her at a close personal distance, not as intimate as the close-up heads in the other poster, but still very close and engaging, especially with the strong eye contact.

Her expression is serious, with wide, red eyes staring forward and a closed mouth. Both her pupils and irises are red, and the facial expression is classically creepy. The close framing gives us essential information about her face but leaving the top of her head out makes her appear distant despite her proximity because we cannot see all of her. Because her eyes are at the top of the picture, we are forced to look up at her. She is looking down at us. This puts her in a position of power over the viewer. Thus, she is both mysterious and powerful.

The composition gives her white shirt slightly more space in the image than her face. While it is difficult to tell from this close-up, her age probably still gives the viewer hints that the shirt is part of a school uniform. The shirt is not that important despite all the space it occupies and the salience it has in the image: most of that space is used as a somewhat solid background for text. The clothing does carry the same denotations as in the first poster, though, and even if viewers can’t see the full outfit, the collar is still quite formal, proper, and businesslike. There are no buttons unbuttoned and there are no wrinkles on the shirt, despite the texture overlay. The white, pure, and patriotic color of the shirt carries much value in itself. This ghostly girl was young and innocent, but the flames turned her into a scary, vengeful figure.

The flames are going upwards to the left of the image. The image is cropped so closely that we do not know where the fire is going. The fire is licking her face and hair but has no effect on her whatsoever. She seems to be a ghost, and presumably one who died in a fire. This is a correct assumption.

The picture is black and white aside from the transparent flames around her face and her reddish-orange irises. There is a cracked texture element on the girl’s pale skin and shirt. It gives the impression that she is ready to crumble into ash at any moment. There is only a tiny bit of gray background visible behind her head, which gives no clues to the viewer about the environment she is in.

The text is in red and yellow. The typography of the title has gothic calligraphy influences and a worn, spotty texture that resembles rust spots. The style of the font is distinctly European instead of a calligraphic font that mimics an Eastern style. The calligraphy style is that of a calligraphy pen, not a brush script like in the first poster had. The other bits of text are in a serif font. The added text advertises the director of *Phone* just like the Korean poster, but there is no further text alluding to the plot or contents of the movie, other than “Another shining horror” coming this summer (meaning

the summer of 2005, when the film had its U.S. release)¹. The Korean poster is most obviously different from the international one in that it features more characters. The focus is on how the characters are feeling and how they play off each other, whereas the English language poster just focuses on one face as a representation of the whole movie. It is interesting to note that the sole figure in the poster is not the main character, but the antagonist of the movie. In this way, the poster sends a message that, rather than being about the main character, the movie's main focus is on the ghost.

The composition is more obviously circular in the first poster than in the second one. The smoke swirls around the faces, bringing the focus toward the center. Because of the framing in the international poster, the focus is directed toward the top and bottom of the picture, with few significant details in the middle.

Both posters have fairly low modality, because of their desaturated and manipulated colors and obvious photo manipulation. It is obvious in both posters that elements of smoke and fire are added onto the images and were not actually present when the photos were taken. Nobody is actually on fire in the pictures, but fire is alluded to in an understandable way that gets the message across. The images appear to be unreal because of a deliberate stylistic choice, not as a result of poor design. Nobody is asked to believe in the images. Rather, viewers are urged to play along and become immersed in the story.

Both posters use the index of flames or smoke to imply a specific character's association with fire. The signified in this context is her death by fire. The fire symbolism used differs in color and subtlety between the two posters. The international poster is more bold and obvious in its depiction of fire, whereas the Korean version requires slightly more attention from the viewer to see the poster's message.

Both posters depict signifiers of the mythologies of the *wonhon* or vengeful spirit. The ghost theme is instantly recognizable to both Korean and Western audiences because of the visual elements used that all allude to well-known ghostly conventions. Western audiences can also recognize the *wonhon* because we have our own, similar mythologies with female ghosts that can look very much the same as Asian ones. Modern Western horror also sometimes draws influence from popular Asian horror movies like *Ringu* (リング, Japan, 1998), and *The Grudge* (*Ju-On* / 呪怨, Japan, 2002) and others that have also been remade in Hollywood. Therefore, Asian ghost imagery codes are also familiar to consumers of Western media. While Korean traditions are less widespread than Japanese ones, the Japanese *Onryō* mythology, in its modern pop culture form, is similar enough to the *wonhon* that if you have been exposed to one, then you will recognize and understand the other².

1 <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0415689/>

2 <http://yokai.com/onryou/>



Figure 6: *Oldboy* Korean poster

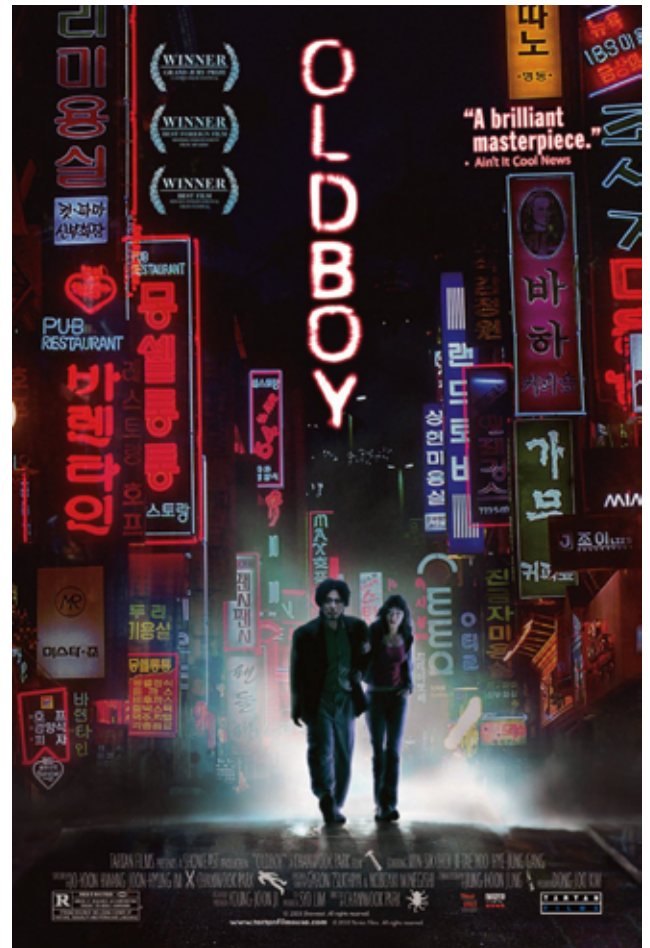


Figure 7: *Oldboy* International poster.

3.2 POSTERS 3&4: OLDBOY

Oldboy is arguably the most popular film ever to come out of South Korea. It has a large international audience and been praised by critics worldwide.

The Korean poster features a split screen with the antagonist, Lee Woo-jin, on the left and the protagonist, Oh Dae-su, on the right. The antagonist is framed from forehead to waist with the right side (from the viewer's point of view) of his body cropped out by the split screen. He is wearing a black suit that gets lost in the pitch-black background, with a white shirt and black tie underneath it. His facial expression is mostly neutral, with hooded, relaxed eyes. There is a slight shadow on his face. The light is coming from above. His hair also blends into the black background. He is holding his hands in front of his body, with his fingers interlaced, palms upwards, and visible right thumb pointing toward the viewer. His clothing and positioning send a message that he has businesslike power.

The protagonist on the right side of the split image is portrayed in close-up, framed from his hairline to his collarbone. We can only see the right side (from the viewer's point of view) of his face. The contrast and shadows are stronger in his face than that of the antagonist's. His eyebrows are slightly furrowed, his skin looks aged, and his eyes are tired, with prominent bags and shadows underneath them. His mouth is closed in

a slightly tense way, and his expression is determined and serious. His hair falls slightly on his cheek, so we can see it is a bit messy. The rest of his hair and the shadow under his chin get absorbed into the black background. Because the background is so black, it does not seem like the characters are in a real place. The blackness is abstract and symbolic rather than a concrete environment.

The harsh line between the men and the high contrast in proximity to the viewer separate the characters and gives hints about their significance to the story. Their images are juxtaposed to each other. Dae-su is in the foreground, which makes it apparent that he is the protagonist viewers are meant to sympathize with. He is pictured at *an intimate social distance*. Woo-jin is further away and less approachable, at a far personal distance. (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006, p. 125) He is the danger looming in the darkness while still being in direct interaction with the viewer, as if he is standing in front of us. Despite how both characters are looking at the camera, the split screen implies that they are really looking at each other, not the viewer. The eye contact experience looking back and forth between the characters can make the viewer imagine what the other person looks like through the other's eyes. Despite being in separate images, the characters are in communication with each other, as well as the viewer.

The positioning of the characters to the left and right is also significant. In this image, reading from left to right, viewers are first presented with the antagonist from further away, followed by the intense close-up of our protagonist. The left and right side, again, represent the “given” and the “new” when applying the model by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen. (2006 p. 180) The image would have a different impact altogether if it was mirrored, and the composition might appear skewed or unbalanced with the larger close-up on the left side. The close-up of Dae-su's face has the highest salience in the picture both because of how much surface area it holds and its position on the right.

Like in the previous movie's Korean poster, the faces of the characters are only seen partially. In this case only approximately half of each face is visible. Again, this gives the characters a bit of an aura of mystery, unknown, and incompleteness. In a way, they complete each other, each giving one half of a full face to the image. They are two sides of the same coin, so to say, or better fitting the Korean mindset, Yin and Yang.

The two halves of the poster, being highly saturated portraits, have a somewhat high modality value by themselves. The modality would be higher than it is if the blacks were not artificially darkened in photo editing. The split screen editing makes the image unreal and decreases its modality. The picture tells a story, and is not intended to be a depiction of absolute reality. Most movie posters have the goal of intriguing the audience, which makes it likely that they intentionally lower the modality of the photos presented to give more hints about the themes of the movie.

It can be deduced, that the man shown from close up is the person the audience is meant to identify with more. His close distance and the light reflected in his eye make him more relatable than the other man who is shown from further away, his eye cast in shadow. Both men look menacing, but the antagonist is shown in a villainous pose, with his hands interlaced in front of him, giving him an aura of power. The gesture of rubbing the hands together is seen in pop culture fiction to be a sign of a scheming, perhaps that of a money-hungry character¹. This man's fingers are interlaced, but

¹ <http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/HandRubbing>

the strange positioning of the thumb and the slightly raised, unrelaxed hands holds a suggestion of movement. The light coming from straight above gives his face a menacing, shadowy look.

The typography used is blocky and geometric with no calligraphic elements. The title is in white with a worn, distressed texture that makes the text transparent in spots. The text is situated in the middle of the poster, but slightly off-center to the left. There is more empty black space on the left side than on the right side, so this choice makes sense in terms of maximum visibility. The top text in orange translates to “Are you ready” and the text below that in gray says “The secret of two men.” The orange text near the bottom says “I waited too long,” and the yellow text below says “November 2003, the fight starts from now!” (Translation by Chel Woong Kim)

These bits of text add context to the roles of the people in the poster. The orange bits of text work as a dialog between the characters, while the gray text confirms that there is something between the two men and that viewers must see the film to find out what it is. Even the advertisement for the release date tells the viewer that these men are enemies and will eventually fight. The reddish-orange color symbolizes fire and passion in both Korean and Western sensibilities, which adds power to the message in the text.

The color scheme is muted to black, white, and warm skin tones. The dichotomy of light and dark, Yin and Yang, is implied through the dark background and white shirt and text.

The international poster has a very different theme. It shows the main character and Mi-do, man and young woman, as small figures in the middle of a city at night with vibrant neon signs in Korean everywhere. There is a white light behind the characters, most likely emulating the glow of car headlights. Dae-su is looking to the left with a bored expression, while Mi-do looks at him with her eyebrows raised and mouth slightly open.

The name of the film is suspended in the air in glowing neon red, emulating the neon signs around it with texture details like the glow around the letters and breaks in the “light” here and there. This type of glowing effect is most widely used in the posters of sci-fi movies. (Van Winkel, 2015) The review text (“A Brilliant Masterpiece”) is laid out in a grotesque font in white, with a red outline, imitating the neon sign style of the title.

It is notable, that the title text reads vertically. This is rare, but not unheard of, in English writing. In fact, vertical text may be most commonly used in storefront signs in countries that use the Roman alphabet. The text is vertical in this example to mirror the reading direction of the neon signs. English language signs also use this layout in signs that stick out from walls to efficiently utilize space. It would be more difficult to mount heavy signs that stuck out very far from the wall with horizontal text, so vertical composition makes sense. Therefore, in this example, the vertical text is not only an imitation of the Korean reading direction but a nod to neon signs all over the world.

The neon signs display many different bright colors, but the saturation of the whole image has been brought down, somewhat flattening it. This keeps the image from being too bright and ‘in-your-face’. The film does not feature a scene with a setting that is similar to the setting in this poster.

The characters are very small in the picture's composition. Some neon signs are taller than they are. Without the white light behind them, they would drown in the chaos of the city lights. They are pictured at a *far social distance*, allowing the viewer to observe the characters without feeling a close, personal connection to the people in the picture. The characters are positioned low, right above the credit text in the center of the image. They are positioned on the road as if the viewer is walking toward them.

The road is not actually positioned so that it looks like the signs and shops correspond to it. While the road and people are not pictured from a very high angle, the signs seem to be viewed from a different angle, as if the camera was tilted more upwards. It looks like the poster image is composed of a collage of two pictures, the road, and the street signs, with the artificially added bright light effect hiding the seam between the two photos. This imperfect photo manipulation makes the image seem a bit uncanny and dreamlike, lowering the modality of an otherwise normal seeming scene. There is a certain unrealism present in the image that may be hard to pinpoint at a quick glance. Rather than being a deliberate choice, in this example, the unreal quality seems to be more due to imperfect photo editing. Symbolic fantasy elements are sometimes used in the posters for realistic movies, but this poster gets stuck somewhere in the uncanny valley between being real and unreal, making the image feel strange. (Cheetham 2018, p. 4)

There is no eye contact interaction between the characters and the viewer. Because of the characters' distance from the viewer, it is hard to see whether Dae-su is looking forward or to the side. Because the eyes are not very visible at this distance, it is safe to assume he is not looking at the viewer, but rather at something we cannot see. According to Kress and van Leeuwen, this is called a "*non-transactive reaction*". (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006, p. 157) Mi-do seems to be looking at him, in a "*transactive reaction*." This makes the interaction between the characters one-sided: Dae-su is holding Mi-do's attention while his attention lies elsewhere.

He seems to know where he is going, while she is only following him. Her look is inquisitive, and she does not seem to know what they are doing. He is leading her by the arm, not holding her hand as an equal. Her hand is holding the arm from high up on the bicep, and Dae-su holds his arm in a position that makes it easy for her to hold. This is an old-fashioned, chivalrous way for a man and a woman to walk together, which suits their considerable age difference better than holding hands would. Dae-su does not walk in this way with Mi-do in the film itself. This pose was chosen for the poster to give the viewer information about their relationship.

Their differences are further signified by their clothing and appearance. Dae-su is wearing baggy clothes that include gray pants, a green button-up shirt with the top button open for comfort, and a large, dark suit jacket. Details about his shoes cannot be seen very well from this angle, but they look quite comfortable as well. His hair is a scraggly mop, not styled, and very unfashionable. Mi-do is dressed very fashionably for the time. She is wearing a wine-red top paired with low-riding flared blue jeans, which expose a strip of her midriff, as well as a light-colored open jacket on top. Her shoes are almost covered by the long pant legs. This look was very much in style in the early 2000s, acting as a signifier of a fashionable city youth of the era. Her outfit is possibly the most obvious signifier of when the movie was made. Her hair is also youthful: black, wavy, and untied with bangs.

The characters' clothes show that one is an adult, unconcerned with trends and focused on comfort while looking slightly representable (his shirt is tucked in, but the jacket is too big and so on), while one is a young person who is concerned with her looks. Dae-su's oversized clothing also makes him look bigger than he is while he also looks to be drowning in them. It appears that these clothes were not chosen carefully and may not even be his. From the movie, we can confirm that this version of Dae-su did not have much say in how his hair and clothes were styled, and he was unconcerned with these matters while focusing on more important things.

In this example, the environment has been given the most surface area and the people in the picture have been literally highlighted to make them stand out. Without the bright light drawing the eye to the characters, the background would have the highest salience in this picture.

The picture on the poster is somewhat ambiguous and leaves much to the viewer's interpretation. The Korean setting is emphasized with all the *Hangul* text, but there is no clear genre coding to the image and the only additional text advertises the quality of the movie rather than what the movie is about or its mood.

Again, the Korean poster focuses mainly on the interpersonal tension between the two central characters. The focus is on their emotions and antagonism toward each other. The international version does not focus on the characters' faces much. There is a stark contrast between the close-up in the first poster and how far away both characters are in the second poster. The Korean poster is highly interactive, demanding the viewer to connect with the characters, while the English language poster gives the viewer plenty of space to contemplate the image without interaction.

Neither poster gives the audience any codes of horror and the violence apparent in the film is not advertised at all in the images themselves. Both posters have a circular focus; the characters and text are positioned in the center.



Figure 8: *Thirst* Korean poster



Figure 9: *Thirst* International poster.

3.3 POSTERS 5&6: THIRST

Thirst is not, by any means, a typical K-Horror movie. Vampires are not a common theme in Korean culture and *Thirst* borrows influence from the European vampire mythology rather than the much closer and more historically familiar Chinese vampire mythology, the *Jiangshi*. (Hoare 2015)

The Korean poster continues the theme of two faces established in my previous examples. The picture is of the main characters, male priest, Sang-hyun and his female love interest, Tae-ju. The man is situated behind the woman, clasping her hands in a way that cannot really be called a loving embrace. Both characters are looking to the left. Sang-hyun's facial expression is not as emotional as Tae-ju's is. He is attentively looking at whatever is to the left, unseen by the viewer. There is a stain of blood on his lips. His posture is protective. Tae-ju looks scared, wide-eyed, mouth slightly open, and eyes slightly teary. Both characters are looking at something the viewer cannot see, a *non-transactive reaction*. (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006, p. 175)

The two are in close bodily contact, but there is unmistakable tension in their hands. The man is clasping the woman's hands from behind in a tight grip. The woman's hands are in a strange position in front of her chest. Her left hand's fingers look to be in a strained, uncomfortable position. They are together, but also slightly separated from each other by the darkness of the shadows in the man's dark clothing.

The composition and body language in this picture give much information about the relationship between the two characters. From how their bodies are positioned, they look to be lovers in trouble. There is tension in the woman's pose, the strained fingers, and raised shoulder. She is uncomfortable and tense in this position while the man's hands seem to be firm but relaxed. He is in control. His expression, calmer than hers, supports this notion.

Both characters are seen somewhat from the waist up (although the framing is a little tighter than that), and therefore, they are at a *far personal distance* from the viewers. (Kress & van Leeuwen 2005, p. 125) This framing and the lack of eye contact allows the spectator to observe the characters from relatively close without feeling like they are part of the scene before them. The viewer is an onlooker, a fly on a wall, with no personal ties to the people pictured.

The most natural way the viewer's gaze is directed when looking at the poster is from the upper left corner toward the lower right corner, from the man's face toward the title of the film. This direction is supported by the pose of the woman, who leans to the right, with her raised shoulder and hand creating a line toward the lower right corner. The pointing finger and the "corner" created by the shoulder direct the eye back toward Sang-hyun's face. The direction of the hair of both characters also supports the flow of the image from up on the left downward and to the right.

The colors in the poster are very muted. They are almost monochromatic but not quite. The image, therefore, has a somewhat low sensory modality and appears to be less than real, almost ethereal, due to the lack of saturation. (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006, p. 159) The reduction of color is the only thing reducing the modality of the photo used in the poster, which would otherwise seem very realistic. The priest is wearing a black coat, but you cannot tell if it is a priest's uniform because his torso is hidden by the woman in front of him. She is wearing a white long sleeve blouse or dress that she cannot be seen wearing in the film. Both have black hair.

White is universally a symbol of purity, making the woman seem virginal, innocent, and virtuous in contrast to the black-clad man. White also has its own cultural significance in Korea, being the most traditionally worn color in the clothing of commoners. To Koreans, white symbolizes not only purity, innocence, and peace but also patriotism. (Pugsley 2016, p. 19) Dressing the woman in white thusly makes her a symbol of traditional values. This contrasts how Tae-ju's character in the movie changes from an innocent victim into an uncontrollable monster.

The man, Sang-hyun, is portrayed as a much darker character in this poster than in the other one. His clothes are black, there is no light reflecting in his eyes, and his skin has a gray tone and the red blood on his lips make the vampiric symbolism obvious to the viewer. As an Asian country, Korea also assigns importance to the balance of light and dark (Yin and Yang). (Kang 2017) The black and white clothing of the characters symbolizes this dichotomy; Sang-hyun is the darkness, Tae-ju is the light, and the two come together and depend on each other to survive. In fact, in the story of the film, both characters go through an arc of being presented as virtuous to stretching the limits of their morality. Questions of good and evil are essential themes in the film, and thus, they are emphasized in the poster.

The image gives no indication of the setting, with only a sliver of textured gray visible behind the characters. The background could be a studio drop or a wall, or even

somewhere outside. The framing is very tight on the characters for a reason: the milieu is not as important as the people and feelings pictured.

The typography used in the title has sharp points and some distressed edges. The vertically positioned text is bright red, which is the only bright color in the whole poster. Red is functioning here simultaneously as a symbol of blood and passion. The sharp, downturned points of the letters can also look a little bit like dripping blood if you already know to look for that association. The original title of the movie, 박쥐 (*Bakjwi*), means “bat,” and some batwing-like influence can be seen in the sharp points of the *Hangul* letters. (Han 2009) There is a black shadow around the letters, to make the red further stand out from the rest of the image.

The text to the left of the poster translates to “I will take you out of this hell...” and the text on the far right means “2009, Director Park Chan-Wook’s new film.” (Translation by Chel Woong Kim) Both bits of text are in white common looking *Hangul* typography. The text supports the idea that the couple is in danger and the man is protecting the woman. The poster makes it apparent that this movie is a scary love story.

The international poster features the same main characters against a pitch-black background in a stylized composition. Both characters are wearing black, and the clothes disappear completely into the background (very similar to the design of the *Oldboy* poster). The priest’s head is seemingly floating in the blackness, with only the white of the priest’s collar visible in the darkness.

The woman is upside down below him, her hands coming up to wrap around his throat in an almost strangling position. Her arms, shoulders, and a little bit of her chest are visible until what is supposedly her strapless black dress cuts off the rest of her body to blend completely into the blackness. The man’s hands are floating beside her shoulders. His face and hands also partly disappear into the shadows. The darkness divides the characters, and the only spot of contact is the hands clasping the neck.

The expression on priest Sang-hyun’s face is a little difficult to read. He is looking forward, mouth slightly open, with blood on his lips. Tae-ju’s upside-down face is more expressive than Sang-hyun’s, with eyes and mouth open, also looking forward at the viewer. Both characters are engaging the viewer as if they were suddenly caught in an intimate situation. There is some element of alarm on both of their faces. The position they are in is intimate and can be seen as sexual. It can also look to some people to be a depiction of rape, because of the woman’s hands around the man’s throat and her startled expression make her seem to be pleading the viewer to help her. It is up to the viewer whether they see the the people as being in a consensual, intimate situation, or victims of the other in some way. The blood on Sang-hyun’s lips (although difficult to see unless you look very closely) implies that he may have been feeding on Tae-ju’s blood.

There is much black space around the characters. Because their bodies are not visible, it is a bit difficult to gage what model of social distance they fit into. From their proportions, I would say they are somewhere around a *close social distance* where the full figure should be visible, but the characters’ full bodies would not quite fit into the space given in this poster. (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006, p. 125) They are far enough away that the distance is no longer as personal as a photo from the waist up would be.

The composition of the picture is central, top to bottom. The characters are set in the middle of the poster, and the positioning of the man's hand on the left guides the viewer's gaze downward in a counterclockwise movement. Both characters' visible pointer fingers point toward each other, his finger on the left, hers on the right. In essence, the characters are on opposing sides of an invisible circle. This circle can be interpreted as an echo of the Yin and Yang, especially considering the light-colored bare arms of Tae-ju in contrast to Sang-hyun's black-clad body. The faces glowing in the darkness resemble the dots of white on the black side of the Yin and Yang symbol, the Yin. The white dot in the symbol signifies the light that can be found in darkness. Both characters are dark and end up becoming increasingly morally corrupt as the movie goes on. Their faces being the only light in the darkness may have symbolism for the leftover humanity still in them.

The color scheme in this poster is not much different from that of the Korean poster. The tones are only slightly more vibrant and warm. The contrast is higher, and the blackness overtakes most of the poster. The black background, indistinguishable from the clothing of the characters, does not imply that the action seen in the photo is set in a real place. The blackness is too black and untextured when taking into account all the light caught by the skin of the characters. This is a fantasy image, set in an emptiness that is essentially nowhere. The black background is symbolic in the same way as in the *Oldboy* poster that used the same style. The similar stylistic choice of black blending into the background may be a conscious nod to the *Oldboy* poster, seeing as the other film by the same director is also advertised on this poster.

The modality presented by the photo in the poster is low, due to both the desaturation of color and the strangeness of the pose and composition. The image appears to be dreamlike, certainly not real. The characters emerge from the darkness like nightmares. The darkness around them is too dark to be real and makes the picture scary looking.

The woman is significantly less innocent and virginal in this depiction. She is revealing much more skin (especially apparent in contrast to the fully covered priest), and she appears to be wearing either a black dress or nothing at all. Because the strapless "dress" is only really a line where the blackness starts with no real detail, it can be interpreted as just a censor rather than an actual garment. A low neckline is less common and considered to be much more inappropriate dress in Korean culture than in the West. Usually, women in Korea wear very high collars and display their legs with short skirts or shorts. This amount of cleavage in the poster, that would be common to see in the West, is therefore more provocative in the Korean context than a Western one. In fact, Tae-ju is never seen wearing anything remotely like this in the movie. When she is dressed, he is usually shown dressed modestly with no cleavage showing and the hem of her skirt is usually down to her knees or lower.

The title is in the same red as the first poster. The typography is a Roman typeface with cross imagery in the Ts. The sharp points in the typography are slightly similar to the bat-like sharp points in the *Hangul* title, but this typography choice emphasizes the religion theme much more than the vampire theme. The font is based on Trajan, which has become ubiquitous in horror movie posters. The sharp serif edges lend themselves well to establishing a scary atmosphere. The wide use of the font has made it easy to instantly code horror genre films by using Trajan or something similar. (Van Winkel 2015)

The pieces of advertising text chosen for this poster are a review from Richard Carliss of *Time Magazine* that reads “A MAD LOVE STORY! Director Park Chan-wook’s richest, craziest, most mature work yet!” and an advertisement of the director that says: “From the Director of OLD BOY, A PARK CHAN-WOOK FILM”. There is also an icon to the right promoting that the film was a Cannes International Film Festival Jury Prize winner in 2009. Again, it can be established that the international poster emphasizes the fame of the director and the quality of the film rather than hinting about the story. The words “A MAD LOVE STORY!” and “From the director of OLD BOY” are emphasized in red. These smaller bits of text are mostly in two different sans serif fonts (the review quote is a wider, rounder typeface than that used below), but the text “From the director of OLD BOY” is in a serif font. This different font emphasizes to the director’s name in stark white capital letters below it.

The international poster for the movie came to look the way it does now through some controversy. There was an original Korean poster featuring an earlier version of this design, which was banned in Korea for depicting a priest in a sexual context. (Han 2009) The controversial poster was then edited to be more appropriate than it originally was.

The poster shows the priest between the outstretched legs of Tae-ju, with his hands on the ground. His expression is different than in the modified poster, and Tae-ju’s neckline shows a bit more cleavage in the original version.

The composition of this poster is not only more sexual but also more bat-like than the edited version. The modified version loses the bat shape created by the characters’ bodies because the wing-like legs were cut out of the composition.

Tae-ju’s half of the picture was not changed as much as the priest’s half. The edits include the positions of the hands and the head being swapped from a different picture. The only thing remaining of the original priest is the collar.

The reading direction of text and image seem to be switched between the posters. While the Korean poster’s image reads from left to right, from one face to another, then downwards to the hands, the Korean texts reads from top to bottom. This is inverted in the international poster, where the image reads vertically from the face above to the face below, whereas the text below reads from left to right. In both images, the light moves along with the gaze of the viewer, from Sang-hyun’s relatively shadowy face toward Tae-ju, whose skin catches relatively more light.



Figure 10: Banned Korean *Thirst* poster.

According to Kress and van Leeuwen, reading an image from top to bottom also has its own convention. The upper section shows us an emotive appeal and “what might be,” while the bottom section shows us “what is.” (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006, p. 186) Therefore, in this example of the international poster, the priest being strangled would hold some “fantasy appeal” while the woman on the bottom represents reality. I would like to point out, though, that this image was constructed in Korea, where text can be read both from left to right and top to bottom, which also affects how people read images, so the original meaning and interpretation may be slightly lost on an English-speaking audience. Directionality is a semiotic value in all cultures, and it most often corresponds to reading direction, as well as other cultural systems. (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006 p. 192)

These posters are also interesting in that, in this case, the Korean poster reads as left-to-right oriented, whereas the international poster has a relatively more circular composition. In this sense, the Western and Asian styles have swapped places. It is notable that this particular movie was the first in Korea to be jointly produced by Hollywood, which may have further affected the merging of the two visual cultures in this case¹. *Thirst* is already a film with much Hollywood influence, particularly Christian and vampire subject matter.

This pair of posters is the only one of all four that I am studying here, that looks to be part of a series of posters with a unifying theme. My guess is that this is because the international poster, in this case, is directly based on what was supposed to be the original main poster in Korea. The international *Thirst* poster is a tribute to the original vision rather than a reconfiguration intended to suit Western tastes. The original poster may have already been made suitable for Western tastes because of the movie’s many Hollywood influences.

The vampire mythology references are subtle, but recognizable upon a closer look. The blood on Sang-hyun’s lips can be especially difficult to see in the English language poster, but functions as a clear indicator of the vampire lore if you spot it. The European vampire mythology is so popular and widespread that it can easily appear cliché if overly emphasized in a poster. There are vampiric symbols in the text’s color and shape in both versions of the poster, and the ashy skin tones also give the viewer hints that this is a vampire movie. The posters either expect the audience to be very aware of the vampire myth and how vampiric things are meant to look or miss that association and instead just focus on the relationships between the characters presented. It is up to the viewer to focus on whichever message is most interesting or important to them.

1 <http://asianwiki.com/Thirst>



Figure 11: *I saw the Devil* Korean poster.

Figure 12: *I Saw the Devil* International poster.

3.4. POSTERS 7&8: I SAW THE DEVIL

I Saw the Devil is a direct continuation of the revenge film tradition that is most commonly associated with *Oldboy*. Some critics even consider it the quintessential Korean revenge thriller.

The Korean film poster shows antagonist Jang Kyung-chul (left) and protagonist Kim Soo-hyun (right) facing each other in profile. There is only space for one line of vertical text between them. The background is pitch black. The characters are framed from the top of the head to just below the shoulders. Both are in close-up and the picture is cropped so that we cannot see their ears. The two characters are looking into each other's eyes with similar, serious expressions. It is a staring match between two people who do not like each other. This would be the opposite of a *non-transactive reaction* in the example seen in the *Thirst* poster and a *transactive reaction* between the characters.

The Korean film poster shows antagonist Jang Kyung-chul (left) and protagonist Kim Soo-hyun (right) facing each other in profile. There is only space for a line of vertical text between them. The background is pitch black. The characters are framed from the top of the head to just below the shoulders. Both are in close-up and the picture is cropped so that we cannot see their ears. The two characters are looking into each other's eyes with similar, serious expressions. It is a staring match between two people who do not like each other. This would be the opposite of a *non-transactive reaction* in the example seen in the *Thirst* poster and a *transactive reaction* between the characters.

(Kress& Van Leeuwen 2006, p. 175) The profile view of the characters distances them from the viewer; they are focused only on each other.

The composition of this photo does not fit the concept of circular Asian design composition in the most classic sense. The image has the highest salience points in the faces on the left and the right as well as the text near the bottom of the poster. The center is black with text on it. It can be argued that the faces are positioned toward the center and the picture can, therefore, be counted as centered. The composition can work both ways, left and right or circularly, depending on who is looking.

The colors of the photo are mostly warm but somewhat muted. The antagonist is wearing a green shirt under a red plaid unbuttoned button-up shirt while the protagonist is wearing a bluish jacket with a high collar. The light is coming from above, catching both of the tops of both characters' heads in a bright contrast to the black background. There is also light on the protagonist's face, giving a subtle hint that he is more "good" than the other man. The added light also makes the viewer's gaze linger on the main character's face longer than the antagonist's. It is also easy to guess that the man on the right is the protagonist because he is younger and more conventionally attractive. Hollywood, and the international film traditions influenced by it, often use physical beauty as a signifier of morality and goodness. (Smith McIntosh & Bazzini, p. 13)

Other than the color correction and added contrast, which are common practice in the manipulation of all types of print media photos, the photo appears believable and real – it has high modality. The characters are separated from each other by a black strip of background. The blackness between them can be interpreted as symbolic. There is darkness and death between the characters; their relationship to each other is defined by it. They face each other within that darkness.

The name of the movie, *I Saw the Devil*, emphasizes the element of "seeing" in the image of the two men looking at each other. The text paired with the image can be interpreted as the men seeing the devil in each other. This is supported by the contemptuous expressions on the men's faces.

The typography in the title is angular, but not as blocky as in the *Oldboy* poster. There are some subtle calligraphy influences to the font, but the main feel of it is modern. The title text is an orangey red with very subtle distressed texture elements on top. The rest of the text is standard blocky typography in white with no calligraphic influence in its style. The column of text between the characters translates to: "The 2 faces of revenge, the fight of the crazies begins." (Translation by Chel Woong Kim) The words "revenge" and "fight" are key here because the tradition of similarly themed movies makes it easy for the audience to know what to expect from the movie. The word "fight" was also used in the Korean *Oldboy* poster, and it is a clear parallel between these two revenge films that follow the same tradition.

The international poster emphasizes the title of the movie more heavily than the original poster. It is laid out on top of the image in a very large, stylized brush script, taking over the whole poster. The text is white, with a wild, splattery, and cloudy handwritten brush effect. The letters are all uppercase. There are some smudges (mostly in the word "saw"), indicating movement diagonally from the upper left corner to the lower right corner. The red text "abandon all compassion" in a grotesque font underneath the title is very small in comparison. It is also all in uppercase.

The text can be difficult to see or read unless viewed from close because of the small size and darkness of the color that blends into the background. This text is our first example of an English language poster that uses a teaser text like this – one that directly refers to the story of the movie rather than the director or success of the film. The director was not mentioned in advertising texts in the Korean poster for this movie either, despite his considerable fame and popularity with many previous successful movies that are worthy of mention¹.

The picture underneath the large letters is of the faces of the antagonist and protagonists in close-up, side by side, and framed so that only half of both faces are showing. Both faces are overlaid with red blood dripping down from the top half of the picture. The bottom of the picture is tinted an ombre from green in the middle to a more bluish tone at the bottom. Both faces display serious expressions and look forward.

The international poster is, in many ways, much more extreme than the original. The bold text and many other effects emphasize the shock value of the film, rather than the tension between the characters. In the Korean version, the characters are focused on each other while the English version has them look directly at the viewer.

The expressions on both men's faces are tense, but the younger man seems to be slightly sterner than the other man in this image. His stare looks somewhat more intense than that of the man on the right. This may be because there is more light reflected off of Kyung-chul's eye, and Soo-hyun's eye is left more dull and shadowy in comparison.

The strongly altered colors of the faces make a big difference to the feel of the poster. The dark red is striking in contrast to the greenish hues underneath. In this context, the green carries the connotation of being sulfurous, sickly, and irritating rather than calm, placid, or natural, as the same color might appear in a different environment. (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2002, p. 354)

The effect of sickliness is especially obvious when the color is laid over a human face because the idea of green skin immediately equals illness in our minds. When a light-skinned person feels sick, their face becomes pale and sometimes slightly greenish in hue. Even if we have never seen a green-skinned person with our own eyes, a green face is commonly used in cartoons to imply sickness, especially the need to vomit, which makes the association fairly universal and intuitive for people exposed to these images. In this instance, the symbolism of sickliness is not literal but refers to psychological issues in the characters. The high, unnatural saturation of the image does its part in making the image 'more than real,' seeking to give the audience a sensory experience of horror. (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006, p. 159)

The blood effect is very clearly added on top of the original photo as some kind of a filter. This layering makes it obvious to the viewer that there is not really any blood on the actors' faces. It is almost as though the men are looking through a green-tinted glass with blood dripping down on it.

The stark color and the unreality of the green and bloody layer of the photo adds to its otherworldliness and lowers its modality, but it also adds symbolism to the image. Blood is a strong, globally recognized symbol. In this example, it represents murder, death, and violence. The blood is on the faces of both characters, because both are linked together by the inciting incident of the murder of Soo-hyun's fiancé, and both

¹ http://asianwiki.com/Kim_Jee-woon

men commit numerous bloody acts of violence throughout the film. They are both “stained” or “marked” by bloody acts.

Even though serial killers are very real, there is still a mythos surrounding them. Serial killers are often seen in movies, and people often get their ideas of what serial killers look like or do from the fictional media they have seen, rather than by studying real-life cases. We often associate images of blood splatter with horror or crime shows and movies on TV. Blood splatter is often used as a thematic decorative element in the posters and VHS/DVD/Blu-Ray cover art for movies that feature killers.

Seeing a movie poster with dripping blood not only identifies the genre of the film as something in the realm of horror or thriller but also allows viewers to assume that there is a murderer in the movie. What is interesting is that there are two faces on the poster, so the audience does not really know who the killer is. It could be assumed that both men are killers. In this case, though, only one man kills and one, while violent, does not. That is an important distinction, because we expect “justified” violence from movie heroes due to the codes we have been exposed to, but a murderer is always supposed to be seen as bad.

Both men are seen as floating heads because their necks are visible. It is unlikely that there is any particular symbolic meaning to this choice in this particular poster, but links to the movie’s story can be found here.

There are two explicit instances of decapitation present in the movie. The first is when the main character’s fiancé’s head is found in a river, and the second is right at the end, when Kyung-chul, her murderer, gets decapitated, in turn. In his case, he really does become a disembodied head, but I doubt this allusion was intended in the poster, because it does not make much sense to portray Soo-hyun in this same manner if this was intended as a nod to the decapitation scenes. This serves as a perfect example that not all symbols or meanings are intended by the designer, even if they can be rationalized based on plausible evidence. All interpretation is, after all, subjective, and every person will inevitably see an image differently.

In this example of a movie that has a very similar theme as *Oldboy*, we can see how the composition of a Korean sensibility and a primarily American one differ from each other. In the Korean poster, the left-to-right composition of the characters is similar to that in the *Oldboy* poster: antagonist on the left, protagonist on the right. The international poster, however, switches their placements with protagonist on the left and antagonist on the right. The faces occupy an equal amount of space on the poster. Therefore, neither is highlighted as more important than the other. With these two examples, we see how fluid the interpretation of “given” and “new,” on the left and the right respectively, can be when interpreting opposing characters in a movie poster.

There are more parallels to the Korean versions of the *Oldboy* poster in both posters because in each, only half of the characters’ faces are showing. Both posters also feature the same actor, Choi Min-sik, who plays the main character in *Oldboy* and the murderer in *I Saw the Devil*. It is a coincidence that I have two examples of the same actor pictured as half a face staring straight on. Despite the similar positioning and layout in these posters for two different movies with a similar theme, Choi appears almost unrecognizable, being seven years older than in *Oldboy* and beardless in *I Saw the Devil*.

In both posters for *I Saw the Devil* and the Korean *Oldboy* poster, comparisons can be drawn to Yin and Yang with the two different halves of the people completing each other. This fits the thematic division of evil, murderous antagonist, and wronged, vengeful protagonist.

4. FILM AS BASIS FOR POSTER EXAMINATION

4.1 THE VISUAL WORLD OF THE FILM

In this chapter, I use the imagery of the films the studied posters represent to compare to the decisions made about the poster designs. Film and poster are two very different mediums with different possibilities. While a movie has thousands of frames of imagery to convey its story and themes, a poster must advertise the content of the film in an interesting, aesthetic way – without giving away too much of the plot. While a typical advertisement must create a completely new story around the product, a movie poster in itself is an advertisement for an existing story with pre-existing visuals.

The movie and the poster do not have to look exactly alike, but as a representation of the product, the poster is supposed to sell the visual style of the film to the audience. It is, in fact, more uncommon to use something directly from the movie as a poster image, than it is to design and have the actors pose for a separate picture that represents some aspect or event in said film. None of the posters I examine feature a direct screenshot on them. I am interested, however, in finding out how closely the visuals of the posters match those of the films they represent.

4.2 MOVIE AND POSTER COLOR PALETTES

I made color palettes to represent each movie corresponding to the posters I study. I use these color palettes as representations of their respective films. The color palettes were compiled using a large image comped of screenshots spanning the film's entire duration, which was auto-processed using the website <http://www.cssdrive.com/imagepalette/index.php>. The purpose of these palettes is to aid me in comparing the colors chosen for the posters to those most prominently featured in the films themselves. In their 2002 article *Color as a semiotic mode: notes for a grammar of color* Kress and Van Leeuwen argue that color schemes may be becoming more important carriers of color meaning than the single hues. (p. 350) Choosing a set of aesthetically complementary and thematically fitting colors is an important part of the design process, both in the visual construction of a film and graphic design.

While the poster is a representation of the product, the designers do not necessarily have to make similar choices in its coloring. While many symbols attributed to certain colors are universal, like red and blood, for example, the cultural background of the product's region of origin should be considered when looking into the meanings

of colors. One of the key elements in creating an Asian aesthetic is the use of traditional colors. (Pugsley 2016, p. 19) In traditional Korean color symbolism blue, red, yellow, black, and yellow are the basic colors, and they are each attributed to one of five elements. The five colors symbolize the traditional principle of Yin and Yang, male and female, positive and negative and light and dark. The traditional colors also have other meanings unrelated to what I am looking for in this research, such as the various compass points and five different blessings. (Shin, Westland, Moore & Cheung 2012, p. 50-51)

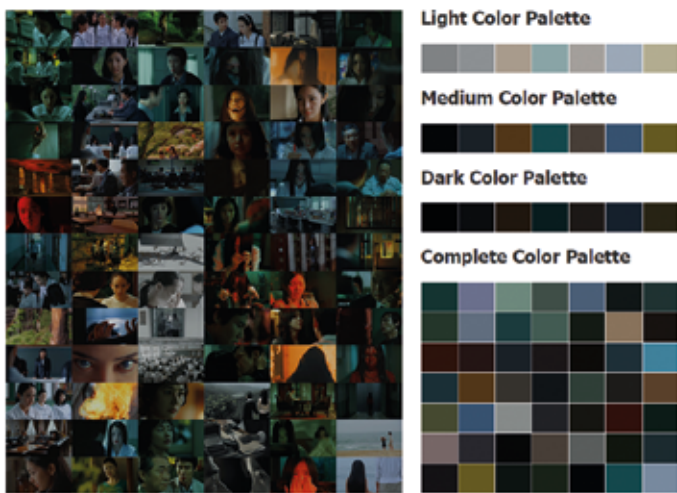


Figure 13: Color palette generated from screenshots from *Bunshinsaba*.

4.2.1 BUNSHINSABA

The color palettes for the posters are almost polar opposites, the Korean poster being mostly blue and cold and the English language poster being on the warmer side of the spectrum with yellows and browns mixed in with the many shades of gray. These palettes have only bits of reddish brown and blacks in common with each other. While both images are going for an

otherworldly, ghostly theme, the first poster features blue and the international one features gray to create the association. The grey tones in the international poster are reminiscent of the color palette used in the flashback scenes in the film.

Green and blue tones are used throughout most of the film. These green tones are juxtaposed by red lights. The flashback sequences, in their grayish, washed out tones, stand out from the rest of the film. Both posters pay homage to the film's original color selection. There are several blue-tinted scenes amidst the more greenish ones, as well as the aforementioned grayish flashbacks. Fiery reds and oranges are used similarly



Figure 14: *Bunshinsaba* Korean poster color palette

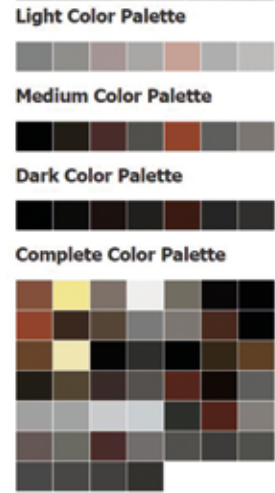


Figure 15: *Bunshinsaba* International poster color palette.

throughout the film. The movie's own color palette has something in common with those of both posters and, in a way, stands between the two with the addition of green as an in-between color.



Figure 16: Color palette generated from screenshots from *Oldboy*.

4.2.2 OLDBOY

The palette generated from screenshots of the *Oldboy* movie is mostly dark, with splashes of white, bright blue, and reddish browns. Brown and green seem to be the most commonly occurring colors in this interpretation of the film's color scheme. The color palette for the Korean poster is like a simplified version of the movie's color scheme with all greens and blues stripped off. All that we are left with is black, white, and a variety of brownish skin tones. The international poster's palette is filled with many different colors, mostly warm-toned ones. The deep black that was present in the palette for the movie and Korean poster are absent in this one, and the colors that are present in the International poster's palette do not coincide much with the movie palette, aside from some of the brown tones. There is no white in this palette either.



Figure 17: *Oldboy* Korean poster color palette

Figure 18: *Oldboy* International poster color palette.

and poster feature images of human faces and, therefore, warm beiges and browns are inevitably a big factor in all media that portrays humans with unaltered skin tones and warm lighting.

Both the film and poster also feature prominent blacks and whites, fitting the themes explored in the story.

The second poster went into a different direction in its choice of colors. The neon billboards skew the palette toward more pinks and purples than what can be found in the film itself. Because of the different colors, the overall mood in the international poster is not very similar to those of the other examples. The film palette and poster palette, however, do resemble each other slightly in vibrancy. The colors in the movie are more contrasted, some of them being more vibrant than those in the palette for the poster, but there are similar amounts of significant colors in movie and poster. The palette for the poster calculated by the artificial intelligence (AI) seems to be very muted compared to how brightly saturated the various neon lights look in the poster.

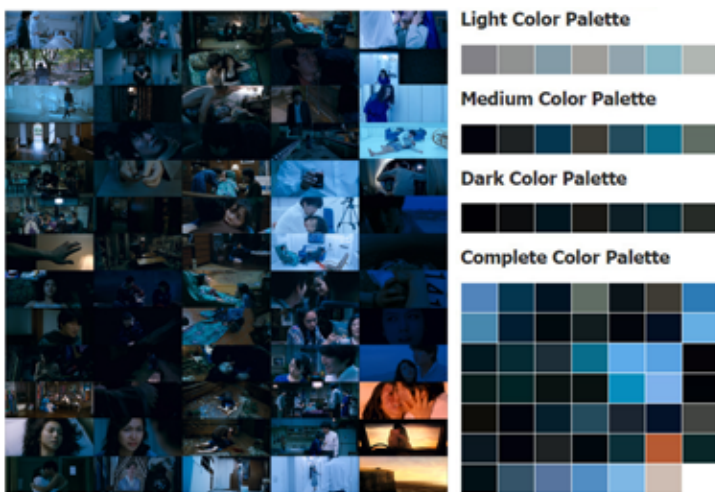


Figure 19: Color palette generated from screenshots from *Thirst*.

4.2.3 THIRST

The screenshot color palette for *Thirst* is overwhelmingly blue, with only a little bit of bright orange from the fiery desert finale of the movie. Apart from the final three, all screenshots heavily feature bluish tinted elements. The Korean poster does away with the striking blue, ending up with an almost monochromatic palette with only slight variation from dusky blues and muted beiges. The differences in hue are very subtle.

The international poster is highly color contrasted and offers a very small selection of colors. The colors are mostly very dark, with only a little bit of light, grayish skin tone, two browns, and the bright red featured in the title text.

When it comes to color, the two posters have much more in common with each other than the colors seen in the movie. According to this interpretation of color palettes, the international poster strays far from the blue-tinted colors of the movie to the opposite, warm spectrum. There is more pitch-black in both posters than in the movie.



Figure 20: *Thirst* Korean poster color palette

Figure 21: *Thirst* International poster color palette.

It is interesting to see what colors a computer deems as important to an image compared to the human eye. A person would most likely have picked out the red of the text in the Korean poster as an important color because of its high salience in contrast to the muted colors in the photo. This pop of color did not make the same impression on the AI that calculated the colors used because it does not occupy enough space to be considered as part of the poster's color scheme by a machine. The similarly used red in the international poster gets featured because there is more surface area that is entirely black, which gives the red more value. There is also slightly more red in the second poster because it is also used in the two smaller bits of text.

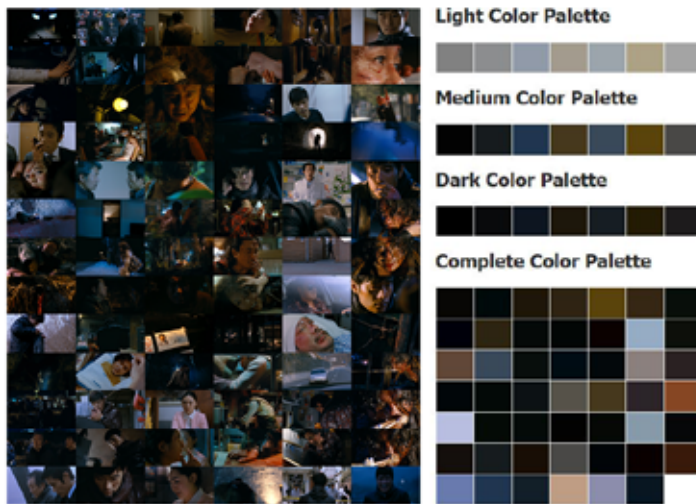


Figure 22: Color palette generated from screenshots from *I Saw the Devil*.

4.2.4 I SAW THE DEVIL

The film's color palette is murky and earthy, with dark tones, browns, swampy greens, and some light blues and purples mixed in. Similar lilac or purplish colors can be seen in the Korean poster's palette. The reds used in both posters do not show up in the movie's palette. The only warm tones present in the palette are dark browns and one lighter brown that looks slightly more yellowish than the others. Without the added text, the Korean poster's photo might match the movie's palette more while still being somewhat richer in color. The international poster's automatically generated palette also features greens and some dark browns, but the color palette is much more saturated than that of the film. In both posters, the colors pop more than those in the movie.

The palettes for the posters have red and black in common with each other. The color manipulation in the English language poster leads to green being prominently included in the poster's color palette, whereas the Korean version features many hues of



Figure 23: *I Saw the Devil* Korean poster color palette

Figure 24: *I Saw the Devil* International poster color palette.

brown and beige from the characters' faces. These types of tones become a part of many posters' color schemes by default if human faces or bodies are prominently featured. Putting a filter over the human faces is one method of acquiring more freedom in the colors chosen. Many of the posters examined so far have used this technique to some degree. This technique is suitable for a horror movie poster because the subject matter is often meant to evoke feelings of eerie otherworldliness.

The red and green used in the international poster are also present in the other poster, in the antagonist's clothing. The jacket worn by the protagonist in the Korean poster adds purple tones to the mix. The Korean poster that seems to be relatively less colorful because of the lower saturation and vibrancy, in fact, contains more variety in its color scheme. The palette for the international poster focuses on two pairs of opposing colors: (1) black and white and (2) red and green.

4.3 COMPARING THE FILM AND ITS POSTER DESIGNS

None of the posters in my collection show scenes from the films. I attempted to find screenshots from the movies that most closely resemble what the designers chose to represent the films in poster form. I call visually similar moments in the films visual parallels to the poster. Visual or cinematic parallels are commonly used in film analysis. Using imagery similar to something the audience has seen before (either within the film or in broader culture) gives the image added meaning. Visual parallels between films or other works of art that are not directly related to each other can be conscious tributes, allusions, or mere coincidences. (Bakutyte 2016) In a poster for a film, parallels can be assumed to always be deliberate and thought out, although accidental nods to some content of the film can also occur without the designer being directly aware of or intending the connection.

4.3.1 BUNSHINSABA

It is uncommon, in film, to use the convention of looking directly into the camera to engage with the viewer. Unlike in photographs, in movies, this may break the illusion that the viewer is observing another world without being part of it by being seen ourselves. (Lister & Wells 2001. p. 75) This can be seen in the comparison between both posters for *Bunshinsaba* and the visual content of the film itself.

The movie *Bunshinsaba* uses many close-ups of characters to convey their emotions and fearful, intense expressions. These are also reflected in both versions of the poster.

Parallels to the posters are mostly found in scenes that involve fire and the burning of several girls' heads in trash bags. These images of heads on fire are hinted at in both posters in more subtle ways. In the Korean poster, the middle girl's head is enveloped in a cloud of blue smoke, which turns into an orange flame. The international poster shows flames licking the girl's face and hair. There is no trash bag in the posters, and the flames are subtler than the intensely burning fire that is seen in the actual film.

Both posters allude to the same aspect of the story – the ghostly burning girls. In the film, the ghost is never seen with flames or smoke surrounding her head. She is always seen with an already slightly burned face, slightly like the texture used in the

international poster, albeit less pleasing to the eye. The symbolic flames and smoke are an artistic choice in the poster design and not an element that was lifted straight from the film's visual choices.

The choice to give the main character red eyes in the English poster is also a deviation from the film. In the movie, Kim In-sook's eyes are milky and unseeing, but never red. This artistic choice is there to symbolize fire and the supernatural, and to bring color to the poster.

The supernatural element present in the movie gives the poster more leeway in how the ghostly entity is presented. A ghost, already an inhuman entity, can be shown in different forms, whereas a realistic person can only be manipulated visually to an extent before becoming inhuman in appearance.



Figure 25: Screenshot example of a closeup of Yoo-jin, similar to the poster image.



Figure 26: Kim In-sook's mother standing in front of fire creates a vague parallel to the International poster with Kim In-sook on fire



Figure 27: Example of a much more dramatic head on fire as shown in the movie than those presented in the posters.

4.3.2 OLDBOY

The Korean poster for *Oldboy* mirrors the style of the movie by drawing influence from a split screen technique used during the climactic final confrontation between the antagonist and protagonist.



Figure 28: Oh Dae-su and Lee Woo-jin presented in split screen

While in the poster, the characters are shown at differing distances from the viewer, the film shows the two characters in close-up, as if they are two sides of one face. This split screen technique is briefly used a few times in the film to simultaneously bring two different parts of the story together. In this example closest to the image of the poster, the antagonist is explaining his plot and the face of the protagonist from the past appears alongside his, showing that the antagonist was the orchestrator behind this moment with the telephone that we already saw.

The characters are put on opposite sides to what we see here in the poster. This may be because in the scene, Dae-su, the protagonist, is a flashback image or a memory, while Woo-jin, the antagonist, is speaking about the past in the present. Therefore Dae-su is placed in the position of the “given” and Woo-jin is placed in the position of the “new.” (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006, p. 180) This positioning is not necessary in the poster because, there, it is assumed that both men are living in the same moment. It is also beneficial to switch the characters around in the poster because in the poster, the protagonist is in a position of power, larger and on the right, whereas in the scene in the movie, the antagonist is the one in control.

Unlike the previous example in *Bunshinsaba*, this parallel scene in the movie features the characters looking directly forward, just like in the poster. In this scene, the direct eye contact does not break audience immersion in the film because the audience is put into Dae-su’s perspective, looking “through his eyes,” enabling them to empathize with him.

The poster appears to be very faithful to the film’s artistic choices when compared to this scene. The poster relays the same message using similar methods and, therefore, can be said to give an accurate idea of what imagery the movie contains.

The international poster takes more liberties with the representation of imagery in the film, drawing reference from different scenes rather than a single source of inspiration.



Figures 29 & 30: The two instances where Dae-su and Mi-do are seen walking together.

There are two scenes in which Dae-su and Mi-do walk together in public, but in the movie, they are shot from behind both times. The scenery is also not like to the neon-lit nighttime city in the poster. Both scenes in the film appear to be in the daytime. The second one is set in a brightly lit shopping center, and it can be deduced from the context of the film that this scene is set in the morning. These scenes do not share visual similarities with the poster, but they may have served as the inspiration behind it. In both scenes Dae-su is clothed similarly to how he appears in the poster, but Mi-do's outfits and hairstyle do not match the picture in the poster. She is walking behind Dae-su in both instances, which is mirrored in the poster, but they are not touching as they walk in the film.



Figure 31: The only shot of neon signs in *Oldboy*.

Neon signs similar to those in the poster image are briefly seen in a cutaway shot, but the characters are not outside at this moment. This shot is a brief glimpse into the outside world in the middle of a different scene. This is the only glimpse to a brightly lit nighttime city I could find in the film itself. This brief shot ties the settings of the movie and poster closer together but does not exactly justify the heavy focus on neon signs in the poster. I doubt the makers of the poster had this shot in mind when designing the poster. Nothing of importance happens outside when this shot is shown because the important events are going on elsewhere.

4.3.3 THIRST

For most of the film's duration, Tae-ju wears blue dresses, unlike the white she wears in the Korean poster. There are instances in which she wears white, but nothing that looks exactly like the one in the poster. A moment in the film that most closely resembles what we see in the poster is when Tae-ju runs away from home in a white nightgown and Sang-hyun lifts her up from behind, takes off his shoes and lowers her bare feet into them. He is wearing his priest's uniform in the scene. The shot after this mirrors the poster's composition most closely, from what I could find.



Figure 32: Similar composition to the Korean poster in *Thirst*.

This moment in the film is quite gentle and loving and occurs before the characters' descent into a world of violence. It appears that the poster may have taken inspiration from this scene and the tension in their romance develops later on. No images in the movie offer any explanation as to what they may be looking at in the poster photo, apart from maybe the sun that will burn them because they are vampires. I would argue that Tae-ju is not presented as a vampire in the poster, however. I think the poster displays a more innocent version of Tae-ju before she turned into a vampire, much like how she is in this tender scene.

The nightgown she is wearing here is different from her usual, modest, and proper clothing. She is vulnerable wearing this, and the garment shows slight parallels to both posters. It is both a white gown, like in the Korean poster, and the most revealing thing she wears throughout the movie, and therefore, it is the closest thing she wears in the movie to the black "strapless dress" she can be imagined wearing in the international poster.

There are several parallels between the international poster and the movie. An obvious mirror for the characters' position in the poster is during a sex scene.



Figure 33: Sang-hyun's and Tae-ju's positioning in the international poster is mirrored in a love scene.

However, there is another scene that resembles the poster more closely than this. It happens when Tae-ju drinks blood directly from Sang-hyun's mouth and he pushes her away. We are then shown them separately in two shots:



Figures 34 & 35: The positioning of the international poster mirrored in the movie, shown in two shots.

The positioning of the characters in this scene is the most similar to that of the poster out of the many that somewhat resemble it. Sang-hyun also has blood on his lips in this instance, but both characters are significantly more covered in blood in this scene in the movie than in the poster. Also, rather than just Sang-hyun feeding on Tae-ju, she drinks his blood in the scene and subsequently turns into a vampire. She is a victim of murder who is still in a vulnerable position underneath Sang-hyun despite taking back control by feeding on him in turn.

There are two instances in which Sang-hyun strangles Tae-ju, but not the other way around like in the poster. Tae-ju hits and is in other ways violent toward Sang-hyun many times during the movie, so showing her choking him in the poster is not far from the truth of the film.

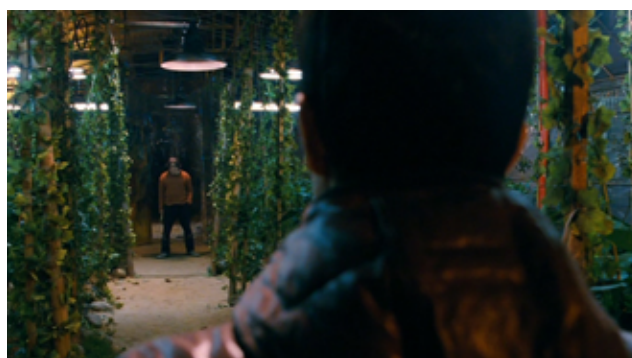
When looking at the scenes in *Thirst* that look most like the international poster, one can draw a conclusion that the poster mirrors elements of sexuality and violence from the film. The poster is, therefore, an artistically faithful portrayal of the characters in the movie.

It is hard to say which poster looks most like the movie. Both have taken a different stylistic direction from the film in terms of color, but in terms of character composition, both are essentially sending the same message about the relationship between the same two characters. The relatively chaste Korean poster ended up being widely circulated because of censorship, but it works to give a mostly accurate idea of what it is trying to tell the viewer about the film. Both posters allude to the vampire theme, but they do so as a theme of secondary importance to the nature of the relationship between the two.

Park Chan-Wook intentionally combines beautiful imagery with extreme violence in his films to create a dissonance in the viewer (Pugsley 2016, p. 67) Both posters have a similar style that goes hand-in-hand with the visual feel of the movie.

4.3.4 I SAW THE DEVIL

The two main characters stand facing each other in the scene in which they first meet. Particularly Soo-hyun, the protagonist, looks similar to how he is depicted in the Korean poster. He is wearing the same jacket and a determined expression. The lighting is also similar on both characters. The lights are hanging above the characters, and Soo-hyun's face is more lit up than Kyung-chul's relatively more shadowed face. This scene is far from identical to that in the poster in that both characters are standing far away from each other and Kyung-chul is wearing different clothing. The red plaid shirt seen in the poster makes an appearance later on in the film. The characters are dressed the same as in the poster in a



Figures 36, 37 & 38: Kyung-chul and Soo-hyun face each other from a considerable distance unlike the close proximity shown in the Korean poster.

scene together, but there is no moment at which they face each other like this in that part of the movie.

The film does not feature a direct parallel in which the two main characters are facing each other in profile in the same shot. In the face-to-face meeting scene the camera turns from one character to the other, showing them facing each other, but there is no moment when both faces can be seen at the same time. This style of focusing on one face at a time continues throughout the film.



Figures 39, 40 & 41: Instances where the characters have bloody faces.

The international poster features both actors side by side with blood added to their faces as a photo manipulation effect. There are no shots of the two characters facing the camera side by side in the movie. It is impossible to find a moment in the film with the same character positioning because it would require the two enemies to stand unnaturally close to each other, looking into the camera. While this positioning can work in a poster, it would never make sense in a movie that is aiming at realism. The picture in the poster can be interpreted as two pictures of the two men looking at each other that have been put side by side. As mentioned before, this interpretation could be an homage to an amalgamation of different scenes throughout the film.

Kyung-chul has blood on his face in multiple different instances in the movie. The scene in which he gets out of the car is, perhaps, the closest mirror to the poster because of his similar hair style and the dripping pattern of the blood. He has a very bloody face again at the end of the movie, but in this scene he is much more disheveled looking, and the blood is on the bottom of his face, so this image does not match the feel

of the poster. The poster depicts Kyung-chul in his slick, calculating killer image, not defeated, vulnerable, and injured like in the movie's climactic scenes.

Soo-hyun does not appear as bloody at any point in the film. He has a little bit of blood on his face at the end, but this hardly comes close to the effect displayed in the poster. Rather than being a depiction of what can be seen in the film, the blood added to the poster is symbolic of the blood on the characters' hands, or in this case, heads.

결론

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 FINDINGS

In two out of four examples, the English language posters show the characters looking at the viewer instead of at each other or somewhere off screen. The Korean posters focus on the relationships between characters. Faces are often chosen to be the most salient elements in many posters.

The circular composition that is typical in most Asian countries is quite uncommon in Anglo-Western visualization, and this can be seen in what kind of images are favored in the English versions of the posters. (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006, p. 194) The circular or central composition model favored by Asian designers can be clearly seen in some of the posters, but not all of them. (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006, p. 194) The circular model involves positioning the most salient part of the image into the center with less important elements situated around it in the margins. (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006, p. 196) An international poster for a Korean movie is not meant to look like a poster for a non-Korean movie, so the designs often take influence from Asian conventions. After all, the movie's Korean-ness is also a selling point for these films, and it would be a mistake to hide it.

The Western counterparts of the posters have left-to-right composition more often than the Korean ones, but there are exceptions. The base images of the posters are always of Korean origin, even if the product is presented for an Anglo-Western audience, which can make the design choices in the posters more Asian in nature than if they were designed entirely from a Western point of view from start to finish.

Five out of eight posters use direct gaze to hold the viewer's attention. These examples were found both in Korean and international posters. Based on this evidence, I would not consider this representational choice an important variable in comparing Eastern and Western sensibilities. This method of visualization has equal psychological power, regardless of the culture of the person observing the photo.

Every poster in this collection had some sort of dark background, or a considerable amount of the space used was in shadows or black. This was to be expected because all are movies about some form of dark themes. The use of black is consistent within the styles of all posters, there is no noticeable difference in how darkness is used in Korean and international versions of the posters.

English language posters tend to use more striking, saturated, and contrasting colors than Korean ones. Korean posters tend to have more harmonious and undersaturated

color palettes. Of course, this is not always true because there are also international posters with muted, Korea-influenced palettes. Color scheme is a likely element to change from the original poster to the English language version. The designers of posters for K-Horror do not seem to be too bothered to go with the specific types of color seen in the film. Just like how people usually do not look into the camera in movies, but frequently do just that in posters, different things work for these different mediums.

The genre of horror (or thriller, depending on how the genres are classified) leads designers in a certain universal direction in their choices of color. Black and red are very popular, classic “horror” colors that symbolize darkness and blood, which in turn, symbolize the very common universal fears of the unknown and bodily harm. If designers want to stray from the convention of using bright red, a fiery orange can take its place. Orange, like red, is an adrenaline-inducing color that signifies danger.

Altering the color of human skin is used most commonly in posters for K-Horror films that feature supernatural elements. Making the characters seem otherworldly, and usually paler than regular people, gives the viewer cues that the film deals with ghosts or vampires. The technique is not, however, tied exclusively to supernatural films. Realistic films can also play around with elements in the poster, because the poster is meant to convey an idea, rather than fully tell a story like the film does.

Original Korean posters often show more subtle nuances and hints about the inner worlds of the people in them than the Western versions. Western posters emphasize eye-catching elements like fire, city lights, sex, violence, and blood, while Korean posters focus on who the characters are, what they are feeling and how they relate to each other. Original Korean versions of the posters are likely to show the characters close to the camera and the viewer. The observer has more insight into what may be going on with the characters before seeing the film, while the plot is still only vaguely hinted at (and mostly via text rather than image). The international posters are even more vague about the plot, not even offering any teaser text akin to that in the Korean posters. Both versions sometimes aim to sell the movie by advertising the creators’ previous successful films rather than focusing on the film’s own merits.

Only one poster out of all eight showed only one single character. Because there’s only one character, conclusions cannot be drawn about whether this choice is tied to it being a Western interpretation or if it is used equally in other posters from Korea and the West. I think, however, that this supports my idea that interpersonal relationships are not as highlighted in the Hollywood model of advertising a movie via a single image. While both Korean and American films sometimes do a series of posters featuring different characters in their own solo posters, this one is not part of such collection. This example is a standalone poster, that just happened to have one character to represent the whole movie. This is not a bad or inferior choice, just significantly unpopular among my examples.

K-Horror movie posters are very likely to feature faces with serious or scared expressions. Smiling or happy emotions would not be as effective at presenting the image of a scary and intense film, so this is to be expected. There are no maniacally smiling monsters or killers in any of these posters, even though that is also a common horror movie poster trope. Perhaps, this trope is not as much a part of Korean horror cinema as it is in Hollywood film.

Visual allusions to the Yin and Yang symbol can be found more in Korean posters than Western ones. These choices may be completely subliminal or unintentional, but the symbol holds a significant amount of importance in the minds of Koreans. Even the Korean flag has the shape of this symbol within it. The Yin and Yang analogies also lend themselves to the circular composition that is favored in Asian design. It may very well be that the initial popularization of the model of circular composition can be partially attributed to this very symbol and its widespread use and importance in the minds of many people in most East Asian countries.

The typography used in the posters works along similar lines in most of them. Calligraphy-influenced writing and typefaces are commonly used in Korean posters, and some international designers try to emulate the style by also choosing Western-style calligraphy fonts, even if they are not Asiatic in nature. Korean posters aiming for a more modern style than the ones using calligraphy fonts like to use blocky, square-shaped type. This kind of typography is suited to more action-focused movies, whereas films with supernatural elements tend to have more hand-drawn looking text in their posters.

It is surprising how often Western designers attempt to keep a similar feel in the lettering, despite how very different the writing systems are in Korea and Western nations. While some posters nod to the original typography, they do not make the mistake of attempting to appropriate the style of *Hangul* writing through the use of fonts that try to look “Asian.” These types of “Asiatic” fonts can sometimes be seen in the menus for restaurants that specialize in various Asian cuisines. Doing the same for a movie poster would be tacky and appropriative. All international posters, therefore, maintain their own, Western cultural context for the typography.

It is obvious that the switch from one writing system to another is going to significantly change the feel of the poster. The English language takes up more space than *Hangul*, in which all individual words are the same width, and while English can be read vertically, it is not used commonly enough to give Anglo-Western designers the same freedom of text layout as their South Korean colleagues.

The stylistic choices in the original posters do not always seem to influence the Western designer who is tasked with the repackaging of the film for a different audience. The versions do not necessarily resemble each other, and the results of redesigning can alter the message of the original posters quite significantly.

The central finding of my research is that K-Horror posters get a slightly Americanized makeover in the international export process. The poster image gets translated for the new audiences from a different culture’s point of view, along with the text, while maintaining some of the Korean essence. While K-Horror is not mainstream at this point, the international posters still highlight the movies’ Korean-ness through their visual elements. English-speaking audiences are given posters with more attention-grabbing imagery and less focus on subtle hints about the inner workings of the characters than Korean ones.

5.2 METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Graphic design is not a research-heavy section of the university sphere, and doing research like this with little experience did not come naturally to me. The biggest challenges I faced while conducting this research were in the highly theoretical portions of the thesis. Explaining and applying semiotic principles was difficult for me. It was difficult to make sense of all the different schools of thought within semiotics. I struggled with trying to find a non-contradictory approach to semiotics and putting those principles into my own words felt impossible at times. Understanding the main schools of thought within semiotics took time, and I needed to hone my skills in reading academic texts. I feel that I managed to find an understanding of the study and the theories of its main influencers, and eventually found ways to summarize them in my own paper.

Despite my difficulty with semiotics, I feel that close reading using semiotic principles was the best way to approach my subject. While there are other methodologies under the umbrella of semiotics that would have also been fitting, I think none would have been as good for this particular material and problem as close reading was.

Picking the posters to be examined was sometimes frustrating because there were several posters I would have liked to use, but no matter how hard I tried, I could not find high-resolution versions that would have been print-worthy. Therefore, the posters I picked were not all my personal favorites. In a way, not being able to pick the exact posters I would have initially wanted made my material impartial and varied, which was a positive thing. I think I examined the posters with equal attention, some just had more things to observe than others.

The color palette and screenshot mirror portions of the thesis were added because I wanted to do them out of personal interest. I think they bring their own value in the analysis and demonstrate my points about how the posters represent and resemble their respective movies. I strongly feel that taking the films into consideration when looking at the posters enriches the analysis and makes it easier to discover intended meanings in the images. Of course, looking at posters without seeing the films first and then watching the film would have been another way to gauge whether the posters are successful in advertising the film to an unfamiliar audience. That method would also be valid and that way I would have both the perspective of someone who doesn't know the movie and someone who does.

I do not regret my decision to write in English. I still feel that it was a fitting decision, given the subject of my research, and did not cause me any notable issues. In some ways, writing in English was easier than writing in Finnish, given that most of my resources were already in English and I did not need to translate much. Writing in English did introduce some unique issues, though. Namely, when I used Finnish books, I sometimes had to retranslate translated text back to English, which was strange. Using Finnish sources along with English ones can be a little confusing, it would have been the same with English sources if I was to write in Finnish.

If I was to take my research further, I might want to examine the posters for completely American remakes of Korean horror movies. There is a Hollywood remake of *Oldboy*, for example, and it would be interesting to see how much the visual representation of the poster changed when the entire movie was remade within a different culture. My

research into that subject, however, might be negatively biased due to my principled dislike for the Hollywood practice of remaking films mainly so people would not have to read subtitles or expose themselves to unfamiliar cultures.

Another way to bring my research further would be to take all posters ever published for a few movies and compare those as a group. Content analysis would be a suitable method for discovering patterns in many posters, and it would be interesting to do. In fact, I considered doing something like this for my master's thesis. Before deciding to analyze four pairs of posters, I thought about taking a bigger collection of Korean horror movie posters and finding the trends used within them. That would have been an interesting alternative to the research I ended up doing, but I opted for a simpler collection of material. A large collection of posters would not have allowed me to go as deeply into any of them as I was able here and might have been too much to handle for a master's thesis.

Having eight posters to examine turned out to be a good amount, comfortably resulting in a comprehensive text that was not too long or too short. The more you look at a picture, the more things you keep finding, but I feel that I have said enough in this text and do not need to go further with any of these particular posters, at least without adding more specimens to the study material. There is potential for additional findings with the addition of more examples of posters.

Overall, I am glad I picked a subject I am passionate about because it made the analysis enjoyable, interesting, and motivating. Being very familiar with the films and posters I studied made it possible for me to understand my study material in a deep way. I think I would not have obtained the results or been as motivated without my familiarity with and expertise in my subject.

The experience of writing this thesis has been a big life lesson for me. I learned to find and use sources well beyond my previous expectations. I learned that conducting research can be something you actually want to do rather than just being something one is forced into. I learned to find enjoyment in immersing myself in a long-term academic project. I learned to structure a project and stick to a self-imposed work schedule. I also learned to apply a scientific framework in how I make observations about my material.

The guidance meetings helped me find motivation and new directions to continue in. Our group's instructor, Mari Mäkiranta, helped me along with suggestions and guidance. Working closely with my opponent, Liina Hautakoski, provided me with lots of added peer support and good ideas.

SOURCES:

- (1993) **Best of Graphis: Poster**. Gingko Pr Inc
- Altman, Rick (1998) **Film/Genre**. British Film Institute.
- Barthes, Roland (1991) **Mythologies** (25th printing). The Noonday Press.
- Barthes, Roland (1997) **Rhetoric of the Image**. Image, Music, Text, 1997, pages 32-51.
- Beckett, Stephen J. & Kim, Hoo-sung (2014) **Design as Ideology: An Analysis of the Opposition of Global and Local in South Korean Design**. The Design Journal, 2014, vol 17, Issue 1, pages 9-28. Bloomsbury publishing PLC.
- Bell, Philip (2001) **Content Analysis of Visual Images**. Handbook of Visual Analysis, chapter 2, pages 10-34. Sage Publications.
- Bignell, Jonathan (2002) **Media Semiotics: An Introduction** (2nd Edition). Manchester University Press.
- Chandler, Daniel (2007) **Semiotics: The Basics** (2nd edition). Routledge.
- Cheetham, Marcus (2018) **The Uncanny Valley Hypothesis and Beyond**. Frontiers in Psychology.
- Choi, Jinhee (2010) **The South Korean Film Renaissance: Local Hitmakers, Global Provocateurs**. Wesleyan.
- Cobley, Paul & Jansz, Litza (1997) **Introducing Semiotics**. Icon Books Ltd.
- Eco, Umberto (1976) **A Theory of Semiotics**. Indiana University Press.
- Eliot, Simon & Rose, Jonathan (2009) **A Companion to The History of the Book**. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Fiske, John (1992) **Merkkien kieli: Johdatus viestinnän tutkimiseen**. Vastapaino.
- Guffey, Elizabeth E. (2015) **Posters: A Global History**. Reaktion Books.
- Hammer, Elizabeth (2001) **The Arts of Korea: A Resource for Educators**. The Metropolitan museum of Art, New York.
- Ibbi, Andrew Ali (2013) **Hollywood, The American Image and The Global Film Industry**. Cinej Cinema Journal 2013, Vol 3.1. University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Kawin, Bruce F. (2012) **New Perspectives on World Cinema: Horror and the Horror Film**. Anthem Press.
- King, Emily (2003) **Movie Poster**. Octopus Publishing Group Ltd

Kress, Gunther & van Leeuwen, Theo (2002) **Colour as a semiotic mode: notes for a grammar of colour**. *Visual communication*, 2002, vol 1 (3), pages 343-369. Sage publications.

Kress, Gunther & van Leeuwen, Theo (2006) **Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design** (2nd Edition). Routledge.

Lehtonen, Kimmo (1991) **Mainoskuva – mielikuva**. VAPK-Kustannus.

Lister, Martin & Wells, Liz (2001) **Seeing Beyond Belief: Cultural Studies as an Approach to Analysing the Visual**. *Handbook of Visual Analysis* chapter 4, pages 61-91. Sage Publications.

Magistrale, Tony (2005) **Abject Terrors: Surveying the Modern and Postmodern Horror Film**. Peter Lang International Academic Publishers.

McHugh, Kathleen & Abelmann, Nancy (2005) **South Korean Golden Age Melodrama: Gender, Genre and National Cinema**. Wayne State University Press Detroit.

Mercer, John (2004) **Melodrama: Genre, Style, Sensibility**. Wallflower Press.

Metz, Christian (1991) **Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema**. The University of Chicago Press.

Mulvey, Laura (1989) **Visual and Other Pleasures**. Indiana University Press.

Paquet, Darcy (2009) **New Korean Cinema: Breaking the Waves**. Columbia University Press.

Peirse, Alison & Martin, Daniel (2013) **Korean Horror Cinema**. Edinburgh University Press.

Pugsley, Peter C. (2016) **Tradition, Culture and Aesthetics in Contemporary Asian Cinema**. Routledge.

Richards, Andy (2010) **Asian Horror**. Oldcastle books.

Shin, Meong Jin & Westland, Stephen & Moore, Edel M & Cheung, Vien (2012) **Colour preferences for traditional Korean colours**. *Journal of the International Colour Association* (2012): 9, pages 49-59.

Smith, Stephen M. & McIntosh, William D. & Bazzini, Doris G. (1999) **Are the beautiful good in Hollywood? An investigation of the beauty and goodness stereotype on film**. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* (Mar 1999), vol 21(1), pages 69-80. Taylor & Francis.

Stam, Robert (2005) **New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics**. Routledge.

Stathi, Irini (2014) **Film and New Art Media Semiotics: On the Figural**. Semiotics and Visual Communication: Concepts and Practices (2014) chapter 3, pages 139-149. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Tyler, Ann C. (1992) **Shaping Belief: The Role of Audience in Visual Communication**. Design Issues 9, no.1, pages 21-29. The MIT Press.

van Leeuwen, Theo (2001) **Semiotics and Iconography**. Handbook of Visual Analysis chapter 5, pages 92-118. Sage Publications.

van Looy, Jan & Baetens, Jan (2003) **Close reading New Media: Analyzing Electronic Literature**. Leuven University Press.

INTERNET SOURCES:

Bakutyte, Justine (2016) **Video Compilation of Juxtaposed Movie Scenes Reveals Unexpected Parallels** [read 9.4.2018]

<http://www.konbini.com/us/entertainment/candice-drouet-similar-movie-scenes-compilation/>

Boyles, Nancy (2013) **Closing in on close reading** [read 9.4.2018]

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/dec12/vol70/num04/Closing-in-on-Close-Reading.aspx>

Buena Vista International company information [read 9.4.2018]

<https://www.bloomberg.com/research/stocks/private/snapshot.asp?privcapId=30826092>

Bunshinsaba on Wikipedia [read 9.4.2018]

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bunshinsaba>

Connotation: definition in the Oxford dictionary [read 9.4.2018]

<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/connotation>

CSS Drive's Image to Colors Palette Generator [read 9.4.2018]

<http://www.cssdrive.com/imagepalette/index.php>

Han, Sunhee (2009) **Korean 'Thirst' poster banned** [read 9.4.2018]

<http://variety.com/2009/biz/news/korean-thirst-poster-banned-1118001471/>

Hand rubbing TV trope [read 9.4.2018]

<http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/HandRubbing>

Hoare, James (2015) **Chinese Hopping Vampires: The Quing Dynasty roots behind the Jiangshi legend** [read 9.4.2018]

<https://www.historyanswers.co.uk/people-politics/chinese-hopping-vampires-the-gruesome-origin-of-the-jiangshi-legend/>

I Saw the Devil on Wikipedia [read 9.4.2018]

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Saw_the_Devil

Intertextuality: definition in the Oxford dictionary [read 9.4.2018]

<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/intertextuality>

Kang, Starr (2017) **Traditional Korean colors** [read 9.4.2018]

<https://oureverydaylife.com/traditional-korean-colors-12082934.html>

Kim Jee-woon (director) on Asianwiki [read 9.4.2018]

http://asianwiki.com/Kim_Jee-woon

Larkin, Karen Y. **Korean School Uniform** [read 9.4.2018]

http://kids.lovetoknow.com/wiki/Korean_School_Uniforms

Oldboy on Asianwiki [read 9.4.2018]

<http://asianwiki.com/Oldboy>

Onryō mythology information [read 9.4.2018]

<http://yokai.com/onryou/>

Protagonist & Antagonist: definitions [read 9.4.2018]

<http://learn.lexiconic.net/characters.htm>

Rampal, Kuldip (2005) **Cultural Imperialism or Economic Necessity?: The Hollywood Factor in the Reshaping of the Asian Film Industry** [read 9.4.2018]

<http://www.razonypalabra.org.mx/anteriores/n43/krampal.html>

Rice, John A. (1961) **Bentley Discusses Appeal of Melodrama** [read 9.4.2018]

<http://www.thecrimson.com/article/1961/3/3/bentley-discusses-appeal-of-melodrama-peric/>

Rose, Steve (2013) **Why Hollywood doesn't get South Korean cinema** [read 9.4.2018]

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2013/nov/29/old-boy-remake-South-Korean-cinema>

Salience: definition in the Oxford dictionary [read 9.4.2018]

<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/salience>

Shepherd, Jessica (2010) **World education rankings: which country does best at reading, maths and science?** [read 9.4.2018]

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2010/dec/07/world-education-rankings-maths-science-reading>

Thirst on Wikipedia [read 9.4.2018]

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirst_\(2009_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirst_(2009_film))

Top 40 education systems in the world [read 9.4.2018]

<http://www.master-and-more.eu/en/news-detail/news/top-40-education-systems-in-the-world/>

Van Winkel, Rafael (2015) **Building on Typography Trends in Movie Poster Design** [read 9.4.2018]
<http://www.printmag.com/typography/typography-movie-poster-design/>

FILMS:

박쥐 (*Bakjwi*) / **Thirst** (2009) Dir. Park Chan-Wook. CJ Entertainment.

분신사바 (*Bunshinsaba*) / **Bunshinsaba: Ouija Board** / *Witchboard* (2004) Dir. Ahn Byung-ki. Buena Vista International: Korea.

악마를 보았다 (*Akmareul Boattda*) / **I Saw the Devil** (2010) Dir. Kim Jee-woon. Showbox Mediaplex co.

올드보이 (*Oldeuboi*) / **Oldboy** (2003) Dir. Park Chan-Wook. Show East.

POSTERS:

Bunshinsaba Korean poster © 2004 Buena Vista

Bunshinsaba international poster © 2004 Buena Vista

Oldboy Korean poster © 2003 Show East

Oldboy international poster © 2003 Show East © 2005 Tartan Films USA

Thirst Korean poster © 2009 CJ Entertainment

Thirst international poster © 2009 CJ Entertainment

I Saw the Devil Korean poster © Showbox Mediaplex co

I Saw the Devil international poster © Showbox Mediaplex co

All posters and movie screenshots are used under fair use and academic citation rights and belong to their respective owners.

OTHER SOURCES:

Korean to English translation of text in the movie posters provided by Chel Woong Kim.

APPENDIX:

ATTACHMENT 1: PLOT SYNOPSIS FOR EACH MOVIE

BUNSHINSABA:

Lee Yoo-jin is a transfer student from Seoul, and along with two of her friends, she is constantly being bullied by a group of classmates. One night, Yoo-jin and her friends decide to place a curse on their enemies by creating a Ouija board on which they write the names of the female bullies. Using the *Bunshinsaba* curse, her friend warns the others not to open their eyes until the spell is finished. The calling takes effect, and Yoo-jin, somewhat curious, opens her eyes. To her shock and horror, she sees an image of a pale-like dead girl with long hair beside her.

The next morning when Yoo-jin enters the classroom, she discovers the corpse of one of the bullies on top of the desk, with a burned face. Meanwhile, the school hires a volunteer teacher, Lee Eun-ju, as the new art instructor. She starts to call the roll in her class and stumbles on seat number 29 as she mentions the name of a deceased girl, Kim In-sook. The students are terrified when they hear the name, and rush out of the classroom when they see her talking to thin air. The only one left is Yoo-jin, who tells Eun-ju that Kim In-sook doesn't exist. Eun-ju takes another look at the seat and realizes that there's no name at seat number 29. Suddenly, Yoo-jin sees a figure on Eun-ju's back. Investigations soon rise as the other three bullies die in the same manner. Finally, Yoo-jin realizes that the spirit of Kim In-sook is possessing her. She was the one who killed all of those bullies, even though she doesn't remember doing it.

Eun-ju also senses a terrible force and unearthly presence surrounding Yoo-jin. Mr. Han, Yoo-jin's class adviser, decides to help out by consulting his friend on what is causing her to act strangely. Through hypnotism, they are able to see a vision of the past showing how Kim In-sook and her mother Chun-hee were brutally killed by the villagers, and before dying, they placed a curse that for generations to come, whoever left the village would die. As Chun-hee finally takes possession of Eun-ju's body, she exacts punishment on the people who wronged them, slaying the school's principal but sparing Mr. Han's life.

Not long after, Eun-ju gives birth to a girl and within that girl's body is the spirit of Kim In-sook.

(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bunshinsaba>)

OLDBOY:

Oh Dae-su (Choi Min-sik) is an ordinary Seoul businessman with a wife and little daughter who, after a drunken night on the town, is locked up in a strange, private “prison” for 15 years. No one will tell him why he is there and whom his jailer is, but he is kept in reasonably comfortable quarters and has a TV to keep him company. While watching TV, he discovers that he has been framed for his wife’s murder and realizes that, during one of the occasions in which he was knocked out with gas, someone has drawn blood from him and left it at the scene of the crime. The imprisonment lasts for fifteen years until Dae-su finds himself unexpectedly deposited on a grass-covered high-rise rooftop.

Oh Dae-su is determined to discover who his mysterious enemy is. He gets his first clue when a homeless man hands him a cell phone and a wallet full of cash. Later, while Dae-su is eating in a Japanese restaurant, the phone rings and a voice challenges him to find the reason for his imprisonment.

Dae-su blacks out only to awaken in the apartment of the restaurant’s pretty, young waitress, Mi-do (Kang Hye-jung). Mi-do helps him search for his hidden prison, but one night, Dae-su finds Mi-do exchanging emails with a mysterious stranger who seems to know all about him. Convinced Mi-do has betrayed him, he continues the search on his own.

Dae-su locates his former prison and beats up the gangsters who served as his captors. A tape offers clues as to his enemy’s motives, but not his identity. Dae-su blacks out on the street and after being helped into a cab by his mysterious, but still unnamed foe, he ends up back at Mi-do’s. At this point Dae-su’s and Mi-do’s relationship turns into a sexual one. An old friend who owns a cyber café helps Dae-su discover that Mi-do’s emailer, “Evergreen”, is indeed the man who had him locked up. Dae-su is enraged by Mi-do’s apparent betrayal, but a face-to-face confrontation with his smooth-talking adversary ends with Dae-su’s conviction that she is innocent. The man gives Dae-su five days to discover who he is and why he imprisoned him. He is told that if he succeeds, the man will kill himself; if he does not, he will kill Mi-do.

Final clues lead Dae-su back to his old high school, where he discovers that his enemy is fellow graduate Lee Woo-jin (Yoo Ji-tae), whose sister, Soo-Ah (Yoon Jin-seo), committed suicide years before. Dae-su confronts Lee in his ultra-modern penthouse apartment, only to discover that his enemy’s tortures are just beginning. Dae-su learns that his imprisonment was orchestrated by Lee Woo-jin because Dae-su witnessed him doing sexual acts with his sister in high school and spread rumors about it, an incident Dae-su had simply forgotten. Woo-jin’s sister committed suicide because of these rumors, and Woo-jin wanted to avenge his sister’s death and to make him feel the same pain he and his sister felt.

Woo-jin imprisoned Dae-su for fifteen years to allow his daughter to grow up, and hypnotized both so that the phone call Dae-su receives at the sushi restaurant causes Dae-su and Mi-do to fall in love with each other. Mi-do is Dae-su’s daughter. Upon finding this out, Dae-su begs Woo-jin to keep this a secret from Mi-do, even cutting

out his own tongue to show that he'll never tell any secrets again. Woo-jin, with his master plan of revenge, exits via elevator and shoots himself.

In an epilogue scene a haggard-looking, mute Dae-su is seen in a snowy landscape with a hypnotist, asking her to erase the memories of the truth about himself and Mi-do from his mind. The woman hypnotizes him and Mi-do comes to meet him, now alone in the snow. Mi-do embraces him and tells him she loves him. Dae-su starts to smile, which then turns into a weeping grimace.

(<http://asianwiki.com/Oldboy>)

THIRST:

Sang-hyun (Song Kang-ho) is a Catholic priest who volunteers at the hospital, providing ministry to the patients. He is well respected for his unwavering faith and dedicated service, but he secretly suffers from feelings of doubt and sadness. Sang-hyun volunteers to participate in an experiment to find a vaccine for the deadly Emmanuel Virus (EV). Although the experiment fails, and Sang-hyun is infected with the seemingly fatal disease, he makes a complete and rapid recovery after receiving a blood transfusion.

News of his marvelous recovery quickly spreads among the devout parishioners of Sang-hyun's congregation, and they begin to believe that he has a miraculous gift for healing. Soon, thousands more flock to Sang-hyun's services. Among the new churchgoers are Kang-woo (Shin Ha-kyun), Sang-hyun's childhood friend, and his family. Kang-woo invites his old friend to join the weekly mahjong night at his house, and there, Sang-hyun finds himself attracted to Kang-woo's wife, Tae-ju (Kim Ok-bin). Sang-hyun later relapses into his illness and wakes in dire need of shelter from the sunlight, having become a vampire.

At first, Sang-hyun feels a newfound vigor but soon he is aghast to find himself drinking blood from a comatose patient. After attempting to kill himself, Sang-hyun finds himself irresistibly drawn to human blood. To make matters worse, the symptoms of EV return and only seem to go away when he has drunk blood. Desperately trying to avoid committing a murder, Sang-hyun resorts to stealing blood transfusion packs from the hospital.

Tae-ju, who lives with her ill husband and overprotective mother-in-law, Mrs. Ra (Kim Hae-sook), leads a dreary life. She is drawn to Sang-hyun and his odd new physicality, including his inability to resist his desires. The two begin an affair, but when Tae-ju discovers the truth about Sang-hyun, she retreats in fear. When Sang-hyun pleads with her to run away with him, she turns him down, suggesting that they kill her husband instead.

When Sang-hyun's superior at the monastery requests some vampire blood so that his eyes may heal and he may see the world before dying, Sang-hyun flees his position at the monastery. He moves into Mrs. Ra's house so that he may secretly be with Tae-ju. Sang-hyun notices bruises on Tae-ju and assumes her husband is the cause, a suspicion she sheepishly confirms. Sang-hyun decides to kill Kang-woo during a fishing trip with the couple. He pulls Kang-woo into the water and claims that he placed the body inside a cabinet in a house at the bottom of the lake, putting a rock on the body to keep it from floating to the surface.

A police investigation ensues. Mrs. Ra drinks herself into shock after her son's death, sinking into a completely paralyzed state. In the meantime, Sang-hyun and Tae-ju are haunted by terrifying visions of Kang-woo's bloated corpse. When Tae-ju lets slip that Kang-woo never abused her, Sang-hyun is enraged because he only killed Kang-woo to protect her. Teary-eyed, she asks Sang-hyun to kill her and let her return to her husband. He obliges by snapping her neck, but after feeding on her blood, decides he does not want to be alone forever and feeds her corpse his own blood. She awakens as a vampire. Mrs. Ra, knocked to the floor by a seizure, witnesses everything.

Tae-ju quickly shows herself to be a remorseless monster, killing indiscriminately to feed, while Sang-hyun acts more conservatively, not killing unless he has to. Their conflicting ethics result in a chase across the rooftops and a short battle. Some time later, Mrs. Ra manages to communicate to Kang-woo's friends that Sang-hyun and Tae-ju killed her son. Tae-ju quickly disposes of two of the friends, and Sang-hyun appears to eliminate the third. Realizing the gravity of the situation, Sang-hyun tells Tae-ju that they must flee or be caught. Before leaving with her, he makes a visit to the camp of worshipers who consider him the miracle EV survivor. He makes it seem like he tried to rape a girl, leading the campers to chase him away, no longer idolizing him.

Sang-hyun then places Mrs. Ra in his car, and with Tae-ju, drives into the night. Back at the house, the third friend (having apparently been hidden by Sang-hyun) escapes. Upon waking from a nap in the car, Tae-ju realizes that Sang-hyun has driven to a desolate field with no cover from the imminent dawn. Realizing his plan to have them both burn when dawn breaks, Tae-ju tries to hide but Sang-hyun foils her every attempt. Resigning herself to her fate, she joins him on the car hood, and both are burnt to ash by the sun, as Mrs. Ra watches from the backseat of the car.

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirst_\(2009_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirst_(2009_film)))

I SAW THE DEVIL

Academy-bus driver Jang Kyung-chul happens upon Jang Joo-yun one snowy night and offers to help fix her flat tire. Kyung-chul kills her and scatters her body parts. When a boy discovers one of Joo-yun's ears, the police are called in under the command of Section Chief Oh and Squad Chief Jang, the latter of whom is the father of Joo-yun. Kim Soo-hyun, a secret service agent of the National Intelligence Service (NIS) and Joo-yun's fiancé, vows to track down and take vengeance on Joo-yun's murderer.

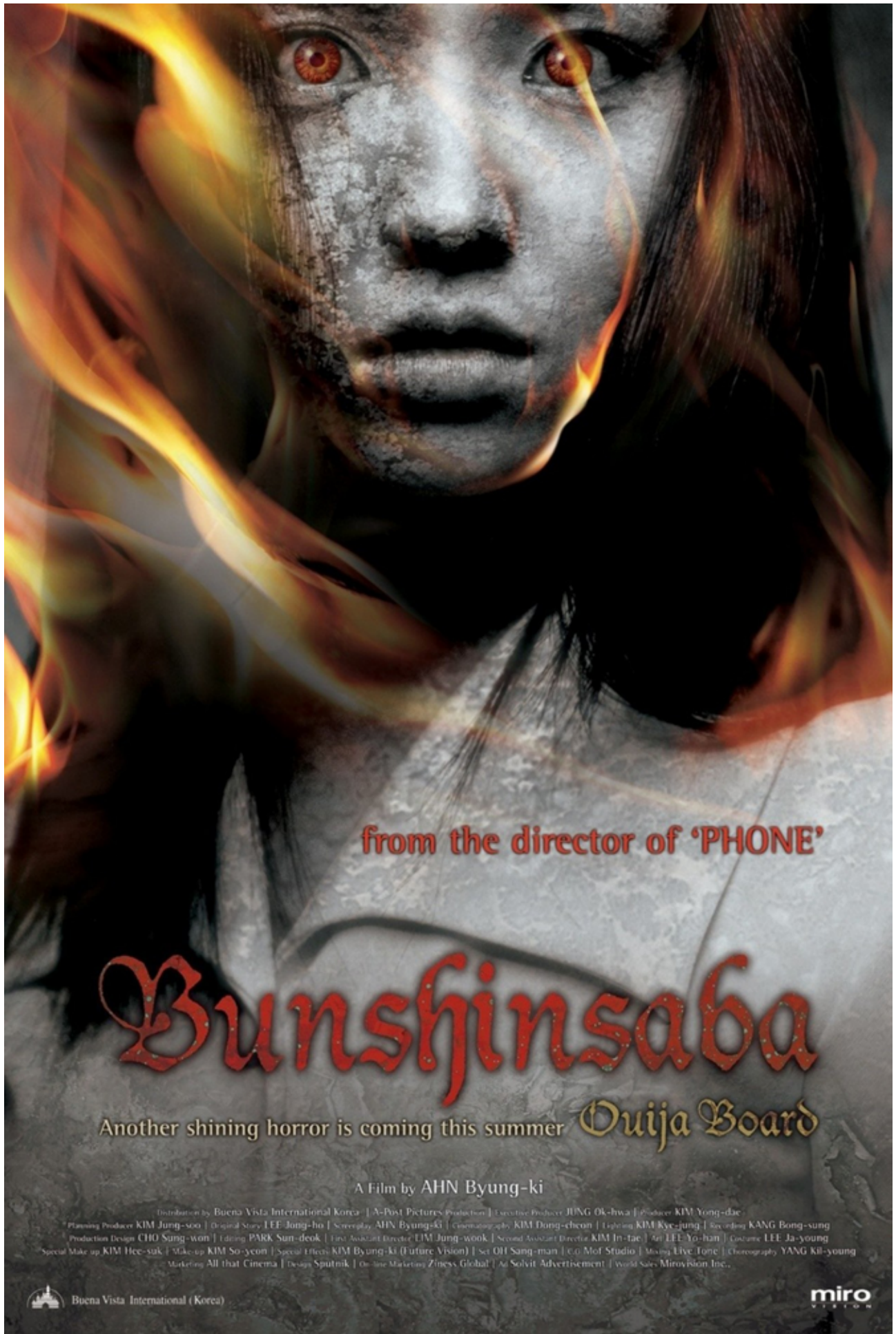
Jang supplies Soo-hyun with a list of four suspects, including Kyung-chul. Searching Kyung-chul's home, Soo-hyun finds jewelry and underwear taken from (apparently) numerous victims. The discovery of Joo-yun's engagement ring proves that Kyung-chul is the killer. Soo-hyun puts a tracking device on the academy bus, following then attacking Kyung-chul while he is sexually assaulting his latest victim—one of the schoolgirls he was transporting home. Beating him unconscious, Soo-hyun places an NIS transmitter inside Kyung-chul, allowing him to track him on radar and listen to his conversations. Waking up, Kyung-chul flags down a taxi. During the ride, Kyung-chul realizes that the two men in the cab are thugs looking to rob and possibly kill him; he stabs both men to death. After finding the real taxi driver in the trunk, Kyung-chul disposes of all three bodies before going to a medical center, where he attempts to sexually assault a nurse Han Song-yi. Soo-hyun intervenes and slashes Kyung-chul's Achilles tendon before letting him go again.

Kyung-chul goes to the home of his friend Tae-joo, a cannibalistic murderer. After explaining his situation, Tae-joo remarks that whoever is after him must have some relation to one of his victims. Soo-hyun arrives while Kyung-chul is having anal sex with Se-jung, proceeding to incapacitate both murderers along with Tae-joo's girlfriend Se-jung after a prolonged fight. The next day, both Tae-joo and Se-jung are found by the police and sent to a hospital. A trusted subordinate of Soo-hyun's ensures he and Kyung-chul are sent to a private medical area away from the police. The barely conscious Kyung-chul hears them talk about the transmitter inside him.

Soo-hyun dumps Kyung-chul, intending to continue stalking him. Kyung-chul taunts him over the transmitter, now knowing who he is. Kyung-chul brutally assaults a pharmacist while searching for laxatives, forcing Soo-hyun to rush to the aid of the victim. Kyung-chul uses this time to defecate out the transmitter and place it inside a taxi driver he viciously assaults in a public restroom. Soo-hyun interrogates Tae-joo and learns that Kyung-chul is going after Joo-yun's father Jang and sister Jang Se-yun.

Soo-hyun arrives too late to stop Kyung-chul, who blinds Jang with a dumbbell and mutilates Se-yun. He abducts Kyung-chul before the latter can turn himself over to the police. Soo-hyun tortures him physically and mentally before setting up a guillotine above Kyung-chul's head that is soon activated when his parents and son arrive to visit and open the door to the room he is in. Placing a transmitter nearby, Soo-hyun hears the death of Kyung-chul and his family's reaction to his decapitated corpse. Alternating between sobbing and fits of laughter, Soo-hyun suffers a mental breakdown while walking away from the house.

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Saw_the_Devil)




from the director of 'PHONE'

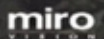
Bunshinsaba

Another shining horror is coming this summer *Ouija Board*

A Film by AHN Byung-ki

Distribution by Buena Vista International Korea | A-Post Pictures Production | Executive Producer JUNG Ok-hwa | Producer KIM Yong-dae
Planning Producer KIM Jung-soo | Original Story LEE Jung-ho | Screenplay AHN Byung-ki | Cinematography KIM Dong-cheon | Lighting KIM Rye-jung | Sound/KANG Bong-sung
Production Design CHO Sung-won | Editing PARK Sun-deok | First Assistant Director LIM Jung-wook | Second Assistant Director KIM In-tae | Art LEE Yo-han | Costume LEE Ja-young
Special Make-up KIM Hee-suk | Make-up KIM So-yeon | Special Effects KIM Byung-ki (Future Vision) | Set OH Sang-man | CG Mof Studio | Mixing Live Tone | Choreography YANG Kil-young
Marketing All that Cinema | Design Sputnik | On-line Marketing Ziness Global | Ad Solvit Advertisement | World Sales Mirovision Inc.

 Buena Vista International (Korea)

 miro
VISION

ATTACHMENT 3: POSTER 2

준비됐나

두 남자의 비밀

올드보이

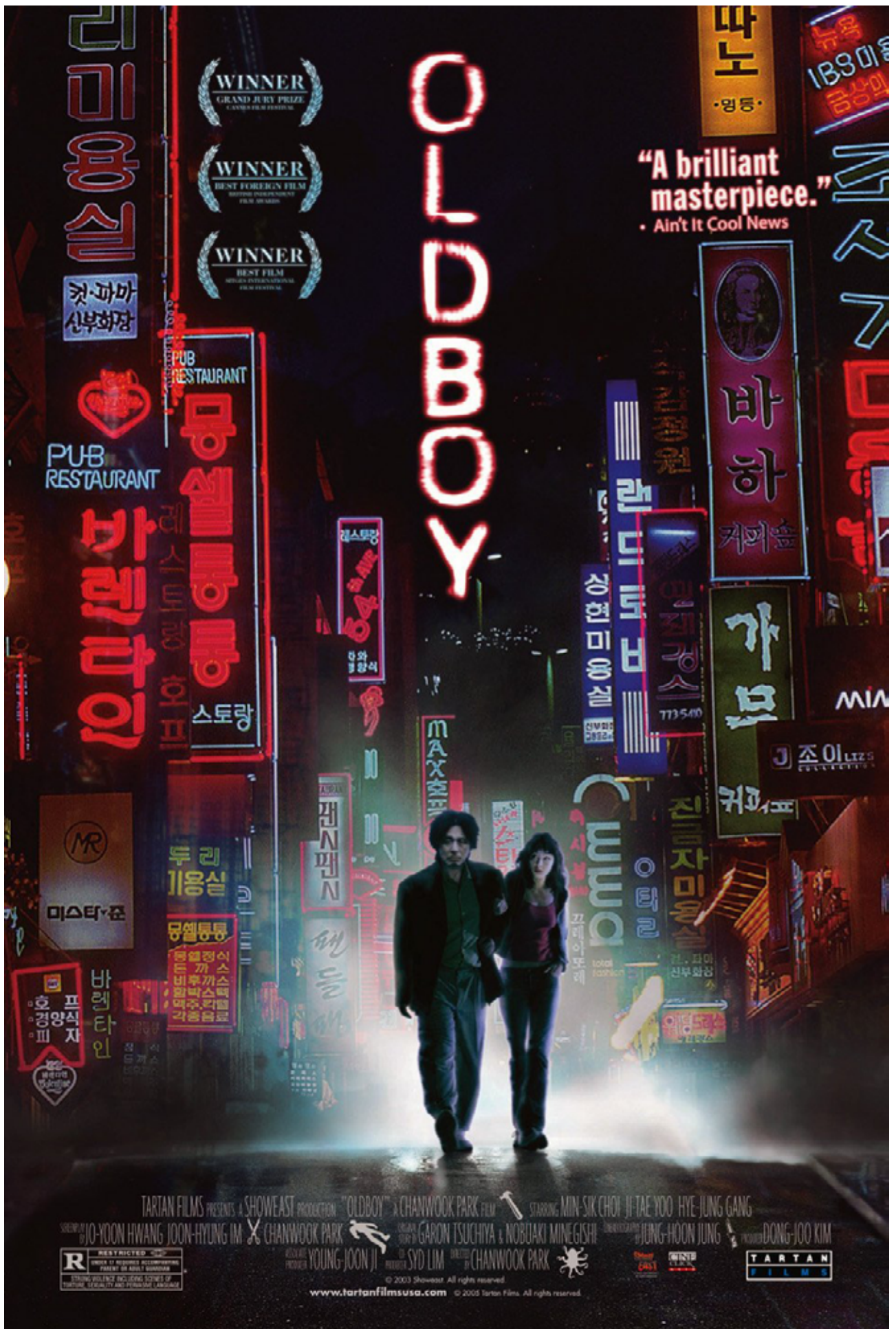
너무 오래 기다렸어

2003년 11월, 대결은 이제 부터다!

〈공동경비구역 JSA〉의 박찬욱 감독 작품 출연 최만식 유지태 강혜정
제작 쇼이스트(주) 공동제작 에그필름
2003년 쇼이스트 창립작품

ATTACHMENT 4: POSTER 3

Oldboy South Korean promotional poster © 2003 Show East



ATTACHMENT 5: POSTER 4

Oldboy international promotional poster © 2003 Show East, © 2005 Tartan Films USA



내가 이 지옥에서 데리고 나가 줄게요...

2009년 박찬욱 감독 신작

박쥐

ATTACHMENT 6: POSTER 5

Thirst South Korean promotional poster © 2009 CJ Entertainment

"A MAD LOVE STORY!"

Director Park Chan-wook's richest, craziest, most mature work yet!"

-Richard Corliss, TIME



From the Director of OLD BOY
A PARK CHAN-WOOK FILM



THIRST

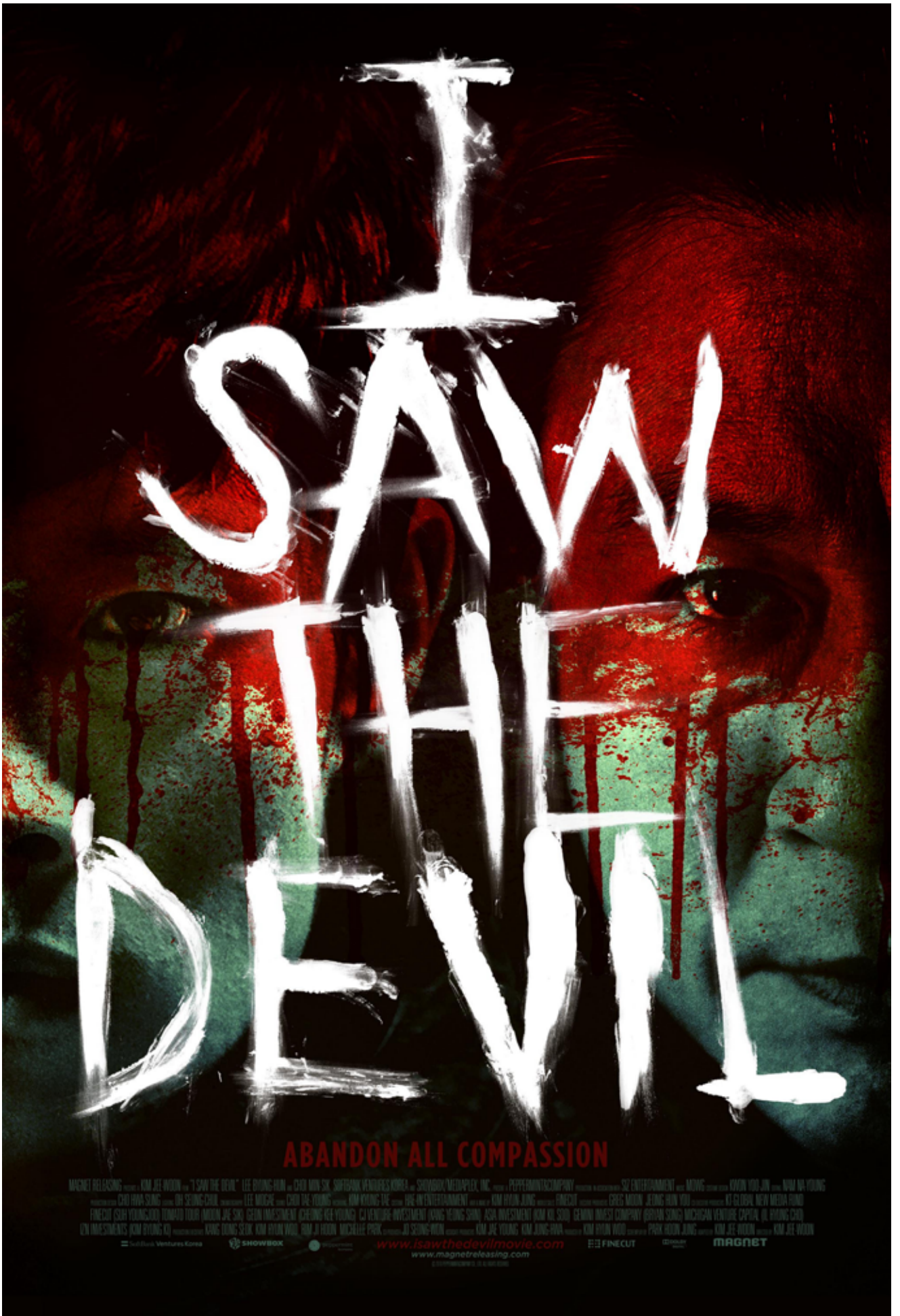


See the restricted trailer at thirstmovie.com



ATTACHMENT 7: POSTER 6

Thirst international promotional poster © 2009 CJ Entertainment



ATTACHMENT 9: POSTER 8

I Saw the Devil international promotional poster © Showbox Mediaplex co