

Male crisis in new
korean cinema:
reading the early
films of park kwang-
su



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"Male Crisis in New Korean Cinema: Reading the Early Films of Park Kwang-su
Kyung Hyun Kim
Park Kwang-su's ? Im Chilsu and Mansu [Ch'il-su wa Man-su] (1988) depicts the lives of two working-class billboard painters in Seoul. At the beginning of the ? Im, Ch'il-su has a date with Chi-na, a college-educated woman he has been pursuing outside his economic class.

The attempts to woo her have already cost Ch'il-su one job after he arrived late for work. Ch'il-su cajoles Chi-na into going to see Rocky IV. In the movie-within-a-movie, with James Brown singing " Living in America" before a boxing match, Rocky displays the supermasculine gestures of the last-minute Cold War showdown with a Soviet boxer while the counterculture African American icon from the 1960s blesses his triumph. This scene, evidently inserted in Rocky IV to ? aunt U. S.

patriotism and celebrate the Reagan-era facade of the multicultural alliance (between Italian American and African American), is deliberately appropriated by Park for two reasons. First, the scene, with its crass Las Vegas-type setting, produces a visual fantasy that enacts
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Ch'il-su's desires.

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Second, through the activation of the spectatorial desire of a character in the movie, it also reminds Chilsu and Mansu's viewers of Ch'il-su's reality where his potency and masculinity have been constantly undermined. By specularizing Rocky, Ch'il-su's emasculation is exposed. He has been lying to Chi-na, who is looking for her prospective husband; he tells her.

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