

## Through the eyes of a child: Hybridity and Morbidity in Jo Sung-hee's *A Werewolf Boy*

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Jo Sung-hee's directorial debut, *A Werewolf Boy* (Neukdae Sonyeon: 2012), is a variation on the mythology of the feral child who abandoned by his/her parents is suckled and nurtured and a pack of wolves. The boy in question, Chul-soo (Song Joong-Ki) is taken in by a single mother and her two children when they discover him living in a ramshackle barn on their land when they move to the country because of the older child's poor health. As Chul-Soo becomes domesticated, a bond forms between the boy and the younger daughter, Soon-yi (Kim Hyang-Gi). However, their romance is threatened when the community become aware that Chul-Soo is not quite the boy that he appears to be and the family are forced to flee their rural retreat leaving Chul-soo once more to fend for himself. Werewolf mythology is not indigenous to Korea (the nearest myth is that of the *kumiho*, a nine tailed fox, who is usually represented as a monstrous-female male-eating creature), although the mythology could feasibly have been transmitted and transformed due to the dominance of Western cultural imports in South Korea post the Japanese occupation. However, *A Werewolf Boy* is, I would argue, more correctly defined as a 'social issue' or 'human rights' film rather than a traditional werewolf horror film. In this paper, I argue that the figure of the wolf/boy functions signifies the persistence of historical trauma and attests to the continuing legacy of the Korean War on the national psyche. As such, the abandonment and stigmatization of the boy-child in *A Werewolf Boy* is a political allegory which explicitly critiques the mass US saturation bombing campaigns during the Korean War which left thousands of children abandoned and/or as orphans. The figure of the child in post Second World War cinema was often represented as a signifier of hope and change, however here the hybrid child symbolizes despair and division, both internal and external, and a profound morbidity in the light of the future.

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