Through visual analyses of genres as different as theatre, film, documentary, and museum exhibits, *DMZ Crossing: Performing Emotional Citizenship along the Korean Border* examines acts of border crossings that transgress the demilitarized zone dividing North Korea from South Korea (DMZ). The author, Suk-Young Kim, juxtaposes the bodily performances and emotions of the border crossers with statist versions of citizenship, arguing that the former signifies emotional citizenship. Emotional citizenship, as explained elsewhere, refers to how citizenship takes shape through representations that invoke the emotions and subjectivities impacting the way people experience citizenship emotionally. Kim advances such an approach towards studying citizenship by elaborating on how the lexicon and metaphors that give rise to emotional representation are inscribed onto bodies and projected through border crossings as acts of social performance. Not only is citizenship a legal status, it also involves practices of making citizens through the social, political, cultural, symbolic and emotional realms.

Across four empirical chapters, Kim discusses several types of border crossings by comparing how they are represented through different cultural mediums to audiences in North Korea and South Korea. The chapters utilize the discussion of theater, film, documentary, and museum exhibits to present to the reader a chronological reading of political events connecting the two Korean societies. The final empirical chapter draws on ethnographic observations to examine how tourism is staged in the DMZ and discusses the overlapping interests represented by environmental lobbyists active in the buffer zone. Kim usefully analyzes this borderland as "intimate public spheres" (p. 99), where geopolitically delineated territories are united discursively through familial ties and cultural affinities. In this respect, the book situates itself in the wider scholarship of feminist geopolitics and furthers theorization of this field in at least two ways. First, the book demonstrates how accounts of the emotions (normally associated with the private sphere) can be connected to political processes (associated with the public sphere); and second, it illustrates how embodiment contributes to the discursive and material relations that reproduce or challenge global political processes.

Kim’s evocative writing not only portrays to readers the textual and visual sources she draws on, but also skilfully invokes the range of emotions elicited through drama, films, exhibitions, and visits to the border zone. She suggests that cultural platforms such as these seek to provoke emotional and visceral responses to prompt their respective audiences towards a political stance that is aligned with the ideal of citizenship envisioned by the North Korean or South Korean regime. Kim adeptly shifts scales of analyses from bodily encounters to community responses and the divergent national representations of citizenship that contribute to the international geopolitics of the border zone. The border crossings discussed bring to mind Engin Isin’s "acts of citizenship," in which an "act is a rupture in the given," thus producing contingent qualities of citizenship that are contestable by different social actors who project their own interpretations of political and social justice.

Through discussion of border crossings, Kim highlights the salience of kinship in projections of citizenship by parties on both sides of the border. She underscores the violence inflicted on individual bodies, family bonds, and the body politic through the geopolitical separation of the two Korean societies. But she maintains...
that border crossings reflect how the geopolitical division cannot disrupt the integrity of kinship, hence establishing “an alternative type of citizenship based on emotional affiliation rather than a constitutional delineation” (p. 4). Kim’s intervention signaling the significance of the family and communal framings of citizenship is a welcome departure from dominant models of citizenship that are derived from the experience of “Western” liberal democracies emphasizing individualism and rights. In this way, the book contributes to a growing literature calling for analyses of citizenship that are attentive to how citizenship materializes in distinct ways across different national and cultural contexts.[5] The welfare of immediate family members, or the community, tends to be prioritized in localized understandings of citizenship and belonging within Asian societies.[6] That is not to say that familyhood is downplayed in interpretations of citizenship found in non-Asian contexts. Rather the point is to bring into view approaches towards citizenship studies that refrain from taking individual rights as the starting point of citizenship analyses, but which seek to enact “boundary transgression” across units of analysis normally presumed to be discrete, such as the individual, family, community, or nation.[7]

In view of the above observation, the careful reader might question whether Kim has sufficiently interrogated claims of “intuitive bonding” (p. 45) found in kinship ties, or phrased another way, the prominence of blood lineage in Korean narratives of nationhood and citizenship. The ethnic homogeneity of Korean society projected through the myth of lineage reinforces the exclusion of non-co-ethnics, an issue routinely critiqued by scholars of Korean immigration and assimilation policies.[8] The myth of lineage as the social glue of South and North Korean societies is debunked if set against the divisions that become perceptible amongst co-ethnics when North Korean refugees, labor migrants, and marriage migrants (including North Koreans from China) co-inhabit South Korean society.[9] Emotional citizenship can be put to work as an analytical tool to give greater nuance to the fractures and divisions forged through distinct social positionings that impact the differential inclusion of populations within citizenship discourses and practices.[10]

Kim’s book enhances citizenship studies by making accessible to an English-language audience not only the cultural representations of citizenship found in Korean society, but also how they compare across two distinctive renderings of citizenship divided by ideological leanings and geopolitical ambitions. It further advances theorizations of how the emotions feature in both the way citizenship is represented and how it enacts subjectification through embodiment and bodily performance of border crossings. I believe this book to be an important contribution that allows us a better understanding of how analyses of the emotions can be productive for citizenship studies, border studies, and geopolitics.

Notes


[5]. See the special issues “Citizenship after Orientalism” edited by Engin F. Isin, *Citizenship Studies* 16, nos. 5 and 6 (2012).


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