

Okja: A meat-lover's nightmare

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His report on Okja's phenomenal growth prompts the corporation to bring Okja back to their lab in New York. Mija finds help from the ALF led by a man named Jay. With the help of a Korean translator K, Jay and his crew convinced Mija that both Okja and Mija should go to New York to expose the injustices done to animals. Although she did not consent, the Korean translator—a member of the ALF team—deliberately mistranslated her words. Before the group jumped from the truck carrying Okja into Han River, K says in Korean, "Mija! Also, my name is Koo Soon-bum." The sub-title for the Anglophone audience, however, read: "Mija! Try learning English. It opens new doors!" It is a piece of advice that every Korean student hears just like students in our part of the world. Mija's first attempt to leave her known territory and to enter the unknown is met with linguistic imperialism in a globalized world where the supremacy of English is taken for granted. The filmmaker Bong Joon-ho is probably having a private joke in a movie script that he co-wrote with an American writer. To beef it up, he even makes K wear a tattoo in his hand, saying, "Translations are sacred."

Suddenly, we become aware of the larger, albeit symbolic, scheme of things. Okja was transplanted in a Korean countryside as nothing more than a future investment by the Mirando Corporation. The ALF wants to exploit Okja as a mole in the system by transplanting secret camera in her. But the moment a terrified Okja starts running through a busy Seoul literally like a bull in a

China house, the multinational Company watches the power of its beast in horror. Sitting in its Corporate office, the top management and its mercenary security service watch the carnage in a shot that mimics the photograph of president Obama and his foreign secretary Hilary Clinton sitting together in White House Situation Room to watch the capturing of Bin Laden. The political allegory goes on to show the unholy alliance between the State and multinational companies. Mirando enters into a contract with the NYPD to engage their private mercenaries (Black-Chalk) to suppress the demonstrations of the animal rights movement. The name connotes the employment of the private army by the US, Blackwater in Iraq.

The White House photograph was fed to the media to show how the State was on top of things despite their virtual distance. They had no real connection with the actuality of events. In a *mise-en-scene* (movie within a movie), we watch the corporate agencies watching a runaway giant. Okja, however, drew more empathy from the audience who could not wait to see her back in the Edenic landscape while being united with Mija. While the success for the corporation involved containing the situation, Mija and ALF had to violate rules to bring back the peace in which we first met Okja. The humanizing of Okja thus dehumanizes both government and corporations.

The cruelty continues once Okja is brought back to New York lab where she is forcibly bred, and then a slice of her meat is exerted by the lab technician to sample the

quality of her meat. The secret camera inserted in Okja brings the animal cruelty to the fore, unleashing riot everywhere. The animal rights activists are arrested and Okja somehow finds herself in the slaughterhouse. The uproar sees a change in the top management of the corporation; one sister replaces the other, but the decision to slaughter Okja remains. Eventually, Mija manages to buy Okja back from Lucy with the small gold pig that her grandfather has given her earlier.

The sci-fi ends in a fairy tale mode as we find Okja back in the South Korean mountains with a super piglet that they managed to salvage from the slaughter house. A dying mother pig pushes the piglet out of the fence that Okja hides in her mouth and smuggles out of the slaughter house. The movie makes no secret of its disgust against assembly line harvesting of animals for meat production. The harrowing details will make you cringe and make you question your position in the food chain. The dark comedy is not only about consuming animals that are blown out of proportion but also about the animals that we are surrounded by as well as the animal instinct that we need to survive the onslaught of animals. Maybe, at the end of the movie, you will heave a sigh of relief and say: being an animal is not bad after all! You don't need to kill it. You just need to learn to live with it.

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