

**ARE WE STILL EXOTIC?: EXAMINING KOREAN AMERICAN ETHNICITY
THROUGH THE MUSIC OF YOUNG JEAN LEE'S PLAY,
*SONGS OF THE DRAGONS FLYING TO HEAVEN***

Hyecun Ceon

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Katherine Meizel, Advisor

Kara Attrep

ABSTRACT

Katherine Meizel, Advisor

This thesis is an analysis of music used in, *Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven*, a 2006 theater work written and produced by a Korean American playwright, Young Jean Lee. Music in *Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven (SDFH)* is a unique window into contemporary Korean American thinking on ethnicity and gender. Although *SDFH* is discussed in insightful academic writings by Karen Shimakawa (2007), Seunghyun Hwang (2010), and Jisoo Chung (2010), their discussions are mainly bound to Young Jean Lee's theatrical techniques of ethnic representation that attempt to cast away the stereotypes of Korean/ Korean American people. Music and sound, which are carefully deployed to illuminate Young Jean Lee's criticism of Koreans' self-exoticism and Americans' exoticism of Asia, are little discussed by the above scholars. The musical repertoires used in *SDFH* include a Korean traditional music genre (p'ansori 판소리), a Korean children's song, a Korean church tune, a Korean popular song, and American popular music. By analyzing the use of these musics in conjuncture with social and staged conflict, I will examine the problems of exoticism and ethnicization of immigrants addressed in the play.

First, I will provide a summary of the music used in selected Korean American theater works to locate Young Jean Lee's use of music in the history of Korean American theater works. Two main characteristics: 1) music to express Korean Americans' rootedness in Korea, and 2)

music in the new wave Korean American theater works in the 1990s and 2000s, will be discussed in order to grasp the relationship between the incidental music and the message of the play. Then, I will explore the characteristics of Young Jean Lee's musical use in general, focusing on her preferred musical style (alternative rock), and her unique theatrical style that allows the rich use of music. The next chapter, the main body of my thesis, will be an analysis of music used in *SDFH*. First, I will give a summary of *SDFH* in order to provide a theatrical context to her musical choices. Then I will examine the music in *SDFH* under the four main subjects: 1) music to set up exoticism, 2) music representing oppression, 3) music to critique self-exoticism, and 4) music to convey universal messages (in comparison with other music's pertinency to the subject of ethnicity). Building on the theories such as Edward Said's Orientalism (1978) Homi Bhabha's colonial stereotype (1994), Graham Huggan's strategic self-exoticism (2001), and Herbert Gans's symbolic ethnicity (1979), I will locate Korean/ Korean American women's self-exoticism as a site of conflict between their resistance to patriarchal and colonial history, and desire to gain power through their ethnic and gendered performances in the multicultural American society. In the last chapter, I will propose another way to look at Koreans'/ Korean Americans' self-exoticism as an indicator of cultural confidence and tolerance. Recognizing younger generations' understanding of ethnicity that is little confined by colonial memory and victim mentality, I will suggest that self-exoticization is a practice of cultural diversity, which is gaining significance in contemporary Korean and Korean American culture.

Using a thorough textual analysis of the play, both the script (Lee, 2009) and the recorded performance (2006, Young Jean Lee's Theater Company, HERE Art Center, New York), as a

main methodology as well as supplementary interviews and autoethnography, I will examine how each musical entry in *SDFH* reveals a web of power relations between the cultures of Koreans, Korean Americans, and mainstream Americans. My research will deepen understanding of the discourses surrounding contemporary Korean American ethnicity as well as the conditions of American society as a reflexive mirror of Korean American community.

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CHAPTER I. INCIDENTAL MUSIC IN KOREAN AMERICAN THEATER WORKS

The incidental music of Korean American theater works uniquely displays contemporary Korean American people's thinking and relationship to music. The appearance of music in theater works can be different from that of commonly-known musical practice. For instance, Julia Cho in her 2004 play, *99 Histories*, employs classical music as a tool to connect a Korean immigrant mother and her American born daughter. The mother tries to forget her past in Korea by devoting herself to her daughter who is a cello prodigy. J. S. Bach's cello suite, no. 1 in G major is played on the stage by the actor who performs the daughter, not to showcase the greatness of Bach's music nor to display the virtuosity of the Korean musician, but to express the struggle and reconciliation of mother - daughter relationship. It also offers an insight into the role of classical music for Korean American people as a way to overcome their past and current hardships. In *The Art of Waiting* (1991) by Rob Shin, "traditional Oriental music" is played to set the scene of a Chinese restaurant, where the main character works as a waiter. The main character is a young Korean American man, who wishes to become a stand-up comedian. His Korean American identity is not important to the restaurant customers, who often mistake him as a Chinese, nor to a night club owner, who wants ethnic jokes about Chinese immigrants for his comedy shows. "Traditional Oriental music" is used in this play, not to show the beauty of Asian traditional culture, but to represent the stereotyped and distorted images of Asian people in America. Through the incidental music of Korean American theater works, audiences and readers can discover meanings of music that are specifically related to the life of Korean American people.

Methodology

Incidental music of Korean American theater works has rarely been researched. *A History of Asian American Theatre* (2006) by Esther Kim Lee, which contains probably the most substantial accounts for the history of Korean American theater, has little information about music. *Asian American Culture on Stage: The History of the East West Players* (1999) by Yuko Kurahashi is another significant work that provides historical traces of Korean American theater works. This book includes a brief but interesting record on the music of Soon-Tek Oh's *Martyrs Can't Go Home* (1967), one of the earliest Korean American theater works (this will be discussed shortly later in this chapter). While providing some valuable accounts for the music used in various works staged by East West Players, the music that is specifically related to the Korean Americans can be hardly found in this book.

In order to analyze the incidental music of Korean American theater works in the lack of published researches, it is essential to obtain and examine the primary sources such as scripts, video/ audio recordings, and interviews with the people who were engaged with the works. This is especially hard when the work is old. In this case, visiting the theater group's archives, or locating related people is often necessary. Considering the focus of my thesis, and the given time and conditions, my discussions on the music of the historical Korean American theater works are limited to the works either whose script is published or whose secondary sources are available.

For the analysis of my main topic, the music in *Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven*, I primarily undertook a thorough textual analysis of the play, both the script (Lee, 2009) and the recorded performance (2006, Young Jean Lee's Theater Company, HERE Art Center, New York), as a main methodology. My effort to interview Young Jean Lee or the production crews was un-

fortunately not fulfilled due to, I assume, the busy schedule of Young Jean Lee's Theater Company including their European tour during the time of my research. I attempted showing some of my Korean acquaintances the video recording of *Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven* in order for my research to engage with audience reception. I could not, however, draw substantial results from it, seemingly due to the carefulness of both parties, the researcher and the participants, in responding to the provocative elements of the play, such as insulting parents, condemning and ridiculing Korean traditional culture, and overt sexual descriptions.

Theoretical Framework

Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven (SDFH) is discussed in many newspapers and magazines as well as academic writings by Karen Shimakawa (2007), Seunghyun Hwang (2010), and Jisoo Chung (2010). While providing insightful examinations on the play, most discussions are mainly bound to Young Jean Lee's theatrical techniques of ethnic representation that attempt to cast away the stereotypes of Korean/ Korean American people. Music and sound, which are carefully deployed to illuminate Young Jean Lee's criticism of Koreans' self-exoticism and Americans' exoticism of Asia, are little discussed in above publications.

Seunghyun Hwang especially engages at length and depth with various aspects of the play in his master's thesis, "Exploding Stereotypes Inside and Out: The Theatre of Young Jean Lee and Issues of Gender and Racial Identity" (2010). He analyses some songs briefly, focusing on the meaning of the lyrics, and their functions in the context of the play. He also lists all songs used in this play with relating scene descriptions, for music is a vital element in defining scenes, and therefore the structure of this play. Still, discussions on the musical genre, musical elements,

representations, and their connection to the social context are outside of his frame, and require further research.

I ground my study primarily on the junction between performance studies and ethnomusicology. Richard Schechner considers theater as a modern ritual where people practice their lost communality (Schechner 1994, 187).¹ Studying theater incidental music then becomes a study of ritual music, which connects to the very origin of ethnomusicology. According to Victor Turner, theater is the place where the social drama is reiterated (1985, 300-301). Theater incidental music in Korean American theater then plays the role to express the social conflicts that the members experience. Music culture of Korean American people has been passive in expressing the reality of their lives. The popular practice of traditional music, for example, which is often aimed for the exhibition at the culture events and festivals, focuses on the beauty and the power of cultural heritage that can promote the ethnic pride and strengthen the sense of belonging to the community. It is often difficult, however, to uncover the current thoughts and issues of their lives through this type of practice. Approaching music in the setting of theater works can offer an alternative frame that can actively engage musical research with Korean Americans' socio-political realities.

Secondly, I build my argument on the various theories from the discourse of postcolonial studies, such as Edward Said's orientalism (1978), Homi Bhabha's colonial stereotype and colonial mimicry (1994), Graham Huggan's strategic self-exoticism (2001), and Herbert Gans's symbolic ethnicity (1979). The application of these theories are not to re-accentuate the victim men-

¹ "The community becomes privatized, the family isolated, the streets empty. It is at this point that drama in the form familiar to us begins to emerge - as if people had to have some place to go with their collective responsiveness" (Schechner, *Experimental Theater*, 187).

tality or colonial guilt. Rather, I intend to stress the agency and diversity of individuals in the contemporary postcolonial culture, and to highlight the conflict between the burden of colonial history and the individual demand to survive in this time of highly commercialized globalism. Therefore, when contemporary Korean Americans bring their ethnicity to the fore, or perform ethnic stereotypes, this must not be viewed as a simple act of internalized orientalism nor romanticized nationalism. There are various elements that may be working behind the performance of self-exoticism: the Korean Americans may be fashioning themselves by utilizing their unique ethnicity and western exoticism; they may be purely exoticizing their own ethnic culture because they are not actually familiar with it; they may be having a deep conflict between their ethnic performance that might empower their status and profit, and their antagonism toward oppressive tradition and racism.

Building on the methodology and the theoretical framework stated above, I will now start exploring in the next chapter the music of the historical Korean American theater works from the 1960s to 2000s. This will situate Young Jean Lee and her use of music in the context of Korean American theater history.

Music to "Root" in Korea

The most common type of music used in the Korean American theater works is traditional Korean music. It is especially prevalent, and one of the characteristics of early Korean American theater works, when the plays are themed around Korean history and cultural heritage. When I said "early" Korean American theater works, it actually meant a small number of works by a

single person, Soon-Tek Oh (1943-). Oh is one of the most well-known² Korean American actors, and one of the first Korean American playwrights as well as a precursor of Asian American playwrights. Other than Soon-Tek Oh's plays, I have not been able to find a record of any original theater works written, and produced by, or dealing with Korean Americans before the 1990s. Even though there were Korean American directors and actors, such as Peter Hyun (1906-1993) and Randall Duk Kim (1943-), who were individually involved with both/ either the mainstream American and/ or Asian American theater as early as in the 1930s, the 1990s was the first time when Korean American playwrights started to appear in a noticeable number. The reason, I assume, is that at this time, artists whose parents had arrived in the United States after the 1965 Immigration Act were coming of age.³ The distinct characteristics of the works after the 1990s will be discussed shortly later.

In 1967 Soon-Tek Oh wrote and staged his original work, *Martyrs Can't Go Home* through the East West Players in Los Angeles. Yuko Kurahashi notes that *Martyr* was especially significant (1999, 46), for it was an important impetus for the emergence and growth of Asian American playwrights. Asian America theater works were mainly producing the adaptations of traditional Japanese and Chinese plays in the 1960s, which overtly emphasized the "orientalness" of Asian American people. *Martyr* addressed instead contemporary sociopolitical issues entwined around the Korean War (1950-53) and the division of the country. Kurahashi documents the music of *Martyr* as especially beautiful, quoting her personal interview with Ernest Harada,

² He plays Sensei in the Hollywood hit film, *Beverly Hills Ninja* (1997), Lieutenant Hip in the 007 film, *The Man with the Golden Gun* (1974), and his voice is featured in the Disney animation film, *Mulan* (1998).

³ Korean American playwrights, such as Diana Son (1965~), Sung Rno (1967~), Edward Bok Lee (1971~), Young Jean Lee (1974~), Julia Cho (1975~), and Lloyd Suh (1975~) were either born in the U.S. to Korean immigrants, or moved to the U. S. when they were very young.

who acted in the play, and C. Bernard Jackson, who arranged the music for the play. Jackson adapted a Korean folk song, *Arirang*, into English with a piano accompaniment.

The performers sang the songs behind the screens, with Jackson accompanying on the piano. This intercultural event was noteworthy since the EWP [East West Players] introduced traditional Korean music, an unfamiliar aspect of Asian culture. (Kurahashi 1999, 47)

Oh in 1979 produced *Ka-ju-ta-ryung* 가주타령 [Ka-ju means California, and ta-ryung generally means song; titled *Have You Heard* in English] through the Korean American Theater Ensemble, which he founded in Los Angeles in 1978. Starting the Korean American Theater Ensemble and producing *Have You Heard* resulted from Oh's clear purpose of educating Korean American youths in Korean traditional culture, giving them ethnic pride and a sense of rootedness, and connecting them to their parents and ancestors. According to Esther Kim Lee's interview with Oh, he had attended a Korean play, *Bae-bi-jang-jun*⁴, in L.A. to find that the audiences comprised mainly first generation Korean immigrants, missing their children's generation.

I started wondering what happens to the Korean American family. The parents go home and watch Korean mini-series [on video], and the kids watch American [television], and then they go out and function [separately]. So, I began to wonder what happens to family communal experiences? It was very typical of other Korean parents - communication becomes very difficult because of the language problems as well as living pressures and [lack of time]. (Esther Kim Lee 2005, 387)

⁴ *Bae-bi-jang-jun* 배비장전 [A Story of Bijang Bae] is one of the seven lost p'ansori works, which has been revived by many productions in the form of chang-guk 창극 [Korean traditional musical theater] by Changukjoa 창극좌 in 1936, and Guknip Gukjang 국립극장 in 1973, and of western style musical [titled *Sal-jja-gi Ob-seo-ye* 살짜기 읍서예, 1966).

Have You Heard is not a finished theater work but a show that was produced annually with improvisational content to deal with current issues. Its form is based on Korean traditional *Madang-nori* 마당놀이, in which actors, often with musicians and dancers, perform in the center of an open arena being surrounded by the audience. In *Madang-nori*, performers and audience interact actively by asking and answering questions, singing and dancing together, and sometimes sharing food. The music used in *Have You Heard* includes both Korean traditional and contemporary American popular genres due to its dual purposes of approaching the Korean American youths, and educating them with Korean traditional culture. *Have You Heard* was produced annually until 1991, and revived in 1996, reflecting Korean Americans' changing musical tastes from "twist in the 1970s, break-dance in the 1980s, to rap in the 1990s."⁵

Theater Mu, a Minneapolis based Asian American theater company, produced *Mask Dance* in 1992 with the purpose of educating Korean Americans/ adopted Koreans in the area. *Mask Dance* is a story of adopted Koreans searching for their identity. Their struggle is expressed in this play, especially through the masked dances. The dances are inspired by Pongsan Tal'ch'um 봉산탈춤, a traditional Korean mask dance genre from Pong-san area. Andrew Kim, who was one of the founders of Theater Mu and heavily involved with *Mask Dance* as a drummer and mask designer, explains the dances as follows:

The Pongsan style is fast, bold and free in spirit, emphasizing expression and energy over tight choreography. The earthy, rooted movements, set against the free flow of the *hansam* 한삼 (fabric sleeves worn over the hands), the masks, and the heartbeat rhythms of the drum speak of a sublime and familiar spirit which is Korea. (Shiomi 2001 (1992), 351)

⁵ Soon-Tek Oh, Personal interview by Esther Kim Lee, August 2, 2001 (as cited in Esther Kim Lee, 2006, *A History of Asian American Theatre*, 104).

According to Rick Shiomi, who wrote and directed *Mask Dance*, the music that accompanied the dances was basic drumming (Rick Shiomi, personal e-mail, May 19, 2013). Pongsan T'alch'um is generally accompanied by p'ungmul 풍물 instruments - a mixture of drums and winds such as changgo 장고, sogo 소고, buk 북, ching 징, kkwaenggwari 쥬리, t'aep'yongso 태평소, and nabal 나발. Shiomi explained that the dance in this play is actually modern dance influenced by traditional Korean movement. I assume that the supporting music had been simplified to a single drum accompaniment to fit the artistic idea of modernity and individuality.

More recent works such as *Hongbu and Nolbu: The Tale of the Magic Pumpkins* (2005) by Jean Yoon, and *Pojagi* (2000) by Ping Chong also utilize traditional Korean music to evoke a unique sense of Korean ethnicity. Jean Yoon, a Korean Canadian actor and playwright, wrote *Hongbu and Nolbu*, a popular Korean folk tale about two eponymous brothers, to stage at the Lorraine Kimsa Theater for Young People in Toronto. Stage directions about the music in this play read:

Sound and music play a large role, with live sound effects throughout created vocally by the actors, and with instruments and toys such as drums, rattles, Korean violin [Haegum 해금], chimes, gongs, and flutes. Korean *Samul* drumming serves as the base musical reference. (Yoon 2012 (2005), 152)

The play adopts some of the *Madang Nori* aspects seen and heard in *Have You Heard*, such as actors talking directly to the audiences to draw spontaneous responses, and combining mask play, dance, and live music to create a total theater event. Ping Chong, a Chinese American playwright and director, wrote *Pojagi* (1999) as a part of *The East-West Quartet*, a collection of

four plays about the history of East and West relationship. Chong states that the purpose of *The East-West Quartet* is "to confront American ignorance about Asian cultures and history" (Chong 2004 (1999), xv). *The East-West Quartet* deals with historical account of how the three far Eastern countries - China, Japan, and Korea - made relationships with Western countries. *Pojagi* [보자기], a Korean word for a square or rectangular cloth that is used for multiple purposes such as a book bag, lunch bag, table cover, head wrap, etc.] is about Korean history from ancient mythology of the nation's birth to modern events like the Japanese annexation and the Korean War. No live instrument is used in this play, but the recorded sound of vocalization⁶ of traditional rhythm, Korean court music, and the off stage singing of the narrator gives the feeling of sacred distance and historical remoteness.

Another notable work that includes Korean traditional music is *Comfort Women* (2004, formerly *Hanako* (1999)) by Chungmi Kim. This play is about Korean female sex slaves who worked at the Japanese military camps during World War II. The play employs many well-known folk tunes such as "Doraji Taryung 도라지 타령 [Bellflower Song]," "Sae-ya, Sae-ya 새야, 새야 [Birdie, Birdie]," and "Han-o-baek-nyun 한오백년 [Five Hundred Years]," as well as a Japanese national anthem [Kimigayo] and a Japanese military song to evoke the scenery of war. The popular Korean folk tune "Doraji Taryung" opens the play, as 'bellflower' was known as a slang term for the comfort women among Japanese soldiers. Most songs are sung by the actors, and the

⁶ Vocalization of musical instruments, which is called *goo-um* 구음 (literally meaning, sound by mouth), is well developed in traditional Korean music. Rhythmic instrument (eg. *buk* 북 and *changgo* 장고) is vocalized to the syllables like dung, duck, giduck, and kung, string instruments (eg. *gayagum* 가야금 and *geomungo* 거문고) to doong, dang, dong, and ding, and wind instruments (eg. *piri* 피리 and *daegum* 대금) are notated to lu, la, li, and lo. It is recorded and transmitted as a type of notation system called *yookbo* 육보 since 15th century, and also developed to an individual vocal genre called *goo-um sinawee*, which is similar to skat singing or vocalise.

script does not give directions for instrumental accompaniment for the songs. In the Toronto performances (2008), however, an electric keyboard accompanied the songs using simple chord progressions of western tonal harmony.⁷

A New Wave in the 1990s

The 1990s was the first time Korean American playwrights started to appear in a noticeable number. At this time, artists whose parents had arrived in the United States after the 1965 Immigration Act were coming of age. Esther Kim Lee identifies the 1990s as a turning point of Asian American studies as well as Asian American theater, for there was a significant change in the notion of Asian ethnicity. Scholars in the discipline of Asian American studies such as Sucheta Mazumdar (1991) and Lisa Lowe (1996) challenged the essentialist notion of Asian America as being inefficient to explain the complexity of Asian American ethnicity. Lisa Lowe in her essay, "Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Marking Asian American Differences" argues:

Rather than considering 'Asian American identity' as a fixed, established 'give,' perhaps we can consider instead 'Asian American cultural practices' that produce identity; the processes that produce such identity are never complete and are always constituted in relation to historical and material differences. (Lowe 1996, 83)

She especially emphasizes, adopting Stuart Hall's idea of cultural identity as a *positioning* rather than an essence, that essentialist notions of ethnicity cannot explain the heterogeneity of Asian American groups nor resist existing hegemony effectively: "In the 1990s, we can diversify our practices to include a more heterogeneous group and to enable crucial alliances - with other

⁷ "AHN: Theater 'Nabi' Performance AHN:연극 '나비'공연," [November 17, 2008.], video clip, accessed May 21, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VrtLrgTUq-Y>.

groups of color, class-based struggles, feminist coalitions, and sexuality-based efforts - in the ongoing work of transforming hegemony" (Lowe 1996, 83).

Reflecting this climate, a majority of Korean American theater works in the 1990s and 2000s show fluid, diverse, and functional approaches to the matter of ethnic identity. Some writers continue to deal with ethnicity, but without nationalistic undertones. Others navigate away from the subject of ethnicity, focusing more on the common issues of human experiences. Sung Rno in *Cleveland Raining* (1994) examines immigrant descendants' suffer from uncertainty of cultural belonging through a story of orphan siblings, Jimmy and Mari, who lost their Korean immigrant parents. In the gloomy, destructive, and surreal settings of this play, the siblings cry out for an exit from the ambiguity of their identity trapped in between two cultures. Instead of attempting to decide on one culture, Mari and Jimmy accept the betweenness as their space. No music is used in this play. The dry dialogue without music intensifies the siblings' feeling of loss, ambiguity and vanity. Rno's later work *Yi Sang Counts to Thirteen* (2000) also employs a Korean subject, but not in a nationalistic nor an essentializing way. It is the story of Korean poet Yi Sang (1910-1937), an innovative modern writer who resisted Japanese imperialism through his witty and enigmatic writings. Rno, in this play, rather focuses on expressing the poet's twisted mind and desire to surpass himself and his circumstances, utilizing a series of fluid and random conversations without a typical storyline or plot. The only musical entry used in this play is the "sound of saxophone music" to evoke the mood of "a scene from a detective noir movie" (Rno 2012 (2000), 205). This play is notable for a Korean American playwright's interest in modern Korean literature, and utilization of it to convey his personal voice.

Diana Son may be one of the most well-known Korean American playwrights. Her 1998 play *Stop Kiss* was a hit receiving a number of extended performances and becoming the Off Broadway hit of the season (Esther Lee 2006, 202). The story is about a couple in love who learn about relationships and compassion through an unexpected accident. The stage direction for the cast reads: "The cast should reflect the ethnic diversity of New York City." There is only one musical entry employed at the very beginning of the play - "Something '70s and great to dance to like The Emotions' "Best of My Love"" (Son 2000, 7). Her two other popular works, *R. A. W. ('Cause I'm a Woman)* (1996) and *Satellite* (2006) also use very little music. In *Satellite*, a Korean lullaby is sung by a first generation Korean woman (Mrs. Chae) and a Korean American woman (Nina) as a sign of commonality the two women share. This shared culture, however, does not work as a medium to fill the gap, nor to solve the conflict between the two characters, but only to magnify their inner differences.

Lloyd Suh in *American Hwangap* (2007) chooses American popular music to connect a first generation father and a second generation son. It is a story of a Korean American family that has difficulty in staying together. The son, who is a guitarist in a punk rock band with his friends, plays a song on his guitar for his father's *hwangap* [sixtieth birthday]. The script does not give a clear direction on what type of music he plays. The stage direction reads, "Ralph [the son] runs to the guitar. He plays. Chun [the father] listens. After a few bars, he starts to hum, maybe sing along, or clap in a steady rhythm. Ralph's playing might not be silled, but it might be beautiful" (Lee 2012, 150).

Music is somewhat muted, inactive, and often generic in the "non-ethnic" contemporary Korean American theater works. It seems that when the play has a clear stance of cultural pur-

pose, the use of music becomes more active and specific. The generic directions for music in particular, which are often found in the works mentioned above, can be understood in two ways.

One is that the playwright gives freedom to a producer/ director in choosing a specific repertoire that works the best for the theater community. The second reason can be the influence of film music, which employs frequent use of clichéd musical figures instead of using a specific music composed or picked for a certain scene. Even with minimal use, music still plays a notable role in displaying Korean American's changing views on themselves, and, in the same vein, Americans's changing views on the Korean Americans in the 1990s and 2000s.

I have briefly examined, in this chapter, the incidental music of the selected Korean American theater works from 1960s to 2000s. The shift of emphasis from loyalty to the ethnic/ national origin to the expression of individual identity is reflected in the choice of music in Korean American theater works during this time. The dominance of traditional music and didactic messages gives in to more personal narrative of in-betweenness of the Korean Americans' identity and the use of various types of music. In the next chapter, I will investigate Young Jin Lee's musical character shown in ten of her productions from 2003 to 2011. This will be followed by an overview of the plot and the music of the play, *Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven*.

CHAPTER II. YOUNG JEAN LEE'S MUSIC AND PLAY

Young Jean Lee's Musical Character

Unlike many of her contemporary Korean American playwrights discussed above, Young Jean Lee utilizes music as an active element of her works. Out of ten shows listed in Young Jean Lee's Theater Company's production history, only one play, *Pullman, WA* (2005), does not feature any music. Most of her plays are tightly woven musically with clear specifications of song titles, composers, and performers. One of the reasons for her rich use of music is that many of her plays have the characteristics of total entertainment involving music, dance, comedy, and spoken drama all together, which is similar to Korean traditional *madang nori* or vaudeville shows. The actors often talk directly to the audience to encourage them to be actively engaged with the play. Consequently, the popular use of incidental music as a creator of the fourth wall—that is, the background music is assumed to be heard only by the audience not by the actors in order to place the stage in a blocked space from the audience—is reduced in Lee's plays. Instead, music draws actors and audiences to the same space for communication. Another possible reason for the rich use of music in Lee's works is her uniquely open, process-oriented method of writing her play. She does not write the entire work all by herself. She first puts out a rough plan about a show, works with actors and staffs to find what works and what does not; then combines

all the ideas and experiments from the rehearsals to create a final work.⁸ Ideas for various theatrical devices including music can be stimulated through the process of this co-operative work.

Young Jean Lee chooses music for her plays from a wide range of repertoires, including 16th-century English organ music, African American spirituals, American indie pop, experimental electronic music, and Korean traditional music. One of the characteristics of Lee's choice of music is her affinity for alternative indie rock, which is a genre that peaked in the 1990s. She sings in an alternative rock band called Future Wife, and takes the stage with the band for her autobiographical monodrama, *We're Gonna Die* (premiered in 2011). In this play, Lee presents episodes about growing up, her family, her boyfriend, and her father's death. Each story alternates with the band's performances, in which she sings, screams, and dances. Since the stories are told without particular references to her ethnicity, and the band's music does not have any references to Korean culture, the whole play has a personal, intimate, and universal appeal to the audience.⁹ In addition to singing with Future Wife, Lee is also featured as a co-singer in the song, "That's Right" (2011) by Mike Doughty, an American alternative rock singer-songwriter. Alternative indie rock is a genre in which Young Jean Lee finds her personal voice. Another use of alternative rock music is found in *The Shipment* (2008), a play about racism and stereotypes about African American people. Here, alternative rock music represents two different meanings, one being the voice of white people's exoticism of black people (represented by Semisonic's

⁸ Lee explains the process of creating *The Shipment* in an interview with New York Times. Patrick Healy, "An Evening in Black and White From a Playwright Who Is Neither," New York Times, January 27, 2009. http://theater.nytimes.com/2009/01/28/theater/28lee.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0. Lee's newest play, *Straight White Men*, exhibits the similar process. "Straight White Men, A New Play in Progress by Young Jean Lee," The Department of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies Website, Brown University. accessed May 20, 2013, <http://www.brown.edu/academics/theatre-arts-performance-studies/straight-white-men-0>.

⁹ Young Jean Lee & Future Wife, *We're Gonna Die*, Joe's Pub on Livestream.com, accessed May 15, 2013, http://www.joespub.com/component/option,com_shows/task,view/Itemid,99/id,5658.

"F.N.T" (1996)), and the other as an inner voice of black people (Modest Mouse's "Dark Center of the Universe" (2000)). Alternative rock music is also used in *Songs of Dragons Flying to Heaven*. The use of alternative/indie rock will be discussed in the next chapter in connection with the genre's social meaning.

Summary of *Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven*

Song of the Dragons Flying to Heaven is a collage of seemingly unrelated stories about a Korean American woman (whose native language is English), three Korean women (each of whom speaks English with an accent), and a white American couple. It will be useful to introduce here the characters of this play. There are five characters in this play; Korean American, Korean 1, Korean 2, Korean 3, White Person 1, and White Person 2. The names of the characters are not personalized, and none of the characters have a definite identity - the identity continuously changes even in a scene. No characters develop either, which tells the audiences and readers that the individual character is not the focus of this play. By generalizing the characters' identity, this play let the audiences put any Korean and American they know on the stage. Typical theatrical focus on the characters and the story line shifts and expands to the spectators' experiences and self-reflections.

The play's subtitle for the original production reads, "A show about white people in love," which makes a subtle mismatch with the supposedly "Asian" title. Young Jean Lee explains:

I named the show after 'Yongbee Ochonga, 용비어천가' the great Korean epic that was the first literary text ever written in hangul [Korean]. In translation, the title sounds very

stereotypically flowery and 'Asian,' the way that Asian artistic works' titles so frequently are. I am very embarrassed by this title, which was why I chose it. It fit[s] in with my 'What's the last play in the world you would ever want to write' theme" (Hwang 2010, 26).

The white couple's search for love and a deeper relationship is juxtaposed with Korean/Korean American¹⁰ women's struggle in the questions of race and gender. The Korean American woman bitterly criticizes her Korean tradition and American racism, while the Korean women exhibit suffering from and submission to Korea's patriarchal culture. The white couple, who have no interactions with Korean/Korean American characters in this play, constantly argue about various personal topics, but finally reach an agreement to make an effort to restore their relationship. Lee's portrayal of Korean women is ugly, greedy, pretentious, but also battered and hurt. White people are depicted as full of selfishness and indifference, but at the same time they are empty and disconnected. The Korean American is outraged and hurt by both Korea and America.

SDFH reflects the change in Korean American theater works that happened in the 1990s; moving away from the fixed, essentialist view on ethnicity to the fluid and functional understanding of ethnic dynamics in America. On one hand, *SDFH* is a return of the race - identity play when many of Korean American theater works had shunned race related matters. Race became an unfashionable subject in the 1990s. Many young and ambitious Korean American play-

¹⁰ I use the terms, "Koreans" and "Korean-Americans" in the way they are described in *SDFH*. The key difference between the two identities, which is specified in director's note for the characters, (Lee 2009, 34) is their language – Koreans speak with a Korean accent while Korean-American speaks with an American accent. This separation of identities based on the language differences primarily implies that Korean-Americans were either born in America or moved to America at an early age. This further suggests that in *SDFH* American citizenship does not make a person Korean American, but the degree of Americanization does. I also follow Lee's use of the terms "Koreans" and "Korean-American" without 'the', and with a hyphen (for Korean-American), for these designate the characters in the play. I add 'the' and drop the hyphen when the terms describe general collectives of Korean and Korean American people as I observe the Chicago citation style throughout my thesis, which recommends dropping of hyphen for nationalities (see The Chicago Manual of Style, 16th edition, 2010, p. 402).

wrights were eager to establish themselves as good writer, not an ethnic writer, trying to reach wider audiences and readers regardless of their ethnic background. On the other hand, *SDFH* is a bold and penetrating move to alert the audiences that race problems are still active in a less visible but more complex way. Young Jean Lee tackles minorities' and women's utilization of their newly achieved socio-political rights and benefits as an act of irresponsible exploitation. They take advantage of social changes without actually making differences in their own lives and mentality, but merely feeding their hunger for power. Excerpts from *SDFH* summarize Lee's viewpoints:

You spend all this time obsessing over your looks and being jealous of other women, and then you bust out your self-righteous feminism like it's some cherry for the top of your cream puff. (Lee 2009, 66)

White people are so alert to any infringement on their rights. It's really funny. And the reason why it's funny is that minorities have all the power. We can take the word racism and hurl it at people and demolish them, and there's nothing you can do to stop us. (Ibid., 41)

I love the white patriarchy with all my heart because I'm ambitious and want power. My whole mentality is identical in structure to that of a sexist, racist, homosexual white male. People think of me as this empowered Asian female, but really, I'm just a fucking white guy. (Ibid., 66)

Korean/ Korean American women are a target of double condemnation here as women of an ethnic minority, who have the appearance of the empowered Asian female and the mentality of the sexist, racist white male. They unconsciously despise women and ethnic minorities with the age-old perception of male- and western superiority still engraved in them. They deliberately discriminate against other women and ethnic minorities in order to acquire, exercise, and become a part of the hegemonic power that white males used to and still have. After all, Korean/ Korean

American women are performing three contradicting figures: empowered Asian feminist, the role of their former (and sometimes current) oppressors, and the image of their past as the oppressed.

Young Jean Lee in this play is particularly focusing on Korean/ Korean American women's performance of self-exoticization; their representation of self as attractive, exotic, and authoritative Asian women in order to conform and appeal to the American mainstream. Ethnic minorities' emphasis on their unique culture and tradition is primarily derived from their deep desire for rootedness, belonging, and pride. What Lee is tackling, however, is the other side of ethnicization; the violent and deceptive nature of claiming and practicing authority of a tradition, and of profiting from it. It is violent because it refuses to accept other ethnic minorities, and pushes out some group members, who does not possess nor wish to practice their ethnic tradition. It is deceptive, first because the performance of ethnicity often hides reality for the sake of distinction and spectacle, and secondly because it conceals internalized orientalism under the name of preservation of ethnic tradition. Lee exhibits in this play self-exoticization as a site of conflict between Korean/ Korean American women's resistance to patriarchal and colonial history, and desire to gain power through their ethnic and gendered performances.

Overview of Music in *Song of the Dragons Flying to Heaven*

Music is effectively deployed in *SDFH* to reveal the layers of conflict. Korean women's suffering from patriarchal and colonial oppressions, American's exoticism, and Koreans' self-exoticism are displayed through seven songs in various genres ranging from *p'ansori* to American pop music and some sound effects [Table 1]. There are several characteristics of musical uses in

this play. First, all the music consists of pre-existing songs played from recordings, except for two songs sung by the actors. There is no live instrumental music.

Secondly, all music but two songs are to be heard by the actors and the audiences alike. Theater incidental music often exists outside the story, being intended to be heard only by the audiences (e.g. interlude between the scenes, and underscore that helps setting the mood). This creates a wall between the stage and the spectators, role of theater incidental music intensifies the notion of the play on the stage as being fictive, and not real, creating a gap between the stage and the spectators. *SDFH* however minimizes Music in this play does not carry subtextual messages, nor try to appeal to the audiences' emotional side.¹¹

Another characteristic of musical use in *SDHF* is that five out of the seven songs are played in the scenes involving Korean American/ Koreans. Therefore, music mainly voices Korean/ Korean American points of view. Music and sound in *SDFH* serve roughly four main purposes: 1) to display American exoticism toward Asia; 2) to represent the oppression that Korean/ Korean American women experience; 3) to critique Koreans' self-exoticism; and 4) to convey a universal message rather than an ethnically specific one. These four aspects will be examined in the following chapter.

¹¹ This is similar to how musical characteristics are used Bertolt Brecht's epic theater. He wants music to directly express the actors' characters, and to engage the audience actively at the same time. In "Alienating Effect in Chinese Acting," he explains that, "the Chinese artist [in traditional theater] never acts as if there were a fourth wall beside the? three surrounding him. This immediately removes one of the European stage's characteristic illusions. He expresses his awareness of being watched. The audience can no longer have the illusion of being the unseen spectator at an event which is? really taking place (Brecht 1964, 92-93). Alienating effect aims to engage the audience in the play as a reality, not as an escape or mere entertainment. For the same reason, Brecht criticizes that "serious music clings to lyricism and cultivates expression for its own sake" (Ibid., 85).

Table 1: Scenes and Music of *Songs of the Dragon Flying to Heaven*¹²

scenes	descriptions	music
1. Behind the stage	Audiences are stuck behind the set before they are seated.	Sound of Asian flute music and trickling water.
2. Prelude	Pre-recorded sound of Young Jean Lee and her friends discussing the filming of face-slapping scene.	
3. Face-slapping	A video clip of Young Jean Lee getting slapped.	“Sarangga [Love Song]” (from p’ansori, Choonhyangga, early 17C Korea)
4. Korean-American's Monologue	Korean-American talks about Korean family and American racism.	
5. Koreans' first scene	Three Koreans appear on the stage dancing wildly. This is followed by a fight between Koreans and Korean-American.	“I Was Born a Unicorn” (Unicorn 2003, Canadian alternative pop)
6. Sex	Three Koreans talk about sex. Korean 1 brags about her experience with prostitution. Korean 3 shows traumatic reaction towards a Ghost-man's voice asking for sex.	“Santokki [Wild Rabbit]” (Korean children’s song, early 20C). The lyrics are changed. It is about how to cut herself.
7. Koreans's dance	Three Koreans dance. Korean- American joins, but is soon to be pushed away.	“Small Waiting” (K2 1995, Korean pop music).
8. Rape	Korean 3 shares her story of being raped by her school teacher.	
9. Korean-American's rage vs. Koreans' disagreement	Korean-American shows her anger towards Koreans and White people. Koreans try to reassure the audience that they don't hate white people by acting pretentiously nice.	

¹² This table is based on the table by Seunghyun Hwang in his thesis on Young Jean Lee (Hwang, 2010). The scene numbers are taken from the DVD of the original performance (2006) at HERE Art Center, New York, New York. The scene titles and descriptions for the scenes and music are mine.

scenes	descriptions	music
10. Whites 1	A White Couple's first scene. The white woman complains to the white man that he is not smart enough and his nose is too big.	
11. Korean Christians 1	Grandmother's dying wish and prayer for her non-Christian granddaughter.	
12. Whites 2	A White man tells the white woman that he wants to become her.	
13. Korean Christians 2	Korean church scene with the white couple. The two groups interact. This is followed by a bible study scene where Korean church is criticized by Koreans and Korean-American.	"Ye-su mi-du-se-yo [Believe in Jesus]" (1981, Korean gospel)
14. Whites 3	The white woman complains to the white man about their sexless relationship. She also complains about his stealing her pen.	
15. Suicide	Koreans and Korean-American take turns miming a suicide.	"All I Want for Christmas Is You" (Mariah Carey 1994, American pop music)
16. Whites 4	They pretend that they are in some governmental positions.	
17. Unison	Monologue in unison by Koreans and Korean-American about their desire for power.	
18. Whites 5	White people decide to go to couple's counseling together.	
19. The play ends	Lights out	"Held" (Smog 1999, American alternative pop).

In this chapter, I have examined Young Jin Lee's musical character shown in ten of her theater works produced from 2003 to 2011. At the time of my research, Young Jean Lee's Theater

Company was performing their 2011 work, *We're Gonna Die*, and touring a new production, *Untitled Feminist Show*. My request asking about the music in *Untitled Feminist Show* was unfortunately not answered by Young Jean Lee's Theater Company, presumably because the show had recently premiered and was still touring. Lee uses music intensively for most of her works, and her use of various types of music adds interesting layers to her shows. Her personal affinity to alternative rock music will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, as I thoroughly examine each musical entries used in *Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven*.

CHAPTER III. MUSIC IN *SONGS OF THE DRAGONS FLYING TO HEAVEN*

The use of music in *SDFH* will be examined under the four main subjects in this chapter:

1) music to set up exoticism, 2) music representing oppression, 3) music to critique self-exoticism, and 4) music to convey universal messages (in comparison with other music's pertinency to the subject of ethnicity). Each subjects will be discussed in relation to the its social implications, including stereotypes, the meaning of cultural heritage and customs to women, the value of ethnic culture in the multicultural American society, and the significance of alternative rock music in the midst of homogenous mainstream culture.

Setting up Exoticism through Music

The most notable thing about Lee's use of music in *SDFH* is that music marks "others" as "exotic." In *SDFH* the Korean Americans' and Koreans' scenes alternate with the white Americans' scenes, and there are almost no interactions between them. Music is used exclusively for the scenes involving the Koreans and Korean American. Along with music, Korean/ Korean American characters sing, dance, fight, and shout in their colorful traditional dresses. These make a vivid contrast to the white Americans' scenes, which are calm, quiet, and pale with casual conversations and controlled arguments without any music, color, loud noise, or big movements. This contrast is intensified by the different use of stage light.

Terminology: Exoticism vs. Orientalism

Before discussing further about exoticism in *SDFH*, I need to clarify two terminologies that are often used interchangeably: exoticism and orientalism. The lexical meanings of "exotic" as listed in the American English dictionaries, such as The New Oxford American Dictionary (2005), The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2004), Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2009), and American Heritage Dictionary of English Language (2011), are commonly related to the characteristic of a foreign country or a faraway place with a positive attitude toward foreignness/ strangeness (American Heritage Dictionary and The New Oxford American Dictionary). According to The New Oxford American Dictionary, "exotic" means "1. originating in or characteristic of a distant foreign country, 2. attractive or striking because colorful or out of the ordinary, and 3. of a kind not used for ordinary purposes or not ordinarily encountered." Philosopher Tzvetan Todorov supports the favorable implication of "exotic" by contrasting the word to "nationalism". He says, "If I am a nationalist, I proclaim that the values of my own country, whatever they may be, are superior to all others. No, the exoticist replies, the country with superior values is a country whose only relevant characteristic is that it is not my own" (Todorov 1994, 263). Examining various Western literature sources in tourism and exoticism from Homer to Artaud, Todorov argues that exoticism is a result of fantasy and a desire for what the exoticists lack.

Unlike Todorov's stance to analyze exoticism as a personal and philosophical experience, Christa Knellwolf sees it as a collective and cultural phenomenon that is closely woven with power. She says, "It [exoticism] adopts a cultural perspective that is firmly entrenched in the conventions and belief systems of Western civilization and therefore constructs the East as the archetypical location of otherness.... Exotic fantasies entail a contrast of, and hierarchy between,

two different cultures, controlled by the Western point of view" (Knellwolf, 2009). Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett in *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (1998)) and Micaela de Leonardo in *Exotics at Home* (1998) use the term "exoticism" in a similar manner to Knellwolf's. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett analyzes the relationship between American exoticism, anthropology, and cultural exhibitions/ performances, to reveal how exoticism tailors the reality of third world people and culture for display purposes. Dealing with a similar topic, Leonardo focuses on the faults of an American anthropology that emphasizes "culture" over politics and economy.

When viewed as a cultural phenomenon, as Knellwolf notes, exoticism is used synonymously with Said's "orientalism." Orientalism originally refers to the academic study of Middle East, Africa, and Asia in eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Stephen A. Geremic notes in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* article ("Orientalism", 2008), that the term has become to carry pejorative meaning about the East since the publication of Said's *Orientalism* (1978). The New Oxford American Dictionary and American Heritage Dictionary of American Language reflect this change by listing both meanings for "orientalism," and American Heritage Dictionary takes the derogatory definition as a primary meaning of the term. The change in meanings and usage of both terms, exoticism and orientalism, indicates the influence of postcolonial thinking that takes power relations between cultures as a focal point in understanding a cultural phenomena.

It is understandable that "exoticism" and "orientalism" have come to carry a similar meaning among the Westerners, since their Orient often coincides with their distant foreign countries, and Western hegemony in the relationship between the two worlds is undeniable. To

the people in/ from the Orient, on the other hand, the object of Western exoticism, especially one's traditional culture, can be something that he/she is proud of. For instance, when a Korean American wears a traditional dress for her special occasion, she might have some intention to ethnicize herself with no intention of self-orientalism. Therefore, self-exoticism and self-orientalism can mean two different things to the non-Westerners. This will be discussed further at the end of this thesis.

Are Exotics Noisy?

Koreans' scenes in *SDFH* are noisy and colorful. Is Korean/ Korean American culture noisier and louder than American culture? Or, does it sound loud to the people who are not familiar with the culture as undecipherable sound becomes meaningless noise? Does it further insinuate the listeners' desire to control and silence the exotic culture? Noise is often associated with ethnic cultures or the lower classes. Tricia Rose in *Black Noise* depicts a story of how a chairman of a music department (of some unnamed college) reacted to the sound of rap music. He said, "they ride down the street at 2:00 a.m. with it [rap music] blasting from car speakers, and they wake up my wife and kids. What's the point in that?" (Rose 1994, 62). To the chairman of the music department, rap music is undecipherable and undesirable noise, the sound of his poor neighbors, the sound that he might not wish to relate with his family and himself, the sound that he wish to control.

Deborah Wong, through her auto-ethnography of taiko performance (2004, 195-231), examines the relationship between the sociopolitical power and the occupation of physical/ aural space. In taiko performance, everything is big - the performer's stance is wide (whether they are

female or male), the instruments are huge, the sound of multiple taiko drums and the performers' shouting is overwhelming, and a large number of performers often play together. Quoting one of her taiko classmates, Wong describes taiko performance as a channel for the Asian Americans (especially women) to feel "strength and command" (Ibid., 217). While agreeing with Wong's notion of taiko's power that compensates the Asian Americans' isolated and constricted social reality, I can also argue that Asian Americans' expression of "strength and command" is controlled and confined in the ethnic performance of taiko.

Portia Maultsby in her essay "Africanism in African-American Music" (2000) relates this notion of "black noise" to the conception of African music tradition as linked to an exoticized past: "The concept of sound that governs African American music is unmistakably grounded in the African past" (Maultsby 2000, 162). "The arbitrary notion of beauty [as the ways uncommon to Western practice] has resulted in the? description of black music as 'weird,' 'strange,' 'noise,' 'yelling,' 'hollering,' 'hooting,' 'screaming.' The use of these words clearly indicates that the black music tradition does not adhere to European-American aesthetic values" (Ibid., 162). The "noise" of unfamiliar music is associated with an exotic race, and the exotic race is again related to its ethnic traditions. Ethnic traditions emphasize the past, and often hide the ethnic group's contemporaneity.

One of the reasons for the noise-race association in relation to music seems to be Westerner scholarly and commercial attraction to "exotic" sounds that contradict Western aesthetics with foreign-seeming loudness, strong drum beats, and unfamiliar timbres. Many ritual musics from various cultures are designed for outdoor events, which result inevitably in loudness. When these musics, which are only one part of a musical tradition, are taken to represent cultures,

stereotyping is formed. Claudia Gorbman, examining the musical representation of the Native Americans in the western films (Gorbman, 2000), points out that musical stereotypes descend from "a Euro-American all-purpose shorthand for representing primitive or exotic peoples" (Ibid., 235). Pentatonic melodies, strong drum beats, and melismatic vocalise are popular characteristics of "exotic" music to Western ears, whether it is used to represent Chinese, African, or Native Americans (Ibid. 236). Christa Knellwolf explains exoticism relating to a lack of knowledge, especially on the current socio-economic conditions of a certain country. She says, "Exoticism demonstrates itself in colorful spectacles of otherness purporting to be an unmediated expression of natural drives and instincts. ... An abundance of colors, sounds, smells, and tactile experiences promise to gratify the senses within an economy that gives free rein to consumption, unrestrained by political responsibility and ethical commitment to the real actors of exotic fantasies."¹³ Ignorance and desire form the basis of exoticism.

Koreans' scenes in *SDFH* look festive, unreal, outdated, and comical to my Korean eyes. What Young Jean Lee is creating here is one of the typical images of Korea to American people— traditional dress, youthful and playful girls, and loud, festive and unsophisticated noise. Some Americans still think that Koreans wear colorful traditional dresses every day¹⁴, dance and eat in a traditional way as if time has stopped and they are blocked from the outside world. As Tzvetan Todorov points out, "knowledge is incompatible with exoticism" (Todorov 1993, 265), and as Bernard Cohn notes, the East is often fantasized as "static, timeless, and spaceless" (Cohn

¹³ "Exoticism," International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, ed. by William A. Darity, Jr. 2nd ed. Vol. 3.

¹⁴ "Do Korean People Dress Like Westerners or Do They Dress In Traditional Clothing Everyday?," Yahoo Answers, accessed April 8, 2013, <http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20120326130553AA2optfS>.

2004 (1968), 143 (7)). Even if people have better knowledge about Korea, they might still think that the traditional culture is the authentic Korean culture. An article in a progressive Korean magazine¹⁵ bitterly reported in 1998 that the 52nd Avignon Theater Festival held in Avignon, France invited traditional Korean performances like *p'ansori*, *samulnori* and a dance of Buddhist nuns, etc., but refused to stage modern Korean theater works. Their reason was that Korean modern theater works follow the form of the European theater, which would make no unique impression to French audiences. To westerners, Korea is placed in its distinctive spectacles, and in her timeless, unchanging images of the past.

Exotics are also associated with silence, and silence is related to other properties such as spirituality, unintelligence, obedience, and the absence of individual voices. Popular images include meditating Indians, mute black slaves, obedient and self-giving Asian women, and quiet and hardworking model minorities. In *SDFH*, contrary to the onstage scenes by Korean/ Korean American characters, which are loud, colorful, and dynamic, there is an offstage sound effect of calm and contemplative Asian flute and trickling water. These sounds are played before the play starts while the audience is waiting behind the set, suggesting that the audience will see something Asian in this play. That “something Asian” shown on the stage is completely in opposition to the image of Asian flute and trickling water. Which image— calm and contemplative, or loud, colorful, and even violent— is typically Asian? Are Asian women more like Cio-Cio-San in *Madama Butterfly*, who is quiet, reserved, submissive and selfless, or a dragon lady in *The Daughter of Fu Manchu*, who is confident, ambitious, and powerful?

¹⁵ “Yetgeotman Yoranhan Avignon ūi Hang'uk 옛것만 요란한 아비뇽의 한국 [Loud Korean Antiquity in Avignon].” Hang'yeore 21. June 25, 1998. accessed April 8, 2013. <http://legacy.h21.hani.co.kr/h21/data/L980615/1p9y6f04.html>.

Exaggerated Gazes

Like all other cultures in the world, Asian culture has various shades of human sentiments from serenity to insanity. As I examined earlier, the popular images of stereotypical Asian people are based on the two totally contrasting characteristics: either quiet, submissive, and mysterious, or loud, shrewd, and ambitious. This discrepancy indicates that stereotyping is primarily extremization, which cannot offer a fair account for the truth of the object, but rather reflects the image makers' mentality.

Homi Bhaba in *The Location of Culture* (1994) interprets colonial stereotyping as a form of fetishism, a sign of colonists' anxiety as well as their will to oppress their colonial subjects. Building on the ideas of Freud and Foucault, Bhaba argues that fetishism comes from the anxiety of difference as well as a normalization of that difference. As Bhaba states, "The fetish or stereotype gives access to an 'identity' which is predicated as much on mastery and pleasure as it is on anxiety and defense, for it is a form of multiple and contradictory belief in its recognition of difference and disavowal of it" (Bhabha 1994, 107).

A similar interpretation is made by Graham Huggan in *The Postcolonial Exotics: Marketing the Margins* (2001). He argues that the word "exoticism" is commonly misunderstood as if it has an inherent quality to be found in certain people, objects or places (Huggan 2001, 13). Exoticism describes, Huggan continues, "rather, a particular mode of aesthetic perception - one which renders people, objects, and places strange even as it domesticates them (Ibid.). Quoting Foster, Bongie, and Wasserman, Huggan explains exoticism as a symbolic system of domesticating the

foreign, which successfully assimilates the cultural differences into the familiar and predictable, while effectively limiting complete assimilation.

Karen Shimakawa's interpretation of the Asian Americans as abject is done in the similar vein. She says that "the coincident or simultaneous split in the case of Asian American stereotypes can also be understood as a product of abjection" (Shimakawa 2002, 16), because "the abject does not achieve a (stable) status of object," (Ibid., 3) but rather is product of "constantly shifting relation to Americanness, a movement between visibility and invisibility, foreignness and domestication/ assimilation" (Ibid., 3). To Shimakawa, Asian American do not even exist on their own ground.

There are many theatrical devices used in *SDFH* to display American exoticism toward the Orient. For instance, the white woman character repeatedly says "I want to go to Africa, and live with the monkeys, who are always happy in the banana trees," as if Africa is one homogeneous place, all about animals, tropical food, and primitive happiness. In another scene, Korean/ Korean American women are called by whatever names that sound similar to Asian names, and the names are constantly changing. They even speak to each other in different languages; Korean 1 and 2 speak in Korean, and Korean 3 in Cantonese Chinese. Many American audiences may not notice it, and that is the exact point with which Young Jean Lee is playing. Lee specifies the ethnicity of the characters as follows:

Korean-American and Koreans 1, 2, and 3 should be played by actresses who are one hundred percent Korean, Chinese or Japanese (or any mix of the three ...). When speaking English, Koreans 1, 2, and 3 speak with authentic Asian accents and Korean-American speaks with an American accent. When not speaking English, Koreans 1, 2, and 3 speak their native languages, whatever those may be. (Lee 2009, 34)

Lee's plan for the characters and languages is targeted at Americans' lack of knowledge on Asia, and of understanding personal differences. Asian people in America are often seen as a group, not recognized as personalized individuals. An individual is generalized and the image of the group is exaggerated. It echoes Edward Said's observation of Arabic men always being presented by westerners as a mob (Said 2003 (1978), 287).

One thing that should not be overlooked in this contrast between the Koreans' and Americans' scenes, is the nature of gaze *toward* the white American couple. While Koreans' scenes are exaggerated to look festive, busy, and loud, Americans' scenes are created to look overly controlled, quiet, and pale. In the original production, the white couple wear simple dark-colored clothes, stay in one position, either sitting or standing, and talk disparately about random things such as "your nose is too big," "stop stealing my pen," and "Why are you trying to be healthy?" Their conversations are all related to sex, love, and relationships, but always slip away from the focus. The Koreans' scenes are full of struggles, but full of energy and life, while white people's scenes are calm, but lethargic and listless. Richard Dyer, in his essay, "Whites are Nothing: Whiteness, Representation and Death" (2000), notes that color is a sign of life and presence, while white, the absence of color, means death and nonexistence. He argues, quoting bell hooks (hooks 1992, 169), that non-white people's association of white people with death takes a form of "fear" for death, especially when it is combined with fear for power that white people possess. White people are "seeing but not seen, knowing others but not known by them" (Dyer 2000, 136), and they have power to bring death to others. The Koreans' scenes in *SDFH* contain frequent suicidal acts caused by suffering from oppression. White people, who seem to be only

minding their personal business, love and relationship, look normal, stable, and powerful, compared to Koreans. Ironically, however, the white people's scenes hold the image of death—death by being alone, being disconnected from each others, while suicidal Koreans' scenes deliver the message of struggle for life. Deprivation of music and sound from the white people's scene intensifies the image of emptiness and lifelessness. The White couple's scenes in *SDFH* are exaggerated reflecting Koreans'/Korean Americans' envy and fear of the white people.

Music Representing Oppression

The Sound of Asian Flute and Trickling Water

I mentioned earlier the sound of Asian flute and trickling water, which are played before the play starts, while the audience is waiting behind the set. This sound represents the quiet and contemplative side of Asian stereotypes. In addition to the function of evoking Asianness, Lee has another purpose for playing the sound of Asian flute and trickling water. The stage direction reads, [while the sound of Asian flute and trickling water is playing] "Ideally, the audience will be crowded together behind the temple [the stage] in a claustrophobic manner and made to steep in this oppressively "Asian" environment for a long time before they are allowed to go to their seats" (Lee 2009, 35). She wants the audience to experience how the calm and peaceful sound can turn into an oppressive environment depending on the situation. The sound of Asian flute and trickling water plays like a prelude to the play, where the audience will find more contradictory values such as love, virtue, sacrifice, religion, and exoticism.

P'ansori, "Sarangga"

The first scene of *SDFH* is a video clip of Young Jean Lee herself being repeatedly slapped on the face by somebody invisible. A love song from p'ansori, *Choonhyangga* 춘향가 is played in the background. This song, which is sung by a male singer expressing the male character's sexual desire toward his lover, is more than merely background, but serves as an aural agent that slaps Lee in place of invisible hitter. The strong beats of the drum (*buk*) accompaniment is sounding simultaneously whenever she gets slapped, as if the drum beat is hitting her. Lee's face becomes red and tears keep running, but the beating does not stop even after the song is over. How can she be hit by a love song so violently?

P'ansori is the most well-known Korean traditional music genre. It is designated as Intangible Cultural Treasure (1964) by Korean government, and one of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity (2005) by The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The story of *Choonhyangga*, however, is not simply proud and cherishable when it is viewed from the perspective of women. Choonhyang is a prostitute's daughter who falls in love with a novel young man, Mongryong. Choonhyang keeps her chastity even in the face of death until Mongryong comes to save her. This is a typical theme of Korean folk tales which emphasizes women's virtue and subordination to men and reflects the male dominated society in 18th-century Korea. The violence of sex inequality, which is still pervasive in Korea, has always existed wrapped under the sugarcoating of love and virtue. Another well-known p'ansori work, *Shimchungga* 심청가, exhibits a similar theme. Shimchung is a young woman whose father is poor and blind. One day she hears that a large offering to Buddha can cure her father's blindness. She sells herself to merchant sailors to become a sacrifice to the

ocean, in order to earn the money. Shimchung gets saved by the king of the undersea world and becomes the queen. The story of Shimchung beautifies the daughter's sacrifice for her father, reinforcing the filial duty and male supremacy. Love and sacrifice become an invisible ball and chain as portrayed in the scene of Lee getting slapped by the man's love song.

"All I Want for Christmas is You"

"Saranga" from p'ansori, *Choonhyangga* is not just a love song, but a proud national and international treasure. The tension between preservation of ethnic culture and protection of individual rights has been discussed frequently (Okin 1999, Kimlicka 1989, Volpp 2001, etc.). In South Korea, as a rapidly developing and highly modernized country, and also in North Korea, where gender equality is enforced by communism, the tension between traditional culture and feminism may be relatively minor (compared to customs in other countries such as clitoridectomy, polygamy, and coerced marriage). Korean women, however, have long been the oppressed of the oppressed, for the male-dominated culture of Korean society has been under the control or influence of powerful countries like China, Japan, and the United States. Korean women were sent to China as a part of tribute to the Yuan dynasty, they were drafted as "sex workers" for Japanese soldiers during World War II, and worked as prostitutes in the American military bases in Korea under the governmental approval of both countries. Double degradation by men and the colonial powers has deeply wounded Korean women's self-identity as well as sexuality.

This deep wound is expressed through two different suicidal scenes in *SDFH*. The three Koreans and the Korean American, all in Korean traditional dress, are scuttling and shaking their skirts to the music of "All I Want for the Christmas is You" (1994), sung by Mariah Carey. They

take turns miming a horrifying suicide, such as hara-kiri, one stabbing herself in the vagina with a knife, one cutting off her breast, and another shooting her baby and herself. Mariah Carey's love song plays a similar role to the love song from *Choonhyangga*, but this time it represents modern and foreign forces. By choosing a Christmas song, Lee connects this scene with the previous scene about Korean Christianity, which I will discuss after the brief examination of the following song.

A Korean Children's Song, "Santokki"

Another musical representation of battered and distorted female sexuality is done through one of the most well-known Korean children's songs, "Santokki 산토끼 [A Wild Hare]". Korean 3 sings a modified version of this children's song after she is frightened by a scary Ghost-Man's voice asking "Shall we play 'Hookers and Johns'?" The song is originally lively in a major mode, telling a story about a wild hare running over the hills to gather nuts.¹⁶ Korean 3 sings the same tune at a slower tempo in minor mode. The new lyrics are this time about cutting herself, which makes a stark contrast to the original's message of innocent childhood.

When you cut her
Do not cut her with a knife.

¹⁶ The original lyrics are as follows.

Wild hare, wild hare, where are you going?
Hopping and Jumping, where are you going?

Hills and valleys I will go over by myself
To gather chestnuts round and plump (translation by author)

This song is composed during the Japanese occupation of Korea, by Il-lae Lee, who wrote many well-known children's songs such as Gohyangui Bom 고향의 봄 [Spring in Hometown], Nogojiri 노고지리 [A Skylark], and Obba Saengak 오빠생각 [Thinking of My Big Brother]. The freely running wild hare in this song is sometimes referred to as the expression of the composer's longing for the nation's freedom. It is more likely, however, the song's popularity than the conceivable messages, which led Young Jean Lee to choose this song.

Do not chop her with an ax.
Do not saw her with a saw.

One, two, one, two.
Now you know what you must do.
Do not cut her with a knife.
This is how you take her life.

Put some fishhooks in her hand.
That is all you need.
She will put them in her cunt
And they will make her bleed. (Lee 2006, 45)

The lyrics hauntingly describe how women are blamed and hurt for what men did. Using the tune of children's song implies that young girls were not exceptions in sexual abuse and taught to blame herself from early age. Korean 3 says she learned this song from her grandmother. Korean 3 later reveals the story of her rape by her schoolteacher, arranged with her father's permission.

A Korean Church Song, "Yesu Miduseyo"

After the white couple's first scene, which introduces the couple's uneasy relationship, Korean-American comes on stage being dragged by her grandmother. Grandmother makes a dying wish to her granddaughter that she would love to see her granddaughter becoming a Christian. She insists that without believing in Jesus, people will make a miserable life and go to hell to be tortured eternally. Korean-American first resists, but eventually agrees to answer her grandmother's last wish. Grandmother's death is followed by the white couple's second scene, in which, this time, the man expresses his obsessive love to the woman, saying that he wants her to be with him at every moment, and even wants to disappear in order to become her. The man's

exhibition of an almost religious nature of his love is interrupted by the Koreans and Korean-American, who rush to the stage and grab the white couple, singing loudly a popular Korean church tune, "Yesu Miduseyo 예수믿으세요 [Believe in Jesus]" (1981). This song is one of the best known evangelistic campaign songs in Korean protestant churches. The first verse¹⁷ of this song is as follows:

[Verse 1]

Where are you going now with footsteps so heavy?
Found a place to rest in this world, any place to stay?
In Jesus, there are rest and peace overflowing.
Whoever believes in Jesus's blood on the cross will get salvation.

[Chorus]

Believe in Jesus. Believe in Jesus.
Those who believes in Jesus are happy to earn eternal life
The Kingdom is his possession, so believe in God with no delay.
(translation by author)

The white American couple reluctantly follow the Koreans with puzzlement and even sing the Korean Christian song together. This is the only scene in SDFH, where Koreans, Korean-American, and white people meet together on the same stage. It reminds me of the first meeting of Koreans and American missionaries in Korea in the late 19th century. The ironic differ-

¹⁷ The lyrics of the second and the third verses are as follows:

[Verse 2]

Who did you meet today? Were you comforted?
Has anybody in this world sacrificed his life for you?
Throw off a yoke of suffering in the name of Jesus.
Open you heart and receive the Spirit, you will be filled with Joy.

[Verse 3]

I am renewed by believing in Jesus, and my joy overflows.
Darkness has gone and a new day came, my happiness overflows.
I have peace that I have never had before, my praise overflows,
Let's tell this ever welling joy to the world in the name of Jesus.
(translation by author)

ence is that Koreans in this scene are more enthusiastic about Christian evangelism than white Americans. According to a monthly issue of a renowned newspaper in Korea (*Wolgan Chosun* 월간조선, January, 2010),¹⁸ the number Korean missionaries sent all over the world reached 20,000 in 2009. Korea is ranked as the second largest missionary country being surpassed only by the United States of America. *The Economist* (November 1, 2007)¹⁹ reported that the five of the world's biggest megachurches are in Korea, and the largest of those five churches, Yoido Full Gospel Church [Pentecostals], has 830,000 members. *The Economist* points out a couple of characteristics of Korean megachurches; they are "export-minded" evangelical protestants, they combine competitive spirit and a business-oriented mindset to move up in the social ladder and to excel past other churches and religious groups, they have a tendency to be more emotive than intellectual with passionate belief in spiritual experiences like miraculous healing of disease, and they are politically conservative with close connections to the Korean New Right movement (2/3 of whose 200,000 members are Christians).

Korean churches often receive serious criticism from non-Christians for a self-righteousness that condemns other religious groups and non-believers, and its conservatism that rejects social diversity. In *SDFH*, after the brief interaction of Korean-American and Koreans with white Americans, Korean American and Korean 1 express their criticisms of Korean Christianity.

¹⁸ "Gidokgyo Seongyosa Imanmyung Pasong Sidaeu Myungam 기독교 선교사 2만명 파송 시대의 명암 [Light and Shade of Korean Christianity in the Age of 20,000 Korean Missionaries." *Wolgan Chosun* 월간 조선 [Monthly Chosun]. accessed July 8, 2013. http://monthly.chosun.com/client/news/viw_contentA.asp?nNewsNumb=201001100066&ctcd=&cPage=1.

¹⁹ "O Come All Ye Faithful." *The Economist: Special Report: Religion and Public Life*. November 1, 2007. accessed July 8, 2013. <http://www.economist.com/node/10015239>.

KOREAN-AMERICAN: But, Christians are evil. They're homophobic and anti-sex and racist and misogynistic and pro-life Republicans who have all the power in America that got Bush elected.

KOREAN 1: Those are white Christians, Dong-Dong. White Christians. Korean Christians are different. We are even more evil, because we add on top of the evilness of Christians the evilness of being Korean, and Koreans are the most evil nation in the world. Koreans are conservative and apolitical (except for not wanting to pay taxes) and they are greedy and anti-sex and anti-gay and racist and smell bad and talk funny and our streets smell like kimchi! (Lee 2009, 61)

Naturally, neither all "white Christians" nor all Korean Christians are homophobic, anti-sex, racist, and conservative. Christian denominations such as the Episcopal Church, Presbyterian Church (PCUSA, not PCA (Presbyterian Church of America)), and United Church of Christ ordain gay clergy, and a few Korean churches of Presbyterian and Methodist denominations openly tolerate sexual minorities. Young Jean Lee made it clear in her 2007 play, *Church*, that even the most conservative Christians should not be criticized as a whole. In her interview with Eliza Bent in *The Brooklyn Rail* magazine (Eliza Bent, 2007), Lee says; "With all the George W. Bush stuff, I was hearing more and more blanket beliefs that all Christians are evil morons. ... My parents [who were evangelical Christians] aren't evil morons... they're really smart, really good people. How crazy it is to say that an entire group of people is evil and that they're morons? Blanket mentality is really dangerous even when applied to someone who you think deserves it."

The blanket criticism of Korean Christians in *SDFH*, however, has a purpose other than denouncing them. The fanatic figure of the Korean Christians is a comical caricature of Koreans' internalized orientalism, which propels them to keep the Christian doctrines even more faithfully than the people who first introduced Christianity to them. Behind Koreans' zeal for Christianity

(mainly Protestantism) that makes them sing "Believe in Jesus" so faithfully that they approach obsession, there is a deep longing for the wealth and power that the United States possesses. Many Korean Christians dream of power, money, and social success as a blessing from God, and the image of the wealthy and powerful United States of America is living proof. Protestants form 24% of the Seoul area population, while Buddhists (18%) and Catholics (14%) take smaller proportions.²⁰ According to *The Economist* (November 2007), 42% of the chief executives of listed companies and a third of its senators are Protestants. These statistics imply the strong influence of the United States on the Korean people especially those who are/wish to be upwardly mobile. Korean churches in America have the added function of giving Koreans/ Korean Americans an ethnicity-based spiritual community that can support and benefit the members in their daily life (e.g. helping settlements and businesses, socializing with other Koreans, preserving and sharing Korean culture, and educating the next generations about Korean culture, etc). Feeding desire and necessities, Korean churches both in Korea and America have quickly adopted Western/ American/ Christian values into their own community system. It may be hard to call Korean churches "oppressive," since Christianity has permeated Korean society in such a voluntary and personal way. The social climate, however, clearly connects Christianity with the powerful western countries (primarily the United States), and again with the upper class of Korean society. This reflects how deeply pervasive western centrism is in Korea and, how subtly oppressive power of orientalism is.

²⁰ The statistics are based on the most recent government census on religion (2005). Korean Census of Population, 2005: Gender, Age, and Religion. Korean Statistical Information Service. accessed July 8, 2013. http://kosis.kr/abroad/abroad_01List.jsp?parentId=A.

Music to Exhibit Self-Exoticization

Self-Exoticism: A Sign of Orientalism or Self-Empowerment?

Korean women in *SDFH* are intentionally portrayed as wild, shamelessly frank, and comically ugly. But, they act suddenly polite and gracious when they are aware of American observers, as though "someone in the audience is trying to take their picture," (Lee 2009, 43), or they are in "a Korean Airline's promotional video welcoming Westerners to Korea" (Lee 2009, 51). These scenes bring laughter from the audience, but exhibit a symptom of self-exoticism.

Korean tourism promotional videos aiming for the western customers usually emphasize two contrasting selling points, traditional Korea and modern Korea. Traditional Korea, such as nature, food, historical places, and traditional art and performances, appeals to the exotic expectations of westerners, while modern Korea, such as shopping, hotels, transportation, and high-end technology, ensures the target customers a convenient and pleasant travel. Both aspects of Korea are often presented to foreigners by young Korean women. They act mysterious, reserved and gracious in their beautiful traditional dress, and play chic, confident and powerful in modern western outfits. The image of Korean women mirrors Korea as an attractive destination, where you can enjoy all — exotic tradition and comfortable modernity. The exotic and traditional side of Korea/Korean women is particularly highlighted, for it distinguishes Korea from other parts of the world, and fulfills westerner's expectations of something different. Young Jean Lee exhibits, through the Korean characters' change of attitude, that the mentality of tailoring Korea's image to western taste is not limited to marketing purposes, but closely influential to individual performance at a personal level.

Graham Huggan in *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (2001) notes that since ethnic minorities voluntarily utilize and benefit from exoticism in the current global market and multicultural society, self-exoticism may be viewed as a strategic move that ethnic minorities maneuver:

Strategic exoticism is the means by which postcolonial writers/thinkers working from within exoticist code of representation, either manage to subvert those codes or to uncover the differential relations of power. (Huggan 2001, 37)

Still, he argues that self-exoticism is another sign of colonialism that is immanent in the postcolonial society, for it is benefiting from the former colonial mindset of viewing the East as an inferior opposite of the West. Some scholars, on the other hand, observing the same phenomenon of self-exoticism/self-orientalism, show more positive view points than Huggan. Grace Yan and Carla Almeida Santos admit in their article "China, Forever: Tourism Discourse and Self-Orientalism" (2009) that Chinese tourism promotional videos conform to Orientalistic discourse by presenting China as a changeless, mystical, nostalgic and feminine place. Quoting Arif Dirlik (1996), however, they note that "the once victims are now using Orientalism in the new global power dynamics for self-empowerment" (Yan & Santos 2009, 310). Greg Umbach's and Dan Wishnoff's report (2008) on urban renewal planning of New York's Chinatown reveals how strong the Chinese Americans' urge is to exoticize Chinese culture to profit through tourism. During 1950-2005 Chinatown's merchant elites made three failed attempts to rebuild New York's Chinatown into a more exotic and traditional Chinese village to overcome economic recession. Researches prove that self-exoticism, whether it is a continuation of orientalism or a strategic

move to profit in the global market, is a trend that is much sought after by the "exotics" themselves.

Traditional Dancing to K-Pop: Concealing the Ugly Truth

Young Jean Lee provides another controversial scene of self-exoticism in *SDFH*. Three Korean women share with each other the stories of their sexual experiences. It is a mixture of trauma and desire. One shares her painful memory of sexual abuse that was committed by her school teacher under the consent of her father. The other woman brags about her experiences of having been a prostitute, saying that it was fun to have sex for money. Then the three Korean women play around slapping each other's butts, which is far from the image of chaste Asian women. Suddenly a slow K-pop tune (commonly known as "ballad" in Korea), "Small Waiting" (1995) by K2 plays in the background. The three Korean women immediately face the audience, and do a beautiful traditional Korean dance to the music, as if they are the most elegant Korean women.

The unique spectacle of colorful dress and exotically graceful dance conceals each women's individual story of painful trauma and sexual desire. The slow K-pop tune in the background intensifies the superficiality of this dance act. It is not a common musical choice for the traditional dance, unless it is intended for humor. Lee is comically revealing the awkwardness of Korean women's performance of ethnicity, which is used for display purposes, out of context, and concealing the struggle and ugly truth of Korean women's experiences. Is Korean culture a trademark for Korean/Korean American people that they can always pull out to proudly present with themselves? Is it okay to conceal the truth to look appealing?

The Korean American's response to this question in *SDHF* is not so affirming. The stage directions describe the Korean American's reaction to the three Koreans' dance as follows; "Korean-American walks onstage, unable to resist the charming dance. [...] Korean-American imitates their movement clumsily [...]. Korean 3 critically eyes Korean-American's dancing and makes a disgusted face, shoving her away. [...] Korean-American makes racist faces at the Koreans" (Lee 2009, 46-47). The Korean American character in *SDFH* constantly scoffs at Korean women's festive traditional dress (Korean-American is wearing a t-shirt and jeans) and their pretentiously hospitable attitude toward an American audience. She is, on the other hand, curious and envious of the Korean women's possession of traditional culture. She tries to be part of the tradition, but the Korean women claim their authority over their tradition by pushing her away. Korean women are practicing their authoritative power as bearers of tradition to rule over Korean-American who does not possess the same membership.

Many Korean Americans learn the Korean language and traditional culture to become a part of "real" Korea. A Korean American college student, who plays traditional Korean drumming at the University of Southern California, explains how she started Korean drumming,

I don't think I had any Korean friends. And so I was THE KOREAN one in my group growing up all the time. So I always identified with it as being the Korean one. So, I just thought, you know, in order to actually fulfill that title, I had to really be the Korean one.²¹

Will Kymlicka argues that cultural membership in a "rich and secure cultural structure," with its language and history, is essential both for the development of self-respect and for giving

²¹ "I am Korean American: Identity 2," [February, 2011]. Video clip. Accessed April 23, 2012. YouTube. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j-Dd3ZyJKM8>.

persons a context in which they can develop the capacity to make choices about how to lead their lives (Kymlicka 1989,165). By the same token, however, the judgment and preconception about an individual based on the membership to a certain group forces the individual to find identity and self-respect in his/her affiliation to a group. Do those identifying/identified with ethnic minorities need a special cultural membership in their ethnic group?

No Optional Ethnicity?

Henry Yu, in the preface of his book, *Thinking Orientals: Migration, Contact, and Exoticism in Modern America* (2000), tells his experience of American exoticism towards Asian people.

This study has been an attempt to answer why it is that an Asian American in the United States, no matter how long and for how many generations he or she might have been here, will still be regularly asked "Where are you from?" The inquisitors are never satisfied with the answers of Los Angeles, or Vancouver, or Canada. You are seen as an "Oriental" of some sort, and they need to sort you according to some foreign distinction. And so you must answer, "I am 'originally' from Japan, even though you have never been to Japan, or "My parents (or grandparents) are Chinese." To feel like an outsider is an existential phenomenon on the individual level, but it is also the result of journey through a certain kind of landscape. It is this terrain of race relations in the United States that I have come to know through my travels. (Yu 2001, vi)

For the second, third, and the later generations of Asian immigrants, it may feel more natural to identify themselves as simply American. As generations pass, immigrants' ethnicity and origin of country lose their significance. Herbert Gans in his article "Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America" (1979) argues that "[to young ethnics] the secular ethnic cultures become an ancestral memory or an exotic tradition to be savored at an

ethnic festival" (Ibid., 6). Therefore, "ethnicity takes on an expressive rather than instrumental function" in the third and fourth generation immigrants' life (Ibid., 9). Gans termed this phenomenon "symbolic ethnicity." Adopting this theory more than twenty years later (another generation), Sang Ja Ahn (2000) examines the nature of second generation Korean American ethnicity as primarily more "American" than Korean. Emphasizing the context of contemporary American universalism and multiculturalism, Ahn argues that the second generation Korean Americans identify themselves as American, and optionally perform Korean ethnicity to fulfill the American ideal of pluralism and diversity. Taking another step forward in this direction, Eugene Volokh in his article "Making Hay With Shifty Labels" (1998) states that "Asians are now white," because "white" does not mean Caucasian anymore - it means upper class, a group of people who succeeded, and Asians made it."²²

Mary Waters, however, thinks differently. In her essay, "Optional Ethnicities: For Whites Only?" (1996), she claims that "symbolic ethnicities are confined to White Americans of European origin. Black Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans and American Indians do not have the option of a symbolic ethnicity at present in the United States" (Waters 1996, 200). She argues that for non-Whites, ancestry still affects their individual life, because all ethnicities are still not equal in America, and have unequal history and memory. If ethnic minorities are treated differently, they are pressured to perform differently.

All these views on ethnicity prove that, after all, identity is a relationship between self and others. Some Korean Americans choose to be exotic while others aim to be better assimilated, depending on their position in a given context. The fact that many Koreans choose to learn

²² Eugene Volokh, "Making Hay With Shifty Labels," *Los Angeles Times*, April 9, 1998.

Korean/Asian culture through group projects such as p'ungmul and taiko rather than solo activities, which is often preferred in Korea, proves that the relationships with other members in the group and the visibility of their activities are important factors in ethnic minorities' identity formation. Identity is also the relationship with/between nations. Most people nowadays want to choose both identities, mainly because "it is easier and cheaper to travel and communicate"²³, and also it is "encouraged by their countries of origin to further promote identification with and commitment to the homeland."²⁴

Alternative Rock As Universal Self?

Young Jean Lee includes two songs from Lo-fi, alternative indie rock genre; one is a song titled "I Was Born a Unicorn" (2003) by a Canadian indie rock band, The Unicorns, and the other is "Held" (1999) by an American indie band, Smog. The former is played near the beginning of the play when the Korean characters are first introduced on the stage, and the other is played at the very end of the play when the white couple finally reach agreement on rebuilding their relationship. If Lee's slapping scene and Korean-American's monologue are seen as an intro to the play, these two alternative rock songs play a significant role in framing the play at the beginning and at the end.

After the opening video clip of Young Jean Lee's slapping scene, a Korean American character takes the stage, and cheerfully but sarcastically ridicules herself by saying that "most

²³ Nathan Glazer, 2004, "Assimilation Today: Is One identity enough?" in *Reinventing the Melting Pot*, edited by Tamar Jacoby, New York: Basic Books, 65.

²⁴ Ibid., 65.

Asian Americans are slightly brain-damaged from having grown up with Asian parents," because Asian parents are "retarded monkeys who can barely speak English and who are too evil to understand anything besides conformity and status" (Lee 2009, 39-40). After saying a few more things about race in America, she introduces Korean characters to the stage by shouting, "Let the Korean dancing begin!" The music, "I Was Born A Unicorn," starts, and three Korean women in Korean traditional dress enter the stage, running and shaking their skirt up to the head, and playfully smacking each other's butts. Suddenly the three Koreans gang up and beat Korean-American hard to the ground. They still smile at the audience, making peace signs with their fingers, "as though someone in the audience is trying to take their picture" (Lee 2009, 51).

The absurdity and cruelty of this scene is comically lightened by song lyrics.

I was born a Unicorn
I missed the ark but I could've sworn
You'd wait for me

I was born a Unicorn
I could've sworn you believed in me.
Then how come all the other Unicorns are dead?

[middle part is edited to cut]²⁵

We're the Unicorns.

We're more than horses.

We're the Unicorns

And we're people too! ("I was Born a Unicorn," *Who Will Cut Our Hair When We're Gone*, Alien 8 Recordings, The Unicorns, Lyrics, The Unicorns)

The middle part of the song is cut to fit the scene. The ending verses (we're the unicorns and we're people too) echo a line from Korean-American's monologue:

But the important thing about being Korean is getting to know your roots. Because we come to this country and want to forget about our ancestry, but this is bad, and we have to remember that our grandfathers and grandmothers were people, too, with interesting stories to tell. (Lee 2009, 40)

The Koreans/Korean Americans may look weird like "monkeys" or "unicorns", they may feel unreal like those far away or legendary animals, but "they are people, too, with interesting stories to tell." The Korean American character in SDFH shares her grandmother's recipe called

²⁵ (Were never gonna stop
I think I wanna stop
We want one us
I don't care i'll do push-ups
I write the songs
I WRITE the songs
You say I'm doing it wrong
YOU ARE doing it wrong

Put your crystals under my pillow
Send your epistle to my bedfellows

It also says!

When dreaming beasts are dying down, on out
They're there, for we agree they're there, They're there
alive and sure.

If I stop believing in you
If you stop believing in me
If I stop believing in you
If you stop believing in me)

"meekudaji tong,"²⁶ which is a stuffed tofu dish filled with mudfish. While mudfish is eaten widely in the southeast Asian countries, the recipe described in this play is quite displeasing:

Every New Year's Day, my grandmother throws a bunch of mudfish into a bowl of brine, which would make them puke out all their mud until they were shiny clean. Then she would put pieces of tofu on a skillet, heat it up, and throw the live mudfish onto the skillet. The mudfish would frantically burrow inside the pieces of tofu to escape the heat and, voilà, stuffed tofu! (Lee 2009, 41)

As Karen Shimakawa points out (Shimakawa 2007, 89-90), Korean-American claims herself as a culinary inheritor (or a witness, if not an inheritor) of her family, even if the recipe—the tradition, the culture—discomforts the American majority. In a way, the interaction between Koreans and Korean-American in *SDFH* can be seen as a conversation between Korean American and her near ancestors (Korean parents and grandparents), since the portrait of Koreans in this play seems much outdated. Korean American faces her status as a descendent of Koreans and a citizen of America, trying to understand the former, and seeking for the latter's understanding at the same time. "I Was Born Unicorn" manifests Koreans'/ Korean-American's feeling of misfit in the American society and their thirst to be understood as individual human beings. Choosing alternative rock rather than Korean music for their "theme" song can be understood as Lee's stance to view Koreans and Korean Americans outside the frame of ethnicity.

"Held" by Smog is used as closing music. The White American couple have been arguing about peripheral all through the play, without actually getting into their real problem of broken relationships. Finally at the end of the play, they agree to find help in couples counseling. The

²⁶ The word "meekudaji tong" in the script is not quite accurate, reflecting Young Jean Lee's unfamiliarity with the dish. The mudfish in Korean is meekuraji 미꾸라지, and "tong" should be spelled "tang" to mean "soup", which would make "meekudaji tong" mean "mudfish soup." The recipe described in this play, however, is stuffed tofu, which is a separate dish called "choodubu 추두부."

man reaches his phone and hands it to the woman, the scene stops, music starts, and the lights are out. All the actors come out and take bows to the audience, while the instrumental introduction of the song is played. The video recording of the play ends before the lyrics begin. The audience in the theater may hear the lyrics while they are getting ready to exit the theater:

For the first time in my life
 I let myself be held
 Like a big old baby
 I surrender
 To your charity

I lay back in the tall grass
 And let the ants cover me
 I let the jets fly
 I'm wishing for their destruction
 Born to black in a perfect blue sky

For the first time in my life
 I am moving away, moving away, moving away
 From within the reach of me
 And all the wild being held
 Like a big old baby ("Held," *Knock Knock*, Drag City, Smog. Lyrics, Bill Callahan)

The song affirms the couple's choice to trust others' help, let go of their old selves, and rebuild their life. Both "I Was Born a Unicorn" and "Held" bring the message of understanding each other and seeking a better relationship. This ethnicity-free, personal and universal message is carried by alternative rock, which is a symbolic genre for young, free, subversive, and independent minds, whose representative supporters are college students. Alternative/ Indie rock, however, as a musical genre that reflects social value, is not so ethnicity-free. David Hesmondalgh notes that indie music was constructing a canon of white, underground rock references in the mid 1980s, distancing itself from funk figures and dance rhythms of pop and black musical tradi-

tions, such as electro and hip hop (Hesmondalgh 1999, 5). Quoting Will Straw's notion of the link between post-punk and older rock tradition as a trait of white young men's musical culture, Hesmondalgh reports that "the 'whiteness' of the genre became even more pronounced [in the 1990s]; there was scarcely a black musician to be seen in the pages of the music press, except where jungle and trip-hop made appearances" (Hesmondalgh 1999, 52).

According to Chris McDonald, the label [alternative rock] was applied to the largely underground sector of rock in the 1980s, of which characteristics met one or more of the following criteria: it was recorded and performed on independent ("indie") networks of record companies and venues; it was a subversion of rock and pop conventions musically in some way; or its stylistic pedigree could be traced back to PUNK.²⁷ Even though alternative rock has some signature sound and characteristic association with young white (mostly male) culture, and is often joined to the mainstream rock scene (e.g. Nirvana, R.E.M, and the Cure), the idea of being independent from commercial record companies, and being subversive of mainstream rock and pop have attracted young listeners including Young Jean Lee. By choosing alternative indie rock as his/her musical genre, the person differentiates his/her socio-musical status from the majority of mainstream people.

Differentiation urges power. Ryan Hibbett explains in his article "What is Indie Rock?" (2005) how alternative rock achieves social power. Alternative/ Indie rock has a characteristic sound and style that requires specialized knowledge to be fully appreciated, as "high" art such as classical music does. This unique knowledge creates "cultural capital" (Bourdieu, 1986),

²⁷ Chris McDonald. "Alternative rock." Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press, accessed June 2, 2013, <http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.maurice.bgsu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/A2227025>.

which is "a form of knowledge, an internalized code or a cognitive acquisition which equips the social agent with empathy towards, appreciation for or competence in deciphering cultural relations and cultural artifacts" (Johnson 1993, 7). In Young Jean Lee's case, alternative rock is employed in the experimental avant-garde theater, another specialized cultural artifact, which intensifies the differentiation of power from the "inferior" world of mass culture. Lee's interest in experimental electronic music, which is used in *The Appeal* (2004) and *Untitled Feminist Show* (2012), can be viewed in the same context. *The Appeal* is a historically inaccurate, comic parody of three English Romantic poets, William Wordsworth (1771-1850), Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), and Lord Byron (1788-1824). Instead of employing the music from the play's background time and place as she did in *Lear* (2010)—she used the music of Shakespeare's contemporaries, William Byrd (1540-1623) and John Dowland (1563-1626)—she chose electronic music of American experimental duo Matmos to encapsulate the play's non-sense, energetic, and elusive atmosphere.

Can a relationship be drawn between Asian American ethnicity and alternative Indie Rock or classical music as a choice of preferred musical genre? Why is it harder to find Korean American pop musicians than Classical virtuosi? When a person cannot identify oneself with the majority mainstream culture, he/she will create a different type of "habitus," another of Bourdieu's terms meaning "a set of dispositions which generates practices and perceptions," which is "the result of a long process of inculcation, beginning in early childhood, which becomes a 'second sense' or a second nature" (Johnson 1993, 5). Finding power in a disinterested but prestigious field may be a smooth strategic choice for Korean American people to build cultural capital in American society.

CHAPTER IV. AN ALTERNATIVE VIEW TO SELF-EXOTICISM

The main issue I have discussed throughout the thesis is Young Jean Lee's criticism of the Koreans' and the Korean Americans' self-exoticism in *SDFH*. Utilizing the medium of theater incidental music, she effectively staged the ugliness of Korea's patriarchal tradition, American racism, and most of all, Korean/ Korean American women's hunger for power that propels shameless self-exoticization:

All I know is that I come up with all this racist shit, and when minorities get mad I'm like, "Go to hell, you unfashionably angry minorities, this is my sophisticated critique of racism that you are too stupid to understand." But the truth is, if you're a minority and you do super-racist stuff against yourself, then the white people are like, "Oh, you're a 'cool' minority," and they treat you like one of them. (Lee 2009, 66)

"Getting mad" about racism is "unfashionable" and "unsophisticated" in this 21st century global world. Instead, you have to do "super-racist stuff" like adequately exoticizing and even orientalizing yourself in order to be "cool," and to become a part of the powerful. Lee is revealing the hidden cause of acting "exotic" in the multicultural American society. Lee's double-edged message that criticizes both the oppressing and the oppressed forces the audiences/ readers to face the problem directly, and invites them to search for better solutions.

Trapped in Anti-Orientalism

How to overcome orientalism? Since the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, Korean scholars have actively responded to this question in relation to Korea's specific circumstances. Due to the nation's continuous struggle in dealing with the vestige of Japanese colonial

history, Koreans were already well aware of the concepts of colonial mentality permeated in every corner of their society. The Korean government's policy against the distribution of Japanese popular culture products in Korea reflects the nation's deep animosity toward Japan, and their strong will to leave behind the humiliating past. The sale of Japanese popular music recordings in Korea was illegal until 2004, and the broadcasting of Japanese pop music through TV and radio is still prohibited. What Koreans were less aware of was the colonial aspects of Western influences to their country. The circulation of Western music recordings was barely restricted when all five then-major record labels (PolyGram, Sony, EMI, BMG, and Time-Warner) started direct sales in Korea in 1989. Major part of Korean musicking, such as music education both in institutional and private sectors, popular music, commercial music, ceremonial music, etc., were, and still are based on Western musical traditions. Traditional Korean music was associated with backwardness, poverty, and an unsophisticated lifestyle, while Western music was considered to be to modern, rich, polished, and forward-looking.

Western-centrism in Korean culture has been a major target of criticism when responding to Orientalism. Scholars like Sil-ha Woo and Hong-kyu Park have been emphasizing the value of Korea's unique traditional culture with the purpose of enlightening Korean people to become proud of their own cultural heritage. Woo, in her 1997 book, *Orientalismui Haecheowa Uri Munhwa Baro Ilggi* 오리엔탈리즘의 해체와 우리문화 바로 읽기 [Dissolving Orientalism and Knowing Right about Korean Culture], coined a term, Dong-do-dong-gi-ron, 동도동기론(東道東器論) [Eastern Content, Eastern Container], as a way to convert Korean's western-centric values to the mindset that is grounded on Asian soil. She argues that Asian culture should be understood from the Asian point of view. She criticizes that what she sees as a Korean value system is based

on Western tastes, lacking their own motives and criteria to judge cultural values. Even though her argument is valid, her counter plan contains a fundamental problem. While Said is ultimately trying to dissolve the idea of the Orient as a Western imagination, Woo is consolidating the idea of the Orient as an essential being as if there is a thing we can confidently call "Asian," or "Korean." Besides, why Orient, why not Korea, if she wants to establish a value system that is truly Korean? Woo is generalizing Asia as one big homogeneous culture. Hong-kyu Park takes a similar stance when he emphasizes the uniqueness of Korean people and culture. He denounces Korea's national enthusiasm on the achievement of Yun-a Kim, a Korean ice-skating star, as an example of Korean's Western-centric mindset²⁸. He argues that neither the ice-skating nor Yun-a Kim's physical appearance are truly Korean. Most sports competitions are made advantageous for the western body type, and the international enthusiasm for sport events is the result of Western hegemony. By saying that Yun-a Kim's body with long arms and legs is not truly Korean, Park is denying the Koreanness of people with less popular Korean body types. Essentializing ethnicity and finding pride in it is being mixed with overcoming orientalism.

So-Young Lee, in her book *Hanguk Umagui Naejaehwadwen Orientalsimul Neomeoseo* 한국음악의 내재화된 오리엔탈리즘을 넘어서 [Beyond Internalized Orientalism of Korean Music] (2005), summarizes the past one hundred years of Korean music history as a site of internalized orientalism (So-Young Lee 2005, 6). She laments that traditional Korean music is losing its original form and spirit in order to meet Western/westernized tastes; the original tuning system is ignored to tune traditional instruments so they can play with western instruments, the unique tim-

²⁸ "Baekgang Munhwa Teukgang; Jeontong Munhwa [Traditional Culture], World Music, Postcolonialism" [March 17, 2010], video clip, accessed may 21, 2013, YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2TrB2ooM2Jg>.

bre of Korean instruments is often used to evoke some 'exotic' mood, and the spontaneous and improvisational nature of traditional music performance is becoming academic, rigid, and institutionalized. In order to overcome Korean's deeply internalized orientalism in music culture, she argues, Korean music must conserve the originality of traditional music while conveying contemporaneity of Korean thinking. In reality, however, the balance between the preservation of tradition and construction of modernity is not an easy task to achieve. The reason for the popularity of hybrid/new age Korean music is that they are easy to understand, but still offers the Korean flavor. Where is the right point that you can say this is the ideal kind of hybrid music that preserves tradition and expresses modernity? Who decides that? Her argument, after all, disregarding popular taste, is prone to fall into elitism that relies on the output and judgement of some rare conscious minds.

The common premise that Korean scholars bear in their responses to orientalism is the desire to find or establish a unique voice of Korean national culture. Perhaps, from the outset, this premise is not compatible with the purpose of dissolving orientalism. Edward Said's observation of orientalism shows that orientalism is being practiced in two different ways: one is a form of western-centrism, against which Korean scholars are most defensive, and the other is traditionalism, which believes that the essence of an ethnic group lies in its unique cultural tradition. These two look different, but actually are two sides of a coin, because both have resulted from a rejection of the Orient's current value and power. Koreans' struggle against orientalism seems to be trapped in these two appearances. If they put more weight on the traditional side, they fall in the trap of traditionalism. If they practice more on the modern side, they are accused of western-centrism. The discourse on anti-orientalism among Koreans is not well-aligned with

Edward Said's intention of de-essentializing the Orient. Young Jean Lee is asking through *SDFH*, "Does it make sense when Koreans try to overcome all those racial inequities— orientalism, colonialism, and exoticism— by essentializing and exoticizing their ethnicity, even if it brings social benefits and material profit to them?" Is there a better solution?

New Self-Exoticism as Cultural Tolerance

Isabel Santaolalla in "*New*" *Exoticisms: Changing Patterns in the Construction of Otherness*, searches for a new way of interpreting exoticism based upon Bhabha's re-formulation of Orientalism. Unlike Said, Bhabha puts emphasis on the agency of the colonized people in the process of orientalizing themselves. To Bhabha, "meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, re-historicized and read anew" (Bhabha 2004, 55). Instead of viewing exoticism and orientalism as a fixed, uni-directional result of hegemonic structure, Bhabha and Santaolalla focus on how the agency is performed and negotiated through the process of representation. The term *exoticism* in the field of American social science much implies the meaning of Orientalism, because the agent of the action is the West. When the agency of the action and interpretation becomes the Orient itself, self-exoticism does not always mean self-orientalism. For instance, the Koreans can *exoticize* themselves with the most recent, uniquely Korean rapping style without necessarily *orientalizing* themselves, depending on the type and purpose of the music.

When focusing on the power of agency in the process of self-exoticization, how to understand the state of the agency becomes critical. Younger generations of Koreans/ Korean Americans, who are little confined to the memory of colonialism and the sense of victimized, may

practice self-exoticization more freely and fashionably. For instance, the Korean Americans, who choose to wear Korean traditional dress for a part of their wedding ceremony, may do so not much because they want to claim their ethnicity or show their resistance against the dominant American culture, but simply because they want to do something unique (but something related to them) for their special day. To many Koreans traditional Korean music is more foreign than western music. I have met very few Koreans whose favorite music is traditional Korean music. No Koreans that I know wear traditional dress as a daily wear, nor persist in traditional cooking and diet. Most Koreans, however, have positive interest, if not great pride, in Korean cultural heritage. This relatively recent and voluntary interest in their own culture is a separate phenomena from post-war Korea's nationalism, which was promoted/ propagated by the government. I consider it a part of Koreans' response to the growing cultural diversity, which has become a prominent characteristic of Korean society since 1990s²⁹. Korea's economic, political, societal, and cultural achievement helps overcome the victim mentality (and the consequential nationalism), and promotes confidence to rediscover their own tradition, and tolerate former colonial culture as well as other cultural imports.

As exoticism and orientalism are losing their negative implications, and *diversity* is becoming the key property of Korean culture, Koreans embrace many types of music, and claim those as their own. For instance, Jaram Lee is a young p'ansori singer, who gained recognition by her original p'ansori works such as, *Sacheonga* 사천가, and *Ukchukga* 억척가, both of which are based on Bertolt Brecht's plays (*Good Woman of Szechwan*, and *Mother Courage and Her Chil-*

²⁹ Liberalization of Korea's overseas travel regulations in 1989 greatly accelerated Koreans' interest in many foreign cultures.

dren). She is also an active member of an indie folk rock band, Amado Leejaram (Maybe Lee Jaram) as a singer and composer, claiming both types of music as her own. Giha Chang, another indie folk rock singer, finds his musical inspiration in the music of Korean rock bands from the 1970s and 80s. His music, a close reminiscent of San-wool-lim and Song-gol-mae, two seminal rock bands from the 1980s, is a manifestation of originality that contributes to the establishment of a uniquely Korean rock tradition. Chang is especially unique in the way that he values relatively recent Korean rock music, rather than adopting traditional Korean musical elements, or relying on the popular Western rock style.

When I watched the video clip of Jaram Lee and her p'ansori group performing on the street in Avignon, France, to promote their upcoming performance, *Sacheonga* 사천가, my impression was very mixed.³⁰ I knew Jaram Lee's passion in p'ansori, but the spectators' gaze on the performance which was filled with curiosity bothered me. Should I accuse Jaram Lee for self-orientalism, making herself and her nation's tradition into a showy eye-catcher? Did she really need to do the street performance? I questioned, at the same time, why not? Yes, she is exoticizing herself in the sense that she is self-fashioning or self-differentiating to find her unique voice and position in the current music business both in Korea and worldwide. She is not necessarily orientalizing or denigrating herself, if you see the event from her point of view, not from the spectators' point of view.

After all, Young Jean Lee herself, by choosing the topic of ethnicity for her play, is strategically utilizing Western exoticism "for the purpose of uncovering differential relations of

³⁰ "Sacheonga Avignon Geori Hongbo 사천가 아비뇽 거리 홍보 [Sacheonga Promotion Performance on a Street in Avignon] ," [July 19, 2011]. Video clip. Accessed May 5, 2013. YouTube. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NnZPHVZTgW8>.

power" (Huggan 2001, 37), which can be considered strategic self-exoticism. This is a notable move in the history of Korean American theater at least in two ways. First, the thematic emphasis in Korean American theater, which has shifted continuously from nationalism in the 1960s to individual identity in the 1990s, is now taking another move towards seeking a close conversation between the Korean American community and the American mainstream. Who is exoticizing what? Who's image is this that you see in the Korean Americans? The subtitle of *SDFH*, as discussed earlier in this thesis, is "*A Show about White People in Love*." Towards the end of *SDFH*, Korean American, Korean 1, 2, and 3 asks in monologue, "I don't know what white people are doing in this show. I don't even know what the Asian people are doing. All I know is that I come up with all this racist shit, ..." No interaction between the white people and the Koreans in this play only results in Koreans' self-loathing and anger, and white people's guilt and indifference. Young Jean Lee is asking the audience to take a step further towards interaction and understanding.

Secondly, by debunking the stereotypes and exoticism, Lee is also rejecting the superficial notion of organic connection between music and ethnicity/ nationality. The calming sound of Asian flute and trickling water, traditional songs of proud national heritage, the ever-growing popularity of Korean pop music - these are only cliched cultural products when used without deep understanding of Korea, the Korean/ Korean American people, and cultural, political and economical interrelations between Korea and America. Lee's effort to create or search for an alternative type of music in order to express her true self, if not to convey the contemporaneity of the Korean Americans, is found most obviously in her affinity of alternative, experimental rock music. Her bold criticism of exoticism through the music, dance, and stories in *Songs of the*

Dragons Flying to Heaven opens up the possibility of constructing a new Koreanness/ Korean Americanness, which is a cooperative work with the Americans.

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BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

Office of Research Compliance

DATE: September 10, 2012

TO: Hyecun Ceon, Master

FROM: Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board

PROJECT TITLE: [311747-3] Master's Thesis

SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision

ACTION: APPROVED

APPROVAL DATE: September 10, 2012

EXPIRATION DATE: August 14, 2013

REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 7

Thank you for your submission of Revision materials for this project. The Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is available as a published Board Document in the Review Details page. You must use the approved version of the consent document when obtaining consent from participants. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that you are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the HSRB. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures, those modifications must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the modification request form for this procedure.

You have been approved to enroll 31 participants. If you wish to enroll additional participants you must seek approval from the HSRB.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must also be reported promptly to this office.

This approval expires on August 14, 2013. You will receive a continuing review notice before your project expires. If you wish to continue your work after the expiration date, your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Good luck with your work. If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at 419-372-7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence regarding this project.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board's records.