

Border Crossings in East Asian Cinema: Koreans on the Move

May 27-28, 2011

Film One: *Dooman River*

(Zhang Lu, 2010, South Korea/France, 35mm, 89min)

Marking the border between North Korea and China and frozen for several months a year, the Doo-man [Ch. Tumen] River is regularly crossed by North Koreans in search of a better life or simply for food. Zhang Lu's film focuses on a village along the Chinese side of the border, detailing the encounter between the twelve-year-old Changho and a North Korean boy, who is offered food and hospitality in exchange for his participation in a soccer game. Their budding friendship is soon soured by a series of events that deeply affect Changho's family and threaten the survival of the villagers at large. As ill feelings mount against the refugees, all possibility for solidarity and play is tragically interrupted. The jury that awarded the film a Special Mention at Berlinale 2010 wrote: "Every aspect of the movie shakes you to the core, acts as a wake-up call for something that the majority of our society does not know about. Without strong characters or music this movie develops a language of silence, which says more than any cry for help."

Born in Jilin province in the People's Republic of China in 1962, Zhang Lu studied Chinese literature at Yanbian University and started publishing poetry and novels in 1986. His first short film, *Eleven*, was shown at the Venice International Film Festival in 2001. He made his feature debut with *Tang Poetry* in 2004; his second feature film, *Grain in Ear*, was solicited for the 2005 Critics' Week in Cannes, where it won the ACID/CCAS Support Award. His film *Hyazgar* was included in the Berlinale's Competition program in 2007. *Dooman River*, which is his sixth feature film, has received several awards worldwide, including a Special Mention at the Berlinale 2010.

Film Two: *Sona, the Other Myself* [*Goodbye, Pyongyang*]

(Yang Yong-hi, 2009, Korea/Japan, DVD, 82min)

Documentary filmmaker Yang Yong-hi is an ethnic Korean born and raised in Japan. For Korean residents in Japan of her parents' generation, formerly Japanese colonial subjects, life was hard; Yang's father, who affiliated himself with North Korea rather than South Korea, sent his three sons to the north in the 1970s, believing that they would have a better life away from Japanese ethnic discrimination. The Yang family in Osaka was able to visit North Korea occasionally, but none of the three brothers was allowed to return to Japan. Yang herself has been banned from returning to North Korea because her first documentary film, *Dear Pyongyang* (2006), irked the North Korean authorities. *Good-bye, Pyongyang* offers a glimpse of life in the North Korean capital through the eyes of the filmmaker's divided family, and particularly through those of Sona, Yang's niece, who is a student at Kim Il Sung University.

Yang Yong-hi studied Korean Literature at Korea University (Chosŏn Taehakkyo) in Tokyo, Japan, and received her MA in Media Studies from the New School in New York. She has worked as a bilingual radio host and played as an actress in *Bird* (1992), a Japan-DPRK co-production. Her works include *Dear Pyongyang* (2006), which won awards at Sundance and Berlin film festivals, and *Sona, The Other Myself* [*Goodbye, Pyongyang*] (2009).