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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

"ImagiNATION is my nation."

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree Master of Fine Arts

In

Visual Arts

By

Heejung Shin

Committee in charge:

Professor Brian Cross, Chair
Professor Jordan Crandell
Professor Nicole Miller
Professor Shahrokh Yadegari

2018

The Thesis of Heejung Shin is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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University of California San Diego

2018

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

“ImagiNATION is my nation.”

by

Heejung Shin

Master of Fine Arts in Visual Arts

University of California San Diego, 2018

Professor Brian Cross, Chair

In this paper, I discuss artistic subjects and themes that were featured in my project, *호올 (Whore/Hole/Whole)* (2017), and more recent work, *Free Fish”es”* (2018), that stemmed from my three-years residence practice at the Visual Arts Department, the University of California, San Diego. A Korean transcription of multiple English terms whose sounds are clearly distinguishable to English speakers but suggest little distinctions to Korean speakers, *호올 (Whore/Hole/Whole)* is an attempt to defy the hierarchy of languages and gender inequality by adopting forms of rap music video, dance and vernacular swear words. In the exhibition, viewers are embedded in the counter-representational space against patriarchal, white-supremacist, hetero-normative institutions of language, gender, and race that marginalize women of color and hyphenated Americans. *Free Fish”es”* imagines the world of immigration and border policing as the vast body of water in which the migrant body as fish has to navigate and confront obstacles, which endlessly confines migrants into the water. Why the sea and the sky both have the same color—BLUE—but are not traversable? Let’s make fish fly. Let’s break the horizon, the borderline.

1. WOMEN

I don't have vagina, I am a lack of dick. As a woman, a "less human," I survived misogyny in South Korea from the beginning of my life in which the female abortion rate was highest; one point five million fetuses were aborted every year in 1986, 1988 and 1990, comprising one out of four girls. The Chinese zodiac of these years were red tiger, yellow dragon, and white horse, animals considered as less feminine and wild. Koreans believe that the unborn baby can possess the traits of the zodiac animal of the year they were born in, and because of that, girls who are born in these years, they think, would have undesirable traits for women. For example, it is often said that the woman born in the dragon year—the year 1988 in which I was born—is likely to have a successful life in job career and social status, but a woman's success, people say, will likely put pressure on her spouse's self-esteem and consequently ruin his career. Given this, I could have been aborted, yet, luckily, my parents had a son already when my mother had me. I am a survivor from the beginning of my life; should I thank my brother to be alive?

Likewise, Korean women who are in their 20s and 30s were the object of mass abortion when they were fetuses, and now as they come of age, fertile, they are treated as mere wombs. Since lower birth-rate became a social concern, the Ministry of Government Administration and the Home Affairs of South Korea created a birth-rate map in late 2016. The map displays the number of fertile women between age fifteen and forties *distributed* across cities and municipalities in South Korea. Due to the opposition and outrage that followed, they soon deleted the website: http://birth.korea.go.kr/. Currently abortion is illegal and criminalized, and recently the Korean Government is under investigation on the bill to legalize or at least decriminalize it.

Under the armistice in 1953, the military force has become an important symbol that supports both Koreas. They run the mandatory draft system: ten years in North Korea, and two years in South Korea. In South Korea, however, women are not allowed to serve the military. Korean men always whine that the male-only conscription is unfair, but in reality they are granted to monopolize political, economic, and symbolic privileges over women, people of color, people with disability, queers, and minorities in exchange of a two-year stint in the army. They are socially recognized as a full citizen—regardless of the fact that one actually served or not—but women and others who are excluded from

the draft system only become a second-rank citizen, being stigmatized for what they have no freedom of choice: after all, it is not women who force men to serve in the military, but men who start war and send troops. In this, women are considered as selfish free-riders of the country by male supremacists who furiously bawl at women that they should also serve if they want to be treated equal, without admitting the fact that the current military institution, fundamentally designed to serve heterosexual cis-male members, would more marginalize women conscripts if they are to be conscripted. This hatred toward "parasitic" women might explain the femicide of Gangnam station in summer 2016. In a Karaoke's restroom near the station, one man murdered a woman. The media broadcast that he had no specific target, thus a random crime. However, the investigation revealed that he waited for first six people to pass—because they were all men—and the seventh was a young woman whom he stabbed in her chest eight times. Moreover, the murderer said he wanted to kill any woman he doesn't know because every women looks down on him. In other words, the victim was killed for no reason other than being a woman. However, when feminists argued that this murder is a hate crime against women and protested for women's rights at Gangnam station, men saw them as old, fat, and ugly feminists who complain against everything: "it wasn't a misogynic hate crime but merely a random murder committed by a schizophrenic!"

I was tired of the misogynistic society and tried to find a better place, but the new place I arrived with hope is not much different. Like someone said, "grab them by the pussy," the pussy is "grabbable." In many societies, still, being a female itself is a shortage and weakness. Eventually, more or less, I realize that there is no place for women. Experiencing relentless misogynic events in South Korea has led me to question constraints on the female immigrant's body. The music video, *호올 (Whore/Hole/Whole)* defies the male gaze in a sarcastic way; even though I shake my hip, it does not look sexy. The blatant butt-hitting dance responds to someone saying, "grab them by the pussy." The attitude in my response is like this: "Oh yeah? you think you can grab my pussy? Come grab mine if you dare!" Also, when I chew banana, it destroys the fantasy of oral sex (my weenie!), which renders me as an excessive, toxic woman. The normalized sexual desire of heterosexual cisgendered men can be questioned by such a small act of aggression. I think the "manhood" is

defined as something “not being a woman,” already presuming womanhood as inferior (“Man up, don’t act like a pussy!”) So when a woman acts in a way unexpected by patriarchy, it can hurt the prevalent feelings of the male chauvinists. Masculinity is that weak.

The music video evokes ambivalent emotions the audience: on the one hand, I saw some people get upset, and, on the other hand, some laughed after watching it. The dance and the mocking face, which sneers at patriarchy, can be funny, but this sarcasm might be too aggressive for someone as well. Yet, at the same time, here I am talking about the femicide by heterosexual male chauvinists and culturally enforced body modifications of women. What makes you more uncomfortable: the criticism toward the male pride, or the murder of women? Men are offended when they think they are misunderstood as the sex offender, but women are exposed to actual threats of being raped and killed.

The rap lyric in the video begins with my life story as a Korean woman. In an auto-ethnographical view, I can share my experience with not only other Korean women but also other women of color. I do not disregard different experiences of gender as well as egregious discriminations according to class, nationality, and race; but my priority on gender issue here is based on my particular experience as a woman, and many of us are certainly not free from the hierarchy of gender. This fact is the reason why women need solidarity to fight male supremacy, and this solidarity based on gender does not exclude other coalitions based on race, class, nationality, and sexuality but aligns with these. As Audre Lorde said, “For women, the need and desire to nurture each other is (…) real connection which is so feared by a patriarchal world. Only within a patriarchal structure is maternity the only social power open to women” (*Sister Outsider* 111). I understand this maternity not just as a woman who cares for their children, but a female power that consolidates the voices against the male supremacy.

As in the critique of Combahee River Collective that the white feminist movement was not properly addressing particular needs of women of color, third world and U.S. women of color feminism is under the double hierarchy—race and gender. In many cases, those hierarchies provoke class hierarchy as well, and in that case, the woman is under the triple hierarchy. This intersectional, multiple hierarchy is strengthened by the history of visualization of the body of colored woman, which is rooted in a colonialist viewpoint.

From the nineteenth century, racism encroached on western society behind the mask of biology and medical sciences, and with these discourses, colonialism supported the superiority of whiteness. Think about the life of Sarah "Sartije" Bartman who is better known as Venus Hottentot, or those of others such as Joice Heth, Ota Benga, and Julia Pastrana's. In the history of ethnographic photography, the colored body, especially the black woman's body is seen as being freakish and overly sexualized, that is, as corrupted. The black body is like a mirror that only reflects what are abject and alien to the white body.

At the same time, however, because of that, it is seen as intriguing. What does it mean that Sartije's nickname is "Venus?" The white viewer traces the myth that "Black women are sexually promiscuous" from her enormous buttocks and labia. The colored woman's body is fragmented, and her genital areas are overtly emphasized. They are visualized as less human who do not fit the rights of white people. As imperialists colonized non-western societies and colored populations living in these societies, non-western sexuality and race were likewise colonized and colored.

This double objectification of sexuality and race is also applied to the yellow skin as well. My painting work, *Yellow Fever* series (2016), deals with the sexual fantasy of colonizers toward Asian women. The portrait photos I used in this work were originally taken for the purpose of ethnographic documents or advertising "Oriental" sex workers in the nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, pictures that promote the sex tourism of European and North American male citizens. The young girls in the photos are adorned with flowers and beautifully ornamented traditional dresses, waiting for the male gaze. The photographers did not have much interest in representing actual lives of Asian women but rendered them as the beautiful but taxidermied object of Orientalism. In *Yellow Fever*, the images of Geisha, Gisaeng, actresses, and college beauty queens are stained by yellowish-white drizzles on the surface, as if these were semen sprayed onto their faces. This facial cumshot symbolizes the hetero cis-male lust to conquer the female body, and this desire is also deeply woven into the racialized colonization of Asian bodies. However, my critical idea toward colonial visualization in this project was not successfully executed.

Even though the underlying goal in the work is to criticize the objectification of the colored body in the colonial hierarchy, *Yellow Fever* series stops at appropriating the images of women in old

times. In this, it is hard to detect any radical sense of subversion, but the series can again victimize the women as pathetic objects of seeing. Instead, I would like to see more direct and powerful use of the Asian women's body in the art scene, creating new ways of visualization, less burdened by stereotyping them.

In *Disidentifications: Queers Of Color And The Performance Of Politics* (1999), José Esteban Muñoz discusses on reshaping stereotypes. As a third strategy of Latina/o self-representation after identification and nonidentification, disidentification, by appropriating stereotypic images imposed onto minorities by the mainstream white media, turning such images into something positive, excessive, and acceptable, thereby allowing folks to embrace all parts of who they are, even ones that don't fit into a narrowly defined box of identity. Muñoz says, "It is meant to be descriptive of the survival strategies the minority subject practices in order to negotiate a phobic majoritarian public sphere that continuously elides or punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasm of normative citizenship" (4). In this case, I think 호올 goes one step further than *Yellow Fever* series. 호올 uses the disidentificatory strategy; by using excessive representations of Asian women, it breaks gendered and racialized stereotypes imposed on them, who are expected not to make any troubles and political voices as a "Model minority." Also, the work is not necessarily excluding the stereotyped body. Especially due to my cultural background in which women are systematically oppressed, I was afraid of revealing my anger and constantly censored myself and my art. When I showed my first music video, some were against the work and it made me shrink for a while, but later I decided to make it louder because I knew that shrinking is what they want me to do. I believe that directly representing the colored body of woman in performance can be highly provocative or potentially disturbing. The directness of rap and performance in the music video—yelling "pussy" and shaking my butt—makes people vividly feel the anger of an Asian woman, which makes colonial viewers baffled.

I think that the work of Victoria Santa Cruz, who is called "the mother of Afro-Peruvian dance and theatre," *They Called Me Black* (1978), an excerpt from documentary film *Victoria: Black and Woman*, has interesting similarities and differences with my project 호올.

First, *They Called Me Black* starts from Cruz's childhood memory of being called black when she was seven-years old. In the lyric, she started to question the connotations of being Black. She said that she hated her hair and fleshy lip and dark skin at first. She thus straightened her hair, powdered her face white. But after realizing that the beauty standard is white, she found different beauty in blackness. Similarly, I use an autobiographical approach: I rap about my life in a timely manner, which critiques misogynic societies. In the later part of the lyric, I sing about otherness I have experienced in the United States. I think such an autobiographical method highlights the emotional rise of the author, and listeners are also able to sympathize with it, by overlapping their life experiences with mine.

Secondly, subverting demeaning beauty and racial standards is what Cruz and I share in each work of ours. In the video, the artist repeats the word "Black," which once stigmatized her body, and finds the source of her pride by turning this word into an acceptance of her own body. As the repetitive enchantment empowers her, it is in turn revoiced by other Black people in the art group, creating solidarity among them. In my case, I repeat PUSSY, HORO, WHORE, HOLE, and WHOLE many times, which share similar meanings and/or sounds. Their explicit meaning, demeaning and derogatory, seems to indicate my weaknesses at first. Some might think I am a grabbable tight hole, pussy. Such a demeaning viewpoint is soon to be challenged and overturned by excess and repetition. As Monique Wittig notes, "Language is an instrument or tool that is no way misogynist in its structures, but in its applications" (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 35). Therefore, though it might sound paradoxical, we have to hold the demeaning words and subvert them to provoke new positive meaning within the subjects who are under oppression. Through this action, they can begin to question the colonial structure which is pervasive in our day-to-day language practices. When we overturn the application of language, it creates opportunities for counter-normative spaces and cultures to grow.

Along with her brother, Nicomedes Santa Cruz, Victoria Santa Cruz is credited as one of the pioneers in the revival of Afro-Peruvian culture in the 1960s and 1970s. For her part, she is said to have had "Afrocentrism" influences in her view of dance that attempts to discover the "ancestral memory" of African forms. Cruz, for example, revitalized Zamacueca—an ancient dance with roots in

African, Spanish, and Andean music. She finds this strength, as an emancipation of the Afro-Peruvian dance rhythm, inherent and inherited in the black body. The artist says that Black people have never been enslaved, since they have kept the rhythm in their body. In an interview she mentions that the emancipation of emotion with rhythm cannot be fully explained with words, but the rhythm in the poem and music is something to feel with dance, with the body. For me, this seemingly suggests her essentialist understanding of the root of black power: the black body. I think her approach was strategic and valid in her situation considering the very low population of Black people and blatant racism in 1960s Peru. In regards to my attempt to empower the Asian body, however, I say that this power does not come from the Yellow body. This power is not from certain skin color but from experiences of otherness and solidarity among others.

2. LANGUAGE

The first quarter in San Diego was quite chilly. It was my first time living abroad, leaving behind family and close friends, which made me feel even more lonely, cold. Although I ran out from my home because I couldn't bear the misogyny of South Korean society, I still missed the comfortable feeling of speaking Korean, my mother tongue. For San Diego's weather change so quickly and capriciously, I hurriedly bought a sweater, which I didn't like so much: it was just ordinary, black and white wool mixed, loosely weaved sweater. The sweater made me look bit chubby and nerdy, but I look that way without the sweater anyway. One day a friend complimented my new outfit, and I responded with courtesy, "Thanks, but it has lots of WHORES so I feel cold." I mispronounced "holes" as "whores" because it is hard to distinguish R and L sounds in my Korean accent. Korean language uses the same "ㄹ" sound, quite close to the L sound, to pronounce both R and L sounds. There was a burst of laughter from the two of us at first, yet, soon after I felt shameful and worried of my mistake: how can I survive in this society with my bad English? How can I learn and make something meaningful if I can't communicate well in English? I wanted to change the situation. I wanted to show that I am not an incompetent babbling alien but a competent speaker in different ways. Therefore, I questioned to myself: what if I empower myself and linguistic outsiders to speak out and to be heard without identifying their different ways of speaking as "mistakes"? What if those "mistakes" become their "voice" itself? What if I change the "shame" into something "proud"?

One of the most noticeable traits in my work, *호올*, is the very opaqueness in understanding language. English speakers, knowing little Korean, should read the subtitle video screen installed in the opposite side of the music video screen, an intended separation meant to prevent viewers from simultaneously and organically connecting the video-audio and subtitle, from the way they are used to assume when they think of viewing translated films. After watching the two video screens, participants can dance to the videogame, *Dance Dance Revolution*, playing the tune I rapped, *호올*. In the DDR game, a sequence of falling arrows on the screen guide players to step on the right panel on the floor at a right time, making them dance to the music. The player will never get a full score in it, however, since it is designed in that way. What are all these failures or disturbances? Dictation is

dictatorship. Playing the DDR game is an act of dictating signs using the body, a dictation that I designed to ultimately fail. The purpose of this game is to give back the experience of a linguistic other who is living in the permanent process of becoming a native-speaker that is from the beginning a mission impossible to accomplish. At the same time, so-called "mother tongue" is itself a myth, which creates the fantasy of the natural experience of communication in a common language, and this masked experiences can be subject to rupture when the link between meaning and sound is at risk. I think speaking "wrong" English and living in the anxiety of making mistakes is a physical and corporeal experience that makes you feel being dislocated from the rest of the world. At this very moment of rupture you realize the risk of the language. I focus on this physical experience of dislocation with fun elements. Dancing on the DDR game might look absurd, players can enjoy it, and it eventually creates the mirroring image of hegemonic language's rendering us as linguistic aliens.

Not only because of the language barrier but also because of different background knowledge each audience has, the video cannot be fully understood by English speakers. Still, the viewer can sense something. The trembling black and white images can present sensuous atmosphere to viewers. They can enjoy the beautiful beat of sound or feel saddened by the dark subjects matter of my work—death of women, as in the murder in Gangnam station. Even though non-Korean viewers might not get the reference to the murder in Gangnam in the way a Korean viewer~~s~~ might, the distanced and ~~thus~~ deferred juxtaposition of the lyric "*Quiet is the dead woman, living woman, be quiet!*" may illicit a similar feeling of uneasiness. When the viewer sees images of a knife pointing at a headless woman, or a man about to throw something at the woman's head, they understand that this is about femicide. Maybe the language and cultural barrier between Korean and English could have been reduced by closely aligning the video image and the English subtitle, which I didn't. Although it might sound naïve, I feel the visual is sometimes stronger than translated texts. Such unexplained, unclear yet comprehensible and immersive sensations rise in participants and demand them to think about the transparency, translucency, and opaqueness of the language and the universal—perhaps sharable?—sign of image.

Another importance in my music video is that it crystallizes the experience of a woman into a rap lyric, a street poem. Audre Lorde claimed that "Poetry is the way we help give name to the

nameless so it can be thought. The farthest horizons of our hopes and fears are cobbled by our poems, carved from the rock experiences of our daily lives" (*Sister* 37). Silence cannot protect you. The power of speaking out the life of a woman with artistic media, as does poetry in Lorde's case, makes her life communicable. I am well aware of the fact that my raw English can cause isolation from the Anglophone academia and art world, but because my language is alienated, my poem becomes rich. I hover over multiple languages to make rhymes and put diverse meanings in similar sounds. Despite the fear of being isolated, we have to speak out, and we have to swim in the pool of languages to make the world a more habitable place for migrants.

What makes language migrant or indigenous? What makes my English good or bad? My English is bad not just because I am a foreigner from a non-English speaking country; my skin color and the relationship between the U.S and Korea color my tongue as well. Frantz Fanon analyzes the colonized people's sense of inferiority in speaking their colonizer's language. This anxiety comes from the hierarchy between the two societies; due to the economic difference and symbolic status derived from it, the language of the colonized is rendered as forever inferior. To be more concrete, it is not just language that is inferior; so is the body of the colonized. The colonized are eager to learn their colonizer's language and speak it fluently, but this attempt to master the language will fail. We see this in Fanon's failure—"you are the most fluent French speaker among all the blacks I've ever met. When did you come to France?" (This also suggests that Fanon *became* black only after he came to France.) Fanon's French was obviously more fluent and refined than the majority of the mainland French citizens; yet, lacking a white body, Fanon was never considered a French speaker. Instead, Fanon is considered a French-sounding speaker, a Franco*phone* Martinique, just as Jean Paul Sartre is a French writer while Aimé Césaire is a Francophone writer. What the colonized ultimately is lacking would be the body of the colonizer. This hierarchy in languages and bodies creates a sense of discordance in the colonized subject. W.E.B. Du Bois explains this discordance in the black soul as a "double consciousness," always looking at oneself through the eyes of others: "One ever feels his two-ness—an American, a Negro: two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (*The soul of black folk* 2).

The movie *Address Unknown*, directed by Ki-duk Kim in 2001, shows the discordance in the body of those who are abandoned from both countries, United States and South Korea. A son of a "western princess" (a name for Korean sex workers who only deal with the U.S. army) mother and an African American soldier father, Chang-guk is living in a town near a U.S. Army camp. The mother sends mails to her child's father in the U.S. who promised her and Chang-guk to one day bring them to his country, but these always come back as "address unknown." Chang-guk studies English hard, hoping his father will one day take him to the better society, the U.S., but his reality is extremely cruel. Due to his dark-skin tone and parental background, what he can do is what people are unwilling to do: butchering dogs. In the end, he rips off his father's English name tattooed on his mother's chest, as if he wants to overcome and efface Americanness in him. However, as he tears off her mother's skin with knife, he speaks in thickly accented English, "Moder, prease fergibu me."

We can ask multiple and overlapping questions about this filmic scene. What are possible implications in Chang-guk's oscillating body and language between Korean and African American, Asian and Black, as well as failed attempt to be assigned to one culture and language? Is his failure the source of problem? If so, would having a stable language and body solve his trouble? Why does he erase the English tattoo while speak English at the same time? Why the body of his western princess mother is the place of projecting and mediating masculine and sexual violence: why does the father inscribe his name on the chest of Chang-guk's mother, as if making his territorial claim to a foreign woman—similar to an act of planting a flag on the occupied land—which his son later tears out to overcome or deny his heritage? Kim's representation of the female body is uncomfortable enough, well mirroring the violence of colonialism, language, race, masculinity, and patriarchy—and unwittingly of his own as a sexist male film director—on the female body. Men's language needs women's body. The female body comes to represent a lack, and womanhood becomes a phallus. The migrant's mouth and body are places for necropolitics. As Achille Mbembe described, war is as much a means of achieving sovereignty as a way of exercising the right to kill (*Necropolitics* 2). The body that has failed in this war will be exposed to death, and in the history, it is most of the time the non-western body that were colored after the defeat. In the postcolonial globe, the migrant body is always replaceable and should be fixed. Yet, at the same time, the mouth of the colonized should be wrong

because the colonizer needs to render the colonized as abnormal in order for the former to become normal. This dynamic of making certain body ab/normal is how (post)colonial power structure renders whiteness as normative and perpetuates this privilege by coloring non-white subjects it colonized.

I imagine a third place beyond this binary of normal and abnormal with *Dictée*. Like the beginning of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's masterpiece, *Dictée*, 호올 is about dictation. As Cha takes dictation of every comma, quotation marks, punctuations, and transliterates French dialogues, the delivery of *natural* meaning is consistently interrupted. As a result, the fact that writing is itself an incomplete dictation stands out; the writer is a language learner who only mimics French but always fails to have a good command of it. By hovering between French, English, and Korean, *Dictée* shows the concept of an unsettled, unfixed place of language, especially feminine one, and this brings much resonance to 호올. The third space in my project would be the lexicon, which is the title, 호올.

I juxtapose different languages that have similar sounds and overturn the misogynic meanings in the words into a feminist power. 호올 oscillates in between "whore" and "hole" and chases the Korean history of misogyny that demonizes women who emigrate to White nation-states:

… You think I'm scared of being called pussy, HORO, bitch?

Colored, exotic, easy, sexy, slutty, weird, contaminated, different woman?

If I am a HORO because of that, HORO is so cool

Break that stigma and call me HORO bitch

The best compliment, a superb expert of escaping Korea

Teeth that bite White supremacy

You think you're innocent? Don't you teach me, admit your "vested interest"…

HORO (호로), which sounds similar to 호올, literally means a "war captive" in Korean, gradually gaining the meaning "slut." It's hard to find the exact origin of the word, but people

conjecture that the word was first used in this way after the war with the Qing Dynasty (the Manchu war of 1636). After defeated, the Joseon dynasty (Korea) had to send its female subjects as a human tribute to Qing. After serving years in the foreign land and came back with their mixed blood babies, these women were called HORO, and their babies the HORO brats (horosaeki). I overlap this term with the words hole/whore/whole, terms that can be effortlessly articulated and distinguished to one another by the native English speaker but are inarticulate to many Koreans. I make people see the words in a new way; for the non-English speakers, especially Korean, HORO crosses boundaries among these words, boundaries that could be porous to non-English speakers. As a porous and inarticulate term, elusive to any efforts to pin down, HORO opens out our body, our mind, and our desire to be unmarked and undefined by the power. With this cross-boundary power of language, thanks to the wildly different phonetic structure between fixed languages of nation-states, I can create new meanings from fixed idioms in order to appropriate and subvert them.

3. Hip hop

At first my English was stuttering: to correct mistake, I pronounced the same word over and over again. Repeating the words, I could distinguish the different sound between “whore,” “hole,” “whole,” “호올” and “HORO (호로).” After successfully articulating each sound according to assigned meanings, I could play with the words as musical elements or puns to subvert the demeaning connotations on the female body. This playful attitude could be achieved when I overcame the sense of inferiority in speaking “wrong” English and the fear of being seen as a promiscuous, vulgar woman. By juxtaposing and repeating the different sound of the words, I made rhythms, and then they became rap. But I rap not only because of the rhythmical traits of language and words. Hip hop and African American music have a great history of resistance against white supremacy, and I want to align my feminist work with their anti-racist resistance. In other words, I want to stand with aggressive rappers.

Hip hop journalist Davey D. connects the African oral tradition to modern rap: "You see, the slaves were smart and they talked in metaphors. They would be killed if the slave masters heard them speaking in unfamiliar tongues. So they did what modern-day rappers do—they flexed their lyrical skillz." (Why Is Rap So Powerful? http://www.daveyd.com/whyrapispowerart.html). The oppressed can convert their language into lyrics, which becomes their strong weapon; in African American oral traditions, this power has been crystalized into distinctive musical genres. Likewise, in the interview with Simple, a Bebop musician, he elucidates that the origin of the name “Bebop” is from the sound of white police officers hitting black people’s head (*it’s not about a salary…*6): “BOP! BOP! … BEBOP … MOP … BOP!” It is not much important to me if the name of Bebop is actually derived from the beating sound or not. For me, what is more necessary to think about is that Simple describes the origin of Bebop as a story of police brutality on the black body. This reflects the violence on the colored body, and this reflection has nothing to do with resignation or escapism, but instead it confronts the racist social structure and its police brutality with the art medium of Bebop. This attitude is what I share in my art. I want my art to give back the “BOP,” which disturbs the eyes of white heteronormativity.

I change my physical/mental mode when I do performance, and Hip hop helps me a lot to do that. In my daily life, I try to be polite and feel comfortable with this social role I play. But when in performance, when I talk about my deep anger as a woman, this cute, quiet Asian girl mode is not enough. KRS-ONE says, Hip hop is not for established, rich people, but speaks for people who are under situation. Hip hop is a voice, even a scream from unseen people. I should be aware of the danger of understanding certain genres in a simple, one-dimensional view, but I see Hip hop as a medium of empowerment.

On the other side, I think my art practice can contribute to push the boundary of Hip hop. In the American mainstream rap scene, there are many female rappers of color who talk about lives of colored immigrant women, such as Ruby Ibarra, M.I.A., and Awkwafina, to name a few. And in the Korean rap scene, there are figures such as Sleeq, who proudly identifies herself as a feminist, which is rare and dangerous for a rapper in the male dominant, misogynic society. These rappers open a new era of Hip hop by considering new subjects, women of color feminism, in their lyrics, which male rappers might not consider. Like these female and feminist rappers, my Hip hop practice builds an alternative language that reflects women's life, which is different from the language of the mainstream, hyper-masculine rap music. My goal is not only to stand the other side of the phallocentric scene, but to sing the world as a confident subject with my own language.

Considering the male-centered visual culture in Hip hop, it would be important for me, as a feminist woman rapper of color, to think about the female rappers' self-empowering practices by ways of visualizing their body in the current rap scene. "I got big fat ass"—Nicky Minaj's *Anaconda* (2014) is one of the most well-known rap songs and also notorious for her excessive sexual visualization of the female body. Whether it was intended or not, *Anaconda* refers to the marginalized and objectified history of the black women's body. Also, in Princess Nokia's song, *Tomboy* (2017), the lyric goes: "My fat belly, my little tities." The fat waist and little breasts are considered undesirable in the U.S., but Princess Nokia repeats the phrase so proudly, and because of this repetition, her embrace of a once marginalized female body gets powerful meanings.

I am not saying that Princess Nokia is independent and Nikki Minaj is not. I don't think that Nikki herself or other famous people would claim that *Anaconda* shows the submission of the female

body, means that is subject. It would be more helpful to think what makes Nikki Minaj to be seen as the object and/or subject of desire. Through the way of how power works, subjectivity can be created in multiple ways.

Rappers in Korea understood Hip hop as an art medium that empowers people, but they had to examine their own history, social contexts, and reasons to determine *how* to empower *who*, as well as the very meaning of empowerment since the cultural and economic context is vastly different from that of the mainstream Hip hop in the United States. From the beginning, Hip hop was imported largely by the second generation Korean American rappers and Korean international students who studied in the U.S. Due to the relatively privileged social status of Korean rappers and the international hierarchy between United States and South Korea, it was hard to say that Hip hop in Korea stand for and speak about the experience of non-dominant groups of people. Many of the Hip hop trendsetters were born with "silver spoons," had privileged place within the upper-class society, enjoyed the cosmopolitan life style, or at least had the enough family fortunes to live as a musician, a job that cannot guarantee stable income in Korea. Since the Korean rap scene has been developed under the influence of Internet Hip hop websites, when many Korean rappers borrowed cool, up-to-date American vernacular Hip hop styles by boasting their fluent English skill to gush originally African American and Latino/a slang such as SWAG, HUSTLE, RESPECT, and HOMIE, they learned them not from the dangerous and impoverished slum life but from the Internet or college Hip hop community. Some Korean rappers are well aware of this gap between a black thug Hip hop and a nerdy international student Hip hop which tries hard to imitate black cultural assets, but most remain as an imitator. But now it is time to face this gap and figure out new possibilities.

In one of his brilliant songs, Ching Chang Chong (2015), Korean rapper Genius Nochang mentions about the deep separation between Hip hop as a means of resistance and its decontextualized reality in the Korean rap scene. As you can see in the phrase, "ching chang chong," which is usually used to mock Chinese accent in the U.S., Nochang plays with his Asian-Korean identity by using the very stereotyping idiom to create a pun, because "chong" means gun in Korean. The lyric goes: "I got a chong (gun) in my body, it is ching chang chong ching chang chong ching chang chong, it's my gun. Black people can't shoot it, but I'm damn good at it." He claims this weapon for his male Asian body.

This phrase and other lyrics also imply that he mastered his own Hip hop and rapping styles that can aptly talk about Korean (or Chingchong Asian) society without the blind imitation of African American hip-hop culture. In the last lyric, “No one can shoot guns in Korea anyway! A real swag?” Nochang criticizes Korean Chingchong gangstaz, asking “What does it mean to do gangster rap when you live in one of the safest and developed countries in the world” where gun-control is so perfect that the rappers haven’t shoot or even seen guns in their life except in the army? He reveals the hypocrisy in mimicking the cool, *authentic* attitudes from Black gansta rap, thereby making fun of it.

As an ESL (English as a Second Language) rapper, what does it mean for me to rap with English and Korean together? Does it indicate a bilingual artist who can freely flip from one side to another whenever necessary? To problematize this concept of bi- or multilingualism, I would like to introduce an incident that recently happened. In 2017, at a Starbuck in California, a middle aged white woman yelled at a group of Korean international students who talked in Korean. This white old lady believed the students should speak in English for “Your language is disgusting.” I was quite interested in her disgust. What language can provoke such an aversion to some people, and what aspect in the language induces them to feel so? If it were a western language, would she be less disgusted? Or, is there a preference among European languages? And like she said so, if people should speak English (or American?) because we are in America, how would she say when she hears the Navajo language? If the Korean students were to fluently speak English, would the old lady treat them as equal as other American students? I have many questions, but I venture that the lady was never disgusted by the language itself; instead, it might have been her ideas of the colored, incomprehensible body that disgusted her as contaminating White nativist Americans and their promised land. However, regulating language can never achieve pureness because languages are always already dialects to each other. Now let me answer to the first question: “What is significant for an ESL rapper using both Korean and English?” I think it is important to be aware of the fact that these two languages are not transparent and transferrable, even for a perfect bilingual person. By using the two languages in my rap music video and performance, I will also make my audience to clearly sense the messy elements that always intervene the transfer of meanings in my multi-language rap music. Let’s see who take this sense of difficulty in language as the source of disgust, of pleasure, of curiosity, of annoyance, or

indifference, or unAmerican. To listen to the voice of less heard people—an American cliché—all of us, especially Americans, will need to listen to "our" language first, knowing how our language can sometimes *alienate* us, but that this sense of alienation can be a natural and default state of being for many others. I can contribute to this more than fluent bilingual artists and rappers can do, since my embrace of the difficulty and unfamiliarity of using two different languages without trying to become a bilingual is the very source of my critical power.

Outro

In the beginning, I explained how and why the life of women became the main subject in my practice, and then I examined historical cases of visualizing the body of colored women, which is related to my goal to empower women and minorities by using unconventional means of representing and staging female figures. Here I compared and analyzed the artwork Victoria Santa Cruz's *They Call Me Black* (1978) in relation to my work 호울.

In chapter 2, I started with an anecdote that my language mistake became the ingredient of my art. I listed how language "mistakes" become a "power" of the migrant body, brought a Korean film, *Address Unknown*, to share questions that 호울 deals with, and discussed the migrant body reflecting on the concept of necropower. In the last part of this chapter, I found the possibility in the Theresa Hakyung Cha's work, *Dictee* (1982), and compare it with the term I use in the work.

Chapter 3 is about Hip hop as a resistance medium. I look into the resistance of rap and African American music, and analyze female rapper and Korean rap scene, to see my position as a female Korean immigrant rapper.

If my work that I discussed so far in this paper is mainly about solidarities among colored women and resistance toward hegemonic hetero-patriarchy in both the U.S. and South Korea societies, in the future, I would like to work on antagonism within feminisms complicatedly intersecting with various groups of people. This next project of mine may highlight colored women tired of being spoken for by paternalistic humanists or white feminists, or about colorism and homophobic stereotypes in the beauty industry, and so on. This subject of antagonisms in between minorities in my next research comes across far-distance geography and history, such as the colonial history of Korea. Historically, the country was colonized by other Asian countries such as China and Japan, embodying a quite different colonial narrative distinctive to most colonial histories of the Third World occupied by European and U.S. imperialism. I am especially interested in colonial literature in the late Joseon and Colonial era (late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries), which reflects issues of linguistic hierarchies between Japanese, Chinese and Korean in Manchuria. Ironically, it is my experience of

living in the States that allows me to ponder upon my family and home country's deep-embedded history and colonialism, which necessarily intersects with contemporary United States' immigration issues, sexism, racial politics, and xenophobia. I hope to more integrate and problematize those seemingly distinctive issues of migration in my further study.

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