UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Performing Colonial Imagination

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

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by

Areum Jeong

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Performing Colonial Imagi-nation

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in Theater and Performance Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor Sue-Ellen Case, Chair

This dissertation examines representations of national identity in live performance in Korea and the United States from the early twentieth century to the present. My research focuses on how intermedial performance strategies—performances that incorporate pre-filmed elements, often by projecting film or images into the background of a performance—deploy local cultural and political motifs of South Korean national identity. This work encompasses both early and contemporary performances and reveals that the combination of performance and screen has served as a mode of the postmodern movement of cultural translation. The productions I examine—the *pyŏnsa* ("film narrator") performances during the Japanese Colonial Rule, the Korean musical *The Last Empress* (1995) and *Hero* (2009), YMAP's dance piece *Madame Freedom* (2013), and Ping Chong's *Deshima* (1990) and *Chinoiserie* (1995)—address cultural differences, constructing a space in which Korean audiences can both learn the culture of the Western "Other" and imagine themselves as part of a nation. Using critical readings of selected

Korean performances, the research shows that the changing cultural and political climate of the South Korean nation-state creates an urgency for artists to express a particular national identity. By illustrating the shifting rhetoric of the relationship between the individual and the state, such works endeavor to challenge the status quo.

The dissertation of Areum Jeong is approved.

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Performing Colonial Imagi-nation

Since the 1990s, the South Korean government's promotion of cultural and economic globalization encouraged theater and performance to stage Korean works that show Korean characteristics and identities in forms that would appeal to Western countries. As South Korea emerges as a global power in the age of transnational capital, it seeks to establish, through performance, an independent national identity on the global stage. This dissertation poses two leading questions regarding this cultural focus in regard to specifically South Korean performative strategies: how and why does performance offer compelling articulations of national identities? What are the political implications of staging the self, the social, and the nation in performance?

In order to interpret this culturally specific phenomenon, the critic needs to regard more general theories that treat the relationship between nationalism and performance. Recent scholarship from scholars, for example, Jisha Menon reveals, individual subject-identities are constructed simultaneously as national subjects who submit to new rules of social relations, and are authorized by their national representations.[1] Such studies focus not only on the staging of national identities, but also on their reception, or their address to the audience. In this context, a study of the performative structures that help to define one's current national identity by examining national identity during a former colonial period can illustrate how performance can trigger the local audience's identification through a form of suturing.[2]

Even more general critical theories beyond the studies of nationalist identities are theories

1. For a further reading of Jisha Menon's performative approach to the study of the nation, see her book *The Performance of Nationalism: India, Pakistan, and the Memory of the Partition*.

2. Ibid., 12.

of identity and identification. Within the South Korean context, my engagement with formations of national identification in various performances is foremost invested in theories of identity and identification. The intersections I attempt to demonstrate in performance manifest in national and diasporic representations. These apparati address structures of identification pertaining to gender and sexuality, as well as those of class and race in previous scholarship. I aim to address these and other questions in national and subcultural contexts as I elaborate throughout this dissertation. I will discuss key strategies of identification that serve to construct a sense of national identities in performance and explicate the strategies within their theoretical context as well as within the context of a specific performance or performance genre.

Located at the borders between aural, literary, and visual art forms, intermedial performances maintain a "self-conscious reflexivity" in the ways they blur generic and media boundaries.[3] This intermedial form best serves a study of nationalist identity because it "acknowledges multiple acts of representation and makes them visible."[4] As theater and performance provide a "performative situation" in which film, television, and digital video may operate "not just as recordings on their own, but [operate] at the same time and above all [as] theatrical signs,"[5] this study employs intermediality as a tool in order to understand the complex processes of nation formation in performance and the theoretical conversations that emerge from it.

This dissertation examines representations of national identity in live performance in

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3. Freda Chapple and Chiel Kattenbelt, *Intermediality in Theatre and Performance* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2006), 11.

4. Ibid., 38.

5. Ibid., 37.

Korea and the United States from the early twentieth century to the present. My work focuses on how intermedial performance strategies—performances that incorporate pre-filmed elements, often by projecting film or images into the background of a performance—deploy local cultural and political motifs of Korean national identity. This work encompasses both early and contemporary performances and reveals that the combination of performance and screen has served as a mode of the postmodern movement of cultural translation. The productions I examine—the pyŏnsa ("film narrator") performances during the Japanese Colonial Rule (1910-1945), the Korean musical *The Last Empress* (1995) and *Hero* (2009), YMAP's dance piece *Madame Freedom* (2013), and Ping Chong's *Deshima* (1990) and *Chinoiserie* (1995)—address cultural differences both spatially and temporally, constructing a space in which Korean audiences can learn the culture of the Western "Other" and imagine themselves as part of a Korean nation. Using critical readings of selected Korean films and performances, my dissertation argues that that the geo-political confinement of the South Korean nation-state creates an urgency for filmmakers and performance artists to constantly define and reiterate a particular cultural and national identity.

The dissertation begins by examining the performance of the pyŏnsa during the period of Japanese Colonial Rule. Accompanying imported films, the pyŏnsas' performances functioned as cultural intermediaries during the Korean audience film-viewing. They created a performative process of alteration and modification in relation to a new technology and its related worldview that conformed to and informed local taste. Through a close reading of the pyŏnsas' performances, I argue that the "Koreanness" constructed through the pyŏnsa's discourse evoked a shared national consciousness striving to regain Korean national identity as a site of resistance toward Japanese Imperialism even in the face of censorship.

The relationship that the pyŏnsa set up in the colonial period prefigured the ways in which visual cultures have become the primary means of mediating identities in the increasingly globalized, transnational sphere. My dissertation begins with this paradigm in order to examine, more broadly, how visual media is situated in relation to live performance and vice versa. Their interaction is studied through selected examples that show how local cultures and politics are deployed to form national identities and anxieties in intermedial moments of articulation.

For example, through a close reading of the Korean musicals *The Last Empress* and *Hero*, I consider how contemporary Korean theater and performance represent Korean histories during the colonial period and how these musicals envisage the nation's desire for global success and explore the implications of their approach both in a Korean and a transnational context. South Korean performance is increasingly dominated by non-Korean theatrical forms, in which local artists who absorb Western conventions and disseminate locally produced U.S.-style entertainments turn heritage performances into large-scale, tourist-friendly productions with an exotic, nationalist flavor. I argue that these productions suggest that the traffic in Korean theater and performance can no longer be linked to one metropolis or one national tradition. Such performances need to be analyzed from a transnational perspective that emphasizes interconnectedness and the cross-border fluidity of cultures.

In addition, it is important to observe how that since the 1990s South Korea has seen an increasing number of performances with materials adapted from its colonial history, making the recent past a site for Koreans not only to construct national identities, but also to stage the struggles and contradictions that they faced before and/or after liberation from Japan. What are some historiographical and theoretical issues that this phenomenon raises, especially in the context of the ongoing debate about modernity, national identity, and Korean colonial experience?

How is the colonial state represented and how are the past and the present integrated in performance? What makes the present distinct from other periods that it brings forth themes of the colonial period in local theater and performance? And why are these relations staged intermedially?

The characters in the Korean musicals *The Last Empress* and *Hero* enact a resistant Korean nation to the oppressive Japanese colonial state. The musical's translation of Japanese colonialism and the formation of Korean national identity play between live performance and visual projection of Korean colonial history. This interplay sets up the process of visual mediation and its constructing of nation-building narratives. Such collective consciousness portrayed in selected scenes becomes a crucial performance strategy.

While South Korea stands as an independent nation, successful in its cultural, economical, and technological endeavors, the geo-political confinement of the nation-state seems to create an urgency to constantly define and reiterate a particular cultural and national identity. Here, I am careful not to make any generalizations about political allegories. Yet, it is interesting to note that when viewing South Korea's geo-political conditions—geographically surrounded by China, Japan, and Russia, and politically affected by North Korea, China, Japan, and the United States—representations of South Korea seem to stage it as within the influence of other countries, rather than as a fully independent nation. In this context, Korean theater and performance, which pulses with the desire for self-definition may be examined in relation to the geo-political confinement of the nation-state.

Along with how performance represents a particular national identity, I investigate how gender is represented in Korean performance by examining YMAP's intermedial dance piece *Madame Freedom* and the ways in which performance becomes a site of cultural, historical, and

political memory by projecting Hyŏngmo Han's 1956 film *Madame Freedom* in the performance. It examines how performance becomes a palimpsest in linking document and translation, past and present.

Beyond the Korean context, my last case studies are designed to serve as an intervention into the representation of East-West relations, representing a history of the United States' and Europe's various colonial, diplomatic, and economic encounters with Asia and how that history is embedded in and how it constructs contemporary relations within and among those sites. I examine how histories of East-West relations are staged in Ping Chong's *Deshima* and *Chinoiserie* and argue that the poetic arrangement of aural and visual imagery can be read as a choreography or construction of history. The mediated representation of the temporal and spatial jumps is not projected according to a linear history or narrative and reveals historic discontinuities between East-West relations.

While *Deshima* and *Chinoiserie* produce signs of multiple, sometimes contradictory, identity formations, their processes share certain performance strategies with the pyŏnsas' performances, the musicals *The Last Empress* and *Hero*, and YMAP's *Madame Freedom*. Each performance represents how national identity emerges via a visually mediated site in which colonial historiography is woven through a portrayal of historical encounters, real and imagined, significant and incidental.

In addition, while each case study provides a context of the socio-political conditions of South Korea, they also challenge the status quo in each of their respective situations, should it be colonialism, globalization, and patriarchy.

In recent years, there has been a renewed academic interest on how South Korean transnational theatrical productions and performance contribute to constituting a sense of

national identity. However, this interest often comes in the form of conservation strategies that lack a multi-perspectival approach. Promoting a paternalistic view of the West, much scholarship widens rather than narrows the gap between the multivalent connections between Korea and the West. Meanwhile, Korean Cinema Studies has experienced an interdisciplinary growth with numerous publications on transnational cinema. Although Korean cinema still has its strongest foundation in Korean Studies departments, it continues to expand across multiple disciplines. On the contrary, Korean Theater and Performance Studies have produced only a trickle of scholarship over the last decade. While scholars have explored the cultural implications of national identity assimilated in Korean performances, they have yet to address the role of visual media in performance. My dissertation will fill this gap in the literature by examining how the history of cinematic images can create a *mise en scene* and even a characterological dynamic in consonance or dissonance with contemporary gestural practices. Moreover, performance and screen also serve as an identificatory mode of cultural translation. While my research provides a perspective for the study of Korean performance from the optic of Euro-American critical strategies, it also explores how postcolonial Korean performances play out for U.S. audiences within a transnational framework. In addition, there has been little English-language scholarship on performances during the Japanese Colonial Rule. My dissertation offers new case studies, expanding the literature on Korean performance.

It is with this focus in mind that I work from within my three fields of specialization: (1) modern Korean history, (2) theories of historiography, and (3) theories of identity and identification. The interdisciplinary scholarship of Theater and Performance Studies allows me to explore various methodologies to analyze transnational performances across and within nation-states. Employing transnationalism as a conceptual framework, I will examine social dynamics

and specific performances in order to query notions of agency, identity, and representation as these are negotiated in border crossings, contact zones, and counter-hegemonic formations.

Through a close examination of selected performances, I aim to (1) explore how performance deals with narrative, genre, and politics of representations in national, diasporic, and transnational contexts; (2) investigate history, modernization, and transnational perspectives reflected in these works; and (3) pose questions in relation to national and transnational approaches to Theater and Performance Studies, and various methodologies employed in studying these performances, and their cultural and political significance in the transnational world system.

Chapter 1 “Reflecting and Staging National Identities: The Performance of the Korean Silent Film Narrators” looks at how the pyŏnsa’s performance can be examined in light of Jisha Menon’s performative approach to the study of the nation in that the pyŏnsa’s narration strives to resist the status quo of Japanese imperialism and encourages the determination of the Korean independence movement to regain Korea’s sovereignty.

During the silent film period (1897-1934) in Korea, the pyŏnsa explained and narrated both domestic and foreign cinema to the Korean audience. At the same time, he also constructed a Korean-identified position for them to assume while viewing. The pyŏnsa served not only as an entertainer and interpreter, but also as a pedagogue whose position of authority enabled him to “choreograph” the cinematic narrative through his own narration. In Susan Leigh Foster’s “Choreographies of Protest,” the notion of “choreography” enables one to perceive social construction through how decision making is negotiated within a given cultural and historical field. Foster argues for the physicality that constructs both individual agency and sociality through her examination of three particular instances of protest. She analyzes how each protest

implemented a tactics of non-violent direct action for which bodies rehearsed specific procedures of non-cooperation. In relation to Foster's idea of choreography, I view the pyŏnsa's performance as a signifying practice in that his choreography is a form of physical preparation and theorizing that uses narrative as a tool for his live, non-reproductive performance. I argue that the pyŏnsa's performance can be viewed as a social practice that was produced and also produces through the choreography of his narration. Although the pyŏnsa's discourse was emerging from a highly masculinist perspective and oblivious to marginal voices, the "Koreanness" of the film that was constructed through the pyŏnsa's discourse could evoke a shared national consciousness of the audience. This Koreanness inspired them to regain Korean national identity as a mechanism of resistance toward Japanese Imperialism even in the face of censorship. Here, the national is historically specific, inscribed as a direct response to Japanese colonialism.

Previous scholarship on the pyŏnsa viewed the film narrator as merely an entertainer or cultural icon. While the pyŏnsa's exceptional use of non-reproductivity and the combination of a live performer's corporeality with the material of screen performance make the pyŏnsa worthy of more study, little research has contemplated the intermediality of the pyŏnsa's performance and the anti-imperial ideas that might have been heard in his live film narration. In addition, there has been little English-language scholarship on performances during the Japanese Colonial Rule. My work offers new case studies, expanding the literature on Korean performance. Using critical readings of selected pyŏnsa performances during the colonial period and reenactments that have taken place from 2008 to today, the research shows that the changing cultural and political climate of the South Korean nation-state creates an urgency for artists to express a particular national identity. By illustrating the shifting rhetoric of the relationship between the individual and the state, such works endeavor to challenge the status quo. This study focuses on how local

cultural and political motifs are deployed as part of South Korean national identity using intermedial performance strategies—performances that incorporate pre-filmed elements, often by projecting film or images into the background of a performance. Addressing cultural differences, these performances construct a space in which Korean audiences can both learn the culture of the "Other" and imagine themselves as part of a nation. Throughout this chapter, I use performance analysis for non-scripted theatrical events, textual analysis for scripted plays, and visual analysis for films and images.

Chapter 2 "Performing Glocalized "Koreanness" in The Last Empress (1995) and Hero (2009)" looks at how transnational Korean performances—particularly the Korean Broadway-style musicals *Hero* and *The Last Empress*—produce "Koreanness" for consumption in the global marketplace.

Entering the 1990s with the Young-sam Kim administration (1993-1998), the South Korean government attempted a reform of the Korean political economy to meet the rapidly changing conditions of the world economy. In laying out the globalization policy, Kim put it in a historical context. He reflected on Korea's modern history, comparing what Korea has to face in the 1990s to "the challenge of similar revolutionary changes at the turn of the [twentieth] century." With only "a vague awareness of the need to pursue modernization," Kim argued, Korea failed to reform and subsequently became a Japanese colony. Since the 1960s, Korea has been successful in its efforts to industrialize and modernize, but is not well equipped to meet the new challenge of globalization. Kim claimed that the globalization policy is necessary "if Korea is to survive and thrive in this age of increasingly fierce borderless global competition." Moreover, Kim's promotion of globalization encouraged theater and performance to communicate with Western countries through Korean works that show Korean characteristics

and identities.

As a result, there was a strong impetus for the creation of a Korean version of a Broadway musical. A wide variety of Broadway musical performances had already been translated and adapted for performance by Korean actors. Their popularity with Korean audiences, which increased through the decade, was further fueled by globalization in the 1990s. When domestic theater artists witnessed the appeal of foreign-born musicals, they sought to create and produce a Korean-brand musical. ACOM International, a Korean musical production company, did exactly this in the *The Last Empress* and *Hero*.

The Last Empress was created as a direct response to the demands of globalization in Korea during the 1990s. ACOM International conceived the production to create a Korean version of a Broadway musical and aspired to stage it in Western metropolises. The musical is highly popular with Korean audiences, at least in part because it was marketed as the first Korean musical to be staged on Broadway. Mainstream Korean newspapers often mentioned this production as an example of the allure of global development and of Western success in a Korean context.

Why did Korea choose to stage a century-old historical event about the empress's life and assassination? While the production initially aimed at rekindling the assassination of the empress to commemorate the centennial of her death, it also claims (reminiscent of Kim's globalization discourse that I mentioned earlier) that this was done to revisit Korea's late-nineteenth-century transition into the modern era. Indeed, the demand for globalization in the 1990s in Korea resembles the situation of late-nineteenth-century Korea which was forced to open up by Western empires. Thus, globalization prompted the imperative to reestablish Korean identity through learning from the nation's past hardships.

Another example of creating a Korean musical that adapts the Broadway form while incorporating elements of traditional Korean culture in order to target international audiences can be seen in the *Hero*. *Hero* was commissioned to commemorate the centennial of the death of Chunggŭn An, a resistance fighter during the Japanese Colonial Rule, who, in 1909, killed Hirobumi Ito, the Japanese resident-general in Korea who is considered instrumental in the Japanese invasion of Korea. After its successful premiere, the musical made its international debut on 23 August 2011 at the David H. Koch Theater at Lincoln Center in New York and performed through 3 September 2011. The musical's trip to Broadway was seen by Korean audiences as evidence of Korea's ascendance and its domestic popularity rose accordingly.

An examination of these performances as well as their performativity illustrates the ways in which the idea of the national has been assimilated or conflated with that of the global in Korea as it encounters the globalized era. In the process of achieving that global standard, the term "global" becomes an empty, idealized signifier. The performances and their ways of constructing a sense of nationness assume that Korea has already been part of the global. At the same time, however, these productions and the discourse surrounding them constantly remind the spectators of Korea's lack of global competitiveness as well as the nation's desire and need to counter this lack of recognition by striving to create a global identity and presence. In other words, I suggest that these productions and related discourses in Korea both identified and promoted the "global" as a way of identifying Koreanness and reconstructing national histories. The underlying rationale in these performances, which seeks and confirms Korea's capability in the global arena, expresses both the nation's anxiety and doubt about its global competitiveness as it pursues its global desires. The theatrical productions evolve and function as they strive to supplement the gaps between the global and the national by searching for, as well as

reconstructing, an idea of Koreanness.

Moving away from the dichotomy of the global and the local, I examine the multiple dimensions and roles of the local and the national, and providing concrete, detailed actualizations of these encounters in the global era. By focusing on the performances and discourse about their border-crossing movements, this research illuminates how the idea of the global has been used for Korea's nationalistic ideologies and interests as well as how the power of the national has been promoted and strengthened under the rubric of globalism.

Chapter 3 "Performing a Gendered *Mise En Scène* in YMAP's *Madame Freedom* (2013) and Split Britches' *Lesbians Who Kill* (1994)" examines two performances that stage familiar, period films with postmodern performance strategies. The South Korean performance group YMAP's intermedial dance piece *Madame Freedom* projects Hyŏngmo Han's 1956 film *Madame Freedom* in the background of the performance; in *Lesbians Who Kill*, Split Britches employ Hollywood films, particularly motifs of film noir, throughout the performance. While *Madame Freedom* and *Lesbians Who Kill* is each performed in different geographic and periodical settings, both performances set up certain roles for strong women who are in charge of their own sexuality and compete with men for power. In addition, in both performances, women are represented as seductive and negatively portrayed and punished in the end. Drawing from Cinema Studies scholar Adrian Martin's discussion on the various meanings and use of the term of *mise en scène*, I look at how the cinematic images can create a *mise en scène* and even a characterological dynamic in consonance or dissonance with contemporary gestural practices. By examining how the *mise en scène* in both performances each set the stage in representing a particular gendered identity at different moments and times, this chapter explores how performance and screen serve as an identificatory mode of cultural translation.

Chapter 4 “(Un)Positioning Transnational Identities in Ping Chong & Company’s *Chinoiserie* (1995) and *Deshima* (1990)” looks at Chinese-American performance artist Ping Chong’s two intermedial pieces, *Chinoiserie* and *Deshima*, which stage complex intercultural trafficking between the East and the West that revises the former notion of a one-way traffic from the West to the East. Reflecting on Ping Chong’s performances from a contemporary transnational perspective, one can imagine how the pieces represented the cultural nationally identified self and its foreign Other at a particular point in U.S. history. Although these performances are available now only on VHS cassettes, the recordings nonetheless reveal that the combination of live performance and screen has served as a mode of the postmodern movement of cultural translation.

Chinoiserie and *Deshima* stage histories of East-West relations and how these relations shaped East-West cultural representations. In this sense, Ping Chong’s *Chinoiserie* and *Deshima* can be regarded as staging a contact zone for ethnic groups—a crossroads not only for cultures, but also for the bodies and the material goods that carried them. These routes enabled sometimes unequal encounters in which the changing cultural and political climate could determine the direction of any exchange and in which bodies, ideas, and practices could be dramatically affected.

Influenced by Meredith Monk and avant-garde performance groups from the late 1960s and early 1970s in the United States, Ping Chong uses what were Western, even specifically New York-based forms of experimentation—performance aesthetics such as the poetic arrangement of aural and visual imagery, transfiguration and transmutation of quotidian movements, and distortion and reorganization of the space-time continuum in performing histories of East-West relations.

My research takes on concerns about the formation of Korean national identity in film and performance. This project will contribute to debates in Asian studies, theater and performance studies, and studies of visual culture over how to represent national identity through film and performance to the local audience.

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Reflecting and Staging National Identities:

The Performance of the Korean Silent Film Narrators

During the silent film period (1897-1934) in Korea, the pyŏnsa ("film narrator") explained and narrated both domestic and foreign cinema to the Korean audience. At the same time, he also constructed a Korean-identified position for them to assume while viewing. The pyŏnsa served not only as an entertainer and interpreter, but also as a pedagogue whose position of authority enabled him to "choreograph" the cinematic narrative through his own narration. In Susan Leigh Foster's "Choreographies of Protest," the notion of "choreography" enables one to perceive social construction through how decision making is negotiated within a given cultural and historical field.[6] Foster argues for the physicality that constructs both individual agency and sociality through her examination of three particular instances of protest. She analyzes how each protest implemented a tactics of non-violent direct action for which bodies rehearsed specific procedures of non-cooperation. In relation to Foster's idea of choreography, I view the pyŏnsa's performance as a signifying practice in that his choreography is a form of physical preparation and theorizing that uses narrative as a tool for his live, non-reproductive performance. I argue that the pyŏnsa's performance can be viewed as a social practice that was produced and also produces through the choreography of his narration. Although the pyŏnsa's discourse was emerging from a highly masculinist perspective and oblivious to marginal voices, the "Koreanness" of the film that was constructed through the pyŏnsa's discourse could evoke a shared national consciousness of the audience. This Koreanness inspired them to regain Korean national identity as a mechanism of resistance toward Japanese Imperialism even in the face of

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censorship. Here, the national is historically specific, inscribed as a direct response to Japanese colonialism.

Previous scholarship on the pyŏnsa viewed the film narrator as merely an entertainer or cultural icon. While the pyŏnsa's exceptional use of non-reproductivity and the combination of a live performer's corporeality with the materiality of screen performance make the pyŏnsa worthy of more study, little research has contemplated the intermediality of the pyŏnsa's performance and the anti-imperial ideas that might have been heard in his live film narration. In addition, while scholars have explored the cultural implications of national identity assimilated in Korean performances, they have yet to address the role of visual media in performance. My research will fill this gap in the literature by examining how the history of cinematic images can create a *mise en scene* and even a characterological dynamic in consonance or dissonance with contemporary gestural practices. Moreover, performance and screen also serve as an identificatory mode of cultural translation. In addition, there has been little English-language scholarship on performances during the Japanese Colonial Rule (1910-1945). My work offers new case studies, expanding the literature on Korean performance. Using critical readings of selected pyŏnsa performances during the colonial period and reenactments that have taken place from 2008 to today, the research shows that the changing cultural and political climate of the South Korean nation-state creates an urgency for artists to express a particular national identity. By illustrating the shifting rhetoric of the relationship between the individual and the state, such works endeavor to challenge the status quo. This study focuses on how local cultural and political motifs are deployed as part of South Korean national identity using intermedial performance strategies—performances that incorporate pre-filmed elements, often by projecting film or images into the background of a performance. Addressing cultural differences, these performances construct a

space in which Korean audiences can both learn the culture of the "Other" and imagine themselves as part of a nation. Throughout this chapter, I use performance analysis for non-scripted theatrical events, textual analysis for scripted plays, and visual analysis for films and images.[7]

How the Pyŏnsa Stole the Show: Pyŏnsa Performances under the Japanese Colonial Rule

The role of the pyŏnsa was not a Korean invention; it was adopted from the Japanese benshi ("film narrator").[8] The Japanese version originated from narration in theater. It was a popular function in bunraku and kabuki performances.[9] Although a specific date of origin cannot be assigned, it seems that the profession of pyŏnsa began in 1907, along with the establishment of movie theaters in Korea.[10] Film narrators were necessary for the audience because the earliest films were imported and consisted of foreign cultures.[11] Because the general Korean audience had little exposure to cultures outside of their local ones, the role of the pyŏnsa was essential in bridging the relationship between the film and the audience. The role of cultural interpreter was so important to the audience that often, audience members would make the choice as to which pyŏnsa to see rather than what film to see.[12] For example, an advertisement for a movie theater demonstrates the influence of the pyŏnsa's role on the film's popularity: instead of the main

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[7]. In this chapter, I transcribe and translate the recordings of the pyŏnsa performances from Korean to English.

[8]. Hee Moon Cho, "Musŏngyŏnghwaŭi haesŏlja, pyŏnsa yŏn'gu" (The Narrator of Silent Films, a Study of the Pyŏnsa), *Yŏnghwayŏn'gu* (Film Studies Association of Korea) 13 (1997): 185.

[9]. Su Nam Kim, "Chosŏnmusŏngyŏnghwa pyŏnsaŭi kinŭngjŏk koch'algwa mihak yŏn'gu" (The Study on the Function and Aesthetics of the Film Interpreter in the Silent Film of Korea before Pre-Liberation from Japan), *Yŏnghwayŏn'gu* (Film Studies Association of Korea) 24 (2004): 9.

[10]. Cho, 193.

[11]. Ibid., 205.

[12]. Ibid., 198.

protagonists' photographs, several photographs of different pyŏnsas surround the movie theater.[13]

One must have a sense of the general audience during the silent film period to appreciate the pyŏnsa's influence and the extent to which the audience relied on the pyŏnsa's narration for explanation of the film itself. Sun Jung Yeo writes that the general audience increased rapidly before the release of Un'gyu Na's film *Arirang* in 1926.[14] In the six months between January and June of 1926, many as 450,000 individuals trekked to see the film, and cinemas in Korea experienced a nearly forty percent of increase in attendance from July to December 1926, resulting in a total of 760,000 viewers. Due to competition between movie theaters, tickets were priced as low in price as ten chŏn. Not only did attendance increase, but also the general audience, which formerly consisted almost exclusively of the bourgeois class, expanded to include the lower class. Gauged from attendance records, film was the general public's main entertainment in 1926. Although this phenomenon seems to be restricted to urban areas, it is noteworthy that the shift in the general demographic of moviegoers to include the lower class is credited to cheap ticket prices.

What, then, was the relationship between the impact of the pyŏnsa's narration and the viewers' reception experience? Mina Oak writes that the pyŏnsa's narration stressed theatrical elements through his reconstruction of the cinematic text.[15] From the earliest theatrical performances recorded in Korean history, an informing voice was included in Korean theatrical

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[13]. Chin Song Kim, *Hyŏndaesŏngeŭi hyŏngsŏng: sŏule ddansuholŭl hŏhara* (The Development of Modernity: Allow Dance Halls in Seoul) (Seoul: Hyŏnsilmunhwayŏn'gu, 1999), 154.

[14]. Sun Jung Yeo, "Musŏngyŏnghwasitae singmindosi sŏulŭi yŏnghwakwallamsŏng yŏn'gu" (Cinematic Spectatorship in Colonial City Seoul in Silent Era) (master's thesis, Chung-Ang University, 1999), 24-25.

[15]. Mina Oak, "Pyŏnsaŭi maekaechŏk wisang mit ŭimie kwanhan yŏn'gu—han'guk yŏnghwasaesŏŭi yŏkhalul chungsimŭro" (A Study of the Mediated Position of Pyon-sa and Its Meaning–Concentration of Its Part in Korean Film History) (master's thesis, Chung-Ang University, 2003), 24-25.

performances. Seen in ch'anggeŭk or pansori, most pre-modern Korean theater is a pictorial expansion of verbal storytelling by a narrator who functions as an informer and does not perform from a fixed text. Rather, the performer freely adds and deletes parts of the text. Such flexibility is highly encouraged and even serves as a criterion for evaluating the performer's ability to improvise on the dramatic circumstances. Korean silent films were more flexible and open to interpretation than censored and/or edited talkie films because the silent films were supplemented by the pyŏnsa's narration. This impromptu supplementation enabled silent films to elude censorship by the Japanese Government General of Korea whereas talkie films were either censored or prohibited. Talkie films could not accommodate the context of the deleted scenes and so seemed of poor quality compared to silent films.[16] Flexible reconstruction of the film via the pyŏnsa's narration became an important factor in the audience's preference for a particular pyŏnsa.

Outside of the Korean context, the Japanese benshi functions as narrator and voice actor; commentator-reader; and audience representative.[17] As Donald Kirihara posited, the commentary of the benshi held more weight than the "self-contained cinematic narrative" of the film, not only providing storytelling of the film, but also serving "to reinforce, interpret, counterpoint, and in any case to intercede."[18] However, unlike Kirihara, several scholars have viewed the benshi/pyŏnsa merely as an entertainer or cultural icon, neglecting his role as a pedagogue. I argue that his "entertaining" acts can be viewed as a means of consciously and unconsciously

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[16]. Hwa Jin Lee, *Chosŏnyŏnghwa—soriŭi toibesŏ ch'inil yŏnghwakkachi* (Chosŏn Cinema—From the Advent of Sound to Pro-Japanese Cinema) (Seoul: Ch'eksesang, 2005), 22.

[17]. Joseph L. Anderson, "Spoken Silents in the Japanese Cinema; or, Talking to Pictures: Essaying the Katsuben, Contexturalizing the Texts," in *Reframing Japanese Cinema: Authorship, Genre, History*, eds. Arthur J. Nolletti and David Desser (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 284.

[18]. Donald Kirihara, "A Reconsideration of the Benshi," *Film Reader* 6 (1985): 41-53.

dominating the cinematic narrative during the screening. The duality of the benshi/pyŏnsa's entertainer/pedagogue role facilitates the pedagogical performance of his discourse and effectively draws the spectator to his narration. From this position, the benshi/pyŏnsa is able to control the viewer's "gaze" through his film-narrating performance. Although the film may predominate the pyŏnsa's performance, the benshi/pyŏnsa reads over it through his discourse, thus choreographing his own narration. The pyŏnsa can be examined in the light of Michel Foucault's view of individuals as agents "simultaneously undergoing and exercising" power.[19]

> They [individuals] are not only its [power's] inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application…The individual is an effect of power, and at the same time, or precisely to the extent to which it is that effect, it is the element of its articulation. The individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle.[20]

In relation to Foucault's view of individuals as agents of power, I argue that the pyŏnsa's position is constructed as an authoritative subject because of the power vested to him by the cultural authorities responsible for the screening. Therefore, the authority of his position makes it possible for the pyŏnsa to provide narration according to his own interpretation of the film.

The discourse of the pyŏnsa's narration is comprised of the pyŏnsa's idiolect and influences the historical, psychological, and social analysis of the films he narrates. Thus, the

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[19]. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, trans. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 98.

[20]. Ibid.

pyŏnsa reconstructs the cinematic narrative. Some pyŏnsa posited themselves as the film's third artist/creator. This imposition into the film can be inferred in the following interview with a pyŏnsa published in the Korean daily newspaper, *Maeil sinbo*, on 3 January 1925:

> Look at those foreign films that we encounter every day. The film is twice created by the screenwriter and the filmmaker. When our narrations are added to it, the film gains full effect, thus, the film is thrice created. Therefore, the narrator feels a heavy responsibility as he acknowledges that he has the power to revive or kill the film.[21]

How, then, did the pyŏnsa's "responsibility" affect Japan's policy of censoring colonial Korea's arts? One must consider the political conditions that may have affected the pyŏnsa and his performance. In 1919, the Korean independence movement was widely active in Korea. Although the March 1 movement succeeded in changing Japanese imperial policy towards Korea, it failed to achieve Koreans' independence. During Japanese colonial rule, various forms of cultural struggle and resistance against the Japanese were manifested. Local and international movements based on art and literature rose up against the colonial regime. According to Hye Kyung Chung, the Korean language drama movement and the students' art troupes that gained popularity in Japan staged Korean dramas, the themes of which revealed contradictions in colonial policies as well as local issues in Korea.[22] Ju Hyeon Sung argues that the Chosŏn art and

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[21]. Chang Kyu Ju, "Pŏnak'yullŏ motŏnichŭmŭi sŭtarosŏ musŏngyŏnghwa pyŏnsaŭi pyŏnhyŏnge taehan yŏn'gu" (The Transformation of Silent Cinema's Byeonsa as the Star of Vernacular Modernism in Colonial Chosun), *Yŏnghwayŏn'gu* (Film Studies Association of Korea) 32 (2007): 270.

[22]. Hye Kyung Chung, "1930nyŏndae chaeilchosŏnin yŏn'gŭkundonggwa haksaengyesulchwa" (A Drama Movement by Koreans in Japan throughout the 1930s and Students' Arts Troupe), in *1930nyŏndae yesulmunhwaundong* (Arts Movements of the 1930s), ed. Han'gukminjokundongsahakhoe (The Association for the

literature restoration movement, the national literature movement, and the proletariat movement of art and literature that took place in Kosŏng in the late 1930s are significant to the understanding of national movements during that time because these movements demonstrate Koreans' struggle to preserve their identity against the oppressive Japanese regime.[23] While scholars have not included the pyŏnsa performances as a part of the independence movement, I argue that, along with other arts movements such as the Korean language drama movement, the pyŏnsas and their performances can be viewed as part of the resistance. The following article appeared in the Korean daily newspaper *Maeil sinbo* on 8 July 1920:

> Hansŏl Chang is a pyŏnsa who has been performing diligently at Umikwan for three years. Around 9:30 p.m. on the 5th, Chang appeared onstage during the ten-minute intermission. With a nervous expression on his face, he clenched his fists and shouted out to the audience in an excited tone: "Today is a day that we cry for freedom…We should shed our hot blood all over the world so that the world acknowledges our presence and our mind." The police appeared immediately on the scene, and arrested Chang who is held for questioning at the Chongno Police Station. This is the first time that a pyŏnsa has been arrested.[24]

Chang's action and arrest became a marker for the enforcement of censorship on films; it

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Historical Studies on Korean National Movement) (Seoul: Kukhakcharyowŏn, 2003), 5-50.

[23]. Ju Hyeon Sung, "1930nyŏndae mal kangwŏndo kosŏngchiyŏk munyepimilkyŏlsaundong" (Secret Society for Art and Literature in Goseong, Gangwon-do in the late 1930's), in *1930nyŏndae yesulmunhwaundong* (Arts Movements of the 1930s), ed. Han'gukminjokundongsahakhoe (The Association for the Historical Studies on Korean National Movement) (Seoul: Kukhakcharyowŏn, 2003), 51-76.

[24]. Ju, 272.

also institutionalized the pyŏnsa as a profession resulting in a mechanism for controlling what went on in the theater. On 1 August 1926, the Government-General Law No. 59, which was Korea's first set of nationally unified film laws, went into effect.[25] The National Film Censorship Regulations required that all films exhibited be viewed and approved by a board of censors before being shown to the public. In "Lost Memories of Korean Cinema: Film Policies During Japanese Colonial Rule, 1919-1937," Brian Yecies and Ae-Gyung Shim write:

> The Japanese government as well as private industry in Japan had understood since the late 1860s that mass media could be a powerful tool, which could communicate ideological messages to the masses. Hence, restricting Koreans from training in learning about film production was probably a key way for both governors-general to limit the creation of a Korean cinema and the spread of potentially anti-Japanese and revolutionary ideas.[26]

The Japanese government seemed to be keenly aware of the influence cinema may have had over society. As Andrew Higson writes, technology is crucial to promoting a sense of belonging in the national community as "it is widely assumed that the rituals of mass communication play a central role in re-imagining the dispersed and incoherent populace as a tight-knit, value-sharing collectivity, sustaining the experience of nationhood."[27] In relation to

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[25]. Brian Yecies and Ae-Gyung Shim, "Lost Memories of Korean Cinema: Film Policies during Japanese Colonial Rule, 1919-1937," *Asian Cinema* 14, no. 2 (2003): 80.

[26]. Ibid., 75-56.

[27]. Andrew Higson, "The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema," in *Cinema and Nation*, ed. Mette Hjort (New York: Routledge, 2000), 65.

Higson's discussion, the pyŏnsa's commentary plays an active role in reaffirming nationalism and patriotism in the viewer and constructing a space that evokes national consciousness. An examination was implemented to codify the qualification of pyŏnsas in 1921 and restrict their behavior. The first pyŏnsa qualification examination was held on 27 June 1922; 54 pyŏnsas applied.[28] Sang Eon Han writes that the qualification examination was an example that gave proof to the pyŏnsa's role as a pedagogue, and not merely an entertainer.[29] Although the examination was implemented to "prevent any act of demoralization in the theater," the following examination questions, which appeared in a Korean daily newspaper, *Donga ilbo*, on 1 March 1927, show the Japanese Government General of Korea's political intentions in licensing the pyŏnsa:

> What are the rules one must abide in the theater?
>
> The people of Kyŏngsŏng
>
> The general mass of the society
>
> The screen
>
> The cinema fan
>
> The modern girl
>
> The Communist Party[30]

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[28]. Cho, 141.

[29]. Sang Eon Han, "1910nyŏndae chosŏn pyŏnsa sisŭt'em toipkwa kŭ t'ŭkchinge kwanhan yŏn'gu" (The Advent of a Silent-Film Narrator and Its Early Features in Colonial Chosun), *Yŏnghwayŏn'gu* (Film Studies Association of Korea) 44 (2010): 381.

[30]. Ju, 273.

Through such examination questions, the Japanese government required the pyŏnsa to hold modern consciousness and knowledge. The pyŏnsa was expected to know and demonstrate proper conduct in a public space and be aware of current phenomena such as "the screen, the cinema fan, and the modern girl." This control over such modern consciousness and ideology was closely linked to Japan's cultural policy, the objective of which was to assimilate Koreans in Japanese culture. However, requiring the pyŏnsa to embrace such new cultural concepts was, to some degree, also in conflict with Japan's policies. As the level of modern consciousness of Koreans increased, so did the awareness of the unjust condition of the colonial rule. This awareness made it more difficult for the Japanese to assimilate Koreans. It is not difficult to find newspaper articles about several pyŏnsa who were censored and/or arrested, even after the implementation of the qualification examination.

A close study of Un'gyu Na's 1926 silent film *Arirang* and the pyŏnsa performances of the film offer an example of the pyŏnsa's resistance to Japanese colonial censorship.[31] The pyŏnsa's live narration for the film offers several layers of representation. Through critical readings of the pyŏnsa's narration, I examine the ways in which the pyŏnsa's narration indicated a set of nationalist ideals; how the pyŏnsa's narration prompted affective responses from the audience, and how the pyŏnsa created his own repertoire of strategies to create counter-responses to the film.

Arirang, directed by Un'gyu Na and produced by Chosŏnk'inemasa, was released on 1 October 1926. The plot of *Arirang* is as follows: Yŏngjin is a young man who has gone insane. His friend Hyŏn'gu is devastated that Yŏngjin's mind has snapped. When Kiho, the corrupt landowner of the village, tries to rape Yŏngjin's younger sister Yŏnghi, Hyŏn'gu appears on the

[31]. *Arirang*, directed by Un'gyu Na (1926; Seoul, Korea: Chosŏnk'inemasa), Film.

scene and a fight ensues between Hyŏn'gu and Kiho. At that moment, Yŏngjin murders Kiho and at the sight of blood, Yŏngjin regains his sanity. Although *Arirang* was the first nationalist film in the history of Korean cinema, it was able to escape censorship because Na staged the protagonist, Hyŏn'gu, as an insane character—thus, the board of censors regarded Hyŏn'gu's lines in the submitted screenplay were those of a mad man. Another factor that might have aided the film to escape censorship was the romantic plot. The censors might not have made connections with Hyŏn'gu and Yŏnghi's seemingly innocent romantic relationship and its parallels with the larger socio-historical movement. In early Korean films, filmmakers used romance plots to subtly convey larger societal messages. As Takashi Fujitani writes, "personal stories of heterosexual love and romance parallel larger themes of historical or public importance."[32] Thus, romantic heterosexual love became a tactic for Korean filmmakers to subtly convey nationalist discourse in their films. The guise of romance may have enabled *Arirang* to veil the intent conveyed through the film's titular song. A well-known Korean folk song, the lyrics of "Arirang" are significant in understanding the film. On the surface, the lyrics represent a woman grieving as her lover leaves her; her grief is a metaphor for the loss of one's nation—in this case. "The one who abandons me," signifies a nation deprived of its sovereignty. It also refers to the villagers who were forced to leave their hometowns due to poverty during the colonial period.

How and in what ways does the pyŏnsa's performance reflect or stage the nation, through character development, language, narration, or some other mechanism? How does the pyŏnsa interpret the film and invite the viewer into a sense of interpellation? I analyze excerpts of pyŏnsa Tongho Sŏng's narration of *Arirang* that have been added in Kyŏngung Sŏ's restored

[32]. Takashi Fujitani, "Total War at the Movies" (Private collection, 2008), 98.

screenplay:[33]

> After the land survey project, he treated the villagers as if slaves, squeezing out as much proceeds from his tenants as possible, depending on his power as the landlord of the village and also pro-Japanese.[34]
>
> Here, we see the village across the fields. A Japanese soldier and his agents are demolishing the villagers' mud huts by force. The villagers who are driven out from their homes fly at the Japanese soldiers, but are trampled by them. The villagers and their children are shuddering in fear.[35]
>
> How wearisome life is! How can we feed ourselves when the Japanese Government General takes away huge amounts of rent on even the smallest land? I lament Chosŏn's misfortune.[36]
>
> In June of 1904, the Japanese government implemented a law that legalizes human trafficking and legitimizes the Japanese army's comfort women, violating Korea women, and moreover, annihilating our national identity.[37]
>
> After the colonization, Koreans' lives have degraded due to several policies implemented by the Japanese government. Every year, the Koreans' status declines; the landowners

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[33]. Kyŏngung Sŏ, "*Arirang*, the Restored Scenario," *Scenario* 1 (2002): 12-58.

[34]. Ibid., 18.

[35]. Ibid., 19.

[36]. Ibid., 20-21.

[37]. Ibid., 32-33.

turn into workers, the workers into tenant farmers, and the tenant farmers into the poor.[38]

As presented in Sŏ's restoration of the narration, the pyŏnsa does not hesitate to explicitly refer to the exploitation of Korean farmers by the ruling class and to criticize pro-Japanese Koreans. Indeed, the pyŏnsa's narration of *Arirang* may have stirred a certain response among the audience, inspiring the public's support to become a symbol of exploited and oppressed people. The pyŏnsa's performance can be examined in light of Jisha Menon's performative approach to the study of the nation in that the pyŏnsa's narration strives to resist the status quo of Japanese imperialism and encourages the determination of the Korean independence movement to regain Korea's sovereignty.[39] In *The Performance of Nationalism: India, Pakistan, and the Memory of the Partition*, Menon considers the ways in which logocentric, cognitivist ideas of "the imagined community" acquire their affective and material force through embodied performances. Considering the centrality of performance as a tactic of political power, Menon proposes that the analysis of embodied performance in public spaces brings new questions to studies of nationalism. It places centerstage the role of performance in understanding the complex processes of nation formation. The internalization of an ideational construct of nation depends for its success on its affective translation into material symbols such as the flag, the military uniforms, and the national anthem. Borrowing Sandria Freitag's idea that central to the act of imagining a community is the pictorial image where "spectatorship meets creation in a complex interplay between visuality, apparatus, institutions, discourse, bodies and figurality," Menon argues that colonial subjects are produced as national citizens through complex iterative

[38]. Ibid., 47.

[39]. Jisha Menon, *The Performance of Nationalism: India, Pakistan, and the Memory of the Partition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

practices.[40] Throughout her work, she describes how performative speech act fundamentally revises our understanding of the stability and given-ness of national identities. By paying attention not only to the descriptive features of language, meaning, and intentionality of speech acts, but also to their ability to effect through their very utterance, performative speech acts demonstrate the world-making and world-shattering power of discourses.[41] Indeed in *Postcolonialism: A Historical Introduction*, Robert J. C. Young writes that the origins of postcolonialism "lie in the historical resistance to colonial occupation and imperial control."[42] Postcolonialism seeks "to combat the continuing. . .operation of an imperialist system of economic, political and cultural domination"[43] and pays tribute to the "achievements of resistance against colonial power."[44]

The recordings of pyŏnsa Tongho Ham's narrations also demonstrate resistance to colonial domination. The following transcript, an excerpt from *Arirang* that was narrated by pyŏnsa Tongho Ham, shows how the pyŏnsa's narration may evoke a sense of national consciousness by reshaping the cinematic text through the pyŏnsa's own interpretative discourse:

> Yŏngjin: My people, I was dead for some time, but have come back to life again. Please send me off with your smiles. I cannot stand seeing you cry. I was crazy and killed a man

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[40]. Ibid., 12

[41]. Ibid.

[42]. Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 60.

[43]. Ibid., 58.

[44]. Ibid., 60.

because I was born in this country. Please send me off with the song that I always sing.[45]

The pyŏnsa's excited voice, his subtle reference toward Japanese imperialism, and his encouragement of Korean independence can neither be seen nor heard in the silent film itself. Neither captions nor dialogue cards were inserted in Korean silent films; hence, it was possible for the films to escape censorship. Silent films also enabled the pyŏnsa to provide narration according to his own interpretation of the cinematic projection. Yŏngjin's insanity, which represents Koreans who could not maintain a sound mind amid Japanese colonial rule, was made public through the pyŏnsa's narration. Throughout the performance, Yŏngjin's sorrows and the subtle connotations of the pyŏnsa's narration during the screening amplify the sentiments elicited by the melodrama and construct a space that symbolizes for the audience the collective consciousness of a nation.

Homi Bhabha's notion of the "location of culture" enables examination of the pyŏnsa's performance as a site of resistance.[46] In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha points to the counter-narratives occupied by colonized peoples. Bhabha's reading of colonial texts recognizes that those people oppressed by colonial and postcolonial power structures found opportunities for alternative discourses that competed with dominant cultural production. For example, Ryeo Sil Kim writes that pyŏnsa Tongho Sŏng gave two different narrations of *Arirang*.[47] When the Japanese police were present during the screening, Sŏng commented that "Yŏngjin is a

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[45]. *Yusŏnggiro tŭnnŏn musŏngyŏnghwa moŭm* (Early Silent Motion Pictures Collection), by Tongho Ham (1996; Seoul, Korea: Syn-nara Records Co.), CD.

[46]. Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990).

[47]. Ryeo Sil Kim, *T'usahanŭn chekuk t'uyŏnghanŭn singminji: 1901-1945nyŏnŭi han'gukyŏnghwasarŭl toechipta* (Projecting Empire, Reflecting Colony: A Study of Korean Cinema 1901-1945) (Seoul: Samin, 2006), 115-116.

philosophy student who became insane"; when the police were absent, he interpreted the same scene as "Yŏngjin is a philosophy student who became insane after getting tortured for participating in the March 1st Movement." In addition, in 1940, pyŏnsa Ch'ul Sin was arrested for applying the term "maekungno" in his narration.[48] Maekungno, someone who hands over the sovereignty of his nation for personal interests, signified pro-Japanese Koreans of the era. It is unclear whether Sin's action was accidental or derived from political purposes. Regardless of Sin's intent, the authorities acknowledged the pyŏnsa as a "location of culture" where political discourse emerges and the transference of ideology converges, and this shows how the performativity of the pyŏnsa's narration makes it possible for his performance as part of the colonial silent film experience to become a site of national resistance.

Performing Colonial Legacy: Reenactments

On 19 July 2008, I visited the Korean Film Archive (KOFA) Cinematheque, Seoul, Korea, to see a performance of *Ch'ŏngchunŭi sipcharo* ("Crossroads of Youth"), which was a screening of a Korean silent film with live music and narration by a Korean pyŏnsa.[49] After I picked up my ticket, I noticed two men walking leisurely in and out of the crowd. One was wearing a top hat and a pair of black, horn-rimmed glasses fitted with a plastic nose and a small fake moustache. His hands held a bundle of leaflets. Another man, dressed in similar attire, sported a large drum hanging down from his neck. The two men shouted out "Welcome to the screening of *Ch'ŏngchunŭi sipcharo*!" and started handing out leaflets and candy to the waiting audience.

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[48]. Oak, 69.

[49]. *Ch'ŏngchunŭi sipcharo* was directed by Chonghwa An in 1934. Upon the discovery of the film in 2007, the Korean Film Archive restored it for screening. The pyŏnsa performance of *Ch'ŏngchunŭi sipcharo* premiered in May 2008 in Seoul, Korea. Since then, it has been screened at several film festivals both domestic and abroad, including the New York Film Festival in 2009 and the Berlin International Film Festival in 2013.

“Here you go, take a pamphlet and read about tonight’s screening. The teenage heartthrob Wŏnyong Yi is playing the male lead and the pyŏnsa Hipong Cho will narrate the film! Here is some candy while you wait. Yes, here you go, miss. Who else didn’t get a pamphlet and some candy?” Now and then, the two men stopped working as some audience members requested photos with them. The pamphlets the two men distributed provided brief information on the film and described their performance as a reenactment of film screenings during the silent film period. Several reviews of the performance wrote that the environment created by the two men evoked a sense of nostalgia for the Korean elders.

At the left front nook of the auditorium, a small orchestra, which consisted of an accordion, a double bass, a keyboard, and a violin, accompanied the pyŏnsa’s narration. At the right stage were a chair and a small wooden desk, equipped with a lamp, a small pitcher, and a cup. After the musicians tested their instruments, the auditorium darkened completely except for a small ray of light that shone directly above the orchestra. A man wearing a top hat, a red bow tie, and a white suit appeared onstage with a video camera in his hands. For ten minutes, he gave a short “attraction show,” dancing comically to springy music. Then, he stared down at the video camera in his hands with a puzzled look on his face. He seemed to have had no idea what the contraption was or what to do with it. He put it next to his right ear and shook it a few times. He lifted it up and down. He placed it down at his feet and pretended to stomp upon it. Then, he held it up so that the lens was directly facing his face. Instantly, the man’s face was projected on the large screen hung behind him. He put on an expression of recognition. After a few tries, he started to film some members of the audience. The footage appeared simultaneously on the screen and the audience clapped and laughed at his funny antics.

As the man playfully aimed the camera backstage, the image of a young woman, sitting

on a bench in a darkened park appeared on the screen. She wore a traditional Korean attire—a full black skirt and a white top. Holding a piece of paper to her chest and sobbing into her black skirt, the woman seemed genuinely sad about something. The man put on an exaggerated expression of surprise on his face. As he slipped behind the curtains, the man appeared in the film; obviously his presence had been recorded earlier. He carefully approached the crying woman and sat next to her. The woman looked up in surprise and then bashfully turned her face away. The man brought forth a crisp, white handkerchief from his pocket and offered it to her. The woman gratefully accepted it and blew her nose. After returning the man's handkerchief, the woman rushed away (still crying), leaving the piece of paper on the bench. The man picked it up and called after the woman. She did not look back so he unfolded the paper. After reading it, he, too, began to cry. The man reappeared onstage, sat behind the wooden desk onstage, and flicked on the lamp. His script in hand, he opened his mouth: "We will now start *Ch'ŏngchunŭi sipcharo*, the tragic and romantic story of Kyŏngsŏng!

During such performances, the pyŏnsa becomes an omniscient being that enables the film to unfold. He introduces the characters and the setting, and then explains the physical actions and psychological dilemmas. The pyŏnsa intervenes in the spectator's process of viewing and understanding the film; thus, the pyŏnsa holds the authority to control and decide what the viewer sees. For example, without the pyŏnsa's narration it is almost impossible to understand why Yŏngbok is suddenly working in Seoul because a particular part of the print is missing; again, there are no subtitles to explain or supplement the edited scenes. Here, the pyŏnsa wields his authority as the storyteller and informs the audience how Yŏngbok's engagement was broken off. Because there is little footage for the viewer to see and judge, the viewer has no choice but to believe and rely on the pyŏnsa's narration.

The pyŏnsa is a biased narrator; he continuously reveals his own interpretations as the film continues. A theoretical space seems to link the narrator's body to his god-like actions during the storytelling. Because the narrator playfully links document and translation, image and sound, and past and present, the space he inhabits lays "in-between" theoretical space and is liminal. Using Peggy Phelan's definition of performance as something "that constitutes itself through disappearance," I consider the pyŏnsa's liminal body in different mediums, such as space and time, along with the fleeting onstage performance of the narrator's body.[50] The pyŏnsa's spatially liminal abode demonstrates the performative quality of his presence and the non-reproductivity of the action is further evidence of his transience. Jokes from a bygone era seem especially relevant to our society today. Traditionally, witty comments are made about the camerawork, actors' make-up, and sometimes a discussion of domestic and foreign politics. Although the film might be the same, no two pyŏnsa performances are identical. The narrator follows a basic script, but includes ad-libs, and occasionally changes his tone based on specific circumstances. For example, in 2008, the narrator referred to U.S. politics in some of his lines because there were many protests in Korea opposing the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement.

Why has the reconstruction and reenactment of the film-narrating performance become popular since 2008? Between 2005 and 2008, the issue of education reform, particularly in Korean history, was hotly debated. In 2005, Korean history was exempted from college entrance exams. Since then, the rate of test takers dropped dramatically. In 2005, 27.7% of test takers took Korean history examinations. The number of test takers decreased in consecutive years to 18.1% (2006), 12.6% (2007), and 10.5% (2008). In 2013, it appears approximately 7.1% of college entrants take the Korean history test. This precipitous drop of test in the percentage of college

[50]. Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London; New York: Routledge, 1993), 143.

entrants taking the Korean history test signifies a decrease in the number of students studying Korean history in Korean high schools. Since the exemption from college entrance exams, concern has grown that today's young students are indifferent to Korean history. This issue is not restricted to young students. Since 2005, both the Civil Service Examination on Foreign Affairs and the Civil Service Examination on Government Administration excluded Korean history. These issues have spurred heated debates on the preservation of history in public education. Due to the economy boom, Korea seems to be revisiting a similar moment from the colonial period, serving as an active interface for transnational trafficking when entering the international market. In such moments, the nation state may become interested in looking back to another moment.

I examine the film *Ch'ŏngchunŭi sipcharo* according to its place in the historical context, as well as in relation to historical developments of the period. How does the film mediate history? The plot of *Ch'ŏngchunŭi sipcharo* is as follows: The film takes place in Seoul, 1934. Yŏngbok, a Korean male in his twenties, has worked faithfully for seven years to marry his lover Pongsŏn. However, the engagement is broken off and Pongsŏn marries Myŏnggu Chu. Heartbroken, Yŏngbok leaves his hometown, mother, and younger sister Yŏngok to work at the train station in Seoul. When he meets Yŏnghi, a girl who works at a gas station nearby, he falls in love with her. Like Yŏngbok, Yŏnghi and her family are poor. She works at the gas station to support her elderly father and younger sister. Meanwhile, Yŏngbok's sister Yŏngok comes to Seoul to tell him that their mother has passed away. Upon failing to find her brother, she takes a job at a café. One day, Myŏnggu Chu and his friend Kaech'ŏl Chang visit the café where Yŏngok works at. Kaech'ŏl seduces Yŏngok and rapes her. Having nowhere to go, Yŏngok stays at Kaech'ŏl's place. Meanwhile, Yŏnghi loses her job at the gas station. Her path coincidentally crosses Kaech'ŏl's, but succeeds in escaping him before he rapes her. Yŏngbok hears the news of his

beloved's plight and goes to Kaech'ŏl's house. He is reunited with his sister Yŏngok and reaps his revenge. In the end, Yŏngbok marries Yŏnghi and the couple starts a new life with Yŏngok.

Similar to *Arirang*, the film uses the romance plot to subtly convey a larger message about the society and also avoid censorship. While Yŏngbok, his sister Yŏngok, and Yŏnghi seem to represent colonized Korean subjects, both Myŏnggu and Kaech'ŏl seem to represent Japanese or pro-Japanese Koreans. The two men's actions—Myŏnggu breaking off Yŏngbok's engagement and Kaech'ŏl's rape of Yŏngbok's sister—seem to refer to the colonization of Japan during that period. Both Yŏngok and Yŏnghi are represented as shy, quiet characters which may allude to the idea of the colonized subject. The film's conclusion with Yŏngbok's victory may indirectly refer to the wish for Korea's independence.

The plot itself is nothing earth shattering, but the film's images, which show the scenery of Seoul in the 1930s, are enough to capture the viewer's attention. When viewing the road on which both cars and wagons travel and the newly built Seoul station in flickering black-and-white images, I almost believed the film to be a fake documentary; I could not help feeling surreal—surreal in a sense that I was viewing the scenery of Seoul during Japanese colonial rule. Such details enable the viewer to experience the appearance of Seoul in the 1930s for himself or herself. In *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*, Rebecca Schneider troubles the prevalence of presentism, immediacy, and linear time in most thinking about live performance.[51] Rather than a unidirectional artistic march toward an empiric future of preservation, time plays forward and backward and sideways across the imagined community of an otherwise spatialized national plot. Schneider explores the warp and draw of one time in

[51]. Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 6.

another time—the *theatricality* of time. She writes that

> historical events, like wars, are never discretely completed, but carry forth in embodied cycles of memory that do not delimit the remembered to the past. For many history reenactors, reenactments are more than "mere" remembering but are in fact the ongoing event itself, negotiated through sometimes radically shifting affiliation with the past *as* the present.[52]

In relation to Schneider's discussion about reenactment, the colonial space that contains both the coexistence and disjunction of the modern and tradition seems to establish relationship between the past and present.

T'aeyong Kim, the director of the pyŏnsa performance, and Hipong Cho, the pyŏnsa, wrote a new script for the performance because the original script was destroyed during the Korean War. Kim also made a short film clip for the attraction show. In addition to the attraction show, several more theatrical reenactment strategies were created for this particular performance. Not only did the director and pyŏnsa reenact the performance so that the public could view the film, but also so that the audience could experience Seoul in the 1930s: the interior of the theater lobby was decorated to re-create the atmosphere of the 1930s. In the nook in the lobby, a small salon was set up. Antique, old-fashioned chairs, lamps, and tables provided a glimpse of a bygone era. The employees were dressed according in fashions of the 1930s. The female employees in the ticket booth wore traditional dresses and the male employees selling rice cakes wore Western attire popular during that time. The flyers—particularly the design and fonts—

[52]. Ibid., 32.

created for the performance also echoed the old-fashioned atmosphere.

Performing Nostalgia

Reenactments of such pyŏnsa performances become a palimpsest in linking document and translation, image and sound, and past and present. In *The Future of Nostalgia* Svetlana Boym proposes that nostalgia is about the relationship between individual biography and biography of groups or nations, or between personal and collective memory, and is a result of a new understanding of time and space.[53] In relation to Boym's idea of nostalgia, I consider how the performances of the 1930s and the reenactment of such performances today construct a space of nostalgia in different contexts. I argue that the performances that were performed in the 1930s construct a space of both restorative nostalgia—which proposes to restore the lost home—and reflective nostalgia—grief toward the loss of a nation that cannot be restored. The reenactment of such performances today produce a space of nostalgia, but this nostalgia is not a desire to return to the past. It is a reimagination of a city that included both tradition and modernity during the interwar period.

Many silent films that were produced and performed in the 1930s include themes indicative of a loss of a nation resolving with tragic endings that signify the grief and sorrow of the colonial state. In addition, several films employ land or the idea of land as the medium to express this theme. The following transcript, an excerpt from *Sarangŭl ch'ajasŏ* ("Looking for Love") which was narrated by pyŏnsa Tongho Sŏng, exemplifies a film narrator conveying Koreanness under the strict censorship of Japan.

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[53]. Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xvi.

> We have a motherland, but we are chased after wherever we go. Oh, where should we go now? Having left our hometown and brothers and wandering in this cold and windy foreign land, this may be the last of us. My dear comrades, say we die here on this field, who will give us a funeral? We will all die one day–let's give ourselves a funeral in advance to our death.
>
> My dear comrades, the lonely souls that are put to asleep in this cold and windy foreign land, when we cross this river, we will see our country. Let our spirits go back to our hometowns where our grandfathers rest, to the motherland that gave birth to us. Although our bodies may die here, let our spirits that love our people and country return to Korea.[54]

In the pyŏnsa's performance of *Sarangŭl ch'ajasŏ*, the exiled characters continue to long for their homeland and desire to return. Reference to "home" is repeatedly manifested throughout the film using terms such as "country," "hometown," and "motherland." Directed by Un'gyu Na, *Sarangŭl ch'ajasŏ* was released on 10 April 1928.[55] The plot of the film is as follows: Kŭmyong, a trumpet player in the army, is unable to endure the oppression from the Japanese and leaves for China. He sells everything except for his trumpet. On the way, he meets a young officer named Un'gyu and his friends. They settle down in a village and work hard to develop the village. One day, during a fight with some bandits, they cross the Tuman'gang (Tuman River) situated on the borderline between the northern part of Korea and China. Mistaking Kŭmyong and his friends for members of the Korean Army for National Independence, the Japanese soldiers fire their guns. To lift his friends' morale, Kŭmyong blows his trumpet until he dies. Un'gyu picks up the

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[54]. *Yusŏnggiro tŭnnŏn musŏngyŏnghwa moŭm* (Early Silent Motion Pictures Collection), by Tongho Sŏng (1996; Seoul, Korea: Syn-nara Records Co.), CD.

[55]. *Sarangŭl ch'ajasŏ*, directed by Un'gyu Na (1928; Seoul, Korea: Naun'gyup'ŭrodŏksyŏn), Film.

trumpet and wanders along the river in search of his comrades until he, too, is shot by Japanese soldiers. He blows the trumpet until his breath allows him to do so no more.

The trumpet represents the cry against the Japanese. *Sarangŭl ch'ajasŏ* portrayed the true stories of Koreans who were forced to leave their hometowns and trek to Manchuria. The film was originally titled *Tuman'gangŭl kŏnnŏsŏ* ("Going across the Tuman River"), but due to Japanese censorship, the film's title was changed to *Sarangŭl ch'ajasŏ* because the *Tuman'gang* had become a symbol of Koreans who denied becoming Japanese and chose exile instead. After having many scenes deleted, the film was released in April 1928. However, five days later, the screening was banned because the film program subtly explained the reason for censorship. After a re-inspection and more editing of scenes, the film was released under the title *Sarangŭl ch'ajasŏ*. The film's tragic ending, in which the characters are shot by Japanese soldiers, was modified into a scene that portrayed a fight between the main characters and anonymous bandits. The Japanese authorities attempted to reduce the resistance in the content to the extent that the film showed no antagonism toward Japan. Although the film narrator was instructed not to provide interpretation further than the information written in the script, he defiantly gave commentary on the colonial state of Korea and the loss of a nation.

According to Boym, restorative nostalgia puts emphasis on the *nostos* (return home) and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home.[56] However, in the pyŏnsa performances, the lost land cannot be restored. Neither could the films portray scenes that show the independence of Korea nor could the pyŏnsa provide commentary on the regain of Korean land because of strict censorship. Even so, the underlying discourse alludes to the desire to restore the lost home, homeland, and nation. On the other hand, not only restorative nostalgia,

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[56]. Boym, xviii.

but also reflective nostalgia—a form of deep mourning that performs as a labor of grief—also characterizes film-narrating performances.[57] Based on Freud's idea of mourning and melancholia, Boym writes that mourning is connected to the loss of a loved one or the loss of some abstraction, such as a homeland, liberty, or an ideal. Mourning passes with the elapsing of time needed for the "work of grief." On the other hand, melancholia does not pass with the labor of grief. Boym proposes that reflective nostalgia, composed of both mourning and melancholia, is a form of deep mourning that performs as a labor of grief both through pondering pain and through play that points to the future.[58] As restorative nostalgia evokes national past and future, and reflective nostalgia is more about individual and cultural memory, Boym claims that the two do not coincide in their narratives and plots of identity.[59] However, I argue that both reflective nostalgia and restorative nostalgia coexist in the pyŏnsa performances. The pyŏnsa's commentary proposes to rebuild, to reconstruct, and to regain, yet the loss and grieving for the home/nation cannot be recuperated.

Nostalgia is also demonstrated in the reenactment of pyŏnsa performances, although in a different context from that of performances of the 1930s. The reconstruction of the urban past, which was made possible by the restoration of the film, produces a reenactment of Seoul during Japanese colonial rule. The spectacle that the two men performed before the screening was an attempt to create a reenactment of a day on which the film was screened in the 1930s. The entire reconstruction of the city via pyŏnsa performances serves an educational purpose, shedding new light on Korean history.

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[57]. Ibid, 55.

[58]. Ibid.

[59]. Ibid., 49.

Boym proposes that the city imagines its future by improvising on its past. There is a pervasive longing for the visible and invisible cities of the past, cities of dreams and memories.[60] The city, then, is an ideal crossroads between longing and estrangement, memory and freedom, nostalgia and modernity.[61] The pyŏnsa performances constructed a reimagination of a city that held both tradition and modernity during the interwar period. It was a reimagination of a city in which people dressed in both traditional attire and Western suits; a city in which the Korean language started employing English vocabulary to coin new terms; a city in which Korean women accommodated gendered roles, but began their struggle to have their voices heard.

Looking beyond the city represented in the film, the film becomes a performance within the reenactment—a performance within a performance. The footage of colonial Seoul in the 1930s is staged in Seoul of the 21st century. In this case, the reenactment becomes a site-specific performance. How does the space of the city function? In *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*, Miwon Kwon writes that a site "is not simply a geographical location or architectural setting, but a network of social relations, a community".[62] From a specific geographic location, that "the site of art…[is] not only a physical arena but one constituted through social, economic, and political processes."[63] Locating the networked nature of site-specific practices within a shifting understanding of site itself, Kwon argues that the art pieces reveal the way in which a site is never contained, but resonates with other sites within the

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[60]. Ibid., 75.

[61]. Ibid., 76.

[62]. Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), 6.

[63]. Ibid., 3.

city, communities, economic systems, and modes of discourse. The site-specific performance pieces I examine persist through time in particular and charged ways, and performatively link the specific site of Seoul back to the colonial period. Kwon asserts that site-specific art is predicated upon a viewing subject, immediately experiencing the artwork in front of them in the here and now. The aesthetics of a site-specific artwork is contingent upon its site, thus, to view a site-specific art piece is likewise predicated upon being in a co-present relationship with the work and its site. Kwon distinguishes between site-specific works that are permanent, persisting through time and those that are impermanent and transient. The reenactment is about the immediacy of the moment, but also always about the past.

Performing a Gendered Koreanness

While discussing how an imagined community is constructed through the discourse of the pyŏnsa's film-narrating performance, one must also consider the gendered voice of Koreanness. In whose voice is the Koreanness that the pyŏnsa constructs through his performance embedded? To whom does it give voice? Does it echo equally for people of different groups of gender?

Strongly influenced by the patriarchal cultural that is manifested in Korean society and embedded in norms which privileges men more than women to educate, govern, and create art, I argue that Koreanness is constructed from a highly masculine perspective. My reasons for viewing Koreanness as a gendered notion is as follows: when considering the performer who plays the role of constructing Koreanness, the male voice is audible—the female voice is conspicuously absent. During the silent film period, the pyŏnsa who gives voice to and makes public the performance was, without exception, a male film narrator. There is no record whether a female pyŏnsa existed, and Ch'ul Sin, a former pyŏnsa, testified that only men could work as

pyŏnsa, because "sexual discrimination was prevalent in Korean society and did not give women a chance to do such work."[64] Given the exclusion of women from the role of pyŏnsa, it is inevitable that the discourse is formed by a male voice, and the female voice is silent.

The pyŏnsa's performance in representing the male and female characters reaffirms the masculinity of Koreanness and, as a result, creates a space in which female voices are not heard. When representing the male characters, the pyŏnsa performs in a range of voices in an attempt to distinguish one male character from another. Thus, the audience is able to recognize the different male characters without looking at the screen. When representing the female characters, the pyŏnsa performs in almost the same vocal tone and speaking manner for all of the female characters. Most of the time, the pyŏnsa employs a high voice, sometimes with a regional dialect. If the audience is not looking at the screen, it may be difficult to distinguish between the female characters unless the character's name is mentioned in the conversation or narration.

The uniformity of the voices the pyŏnsa uses for female characters is not the only factor that silences Korean women in the performance. The voice that the pyŏnsa employs in representing the male and female characters serves to stand for gender qualities. The male characters are represented with deep, steady tones of voice; in contrast, the female characters are represented with high, breathless tones of voice. The contrasting tone of voice between the male and female characters represents the power dynamic between genders. The strong, sturdy voice of the male character signifies activeness, masculinity, and power; the high-pitched voice signifies femininity, inactiveness, and weakness. I argue that this performance produces a space in which the imbalance of power between genders becomes educated and reinforced. Koreanness

[64]. Eun-Sook Choi, "Pyŏnsa yŏnhaeng yŏn'gu—munhwapŏnyŏkkwa ch'ŏnggakchŏk motŏnit'i maengnagesŏ" (A Study on Byunsa—Film Explainer in the Context of Cultural Translation and Aural Modernity) (master's thesis, Korean National University of Arts, 2007), 116.

has been predominantly shaped artistically, politically, and socially by masculinity, and the female/feminine voice has been erased or otherwise excluded or willingly surrendered. The pyŏnsa constructs a gendered space that is issued from a male voice, and Koreanness which comes from a male authority, holds masculinity. Thus, the pyŏnsa's performance is constructed via a male-centered landscape, and as a result, leaves out other voices.

In addition, colonial Seoul can be viewed as a space that makes the modern girl both the flâneuse and the object of male desire. By 1934, the population in Seoul increased to 380,000, accompanied by an increase in Western architecture, department stores, movie theaters, cafés, and so on.[65] Even in colonial Seoul, the flâneur and flâneuse made their appearances. Beyond the Korean context, Anne Friedberg argues that a new social figure—the flâneuse—appeared in public spaces made possible by the new configurations of consumer culture.[66] The Baudelairean observer was a (male) painter or a (male) poet—a flâneur—whose mobility through the urban landscape allowed him access to the public sphere of the streets and to the domestic realms of the home. He had a fluidity of social position, a mutable subjectivity.[67] As the gendered French noun designates, the flâneur was a male urban subject, endowed with a gaze at an elusive and almost unseen flâneuse.[68] If women roamed the street they became "streetwalkers," prostitutes, carnal commodities on sale alongside other items in the arcade. Women were objects for consumption, objects for the gaze of the flâneur, or the poet who, like Baudelaire, would notice women as mere

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[65]. Min Ah Jeong, "Singminji chosŏnŭi samgwa *ch'ŏngchunŭi sipcharo*" (Urban Life of Colonial Choseon and Turning Point of the Youngsters), *Hyŏndaeyŏnghwayŏn'gu* (Contemporary Film Studies Laboratory) 7 (2009): 62.

[66]. Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 11-12.

[67]. Ibid., 29.

[68]. Ibid., 33.

passerby.[69] The flâneuse was the nineteenth-century version of a female observer, whose gaze was mobilized in these new public spaces of modernity. Friedberg argues that while the flâneur and flâneuse gradually nullified traditional class distinctions, their presence raised a new issue in gender; it transformed the flâneuse into an eroticized figure of male desire. Examined in the light of Friedberg's idea, colonial Seoul provided Korean women an opportunity to step beyond the threshold of the domestic sphere and pursue employment in the city, but it also trapped women in a new phallo-centric bubble, making them an object of male desire. According to Jeong, there were approximately 1,000 cafés in Seoul in the 1930s. In one particular café, there were 70 female employees.[70] Along with modernization of the city, the eroticization of the female body increased. In many Korean films produced during the colonial period, such as *Spring on the Peninsula* (1941), the women's clothing is decidedly gendered. Female characters that wear traditional dresses appeared to be represented as traditional subjects, while characters adorned in Western dresses represent the fluidity of cultures and modernity. In such case, the female characters that represented the modern girl became a target of male desire. While the city provided new opportunities, it did not fully liberate women, perhaps alluding that Korean women were still trapped in a patriarchal system.

The Korean modern girl can be examined in the light of her Japanese contemporaries in the cafés of modern Japan. In *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense: The Mass Culture of Japanese Modern Times*, Miriam Silverberg writes that the Japanese modern girl, particularly the café waitress, was "commodified as an erotic object" while she "articulated her own sensual desires

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[69]. Ibid., 35.

[70]. Jeong, 62.

and her protests against the constraint of her workplace."[71] Silverberg questions the subjectivity and activity of the café waitress and raises a series of issues related to the relationship between Japanese women and men during these decades, relationships informed by historically (and therefore culturally) specific constructions of modernity, class, gender, eroticism, and the merchandising of what was considered erotic. For example, not only does it take us into the social space of the interactions between waitresses and customers; it also hints at the meanings attached to the eroticized male by Japanese women. Here "eroticizing" refers to both the process whereby the presence of the café waitress was made desirable to her male customers and to the recuperative task of discussing how these workers might have experienced their own erotic connections that were not business transactions (Silverberg 76).

[71]. Miriam Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense: The Mass Culture of Japanese Modern Times* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009), 73.

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Performing Glocalized "Koreanness" in *The Last Empress* (1995) and *Hero* (2009)

Since the 1990s, South Korea has seen an increasing number of performances with materials adapted from its colonial history, making the past a site for Koreans not only to construct national identities, but also to stage the struggles and contradictions that they faced before and/or after liberation from Japan. What are some historiographical and theoretical issues that this phenomenon raises, especially in the context of the ongoing debate about modernity, national identity, and Korean colonial experience? How is the colonial state represented and how are the past and the present integrated in performance? What makes the present distinct from other periods that it brings forth themes of the colonial period in local theater and performance? Such performances construct a collective national identification as a function of their theatrical address. Because these performances take place in arenas that invite the local community to attend, they are challenged to create strategies of identification that work between the local and the national.

One of the predominant strategies in theater and performance has been the staging of historical narratives of nation-building. My research examines how the emergence of Korean transnational theater and performance since the 1990s contributes to reconstituting a sense of the national or "the nationness" in the context of a desire for cultural globalization. I trace how these projects demonstrate the nation's desire for global success and visibility and explore the implications of their approach both in a Korean and a transnational context. In this context, the Korean musicals *The Last Empress* (1995) and *Hero* (2009) are exemplary performances of staged reconstructed histories that represent a collective, independent national identity. Moreover, these musicals are derived from a globalized form of theater that is made to speak to the Korean

audience and to speak as Korean to a global audience. As Korea emerges as a global power in the age of transnational capital, it also seeks to establish, through performance, an independent national identity on the global stage. While each chapter in this dissertation discusses different live and screen performances, this chapter examines how performance can embody history in popular form. Throughout this chapter, I examine how the reconstruction of histories and performative strategies of identification operate in such performances. My reading of *The Last Empress* and *Hero* illustrates how the local desire for global success resulted in a perpetuation of a Broadway-style musical in a Korean mode. In addition, I argue that while the musicals use their female characters' pioneering image to claim a place for the musical in the global era, they simultaneously pull them back into the traditional domain.

For my methodological framework, I adopt a revisionist, interactive approach to colonial history that provides a framework within which I can analyze the interplay of colonialism, modernity, and nationalism in theater and performance. In *Colonial Modernity in Korea*, Gi-wook Shin and Michael Robinson suggest a narrative of the colonial period that moves beyond "the binary logic of true nation/anti-nation" by adopting "more inclusive, pluralist approaches."[72] Shin and Robinson seek to challenge previous nationalist interpretations that are based on such binary constructions as: Asia and the West, Japan and Korea, and depictions of rich but tainted collaborators versus the pure, impoverished masses. Positing inclusive pluralist approaches to colonial history in what they term an "ecological handling of historical traces [reclaiming] the land with a mind to restoring some of the density, richness, and complexity of the original

[72]. Gi-wook Shin and Michael Robinson, *Colonial Modernity in Korea*, eds. Gi-wook Shin and Michael Robinson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 4.

ecosystem,"[73] Shin and Robinson emphasize the relevance of a dynamic, interactive approach, in which colonialism, modernity, and nationalism are treated as three mutually influencing and interlocking forces. Shin and Robinson demonstrate that colonial hegemony must be viewed "as a historical process continuously negotiated, contested, defended, renewed, re-created, and altered by challenges from within and without."[74] Throughout their work, Shin and Robinson address colonial hegemony and the formation of Korea's unique colonial modernity in different fields of practices and the reconstruction of new identities within the context of colonial modernity. For Shin and Robinson, colonial historiography requires a responsive study of colonialism, modernity, and nationalism that emphasize dynamism, interactions, and multiple causalities rather than a single, correct interpretation. Thus, an expanded view of colonial historiography requires more than simply adding to the inventory of what has historically been considered historiography.

An examination of these performances as well as their performativity illustrates the ways in which the idea of the national has been assimilated or conflated with that of the global in Korea as it encounters the globalized era. In other words, I suggest that these productions and related discourses in Korea both identified and promoted the "global" as a way of identifying Koreanness and reconstructing national histories. The underlying rationale in these performances, which seeks and confirms Korea's capability in the global arena, expresses both the nation's anxiety and doubt about its global competitiveness as it pursues its global desires. The theatrical productions evolve and function as they strive to supplement the gaps between the global and the national by searching for, as well as reconstructing, an idea of Koreanness.

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[73]. Ibid., 5.

[74]. Ibid., 9.

As I examine the obsession with the global that surrounds these performances, I analyze how, in the process of achieving that global standard, the term "global" becomes an empty, idealized signifier. The performances and their ways of constructing a sense of nationness assume that Korea has already been part of the global. At the same time, however, these productions and the discourse surrounding them constantly remind the spectators of Korea's lack of global competitiveness as well as the nation's desire and need to counter this lack of recognition by striving to create a global identity and presence. Using performance as a lens, I focus on how the idea of the global in this national context—this nationness—could remain as an imagined censoring machine, a persistent lack, and the superior "other."

The contradictory linkage of the global with the national illustrated in this work suggests a different dimension to the existing discussions of global-local interaction. In globalization and postcolonial theories, theoretical terms such as "cultural hybridity" or "mimicry" have been suggested as explanations for how the local encounters, negotiates, or even subverts the encroaching influence of globalization—which can also be viewed as "Americanization." However, despite the insights they offer, such approaches tend to assume the local as the opposite of the global and consequently often end up fetishizing the idea of the local. That is, such concepts implicitly run the risk of taking for granted that the local always appropriates the global, and therefore that local responds automatically result in opposition and resistance. Rather than similarly romanticizing the idea of the local, this chapter attempt to unveil more complex, multidimensional interactions between the local and the global.

Moving away from the dichotomy of the global and the local, this chapter examines the multiple dimensions and roles of the local and the national, and demonstrates concrete, detailed actualizations of these encounters in the global era. By focusing on the performances and

discourse about their border-crossing movements, this research illuminates how the idea of the global has been used for Korea's nationalistic ideologies and interests as well as how the power of the national has been promoted and strengthened under the rubric of globalism.

Performing a Transgressive Koreanness in the Musical *The Last Empress* (1995)

The Korean musical *The Last Empress* was commissioned to commemorate the centennial of the assassination of Empress Myŏngsŏng (1851-1895), the last empress of Korea. With a production cost of twelve hundred million Korean won (approximately 1.2 million U.S. dollars), the musical premiered on 30 December 1995 at the Seoul Arts Center. The empress was at the heart of politics in the late 19th-century Korean monarchy and was an active agent for Korea's modernization. Her ambition to accommodate foreign powers made her a target in the Japanese power structure. Condemned as a threat to Japan's imperial project of occupying Korea, the empress was murdered by Japanese assassins on 8 October 1895. Adapted from Korean novelist Munyŏl Yi's play *Yŏwu sanyang* ("Fox Hunt") the musical was acclaimed by both Korean critics and the public alike and was a commercial success. It was the first Korean musical to be performed in New York in 1997 and to tour major cities, including London, Los Angeles, and Toronto. It was reviewed as the "national musical of Korea."

The Last Empress was created as a direct response to the demands of globalization in Korea during the 1990s. ACOM International, a Korean musical production company, conceived the production to create a Korean version of a Broadway musical and aspired to stage it in Western metropolises. The musical is highly popular with Korean audiences, at least in part because it was marketed as the first Korean musical to be staged on Broadway. The production's recognition as "theater of success" resonated with both the Korean government's desire for

global advancement and with nationalism that was prominent in domestic discourse. Mainstream Korean newspapers often mentioned this production as an example of the allure of global development and of Western success in a Korean context.

Capitalizing on the significance of the empress as a promoter of the nation's modernization, ACOM conceived the production based upon the active image of her reaching for the global stage. However, although the musical clearly represents the empress as a harbinger of globalization, her characterization is ambivalent, divided between a proactive global pioneer and a carrier of nation's tradition. While the production takes advantage of her pioneering image to further the musical's attractiveness in the global arena, it simultaneously grounds her within the traditional domain—both as a monarch and as a woman—by building her up as a literal bearer of the national tradition and also by confining her within a traditional female gender role, burdening her with duties as a good wife and a nurturing mother. Thus, the musical pulls the empress into the traditional domain, designating her as its bearer and as the "mother of the nation."

The musical's duplicative construction of this heroine parallels the contradiction in the production rationale: ACOM, endorsing their desire to catch up with global standards through the musical, uses Korean traditional culture and history to construct a cultural product that is both modernly global and uniquely Korean. Consequently, amidst this interplay between the global and the national, ACOM manipulates the empress's character as a distinctive signifier of national identity.

Through a close reading of the performance, I illustrate how the national motivation of global success resulted in a Korean brand of Western theatrical genres. I discuss how the musical is positioned under the rubric of cultural globalization within the Korean theatrical arena. Then, I explain how the discourse of *sekyehwa* ("globalization") and the musical production's

commitment to the nation's cultural development manifest in the musical to create an ambivalent onstage characterization of its female heroine. As I closely analyze selected scenes, I question how masculine developmentalism mediates the creation of a cultural product and accordingly explicate how images of the feminine in the production are reconfigured. By illustrating how the national desire for global success resulted in a Broadway-style musical in a Korean mode, I argue that, caught between global demands and the nationalistic search for a unique Koreanness, the musical manipulates the figure of Empress Myŏngsŏng, its heroine: while the musical promotes her proactive, pioneering image to claim a place for the musical in the global arena, it simultaneously pulls her back into the traditionally gendered domain.

In consideration of the Korean sociocultural climate that prompted this production, the musical is heavily influenced by a particular nationalistic state and social project known as *sekyehwa*. *Sekyehwa*, which refers to globalization in a specifically Korean domestic context, inclusive of all ages and economic strata, was an ambitious developmental policy launched in 1994, during Young Sam Kim's presidency. My reading of *sekyehwa* within this particular project notes an important contradiction: the production fails to address the problems of female citizens in either their public or private lives, even though the central character is a woman.

As I contextualize the musical within *sekyehwa* discourse, I analyze how it adopts and reproduces developmental rhetoric. The ultimate rationale of the performance addresses and satisfies the nation's desire for success in the global arena. However, through its characterization of the empress, the musical also reveals a contradiction at the heart of *sekyehwa*, where desire for globalization and modernization intertwine with desire for the nation and its conservative traditions.

The dynamics of these anxieties and contradictory desires they produce result in a

disturbing perpetuation of a stereotypically canonical Western-style musical in a Korean mode. This perpetuation is further exacerbated because the production does not transcend an essentialist and/or nationalistic search for and view of Koreanness. In particular, the central role of the empress illuminates the gendered aspects of nationalism, even though the performance purports to represent Korea's desire to reach out to the world with its culture. I argue that although the musical does apparently redeem the empress as a heroine of history who fought for Korea, her character within the musical as a national heroine is actually deprived of agency, and therefore, she is misrepresented.

I discuss how the figure of the empress has been represented in the musical and the ways the musical is positioned under the rubric of cultural globalization within Korean theater arena. Then I explain how *sekyehwa* discourse drove the creation of this musical and reveal correlations between globalizing and nationalist desires. In the latter part of the chapter, I closely analyze selected scenes, focusing on how the performance represents the empress and femininity for the sake of national interests.

The musical begins with the end of World War II in 1945, when Korea was liberated from Japanese colonization. The musical then jumps back in time to 1864, when Emperor Kochong of the Korean Empire ascends the throne, and swiftly moves to 1866, when the emperor weds Empress Myŏngsŏng. From then, the musical connects the empress's individual story and the trajectory of national history. The musical portrays the personal and political life of the empress, interweaving other historical moments such as her father-in-law's dictatorship, Emperor Kochong's assumption of direct royal rule in 1873, the Japan-Korea Treaty of 1876, the United States-Korea Treaty of 1882, the insurrection of 1882, and the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), resulting in Japanese victory. The musical concludes with the assassination of the empress.

The empress was the wife of Emperor Kochong and the mother of Sŏnjong who became the last king of the Chosŏn Dynasty (1392-1910). During her lifetime, the empress's political status was powerful enough to threaten her father-in-law, Taewŏn'gun (Kochong's father), who acted as regent. Korea was undergoing an economic, political, and social transition at the end of the 19th century. Due to Taewŏn'gun's strict closed-door, isolationist policy, demands from Western imperialist powers for diplomatic and trade relations were rejected and Korea remained the "Hermit Kingdom" until the end of the 19th century. Taewŏn'gun's disposition clashed with that of the empress, who insisted on claiming support from Western powers, especially Russia, to solve domestic problems, modernizing Chosŏn, and trying to save the declining monarchy at the onset of Japanese intrusion.

However, in 1895, the empress met a brutal end because the Japanese had identified her as an obstacle to their advancement onto the Korean peninsula. Miura Koro, who had succeeded Inue Kaorue as governor general of Japan in Seoul, plotted the murder on the orders of the Japanese prime minister. Under the direction of Miura, Japanese assassins stabbed the empress to death and burned her body. Although Miura was recalled to Japan the following year to face a perfunctory trial held in Hiroshima, he was acquitted.

After the murder, Japanese officials announced that the incident had been the result of an internal power struggle between the empress and her political rivals, notably Taewŏn'gun, her father-in-law. Eventually this view, which has distorted Korean history well into the modern era, was solidified as part of the colonial historiography invented by the Japanese to justify Japan's annexation of Korea (1910-1945). According to the Japanese version of history, the empress had been widely condemned in her country as a manipulative woman who lusted for power and destroyed the nation by opening it up to foreign influences.

In terms of understanding the creation of this musical at this point in transnational development, it must be recognized that although Korea opened its ports to the West in 1876, the concept of globalization is a relatively recent concept in Korea. Entering the 1990s with the Kim Young Sam administration (1993-1998), Korea quickly and passionately reacted to the stream of globalization in areas such as culture, economy, and education. Moreover, Kim's promotion of *sekyehwa* in 1994 encouraged theater and performance to communicate with Western countries through Korean works that show Korean characteristics and identities.

In addition, the endeavor to create a globalized Korean performance may be spurred by South Korea's geo-political conditions—geographically surrounded by China, Japan, and Russia, and politically affected by China, Japan, North Korea, and the United States. In such confinement, Korea seems to be in the seat that is always influenced by other countries, not being able to strongly voice its opinions. Here, I am careful not to make any generalizations of political allegory, but it is interesting to note that many Korean art, cinema, and theater feature themes on Korean national history. In this context, such cultural products may be examined in relation to the geo-political confinement of the nation-state in which subversive urgency pulses just under the surface. In *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*, Roland Robertson writes that:

> In an increasingly globalized world there is a heightening of civilizational, societal, ethnic, regional and indeed individual, self-consciousness. There are constraints on social entities to locate themselves within world history and the global future. Yet, globalization in and of itself also involves the diffusion of the expectation of such identity

declarations.[75]

While Korean theater and performance art strives to create Korean musicals, the majority of the musical industry stages Broadway performances. Korean theater artists and producers who saw how Broadway musicals captured the local market felt the need to create a musical company along corporate lines (i.e., a company that could attract domestic investment, train professional actors/actresses and staff, and pursue domestic and international markets). Targeting international audiences, Korea desires to create a "glocalized," hybridized musical that adapts the Broadway musical form while interweaving various elements of traditional Korean performing arts such as traditional Korean costumes and set design that stages traditional architecture, representing a sense of "Koreanness."

When the curtains go up, there is a visual projection of the atomic bomb at Hiroshima. While this image is open to interpretation for different viewers, this image may evoke a shared national consciousness for Korean audiences. Here, the national is historically specific, as a direct response to Japanese colonialism. Amidst the ascending mushroom cloud, the numbers 1945 appear. It starts to count backwards until it stops at 1895. How are we to understand such projection in an experimental narrative framework that "challenges the propulsive, forward-moving linearity typical of mainstream cinema with a fragmented, regressive temporality?"[76] It distinguishes itself from mainstream narrative framework which is "propulsive, forward-moving linearity typical of mainstream cinema."[77] Reverse chronology creates a mystery, as the viewer

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[75]. Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage, 1992), 270.

[76]. Hye Seung Chung and David Scott Diffrient, "Forgetting to Remember, Remembering to Forget," in *Seoul Searching: Contemporary Korean Cinema and Society*, ed. Frances Gateward (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), 118.

holds an active role, having to mentally orchestrate rather than viewing passively. Next, a courtroom appears. In the first scene, the Japanese soldiers are found not guilty of the empress's murder. During the scene, the judge's verdict is projected on the screen:

> The defendant Miura Koro the Japanese consul in Korea masterminded the murder of Empress Myŏngsŏng. Miura Koro, is this true?
> In the process of the defendant entering the palace to the empress's court, many Korean court servants and soldiers were murdered. The empress was murdered and her body was burned. However, evidence is insufficient to prove that the defendant is guilty. Therefore, due to the Criminal Procedure Code of Japan no. 165, the defendant is released from all charges. Decided by Yoshida Yoshihide, the district judge of Hiroshima, on 20 January 1896.

The juxtaposition of the number "Japan's Choice" and the projection of the verdict and the red sun on the wall represent Japanese imperialism. How does the musical link the histories of the nation with the story of an individual? Such staging of an individual story and a collection of historical events can be understood, in part, through Todd Macgowan's claim that the interconnection of individual development with the evolution of the nation has served as a subject for cinema since the birth of the feature film.[78] McGowan argues that "national identity develops through history, that it is the product of a historical evolution that cinema can capture

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[77]. Ibid.

[78]. Todd McGowan, *Out of Time: Desire in Atemporal Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 182.

and even explicate through juxtaposition with the destiny of an individual or individuals."[79] In relation to McGowan's discussion, one can see how the performance connects the individual's development concurrently with that of the nation. Although I am discussing performance and not film per se, McGowan's idea of the representation of the concurrent parallel between individual story and national history is useful in discussing the musical's intersection of personal history and the nation.

Beyond McGowan's concern, this musical also raises the issue of how, in terms or representing *The Last Empress*, a musical stages a gendered national identity. In my analysis of the musical, I focus on how the construction of its female heroine, Empress Myŏngsŏng, is underpinned by masculinist ideas of national development and how the musical's portrayal of its title character reflects the gendered nationalism in contemporary Korea.

The musical depicts the empress as an intellectual and progressive leader who was concerned about the nation. In Act One, she advises the emperor "Why keep away the foreigners? / Use them to the nation's benefit," showing to be a figure who is more discerning, practical and realistic than her husband and/or father-in-law. While her father-in-law selects her to be empress because "the Queen's family will not control the court / as she is from a humble family," and tells her to "support his majesty as a companion in life / bring harmony to the royal court. / Set the model for others as the mother of the nation," the empress vows to "live in wisdom and virtue / the mother of all people of this nation" and "sacrifice myself for you [king] and the people." In Act Two, Isabella Bird Bishop (1831-1904), the nineteenth-century English explorer, writer, and a natural historian who later wrote *Korea and her Neighbors*, Lillias Horton Underwood, wife of

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[79]. Ibid., 170.

Horace Underwood a Presbyterian missionary from New Jersey, and Antoinette Sontag (1845-1925), the sister-in-law of Russian Minister to Korea Karl Weber praise the empress as a courageous and wise leader.

In discussing representation of gender roles in Korea, an examination of how Korean women have been subject to a particular cultural and national identification is warranted. The Confucian principle of gender differentiation summed up in the rubric *namnyŏyubyŏl* (distinction of men and women) still permeates the daily lives of Koreans. In the Confucian tradition, Korean women's womanhood was defined only in relation to the other sex: that is, by what they are not.[80] However, I am not arguing here that the female subjectivity shows lack of agency of Korean women. Rather, I aim to demonstrate the shift of female subjectivity in the modern period and how such intersections are visible in the musical.

According to her father-in-law, the empress's main role is to support the emperor and give birth to a royal heir. However, she intervenes in domestic and international politics, transgressing traditional gender roles. Several of the empress's solos, such as "You are the King of Chosŏn," "Until the World Needs Me Again," "We Shall Return to the Palace," "Queen Min's Return," "The Queen is Studying French Today," "Welcome," and "Rise, People of Chosŏn" represent the empress's intelligence and progressiveness. Yet, numbers such as "There is a Star in My Heart," "A Wish for a Prince—Shaman Rite," and "The Prince and the Queen" show that she cannot fully transgress because she is trapped in the phallocentric sphere. While the empress is clearly positioned as an active subject, the image of modern women still shows to be assessed in relation to the image of patriarchal men.

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[80]. Hyaeweol Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea: New Women, Old Ways* (California: University of California Press, 2009), 222-223.

In *Choreographing the Global in European Cinema and Theater*, Katrin Sieg examines cultural representations and their societal implications, mainly cinema and theater that represent the problematic side of globalization, specifically its impact in Europe.[81] Sieg asks: "Can the transnationalization of culture that is currently being implemented through EU cultural policy also overcome the troubling legacy of the nation-state, including the deplorable marginalization and exclusion of women, ethnic minorities, and immigrants—populations whose contributions are actively promoted as part of this policy?"[82] Seig finds that gender and heterosexual desire are the motors of most narratives of globalization.

In connection to Sieg, Butler's idea of subject-formation is useful in reading certain scenes in the musical that reinforce normative gender codes. For Butler, performativity depends on accumulation and dissimulating historicity of force as it "implies that discourse has a history that not only precedes but conditions its contemporary usages."[83] Thus, the success of the performative is dependent upon the action which echoes a prior action and accumulates the force of authority through the repetition or citations by which it is mobilized. In such case, Butler argues that "the practice by which gendering occurs, the embodying of norms, is a compulsory practice, a forcible production, but not for that reason fully determining."[84] In other words, the subject is produced by the effect of repetition of the norms, which creates an effect of gender uniformity, a stable effect of masculinity and femininity, and produces and destabilizes the subject as well, for the subject only comes into intelligibility through the matrix of gender. In that

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[81]. Katrin Sieg, *Choreographing the Global in European Cinema and Theater* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

[82]. Ibid., 17.

[83]. Judith Butler, "Critically Queer," *Bodies that Matter* (London, New York: Routledge, 1993), 227.

[84]. Ibid., 231.

case, femininity "is not the product of a choice, but the forcible citation of a norm."[85] Butler asserts that such "citation of the gender norm is to qualify as 'one,' to become viable as a 'one,' where subject-formation is dependent on the prior operation of legitimating gender norms."[86] Moreover, in *Undoing Gender*, Butler posits that "if gender is a kind of doing, an incessant activity performed, in part, without one's knowing and without one's willing, it is not for that reason automatic or mechanical."[87] On the contrary, it is a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint. Moreover, one does not "do" one's gender alone. One is always doing with or for another, even if the other is only imaginary."[88] Understanding gender as a social construct and recognizing codes of masculinity and femininity of the Korean patriarchal society may impose the ways in which the gendered national identity is performed in the musical.

The Korean shaman has become the signature image of Korean indigenous performance, in its reception on the global stage. Since long before the advent of Confucianism and Buddhism, religious rites oriented toward nature have been performed in Korea. In Korean, the word kut denotes not only religious rituals, but also refer to the dance, drama, and music integrated into those rituals, and many theatricals have stemmed from these rites.[89] In *Women's Intercultural Performance* edited by Julie Holledge and Joanne Tompkins, one important consideration of the relation of indigenous and transnational performance is the reception of the Korean shaman

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[85]. Ibid., 232.

[86]. Ibid.

[87]. Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 1.

[88]. Ibid.

[89]. Halla Pai Huhm, *Kut: Korean Shamanist Rituals* (New Jersey: Hollym International Corp, 1978).

Kum-hwa Kim, who performed her rites in Australia.[90] This same shaman performed rites in Los Angeles in 2002, for the tenth anniversary of the inter-ethnic uprising in this city prompted by the Rodney King beatings by the police in 1992. Because the violence in Los Angeles broke out between the Korean American and the African American ethnic communities, the shaman was invited by the local Korean Americans to perform a rite of peace-making. Thus, the image of the shaman onstage in *The Last Empress* was particularly resonant for the audience in Los Angeles. In this city, then, and for those interested in performance across cultures, the image of the Korean shaman signifies traditional difference from global performance practices.

"Who is the Traitor?": Performing "Koreanness" in the Musical *Hero* (2009)

The Korean mega-musical *Hero* was commissioned to commemorate the centennial of the death of Chunggŭn An, a resistance fighter during the Japanese Colonial Rule, who, in 1909, killed Hirobumi Ito, the Japanese resident-general in Korea who is considered instrumental in the Japanese invasion of Korea. The characters in the performance enact a resistant Korean nation to the oppressive Japanese colonial state. The musical's translation of Japanese colonialism and the formation of Korean national identity play between "live" performance and visual projection of Korean colonial history. This interplay sets up the process of visual mediation and its constructing of nation-building narratives. Such collective consciousness portrayed in selected scenes becomes a crucial performance strategy.

I aim to re-evaluate the musical's initial reception as "a hugely patriotic tale about a legendary Korean hero" in which "[t]he libretto and lyrics consist of one message from

[90]. Julie Holledge and Joanne Tompkins, *Women's Intercultural Performance* (London: Routledge, 2000).

beginning to end, mostly blind patriotism."[91] According to one performance review, "[s]uch propoganda never develops forward into a dramatic literary structure, but rather remains cliché and one dimensional throughout, which eventually...leads to thunderous applause when Hirobumi Ito, influential leader in the Japanese invasion of Korea, is assassinated."[92] Such dismissal and misreading of the performance belies its most compelling drama: the reconstruction of history that moves away from nationalist interpretations and their dichotomies with an ambitious agenda to reorient historiography on colonial Korea that emphasizes interactions and dynamism rather than a one-dimensional interpretation.

The entire production cost was fifty hundred million Korean won (approximately five million U.S. dollars) which was considered astronomical compared to that of other Korean local musicals. The musical, which depicts An's struggles to preserve Korean independence, premiered at the LG Art Center in Seoul, Korea on 26 October 2009—the same date that An assassinated Hirobumi Ito a century earlier. The musical was acclaimed by both critics and the local audience as one of the best local musicals of the past forty years in Korea, and was sold out for all of its eighty inaugural performances. *Hero* also won several awards at The Musical Awards, the annual Korean musical theater award ceremony. After its successful premiere, the musical made its international debut on 23 August 2011 at the David H. Koch Theater at Lincoln Center in New York and performed through 3 September 2011. The musical's trip to Broadway was seen by Korean audiences as evidence of Korea's ascendance and its domestic popularity rose accordingly.

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[91]. Gregory Bernard, "Off Broadway Theater Review: HERO—THE MUSICAL (David H. Koch Theater at Lincoln Center)." *Stage and Cinema*. August 28, 2011, http://www.stageandcinema.com/2011/08/28/hero/

[92]. Ibid.

Hero unfolds as follows: Chunggŭn An, a thirty-year-old Korean, vows to devote his life to his country. Sŏlhi, a female resistance fighter and Empress Min's last servant, leaves for Japan to get important information for the resistance fighters. An leaves for Russia and meets his friend, Wang, and Wang's sister, Lingling. However, Wada, a Japanese policeman, hunts An down. An and the resistance fighters duel against the Japanese. Wang dies after being tortured by the Japanese. In Japan, Sŏlhi succeeds in seducing Hirobumi Ito, the Japanese resident-general of Korea. Hirobumi Ito asks Sŏlhi to accompany him on the way to Manchuria. An plans to assassinate Hirobumi Ito and Sŏlhi writes Hirobumi Ito's destination in a letter. An takes the train to Harbin Station. On the way, Sŏlhi attempts to slay the sleeping Hirobumi Ito, but fails to do so. She commits suicide by jumping off the train. An arrives at Harbin. Wang's sister, Lingling, dies in An's arms after saving his life by taking the Japanese policeman's bullet instead. When Hirobumi Ito arrives at Harbin Station, An takes out his gun and kills him. An was executed in Japan on 26 March 1910 after facing trial for his involvement in the assassination of Hirobumi Ito. As the familiar trope of the resistance fighter of Korea, Chunggŭn An's story addresses an empathy for national identification, and in the global musical, a strategy of Korea into the transnational entertainment arena.

Then how was the musical received by non-Korean viewers? While *Hero*'s staging is visibly Korean with a Korean director and an all-Korean cast, the form of the musical is often reminiscent of Broadway musicals. Gregory Bernard addresses such features in *Stage and Cinema*:

> *Hero*…is a long list of derivations from imported musicals: The opening scene in the forest is fairly reminiscent of *Martin Guerre*; the Japanese police inspector who dedicates

> his life to catching the musical's hero An Chunggun (handsome and powerful Chung Sunghwa) is like Javert from *Les Misérables*, and a café scene turns into "Master of the House," also from *Les Mis*. But wait, there's more. The introduction of Hirobumi (compassionate Kim Sunggee) sounds an awful lot like *Chess*; when Lingling (adorable Jeon Mido) is shot, she sings in the arms of her first love, mirroring *Miss Saigon*; an impassioned political speech conjures up *Evita*; a courtroom scene feels like *Jesus Christ Superstar*; and when Chunggun imagines his dreamlike mother, dammit if it isn't *Billy Elliot*…And we're still not done yet. While not derivative of a British import, the chase sequence through the streets is pure *West Side Story* as dancers move toward us while jumping over their own hands. Perhaps the creators are paying homage to Jerome Robbins and British musicals, but there hasn't been this much tribute to so many Broadway musicals in one Broadway musical since *Urinetown*.[93]

The review's reference to "derivations from imported musicals" traces back to the history of Broadway musicals dominating the Korean musical market, and how the Broadway musical has become the privileged form for canonization in Korean theater and performance. In examining *Hero*'s positive reception in Korea (in contrast to its foreign reviews), it is important to see how the term "Broadway" functions in this context. Broadway in Korea has been understood as a successful cultural symbol of America. Broadway in this context becomes both a desirable model that Koreans should imitate to succeed and also a difficult opponent for them to defeat. The Korean media continually overstated the musical's impact on Broadway by misrepresenting the musical's few nights of visiting tour at a New York theater rather as an

[93]. Ibid.

extended Broadway-run production. Such misrepresentation explains how the impression of global success can appeal to domestic readers in Korea. The mainstream media further deployed the rhetoric of global success by continuing to exaggerate the musical's international travels. Gradually, the Broadway musical has problematically become the privileged form for canonization in Korean theater and performance. The list of popular musicals introduced and performed in Korea from 2001 to 2006 underwrites the Broadway musical canon:

The Phantom of the Opera (2001)

Cats (2003)

Chicago (2003)

Beauty and the Beast (2004)

Mamma Mia (2004)

Jekyll & Hyde (2004)

Aida (2005)

Notre Dame de Paris (2005)

The Producers (2006)

I Love You (2006)

The Lion King (2006)

Miss Saigon (2006)[94]

With such histories in mind, one can see how Broadway musicals may influence both the content and form of Korean musicals, and moreover reinforce, complicate, and/or contest

[94]. Minkyu Pak, *The History of Korean Musicals* (Seoul: Hanul, 2011), 754-756.

normative constructions of identity.

Hero's narrative breaks away from the all-too-facile explanation that colonization can be reduced to mere repression and creates a new space in the national narrative. *Hero* recognizes that previous scholarship of the colonial period is written as "victims' history"—a narrative of exploitation, oppression, and suffering—and that the only Koreans given any agency were those who resisted Japanese authoritarianism, cultural aggression, and economic exploitation. It is almost as though the only way to rescue the colonial period from oblivion was to construct a heroic story of patriotic struggle. *Hero* addresses a new interpretation of Chunggŭn An's story and the colonial period. In an interview, the director/producer comments that while Chunggŭn An's story has been adapted into films or plays in the past, most of the adaptations mainly focus on Chunggŭn An's assassination of Hirobumi Ito; hardly any works focus on Chunggŭn An's philosophies or thoughts. In creating *Hero*, the director/producer decided to focus on Chunggŭn An's philosophy, particularly his thoughts on peace for Asia. In addition, the director/producer's directorial statement describes Hirobumi Ito as "Meiji Government's most important authorities" and questions Hirobumi Ito's position in Japan. The director/producer had studied what position Hirobumi Ito holds in the history of Japan and believes that Ito dreamed of constructing an Asian nation. By using Roach's idea of how history is embedded in performance, I propose to argue that *Hero* shifts the narrative away from the political (and hence nationalist) perspective, raising an interesting set of new issues, and moreover, creating a new performance.

During Sŏlhi's first solo, there is a visual projection of the assassination of Empress Min at the back of the stage. On a red backdrop, an animation that enacts the murder is screened. Although only black silhouettes are visible, the image of a Japanese soldier slaying Empress Min is unmistakable to the viewer. The projection is shown as Sŏlhi sings how she "cannot forget the

Japanese soldiers searching the Kyŏngpokkung Palace and the blood dropping from the sword that murdered the Empress." As such representation refers to the brutal historical incident this particular scene may address empathy for national identification.

Another interesting visual projection is the scene in the interrogation room after Hirobumi Ito's assassination by Chunggŭn An. On the darkened stage, the prosecutor briskly asks questions and transcribes Chunggŭn An's answers with his typewriter. As the prosecutor types, Chunggŭn An's words are projected in the background:

> Prosecutor: Why did you kill Hirobumi Ito?
>
> Chunggŭn An: I wish for Korea's independence. Now the whole world will be informed of Japan's plots to rule Korea and Koreans' wish for independence.
>
> Prosecutor: Chunggŭn An, I declare you guilty of murdering Hirobumi Ito.
>
> Chunggŭn An: I have no obligation to be judged by the Japanese court. I am a Korean resistance fighter in war, and I killed Hirobumi Ito as part of my job. Therefore, I am not a criminal, but a prisoner of war.

Another visual projection that addresses a collective consciousness is shown in the last scene. After Chunggŭn An is hanged in prison, the stage is emptied completely except for a black backdrop. On the backdrop, the following statement is projected:

> Although Korea became liberated from Japan in 1945, the whereabouts of Chunggŭn An's body is still a mystery. Over a century later, Chunggŭn An's remains are yet to be found, but his legacy as a hero lives on in his homeland of Korea.

Such projections may be read as a patriotic narrative of the colonial period. Interestingly, the musical breaks away from such translation in several scenes, giving an "appropriate" portrayal of Hirobumi Ito, representing him as an ambitious, yet humanistic character rather than an evil, cold-blooded ruler. During his first solo, Hirobumi Ito says that Chosŏn (Korea) is "the first love that he spent all his youth with" and sings that "one should not look down on Chosŏn as it is a nation that overcame hardships." According to Hirobumi Ito, Chosŏn is "a great nation that has a history of thousands of years" and can be used in order to conquer China. Yet, his interpretation of Chosŏn can be read as attainable and gendered land.

During the duet between Chunggŭn An and Hirobumi Ito's ghost (after Hirobumi Ito's assassination), the pair sing in unison how they identify with each other: "We each worked hard for our countries / We share the same destiny although we have different wishes / Death awaits both of us although we serve different countries / What I truly wish for is / Korea's peace (Japan's prosperity) / Although fate destined us to be enemies / History will remember us / As soldiers who gave up their life for their countries." Such representation of the resistance fighter and Japanese resident-general during the colonial period brings forth new issues and posits questions. In his directorial statement, the director/producer writes that, the musical's juxtaposition of Chunggŭn An and Hirobumi Ito shows how *Hero* attempts to maintain a neutral position in portraying Hirobumi Ito. The director/producer aimed to rescue Chunggŭn An's story from the dominant narratives of the colonial period.

That said, how is gender represented in *Hero*? Sŏlhi, a fictitious character in the musical, is a former servant of the late Empress Min. She volunteers to go to Japan to become a spy for the Korean resistance fighters. The fighters, and even Chunggŭn An, firmly object her trip,

arguing “it is not an easy job for a woman.” Sŏlhi convinces them by stating that it is a time in which it is shameful to be living comfortably” and that she will send them the information that they need. After her arrival in Japan, Sŏlhi becomes a geisha and approaches Hirobumi Ito. Under the pseudonym Namida, she seduces him; Hirobumi Ito becomes attracted to her beauty. Here, the viewer is able to see one representation of Korean women during the colonial period. Although Sŏlhi plays an important part in the mission, it is made to appear as if she cannot carry out her duties without seducing and enticing a male figure. Furthermore, the musical portrays Sŏlhi as a weak character who does not succeed in her plans. During her accompanying Hirobumi Ito to Harbin, Sŏlhi approaches sleeping Hirobumi Ito with a dagger. After a brief prayer, she raises the dagger. Hirobumi Ito takes hold of both Sŏlhi and the dagger, and raises a gun to her head. “I knew that you were trying to take my life,” he says. However, Hirobumi Ito does not kill Sŏlhi and leaves the room. That night, Sŏlhi commits suicide, jumping from the train. The musical’s portrayal of Sŏlhi’s failure of femininity can also be seen in a previous scene. During a duet between Hirobumi Ito and Sŏlhi, Sŏlhi questions “what makes her heart confused,” and sings that “his caring eyes speak to me / and my heart shakes like a tree branch,” implying that she has come to care for Hirobumi Ito.

Such scenes show that the Korean national identity is notably gendered. While performance holds associations with agency and will, performativity is the reiteration of codes (of gender and sexuality) that precede, constrain, and exceed the performer, offering potential identificatory sites for identities and communities. In this case, the musical sets a stage for reiterating codes through its representation of the gendered national identity. The selected scenes reveal how the paradigm of a woman in colonial Korea is constructed. Whereas Sŏlhi proves to be a failure of femininity, Chunggŭn An and his comrades “evidence the superadequacy of their

masculinity, through aggressive tropes of loud singing and high kicks."[95] Similar to Sue-Ellen Case's analysis of the musical *The Last Empress*, *Hero* "prompt[s] the audience to question how the modern nation-state of Korea was composed—the theme of the musical. Was it through the partitioning of genders: the lyric feminine and the militaristic masculine? Was it by setting feminine sexual seduction against masculine violence?"[96] While *Hero* posits a unique point of view in the representation of colonial historiography and attempts to break away from the dichotomy of nationalist framework, the musical fails to rescue the epic tale from dominant narratives and to explore diversity in terms of gender.

[95]. Case, Sue-Ellen. "Musical the Last Empress: a Korean Staging of Woman and Nation." *Australian Drama Studies* 49 (2006).

[96]. Ibid.

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Performing a Gendered *Mise En Scène* in YMAP's *Madame Freedom* (2013) and Split Britches' *Lesbians Who Kill* (1994)

In this chapter, there are two performances that stage familiar, period films with postmodern performance strategies. The South Korean performance group YMAP's intermedial dance piece *Madame Freedom* (2013) projects Hyŏngmo Han's 1956 film *Madame Freedom* in the background of the performance; in *Lesbians Who Kill* (1994), Split Britches employ Hollywood films, particularly motifs of film noir, throughout the performance. While *Madame Freedom* and *Lesbians Who Kill* are each performed in different geographic and periodical settings, both set up certain roles for strong women by basing the performances on films that each portray women who are in charge of their own sexuality and compete with men for power. In addition, in both performances, women are represented as seductive and negatively portrayed and punished in the end. Located at the borders between aural, literary, and visual art forms, intermedial performances maintain a "self-conscious reflexivity" in the ways they blur generic and media boundaries.[97] This intermedial form best serves a study of identity and identification because it "acknowledges multiple acts of representation and makes them visible."[98] As theater and performance provide a "performative situation" in which film, television, and digital video may operate "not just as recordings on their own, but [operate] at the same time and above all [as] theatrical signs," this study employs intermediality as a tool in order to understand the complex processes of identity formation in performance and the theoretical conversations that emerge

[97]. Freda Chapple and Chiel Kattenbelt, *Intermediality in Theatre and Performance* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2006), 11.

[98]. Ibid., 38.

from it.[99] Drawing from Cinema Studies scholar Adrian Martin's discussion on the various meanings and use of the term of *mise en scène*, I look at how the cinematic images can create a *mise en scène* and even a characterological dynamic in consonance or dissonance with contemporary gestural practices. By examining how the *mise en scène* in both performances each set the stage in representing a particular gendered identity at different moments and times, this chapter explores how performance and screen serve as an identificatory mode of cultural translation.

Performing a Gendered Koreanness

In 2013, Korean media performance group YMAP created the intermedial performance piece *Madame Freedom* which was neither solely a staging of a dance piece nor a screening of Korean filmmaker Hyŏngmo Han's 1956 Korean film *Madame Freedom*. Rather, the performance focuses on the space in between the dance and the film, the live and the media, the past and the present. *Madame Freedom* portrays a shift of traditional gender roles in the midst of the allure of Western culture in post-war Korea. Through a close reading of YMAP's *Madame Freedom*, I examine how the combination of live performance and the screen stage the shift in the representation of female subjectivity in Korea. The questions I raise are: how are Korean women subject to a particular cultural and national identity, and how does performance provide a space for both challenging and reiterating gender codes? Throughout this chapter, I analyze representations of Korean women in post-war Korea, considering how gender roles and identities are socially reconstructed over time within processes of cultural, political and social transformations. My discussion is based on YMAP's *Madame Freedom* which was videotaped in

[99]. Ibid., 37.

performance at the Seoul Arts Center, Seoul, Korea on 5 October 2013 and my viewing of the performance which took place at the Roy and Edna Disney/Cal Arts Theater (REDCAT), Los Angeles, CA on 2 October 2014.

The ceiling, floor, and three sides of the stage are used to project images of women. Amidst these images, a female dancer (Hyo Jin Kim) appears at the center of the stage. She stands motionless. On the screen behind her is a projected image of a young Korean woman putting on a traditional Korean dress. The donning of this clothing can be read as an action of preserving, valuing tradition.

The music, which at first opened with traditional Korean music, gradually interweaves Western instruments in the orchestra. Kim turns around in circles. As she turns, the shadow of her movement is reflected on the three walls. She stops dancing. However, her shadows continue to dance on the walls; these shadows are projected images. Multiple shadows appear, dancing on the walls. The shadows grow bigger and bigger, bordering on all three walls. The dancer stands motionless, and then starts dancing. However, neither the dancer nor her (projected) shadows exceed the borders of the three walls. It seems as if the dancer and her shadow are caught or entrapped in a large box.

The dancer and her shadows disappear and images of Korean houses representing the architectural style of the 1950s are projected on the left and right walls. At the center is a projection of Korean male singer performing. In front of the houses on the left and right walls, an image of a female dancer appears. She dances in front of the houses, stepping on the threshold of a house. All of a sudden, the dancer, two houses, and singer disappear. In place are two glaring headlights with sounds of a train nearing.

The image disappears, and in place, the film *Madame Freedom* is projected. The center

screen is slightly moved to the right leaving an empty space onstage. In that space is a table and two chairs. A male dancer in a Western suit and top hat sits down, opening a newspaper. Behind him, a projection of Sŏnyŏng O, the female protagonist of the film *Madame Freedom*, is seen for several minutes. The male dancer gets up and walks across the stage. Kim appears from behind the screen. She is dressed in black top and loose flowing pants and heels. Kim imitates the moves of the dancing Sŏnyŏng O projected on the wall. As she dances, the following conversation, which are excerpts from the film *Madame Freedom*, haphazardly appear on the three walls in both English and in Korean:

Shall we dance?

I'm not very good.

Do you still go dancing?

Yes. To Dabshimni.

I wished to bump into you but our paths never crossed.

Do you go someplace else?

I have been very busy.

I suppose these are the ways of a housewife.

I have been hoping to meet you.

I was worried since I hadn't seen you for a while.

Just the thought of someone makes my heart flutter.

Is that so?

Thank you for thinking of me.

I know a quiet place to dance for us.

Would you take my invitation?

Is there such a place?

The later the better when everyone falls asleep.

During the projection of these lines, the male and female dancer dance together. The volume of the music slowly decreases until there is no background music. The projection changes to another scene in the film in which Sŏnyŏng O is dancing with her lover Han. Onstage, Kim sits on a chair, her back to the audience. Several steps away, the male dancer dances by himself. The Kim gets up and dances, but not with the male dancer. The two dancers each dance by themselves.

The scene changes. The walls are ivory and there is a lighted path onstage. The female dancer walks along the path. The path disappears and there is a single square illuminated. She dances on that square. Then, images of squares appear and disappear on the walls. I interpret this scene as the struggle of Korean women who endeavor to pave the way for gender equality, yet, still face many obstacles today.

The scene changes. Kim kneels down onstage. On the walls are projected images of numerous dancers also in the same position. They fall face down one by one. The female dancer and all of the projected dancers face the ground prostrate. The projected dancers get up, one by one. A blob of black ink covers each of them completely and the walls become black. The viewer can only see the silhouette of the female dancer. Her upper body bent, she starts waving her arms, making motions as if flying.

Geometrical shapes appear on the walls. The female dancer moves slowly and then kneels down. The scene changes and multicolored fish are projected on the walls and floor. The

dancer is curled up in a sleeping position. On the wall, the Korean female from the opening scene of the performance appears then disappears.

The performance's four-screen (the floor and three walls) projection technique brings forth an illuminating conversation between performance and screen. The split screen techniques can be examined in the light of Martin's discussion of the "polyphonic interplay between multiple screens, *spatialised* across the walls or constructed zones of a gallery."[100] His definition of spatialised cinema as a "version of a gallery-like installation, but brought back into cinema and co-ordinated on a single screen" displaying "evident formal fragmentation, the tension between displayed parts and levels, that we experience in modernist and postmodernist artworks" and his alignment of such a practice with *dispositif* —"an apparatus, arrangement or set-up of interrelated pieces or elements"—has provided the theoretical concept for me to work on the Korean performance piece.[101] In addition, by questioning "Has not the cinema always been, in some crucial senses, a *dispositif*? Has it not always been a game with a multiplicity of spaces, looks and sounds? Has it not always been the sum—or rather, the face-off—between the different media that comprise it: theatre, novel, radio, music, painting, architecture?" Martin advocates for the connective tissue between art mediums.[102] While I am writing about performance and not cinema, per se, Martin's inquiry on how the *mise en scène* sets the stage posits a platform for me to question how the combination of the physicality (dance) and the visual imagery (screen) in the performance *Madame Freedom* sets the stage for a feminist performance. In addition, through the juxtaposition of the past and the present, YMAP's intermedial performance represents the

[100]. Adrian Martin, *Mise en Scène and Film Style: From Classical Hollywood to New Media Art* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), xiii.

[101]. Ibid.

[102]. Ibid.

ways in which performance becomes a site of cultural, historical, and political memory by projecting Hyŏngmo Han's 1956 film *Madame Freedom* in the performance. It examines how performance becomes a palimpsest in linking document and translation, past and present. Then, when viewing how the projection of the film *Madame Freedom* is central to the performance, it is important to understand the context and significance of the film and how it is used to create a feminist intermedial performance.

Adapted from the novel of the same title by Pisŏk Chŏng, *Madame Freedom* is set in the late 1950s of the post-liberation, post-Korean War, post-division era. The film, which seems to be a microcosm of the nation during that time, portrays a shift of traditional gender roles in the midst of the allure of Western culture. The opening scene of the film encompasses the theme of the film in sequences of shots. First, the film projects an establishing shot of city. The shot shows the buildings seen from the top of Namsan, the crowded streets from the City Hall to the Seoul Station, fast cars, the hustle and bustle of urban life, and foreign imports that fill the display window of shops and department stores. Accelerated urbanization was concentrated in Seoul and the resulting modern lifestyle meant an acceptance of ideologies and lifestyles of the metropolis. After the busy shots of the city, the noise diminishes and the film retreats to a suburban setting. The camera's shift from the city's center to the suburb seems to represent the clash between modernity and tradition and clash between gender roles.

The narrative revolves around a professor named Chang and his wife Sŏnyŏng O who is called Madame O in the film. Chang becomes attracted to Mrs. Pak, his student. Meanwhile, Madame O flirts with a university student who lives next door and goes out dancing with Taesŏk Han. Han happens to be her friend's husband and also the owner of the boutique store where Madame O works as manager. Chang's affair is portrayed as a romantic and temperate

relationship that terminates uneventfully. However, Madame O's affair ends up in controversy.

A twist in the film is that the university student who teaches Madame O how to dance was the boyfriend of her niece, Myŏngok. In one scene when Madame O and the university student are dancing together, Myŏngok arrives at the dance hall with another man. Shortly, Han also arrives at the dance hall. Madame O quickly changes dancing partners and begins dancing with Han. This spectacle is artfully orchestrated with long and sensual dancing shots of the dance floor showing professional dancers exposing their legs and ends with the partnering of the three men and the two women. One can see how this is an attempt to express symbolically repressed sexual desires. In addition, English expressions and vocabulary such as "friend," "good night," and "present" are used in the characters' everyday speech. The characters that used these expressions and vocabulary seem to adopt more of a Western attitude or set of values in comparison to those who did not.

Each female character in the film is portrayed to be struggling in an oppressive patriarchal society. The narrative places its emphasis on women who violate traditional forms of morality and foregrounds their harsh punishment. As a result, the film centralizes ideological statements about the institutions of family, marriage, and social morals. On the surface, the film seems to reinforce the values of a patriarchal system. However, the film illustrates the desire to break away from society's conservative morality by criticizing sexual discrimination. At the same time, seeing these concepts unfold on the screen had the power to shape and influence Korean culture in new ways.

Filmmaker Hyŏngmo Han's focused on depicting characters that express and pursue their individual desires regardless of moral consequences. While his films conclude in a moral note that does not provide a happy ending to the female characters' decisions, Han nevertheless

offered a realistic approach in portraying the pursuit of the characters' desires. In addition, he deployed comic elements to lighten social satire. In a review published on 3 April 1957 in the Korean daily newspaper *Chosŏn ilbo*, *Madame Freedom* was appraised as "having a tendency for tacitly criticizing or satirizing society."

By analyzing both the film and the performance *Madame Freedom*, I examine how a dancing body becomes a site of female agency. How did dance become a site where the South Korean government exercised its disciplinary practice and regulations? In what ways were female bodies in motion intertwined with a desirable representation of nationness? At the same time, what were the ways in which female bodies in motion during that period of time resisted and undid the scriptedness—the scriptedness which curates the public space and how female bodies should be placed in such a space, all the while shaped by the framework of a healthy nation? Based on these questions, this study considers the 1956 South Korean film, *Madame Freedom*, as an important motif to investigate how the undoing of the scriptedness reveals itself in the screen. It employs textual analysis of the film and offers a close reading of the body and dance movement of the protagonists and the film narrative.

Drawing from Marta Savigliano's work, I am interested in exploring the relationship between dance and culture, rather than merely examining the expression of dance movements. Although Savigliano examines the colonialist, nationalist, patriarchal and hegemonic history of the tango from a decolonialist, "Third World" feminist perspective and I look at social dance in Korea in the 50s and 60s, I examine Western dance in Korea and its interaction with culture, and suggest an understanding of the dancing body as culturally and socially constructed.

In her book *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion*, Savigliano examines how the tango became a commodity for imperialism and capitalism. She discusses how the tango entered

the realm of exoticism at the beginning of the 20th century in Paris and London, and analyzes the impact of the tango. Her concept of the colonizing gaze addresses how the cultural codification of the colonizer functions as a mirror for the colonized. The colonies were under economic/cultural domination of the main power nations, and the tango was rejected by Parisian and European bourgeois moralists. When the tango became popular in Paris, there was a high degree of cultural creativity in the city; Parisians modified the scandalous, erotic, and voluptuous tango and domesticated the dance form. Savigliano characterizes this relationship between the "uncivilized" tango and "civilized" economic powers as a subversive struggle in which "the colonizer dominates with desire the colonized resists with passion."[103] Savigliano's work provides a lens for me to entangle Western dance's complex relationship with different periodical settings in Korea.

Western dance was introduced to Korea during the late Chosŏn period. Empress Myŏngsŏng (1851-1895), the last empress of Korea, insisted on claiming support from Western powers, especially Russia, to solve domestic problems, modernizing Korea, and trying to save the declining monarchy at the onset of Japanese intrusion. The empress maintained a close relationship with the German Russian Antoinette Sontag (1854-1925), the sister-in-law of Russian Minister to Korea Karl Waeber, and in order to facilitate political relations between Korea and Russia, the empress permitted Sontag to build a hotel in Seoul. Thus, the Sontag Hotel, which was built in 1902, became the first European hotel in Seoul, Korea. Sontag's hotel became a popular meeting place for the ambassadors of China, Japan, Russia, and the U.S. and also set the stage for the first café and dance hall of Korea.[104] Here, it is interesting how to see the dance

[103]. Marta Savigliano, *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion* (Colorado; Oxford: Westview Press, 1995), 76.

[104]. See Korea Creative Contents Agency's webpage at

hall started out as a means of foreign politics when Korea was undergoing an economic, political, and social transition at the end of the 19th century. During that time, only the royal family and upper class practiced Western dance.

Gradually, Western dance—particularly social dance—spread to the general mass. In 1937, a group of people who worked in the Korean entertainment industry protested so that other dance halls could be established in Seoul (because the Sontag Hotel became disestablished then). However, the Japanese Government did not favor a cultural activity that could stimulate Koreans' agency and freedom and declined their request. Korean continued to dance in cafés during the Japanese Colonial Rule. After Korea was liberated in 1945, Western dance, along with other aspects of Western culture, were introduced and became firmly rooted in Korea. However, in 1954, Chŏng's popular novel *Madame Freedom* caused much controversy and as a result, social dance became degraded. During this time, movement and protests for women's rights greatly increased. The government looked down on social dance and instilled regulations; institutes for teaching social dance became illegal. It seems that the Korean government suppressed the practice because dance could become a site of agency and sexual desire as seen in Chŏng's novel.

Savigliano also hypothesizes that in the course of the modern global expansion of imperialism and colonialism, a political economy of passion intertwined with the general political economy that has been developing. The capitalist expansion of the dominant imperial powers through the production and export of colonial administrators, goods, financial capital, and machines has been accompanied by the "production of passion" in the exotic world. The tango enters into the economy of passion and exoticism at the beginning of the 20th century.

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http://www.culturecontent.com/content/contentView.do?search_div=CP_AGE&search_div_id=CP_AGE004&cc_code=cp0434&index_id=cp04340057&content_id=cp043400570001&search_left_menu=3.

Savigliano focuses on two analytical models–body movement analysis and political economy–in her investigation of the tensions that stem from issues of gender, race, class, and nationality, and analyzes them in relation to changing socioeconomic conditions in Argentina. In a similar fashion, the introduction of Western culture incited the craze for social dance in post-colonial Korea, and moreover, the allure of Western culture in post-war Korea affected the shift of gender roles in Korea.

After the Korean War (1950-1953), the current national division was established in 1953. The 1950s, under the Syngman Rhee government, was a time of political chaos due to national division (ideological and military conflict), post-war dislocation and recovery from devastation of Korean War, and corruption and poverty. In addition, it was a time of American presence and influence. In 1950, the U.S. aid to South Korea was $100 million when the total budget of South Korea was $120 million. Entrepreneurs and the middle class took advantage of such U.S. military presence:

> All these people were fertilized by the inconceivable amounts of American cash that flowed into the country, down from the presidential mansion, through the bureaucracies civil and military, coursing through the PXs and onto the black market, into the pockets of a horde of people who serviced the foreign presence: drivers, guards, runners, valets, maids, houseboys, black-market operators, money changers, prostitutes, and beggars.[105]

It was an "age of explosive energy"—of Americanization (spread of democratic ideas),

[105]. Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997), 302.

modernization (spread of capitalism, consumer culture), booming popular culture, and rapid urbanization. In the film industry, this socio-cultural background yielded the diminishing influence of political and/or propaganda films and supported filmmaking as a commercial undertaking, for mass amusement. During this post-liberation, post-war period, there was an exponential rise in number of Korean films produced: in 1955, fifteen films were produced; in 1956, forty two; in 1957, twenty eight; in 1958, eighty three; in 1959, a hundred and eight. This was due to the rise in demand for public entertainment, modernization of studio equipment and facilities, construction of largest film studio in Asia, expansion of film industry employment, establishment of film departments at several major universities, renovation/restoration of theaters, construction of new theaters, organization of film associations groups, and government policies aimed at promoting film industry, for example, admission tax exemption on domestic films in 1954 and "Preferential Treatment of Korean Films and Awards for Producing Quality Films" in 1958. Korean filmmakers experimented with various genres—comedies, gangster films, horror films, melodramas, and thrillers, et cetera. Korean cinema mixed genres to produced new genres and achieved its own identity.[106] It seems that the projection of the conversational phrases that haphazardly appeared on the three walls in both English and in Korean during YMAP's performance *Madame Freedom* alludes to the Americanization that was occurring during that time.

Madame Freedom, a film that deals with modern women and their conflict between traditional values and modern ways of life became a box office hit in 1956. The film inaugurated the new shift toward greater commercialization in Korean cinema. This financially successful film epitomized the rise of commercialism of Korean films in the 1950s. Approximately 74% of

[106]. Young-il Lee, *The History of Korean Cinema* (Seoul, Korea: Jimoondang Publishing Company, 1988), 135.

Korean films were classified as melodramas during this period and *Madame Freedom* is not an exception. Korean cinema studies scholar Young-il Lee writes that "a melodrama boom…described the social life of the 1950s very well [as] democracy and liberal ideas poured into Korea after liberation from Japan and the end of WWII" especially, the clash between old and new, traditional and modern that is depicted in changes in family ethics, generation gap, love affairs, marriage, and vicissitudes of social life.[107] With changing views on love and sex, a "popular interest in the flesh,"[108] Korean films responded to changes in socio-political context by portraying "[s]ubjects ignored in the past, such as love, sex, and the lives of ordinary people," which became main themes.[109] Moral values were reflected not by portraying collective views, but by describing individual lives."[110] In "South Korean Film Melodrama and the Question of National Cinema," Kathleen McHugh writes that melodrama is the genre that "seeks above all to make moral principles clear and accessible to everyone" and "articulates the social, economic and political in the register of the private and the personal."[111] It "emphasizes moral polarities with clear distinctions between good and evil over nuance, complexity and subtlety," thus writing that melodrama becomes the moralizing narrative form.[112] It also "fosters affective identification rather than considered analysis" and "personal frustration becomes the basis for

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[107]. Ibid., 116.

[108]. Ibid., 135.

[109]. Ibid., 136.

[110]. Ibid.

[111]. Kathleen McHugh, "South Korean Film Melodrama and the Question of National Cinema," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 18, no. 1 (2001): 5-6.

[112]. Ibid., 6.

interpersonal identification that is at once familial, social, and political."[113]

When examining the setting, post-war Seoul is represented as a space that makes the modern girl both the flâneuse and the object of male desire. By 1934, the population in Seoul increased to 380,000, accompanied by an increase in Western architecture, department stores, movie theaters, cafés, and so on.[114] Even in colonial Seoul, the flâneur and flâneuse made their appearances. Beyond the Korean context, Anne Friedberg argues that a new social figure—the flâneuse—appeared in public spaces made possible by the new configurations of consumer culture.[115] The Baudelairean observer was a (male) painter or a (male) poet—a flâneur—whose mobility through the urban landscape allowed him access to the public sphere of the streets and to the domestic realms of the home. He had a fluidity of social position, a mutable subjectivity.[116] As the gendered French noun designates, the flâneur was a male urban subject, endowed with a gaze at an elusive and almost unseen flâneuse.[117] If women roamed the street they became "streetwalkers," prostitutes, carnal commodities on sale alongside other items in the arcade. Women were objects for consumption, objects for the gaze of the flâneur, or the poet who, like Baudelaire, would notice women as mere passerby.[118] The flâneuse was the nineteenth-century version of a female observer, whose gaze was mobilized in these new public spaces of modernity. Friedberg argues that while the flâneur and flâneuse gradually nullified traditional class

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[113]. Ibid.

[114]. Min Ah Jeong, "Singminji chosŏnŭi samgwa *ch'ŏngchunŭi sipcharo*" (Urban Life of Colonial Choseon and Turning Point of the Youngsters), *Hyŏndaeyŏnghwayŏn'gu* (Contemporary Film Studies Laboratory) 7 (2009): 62.

[115]. Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 11-12.

[116]. Ibid., 29.

[117]. Ibid., 33.

[118]. Ibid., 35.

distinctions, their presence raised a new issue in gender; it transformed the flâneuse into an eroticized figure of male desire. Examined in the light of Friedberg's idea, colonial Seoul provided Korean women an opportunity to step beyond the threshold of the domestic sphere and pursue employment in the city, but it also trapped women in a new phallo-centric bubble, making them an object of male desire. According to Jeong, there were approximately 1,000 cafés in Seoul in the 1930s. In one particular café, there were 70 female employees.[119] Along with modernization of the city, the eroticization of the female body increased. In many Korean films produced during the colonial period, such as *Spring on the Peninsula* (1941), the women's clothing is decidedly gendered. Female characters that wear traditional dresses appeared to be represented as traditional subjects, while characters adorned in Western dresses represent the fluidity of cultures and modernity. In such case, the female characters that represented the modern girl became a target of male desire. While the city provided new opportunities, it did not fully liberate women, perhaps alluding that Korean women were still trapped in a patriarchal system.

The Korean modern girl can be examined in the light of her Japanese contemporaries in the cafés of modern Japan. In *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense: The Mass Culture of Japanese Modern Times*, Miriam Silverberg writes that the Japanese modern girl, particularly the café waitress, was "commodified as an erotic object" while she "articulated her own sensual desires and her protests against the constraint of her workplace."[120] Silverberg questions the subjectivity and activity of the café waitress and raises a series of issues related to the relationship between

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[119]. Jeong, 62.

[120]. Miriam Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense: The Mass Culture of Japanese Modern Times* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009), 73.

Japanese women and men during these decades, relationships informed by historically (and therefore culturally) specific constructions of modernity, class, gender, eroticism, and the merchandising of what was considered erotic. For example, not only does it take us into the social space of the interactions between waitresses and customers; it also hints at the meanings attached to the eroticized male by Japanese women. Here "eroticizing" refers to both the process whereby the presence of the café waitress was made desirable to her male customers and to the recuperative task of discussing how these workers might have experienced their own erotic connections that were not business transactions.[121]

Looking beyond the city represented in the film, it is interesting to note that the film becomes a performance within an intermedial performance piece. Thus, it can be viewed as a performance within a performance. The footage of post-war Seoul in the 1950s is staged in Seoul of the 21st century. In this case, it becomes a performance that is site-specific. How does the space of the city function? In *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*, Miwon Kwon writes that a site "is not simply a geographical location or architectural setting, but a network of social relations, a community."[122] From a specific geographic location, that "the site of art…[is] not only a physical arena but one constituted through social, economic, and political processes."[123] Locating the networked nature of site-specific practices within a shifting understanding of site itself, Kwon argues that the art pieces reveal the way in which a site is never contained, but resonates with other sites within the city, communities, economic systems,

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[121]. Ibid., 76.

[122]. Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), 6.

[123]. Ibid., 3.

and modes of discourse. The site-specific performance piece I examine persist through time in particular and charged ways, and performatively link the specific site of Seoul back to the post-war period. Kwon asserts that site-specific art is predicated upon a viewing subject, immediately experiencing the artwork in front of them in the here and now. The aesthetics of a site-specific artwork is contingent upon its site, thus, to view a site-specific art piece is likewise predicated upon being in a co-present relationship with the work and its site. Kwon distinguishes between site-specific works that are permanent, persisting through time, and those that are impermanent and transient. The reenactment is about the immediacy of the moment—Kwon's now—but also always about the past.

In *The Haunted Stage*, Marvin Carlson suggests that, through its capacity for doubling and 'ghosting,' performance establishes relations not only to other performances and texts, but also to actual past and present sites that it recreates or renegotiates.[124] The links and relationships between theatrical/theatricalized and 'real' spaces can be both diachronic and synchronic—performance can refer or even spring out of actual contemporary sites whose history is still in the making. As much as it counts on cultural memory and tradition, theatrical references to other spaces might rely on short-term memory of the community. A space alluded, recreated, or used so in a theatre production might not be quite 'haunted' yet, or at least not entirely—it might be an integral part of the audience's contemporary cultural and social experience. The real space might be still in the process of being shaped as its theatricalized doubling unfolds. In that sense, an effigy of the actual space is never a mere reproduction, it is always a renegotiation as the link between the real space and the theatrical becomes dynamic and interactive. The reality and the

[124]. Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

unstable position of a historical space in the making alters and influences the meaning of its performative renderings. In return, the theatricalization of an actual space reshapes its future meaning in cultural memory.

According to Silvija Jestrovic, such phenomenon can be viewed as interperformativity of place—a theatrical/performative allusion of an aural, verbal, or visual nature to a cultural space outside designated cultural and theatrical institutions.[125] In other words, interperformativity of place allows for sites of an actual locale to iconically or symbolically penetrate the fabric of the performance. The phenomenon is closely connected to the cultural and political life of a city as a performance space. Interperformativity of place counts on a collective knowledge and memory of shared urban spaces—their history, function, and meaning in the life of a community.[126] In relation to Jestrovic's idea, I view the site of *Madame Freedom*, which stages Seoul from the post-war period to today, while performed in Seoul of the 21st century, to be performative in that it becomes a palimpsest of connecting the past and the present of Seoul.

Where is the choreographer and dancer Hyo Jin Kim's performative style coming from? With the introduction of Western culture into the country in the 1920s, during the Japanese colonial period, theatrical dances such as modern dance and ballet were also imported to Korea. Such theatrical dance forms were called *shinmuyong* or New Dance, to distinguish it from traditional dance. The term referred both to new Western-style stage dances and to dance forms as a modern art genre that emphasized originality and expression in accordance with Western dance philosophy. Later, the term New Dance came to denote creative choreography of traditional Korean dances, until it was eventually replaced by the term Creative Korean Dance in

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[125]. Silvija Jestrovic, *Performance, Space, Utopia: Cities of War, Cities of Exile* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

[126]. Ibid., 39-40.

the late 1970s.[127] In 1964, Wan-soon Yook, who started teaching at Ewha W. University, introduced Martha Graham's techniques, which came to dominate modern dance in Korea until the 1980s, and initiated the formation of the Contemporary Dance Company, which was made up of her disciples.[128] In the modern dance arena in the 1980s, attempts were also made to pursue Korean tradition by incorporating traditional sentiment and subjects into movements and dance language.[129] In the mid-1990s, choreographers distinguished themselves from older generations by undertaking new experiments, and they had no qualms about freely expressing their own ideas. They were also not afraid to combine and fuse different genres. For instance, they sometimes combined hip-hop with modern dance, or break dance with ballet, and also took their experiments further by combining dance with other genres such as film, theater and painting; joining hands with classical Korean musicians or overseas choreographers; and tweaking existing repertoires. As a result, they helped dismantle the boundaries among Korean dance, ballet and contemporary dance, while gaining traction among the public.[130] Contemporary Korean choreographers' performances are found in the increasingly frequent use of video images and multimedia and growing interest in advanced technology. This blurring of genres is often found in many experimental dance pieces combined with abstract theater, multimedia performance, and composite video.[131] This is precisely where Hyo Jin Kim's dancing style comes from. After studying dance at Ewha W. University, Hyo Jin Kim both choreographed and

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[127]. Malpok Kim, *Muyong yesulŭi ihae* (Seoul: Ewha Womans University Press, 2003), 27-28.

[128]. Ibid., 29.

[129]. Ibid., 33.

[130]. Ibid., 38-39.

[131]. Ibid., 44.

performed in numerous dance and intermedial performance pieces without any other Western training. Her choreography interweaves both Korean dance, Western dance which she has studied at Ewha, and the use of multimedia in creating a unique performance. By projecting the film *Madame Freedom,* this intermedial performance alludes to women's issues in post-war Korea and today, giving a new interpretation on the epistemological shift in gender roles in this site-specific performance.

Queering Murder

In *Lesbians Who Kill,* Split Britches flip the violence of patriarchy toward women. Using motifs of film noir, they take off the set of tropes of dominant Hollywood cinema on independent women. The widely recognized idea of the femme fatale of film noir uses her sexual attractiveness and ruthless cunning to manipulate men in order to gain power, independence, money, or all three at once. The femme fatale rejects the conventional roles of devoted wife and loving mother that mainstream society prescribes for women, and in the end her transgression of social norms leads to her own destruction and the destruction of the men who are attracted to her. In "Women in Film Noir," Janey Place writes that film noir is

> a male fantasy…Thus women…is defined by her sexuality: the dark lady has access to it and the virgin does not. That men are not so deterministically delineated in their cultural and artistic portrayal is indicative of the phallocentric cultural viewpoint; women are defined in relation to men, and the centrality of sexuality in this definition is a key to understanding the position of women in our culture.[132]

[132]. Ann E. Kaplan, *Women in Film Noir*, (London: British Film Institute, 1998), 47.

Film noir's portrayal of the femme fatale, therefore, would seem to support the existing social order—and particularly its rigidly defined gender roles—by building up the powerful, independent woman, only to punish her in the end. But a closer look at film noir suggests an opposite interpretation. Even when it depicts women as dangerous and worthy of destruction, film noir also shows that women are confined by the roles traditionally open to them—that their destructive struggle for independence is a response to the restrictions that men place on them. Moreover, these films view the entire world—not just independent women—as dangerous, corrupt, and irrational. They contain no prescription for how women should act and few balancing examples of happy marriages, and their images of conventional women are often bland to the point of parody. It is the image of the powerful, fearless, and independent femme fatale that sticks in our minds when these movies end, perhaps because she—unlike powerful women in other Hollywood films of the '30s and '40s—remains true to her destructive nature and refuses to be converted or captured, even if it means that she must die.

Lesbians Who Kill uses film noir as a vehicle and ties the connection between film noir, the gothic, and queer identity/identification in the performance. The performance deals with violence induced by living as a minoritarian Other. How do Split Britches situate the lesbian serial killer in film noir to convey their message of violence of sexism? The performance employs the Wuornos' case and the act of killing to highlight sexist discourses. In *Split Britches: Lesbian Practice/Feminist Performance*, Sue-Ellen Case writes that while Split Britches based their performance on the case of Wuornos, they do not attempt to reproduce it; rather, they use it

as a springboard into their own intersection and complicity with the situation.[133] Case quotes Judith Mayne who makes the point that lesbians have long identified with certain film stars, certain kinds of narratives, and certain filmmakers' styles. Through gossip and socializing, they have formed a kind of canon of these works. Premier among them are the film noir heroines, who seek retribution when they are 'done wrong' by men. Thus, lesbian signifies in *Lesbians Who Kill* through the practice of borrowing from this subcultural canon. Yet lesbian, in this play, is everything. It is the sex act between May and June, their intimacy, their social isolation, their mutual trust, and their paranoia. But it is also the place from which these women can turn the aggressive violence of sexism back in its own face.[134]

> The play takes place in a car parked outside the house of May and June somewhere in the southern United States during a thunderstorm. The set consists of a front and back seat of a car placed on stage as if the car was still intact. Behind the seats there is a dark an ominous painted backdrop of a driveway leading to a simple cinderblock county house. The porch light is on. The lighting instruments should be placed on stage on trees along the sides of the car seats to give the effect of a television set.
>
> The lights come up on May and June, dressed in clothes from a forties film, in the front seat of a car, in front of a dark house in a storm.
>
> Blackout. The lights come up in a 'film noir' style on June in the front seat and May in the back seat. They lip-synch to dialogue taken from the sound track of a movie in the style of *Deception,* starring Claude Rains and Bette Davis, in which a woman shoots a

[133]. Sue-Ellen Case, *Split Britches: Lesbian Practice/Feminist Performance* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1996), 31.

[134]. Ibid., 32.

man. May plays the Bette Davis-type killer and June plays the incensed and unbelieving Claude Rains-type man. During the course of the lip-synched dialogue May pulls a gun and eventually shoots June who falls dead in the front seat. May overdramatizes her shock at what she's done and throws the gun into the front seat, covering her mouth in horror. Blackout.

When examining the setting quoted above, one can see how the motif of film noir becomes the *mise en scène* of the performance. In this case, an alternative film noir setting in order to strip the destructive power of patriarchy. Thus, *Lesbians Who Kill* represents an epistemological shift in representing women's reception on sexism and femme fatale in film noir. From a feminist point of view, in the Introduction to *Rethinking the Femme Fatale in Film Noir: Ready for Her Close-Up*, Julie Grossman writes that film noir has been understood in a feminist context in two central ways: first, as a body of texts that give rise to feminist critique; and second, as a celebration of unchecked female power.[135] Laura Mulvey's analysis of the male gaze was central to feminist discussions of film noir's potential misogyny. Such insights contributed to larger conversations about cinematic structure, gender representation, and film noir, circling around issues of identity, identification, fantasy, and objectification, and focusing on the extent to which film noir is a "male sphere" and the "femme fatale" figure a projection of male desire and anxiety, an expression of misogyny best expressed by Place. The view that film noir addresses or critiques patriarchy is shared by other feminist film critics, and evolves out of feminist claims in the 1970s (and since) that the "femme fatale" is a projection of post-war male anxiety about

[135]. Julie Grossman, *Rethinking the Femme Fatale in Film Noir: Ready for Her Close-Up* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

changing or ambiguous gender roles.[136]

The continued debate concerning whose fantasy, male or female, is engaged by film noir generalizes narrative and images in relation to types, such as the femme fatale. Ann E. Kaplan argues that "film noir offers a space for the playing out of various gender fantasies,"[137] developing Elizabeth Cowie's emphasis on the multiplicity of identifications possible in viewing film noir, confronting and contesting prior heterosexist readings of the femme fatale.[138] Revisioning classical feminist film theory about the femme fatale in another way, Cowie challenges the assumption that film noir is always a masculine film form. She points out these films 'afforded women roles which are active, adventurous and driven by sexual desire.'[139] Cowie asserts that the fantasy of a woman's dangerous sexuality is as much a feminine as a masculine one: further, that it is the fantasy itself 'that demands the punishment, for in the punishment the reality of the forbidden wish is acknowledged.'[140] In her analysis of selected films, Cowie argues that it is impossible to tell whose story each film is telling—that of a man or a woman—and that the visual structure of film noir proves how ambiguous its gender fantasies are.

The dangerous women in film noir are lawless agents of female desire, rebelling against the patriarchal relegation of women to the domestic sphere where they are deemed passive and

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[136]. Ibid., 1-2.

[137]. Kaplan, 10.

[138]. Grossman, 2-3.

[139]. Elizabeth Cowie, "Film Noir and Women," In *Shades of Noir*, ed. Joan Copjec (London: Verso, 1993), 135.

[140]. Ibid., 136.

valued only in relation to their maternal and wifely vocation.[141] Grossman aligns her argument with Cowie who questions the notion that noir is primarily a "male preserve,"[142] and instead sees these films as engaging women's desires for social and sexual powers.[143] Grossman seeks to modify the tone of feminist discussions about film noir's women by reorienting our attention to the narrative, social contexts, and mise-en-scene that show the relationship between women's powers and the limits placed on them by social rules. Both the view of the "femme fatale" as misogynist projection and the view of the "femme fatale" as opaque yet transgressive female force emphasize her status as object or symbol (as object of scorn or as the mysterious and opaque "other" that threatens to destroy the male subject). Grossman's aim is to adjust our focus on film noir and gender so that we illuminate these women's narratives rather than mystifying women as objects or images.[144]

These discussions of the femme fatale in film noir lead Split Britches to create an alternative space for women, creating a performance that critiques the replication of power and authority in film noir. In *Fatal Women: Lesbian Sexuality and the Market of Aggression*, Lynda Hart writes that the heroines, May and June, "know that they are 'fallen women,' but they like where they have landed."[145] Through a parody of the classic film noir *Deception*, "they reinhabit the 'femme fatale' with a difference."[146] Split Britches, of course, practice this "disaffirmative" writing and articulates this as their goal in many of their works. Indeed one can say that their

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[141]. Grossman, 4.

[142]. Cowie, 125.

[143]. Grossman, 4-5.

[144]. Grossman, 5.

[145]. Lynda Hart, *Fatal Women: Lesbian Sexuality and the Market of Aggression* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 160.

[146]. Ibid.

discursive strategies are more than this gothic disaffirmation, as one uses José Estaban Munoz's "disidentification" or Chela Sandoval's "methodology of the oppressed" to name the decidedly lesbian feminist bent of their aesthetic innovations.[147] In the case of the serial killer story, Split Britches bring into focus the abject figures of film noir creating a performance that enables the viewer to see June or May's supposedly murder as something other than merely rage against patriarchy.

Adrian Martin recognizes the need to pay attention to "*materiality* in cinema—a materiality that works on the double register of *textuality* (concrete properties of the constructed, composed work) and the *spectator's emotions* (the affects that films create in us, the experiences we have of them)"[148] and also that recently, "scholars and critics have revived the concept of *mise en scène* in the context of a general engagement with *affect*—the spectator's emotional states triggered by a film—over and above the literary or dramatic niceties of thematic meaning."[149] In the light of Martin's argument, Split Britches' use of visual images of film noir motifs can be viewed as a *mise en scène* that triggers the local audiences, specifically lesbian audiences, identifications. This aligns with what Martin defines *mise en scène* as "an energetic or dynamic approach to film style," which introduces "the action or psychic drives into both the making of films and their reception."[150] Thus, Martin's suggests that the *mise en scène* as potentially *transformative*—but transformative in ways that refer to the entire materiality of cinema, not solely the inspiration of a director on set or the phenomenological subjectivity of

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[147]. Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

[148]. Martin, xvii.

[149]. Ibid., 18.

[150]. Ibid., 19.

enraptured viewers. Transformation is not transcendence. *Mise en scène* can transform the elements of a given scene; it can transform a narrative's destination; it can transform our mood or our understanding as we experience the film. Style is not a supplement to content; it *makes* content—and remakes it, too, in flight."[151] While I am writing about performance and not cinema, per se, Martin's inquiry about the relationship between *mise en scène* and spectatorship posits a platform for me to question the relationship between the film noir motifs and viewer identification in *Lesbians Who Kill*.

A discussion of gothic seems significant here because it is historically a literary genre that not only introduced literary monsters, but that also served as the aesthetic space where authors could comment on the socially and culturally aberrant. While many early gothic texts were written to reinforce racist and sexist ideologies, contemporary uses of gothic fiction that followed in its steps focus more on what Judith Halberstam has called "technologies of monstrosity"—the construction of visual and rhetorical abjection by those invested in maintaining the status quo.[152] According to Teresa Goddu, the idea of gothic may be used in writing a "mode of resistance" to "by breaking the silence, they reclaim their history instead of being controlled by it."[153] Linda J. Holland-Toll defines such writing as a "disaffirmative" practice, indicating that these gothic texts of horror do not offer happy resolutions and therefore do not work to "conservatively…reaffirm the values of the society with which they are concerned."[154] The use of murder indicates that June and May are introducing a figure that can be imagined as a monstrosity. Goddu recognizes

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[151]. Ibid., 19-20.

[152]. Judith Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).

[153]. Teresa Goddu, *Gothic America: Narrative, History, and Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

[154]. Linda J. Holland-Toll, *As American as Mom, Baseball, and Apple Pie: Constructing Community in Contemporary American Horror Fiction* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 2001).

that many writers use gothic as a way to deal with the complexity of culture: "Although the gothic is not the only form that articulates abjection, it serves as a primary means of speaking the unspeakable…Many texts that are not predominantly gothic use gothic effects at key moments to register cultural contradictions."[155] These cultural contradictions are precisely what Split Britches want to highlight in their works.

Lesbians Who Kill gives a visual representation of such scholarship. The performance transgresses the traditional idea of femme fatale which was already viewed as transgressive. Thus, it becomes a twice-transgressed figure. The transgressive persona of the lesbian serial killer murdering men is not a single anomaly, but is part of a continuum of images of women who are angry at sexism. According to Stallybrass and White, transgression is a "system of extremes which encode the body, the social order, psychic form and spatial location."[156] "Symbolic inversion" may be broadly defined as any act of expressive behavior which inverts, contradicts, abrogates, or in some fashion presents an alternative to commonly held cultural codes, values and norms be they linguistic, literary or artistic, religious, social and political.[157] Transgression becomes a kind of reverse or counter-sublimation, undoing the discursive hierarchies and stratifications of bodies and culture which bourgeois society has produced as the mechanism of its symbolic dominance.[158] In relation to Stallybrass and White's idea, the lesbian serial killer can be read as a site of destructive force representing transgression.

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[155]. Goddu, 10.

[156]. Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics & Poetics of Transgression* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1995), 3.

[157]. Ibid., 17-18.

[158]. Ibid., 200-201.

The lesbian serial killer can also be viewed as a hybrid, a marginal figure that arose from violence of sexism. No longer shut in silence, the lesbian serial killer transforms from a powerless unfortunate being into a monstrous figure. The lesbian serial killer represents the bourgeois class's fear of the return of the repressed—fear of the return of the lower class and the uncontrolled female that were exploited and sacrificed. The idea of such fear traces back to the Freudian terminology "uncanny," a concept that is "undoubtedly related to what is frightening—to what arouses dread and horror."[159] Freud's uncanny is defined by the subconscious recognition of something familiar in the guise of the unfamiliar; some seemingly alien event touches something one has long since repressed and one perceives the uncanny. Therefore, the uncanny is viewed as the class of frightening things that leads one back to what is known and familiar, the mark of the return of the repressed. It is thus the return of something in one's psychosexual history that has been overcome and forgotten. The uncanny is anything one experiences in adulthood that reminds one of earlier psychic stages, of aspects of one's unconscious life, or of the primitive experience of the human species—of which Freud's first categorization is castration. It is the castration complex as part of one's infantile sexuality that is re-invoked.

Here, I borrow Allen Weiss's concept of "monstrosity" from "Ten Theses on Monsters and Monstrosity."[160] Weiss writes that

> Monsters reveal the limits of imagination. Monsters have traditionally symbolized the life of the instincts and the terrors of the unconscious, the domains behind rationality and the

[159]. Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1953).

[160]. Allen S. Weiss, "Ten Theses on Monsters and Monstrosity," *The Drama Review* 48, no. 1 (2004): 124-125.

site of radical alterity.

Monsters symbolize alterity and difference in extremis. They manifest the plasticity of the imagination and the catastrophes of the flesh.

Monsters exist in margins. They are thus avatars of chance, impurity, heterodoxy; abomination, mutation, metamorphosis; prodigy, mystery, marvel.

Monsters are indicators of epistemic shifts.

The language of the gothic—the descriptions of monstrous acts or grotesque crimes—differentiates members of a community from those who would break the law. Thus gothic discourse can maintain social order, but it also contains political acts of terror. That is, if, as Split Britches posit, these women are searching for satisfaction, or if they are hoping for retribution from many years of inequality and misunderstanding, then the gothic descriptors of murder are what silence them. These women are rendered as monstrous instead of as political activists. The gothic imagination that Karen Halttunen describes in *Murder Most Foul: The Killer and the American Gothic Imagination* makes the horror of the serial killer story so potent.[161] As they are traditionally depicted, these tales may represent June and May as monstrous women transgressing moral decency. These so-called evil women thus become examples to the greater community of whom not to become, reinforcing the male-dominated understanding of femininity. Split Britches rewrite these stories, challenging the normative rhetoric. Their monstrous women draw our attention to the ways society at large makes us see these women as criminal instead of asking why these women performed violent acts. Thus, in *Lesbians Who Kill*, Split Britches

[161]. Karen Halttunen, *Murder Most Foul: The Killer and the American Gothic Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

portray the serial killer as an active political woman who makes certain choices for reasons that cannot be construed as simply monstrous.

Thus, by disrupting the gender regime, Split Britches create a utopian alternative space within the patriarchal order. Through these utopian performatives, as defined by Jill Dolan, "theatre and performance can articulate a common future, one that's more just and equitable, one in which we can all participate more equally, with more chances to live fully and contribute to the making of culture."[162] Split Britches' use of space and time can be examined in the light of Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopias. In "Of Other Spaces," Foucault introduces heterotopias to describe places and spaces that function in non-hegemonic conditions.[163] These are spaces of Otherness, which are neither here nor there, that are simultaneously mental and physical. Foucault uses the term *heterotopia* to describe spaces that have more layers of meaning or relationships to other places than immediately meet the eye. Foucault's idea of heterotopias has been used by postmodernists in understanding the contemporary emergence of cultural, economic, political, social difference and identity as a central issue in larger multicultural cities. Among the possible types of heterotopias or spaces that exhibit dual meanings, the heterotopia can be a single real place that juxtaposes several spaces. Here, Foucault looks at the theater that "brings onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another."[164] Examined in the light of Foucault's idea of heterotopias, *Lesbians Who Kill*, which is performed in a physical space, such as La MaMa, can be viewed as heterotopias in that geographical sites of Manhattan's Lower East Side, film noir, and the queer

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[162]. Jill Dolan, "Performance, Utopia, and the 'Utopian Performative,'" *Theatre Journal* 53 (2001): 455.

[163]. Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 16 (1986): 22-27.

[164]. Ibid., 25.

utopia juxtapose on the "real" place. By appropriating the genre of film noir and taking film noir's femme fatale as a vehicle, the performance reconfigures and (re)presents the classic femme fatale and gives her free rein over the play's erotic landscape. The production addresses and engages its spectators as occupying a position of autonomous female sexuality and subjectivity. For, as Peggy Shaw states, "The danger of theatre…is in the power of presence, in power of the transformations it makes possible."[165]

[165]. Dolan, 469.

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(Un)Positioning Transnational Identities in Ping Chong's *Chinoiserie* (1995) and *Deshima* (1990)

In the 1990s, Chinese-American performance artist Ping Chong created two intermedial pieces, *Chinoiserie* (1995) and *Deshima* (1990), which stage complex intercultural trafficking between the East and the West that revises the former notion of a one-way traffic from the West to the East. Reflecting on Ping Chong's performances from a contemporary transnational perspective, one can imagine how the pieces represented the cultural nationally identified self and its foreign Other at a particular point in U.S. history. Although these performances are available now only on VHS cassettes, the recordings nonetheless reveal that the combination of live performance and screen has served as a mode of the postmodern movement of cultural translation.

Chinoiserie and *Deshima* stage histories of East-West relations and how these relations shaped East-West cultural representations. In this sense, Ping Chong's *Chinoiserie* and *Deshima* can be regarded as staging a contact zone for ethnic groups—a crossroads not only for cultures, but also for the bodies and the material goods that carried them. These routes enabled sometimes unequal encounters in which the changing cultural and political climate could determine the direction of any exchange and in which bodies, ideas, and practices could be dramatically affected.

Influenced by Meredith Monk and avant-garde performance groups from the late 1960s and early 1970s in the United States, Ping Chong uses what were Western, even specifically New York-based forms of experimentation—performance aesthetics such as the poetic arrangement of aural and visual imagery, transfiguration and transmutation of quotidian movements, and

distortion and reorganization of the space-time continuum in performing histories of East-West relations.

My discussion is based on (1) performances of Ping Chong's *Chinoiserie,* videotaped in performance at the Brooklyn Academy of Art, Brooklyn, New York, on 16 November 1995; (2) his *Deshima*, videotaped in performance at La MaMa, New York, New York, on 1 January 1993; (3) Meredith Monk's *The Travelogue Series*, videotaped in performance as part of the Dance Umbrella series at the Roundabout Theatre, New York, New York, on 4 and 5 March 1977; (4) documents obtained from both the Ping Chong Archive and the Meredith Monk Archive at Billy Rose Theatre Division of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts; and (5) my experience of participating in a two-day workshop organized by Ping Chong & Company at the Inner City Arts, Los Angeles, California, on 12 and 13 May 2012.[166]

Performing Cultural Contact in *The Travelogue Series* (1972-1987)

A travelogue is defined as "an (illustrated) lecture about places and experiences encountered in the course of travel; hence a film, broadcast, book, etc., about travel; a travel documentary."[167] The term originated in the early twentieth century, approximately in 1903, yet travel for leisure and the act of logging one's perceptions in a travel journal were commonly practiced much earlier. As early as the eighteenth century, the Grand Tour of Europe was a required element of cultural education. Early journey narratives offer the opportunity to study how modern identity has been shaped through travel. According to Stuart Hall, leisure travel

[166]. Supported by the Department of Cultural Affairs, City of Los Angeles, this intensive two-day participatory workshop was for performers, directors, choreographers, and community-based artists who want to create interdisciplinary work that explores history, art, and community engagement.

[167]. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/205274

broke down previously "stable" notions of identity as individuals experienced dislocation.[168] Although my focus is on performance and not writing, per se, Meredith Monk's set of performances as a travelogue series stages the dynamics of performing cultural encounter in urban spaces and the constructions of imaginative geographies through performance techniques are an appropriate component of the discussion. As in the earlier travel journals, Meredith Monk's series ask how leisure travel (re)fashions identity formation when people travel outside their immediate surroundings. How do concepts of abroad and home intersect in the cultural imagination? How are metaphors of movement used to construct experiences of cultural contact?

The Travelogue Series, a trilogy composed of *Paris* (1973-1981), *Venice/Milan* (1975-1987), and *Chacon* (1974-1977), is a collaboration of work by Meredith Monk and Ping Chong from 1972 to 1987. Although different in range and scale, the three pieces in *The Travelogue Series* share common performance aesthetics. *The Travelogue Series* is exemplary in representing how Meredith Monk's performance aesthetics influenced Ping Chong's individual works. The key elements of Meredith Monk's performance aesthetics that I examine are: the poetic arrangement of aural and visual imagery, transfiguration and transmutation of quotidian movements, and distortion and reorganization of the space-time continuum.

In her article "The Art of Meredith Monk," Sally Banes writes that Meredith Monk's pieces "proceed by association and accretion, rather than by narrative," providing a description of how Meredith Monk's works advance by "poetic concatenations of images and variations."[169] Indeed, performances within *The Travelogue Series* work in a non-linear manner. In lieu of a

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[168]. Stuart Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity," In *Modernity and Its Futures*, eds. Stuart Hall, David Held and Anthony McGrew (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 274-316.

[169]. Sally Banes, "The Art of Meredith Monk," *Performing Arts Journal* 3, no. 1 (1978): 15.

linear narrative, Meredith Monk offers an assemblage of aural and visual imagery. The staging of travel through each city in the series is built equally on imagery and movement. Such loosely connected imagery and movement range in space and time are recognized as "one of the most striking contributions Meredith Monk has made to post-modern theatre is the radical reorganization of space."[170] An account of Banes's participation in *The Travelogue Series* provides a description of how Meredith Monk constructs and understands space as both the space of a culture (or site of cultural difference) and the space of choreography, anticipating how the spectator journeys from one scene to the next.[171] The distortion and reorganization of the space-time continuum complicates and contests the construction of linear narrative and historical temporality, and becomes a performance strategy for staging transnational identities. As Banes writes:

> the way [Meredith Monk] activates zones and niches not usually used for theatrical ends, sometimes not even noticed; the deliberate, rigorous contrasts and comparisons between flat and deep expanses, between enormous and tiny proportions. She generally initiates the audience before they enter the performing area. All these techniques for heightening the viewer's sense of place, space and scale serve several purposes. For one, they evoke a sense of pilgrimage. The activities in the works often hint at and sometimes even depict voyages and quests. On one level, these travels are actually explorations of a specific geographic entity, whether it is a theatrical representation of a place on stage—Paris or

[170]. Ibid., 12.

[171]. Sally Banes, "Meredith Monk and the Making of *Chacon*: Notes from a Journal," *Dance Chronicle: Studies in Dance and the Related Arts* 1 (1977): 48-62.

> Venice—or whether it is a "real" place—lower Manhattan or the Connecticut College campus—that is explored. On another level, they are also symbolic journeys, exploring inner space, or the landscape of a body; incarnating metaphors for spiritual, artistic, psychological, or even biological development. The audience, participating physically in these journeys by virtue of Meredith Monk's insistent critique of space, replicates that progress.[172]

Understanding Ping Chong's contribution to Meredith Monk's style may become evident in a study of the individual pieces in the series. In *Paris*, Meredith Monk and Ping Chong appear to be surrounded by an invisible crowd of buildings and people. When they stroll, hand-in-hand, humming softly in harmony, they look like a couple out for a Sunday walk, in their quaint outfits (Meredith Monk in boots, long skirt, jacket, cap, and mustache, and Ping Chong with his longish hair, full-sleeved shirt, and trousers). They limn the empty space with a recurrent, circular peregrination, their actions creating a landscape within the outline. A pianist intermittently plays simple, unraveling chords that dissolve into arpeggios. The couple sits in a formal, stiff portrait pose. They stand facing the back wall and weep. They stand, one at a time, at the margin of the audience and the performance zone. They dance together. Ping Chong suddenly turns into a scampering monkey and Meredith Monk abruptly skitters sideways across the room and falls, again and again. One moment they are possessed; the next, serene. In this particular piece, Meredith Monk and Ping Chong are imagined and represented as a couple on a journey. The formation of the couple and the iteration of normalized gender roles anchor the production in a representational "home" within the foreign site, also referring to the widely recognized notion of

[172]. Ibid., 13.

Paris as a place for lovers.

In *Venice/Milan*, six dancers represent gondoliers, rhythmically weaving their way onstage and continuing to do so for the duration of the performance. The constant, steady motion of the gondoliers at work seems to represent *tempus fugit* (time flies) as mysterious appearances and disappearances, characters, objects, and rituals unfold within the space. Tracing the stage in a diagonal, zigzag path, Meredith Monk and Ping Chong seem to represent outsiders as they observe the encounters between characters: a masked man, a woman turning cartwheels as she greets, and a man in a turban bearing gifts as he weaves another diagonal course through the space. The couple in *Venice/Milan* is not centered on the couple as it is in *Paris*. Rather, *Venice/Milan* seems to focus on representing the site as an intersection of cultures.

In *Chacon*, named after a town in New Mexico, the staging of rituals seems more distinct than those in *Venice/Milan*. Episodic scenes—on birth and death, farming and waiting for rain—expand and diminish the space. A chorus of musicians shaking beer cans filled with rice replaces the trio of silent musicians onstage during *Venice/Milan*. The countess of *Venice/Milan* becomes the artist in *Chacon* who paints a mural depicting the New Mexican landscape while actions unfold on stage; the exotic visitor becomes the sorceress. Contrary to *Paris* and *Venice/Milan*, in which Meredith Monk and Ping Chong take center stage, the key characters perform only at the end. *Chacon* is not set in a foreign country, but in the United States. Although its setting is localized to America, it seems to be linked with the other two pieces, allowing the audience and performers "to be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home."[173]

The three pieces of *The Travelogue Series* have several common features: Meredith

[173]. Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1995), 9.

Monk and Ping Chong play the role of travelers/visitors unfamiliar with the imagined settings. Each work is a dance to music pieces nearly absent of any verbal language, and the organization of space proceeds on a minimal stage setting with illustrative gesture and movement. Much of their physical performance on the stage consists of observing, strolling, and walking while the other performers play the parts of local communities. The performance style suggests both the turn to quotidian movement that began with the Judson Dance Theater and also the Baudelairean idea of the *flâneur*. The flânerie performed in *The Travelogue Series* represents the cultural trafficking of the 1970s and its rich associations: the connoisseur of the street, the idler, the man of leisure, and the urban explorer. Walter Benjamin, drawing on the poetry of Charles Baudelaire, made the *flâneur* the object of scholarly interest in the twentieth century, an emblematic figure of modern urban experience.[174] Drawing on his analysis of Baudelaire's writing, Benjamin describes the flâneur as the essential figure of the modern urban spectator. Chris Jenks spotlights the flâneur, and attempts, through a reflexive appraisal of his strengths and weaknesses, to resurrect the significance of the "urban spectator" as a way of apprehending the social:[175]

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[174]. In "The Painter of Modern Life," Charles Baudelaire writes:

> The crowd is his element, as the air is that of birds and water of fishes. His passion and his profession are to become one flesh with the crowd. For the perfect flâneur, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world—such are a few of the slightest pleasures of those independent, passionate, impartial natures which the tongue can but clumsily define. The spectator is a prince who everywhere rejoices in his incognito. The lover of life makes the whole world his family, just like the lover of the fair sex who builds up his family from all the beautiful women that he has ever found, or that are—or are not—to be found; or the lover of pictures who lives in a magical society of dreams painted on canvas. Thus the lover of universal life enters into the crowd as though it were an immense reservoir of electrical energy. Or we might liken him to a mirror as vast as the crowd itself; or to a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness, responding to each one of its movements and reproducing the multiplicity of life and the flickering grace of all the elements of life.

[175]. Chris Jenks, "Watching Your Step: The History and Practice of the Flâneur," *Visual Culture*, ed. Chris Jenks (New York: Routledge, 1995), 20.

> The *flâneur* is the metaphoric figure originally brought into being by Baudelaire, as the spectator and depicter of modern life, most specifically in relation to contemporary art and the sights of the city. The *flâneur* moves through space and among the people with a viscosity that both enables and privileges vision…However, the *flâneur* possesses a power, it walks at will, freely and seemingly without purpose, but simultaneously with an inquisitive wonder and an infinite capacity to absorb the activities of the collective—often formulated as 'the crowd.'…The *flâneur* is essentially a product of modernity, it provides one image of how that state of being in time can be realised or, at least, understood. It is also an attempt to 'see' modernity; a metaphor for method.[176]
>
> The *flâneur*, though grounded in everyday life, is an analytic form, a narrative device, an attitude towards knowledge and its social context. It is an image of movement through the social space of modernity…The *flâneur* is a multilayered palimpsest that enables us to 'move' from real products of modernity, like commodification and leisured patriarchy, through the practical organisation of space and its negotiation by inhabitants of a city.[177]

Using these descriptions, flânerie will serve as an explanatory device to trace changes in representation in the nineteenth century. *The Travelogue Series* may be considered as representative of the Baudelairean flâneur in that Meredith Monk and Ping Chong perform cultural encounters in sites that seem unfamiliar to them. This use of the historical model of the flâneur draws attention to the gendering of power and visuality in the configurations of modernity. Anne Friedberg proposes that we can find here the origins of the flâneuse, the female

[176]. Ibid., 146.

[177]. Ibid., 148.

counterpart to the male subject in modernity.[178] According to Friedberg, a new social figure—the flâneuse—appeared in public spaces made possible by the new configurations of consumer culture.[179] The Baudelairean observer was a (male) painter or a (male) poet—a flâneur—whose mobility through the urban landscape allowed him access to the public sphere of the streets and to the domestic realms of the home. He had a fluidity of social position, a mutable subjectivity.[180] As the gendered French noun designates, the flâneur was a male urban subject, endowed with a gaze at an elusive and almost unseen flâneuse.[181]

In contrast to the freedom of movement embodied in the flâneur, if women roamed the street they became "streetwalkers," prostitutes, carnal commodities on sale alongside other items in the arcade. Women were objects for consumption, objects for the gaze of the flâneur, or the poet who, like Baudelaire, would notice women as mere *passersby*.[182] The flâneuse was the nineteenth-century version of a female observer whose gaze was mobilized in these new public spaces of modernity. The female flâneur, the flâneuse, was not a possiblity until she was free to roam the city on her own. Accompanying and equating with this freedom was the privilege of shopping on her own. The development in the late nineteenth century of shopping as a socially acceptable leisure activity for bourgeois women, as a "pleasure rather than a necessity," encouraged women to be peripatetic without escort.[183] Although Meredith Monk and Ping Chong

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[178]. Anne Friedberg, "The Mobilized and Virtual Gaze in Modernity: Flâneur/ Flâneuse," *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 3.

[179]. Ibid., 11-12.

[180]. Ibid., 29.

[181]. Ibid., 33.

[182]. Ibid., 35.

[183]. Ibid., 36.

are equally represented in the pieces of *The Travelogue Series*, I am interested in examining how gender is veiled in Ping Chong's *Deshima* and *Chinoiserie*. In addition, I use *The Travelogue Series* as a device with which to examine how cultural encounter is represented in Ping Chong's works.

Performing Contact Zones in *Deshima* (1990)

As described above, Meredith Monk's works are apolitical. They do not seem to represent any political allegiances and/or alliances. A postmodern performance, *The Travelogue Series*, is apolitical. One might say that a certain strain of postmodern art represents a world of signifiers that delight in their "floating," capable of moving through allusions and associations, devoid of politics. In *Avant-garde Performance: Live Events and Electronic Technologies*, Günter Berghaus provides key characteristics of such apolitical postmodern art as self-conscious, ambiguity in meaning, quoting elements from different cultures and periods, mixing of high art and mass culture, incongruity of composition, use of pastiche and collage, crossing of genre boundaries, and mixing of media.[184]

Moving away from the apolitical, Ping Chong's own works are different from *The Travelogue Series*. They possess ethnic politics. On the cover of *The East-West Quartet*, Ping Chong defines himself as follows:

> As an artist, I'm an outsider in American society. As an experimental artist, I'm an outsider in the art world. As a person of color, I'm an outsider; as an immigrant, I'm an

[184]. Günter Berghaus, *Avant-garde Performance: Live Events and Electronic Technologies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 72.

> outsider; as a bisexual man, I'm an outsider. It's the position that fate has allotted me, but it's a valuable position to be in, because I think every society should have a mirror held to it by the outsider.[185]

In "Notes for 'Mumblings and Digressions: Some Thoughts on Being an Artist, Being an American, Being a Witness…,'" Ping Chong provides an explanation of how his ethnic politics, which stem from his personal experiences, are represented through his works.[186] Ping Chong's works—from his first piece, *Lazarus* (1972), to his recent piece *Undesirable Elements* (2013)—hold a common theme, which is the issue of "Culture and the Other." According to Ping Chong, such issue is personal, because, he "talk[s] about it from a very personal point of view" and "see[s] it in terms of [his] personal history."[187] Ping Chong writes as follows:

> I'm first-generation American, meaning I'm the first generation born here in my family. So that meant that I grew up speaking Chinese in New York's Chinatown, which at that time was a very different place than what it is now…I loved going out of Chinatown because I knew there was this bigger world out there and I wanted to see it, obviously.[188] It was going to high school that things started to change because that was when I really left the ghetto and I had to go to another world. Everything changed. My social signals were not functioning in that context because I was raised with certain kinds of Chinese

[185]. Ping Chong, *The East-West Quartet* (New York: Theatre Communications, 2004), cover.

[186]. Ping Chong, "Notes for 'Mumblings and Digressions: Some Thoughts on Being an Artist, Being an American, Being a Witness…,'" *MELUS* 16, no. 3 (1989-1990): 62-67.

[187]. Ibid., 62.

[188]. Ibid.

> values, which were dysfunctional in that situation. That was the beginning of trauma for me. From that point through college, through the first years of college rather, I was completely traumatized. Between that and becoming a young man, all those things, it couldn't have been a worse possible time to be working things out. So those first years in college and subsequent years even after I left college and had already become part of the experimental arts, the avant garde—I hate the word—the white, of the larger society, I was very, very uncomfortable. I just couldn't feel at home and obviously that's the basis of how I came to this theme of "Culture and the Other."[189]

Regardless of his affinity with the theme "Culture and the Other," Ping Chong's works represent no particular ethnicity and/or national identity; he is "not addressing a specifically Asian American audience," but "an American audience, whoever they might be."[190] In creating performance for such audiences, Ping Chong "decided to do *Deshima* with all Asians, so that the Asians play both the oppressor and the oppressed":[191]

> The main point that I want people to realize is, first, the complexity of the cultural issue of being American. Second, there is no easy solution, there's no black and white solution, which I think a lot of people want, on all sides. As is my role, I tend to take the point of view of the person not involved in the sense that I've always been cursed with looking and seeing two sides of things because I'm not just of one culture, I'm of two cultures of

[189]. Ibid., 63.

[190]. Ibid., 64-65.

[191]. Ibid., 66.

more. Cursed or blessed. I'm relatively comfortable with that now. I'm comfortable with the role of being an outsider in most contexts. I'm comfortable with that and that means that in a way I'm not an outsider anymore, I suppose.[192]

There is no question that the status quo must be more sensitive to the need for access and inclusion for those who have been excluded for so long, not only in terms of their culture, but all of ours as well. That is what America is or *should be*, an inclusive, participating society.[193]

Performances that hold themes of "Culture and the Other" can be traced to the early experiments of Artaud to Brecht. In the first half of the twentieth century, the East had provided abundant inspiration for Western intercultural theatre, either in theorization or in stylization.

Antonin Artaud first saw the Balinese dances at the Paris Colonial Exposition in early August 1931. Artaud, like Bertolt Brecht, needed an Eastern performance to represent something that could renew Occidental theatre. In *The Theater and its Double*, Artaud writes that the Balinese have "a vocabulary of gestures and mime for every circumstance of life, reinstate the superior worth of theatrical conventions, demonstrate the forcefulness and greater emotional value of a certain perfectly learned and above all masterfully applied conventions."[194] Artaud argues against the traditional Occidental forms of theater that fail to consider the body. However, in "1931: Antonin Artaud Sees Balinese Theatre at the Paris Colonial Exposition" Nicola Savarese argues that Artaud "wanted to use Balinese theatre as both example and confirmation of

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[192]. Ibid.

[193]. Ibid., 67.

[194]. Antonin Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958), 55.

something of which he had become convinced during that period: that the theatre must have its own language, a language that is not the same as the language of words but which is based on the actor's physicality."[195] Savarese explains that Artaud

> was in fact not interested in Balinese culture; he used the Balinese performance because its extraneousness to his own culture made it possible for him to delineate a difference. Artaud's vision distorted the meaning of a tradition and a culture of which he was essentially ignorant: the Balinese performances represented for Artaud something very different from what they actually were, but something nevertheless necessary to him.[196]

Thus, Artaud had developed a theory beforehand that he applied to Balinese performance later on, without having learned about Balinese dance.

Another example of an assimilation of the cultural "Other" in performance is Bertolt Brecht's theories of Chinese theater and the integration of its aesthetics in his works. In his essay, "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting," which has been celebrated by both Eastern and Western critics alike, Brecht provides his interpretation of Chinese theater and his idea of the Alienation-effect after his spectatorship of Mei Langfang's performance in 1935, which later influences his idea of the epic theater and the epic style of acting.[197] Interestingly, Min Tian examines Brecht's interpretation of Chinese theater in his article "'Alienation-Effect' for Whom? Brecht's

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[195]. Nicola Savarese, "1931: Antonin Artaud Sees Balinese Theatre at the Paris Colonial Exposition," *TDR: The Drama Review* 45, no. 3 (2001): 51.

[196]. Ibid., 71.

[197]. Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, trans. John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), 91-99.

(Mis)Interpretation of Classical Chinese Theater" and argues that Brecht was "already armed with a formulated theory and a synthesizing concept, and did not rest content with a description of what met his eye; he was eager to interpret what he saw in the interests of his own theory."[198] Thus, much as Brecht's theories on Chinese theater are preconceived misconceptions, they are applied to Brecht's idea of epic theater "used as a means to valorize and legitimize Brecht's own theoretical desires, investments, and projections."[199]

In contrast to Artaud and Brecht, Nam June Paik, a Korean-American artist considered to be the founder of video art, provides an example of turning around the assimilation of Eastern performance practices into Western ones through his works that combine live performance and various media, mostly visual, in the late twentieth century. For example, Paik's *TV Cello*, a performance piece in collaboration with cellist and performance artist Charlotte Moorman in the 1960s and 70s, combined live performance, music, and video. In the work, the three different-sized televisions are stacked on top of one another to recreate the shape of a cello. When Moorman draws her bow across the TV cello, images of her and other cellists playing appeared on the screens. Berghaus writes that the aim of such performances was "to question dominant production and reception practices in a media-saturated society."[200] A social critic, Paik seems to question television's screenic function as "a medium that instills a passive acceptance of dominant ideologies and societal structures."[201] Paik sets up alternative uses of modern electronic media so that people become aware of what they are watching.

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[198]. Min Tian, "'Alienation-Effect' for Whom? Brecht's (Mis)Interpretation of Classical Chinese Theater," *Asian Theatre Journal* 14, no. 2 (1997): 203-204.

[199]. Ibid., 218.

[200]. Berghaus, 203.

[201]. Ibid., 204.

Like Paik, visual media is integral in Ping Chong's works. What does the screen in Ping Chong's works mean? It is one big screen, seemingly unified. How is this unified screen different from the fragmented screens of Nam June Paik?

In *The Domain-Matrix: Performing Lesbian at the End of Print Culture*, Sue-Ellen Case addresses the cultural and historical significance of the "screenic" and the "screenness." In "Los Angeles: A Topography of Screenic Properties," Case traces the rise of the circulation of screens that constitute the habits and practices specific to the dawning cyberspace, through movies, TV, video, and other screens. Each chapter in her works concludes with analyses of specific cultural artifacts that illustrate the functions of performance on the one hand and screening on the other.[202] The aim of the story is to situate screening within urban studies, postmodern geographies, and the politics of space to more fully develop the topography of screens that produce cyberspace. While the coming space is "unmarked," it will undoubtedly inherit the racial, gender, and sexual markers of these screenic practices, but these discrete territories are becoming continuous with one another.[203] This narrative "illustrate[s] how, through a proliferation of screens, a screenic consciousness and space has developed in contrast to that of print and text and how each serves a specific capitalist structuring."[204] For Case's narrative, it is the ways that prerecorded visual media are situated in relation to performance, and vice versa, that I examine in Ping Chong's works.

Conceived, directed, and choreographed by Ping Chong, *Deshima* was originally produced by the Mickery Workshop Theatre in Holland. *Deshima* was conceived as a "poetic

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[202]. Sue-Ellen Case, *The Domain-Matrix: Performing Lesbian at the End of Print Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 6.

[203]. Ibid., 189.

[204]. Ibid., 190.

documentary" in which every element is referenced to a historical event in the complicated and often brutal history of contact and competition between Japan and the West. Inspired by events in the shared histories of the East and the West, and built on both documentary and original materials, *Deshima* weaves its story as a multidisciplinary poem composed of layers of choreography, image, music, and text. Ping Chong describes how he came to the composition of the piece—the events that encouraged it:

> I was invited to Holland in 1990 to make a show about Van Gogh for the centennial of his death…At that time, there was a great deal of Japan-bashing going on in America. And as I was reading about Van Gogh, I was struck by the fact that he was born the same year that Commodore Perry of the United States Navy went to Japan and sort of forced Japan's doors back open…1990 was also the year that Van Gogh's painting Sunflowers was sold to the Japanese for US $70 million. Van Gogh was very much influenced by Japanese woodcut prints, so I found that rather intriguing as well. I felt that this was an opportunity to talk about the historical relationships of Asia and the West. So I went back to my sponsor in Holland and said, "Can I do a show about Asia and the West, with Van Gogh as the landmark we keep referring back to?"[205]

In *Deshima*, the character of the Van Gogh's fascination with Japanese culture seems to refer to Japonaiserie. However, Ping Chong seems to go further beyond representing the West's romanticized idea of the East. By staging Van Gogh himself selling postcards of his own work, Ping Chong alludes to the idea of an artist being a corporation, selling himself. Moving beyond

[205]. Julia Szabo, "History Lessons," *Vogue* 1996.

the economic and political trade portrayed in *Deshima*, the performance itself can be seen as an aesthetic trade: *Deshima* was not funded by U.S. sponsors, but was commissioned by the Mickery Workshop Theatre in Holland.

The play takes its name from an artificial island built off Nagasaki in the 1600s to quarantine European traders and prevent them from contaminating Japan with Western ideas. For two hundred years, Dutch merchants lived on the island of Deshima until Commodore Perry's expedition opened Japan by force in 1853. Thus, this artificial island serves as a metaphor for the ongoing process of simultaneous accommodation and resistance in relations between Japan and the West.

Deshima is structured as a series of intersecting of historical events. Cultures collide, histories and eras are juxtaposed, and aesthetics clash to create a prismatic sense of history, time, and implications. It cuts back and forth in time, and blends first-person accounts, archival photos, and recordings with overlapping aural, visual, and choreographic invention. The experiences of the early Jesuits in Japan, the negotiations of a Dutch trader with the Daimyo, the World War II internments of the Japanese in America, the Japanese domination of Indonesia, and the trade wars of the 1980s are just some of the histories explored. Linking it all is the narrator and the character of Vincent van Gogh, the Western artist with a passion for Japan, born the year Admiral Perry arrived in Japan. His paintings which failed to sell in his lifetime are now seen as part of the cultural patrimony of Europe; their sales trigger for alarm when bought for record sums by wealthy Japanese businessmen.

Deshima represents historical periods of East-West relations that allude to globalization. How does the representation of history help one imagine global, national and transnational space? Benedict Anderson argues that the production and dissemination of history in the early

nineteenth century helped emerging national communities imagine a shared past.[206] Édouard Glissant has called for scholarship that would rearticulate such imagined pasts into networks of "relation," arguing that one should view the stories communities tell about themselves as navigational tools for the networks of power that help these communities position themselves in relation to other cultures.[207] How do shifting ideas about the historical past in performance map such global and transnational relations of power?

Ping Chong's categorization of *Deshima* as a "poetic documentary" enables one to discuss how the poetic arrangement of aural and visual imagery can be read as a "choreography" or reconstruction of history. The visual projection of historical information is especially striking because it presents the theoretical standpoints of Hayden White's idea of "history as narrative"—the mediated representation of the spatial and temporal jumps is not projected according to a linear history and/or narrative. In *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Hayden White defines historiography as "a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse that purports to be a model, or icon, of past structures and processes in the interest of explaining what they were by representing them."[208] Although I focus on performance and not writing, per se, White's relation of form to history may be applied to the dynamics of staging histories. The representation of national and political paradigms addressed by *Deshima* signifies discontinuities of history and reveals the complex layers of competing imperial visions while attempting to deconstruct narratives of nation-building within the local

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[206]. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006).

[207]. Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

[208]. Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 2.

audience.

This historiography emphasizes the relevance of a dynamic, interactive approach, in which colonialism, modernity, and nationalism are treated as three enmeshed and mutually influencing ideas. In *Colonial Modernity in Korea*, Gi-wook Shin and Michael Robinson plead for inclusive pluralist approaches to colonial history in what they term an "ecological handling of historical traces [reclaiming] the land with a mind to restoring some of the density, richness, and complexity of the original ecosystem."[209] Until recently, most English-language general histories of Korea treated Japanese colonial rule as a rupture or distortion of the "natural development" of the Korean nation, creating a blank space in the national narrative at a time when Korean history did not belong to the Koreans. The colonial period was written as "victims' history"—a narrative of exploitation, oppression, and suffering. The only Koreans given any agency were those who resisted Japanese authoritarianism, cultural aggression, and economic exploitation. It was almost as if the only way to rescue the colonial period from oblivion was to construct a heroic story of patriotic struggle.

Shin and Robinson demonstrate how to write a history of colonial Korea that is neither a simple celebration of anti-Japanese resistance nor an apologia for Japanese rule. Their goal is to move beyond nationalist interpretations and their dichotomies of Asia and the West, Japan and Korea, rich but tainted collaborators versus pure, impoverished masses. Their work opens with an ambitious agenda to reorient historiography on colonial Korea to new developments in the study of colonialism, modernity, and nationalism that emphasize dynamism, interactions, and multiple causalities rather than a single correct interpretation. Although Shin and Robinson's

[209]. Gi-wook Shin and Michael Robinson, *Colonial Modernity in Korea*, eds. Gi-wook Shin and Michael Robinson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 5.

primary focus is on Korean colonial modernity, their interactive approach to colonial history that provides a frame or historical field for looking at the interplay of colonialism, modernity, and nationalism is particularly useful for me in examining histories of East-West relations in *Deshima*.

Deshima opens with a projection of an image of the ground plan of the Dutch trade-post on the island of Deshima at Nagasaki bay. It is an imagined bird's-eye view of Deshima's layout and structures copied from a woodblock print created by Toshimaya Bunjiemon in 1780. Below the image is the word DESHIMA in black block letters; above the image are black Japanese characters for Deshima ("protruding island"). Although the image is not an official map of Deshima but an artistic rendering of the layout and structures of the island, it can be examined in the light of Benedict Anderson and Michel Foucault's idea of the map as an example of the materiality of power and/or knowledge. In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Anderson argues that the map plays a role in determining the boundaries of sovereign authority and defining the spatial regions of the political entities. The physical construct of the map serves as an example of the materiality of power and/or knowledge. At the same time, national projects such as mapping are imbued with techniques of discipline and normalization, or what could be called embodied knowledge. This map is also an image of the spatialization of power—of space. For this reason, Michel Foucault's genealogical approach to power, knowledge, and the body has been described as a "materialism of the body."[210] The production of knowledge is closely related to the geography of colonial conquest, for instance, mapping and other forms of land surveys, established the cartographic basis for the imposition and further accumulation of capital in much of Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Australia. Ping

[210]. Thomas Lemke, "Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique," *Rethinking* Marxism 14 (2002): 49-64.

Chong continues to use images of maps throughout the performance (as in Scene 4 ["Javanese Court Dance"] in which a large map of Indonesia is projected on the wall), which seem to represent colonial and imperial ambitions of both the East and the West.

During the projection on the history of the first Dutch trading ships sailing to Japan in 1598, the sound of a quiet stream can be heard. Lights fade up to reveal a woman in a Japanese tub, bathing and singing to herself. Her back is to the audience and a red light shines in a semicircle upon her, resembling a sunrise or sunset scene. It also resembles half of the national flag of Japan—a white rectangle with a large red disk in the center. The large red disk represents the sun, and the flag is officially called *Nisshōki* ("sun-mark flag") in Japanese, but is more commonly known as *Hinomaru* ("circle of the sun"). This semicircle expands into a large red disk in Scene 7 ("Dutch Surrender"), representing Japaneseness.

Such use of aural and visual imagery features prominently in Ping Chong's performances aesthetics. The audio, projection, and visual effects play a large part in expressing his politics. Ping Chong's idea of *Deshima* as a poetic documentary described in the "Playwright's Notes" strikingly mirrors Meredith Monk's performance aesthetics:

> A "documentary" because each element in the production—the text, choreography, gesture, sound and visual design—is inspired by an incident in the complicated history between Japan and the West. "Poetic" because the form is associative not narrative.[211]

There are several moments in *Deshima* in which the aural and visual imagery are arranged poetically. Although they refer to historical events, these images neither construct a

[211]. Chong, 7.

linear narrative nor are they tied to unities of space and time. The projected images and narratives (which vary from singular to multiple images and/or paragraphs) are poetic in the sense that—although not fully explaining what they are and/or signify—they may hold different implications. The Ping Chong Archive at the Billy Rose Theatre Division of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts houses numerous production notes of historical materials relating to East-West relations, allowing one to say that Ping Chong had sufficient information on the histories of East-West relations. However, Ping Chong chooses to reveal neither specific historical information nor his opinions on it. Rather, the images and narratives are staged so that they are open to interpretation. The projections, stage brief, and concise factual information are absent of any analysis or argument. They become a culturally open space that does not aim to represent any particular kind of ideology. They are nonideological. Given the subject matter, it would be easy to slip into the polemic—pointing fingers and screaming, "Oppressor." Instead, Ping Chong refuses to choose sides, continually showing that colonialism takes many forms. Domination, he says, like money, is colorblind and knows no geographic borders (Luce 1996).[212]

Projections are integral in both *Deshima* and *Chinoiserie* "because they [supplement] whatever they show…The disadvantage of theatre compared to film is that it's really hard to have an opportunity to see it more than once."[213] Throughout *Deshima,* intersections of cultures and histories are accompanied by data, facts, iconography, and vivid images projected onto the screens that form the backdrop, thus stressing the loosely connected scenes. During the scene of the roll call welcoming newly baptized Japanese into the Catholic Church, there are black-and-white portraits of Japanese Americans from the 1940s projected on the backdrop. The second roll

[212]. Mark Luce, "Deshima Performing Inspiring," *Lawrence & State,* 1996.

[213]. Chong, xxvii.

call is juxtaposed with a projection of the Japanese deployment of soldiers and weapons in Southeast Asia. These are some of the many moments in which the images speak as lucidly as Ping Chong's words. During a workshop at the Inner City Arts, Ping Chong commented on the use of aural and visual imagery: "You need to be conscious of what is visualized in performance. You need to make conscious choices." Ping Chong recognizes the staging of media to be done not by improvisation but with deliberation. Thus, the poetic arrangement of aural and visual imagery is carefully planned and functions as cultural intermediaries through the "conscious choice" in staging.

The woman in the tub hears something strange and looks for the source of the sound. Alarmed, she calls out frantically, but remains within the circumference of the tub. Her somewhat restrained activity seems to allude to non-interventionism. Most non-interventionists are supporters of free trade, travel, and support certain international agreements; they differ from isolationists, as seen in Japanese history. From 1641 to 1853, the Tokugawa shogunate of Japan enforced a policy called *kaikin*. The policy prohibited foreign contact with most outside countries, but the commonly held notion that Japan was entirely closed is misleading. In fact, Japan maintained diplomatic relations and limited-scale trade with China, Korea, and the Netherlands. Reference to such history is staged in *Deshima*.

Thus, in *Deshima*, Ping Chong sets up a performance of contact zones between the East and the West. Originated in approximately in 1626, the word *contact* is derived from the noun contactus (contact-"touched, grasped, bordered on"). The noun has several definitions: (1) the state of physical touching, caused by or operating through physical touch; (2) the action of communicating or meeting; a meeting, communication, or relationship with someone; a person who may be approached for information or assistance, especially with regard to one's job; a

person who has associated with a patient with a contagious disease (and so may carry the infection); and (3) a connection for the passage of an electric current from one thing to another, or a part or device by which such a connection is made.[214] Originated in 1834, the verb contingere (con- "together with" + tangere "to touch") is defined as (1) to communicate with (someone), typically to give or receive information; and (2) to touch.[215] In *Deshima*, the second definition of the noun seems central in the performance—for example, instances of the meeting between the *Daimyo* and the Dutch trader negotiating economic trade, and Japanese arts trafficking in Europe.

In *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Mary Louise Pratt introduces her idea of "contact zones"—areas that allow the intermingling of two or more cultures. She defines contact zones as "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination-like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today."[216] In staging such contact zones, *Deshima* does not represent any kind of particular ethnicity and/or national identity. Rather, in *Deshima*, Ping Chong aims to present different ways of looking at the histories of East-West relations. For example, in Scene 4 ("Javanese Court Dance"), while Ping Chong seems to have chosen Sony's Walkman as a motif to represent Japanese cultural technologies and a certain idea of "Japaneseness," Sony's Walkman actually strove to be "culturally odorless"—to be absent of a Japanese cultural presence. In *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism*, Koichi Iwabuchi suggests that the major audiovisual products Japan exports—

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[214]. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/40021

[215]. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/40022

[216]. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), 4.

consumer technologies (such as VCRs and the Walkman), comics and cartoons (animation), and computer/video games—be characterized as "culturally odorless." Iwabuchi proposes the term *cultural odor* "to focus on the way in which cultural features of a country of origin and images or ideas of its national, in most cases stereotyped, way of life are associated positively with a particular product in the consumption process."[217] Although such images are often exotic fictional constructions, Iwabuchi is interested in examining "the moment when the image of the contemporary lifestyle of the country of origin is strongly and affirmatively called to mind as the very appeal of the product, when the "cultural odor" of cultural commodities is evolved."[218] Such cultural odor is linked to the widely disseminated symbolic images of the country of origin. According to Iwabuchi, these commodities are "cultural artifacts in which a country's bodily, racial, and ethnic characteristics are erased or softened," thus, do not feature "Japanese bodily odor" although one may be aware of the Japanese origin of these commodities.[219] Although Sony's Walkman "may signify Japaneseness because of its miniaturization, technical sophistication, and high quality…[t]he use of the Walkman does not evoke images or ideas of a Japanese lifestyle" and therefore lack any influential idea of Japan.[220] Such "culturally odorless" qualities may have been a successful marketing strategy in exporting such commodities. In relation to Iwabuchi's argument, *Deshima* enables the staging of a nonideological perspective because it does not represent particular ethnicity and/or national identity.

Contrary to performances that stage national identificatory strategies with which the

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[217]. Koichi Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 27.

[218]. Ibid., 27.

[219]. Ibid., 28.

[220]. Ibid.

viewer can identify, *Deshima*'s performance strategies project cultural translation that deconstructs the notion of a collective identity. Unlike performances that assume an ethnic-identified position for the audience while being screened, *Deshima*'s staging deliberately complicates the space-time continuum and poses questions without providing answers throughout the performance. Such performance strategies dissuade the viewer from adopting to a particular position. Thus, the deconstruction of a collective consciousness becomes possible because the performance aesthetics make the process of suture difficult. Such carefully planned and deliberate performance strategies seem to show what Ping Chong endeavored to do in his works, as he says:

> First disorientate your audience. Then unfold before them the fabric of very different cultures—a history of East and West, of exploration and economics, of misunderstanding and racism. The technique gives the audience a kind of objectivity through distance. Some of the facts are familiar but, placed in a different context and seen from a new perspective, the truths are transformed. "Here lies a black man, killed by a yellow man, defending the white man." Who is denying the humanity of whom?[221]

As it becomes difficult to address the connections between the viewer and the fictional character with which that viewer identifies, *Deshima*'s performance strategies deconstruct collective consciousness. From discussion of the staging of histories in *Deshima*, I move to examine how *Chinoiserie* represents Ping Chong's politics through visual projection.

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[221]. Mary Lockhart, "Deshima," *The Glasgow Herald*, 1990.

Not Just Performing Another Yellowface in *Chinoiserie* (1995)

In a context similar to *Deshima*'s performance strategies, *Chinoiserie* stages histories of East-West relations and the racialization of Chinese settlers in America long ago and today. While looking at the contact zones between the East and the West, *Chinoserie* represents an Americanized viewpoint of the affect of such settings. In the introduction to *Chinoiserie* in *The East-West Quartet*, the viewer is witness to how "[t]he West's fascination with China…[t]urns the Chinese into the exotic, the mysterious 'other'…the ironic reversals of power and tradition that reveal underlying ethnic and racial prejudices which continue to affect interpersonal and international relations today."[222]

Several signifiers of "Chineseness" are present throughout the performance and they come from an Americanized viewpoint: *Chinoiserie* opens with an anecdote of Ping Chong's experience at a Chinese restaurant in Pittsburgh, discussing Chinese customs. The interior design and the table setting of the restaurant that he describes seem to stand for "Chineseness," at least in the U.S. socio-cultural context. *Chinoiserie* takes its design inspiration from the Cantonese Opera. The playing area is traditionally defined by a large carpet. The set features a large projection screen framed by windows based on traditional Chinese motifs. The movement is based on the gestures of the Chinese Opera, T'ai Chi, and/or other martial arts. For Ping Chong, dance signifies "cultural identity."[223] As Ping Chong remarks, "Just as the body itself, as a cultural statement of identity, the body itself and the phenomenon of each culture's dance forms."[224] This cultural expression is explicitly seen in *Chinoiserie* because the dance aspect of

[222]. Chong, 64-65.

[223]. Chong, xxii.

[224]. Ibid.

the performance is a combination of Chinese opera and martial arts. “Martial arts as a physical metaphor for the physical violence that is at the core of the experience of China and the West, whether it was about the Opium Wars or the Chinese American pioneers,” Ping Chong explains.[225] Bryon Lars’s costumes seem to be contemporary, except at the end, when Lord McCartney and Emperor Qianlong reappear—only those costumes represent a historical period. Several Chinese lines are heard throughout the performance during which Chinese history and China’s perspective of the West are discussed. Chinese customs, such as kowtowing, are occasionally staged.

Chineseness in these performances is an Americanized viewpoint of what Chineseness is. Although some information may be misleading, it supports in representing such Chineseness as the “Other.” This is precisely what *Chinoiserie* aims to do: representing the “Other” and its histories. Ping Chong’s interest in, as he says, “Culture and the Other,” has its roots in his childhood in New York City’s Chinatown.[226] Although Ping Chong uses performance as a way of representing the “Other” through histories, performance also becomes his tool for thinking about his own identity—ethnicity, sexuality, and so on. *Chinoiserie* is Ping Chong’s first work that “includes material based on the author’s childhood in New York’s Chinatown and his experiences.”[227] Four scenes stage Ping Chong’s recollection of experiencing racism—both as perpetrator and as victim. By producing a self-identified performance, Ping Chong’s own perspective is added into the politics represented in his works. When questioned about the decision to put himself in *Chinoiserie*, Ping Chong answered that he “wanted to be a witness, as

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[225]. Chong, xxvii.

[226]. Julia Szabo, “History Lessons,” *Vogue* 1996.

[227]. Chong 64.

an American, to racism in America."[228]

Conceived and directed by Ping Chong, *Chinoiserie* premiered at the Lied Center for Performing Arts in Lincoln, Nebraska, on September 22, 1995. *Chinoiserie* is organized along a historic arc beginning with the first encounter in 1793 between Qianlong, the Celestial Emperor of China, and Lord George Macartney, the trade emissary from King George III of England. *Chinoiserie* is a collage assembled from the detritus of East-West relations, including the events leading up to the Opium War, the European obsession with tea, the history of Chinese settlers in America, the murder of Vincent Chin in Detroit in 1982, and the continuing trade disputes between China and America.

The title of the work is meant to be ironic. In the eighteenth century, the term *chinoiserie* referred to an elaborate and popular style of decorative art that reflected (or was perceived to reflect) Chinese aesthetics. Thus, with the willing assistance of Chinese merchants, the European aristocracy, hungry for new diversions, transformed Eastern culture into Western fashion. Eventually, the word came to mean "Chinese export goods": things neither truly Eastern nor Western but the curious by-product of the two. The West's fascination with China, however, masks an equally powerful countertrend—turning the Chinese into the exotic, the mysterious "Other." This particular perspective reached its zenith in nineteenth-century America with the exploitation of and the racism directed toward, Chinese immigrants, who were relegated to Chinatowns in urban centers, many of which persist to this day. Chinoiserie came to signify commodity fetishism that effaces Chinese labor. Such erasure is most effectively represented in the performance's projection of the railroad. The erasure of the Chinese bodies can be examined in light of Josephine Lee's argument of commodity racism in *Gilbert & Sullivan's Mikado*.

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[228]. Ibid., xxiv.

In *The Japan of Pure Invention: Gilbert & Sullivan's The Mikado*, Lee aimed to portray Gilbert and Sullivan's *Mikado* as a racist performance that "demonstrates a long history of racial sedimentation" and produces "a wholly spectacular Japan that has no obligation to represent Japan except through its playful display of objects."[229] According to Lee, Gilbert and Sullivan's mimicry of Japan is nothing more than "commodity racism"—a fetishism of objects that does not strive to find real people underneath the clothing and make-up they wear. Lee claims that *The Mikado*'s playing Japanese through objects shows how commodity fetishism erases the Japanese labor that makes these objects and the Japanese people who the objects might represent. Thus, *The Mikado*'s style of playing Japanese through the object models itself as how commodity fetishism erases human relations in favor of objects.[230] This erasure is doubled: in the absence of the Japanese labor that makes these objects and in the Japanese people who the objects might represent. Banishing any real Japanese means that neither the reminder of work nor the grossness of actual bodies intrudes into this new intimacy with things. *The Mikado*, then, allows a particular desire—not just for the possession but for inhabitation—to realize itself on a broad scale. What might easily step into the places of these absent Japanese are the White performers in yellowface, who are imagined as both the possessors of objects and as inhabitants of the fantasy world they represent.[231]

Chinoiserie's erasure of labor points to Asian American visuality—how Asian Americans are marked by their failure/inability to assimilate in the United States due to facial and/or racial

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[229]. Josephine Lee, *The Japan of Pure Invention: Gilbert & Sullivan's The Mikado* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 7.

[230]. Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume 1: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin, 1976).

[231]. Lee, 38.

authenticity. According to Sontag, photographs furnish evidence.[232] A photograph passes for incontrovertible proof that a given thing happened. The picture may distort; but there is always a presumption that something exists, or did exist, which is or was like what is shown in the picture. Whatever the limitations (through amateurism) or pretensions (through artistry) of the individual photographer, a photograph—any photograph—seems to have a more innocent, and therefore more accurate, relation to visible reality than do other mimetic objects.[233] In *Forever Foreigners or Honorary Whites?: The Asian Ethnic Experience Today*, Mittelberg and Waters (1992) state, "[R]ace has been used by theorists to refer to distinctions drawn from physical appearance."[234] Mia Tuan believes this distinction is an important one to make when examining the situation of Asian ethnics who may find themselves being defined in generically racial terms as Asian-Americans.[235] The Asians' ethnic physical features do not conform to commonly accepted notions of what a "real" American looks like.

In Scene 38, the projection of the commemorative photograph of the meeting of the Central Pacific and Union Pacific railroads at Promontory Point in Utah on 10 May 1869 addresses the issue of representation and visibility and/or visuality. The absence of Chinese workers in the photograph signifies the erasure of their bodies, labor, and representation. The erasure of the Chinese workers and how that erasure is represented—or rather, how it is unrepresented—raises the issue of visibility and/or visuality as represented in *Deshima*. Interestingly, in this scene, Ping Chong undoes such erasure by inserting the bodies of the

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[232]. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Picador, 1977).

[233]. Sontag, 5-6.

[234]. Mia Tuan, *Forever Foreigners or Honorary Whites?: The Asian Ethnic Experience Today* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press), 1998.

[235]. Tuan, 21.

Chinese workers in the photograph:

> PROJECTION: Famous photo of the joining of the first transcontinental railroad tracks, from east and west, Promontory Point, Utah, 1869[236]
>
> *The photo is black and white. There are no Chinese people in it at all. Gradually, the picture changes as a few Chinese workers are digitally added in color. Then more and more and more are added.*[237]

The projection, which is the "Joining of the Rails at Promontory Point," photograph by Andrew J. Russell, 10 May 1869 (Gilder Lehrman Collection), records the celebration marking the completion of the first transcontinental railroad lines at Promontory Summit, Utah. This joining of the rails was the culmination of work commenced in 1863, when the Central Pacific began laying track eastward from Sacramento, California, and the Union Pacific started laying track westward from Omaha, Nebraska, in July 1865. To meet its manpower needs, the Central Pacific hired 15,000 laborers, of whom more than 13,000 were Chinese immigrants. These immigrants were paid less than their White counterparts and, unlike Whites, had to provide their own lodging. In viewing the projection, one can see that in midst of numerous workers, Central Pacific Railroad (CPRR) Chief Engineer Samuel S. Montague (left) shakes hands with Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) Chief Engineer Grenville M. Dodge (right). The Chinese workers that are excluded from the photograph slowly appear in color.

In contrast to Sontag's idea of the photograph as documentation of proof, the photograph

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[236]. Chong, 119.

[237]. Chong, 120.

is a visual representation of what *Chinoiserie* attempts to address. In giving a tangibility to the labor of Chinese workers, representing it physically in the photograph, *Chinoiserie* makes available a version of history that characterizes it as changeable, transmutable, and able to be reworked by a subject (in this case, by Ping Chong). Ping Chong modifies the photograph, adding to it, refiguring its performative characteristics. The affective relationship formed by *Chinoiserie* in context with the photograph would suggest that the relationship with representation and visibility is a complex one. The act of the transformation of the photograph is fleeting. The performance constructs the physicality of the bodies of the Chinese workers that is not void of meaning. The photograph becomes a place in which the bodies exist significantly; it becomes a spatial marker of representation. What significantly links the Chinese workers' bodies and the photograph's transformation is the photograph's physical qualities, or rather, its negative physical space. The photograph becomes liminal, linking absence and presence, lack and fullness. Ping Chong's deployment of the projection of the photograph as a performative device in *Chinoiserie* implicates the issue of representation and visibility and/or visuality with concerns of performance. Considering the absence and addition of the Chinese workers and the fleeting performance of the photograph jointly, I argue that the photograph's spatially liminal abode demonstrates the performative qualities of representation and visibility and/or visuality. Furthermore, I contend that *Chinoiserie*'s articulation of the performativity of photography and visual projection avails itself to the erasure and insertion of the Chinese workers. *Chinoiserie* seems to pose the question, "How does one make certain subjects visible in a system of representation that does not include them?"

In *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America*, David L. Eng writes that photography's "reality effect"—its status as transparent historical record and "truth"—is

insistently challenged.[238] In the original photograph, the Chinese laborers lack official documentation—a history of visible images—a lack that threatens to consign their existence to oblivion.[239] The photograph functions, then, not just as a questionable historical image but as an ideological apparatus that attests to the ways in which contradictions among the cultural, economic, and political spheres are reconciled through the visual management and racialization of the Chinese workers.[240]

In discussing the underrepresented Chinese workers, gender is veiled in portraying Asian Americanness. Lily Chin, Vincent Chin's mother, is described as a woman who "long day all cook" and who is going to cook "duck roast of pound quarter" for her family. In her monologue, she sings that "[m]others cook / for little boys / mothers cook / for fat-faced little boys / all day—always. All day—always." Through the portrayal of Lily Chin, the play seems to portray Chinese women who remain in domestic roles. It is a stark contrast from the portrayal of Lily Chin in the documentary *Who Killed Vincent Chin?* (1988)[241] The documentary, which focuses on the Vincent Chin case, shows the Chin family's immigration to the United States, and Vincent Chin's murder and its aftermaths. Several lines of Lily Chin in *Chinoiserie* were adapted from Lily Chin's interviews in the documentary. In one particular scene, Lily Chin says:

> My father warned me, "Life in America is going to be hard. But you're marrying a Chinese-American so you have to go with him." My husband served with the U. S. Army

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[238]. David L. Eng, *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America* (Durham: Duke University Press), 36.

[239]. Ibid., 37.

[240]. Ibid., 66.

[241]. *Who killed Vincent Chin?* directed by Christine Choy and Renee Tajima (1988; Detroit: Film News Now Foundation and WTVS), VHS.

> in China. That was World War II. Then he brought me here. I got off the boat during the first month of the lunar calendar of 1948. We lived and worked in a basement laundry…When I first came here, I didn't know much of anything. So my husband liked to take me to new places. We went to see a baseball game.[242] But when people saw Chinese sitting there, they kicked us and cursed at us. I never went back.

Lily Chin in the documentary introduces how she came to the United States and the racism she encountered. This portrayal is different from the characterization of Lily Chin in *Chinoiserie*. Ping Chong reduced Lily Chin's character as a Chinese American woman that grieves for her son without providing any information about how or why she came to the United States.

Judith Butler's idea of subject-formation is useful in reading certain scenes in *Chinoiserie* that reinforce normative gender codes. For Butler, performativity depends on accumulation and dissimulating historicity of force because it "implies that discourse has a history that not only precedes but conditions its contemporary usages."[243] Thus, the success of the performative is dependent upon the action that echoes a prior action, and accumulates the force of authority through the repetition or citations by which it is mobilized. In such a case, Butler argues that "the practice by which gendering occurs, the embodying of norms, is a compulsory practice, a forcible production, but not for that reason fully determining."[244] In other words, the subject is

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[242]. Throughout *Chinoiserie*, for example, Ping Chong makes reference to America's favorite pastime, baseball. At several points, this national mythology is evoked audially though a familiar crack of a bat hitting a ball. A rousing duet of "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" is sung in English and Chinese, giving a new multicultural twist to this American anthem. Only after all these sounds and motifs have accumulated does Ping Chong reveal that Vincent Chin was beaten to death with a baseball bat. With this devastating revelation, Ping Chong gives a stinging critique of racism and its tragic consequences.

[243]. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 227.

[244]. Ibid., 231.

produced by the effect of repetition, the norms that create an effect of gender uniformity, a stable effect of masculinity and femininity, and produce and destabilize the subject because the subject comes into intelligibility only through the matrix of gender. In that case, femininity "is not the product of a choice, but the forcible citation of a norm."[245] Butler asserts that such "citation of the gender norm is to qualify as 'one,'" to become viable as a 'one,' where subject-formation is dependent on the prior operation of legitimating gender norms."[246] Moreover, in *Undoing Gender*, Butler posits that

> if gender is a kind of doing, an incessant activity performed, in part, without one's knowing and without one's willing, it is not for that reason automatic or mechanical. On the contrary, it is a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint. Moreover, one does not "do" one's gender alone. One is always "doing" with or for another, even if the other is only imaginary.[247]

Understanding gender as a social construct and recognizing codes of masculinity and femininity of the Chinese patriarchal society may impose the ways in which gendered national identity is performed in *Chinoiserie*.

A discussion of Lily Chin's grief can help to understand the ways in which gender, race, and class are intertwined within the social and political spheres. In *The Melancholy of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation, and Hidden Grief*, Cheng examines ''racial melancholia'' through

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[245]. Ibid., 232.

[246]. Ibid.

[247]. Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 1.

the psychoanalytic terms that describe the dynamics of race and the politics that arise from those dynamics.[248] Cheng provides vocabulary for understanding the invisible aspects of race, which tend to be ignored by the conventional politics of claiming grievances against racial injustice, and retheorizes the psychological terms through which the racialized body is both experienced and represented. A distinction in between "grief" and "grievance," as well as between the contemporary American willingness to address racism and racial oppression through legal and political means and the unwillingness to acknowledge the psychical, interior experience of being a denigrated person in a racist society. For Cheng, grievance is the language of material and social recompense and has become the most visible and often controversial means by which people of color seek an acknowledged place in society. Grief, on the other hand, serves as the basis for the "social and subjective formations of the so-called racialized or minority subject," but it has usually remained "inchoate because it is not fully reconcilable to the vocabulary of social formulation or ideology."[249] Cheng's idea of racial grief is based on Freud's concept of melancholy as outlined in "Mourning and Melancholia." Melancholia is an identification with and internalization of loss, and addresses a sense of self for a racialized person that can be characterized by a "convoluted, ongoing, generative, and at times self-contradicting negotiation with pain."[250] This pain, or "racial melancholia," is neither incidental nor peripheral to the sense of self; it is constitutive of the raced subject's sense of self. It is not limited to racialized minorities but is felt by all people in this country, both White and non-White, because it is the foundation of the structure upon which the United States' social relations have been built. Thus,

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[248]. Anne Anlin Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation, and Hidden Grief* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[249]. Cheng, x.

[250]. Cheng, 15.

racial melancholia has been a basis not only for racialization in this country, but also for socialization and sense of self.

Problematically, Cheng's normative liberal assumption in conceptualizing "agency" is insufficient in addressing different forms of racial grief. The Euro-American feminist framework that Cheng applies in examining agency (in terms of resignification or subversion of social norms, and to locate agency within those operations that resist the dominating and subjectivating modes of dominant culture) is limited in discussing the different forms of agency, thus, leaving out the voices of different minoritarian bodies. That said, Cheng's complex approach to racial identification provides a framework from which to discuss the various negotiations of identity discussed in terms of the works composing my case studies.

In representing such histories and stories, Ping Chong does not point fingers at a particular ethnicity. He does not take the side of either the East or the West. The histories that unfold are inconsistent in portraying who the victim and villain are. By continually turning the tables, Ping Chong seems to address to how history is an ongoing topia of unequal encounters. Each historical period offers its own cultural representations. These historical palimpsests link the past, present, and future. In both *Deshima* and *Chinoiserie*, the interplay between the histories of East-West relations enacted by the performers and the histories of the racialized bodies create a ghosting of histories. Although the scenes are imagined, they deal with historical events:

> Ping Chong: In *Chinoiserie* we are dealing with historical events, but we're also making up things; not making up the essence, but making up the scenes, because we weren't there! You know what I mean? Like the British envoy meeting with the Chinese minister, and

what they talk about. I mean, we have no idea what they talked about, and not to mention the difficulty of how do you do a scene like that for a culture that is so remote to them? All of those things were things we had to consider.

Anna Ciezadlo: So you show the historical events through microhistory?

Ping Chong: Yes, kind of a microcosm.[251]

Previous scholarship on the idea of ghosting histories discusses how history is a kind of ghost that, depending on the scene, will materialize completely and then disappear. According to Herbert Blau, "ghosting" names the memory trace that precipitates theatre's illusory effects, including the desire to banish illusion.[252] For Joseph Roach, ghosting is part of a theoretical story in which a culture's "orature" and "surrogations" performatively resist history's official texts and monuments.[253] Marvin Carlson writes that ghosting is the accumulation and/or assemblage of spectators histories.[254] Carlson describes the process through which theatrical performances are haunted by memories of productions past and the inevitable influence these memories have on audience reception. If, as Carlson suggests, live performances are embodied ghosts, hostage to prior material exigencies, performances, and performance memories, then the material remains that survive performance are ghosts ghosting ghosts—surrogates that come not as single spies but in battalions: theatre as palimpsest, eternally borrowing, reanimating, rewriting a past performance. In examining *Deshima* and *Chinoiserie*, I find the idea of ghosting histories

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[251]. Anna Ciezadlo, "Chinoiserie." *Alt Buffalo Alternative Press*, 1995.

[252]. Herbert Blau, *Take Up the Bodies: Theater at the Vanishing Point* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982).

[253]. Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

[254]. Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

particularly useful in studying the representation of histories.

Ping Chong's staging directions provides one with an understanding of what *Chinoiserie* tries to achieve by fusing seemingly disparate and fragmentary bits of auditory, verbal, and visual information. Below are meeting notes obtained from the Ping Chong Archive at the Billy Rose Theatre Division of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts:

> If the performers played the Chinese with Minling gestures and funny accents, would your allegiances go to the British?
>
> Since you are predominantly a white audience, do you relate closer to the British than the Chinese?
>
> Would the 27 senators who were busy protesting Michael Fay's flogging have done so if he were Black, Latino, Turkish, Chinese, unphotogenic and poor?
>
> Do we always identify with that which we are familiar with?
>
> And does what we identify with exclude the possibility of the legitimacy of another point of view different than ours?

Are two different points of view legitimate even though they may be polar opposites? Here, one can see how Ping Chong was self-conscious of identificatory strategies (or dis/identificatory strategies) in staging *Chinoiserie*. The questions show Ping Chong's inquiries regarding audience reception of the unequal encounters between the East and the West. Interestingly, the ending scene, which projects "To be continued into the 21st century," sums up the performance, implying that Chinoiserie is ongoing and may continue in the future. This projection can be in discussion relative to space and time in *Deshima*. Similarly, in *Deshima*, the

narrator says, “Time passes” between many of the scenes; indeed, a pyramid with *tempus fugit* (time flies) is onstage. Yet, there is no need to try to unravel time lines and characters because *Deshima* is interested in portraying the “consequences of history” and the pretext that theater is politically engaged with the world today: “It’s about the past in the present, the present in the past, the past and the present in the future…kind of a microcosm [of history].”[255] For Ping Chong, the reorganization of space and time becomes a key element in his performance aesthetics; he has said that as “a former choreographer, I am very conscious of the use of time and space. Time and space can say a lot. Where you put the figure changes the dynamics of the time and space.” In addition, the elements that Ping Chong instructed the workshop participants to express when creating performance pieces show the ways in which one exploits space and time.[256] Both *Deshima* and *Chinoiserie* do not merely dwell on past events, but link the past, present, and future:

> The past, the present and the future are interrelated and are still interacting. My structures may seem disjunctive, but the fragments eventually make a picture. (Harris 1995)[257]
>
> The Vincent Chin murder case in Detroit is the central contemporary element in the piece; also very, very peripherally, but importantly, the whole present tension between China and the United States. But I don’t really dwell on that, because it’s really not that different than the earlier events in the 17th century, and so on. That’s what I’m saying

[255]. Anna Ciezadlo, “Chinoiserie.” *Alt Buffalo Alternative Press*, 1995.

[256]. Focus, counterpoint, speed, time (duration), scale, repetition, texture, stillness, isolation, emphasis, rhythm, listening, image, tone/atmosphere, limitations, temperature, detail, space, and shape

[257]. William Harris, “Tackling the Issue of Race in a Meditation on East and West,” *New York Times* (New York, NY), Nov. 12, 1995.

about the past and the present echoing each other.[258]

Ping Chong's use of space and time can be examined in the light of Foucault's concept of heterotopias. In "Of Other Spaces," Foucault introduces heterotopias to describe places and spaces that function in non-hegemonic conditions.[259] These are spaces of Otherness, which are neither here nor there, that are simultaneously mental and physical. Foucault uses the term *heterotopia* to describe spaces that have more layers of meaning or relationships to other places than immediately meet the eye. Foucault's idea of heterotopias has been used by postmodernists in understanding the contemporary emergence of cultural, economic, political, social difference and identity as a central issue in larger multicultural cities. Among the possible types of heterotopias or spaces that exhibit dual meanings, the heterotopia can be a single real place that juxtaposes several spaces. Here, Foucault looks at the theater that "brings onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another."[260] In addition, heterotopias are typically linked to slices of time, which, "for the sake of symmetry," Foucault calls *heterochronies*. This intersection and phasing of space and time allows the heterotopias "to function at full capacity" based on an ability to arrive at an "absolute break" with traditional experiences of time and temporality. In the modern world, many specialized sites exist to record these crossroads of space and time. "First of all, there are heterotopias of indefinitely accumulating time," such as museums, libraries, where "time never stops building up" in an attempt to establish a "general archive," a "place of all times that is itself outside of time

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[258]. Anna Ciezadlo, "Chinoiserie." *Alt Buffalo Alternative Press*, 1995.

[259]. Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 16 (1986): 22-27.

[260]. Ibid., 25.

and inaccessible to its ravages."[261] "Heterotopias of time" such as museums, which enclose in one place objects from all times and styles, not only exist in time, but also exist outside of time because they are built and preserved to be physically insusceptible to the ravages of time. Examined in the light of Foucault's idea of heterotopias, *Deshima* and *Chinoiserie*, which were performed in a physical space, such as at the Brooklyn Academy of Art or La MaMa, can be viewed as heterotopias in that geographical sites of the East and the West and the past, the present, and the future juxtapose on the "real" place.

[261]. Ibid., 26.

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