VISUALIZATION OF ETHNICITY: BEYOND WHAT YOU SEE

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Abstract

For my doctorate research, I am investigating discursive analyses of ethnic visibility, particularly of the hyphenated ethnic subject living in a Western society. As Rey Chow points out, becoming visible in this "post-race" era is no longer simply a matter of having visual representation but more importantly it is a matter of reconfiguring the power dynamic between the centre and margins. In order to elaborate the contentious issues of *being visible*, I am working through the hyphenated ethnic subject's dilemma in this dissertation. On the one hand, if she accepts her ethnic visibility, that is remaining in the categorization of being the Other, she will end up participating in the institutionalization of ethnicity. On the other hand, if she denies the categorization of being ethnic, that is *being invisible*, blending with the rest, she will have to face the danger of being accused of becoming "too westernized" or "white-washed." My research is a twofold approach. First, I investigate theoretical writings in order to analyze various elements — ethnicity vs. race, hyphenation, multiculturalism — that contribute to this dilemma. Second, I'm using my art works — *The Invisible Transformation Project (ITP)* and *June on June: a script* — to perform *invisibility* in order to raise questions about the identity formation process: What does it mean to be visibly different from others? Can ethnic (non-white) artists sustain their criticality through works beyond the ethnic lens?

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My parents' decision to move to Canada was not always seen in a positive light by my siblings and myself. In retrospect, however, the move gave me a different perspective in life that I would not have gained if we had stayed in Korea. Most importantly, because we moved to Canada I was able to pursue my childhood dream of becoming an artist. So, thank you!

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Preface

A while ago, perhaps in 2000, I received a comment regarding my art practice : "you are so lucky as an artist; you are a woman and a visible minority." This remark came to me while I was struggling with a new idea/approach in my work, trying to break away from the ethnic imagery that I was accustomed to using. The work was an experimental video with blue yarn slowly filling up the frame while an abstract noise-like sound filled up the eardrum. What the above opinion indicated was "why make it harder?; the solution is already there," suggesting "just use your ethnicity." As simplistic as it sounds, it is also nonsensical. How do those two things make me "lucky" as an artist? Why do those two things matter in making work? Up to that moment, I had naively used my state of being an Asian female in my work since it involved the two most basic elements of who I am; I utilized Korean traditional motifs (especially traditional women's costumes) in paintings and sculptures, and involved my personal story of immigration in short videos. But after hearing that comment, I realized the weight of those two *mundane* aspects of who I am. I became extremely careful in addressing those two components in my work, even consciously avoided clearly displaying my ethnic disposition and influences. However, since my visit to Korea in 2007 (first time since my family and I immigrated to Canada in 1988) I have been reconsidering my perception of ethnic identity. I felt an overwhelmingly uncomfortable sensation toward my *home* country as a *wrong* place while in Korea, but I felt another *wrongness* on my return to Canada. Accordingly, I have decided to confront this sense of *wrongness* in order to find my own position in these two distanced locations that are connected by me. However, this sense of *wrongness* is a complicated one, as I feel quite at home in both places, contrary to my previous statement of feeling discomfort. Then, what is the source of this

contradiction? Could this be coming from how others perceive me, as Canadian in Korea and Korean in Canada? Could this be related to how theorization of the ethnic subject has made the state of ethnicity a static one? My PhD dissertation examines this very dilemma of being hyphenated — both being connected and disconnected — my visual artworks. As a personal and political gesture, I am seeking alternative ways to articulate the ethnic subject's dilemma away from preexisting notions of ethnic artist/artwork. The concept of in/visibility plays a central role in this research.

In this "post-race" era[1], it is hard to define the notion of being visible. As Rey Chow states "becoming visible is no longer simply a matter of becoming visible in the visual sense (as an image or object)," but, "also a matter of participating in a discursive politics of (re)configuring the relation between center and margins, a politics in which what is visible may be a key but not the exclusive determinant" (2007, 11). The power dynamic between centre and margin, in this current "politically correct" climate, complicates the ethnic subject's positionality. On the one hand, if she *remains* being visible, she must take responsibility for being different, must sustain the position of the Other. By being visible, she is asked to be the spokesperson for her culture, or all Asian women. On the other hand, as a gesture of resistance to theorized otherness, if she *rejects* being different, that is embracing the notion of being *invisible*, she is accused of being Westernized. It seems there is no way out of this dilemma of being ethnic. Similarly, the *visibility* and *invisibility* of ethnicity in artworks cannot be simply equated to having elements of visual representations of ethnicity in the work, but rather it should be analyzed along the political power dynamic of current cultural and societal structures that shape

[1] The "Post-race" era refers to the recent common belief that we are living in a time, particularly in North America, where racial segregation no longer exist and we have achieved racial harmony, despite the ongoing tension between racial groups.

up discussions around ethnicity. Artworks, I believe, should function at an equal level of rigour to that which theories function in debates of ethnicity.

Methodology

My PhD research, both theoretical and practice-based, centres around the critique of the institutionalization of ethnicity in the visual arts: how the term *ethnicity* has been utilized by mainstream art institutions, and how the ethnic artist should resist that categorization. I am particularly interested in how non-Western artists living in a Western society negotiate the institutionalization that leads to a *mis*/understanding of ethnicity, as the social and cultural history of ethnic diversity in the West has been embedded in manufactured terms such as "multiculturalism" or "cultural diversity." There are tendencies to categorize non-Western artists and their work using keywords relating to the theme of "identity politics" — displacement, liminality, hybridity, dislocation, homelessness — that universalize ethnic subjects' experience. These keywords were once critical components in articulating the state of being ethnic in a Western society. Artists such as Jin-Me Yoon, Ken Lum and Jamelie Hassan have established a strong foundation with their work, providing a place for the non-Western artists in Canadian art history. However, as they gained recognitions in mainstream art institutions and art history, the type of visual representation and discussions of the ethnic subjects' position in their work became a model for the rest of ethnic artists to follow. In a typical description of the above artists' works, a term "Canadian diaspora" is often used in relation to the artists' thematic explorations. Contemporary diaspora studies employ a broader analysis of the term "diaspora" beyond traditional notions of Jewish exile and their desire for homeland. The term is now extended to "analyze various migrations and exilic or refugee conditions, including the new

migrations caused by global changes" (Matthews qtd. in Sojka, 522). Unlike traditional models of diaspora, in which the longing for homeland centres the diasporic subject's psyche, Eugenia Sojka brings poststructural criticism of the concept of home in discussing diasporic artists' approaches and dilemma: "[t]he literal meanings of home are substituted by the metaphorical ones, and the concept becomes relative, defined by the individual and his/her circumstances" (521). This new challenge on the notion of "home" is a viable option, especially for those who migrated to another country. However, what remains in the centre of theoretical analysis of Yoon's work (and the other artists mentioned above) is the sense of *homelessness,* even when the discussion is on questioning the concept of "home" and challenging the traditional sense of connection between ethnicity and national identity. This is where my research departs from the previously established readings of ethnic artists' work. With changes in immigration history, and global economic and cultural shifts, the existing paradigms are lacking the currency in presenting critical and meaningful contemporary discussions around some of the new approaches in art making. I am not concerned with exploring the typical keywords (such as displacement, liminality, hybridity, dislocation, homelessness) in my artwork because not only it is not my interest to "translate" these words into visual representations but also it is not my lived experience.

In order to understand these contentious issues surrounding problematic readings of ethnicity in the field of visual arts, I began my research by studying four components that shape the intellectual application of ethnicity. They are, in alphabetical order: ethnicity vs. race, hyphenation, multiculturalism, and performativity. These components are analyzed from multiple angles: personal observation (my personal hyphenated state of being Korean-Canadian), political stance (analyzing the influence of neoliberalism and Western imperial globalization) and

theoretical framework (postcolonialism and poststructuralism). I am not interested in presenting definite answers, or arriving at a form of resolution, but rather I am interested in cultivating alternative ways of analyzing ethnic and intercultural representations. Often, in this current "politically correct" and inclusive cultural climate, the artwork gets mangled through preconceived notions of what ethnic work should look like and/or what kind of *key concepts* the ethnic artist should be addressing in her work. In a noble attempt to include the Other, mainstream art institutions ended up ghettoizing otherness. Hence, it becomes ever more crucial for ethnic artists to confirm their self-determined position on how to display their ethnicity. Having a critical understanding of performative ethnicity becomes a central element in the current cultural climate.

During the process of this research, I had to remind myself not to treat my artwork as a platform for executing theory. Artwork has ended up being institutionalized and ethnic artists have been categorized outside of mainstream art history, according to the conventional hierarchy between artwork (making/doing/intuition) and theory (reading/writing/analysis). According to this structure, theory precedes artwork and artworks are used as examples to illustrate theory. In order to break this hierarchical relationship, I am borrowing Trinh T. Minh-ha's notion of "knowledge-without-power." Trinh urges us to step out of the binary relationship between theory and practice, and see both as a form of knowledge. In her view, the saying "knowledge is power" represents only part of the knowledge gaining process; she thinks the concept "knowledge-without-power" is something to consider: "Can knowledge circulate without a position of mastery? Can it be conveyed without the exercise of power?" (41). As my method of working through theory is achieved by raising questions with respect to the preexisting theoretical framework, I am treating the process of art making the same way as theory by presenting

artworks as questions through making. The visual work that I am undertaking for my PhD is another form of research that engages topics of ethnicity and ethnic identity. Having a dialogue between theoretical reference and the visual work in this research is essential, not because they explain each other but more importantly because this dialogue generates further discussions and debates on the topic. Throughout the writing, I am integrating the analysis of artworks, other artists' and my own. Instead of writing about each artwork as an example of a theoretical concept, I am designating one full section per artwork/artist in order to elaborate on debates and criticisms concerning the artwork, and how each component is manifested in certain work.

While conducting this research, I paid close attention to my references; I set myself the goal that 75% of my total references would be either female or non-Western scholars/artists, or both. This is not to meet the *status quo*, or to be "politically correct"; this is because I believe it is important to hear from those who experience being the Other (ethnic others and/or female others). Having references to the lived experience of being other (mainly in a Western world) influences the writing in a way that is not merely abstract or philosophical. The writings of these scholars provided me with multi-dimensional interpretations and approaches of/in locating the ethnic subject, away from placing her in the polarized position of being either a victim or a resister. One of my main references is the cultural theorist Rey Chow. She grew up in Hong Kong and was educated in the US. Throughout her writings, she utilizes her own experiences, as a scholar and a university faculty in the US and as a Chinese woman living in the US, in order to emphasize the importance of the reality of ethnic and racial divisions that exist in not only popular culture (her main analyses are on literature and cinema) but also among intellectuals and the institutions. As Paul Bowman puts in his introduction to *Reading Rey Chow* (2013), her work should not be read only as a tool for cultural studies scholars but also for those who are "thinking

about approaches to *cultural politics* in itself" (my emphasis, 3). Instead of writing only from scholastic research on the notion of ethnicity, Chow questions that very intellectual ambivalence and sometimes self-contradictory state of the current field of cultural studies. She reenforces the reader to be aware of the dilemma between "a universalist rhetoric of inclusion" and "actual lived experiences of violence and intolerance" when thinking ethnicity, visuality and postcolonialism (Bowman, 6). Furthermore, Chow's analyses on popular cultural phenomenons of the recent years do not perpetuate the cliché of the West vs. East paradigm, but rather engage the reader from a perspective of self-claimed ownership of visuality of the ethnic subject. The ethnic subject is no longer an *object* to be looked at but she is now in control of why and how she becomes the *subject* of being looked at. This shift in focus to the ethnic subject's active self-awareness is what makes Chow's arguments and insights refreshing to me. There is a potential danger of falling into "cultural absolutism" when Chow talks about how Chinese diasporic intellectuals are playing a role of cultural "brokers" (1993, 164)[2]. However, this kind of argument is what makes her writings reflective of the lived experience of the ethnic subject in that she is often seen as a static being due to the universalization of her perceived ethnic position.

This self-positioning continues to play an important aspect in studying visibility of ethnicity in artworks; how does the notion of visibility play a part in representing one's ethnic state of being? By having visible ethnic representation in their work, do non-Western artists end up taking part in a set of expectations? I have decided not to revisit well-known artists' works, such as Jin-me Yoon's and Jamelie Hassan's works, whose work have been discussed as

[2] In her book *Writing Diaspora: : Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies* (1993), Chow talks about how to resist the lures of diaspora for the Third World intellectuals in order to reexamine the conditions that non-Western intellectuals in a Western society are allowed in exchange of having visibility in the West. Paul Gilroy presents a counterpoint to such reading of ethnic/cultural absolutism. Gilroy fundamentally discharges the presence of master nation in favour of "anti-essentialism."

examples of how non-Western artists demonstrate their diasporic position. Due to my interest in searching for alternative ways to examine the appropriation of ethnicity in visual artworks, I have decided to look at artists' works in order to challenge the notions of ethnicity such as Ming Wong (who blurs the boundaries between filmic space and reality, and cinematic construction and contemporary art space by utilizing ethnic visibility and the notion of acting), Yamataka // Sonic Titan (who merges diverse cultural references and forms a new image of the ethnic being) and Francis Alÿs (who carries projects in various locations in Mexico and South America as a White European man).

Format (as a methodology)[3]

The overall construction of this written dissertation will be as an artist's book. Artists' books are art objects that take the shape of a book. However, this medium of artwork troubles various conventions: book vs. object, art vs. craft (or design), reading vs. viewing, and so on. What remains to be the most crucial aspect of artists' books is, in my opinion, the relationship between form (material) and content. I am presenting my dissertation research on ethnicity and its constant evolution in the form of an artist's book in order to be able to visually represent the fragmented tendency of my research topic, and promote an active reading practice. For the textual portion of this dissertation, I have put together seven individually bound books, which are then housed in one slipcover. Four of the books represent the following four components — ethnicity vs. race, hyphenation, multiculturalism, and performativity, two are *June on June: a script* and *June on June: a photo album*, and one book contains the Abstract,

[3] In order to follow the York University's set format for the electronic dissertation upload regulation, I have stitched the individual sections as one continuous paper. If you wish to see the original format as an artist book, please contact the Visual Arts Department.

Acknowledgements, Preface, Postscript, and Meta-Bibliography.

Each book investigates different aspects of ethnic representation, from societal views to the ethnic subject's positionality. The above four components are starting points for discussion rather than answers to questions on ethnicity and its application in current intellectual studies. I am treating each book as independent from each other in order to emphasize each component's theoretical route; for example, the "ethnicity vs. race" component is rooted in cultural studies while the "multiculturalism" component is strongly tied to the current Canadian political landscape. One of the artworks, *June on June* project, is present both in a script format and as a photo album. Having this kind of clear presence of artwork within theoretical writings in the other four books reenforces Trinh's "knowledge-without-power" mode of circulation of theory and practice. I am leaving the reading order up to the reader to define or find her own way of connecting the concepts discussed in the books. The only connection between them should be created by the reader's own willingness to make connections. Having said that, I am providing mechanical and conceptual connections between the books: there are footnotes indicating a reference to a specific segment when it is necessary, and there are terms that are repeatedly used throughout the books. I encourage the reader to flip back and forth between books while reading this dissertation; I expect the reader to be an active reader. In order to reflect the complexity of ethnic subjectivity, there should not be a hierarchical relationship between all the elements that are involved in completing this dissertation, including the author and the reader, and the maker and the viewer.

I am on my way to Seoul, Korea. This is my third visit since my family and I immigrated to Canada in 1988. I am sitting in the lounge at the Detroit Airport, waiting for my connecting

flight to Seoul. I am carrying a Canadian passport, but I feel like I am going back home. But, I don't even know how to define "home" anymore. I am very comfortable living in Canada; I am slightly uncomfortable when I'm in Korea. Koreans keep asking "you are not from here, are you?" What makes it so obvious for them to notice right away? Maybe I'm not quite up to date with the current Korean lingo; Maybe I'm not wearing the current trendy outfits. I am not one of them, for sure.

This dissertation is an accumulation of my investigations, questions, concerns, explanations and arguments that motivated my practice-based PhD research in Visual Arts. Each segment elaborates and critiques aspects of ethnic representation. The structure of this paper is deliberately fragmented, an intentional decision on my part in order for the reader to form her own conclusions. I am also posing several questions to the reader throughout this paper. This manner of writing will, I hope, reflect the emphasis on process and the idea of *becoming* that I consistently nurture within my visual work and writings. I am, also, fully aware that there is an unconventional structural flaw, in the constant interruptions to my argument. At times, some of the arguments within each book may appear to be contradicting each other. These contradictions, however, are not a sign of a lack of attention paid to the theoretical components of each book, but rather lead to an intended conflict in order to generate further inquiries. The intentionally imperfect construction of this dissertation reflects the conflicting nature of the debates around ethnicity.

Concepts

In searching for critical methods of articulating ethnic others, that is, modes that move beyond the current state of multiculturalism and globalization, I am delving into the theoretical writings of Rey Chow by focusing in particular on her writings on cultural coevality, mimicry and stereotyping. She emphasizes visual representations and receptions of the Other, not only by the West but by the ethnic others themselves, in order to put forward critically challenging debates on the issues of ethnic others and how the ethnic subject has been portrayed in visual forms such as films and cartoons.

I just got back from Korea after being away for two months. The streets look so empty; I guess I got used to seeing the busy streets of Seoul. It's so strange how fast you get used to one thing. I've lived on this street for the last three years. Now that I have been away for two months, everything looks so foreign to me. I miss the busy-ness of Seoul.

I am particularly interested in the ethnic subject who resides away from their "homeland." The term I adopt in articulating this ethnic being throughout this dissertation is *hyphenated hybridity*. This ethnic subject travels between two (or more) nationalities (in my case, Korean and Canadian) and two (or more) ethnicities (Asian and Caucasian for me), yet she is constantly marginalized as an ethnic being, the Other, part of a minority. In this sense, being labeled *ethnic* refers directly to being non-white, non-Western. In other words, being *ethnic* means being *different,* in terms of a notion that is set by the dominant society. With the introduction of liberalism, ethnic others gained visible recognition in academic disciplines (Ethnic Studies, Postcolonial Studies, Area Studies, etc.), political status (through terms such as

multiculturalism, cultural diversity/difference) and economic/cultural admission (via globalization). However, as Chow points out:

> [W]hat is troubling about liberalism is its often hierarchical relation to the minority others it seeks to affirm and make equal, so that, as these others receive benevolent support for their undertakings, they must at the same time remain subordinate to their (often white) sponsors (154).

Because of this misguided sense of ethnic "equality", it is ever more critical to revisit the use of the term *ethnicity* and *ethnic identity* in the current political and social climate. In my exploration of ethnic positionality and subjectivity through the four components — ethnicity vs. race, hyphenation, multiculturalism, and performativity — I am focusing on the articulation of the ethnic subject's active self-determination beyond its reference as an intellectual and theoretical term.

These four components are expanded and elaborated in each book of this dissertation in order to establish and challenge the current societal, cultural, political and personal narratives of the ethnic subject. In *Thinking Ethnicity Through Visuality and In/Visibility*, I explore the terms *ethnicity* and *race*. I examine and contest the current usage of the term *ethnicity,* as opposed to the term *race,* in light of broadly accepted concepts of cultural diversity in multicultural society. I am highlighting the gap between the liberal, "politically correct", use of the term *ethnicity* and lived experience of racial tension, which, according to Alana Lentin, creates "institutionalized racism" (394). In addition, I am questioning the relationship between theory and practice, established by the visualization process of the *ethnicization/racialization* of ethnic groups. By problematizing how Francis Alÿs' works are viewed as poetic gestures as political tools, while ignoring his privileged ethnic position as a European white man living in Mexico City, I argue

that there is a tendency toward a biased reading of *visibly ethnic (non-white)* artists' work, as being perpetually read through the ethnic lens.

In *Hyphenated Ethnicity*, the concept of *hyphenation* is elaborated in comparison to the notion of *hybridity,* a popular term that was taken up by postcolonial theorists, especially by Homi Bhabha. As a backdrop for the theoretical adaptation of the term *hybridity* and its widespread use in intellectual explanations of the ethnic subject, I problematize the institutionalization of postcoloniality and postcolonial subjects. I have coined two terms in relation to hybridity: *ambivalent hybridity* and *hyphenated hybridity,* in an attempt to clearly state the need for the hybrid ethnic subject's active articulation of her positionality. While *ambivalent hybridity* indicates a tendency, coming from its pre-established theoretical burden, to merge and muddle the conditions of the centre and the periphery, *hyphenated hybridity* sustains a distinctive connection and/or separation between the two entities, in which the subject's ethnic performativity becomes a clear, crucial and conscious constituent in this intellectually harmonious society. By discussing art works by Brian Jungen, Ming Wong and Yamantaka // Sonic Titan, I am comparing "ethnic" artists' approaches in utilizing the notion of ethnic being in this inter-cultural, "globalized", contemporary society.

In *Locating Multiculturalism Between Commodification and Ideology*, I am challenging Canada's well-praised multiculturalism as a national policy and political tagline. In this section, I employ the Tim Hortons' TV commercial *Proud Fathers* (2006) as a central example of how multiculturalism was made to promote the "perfect" image of Canada as a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural society. Discussing the commercial in light of rethinking the application of ethnicity in terms of a commodified object, rather than a self-identified subject, I am borrowing Rey Chow's analysis of *stereotyping* (representational and theoretical) as a means to elaborate the concept of

difference in inter-cultural, multi-cultural society. Furthermore, I am borrowing Jean-Luc Nancy's notion of the *inoperative community*, one that is aware of its conflict and history, to contrast the conventional notion of community as a harmonious unity.

The notion of *performativity* is explored in relation to the formation of ethnic articulation in *Performativity | Ethnicity | Repetition*. Stemming from Judith Butler's feminist theory of performativity, I am connecting the female subject's conscious performative act of *becoming* woman to the process that the ethnic subject undertakes in order to declare or deny her socially assumed ethnicity. In order to establish a conscious decision to demarcate her ethnicity, I discuss the notion of "having a voice" in relation to the process of repetitive performative acts/gestures. In addition, I am investigating the concept of autobiography through the performative act of repetition in Hong Sang-soo's films and my work *June on June: a script*. I am treating the use of repetition not simply as a conceptual and formal construction in the making of artwork but more as a direct element in framing the viewer's understanding of the relationship between the artist and the artwork.

My two visual artworks, *June on June: a script* and *The Invisible Transformation Project*, are going to be presented at a viewing space called 26[4] during the month of August. 26 is the front room of the home of two artists Nicole Collins and Michael Davidson. Being a domestic space, 26 is a modest looking place with one bay window facing the front yard, and a wooden piano in one corner of the room. My motivation for presenting the work in a domestic setting is two-fold. On the one hand, the setting of the venue mirrors the domestic scenes in my *June on June* script. On the other hand, I am hoping the domestic environment will naturally promote conversations among visitors. I have scheduled events for each Saturday that 26 is open to the

[4] 26 is the venue for the dissertation exhibition. It is located in the Beaconsfield neighbourhood of Toronto: http://26artspace.tumblr.com/CONTACT/ABOUT/LOCATION

public. Here is the schedule of the exhibition:

August 2	Performing *The Invisible Transformation Project*: Painting the wall yellow
August 9	A group discussion session on ethnic art and ethnic artist: led by cheyanne turions of "No Reading After the Internet"
August 16	Performing *The Invisible Transformation Project*: Painting the wall back to its original colour
August 23	Last day of exhibition

In addition to performing *The Invisible Transformation Project*, between each coat of paint, I will be knitting a red blanket from the third scene of *June on June*. The room (26) will be filled with the prerecorded soundtrack from the second scene. I would like to present this exhibition as a platform for raising questions and exchanging debates on the issues around invisibility and visibility of ethnicity, not only by being in a familiar domestic setting but also by directly providing an event with the curator and writer cheyanne turions as the facilitator of a "No Reading After the Internet"[5] session. I intend to utilize this space as a place of gathering, not as a place of showing.

[5] *No Reading After the Internet* is a salon series dealing with cultural texts, which are read aloud by participants. The particular urgency of the project is in reforming publics and experimenting with the act of reading, as its own media form, in our moment. (...) Participation in *No Reading After the Internet* is free and open to everyone, regardless of their familiarity with a text or its author. Texts will be handed out at the salon. No pre-reading or research is required. http://noreadingaftertheinternet.wordpress.com/about/

Thinking Ethnicity Through Visuality and In/Visibility

What is ethnicity? How do ethnic subjects define their own ethnic identity in this current multi-ethnic society? During my presentation in the Graduate Seminar class at York University,[6] Mike Hoolboom brought up an interesting observation; while my theoretical framework, in his opinion, presents a macro spectrum of issues on ethnicity and institutionalization, my art work resonates with a personal, micro, voice. Hoolboom's comment echoes my overall research interest that questions the relationship between a universalist theoretical application of ethnicity and a visualization of ethnicity: When you are turning ethnic subjectivity into visual language (in a broad sense of contemporary visual arts — drawing, photography, performance, sculpture, etc.), what does it mean to have visual reference and visual representation? Does having clear visuality increase the possibility of gaining visibility?

In this section, I am going to examine and contest the current usage of the term *ethnicity,* as opposed to the term *race,* in light of broadly accepted concepts of cultural diversity in multicultural society. While popular multi-cultural understanding suggests that ethnic equality has been established, lived experience indicates otherwise. What appears to be an advanced social norm to accept ethnic diversity in multi-cultural society, Etienne Balibar argues, is another form of racism at work, "Neo-Racism." In this new form of racism, the cultural and theoretical formation of ethnicity contributes a new order of hierarchy. With this skewed understanding of ethnicity in our current society, what should be the ethnic subject's position? On the one hand, there seems to be an inclusion of diverse ethnicities through the promotion of multiculturalism; on the other hand, this inclusion limits and categorizes the ethnic subjectivity into an

[6] Centre for Fine Arts, Room 338, November 19, 2013, York University, Toronto.

institutionalized representation that is presumed by the dominant society.

Where does artwork fit in this culture of ethnic diversity? Similar to the debate on ethnicity versus race, should we be content with the inclusion of diverse ethnic artists' work in international exhibitions? Artworks, particularly in the academy, sit in a peculiar position due to the inherent nature of artworks being subjective, in that often artworks are associated often with the artist's personal life and experience. Yet, precisely because of this potential to reflect lived experience by the artist, there is a strong possibility to generate cultural, political and theoretical resistance. This peculiarity of interconnectivity between artwork (in public display) and artist (as the subject of the artwork) can help to bridge the gap between a universalist theory and lived experience of the ethnic subject. If the ethnic artist resists institutional categorization, and is actively involved in articulating decolonization, it is possible to set new definitions of ethnicity and ethnic identity without falling into the entrapment of theoretical slippage and institutional categorization.

I am using Francis Alÿs' work as an example of the potential to broaden our existing definition of ethnicity and ethnic work. He is a white, European man from Belgium, living in Mexico City. His ethnic difference is clearly visible. This difference provides him with the freedom to address social and political issues that are relevant to the current art world and the world at large. If we reverse the circumstance, for argument's sake, and consider a Mexican man living in Belgium and making politically charged work, can he operate as freely as Alÿs without having to response to his ethnic difference or his political work as a result of his ethnic being? This contradiction furthers my discussions on the concept and application of ethnicity and ethnic work. What does it mean to have one's ethnicity visible? Does the visibility limit the potential to establish a self-determined identity?

I. Ethnicity vs. Race: The Good, The Bad, and The Ambivalent

In this so-called post-race era, where we are encouraged to believe that we have achieved racial equality, the term *ethnicity* has come to replace the term *race* in an attempt to establish a "politically correct" view on racial issues. There is a strong belief that we, at least in a multicultural society such as Canada, have accomplished a satisfying result of equilibrium among different ethnic groups. Shifting our attention from racial difference to cultural difference, and using terms such as diverse cultures, cultural inclusivity, and multiculturalism have contributed to the liberal, and by default "politically correct," outlook on racial tensions:[7] "Thinking culturally about difference is the default for not talking about 'race' and avoiding the charge of racism" (Lentin, 394). It is too simplistic to think that the use of the term *ethnicity* solves problems of race and racism, as Alana Lentin argues in her essay "Replacing 'race', historicizing 'culture' in multiculturalism" (2006): "this very need for such a substitute covers up the fact that the hierarchy put in place by racism has been maintained" (*Ibid*.). Under the disguise of multiculturalism, racism and racist acts seem to have disappeared from our civilized society. However, as Paul Bowman indicates in his book *Reading Rey Chow: Visuality, Postcoloniality, Ethnicity, Sexuality* (2013), the discussions concerning ethnicity continue to be relevant because our understanding, and application, of ethnicity "straddles an uneasy boundary between a universalist rhetoric of inclusion on the one hand, and actual, lived experiences of violence and intolerance on the other" (6). Hence, the terms *ethnicity* and *race* should not be viewed with a clear distinction, as if the term *ethnicity* references a culturally reflective and socially advanced state of mind while the old term *race* is associated with the past view on racism and racist

[7] See the "Proud Fathers: Two Fathers' dilemma" section in *Locating Multiculturalism Between Commodification and Ideology* for further discussions on how the concept of *difference* manifest itself as both a problematic and beneficial term in multicultural society.

conflict. I would like to reexamine the connections between the two terms instead of clearly marking the departure from the old to the new, and from the past to the present.

In her book *The Protestant Ethnic and The Spirit of Capitalism*[8] Rey Chow presents various conceptual developments of ethnicity from a utopian perspective to its ambivalent application in terms of its use in political means. One such utopian position is described by Thomas Kylland Erksen:

> Virtually every human being belongs to an ethnic group, whether he or she lives in Europe, Melanesia or Central America. There are ethnic groups in English cities, in the Bolivian countryside and in the New Guinea highlands. (...) the concept of ethnicity can be said to bridge two important gaps in social anthropology: it entails a focus on dynamics rather than statics, and it relativizes the boundaries between "Us" and "Them", between moderns and tribals. (qtd. in Chow, 26)

In this point of view, everyone is ethnic. The boundaries between "Us" and "Them" are blurred. However, this universalist view ignores the common practice of ethnicization of nonwhite groups. For example, in North American universities there is a tradition of compartmentalizing nonwhite groups' social and cultural histories into a discipline called "Ethnic Studies," in which racialized use of ethnicity continues to be in practice.[9] Despite the seemingly noble intent to erase ethnic boundaries, this kind of universalism, marked by an inclusive and liberalist cultural logic, sets up another form of hierarchy with "honorable terms such as 'multiculturalism' and 'diversity'" (Chow, 2002, 29).

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[8] As the title of the book makes a clear reference to Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethics and The Spirit of Capitalism* (1930), Chow sustains her argument on ethnicity based on the Marxist critique of Capitalism.

[9] See "Postcolonialism and Its Aftermath" section in *Hyphenated Ethnicity* for discussions on how the institution turned postcoloniality into an academic discipline called Postcolonial Studies. As a consequence, the political resistance towards the colonial power became universalized and neutralized.

In her analysis of modes of studying ethnicity, Rey Chow summarizes two paradigms: on the one hand, ethnicity is viewed as a 'social invention or construction,' in that it reflects a 'subjective' view on how one is being defined or belongs to an ethnic group; on the other hand, it reflects political engagement, "in particular the injustices against ethnic peoples," in which, Chow elaborates, the politics of ethnicity "tends to take an oppositional approach to the universalist assumptions underlying the first ['subjective'] paradigm" (2002, 31). Despite the differences between the two paradigms, the end result for the ethnic subject is relegation to a "*theoretical stereotype*: an inviolable human subject as such" (32). Stuck between tradition and individuality, on the one hand, and political opposition and resistance on the other, ethnic peoples are being theorized based on an existing system in which ethnicity has already been conceptually commodified. Once the process of commodification is at work, Chow states that it is no longer adequate to ask "How does an ethnic subject come to terms with his or her identity?"; instead the question should be:

> What ideological forces are there, if any, that would enable the individual representative of an ethnic minority to move beyond, or believe she could ever move beyond, the macro sociological structures that have already mapped out her existence — such as, for instance, forces that allow her to think of herself as a 'subject' with a voice, as a human person? (32)

Precisely because of this theoretical tendency to simplify the ethnic subject's positionality in society, that contradicts the initial attempt to generate ethnic equality, Chow believes that discussions on ethnicity needs to be reconceptualized.

According to the liberalist cultural framework, the difference between the use of the terms *ethnicity* and *race* is clearly defined with ethnicity relating to cultural differences while

race is closely tied to one's biological appearance. Although there is an upsurge of doctrines of inclusive cultural diversity, which generates a celebratory mood of ending age old racial debates and existing racism, Etienne Balibar observes the new phenomenon named "neo-racism" as a by-product of neoliberal manifestations of cultural diversity which keeps the dominant society's hierarchy. He elaborates on the recent intellectual tendency of replacing the term *race* with culture by calling it *ethnicity*, in which the debate on race and racism is no longer attached to biological segregation but rather culture and cultural diversity:

> What we see here is that biological or genetic naturalism is not the only means of naturalizing human behaviour and social affinities. (...) *Culture can also function like a nature*, and it can in particular function as a way of locking individuals and groups a priori into a genealogy, into a determination that is immutable and intangible in origin. (emphasis in the original, 22)

Once human relations are explained and understood in terms of cultural diversity, another form of racism penetrates the social consciousness. In order to explain this new phenomenon Balibar borrows P. A. Taguieff's term *differentialist racism*, "racism without races" (21). In this form of "neo-racism," the concept of cultural difference, of allowing diverse cultures to co-exist, has become a means to create another hierarchy that is measured against "the hegemony of certain standardizing imperialisms and against the elimination of minority or dominated civilizations — 'ethnocide'" (21-22). A seemingly harmless cultural construction, by acknowledging different cultures and their diversity in an attempt to eliminate "the superiority of certain groups or peoples in relation to other", began to further differentiate and discriminate cultures that are incompatible with the dominant traditions in this new form of racism (Balibar, 21). Similar to Chow's criticism towards cultural universalism — *everyone is ethnic*, yet there is a distinction

and hierarchy between white ethnic and non-white ethnic groups, Balibar compares *differentialist racism* to "the traditions of Social Darwinism" (26), in which "the assimilation demanded of them [non-white ethnic cultural groups] before they can become 'integrated' into the society in which they already live (...) is presented as progress, as an emancipation, a conceding of rights" (25). The assimilation of ethnic groups into the dominant society is closely manipulated through theorization of ethnicity and institutionalization of ethnic emancipation. Lentin problematizes this kind of institutionalized racism in relation to its top-down model: "like universalist values, cultural difference is *theorized* in relation to a European standard that escapes the relativization that it proposes for others" (394). She argues that the anthropologists' exoticization of non-European cultures resembles the current idea of cultural diversity, as something static within cultural groups:

> The anthropologist claimed that the ideal of a 'world civilization' (…) would only be worth pursuing if each culture were to retain its originality. (…) the only way to ensure diversity was actually to enforce the stratification of human groups according to colonialism's class hierarchies. (387)

In Lentin's reexamination of Franz Fanon's writing, she emphasizes his intentional advocacy for violence "as a necessary stage towards the achievement of national self-determination for the colonized" in order for us to rethink the preexisting hierarchy (392). Some cultural theorists, such as Charles Taylor, see Fanon's advocacy of self-determination as having a foundational impact on furthering racial segregation by promoting the notion of authenticity; as a result, it creates racial "ghettoization" and "communitarianization." However, Lentin states: "Taylor bases his view of identity politics on what he claims to be a search for authenticity in the process of throwing off domination" (*Ibid*.). This view, according to Lentin, ignores the fact that racialized

'communities' are not founded solely on the political action by 'minority groups' but heavily imposed by the dominant society as a means to "protect" the minority's rights. In turn, the notion of cultural diversity becomes a key component in producing another form of racism by those who see the shaping of diversity as an arbitrary mode of living in a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural society, rather than a meaningful and self-activated motivation. Fanon is fully aware of "the impossibility of 'returning' to a precolonial authenticity" (393): 'I wanted to be typically Negro — it was no longer possible. I wanted to be white — that was a joke.' (Fanon qtd. in Lentin, 393). This conscious awareness of the transitory nature of ethnic identity, as opposed to a static image that the colonizer imposes on the colonized, requires a violent shattering of one's image that is detached from the white gaze, the dominant power.[10]

As an example of lived experience, I would like to introduce one academic's struggle. Bryant Keith Alexander, as a dreadlocked Black male professor at an American university, shares his experience of moving from American History class to Black History class as a student in his essay "Black Skin/White Masks: The Performative Sustainability of Whiteness (*With Apologies to Frantz Fanon*):[11]

> As I moved from my American (H)istory class to my Black (h)istory class, I came quickly to understand that these histories were *fashioned* [my emphasis] for different purposes. The exclusion of Black history in my American History class signaled the nature of sustaining Whiteness through a study of Whiteness and the exclusion of the

[10] This shattering violent act is similar to the acceptance of conflict and tension when forming a community. See the "Inoperative Community" section in *Locating Multiculturalism Between Commodification and Ideology* for further analysis on Jean-Luc Nancy's notion of community.

[11] Here, Alexander's use of the word "apology" is not that of a commonly used dictionary definition: a written of spoken expression of one's regret, remorse, or sorrow for having insulted, failed, injured, or wronged another. But rather, he traces back to the Greek origin as *apo-* , "defense," plus *logos,* "discourse," and uses the word "apology" as a justification in this essay (Alexander, 663).

> significant histories of *Others* [his emphasis]. The focused attention on excavating the history of Blacks in the Black history class foregrounded the specified absence of Blackness elsewhere. (653)

In this obvious *presence of absence*, both in an American History class where histories of Others are missing and in a Black history class which is designed specific for the Black students only, Alexander argues that the marginalization of social construction is evident in both extremes. Ultimately, this kind of educational segregation, ghettoization of both Blacks and Whites, echoes the objectification of racial issues that are prevailing in everyday living. As he refuses to further politicize his Black identity, he is often accused of "acting White" by his Black colleagues. As an opposition to this kind of preliminary accusation, and conventional race-based academic studies, he challenges the commonly used notion of "Whiteness": should the notion of "Blackness" or "Whiteness" be limited to the skin colour? Adapting Judith Butler's theory of performativity, he elaborates on the concept of *performing race* in that racial identity should be generated from "a series of meaningfully repeated enactments (acts, actions, and activities)" (655) that is detached from inherent biological skin colour (in Butler's sense, the biologically assigned sex) in order to activate one's own association to race (gender performativity). Instead of viewing being White as what it means to be privileged, he insists that the real privilege comes from the economic or class-based issues, rather than racial divisions (657). Alexander is not promoting a false sense of ethnic equality, as Erksen states that in this post-race era everyone is ethnic, and he is not proposing to sustain the conflict between Blacks and Whites, but rather he echoes Fanon's lived acknowledgement of dual responsibility:

> Both [Black people and White people] must turn their backs on inhuman voices which were those of their respective ancestors in order that authentic communication be

> possible. … It is through the effort to recapture the self and to scrutinize the self, it is through the lasting tension of their freedom that men will be able to create the ideal conditions of existence for a human world. (Fanon qtd. in 664)

Instead of erasing racial tensions by manufacturing theoretically ambivalent or neutral terms such as *ethnicity*, or insisting on segregating racial groups in their authentic, racially homogeneous, groupings, what Alexander articulates, in reflection to Fanon's statement, articulates might lead us to a different place of racial and ethnic discussions beyond the existing parameters of binarism.

II. Visuality and Visibility

W. J. T. Mitchell coined the term *The Pictorial Turn* in order to highlight the important role the image plays in our society. In comparison to Richard Rorty's term *Linguistic Turn*, in which various models of "textuality" — linguistics, semiotics, rhetoric — are the central tools in conceptualizing critical reflections of society, Mitchell declares that there is a shift to the visual in the way we perceive knowledge; he calls this the *Pictorial Turn*. This shift pushes visual representation beyond simply being "a return to naive mimesis, copy or correspondence theories of representation, or a renewed metaphysics of pictorial 'presence'." The pictorial turn is "a postlinguistic, postsemiotic rediscovery of the picture as a complex interplay between visuality, apparatus, institutions, discourse, bodies, and figurality" (1994, 16). In this age of the pictorial turn, the power of pictures is not only limited to what they represent but closely related to "their external relations with spectators and with the world" (324). How pictures get circulated, through painting, film or newspaper, for example, and who and when one encounters pictures are increasingly important aspects to consider (Mitchell, 2005, 294). In his analysis of Spike Lee's

film *Bamboozled* (2000), Mitchell elaborates on Lee's use of racial stereotyping in order to critique popular media's limited representation of Blacks. However, I would like to add Rey Chow's way of examining stereotyping[12] to the interpretation of this film; the main critique in the film is, as Mitchell points out, on the representation of Blacks, but there are other layers of stereotyping, such as the Television entertainment industry, the White boss, the representation of different economic-classes, and so on. With this kind of broader reading of stereotyping, Mitchell's reading of *Bamboozled* as a metapicture — "a picture about pictures, a picture that conducts a self-conscious inquiry into the life of images, … and the way they circulate in media and everyday life" (301), becomes even more poignant.

In his interview with Mitchell, Edward Said talks about his experience working with Jean Mohr on the collaborative photographic essay *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (1999). One of the unique moments for him was when a portrait of an unknown woman that he choose to include in the book turned out to be a friend of a friend; the moment the unknowable became the knowable demarcates the sensation of recognition of the slippage between the known and unknown. This experience described by Said, in my opinion, echoes what he illustrates throughout his book *Orientalism* (1978). The unknown, the Orient, the Other, has been fetishized by the West through representations (literature, painting, etc.). Ironically, the shaping of the people of the Orient's identity is not absolutely independent from a repertoire of images; mostly simplified, generalized stereotypical images, of the Orient made by the West, and distributed by the mass media. These constructed images influence people from the Orient in forging their own identity. The people of the Orient constantly negotiate their visibility between the known (their

[12] In Chow's writing on stereotyping, she reminds us that stereotyping cannot be seen only as a bad practice of misrepresentation and/or over-simplification of one race. Rather, she puts emphasis on the power dynamic during the process of stereotyping. See the "Stereotyping in the Inter-Cultural Relationship" section in *Locating Multiculturalism Between Commodification and Ideology* for further discussions on the concerns around stereotyping.

own culture) and the unknown (their culture being represented through the West). The meaning of "being visible" should not be understood only as having visual representation but as the process of visualization in terms of an on-going power exchange.

In her analysis of traditions of Hollywood cinema, Laura Mulvey discusses objectification of the female body through the male gaze; the female body is "to-be-looked-at" by the male spectator. This critical investigation of the female body in Mulvey's essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975) is pivotal in film history not only because it brings forth a strong feminist stance on the female body, but more importantly it breaks the film's presumed "innocent" and "neutral" state as a medium of entertainment. By critiquing the presence of gender hierarchy in filmic space, Mulvey reveals the connection between *filmic visuality* and the weight of *gendered visuality* within a patriarchal society:

> Mulvey succeeded in doing something that her fellow male critics were uninterested in doing — prying the filmic image open and away from its hitherto spontaneous, reified status and reinserting in it the drama of the ongoing cultural struggle between men and women, the drama of narrative coercions and ideological interpellations. (Chow, 2007, 7)

As the focus in theorizing and analyzing film has been increasingly involved within the critique of the image's production, film critics expand the interrogation of gendered visuality into other types of social queries such as class, race, ethnicity and so on. In this expanded film theory, the notion of spectatorship is another critical adaptation of Mulvey's articulation of "to-be-looked-at-ness": "the politics of gender and sexuality (together with the politics of race, class, and ethnicity) was, in fact, none other than the politics of commodified media spectacles" (*Ibid*., 10). In this massive production and circulation of images, not only by the West but within non-

Western societies, the condition of visibility for ethnic groups takes on a complicated web of spectatorship. Chow extends the implication of "to-be-looked-at-ness" to : "the state of being looked at not only is built into the way non-Western cultures are viewed by Western ones; more significantly it is part of the *active* manner in which such cultures represent — ethnographize — themselves" (emphasis in the original, 1995, 180). Rather than demonizing ethnic spectatorship, Chow sees it as the site of a *productive* relation between ethnicized subjectivity and the ethnicizing process (Gagnon, 128-129). Instead of accepting the "ethnicized" spectator as a predetermined and homogenous being, who is without self-criticality, this alternate view of ethnicized spectatorship provides a means to visualize ethnicity beyond what is visible. Chow states that "becoming visible is no longer simply a matter of becoming visible in the visual sense (as an image or object)." More importantly it is "a matter of participating in a discursive politics of (re)configuring the relation between center and margins, a politics in which what is visible may be a key but not the exclusive determinant" (2007, 11). Considering the huge upsurge of popularity of Asian cinema in recent film history, it would be too exclusive and irrelevant to permanently locate ethnic cinema in the position of "to-be-looked-at-ness" in the spectatorship dichotomy between ethnic cinema and the western viewer, but it is necessary to consider additional layers of relationship between ethnic film and the ethnic viewer, and western cinema and the ethnic viewer.[13]

Stuart Hall poses this question: "Who needs 'identity'?" He believes the concept of decentering would help to understand the relationship between subjectivity and identity. In the process of decentralization, Hall considers a reconceptualization of the subject more crucial than

[13] See the analysis of Tim Hortons commercial *Proud Fathers* in *Locating Multiculturalism Between Commodification and Ideology* for further discussions on the default way of having an ethnic representation in popular media, in which another circulation of simplified visualization of ethnicity continues to perpetuate.

an abandonment or abolition of the subject; thinking in its new, displaced or decentred position within the paradigm, "[i]t seems to be in the attempt to rearticulate the relationship between subjects and discursive practices that the question of identity recurs" (16). He emphasizes that the process of identification is "conditional, lodged in contingency. ... a process of articulation, a suturing, an over-determination not a subsumption", rather than something static, a proper fit, a totality (17). Instead of seeing identity as one unity, a cultural essentialist view, it is more productive to think of the formation of identity as a *temporal* meeting point for the subject and discursive practices of society. Trinh T. Minh-ha further articulates the concept of ethnic identity as self-determination, the idea that the subject carries her own motivation, by utilizing a notion of difference, not as a conflict and separatism but rather as a powerful practice to articulate one's subjectivity beyond and alongside conflict:

> If the act of unveiling has a liberating potential, so does the act of veiling. It all depends on the context in which such an act is carried out, or more precisely, on how and where women see dominance. Difference should neither be defined by the dominant sex nor by the dominant culture. So that when women decide to lift the veil one can say that they do so in defiance of their men's oppressive rights to their bodies. But when they decide to keep or put on the veil they once took off they might do so to reappropriate their space or to claim a new difference in defiance of genderless, hegemonic, centered standardization. (1988, n.p)

The new difference could also seen as a gesture against westernization. The emphasis, yet again, is on the subject herself. When she accepts her otherness as a difference, "[o]therness becomes empowerment, critical difference when it is not given but recreated" (*Ibid*.).[14] It is important for

[14] This notion of self-determination is reflected in the "Performative Ethnicity" section in *Performativity | Ethnicity | Repetition* with reference to Gayatri Spivak's essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

self-determined resistance to be generated for the purpose of the ethnic subject's identity formation in her own methods, not from the imposition of others. The motivation to gain visibility or deny visibility similarly should come from the ethnic subject's own decision to partake of or resist the existing system. However, one thing that is crucial to keep in mind is that the decision should be made from a well researched and fully understood position, that is knowing what it means to take off the veil or put it back on as an ethnic being.

III. *The Invisible Transformation Project*

April 29 - May 2, 2013
Special Projects Gallery, York University
Toronto, Canada

From April 29 to May 2, 2013, I painted a wall at the Special Projects Gallery at York University. It was a simple act: to paint the wall in yellow and then paint the wall back to the original white. Even though it was somewhat mundane, I paid rather close attention to *how* I was doing the job at hand. I posted a daily schedule of the painting outside the gallery for those who might be interested in checking out my "performance" throughout the week. I spent a significant amount of time completing each layer of paint. Between each coat, while the paint dried, I read aloud sections of *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies* by Rey Chow.

When someone walks into the gallery now, or anytime after May 2, the yellow coat of paint is *invisible*. Instead, you are faced with typical white gallery walls in the space as if nothing has happened. To those who did not see the process, the existence of the yellow paint underneath is unknown. The fact that the laborious hours of painting the wall yellow has now disappeared from sight is the point of departure for me; the yellow is hidden, invisible, but the wall is

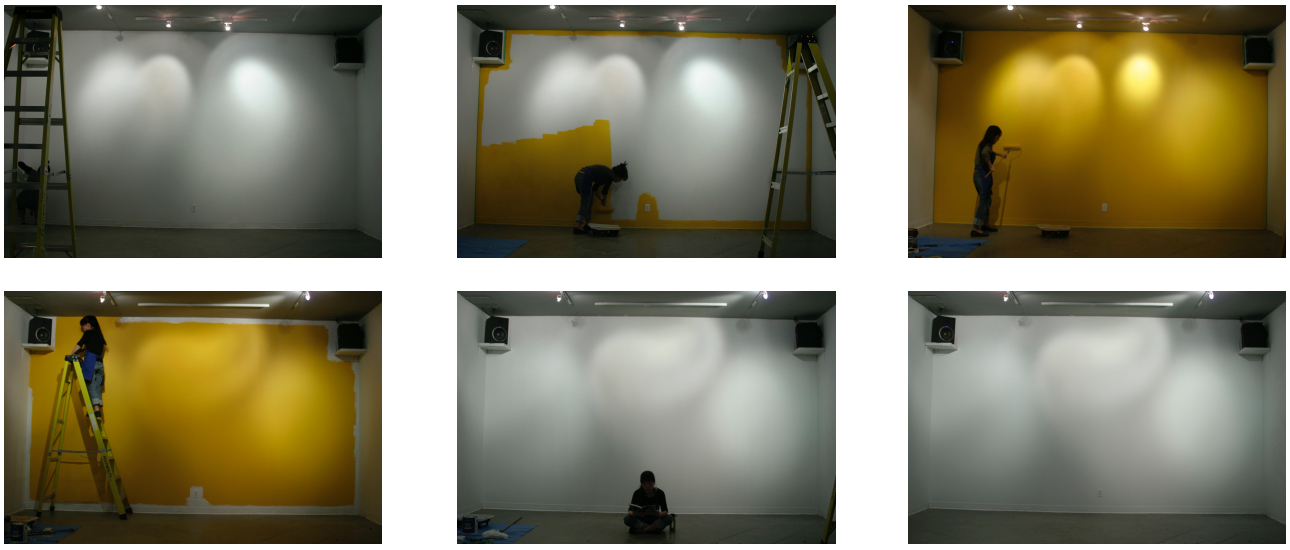

Figure 1
The Invisible Transformation Project
Special Projects Gallery
York University

permanently marked by the yellow paint. However, just because it is not visible, can we ignore its transformation? The invisibility of the yellow layer, covered by the wall's original white, echoes my inquiry on the hyphenated ethnic subject's positionality in this multi-ethnic, multi-cultural society: what does it mean to be *visible* for those who are visibly different from the dominant group?[15] The label "visible minority" demarcates the difference, a clear indication of racial difference from the majority. If one resists to be categorized, it seems that it would be a better solution to be *invisible*; to blend with the rest. However, this has a danger of being criticized as being "assimilated" or "white-washed." How should the ethnic subject deal with this dilemma?

On the one hand, remaining *visible* requires the ethnic subject to be in the periphery, to be

[15] See "Proud Fathers: Two Father's Dilemma" section from *Locating Multiculturalism Between Commodification and Ideology* for further discussions on what it means *to be different* — different from the dominant group, visually and culturally.

the Other. Borrowing Neil Bissoondath's words: "To accept the role of ethnic is also to accept a gentle marginalization, it is to accept that one will never be just a part of the landscape but always a little apart from it, not quite belonging" (Bissoondath qtd. in Wood and Gilber, 683). Accepting a designated place for ethnic artists and playing the given ethnic role in the mainstream art system, according to Rasheed Araeen, resulted in the categorization of "ethnic work."[16] On the other hand, if the ethnic subject decides to erase the visibility of ethnic difference, if that is possible at all, she would be accused of being too "Westernized." However, Rey Chow argues that keeping the cultural binarism between West and non-West perpetuates the deadlock of the anthropological situation where non-Western subjects remain victims of the Eurocentric imperial power dynamic. In her example of Chinese critics' attack of the internationally renowned Chinese filmmaker Zhang Yimou's films, as "selling oriental exoticism to a Western audience" (1995, 176) by revealing China's "dirty secrets" to the outside world (202)[17], Chow warns us that this kind limited interpretation of non-Western artists' work (Chow is referring specifically to Chinese films) as pandering to the West ends up being stuck in "reductive permutations of the two terms — East and West." Instead, she urges us to see both (East and West) as "full, materialist, and most likely equally corrupt, equally decadent participants in contemporary world culture" (195). This view echoes Hall's assertion of temporality in ethnic identity formation opposed to a static set of defined ethnic beings.

The Invisible Transformation Project (2013) stems from my previous work *Paint Job: social exchange between art and everyday* (2004-2010). For both works, I used the same colour

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[16] See the "Institutionalization of Postcoloniality" section in *Hyphenated Ethnicity* for further articulation of Araeen's concerns.

[17] Zhang's early films that were part of this criticism are *Red Sorghum* (1987), *Ju Dou* (1990), *Raise the Red Lantern* (1991); all these films are set before the Chinese Communist Revolution, and portray a female character who overcomes the social and cultural oppression through discovery of her own voice and sexuality.

swatch, *Algonquin Autumn,* manufactured by CIL. The name of the colour holds an important place in this work. It suggests the idea of the Great Northern Ontario landscape and its pivotal role in the Group of Seven's paintings, and the underlining reflection on Canadian cultural identity. The name also references the Algonquin peoples who have been dislocated and dispersed to surrounding areas. The land claim negotiations continue to agitate the government with very little result. What the Aboriginal peoples, members of one of the founding nations in Canada, have to go through to restate their rights is a clear indication of the unbalanced power play between the European and non-European peoples within Canada.[18]

In preparation for *Paint Job*, I presented the colour swatch, *Algonquin Autumn*, to those who are interested in participating in my project. Once they picked a colour from a selection of swatches, I would bring the paint to their home and "perform" the paint job. At the end, the participant would end up with a chosen colour swatch painted on one wall in their home. I then took a picture of the wall with the square as a documentation of the performance. While performing *Paint Job* at various homes, there were many social exchanges — from a one-on-one conversation with a friend I had not seen for years to backyard BBQs with strangers. This act of "self-invitation" to various Canadian homes is an intriguing play on the idea of ownership as an immigrant from Korea; I, the outsider, bring a piece of Canadiana (a "symbol" of Algonquin Park) to Canadian homes. For *The Invisible Transformation Project,* the idea of "self-invitation" is a bit more subtle. This time I am "inviting" myself to a public space. The gallery, a typical white cube, has dominated art history, and "ethnic" artists have played the role of the Other in

[18] See "*Proud Fathers*: Two Fathers' Dilemma" and "Is Multiculturalism Well-Packaged Idealism?: ~~Asian~~ Ethnicity in Canadian Television" sections in *Locating Multiculturalism between Commodification and Ideology* for further discussion on nation and national identity.

this history.[19] I see this work as a subtle gesture of invading that space and leaving an "ethnic" mark with yellow paint, a permanent mark despite its apparent invisibility. I have done another version of this "painting and unpainting" project in the past. The first time I undertook this act was at The Khyber Centre for the Arts in Halifax in 2004.[20] The yellow paint is permanently left on Khyber's Ballroom gallery wall. In August, 2014, for my PhD dissertation exhibition, I am going to perform another version at 26, a front room turned viewing space by artists Nicole Collins and Michael Davidson in their Toronto home.[21] This time, the location is not an institutional (Artist-Run-Centre or university gallery) site but rather a domestic space. This space and I are both on the fringe of the mainstream art system. Perhaps, this is how one can resist typical labeling and categorization. In addition, repeating the same act of painting a wall in yellow, then painting it back to the original wall colour could be interpreted as a tactical performative act of inserting my ethnic self into everyday Canadian life.[22] If the colour yellow, represents me, referring to a derogatory term for Asians, does the overpainted white colour represent the whites, the dominant race? It could be precisely due to the existence of the invisible colour behind the wall, and *knowing* that there is another layer of colour behind the white wall, that possible exchanges and dialogues can be generated between the maker and the viewer.

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[19] See the "Postcolonialism and Its Aftermath" in *Hyphenated Ethnicity* for further discussion on institutionalization of ethnicity.

[20] The "Khyber version" is entitled *Renovation 2.* For this version, I videotaped the entire act, then edited down to a forty-eight minute long video. For the duration of the exhibition, I projected the video in a continuous loop back onto the same wall that went through the "painting and unpainting" process.

[21] You can find more about 26 here: http://26artspace.tumblr.com/

[22] Another interesting interpretation of this repetitive act comes from a friend of mine, Andy Patton. In his analogy, Andy compared my repetitive acts (not only in this work but as an overall theme in my work) to the story of Penelope in Homer's *Odyssey.* In the story, she intentionally unstitches a death shroud for her father-in-law at night in order to keep her suitors at bay since as soon as she finishes sewing the shroud she will have to marry one of the suitors. Just like marriage would finally settle Penelope's place, a unwanted place, Andy sees my use of repetition as a delaying method for having to settle into a designated place in the ethnic/cultural landscape. Also, see sections III & IV in *Performativity | Ethnicity | Repetition* for discussions on the form of repetition, not only as a formalistic structure but also as a means to assert one's identity and subjectivity.

Therefore, acknowledging the process of being "invisible" could be seen as the catalyst for progress, change, self-determination and active articulation.[23]

IV. Sometimes Being Invisible Leads to Visibility: The Paradox of Francis Alÿs[24]

It is interesting to examine Francis Alÿs' work and his position as an immigrant, in contrast to other artists who are dislocated from their homeland, either as a political exile or as an immigrant. Alÿs is a trained architect from Belgium who now lives in Mexico City. He first came to Mexico after the great earthquake in 1985 as part of the French assistance program. After completing the service in 1989, he decided to stay. Once Alÿs settled in Mexico City, he left his trained profession as an architect and started making art works using various mediums (photography, drawing, painting, video) and often collaborating with local people.

His position as an outsider activates the work with political meanings instead of burdening it with the label "ethnic work" that is often attached to work by ethnic artists.[25] T. J. Demos suggests that it is precisely Alÿs' status as an outsider which facilitates "his position as mediator of conflicts" (*FA,* 179). Although the exiled subject is often viewed as someone who "engenders a 'double perspective' on the world, since the displaced person gains a bi-cultural

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[23] However, there is a dilemma: what if one does not know that there is a layer of yellow paint behind the current wall colour?; without knowing the existence of the yellow paint underneath, and the history of the wall's transformation, the dialogue and/or debate that I intend to have cannot occur. While the work is presented, there will be a sign next to the empty wall with the work title. This could work as an entry point for the viewer to inquire further questions about the work. But, what if someone walks in outside of the "exhibition" duration? The wall will look like just a wall. There might even be something hanging on the wall. This dilemma provides me two possible ways to think about the work: On the one hand, I could hope for an oral relay of the story of the wall's transformation. On the other hand, I think the wall (and the reception of it) is a reflection of our current cultural climate where *visibility* automatically refers to having a representation.

[24] The title of this section is taken from one of Francis Alÿs' acts entitled *Paradox of Praxis 1 (Sometimes Doing Something Leads to Nothing)*.

[25] See the "The Institutionalization of Postcoloniality" section in the *Hyphenated Ethnicity* segment for the discussion on Rasheed Aareen's concerns on "ethnic work" in the mainstream art system.

knowledge by virtue of living in another place," Demos positions Alÿs slightly differently within this double perspective: "For Alÿs, that double perspective might be better stated in the negative: he is no longer European, and not quite Mexican either" (*Ibid*.).[26] This position, a double-negative status, allows Alÿs to escape the fixity of culture and develop his own language, his 'poetic license', in order to travel between the political and the poetic. My own position as a hyphenated being — *neither* fully Korean *nor* Canadian — echoes Alÿs' liberation from cultural (and perhaps, ethnic) "freedom," as he states in this interview:

> I think also that my status as an immigrant freed me from my own cultural heritage — or my debt to it, if you like. (...) It provided me with a kind of permanent disjunction (...) an enormous sense of freedom and an open-ended time frame to build a language, an attitude, away from a world and culture that I saw as saturated with information (*FA*, 178).

However, my status as a hyphenated being existing between non-white ethnicity (Korean) and a white nationality (Canadian) is less flexible in terms of generating a sense of freedom for myself; I am constantly "asked" to choose a side between being Korean *and* Canadian, or be Korean *or* be Canadian. I am not suggesting that we should categorize Alÿs' work as another type of ethnic work. Rather, I am questioning how his works are received foremost as political and poetic; could he have achieved this without his privileged position as an European white man?; Could a Mexican artist living in Belgium making critical works about the Belgian way of living be perceived the same way, that is, beyond his ethnicity, race and nationality? Can ethnic (non-white) artists sustain their criticality through works beyond the ethnic lens?

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[26] See the "Studying Through Hybridity: *Ambivalent Hybridity* and *Hyphenated Hybridity"* section in *Hyphenated Ethnicity* for further discussions on hyphenated subject's positionality.

Alÿs' art practice can be traced back to the Conceptual Art tradition, in that he does not make work as a commodity or an object to be looked at, but as a process, a doing. A series of small performative acts (walking, for example) that he undertakes on the streets of Mexico City (and many other cities around the world) are mundane and banal. When one catches Alÿs in the middle of his small acts, it is possible one may not notice him or not know that he is making art. But that is not important to Alÿs. In *Turista* (1994)[27], for example, he is standing among Mexican workers who are lined up outside the railings of the Metropolitan Cathedral in Mexico City, looking for work. While the Mexican workers are holding up signs saying "Electrician", "Plumber", "House Painter," etc., Alÿs is holding up a sign that reads "Turista." In his short description of the work, he says "On 10 March 1994 I went to the Zócalo and stood in a line of carpenters, plumbers and house painters, offering my services as a tourist" (*FA*, 61). He is bluntly and obviously displaying his ethnic difference, as well as his social status as a tourist. Among manual workers he is offering his expertise as a professional observer. The contrasting image of a white "tourist" and Mexicans who are looking for work represents the economic division in the region, as well as the impact of globalization in world economy.

In *Paradox of Praxis 1 (Sometimes Doing Something Leads to Nothing)* (1997), he pushes a block of ice for over nine hours straight until there is only a small puddle of water left. His futile act of pushing a block of ice around the city alludes to the seemingly unproductive hardship in the region. The ongoing theme of labour and productivity that Alÿs has been exploring is, again, apparent in this act. In a video documentation of the act, we see everyday life in the city: the local people carrying on with their daily routine, kids running around (some follow Alÿs around with the block of ice), dogs sniffing around the city, etc. Amongst all these

[27] As often it is the case for Alÿs, *Turista* is a photo documentation of the act.

activities, he is spending roughly about the same amount of hours, as others at work, engaged in a useless activity of pushing a block of ice, not for the purpose of sales of ice (it is common sight to see the similar blocks of ice being delivered to local businesses every morning) but for the obvious result of letting it melt away. This unproductive act is "a parody of the massive disproportion between effort and result in much of Latin American life" (*FA*, 82), another observation that Alÿs makes as an outsider. His role is often described with the term *flâneur*; his aimless wandering around cities resembles "a heuristic figure in our comprehension of the modern city by Walter Benjamin and Michel de Certeau" (Schøllhammer, 145). This is another sign that Alÿs' presence in Mexico City is that of a privileged European man, who can spare free time to walk around the city to observe and contemplate without any specific plans, who can spend close to nine hours pushing around a block of ice until it melts away to nothing.

Let me bring your attention back to my initial question: Can ethnic (non-white) artists sustain their criticality through works beyond the ethnic lens? Before I attempt to answer this question, I would like to consider the imbalanced reactions that Rey Chow presents in the Cultural Studies field:

> [A] white person sympathetic to or identifying with a nonwhite culture does not in any way become less white. Similarly, a white critic choosing to dedicate himself to the study of a nonwhite literature remains firmly rooted in his own ethnic identity, and no one would dream of faulting him for being insufficiently American, English, French, or German simply because he has become intellectually interested in Africa, Asia, or Native American traditions. (2002, 117)

However, if an ethnic (non-white) person becomes sympathetic to or identifies with cultures other than her own, "she would (…) be deemed a turncoat (one that forgets her origins)." But if

she chooses to perform her own ethnicity in her work, "she would be considered a turncoat, this time because she is too eagerly pandering to the orientalist tastes of Westerners" (*Ibid*.). While non-ethnic (white) artists' works can be viewed and appreciated in terms of what the artist is trying to communicate through the work, be that of political messages, social commentaries, or poetic contemplation, ethnic artists' works must go through a qualifiable measure of just the right amount of ethnic flare — not too ethnic, just ethnic enough. Ethnicity is not her natural being (being Asian, African, or Native American, etc.) but a burden for her to carry around; perhaps she should push this burden around the streets of Toronto until it disappears from our sight.

In his video work *El Gringo* (collaboration with Rafael Ortega, 2003), Alÿs is using the camera as a shield between himself and the local dogs as the dogs attack the intruder, the artist, the foreigner. This work is the most overt representation of his own position as an outsider, not simply as an observer but as a unwanted intruder. It is a rare occasion in which we do not see Alÿs in his work. The entire video is shot from the camera's point-of-view, which, in turn, invites the viewer to take the position of the person behind the camera. Is he asking us to share his position as the invader? His position as an outsider is now imposed on the viewer. Perhaps this is a solution to going beyond the discussions of ethnicity in art work; when the artist is invisible in the work, the visibility of the artist's position becomes more clear and evident.

Hyphenated Ethnicity

I consider myself a hyphenated being: Korean-Canadian. The hyphen allows the two ethnicities to co-exist; whether it functions to connect the two (Korean *and* Canadian) or negate the two (*neither* fully Korean *nor* Canadian), its presence draws attention to the existence of the two ethnicities within one self. In addition, when the hyphenation is between the non-Western origin (Korean) and the Western ethnicity (Canadian), the power dynamic between the two agitates the complexity of this particular hyphenation.

Prior to examining the critical and cultural manifestations of the hyphenated being, however, I would like to bring our attention to the current theoretical, social and cultural dilemma that the hyphenated subject faces. In order to do so, it is crucial to re-examine postcolonialism, as it is one of the theoretical backbones of the debate between the centre and the periphery. I will outline how postcolonialism has lost its political vigour in exchange for having its place in mainstream academia, in relation to the recent political and economic phenomenon *vis-à-vis* globalization and neocolonialism under the West-dominant values of capitalism. Mainstream academia and postmodern intellectual discussions have diminished the political attitude that postcolonialism initially embodied into an academic discipline called Postcolonial Studies. As an academic discipline, intellectuals of the West began to dominate the discourses surrounding the *Other*, the non-western subject, under the guise of equal representation *for* marginalized groups. As a result, once meaningful terms relating to issues around race and ethnicity, such as *hybridity, difference, diversity, identity,* have now become mere keywords in relation to international exhibitions, symposia and academic curricula. In contrast to the popular adaptation and acceptance of these terms on an intellectual level, the issues surrounding ethnic

marginalization have not been resolved in our everyday life, as racial tension continues to exist in political and economic levels between countries, often within one nation between ethnic groups. I am particularly interested in the positionality of the hybrid being - the one who is in the *in-between* state, the one who negotiates the West and the non-West.

In this segment, I am going to differentiate between two kinds of *hybridity*: *ambivalent hybridity* and *hyphenated hybridity*. I have coined these neologisms, in order to clarify my elaboration on the understanding of a new "breed" of hybridity. While *ambivalent hybridity* has a tendency, coming from its pre-established theoretical burden of postcolonialism, to merge and muddle the conditions of the centre and the periphery, the term *hyphenated hybridity* keeps a distinctive connection and/or separation between the two entities. I am going to focus my discussion on art works by Brian Jungen, Ming Wong and Yamantaka // Sonic Titan in terms of the ethnic subject's positioning of the self in this inter-cultural, "globalized", contemporary society.

I. Postcolonialism and Its Aftermath

Is *postcolonialism* still a relevant term? In her politically charged book *The Politics of Postcolonialism: Empire, Nation and Resistance* (2011), Rumina Sethi observes the tendency of the institutionalization of postcolonialism as a global pressure on postcolonial studies to serve another form of colonization, namely *neocolonialism,* in order to keep its place in academic curricula:

> Postcolonialism finds itself in a particular predicament today: it purports to be a liberatory practice but it remains nevertheless coeval with modes of oppression, particularly after its appropriation within the United States' university curricula. (5)

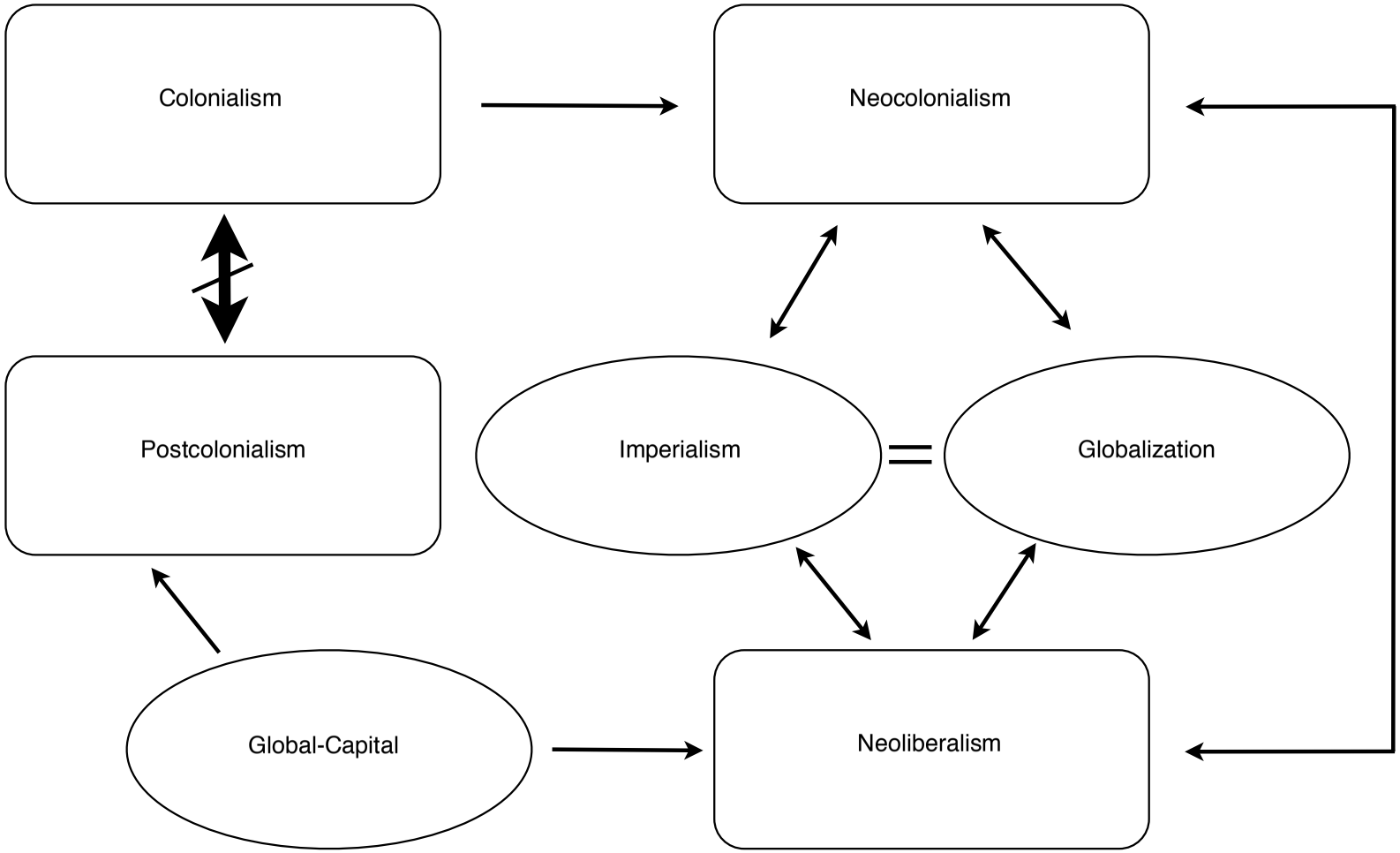

Diagram 1
Interconnectivity: Colonialsim/Postcolonialism/ Neocolonialism

As for the use of the prefix "post", postcolonialism seems to have taken on a different route than other "post" intellectualisms that clearly stand in for opposing theoretical and intellectual understandings in relation to its predecessor, as with poststructuralism and postmodernism. Postcolonialism can be understood as a linear progression from colonialism, as well as declaring meaningful resistance towards the clear binarism to which colonialism abides: the colonizer and the colonized, the East and the West, the Center and the Periphery. However, many postcolonial scholars and cultural studies intellectuals question this progression from colonialism to postcolonialism, as the shift is not so clearly distinctive as it might seem. Sethi emphasizes the impact of US imperialism as a major influence in the development of postcolonial studies, an academic discipline which, in a way, defeats the political ideology that postcolonialism originally embodied. Rey Chow echoes Sethi's connection of US imperialism to postcolonialism/ postcolonial studies by identifying globalization as another form of invasion, which resulted in creating yet another form of oppression. She particularly examines neocolonialism as another form of colonization, through a specific East Asian lens: "how imperialism as ideological domination succeeds best without physical coercion, without actually capturing the body and the land" (*Diaspora*, 8). Many East Asian countries were not territorially occupied by European colonial possessions, yet the influence of US imperialism is prevailing in those countries. As the global power shifted at the end of the Second World War from Europe to the US, *neocolonialism* perpetuated the power dynamic and imposition of Western values on non-Western countries through economic and cultural domination. Different from the previous political tension between the colonizer and the colonized, the shift in power comes from the economic pressure of neocolonialism, that has gained its currency from the widely integrated view on transnational globalization (see Diagram 1).

Ella Shohat questions a chronological progression of postcolonialism in asking: "[w]hen exactly ... does the 'post-colonial' begin?" (103). There is a range of components to consider in order to answer this question, such as geographical, political, not to mention economic aspects of a nation. In this sense, the use of the term 'post-colonial' cannot universally demarcate the end of colonialism. She even suggests, controversially, that the term "Third World" should replace the "post-colonial" as "the term 'Third World' contains a common project of (linked) resistance to neo/colonialisms. Within the North American context, more specifically, it has become a term of empowerment for inter-communal coalitions of various peoples of color" (111). There is a clear disconnect in that the term "post-colonial" has lost its political weight and has become a "diplomatic gesture" (99) in academia. In answering Shohat's question concerning the temporal location of the "post-colonial", Arif Dirlik adds his own partially facetious interpretation by referring to how "Third World intellectuals have arrived in First World academe" (52). He continues:

> [T]he popularity that the term 'postcolonial' has achieved in the last few years has less to do with its rigorousness as a concept, or the new vistas it has opened up for critical inquiry, than it does with the increased visibility as intellectual pacesetters in cultural criticism of academic intellectuals of Third World origin. (1997, 53)

Dirlik and Shohat both problematize this kind of inclusive propagation of postcolonial conditions, in which the theorization of postcoloniality circulates and re-establishes "the reconfiguration of earlier forms of domination" instead of challenging and resisting the pre-set world order that has been privileged by EuroAmerican[28] modernity (*Ibid*., 54). From the

[28] The term "EuroAmerican" refers to the combined dominance of Eurocenrism and US imperialism. It is a problematic term, in my opinion, as the word "America" stands for the US; America is a continent formed by many other countries, yet a common use of "American" referring to the US citizens is another example of the dominant power that the US play in modern history.

criticisms by the above scholars, it becomes evident that the institutionalization of postcolonial discourses produced disconnected, self-referential and over-generalized pseudo political theoretical formulations that essentialized subjectivities of the Other.

Then how did the West, particularly the US, manage to take over postcoloniality and adapt it to the university curricula so successfully? One of the main reasons that the US has succeeded in appropriating the thesis of postcoloniality, according to Sethi, is due to the falsified view of what is called American 'exceptionalism,' a belief that the US started its history "on a clean slate after the earliest white settlers had moved to North America" (93). This view promoted the misconception of an equal beginning for all races, unlike the embedded colonial power that Britain must bear in moving ahead in modern history. With this "clean" slate, the globalized world view promoted equality that has evolved from the previously divided world view in terms of power distribution. In its modern usage, the term *ethnicity* has shifted from referencing the minority to being a term of inclusion for all of humankind. As Chow states: "a term [ethnicity] aimed at removing boundaries and at encompassing all and sundry without discriminating against anybody." This shift in view is symptomatic of liberal theoretical applications that blur racial tension and boundaries "with their transhistorical, transcultural, and transracial tendencies" (Chow 2002, 25). When this kind of liberal equality dominates academia, mainly Western institutions, a broader applicable net of postcoloniality spreads to the Western world. I am not insisting in keeping the binary structures of Western and non-Western world, or the distinction between First and Third World; rather, my concern is that this kind of construction ends up resulting in artificial formulations of a neutralized global balance of power. It is premature to celebrate the collapse of colonial binarisms due to dubious results that only "work" in theory. Ella Shohat expresses her skepticism:

> Since the experience of colonialism and imperialism is shared, albeit asymmetrically, by (ex)colonizer and (ex)colonized, it becomes an easy move to apply the "post" also to First World European countries. (...) the "post-colonial" can easily become a universalizing category which neutralizes significant geopolitical differences between France and Algeria, Britain and Iraq, or the U.S. And Brazil since they are all living in a "post-colonial epoch." This inadvertent effacement of perspectives (...) results in a curious ambiguity in scholarly work. (103)

In his essay "The Postcolonial Aura", Arif Dirlik brings forth another answer to Shohat's question — "When exactly ... does the 'post-colonial' begin?" — by proposing this time, a less facetious answer: "with the emergence of Global Capitalism" connecting East and West, Centre and Periphery; "the one is a condition for the other" (73). He is careful to avoid the obvious blaming of the West as the dominant power over all non-Western countries, as the term Global Capital is rather a fluid one, indicating "borderless economy." For example, the East Asian Confucian revival is a good indication of alternative voices at work along the metanarrative of Western capitalism.[29] Ironically, however, for this non-Western cultural hegemony to be effective, "its boundaries must be rendered more porous than earlier, to absorb in its realm alternative cultural possibilities which might otherwise serve as sources of destructive oppositions." Regardless of how some critics proclaim "that the 'communitarian' values of 'Confucianism' may be more suitable to a contemporary managerial capitalism than the individualistic values of an entrepreneurial capitalism of an earlier day" (75), at the core of the ascendancy of Global Capitalism is the ever-present existence of Western (EuroAmerican)

[29] In East Asia (especially in China), the Confucian values were used as an alternative way to combat the western dominant capitalism after the Chinese Revolution. Confucianism, once relegated by the Communist Party for its association with bourgeoisie, "has been brought out of the museum once again" (Levenson qtd. in Dirlik, "Culture Against History", 172). This revival was a quest for finding East Asian values among the Eurocentric trend of globalization.

values. Let me bring your attention back to my initial question; Is *postcolonialism* still a relevant term? The answer is yes, more so than ever. Being tangled in the web of Global Capitalism, that "seeks to perpetuate older hegemonies in a new guise, a reincarnation of United States imperialism" (Dirlik, "Culture Against History", 173), it is ever more urgent to engage *postcolonialism* from the politically resilient side of the term.

II. Institutionalization of Postcoloniality

Sethi elaborates clearly the distinction between postcolonialism and postcolonial studies. She refers to the former as "a condition of living, a practice, a political belief or set of political beliefs that come into effect in a situation of oppression through marginalization" (6). In this sense, when we use the word postcolonialism it differs from simply referring to a chronological flow, as a time period after colonialism, but rather it should indicate a state of mind and a political attitude; it should provoke activism and resistance regardless of spatial and temporal applications. For the latter, postcolonial studies/theory, she refers to "a discipline that was set up to examine the literature of political protest and resistance among people of the third world, but which has come to represent university curricula abounding in issues of hybridity and multiculturalism"(*Ibid*.). The initial political resistance of fighting back against Western dominance has turned into another form of marginalizing the Other. She continues:

> When postcolonialism enters university curricula as postcolonial studies, which includes a range of topics such as the problematic of language, history as representation, nation as monolith, constructions of gender and race, multiculturalism, hybridity and the diasporic sensibility, it is seen as part of *the west's agenda to undermine the margins*. (my emphasis, 60)

As Postcolonial Studies, an academic discipline, established its place in Western academic institutions, the marginalized and oppressed once again became commodified within the discourse of the Other. In order for the West to dominate cultural and theoretical models, non-Western writers and artists' works were grouped together and taught in postcolonial studies departments at universities through the specific lens of postcolonial theories. As Rasheed Araeen, artist/curator and founding editor of *Third Text*, points out in his essay "A New Beginning: Beyond Postcolonial Cultural Theory and Identity Politics," Edward Said's analysis of the conditions of the postcolonial subject's exile has become synonymous with all those non-white immigrants in the West "through its institutional appropriation" (9). Said's writing on exile comes from his personal experience. Said eloquently places a transgressive mode of repositioning the postcolonial subject's location within the mainstream, Western- central world order:

> Edward Said's exile is a genuine exile, and his articulation of the experiences of this exile is part of the struggles of the Palestinian people. What is most significant here is that Said has used these experiences to look at the system which has caused this exile (…) When Said talks about displacement, he is not indulging in the rhetoric of loss but reveals a condition of modernity, which is both negative and positive. (…) The exiled subject therefore does not operate from a position of loss or as a victim, but from a position from which he/she can locate him/herself in the world as a free subject and change it. (…) [H]e does not expect any sympathy but he puts the sympathiser on the spot so that he can critically engage him/her in a process of change. (Araeen, 8-9)

Instead of retaining Said's original intention of articulating the criticality of the exiled subject, "the idea of exile has become a fundamental pillar of postcolonial cultural theory" in which

Said's analysis of the exiled subject became universalized (9). Working with established intellectual and theoretical readings of the Other, institutions began to appropriate artworks by non-Western immigrant artists in the West by attaching the universal conditions of exile to artworks. Araeen expresses his frustration towards art institutions and intellectuals, in particular their simplified application of theoretical readings of postcoloniality with respect to artworks. This one-sided understanding of art works by non-western artists leads to another form of suffering and marginalization for these *ethnic* artists, in that their art works are understood and read through the pre-subscribed and scholastic theories that are "approved" by the institution:

> I [Araeen] do recognize Said's difficulty here: he cannot respond to this appropriation by the art institutions (which include both the art promotional institutions and the academy) because he is not concerned or sufficiently engaged in the discourse of art. ... He [Said] gives an impression that there is no serious ideological struggle in art. (9)

This frustration felt by Araeen is echoed in Rumina Sethi's plea for more engaging scholarship from postcolonial studies:

> [F]or the decolonized world, there is nothing 'post' about colonialism and that the issue of identities, in terms of representation, race and gender, is still not resolved. Yet the term 'postcolonial' has replaced 'colonial' so rapidly, it is as though political decolonization marked the cessation of economic and cultural domination as well. As a consequence, the employment of the 'post' in academic circles and its absence in the world outside has been observed and criticized, bringing theory and practice head to head. (59)

By presenting the relationship between the minority and the majority as a theorized and intellectual exercise of fair exchange, the academic adaptation of postcolonial discourses in its scholastic construction generated a larger gap. In a different way than its predecessor

"colonialism", which drew a clear distinction between the colonized and the colonizer, as well as the conflict between the two as that of the oppressed and the dominant, postcolonialism served to oppose this kind of binary. However the subtle invasion of "neocolonialism," which parallels US imperialism, blurs the boundaries in favour of a false sense of coevality that is prevalent in a globalized society. Sethi seeks ways for ethnic subjects to articulate their own identity, to resist global power, to act against "neocolonialism" and US imperialism by presenting problems with the existing theoretical models that institutionalize the political motivation behind the conditions of postcoloniality. Taking cues from her thought-provoking and urgent plea to challenge the ruling system, and Araeen's observation of the power imbalance in universalizing ethnic artists' work through theoretical readings, I believe it is time for the ethnic subject to re-articulate and re-position her political subjectivity.

III. Studying Through Hybridity: *Ambivalent Hybridity* and *Hyphenated Hybridity*

I love football (the real kind, not the American kind). I would get up super early or go to bed really late, just so I could watch the games during the 2002 FIFA World Cup (co-hosted by Korea and Japan). I cheered for Korea; one day, I even went out to Little Korea in Toronto to celebrate with other Koreans for the joy of a dramatic win over Italy. Every time when I sat in front of the television, I was fully involved in cheering for *my* team. Then, I wondered: "what if Canada was playing Korea. Who would I cheer for?" I asked a friend, who came to Canada when she was nine: "which country would you cheer for?" She, without a doubt, said Chile, her *home* country, a country she has not revisited for over twenty years. We both thought that was strange: why this affiliation towards a place that we had left long ago? Nostalgia, perhaps? But what is more interesting was that we both said we would cheer for Canada if we were back *home*,

watching a game between either Korea vs. Canada or Chile vs. Canada. Is this the dilemma that the hybrid subject must endure: not belonging to the place where you currently live? Or is this something we, hybrid subjects, have to accept as an inevitable circumstance of being *in-between*? What does this do to our sense of identity? I refuse to cave in to universalized and generalized descriptions — displacement, dislocation, homelessness — of the hybrid subject. In contrast, I have, rather, a strong sense of identity; I am neither fully Korean nor Canadian. I am a new "breed" that does not have to belong to one or the other.

The term *hybridity* has established its theoretical position and cultural relevance, popularized through the writings of Homi Bhabha. In the recent sociopolitical scene, the widely used term *Glocalism* exercises this notion of cultural hybridity, as the slogan says "Think globally, act locally". Gao Shiming, one of the curators for the Guangzhou Triennial 2008 and a theoretician of contemporary art in China, brings forth the shortcomings of *cultural hybridity*:

> As a concept within cultural criticism, hybridity *eliminates* the tension and conflict between identification and difference and between homogenization and heterogenization, as though all intricate contradictions and differences are recognized. But the question is, does cultural hybridity suggest the possibility of a new mode of cultural production? . . . One might say that hybridity is becoming a synonym for a confused, abstract, mixed notion of culture that is not bound by values. More importantly, hybridity no longer signals the production and negotiation of difference, but, rather, is a rough generalized describing [*sic*] on a present situation. As such, it *disguises* dialogue and struggles between different cultures in the global-local context. (my emphasis, n.p)

Gao emphasizes the one-sided economic flow in the global-local transnationalism, in which the notion of cultural hybridity plays a major role in re-packaging global hegemony. In his example

of the recent Hollywood animation film *Kung Fu Panda* (2008), regardless of the many signs as to the director's sincere tribute to Chinese culture with the use of Chinese terms such as *shifu* (master), the tribute to classic Hong Kong action cinema with the references Jackie Chan and Stephen Chow, and illustration of Chinese landscape and architecture, Gao concludes: "no matter how much we emphasize the Chinese influence of *Kung Fu Panda*, the fact remains that China is still an object … a typical example of representation of the Other" (*Ibid*.). However, the appropriation is not just one-sided; he brings our attention to the Hollywood influence on Jackie Chan and Stephen Chow, and Hong Kong cinema's practice of copying Hollywood films in order to sell them back to China. In this cultural hybridity, with the strategic marketing of Global Capital, the relationship between cultural production and consumption is becoming ever more complex.

While Gao points out the economic all-inclusive use of cultural hybridity, Ella Shohat alerts the reader to the on-going generalization and over-simplified application of hybridity in its political applications:

> Negotiating locations, identities, and positionalities in relation to the violence of neocolonialism is crucial *if* hybridity is not to become a figure for the consecration of hegemony. As a descriptive catch-all term, 'hybridity' per se *fails* to discriminate between the diverse modalities of hybridity, for example, forced assimilation, internalized self-rejection, political cooptation, social conformism, cultural mimicry, and creative transcendence. (my emphases, 110)

In this quote, she highlights the *conditional* use of the term hybridity; it is only possible to keep its resistance towards colonization in the current sly circumstances that neocolonialism and globalization have created "if hybridity is not to become a figure for the consecration of

hegemony."

Rasheed Araeen criticizes the popularity of the postcolonial theoretical framing of hybridity, particularly by Homi Bhabha: "[i]t would be no exaggeration to say that his [Bhabha's] notion of hybridity is most influential today, not only among the young artists of Third World origins but also among art writers and curators, who are now collaborating with art institutions in the West in the promotion of what can be described as postcolonial exotica" (12). It is this "collaboration" between art institutions and artists that concerns Araeen; not only do non-Western artists feel as if they have to play their ethnic "identity card" to gain a place in Eurocentric art history, but institutions and artists alike are hiding behind this theoretical safeguard. In addition, attitude is that as long as non-Western artists remain as an "authentic" other and "postcolonial exotica", the postcolonial subject will continue to be a relevant player in dominant culture.[30] This tendency presents another example of how the institutionalization of postcoloniality has shaped the power dynamic in favour of the West. It is important to keep in mind that it is not the term itself that is in question, but rather the usage and understanding of it which need to be reexamined. As a different way of studying the positionality of *hybridity*, I am proposing that we use a new term, *hyphenated hybridity,* in order to put the emphasis back on the decisive nature of the hybrid subject.

The function of the hyphen, grammatically, is to connect two words in order to clarify meaning or create new words. Also, by adding the hyphen the meaning of the word can become different from what it was without the hyphen; for example, while *postcolonialism* refers to an ideology, *post-colonialism* indicates a clear chronological trajectory as in after colonialism. The need to keep the hyphen relies on the desire to sustain the meaning and connection that is created

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[30] see the "Performative Ethnicity" section in the *Performativity* | *Ethnicity* | *Repetition* segment for further discussion on "authentic" native.

by having the hyphen. For example, the hyphenated ethnicity of Korean-Canadian is different from the autonomy of either Korean or Canadian. The desire to keep the hyphen, in the above example, reflects the desire to maintain the visibility of the two ethnicities, within one self, whether that means being Korean *and* Canadian, or *neither* fully Korean *nor* Canadian. In this hyphenated hybridization, two entities of ethnicity must be actively articulated in order to identify whether the hyphen is representing the function of connection (in the case of it becoming an *and*) or negation (in the case of becoming a *neither nor*). In this active articulation, it becomes clear that the intentional joint or disjoint of two ethnicities reflect the hyphenated subject's positionality. I am reluctant to identify myself as existing in a binary construction within one side of the hyphen being the ethnic self and the other side representing the cultural being, for example ethnically Korean and culturally Canadian. In order to explore *hyphenated hybridity*, I am going to compare it with another term, *ambivalent hybridity,* which is tightly connected to Homi Bhabha's theoretical terminologies *ambivalence* and *hybridity.*

In his short essay "Of Mimicry and Man: The ambivalence of colonial discourse," Bhabha elaborates on the concept and conditions of "colonial mimicry" as an ambivalent relationship between the colonized and the colonizer. Bhabha emphasizes the inherent nature of mimicry in that a mimic man (the colonized) can never represent the original (the colonizer), only resemble aspects of the original, by borrowing the Lacanian concept of mimicry: "The effect of mimicry is camouflage (...) It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled" (Lacan qtd. in Bhabha, 121). Bhabha explains that colonial mimicry is "the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other"; the colonized goes through a process of transformation — adopting a new language, converting to Christianity by reading the Bible taught by missionaries, wearing modern (i.e. Western) clothing, but

remaining as a "civilized" Other. The colonial mimicry will only produce *"a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" (emphasis in original, 122). What makes Bhabha's concept of mimicry complex, not simply as an imitation that does not quite become the original, comes from his notion of *ambivalence* in shaping the sense of colonial mimicry. In order to maintain "the dominant strategic function of colonial power," it is crucial for the colonizer to maintain the ambivalent state of mimicry; "mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference" (122-123). In this state of ambivalence, the dominant authority controls and alienates "its own language of liberty and produces another knowledge of its norms". The ambivalence of mimicry keeps its slippage between the "mimicry and mockery" (123) of its colonial subjectivity. Bhabha's reference to Charles Grant's essay "Observations on the state of society among the Asiatic subjects of Great Britain" (1792), explains clearly this "partial" presence of the colonial subject that is carefully (or fearfully) formed by the colonizer's ambivalence, exercising the dominant authority:

> Grant's dream of an evangelical system of mission education conducted uncompromisingly in the English language, was partly a belief in political reform along Christian lines and partly an awareness that the explanation of company rule in India required a system of subject formation ... Caught between the desire for religious reform and the fear that the Indians might become turbulent for liberty, Grant paradoxically implies that it is the 'partial' diffusion of Christianity, and the 'partial' influence of moral improvements which will construct a particularly appropriate form of colonial subjectivity.... In suggesting, finally, that 'partial reform' will produce an empty form of 'the *imitation* [Bhabha's emphasis] of English manners which will induce them [the colonial subjects] to remain under our protection'." [Grant qtd in Bhabha] (124)

In this sense, the state of ambivalence comes with the form of authority; hence my use of the term *ambivalent hybridity* reflects this sense of authority, in which the centre's controlled transformation, while shuffling between mimicry and menace, limits and shapes the formation of the periphery's subjectivity.

Bhabha directs our attention to Franz Fanon when he talks about the hybrid subject: "For Fanon, the liberatory people who initiate the productive instability of revolutionary cultural change are themselves the bearers of a hybrid identity" (55). However, while Fanon's writing resonates with his own struggle as a non-French Frenchman — "I am speaking here on the one hand of alienated (mystified) blacks, and on the other of no less alienated (mystifying and mystified) Whites" (12), Bhabha's theoretical framing provides the sense of flexibility and independence as "[t]hey are now free to negotiate and translate their cultural identities in a discontinuous intertextual temporality of cultural difference" (55). In this newly established identity as a hybrid being, the colonized can now occupy his/her own space, a Third Space. It is in this theoretical space that the recognition of the spilt-self, the mimic man that is "*almost the same, but not quite,"* accepts an "*inter*national culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity."* He further emphasizes that "it is this 'inter' — the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *inbetween* space — that carries the burden of the meaning of culture" (emphases in the original, 56). Bhabha is providing a conceptual, theoretical, space for the hybrid subject to reside in the hope of escaping ambivalent colonial mimicry. However, can this be achieved if colonial ambivalence continues to exist?

IV. Case study 1: Brian Jungen's *Prototype for New Understanding* (1998-2005)

In his sculpture series *Prototype for New Understanding* (hereafter *Prototype),* Jungen, born and raised in British Columbia, Canada by a Swiss-born father and a Dunne-za First Nation mother, cuts up Nike Air Jordan shoes and transforms them into traditional Northwest Coast Aboriginal masks. By combining representations of two cultures into one mask—Nike Air Jordans representing the current Western consumer culture and the aboriginal mask depicting his own cultural background— Jungen is setting up a clear merging of two cultural influences in this work.

Ever since the term *hybridity* was coined by postcolonial theorists, in order to provide a new position for the marginalized, it has become a popular concept. Homi Bhabha's theoretical examination of the hybrid colonial subject, in particular, is the most widely adopted application of hybridity in use in the contemporary art milieu. Despite the empowering gesture of the term, as the cultural theorist Nikos Papastergiadis points out, notions of hybridity have been closely examined and criticized due to the polarized debate between "the utopian promises of a new cultural harmony and the apocalyptic declaration of an unending colonization of the imagination." Papastergiadis argues that, out of these binary divisions, "there needs to be a third position [resembling Bhabha's articulation of the Third Space] from which it is possible to grasp both the uneven formations of identity and the creativity in contemporary society" (47). He makes reference to a number of international exhibitions that deal with the re-examination of hybridity as a theme in (re)defining culture and identity: Documenta XI in Kassel (2002), Border Panic in Sydney(2002), and ARS 01 in Helsinki (2001). He suggests that the concept of hybridity has to be revisited in order to reflect changing cultural and global mobility. He states:

Hybridity has been a much abused term. It has been both trapped in the stigmatic

> associations of biological essentialism and elevated to promote a form of cultural nomadology. My concern is to intervene in these extreme positions and present an alternative theoretical model that can address the ambivalence towards fixity and mobility in contemporary culture. (39)

Papastergiadis continues his effort to revitalize the concept of hybridity in contemporary art by analyzing Brian Jungen's *Prototype* in the *ARS 01* exhibition. According to Papastergiadis, this weaving between the two cultures (the local and the global) "was deliberately staged to refute the claim that either polarity has a monopoly on authenticity and novelty." From Jungen's intentional use of the "made in China" labels and laborious craftsmanship that represents indigenous peoples' skills, Papastergiadis claims that *Prototype* is "a metaphor for the linguistic and epistemological processes of hybridity" (44).

In this work, however, the question that I want to address is not whether or not Jungen's weaving of the local and the global is constructing a new understanding of hybridity, as this kind of inquiry is too simplistic. Rather, I want to problematize his use of aboriginal, cultural and historical tropes; to be specific, his appropriation of Northwest Coast Aboriginal masks as a non-Northwest Coast Indian. When *Prototype* was first exhibited, Jungen presented the masks with painted murals of line drawings done by non-Native people who participated in the artist's pseudo "fieldwork" study, which asked the participants to draw their idea of Native art; results are "lone braves, drunken Indians, and totem poles, along with a few earnest renderings" (Hopkins, 11). Being paired up with representations of Native art done by non-Native people, Jungen's masks are caught in the endless cycle of cultural stereotyping: drawings by non-Native people rendering stereotypes of Native art and culture; masks made by a Native artist repeat another form of stereotyping of Native tradition. In this cyclical predicament, is he

mimicking other's stereotyping of his own culture in order for others to see the ridiculous nature of stereotyping — to borrow Blake Gopnik's words "they seem only to satisfy crude Western clichés of what native art looks like and means" (2005, n.p) — or is he simply presenting a postmodernist view on globalized identity?

Rey Chow utilizes Bhabha's theoretical readings of postcolonial subjects in order to elaborate on her notion of the second level of mimeticism, which is a much more sophisticated and psychologically nuanced theoretical level than the first level of mimeticism: "Rather than simply lacking, the colonized is now seen in terms of *desire* to the white, which exists concurrently with the shame accompanying the inferior position to which she has been socially assigned" (2002, 105). The reason that the colonized becomes a *desirable* entity in this level of mimeticism is due to its intellectually seductive notion of being *in-between*. Bhabha's framing of the colonized in a state of fluidity between the dominant and the periphery provides possible duality of the hybrid subject, one that is no longer stuck in the binary of Self and Other but "the otherness of the Self" (44). In contrast, Chow sees this kind of theorization as an extension of neoliberalism: "[c]onsciously or unbeknownst to herself, and vacillating between black and white, the colonized subject is now pluralized and multiplied in a poststructurally informed, neoliberalist manner." Backed up by theoretical ambivalence, this kind of hybridity mimics "the dominant modes of articulation" that are already inherent in the "productivity of colonial power" (2002, 106). What appears to be a revolutionary shift in the theoretical construction of postcolonial subjectivity still remains within the fabrication of dominant culture.

Jungen's *Prototype* illustrates well balanced and intellectually dialogic cultural references in any combination of the following: aboriginal and Western (White), traditional and modern, authenticity and globalization; yet there is no sign of conflict between the two cultures in this

work.[31] In this sanitized cultural hybridization, the conflict between the dominant and the periphery is minimized, with one keeping a safe distance from the other. By including his cultural reference into the mix of the critique of current consumer culture, Jungen is presenting Native art and tradition as a relevant part of postmodern conditions. In his catalogue essay "Money Changes Everything" for Jungen's survey exhibition "Strange Comfort,"[32] Paul Chaat Smith extends his appreciation for Jungen's intentional inclusion of aboriginal culture to the rest of contemporary issues: "His interest in totems and masks from that region is a comment on what critic Charlotte Townsend-Gault called 'wallpapering of habitas: the incorporation of Native imagery into the vast heaving mass of ephemeral and disposable forms' of Western culture" (6). "Jungen is not a Northwest Coast Indian," Smith writes. As a non-Northwest Coast Indian, Jungen intentionally references aboriginal masks from a region that he is not from, as a gesture of aboriginal cultural tropes being used as another form of consumerism (6). In this sense, categorizing Jungen's work in the context of cultural hybridization is limiting the work's possibility to be a representation of contemporary society's consumer culture.

Since it seems Jungen is less interested in participating in the articulation of his ethnic identity, as he puts more emphasis on material manipulation than what the eventual form represents, I wonder why, then, he produced *Prototype* with such a clear appropriation of his own cultural references in this "white-washed" manner. I dare to say that *Prototype* might have been a brainchild of the theoretically ambivalent hybridity in which the institution's understanding of ethnic representation is limited, and the categorization of non-White artists is commonly

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[31] This kind of harmonious representation of two opposing cultures is similar to the Chinese family coming to terms with their generational gap in the hockey rink in the Tim Hortons commercial *Proud Fathers.* See the "Inoperative Community" section in *Locating Multiculturalism Between Commodification and Ideology* for further discussion on the concept of community.

[32] At the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, October 16, 2009-August 8, 2010

practiced; that there is an implied need to carry a "cultural identity card" in order to enter mainstream cultural institution and art history (Araeen, 16).

V. Case study 2: Ming Wong's *Life and Death in Venice* (2010)

Ming Wong is no stranger to the world of cinema; he has appropriated various elements of cinematic language in his work over the years. Wong has used historic Singaporean film motifs in his large scale installation work *Life of Imitation* (2009), inspired by a scene from Douglas Sirk's *Imitation of Life* (1959). Appropriating other director's films is a reoccurring methodology in Wong's work: a few examples are Malaysian director P Ramlee's *Four Malay Stories* (2005), Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* (1972), Pier Paulo Pasolini's *Teorema* (1968) or Wong Kar-wai's *In the Mood for Love* (2000). In all the above films, the artist performs all the characters in the various original languages of the films. This act of imitation is not an attempt to perform the authentic characters from the films that he is referencing, but rather it reveals the awkwardness of the cheap props and mistakes he makes in pronouncing different languages for each work (Maerkle, n.p).

In Wong's *Life and Death in Venice* (2010), however, the use of an existing film goes beyond the discomfort of amateur acting, particularly at the level of awkwardness that comes from recognizing an Asian man playing two European characters, and the collapse of time in this projected space. Unlike other previous remake projects, there is no conversation in *Life and Death in Venice*. Wong relies solely on the visual representation of the characters. For this self-directed video remake of Luchino Visconti's *Death in Venice* (1971), which is a film adaptation of Thomas Mann's famous 1912 novella of the same title, Wong plays the two main characters, the aging composer Gustav von Aschenbach and the young boy Tadzio. Even with costumes, hair

and make-up, it is obvious that Wong's Asianness cannot be disguised; in a way, his playing two Europeans heightens his Asianness or his 'unfit' ethnicity. Wong's overtly fake mimicry returns the racial conundrum back to the viewer, much like the critical viewer might feel a great degree of discomfort watching the black character Gus being played by a white actor wearing black paint on his face in D. W. Griffith's 1915 classic *The Birth of Nation*. This time, though, Wong is intentionally engaging in ethnicized spectatorship, but not in the way that Manthia Diawara describes "resisting spectatorship" or bell hooks' "oppositional gaze" in problematizing the black spectatorship in white dominant cinematic history.[33] Rather, Wong's racialization/ethnicization of himself echoes the "excitement" that Fanon describes sitting in a Parisian film theatre, waiting for *Tarzan* to start: "I cannot go to a film without seeing myself. I wait for me. In the interval, just before the film starts, I wait for me. The people in the theatre are watching me, examining me, waiting for me. A Negro groom is going to appear. My heart makes my head swim" (Fanon qtd in Gagnon, 126). Gagnon emphasizes that the setting, the French viewing context, heightens Fanon's (dis)identification process. In the grandiose setting of the 53rd Venice Biennale, inside the Singapore Pavilion, Wong is projecting himself into European bodies for the international viewer.

In Rey Chow's examination of cultural mimicry and stereotyping, she presents three levels of mimeticism: the first level of mimeticism is closely related to Western imperialism and colonialism, in which the ethnic subject sees the white man as the original; the second level

[33] Gagnon, "The Persistence of Spectatorship", 123-124. In her analysis of this kind of 90s readings of racialized spectatorship, she sees them as being "programmatic" and "uniform and homogenous." (125)

interrupts this one-sided admiration (the black man's longing to be the original, the white man)[34] and accommodates neoliberalism's urge to generate an ambivalent relationship between the colonized and the colonizer; and the third level is what she calls "coercive mimeticism," in which the motivation behind mimicry is no longer based on the desire to become the white man, or the ethnic tension is no longer within the dominant vs. the minority. In this third level, the original is no longer the white man or his culture "but rather an image, *a stereotyped view of the ethnic*." The minority is expected to "resemble and replicate the very banal preconceptions that have been appended to them" in order to "authenticate the familiar imagings of them as ethnics" (my emphasis, 2002, 107). In this level of mimeticism, the ethnic and cultural hybridization comes from an acute awareness of ethnicity by the ethnic subject. She voices her plural subjectivities; she is mindful of cultural formulations of her ethnicity; she is hyphenating her elements of hybridity, making the connection, the hyphen, visible.

Unlike Aareen's observation of the ethnic artist as a passive and defenseless being under cultural domination, Chow perceives this *self-mimicry* as an active self- productivity: "[i]n order to be, this ethnic must both be seen to own her ethnicity and to exhibit it repeatedly" (112).[35] Chow invites different ways of visualizing ethnicity that challenge preconceived understandings of ethnic subjects in postcolonial divisions between the dominant and the minority, the particular and the universal, and the local and the global. In her discussions of politics of representation in cross-cultural society, Chow sees that the third mimeticism, coercive mimeticism, can offer a

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[34] In her analysis of the first level of mimeticism, Chow relies heavily on Fanon's writings, hence the reference to black vs. white. While she is making her contrast between the first level and the second level of mimetiticsm clearly, I think it is important to point out Chow's reading of Fanon's work, in order to fit as an example of premature adolescent stage of mimeticism, is slightly too simplistic and overlooks the contradictions that he elaborates during the process of longing.

[35] The importance of performativity and repetition is indicated here. See the sections II-a and III-a in *Performativity | Ethnicity | Repeition* for further analysis on the use of repetition in relation to self-determined ethnic identity formation.

mechanism/methodology/pedagogy if the ethnic subjectivity is represented with conscious self-referentiality.

The entire structure of *Life and Death in Venice* points to the *inauthenticity* of visuality. As you walk towards the work, you are faced with a fake, aged looking poster of the "film" *Life and Death in Venice*. Behind the red curved curtain structure, a small monitor with Wong at the piano, playing the soundtrack of the original film Gustav Mahler's *Adagietto* (1904), leads the viewer inside. As one follows the curved wall of the curtain, the viewer comes to a space with two screens facing each other, with each character projected on each screen. In his intentionally flawed performances, it is obvious that he is not a professional. Wong wanders around the streets of Venice in 2010, as both von Aschenbach and Tadzio, visiting the same locations from the original 1971 film, which depicts a story set in 1912. Passersby in Wong's video contradict the time period that the film is meant to represent. The film's original locations are now exhibition sites for the Venice Biennale, where contemporary art works are on display. The collapse of time is, again, obviously presented. Wong's inauthentic remake of the 1971 film places the viewer in the position of confronting and acknowledging the fictitious nature of the work.

In Wong's *Life and Death in Venice*, hyphenation plays a crucial role in breaking the expectation of watching a "film." It exists between his "Asianness" and his inability to portray European characters; between the filmic space of Venice (triggering the viewer's recollection of the original film) and the present Venice (which is what appears in his work); between the art space of the Venice Biennale venues and the real space of the streets of Venice. It is in those gaps of awkward connections, or I should say by making the awkwardness obvious for the viewer, that Wong is inserting his own discomfort of being Asian in a Eurocentric art world. Wong's hybridization of ethnic and cultural references is not simply a self-actualized or self-referential

act, but further engages in keeping the tension between the ethnic and the ethnicized; unlike theoretically structured and performed *ambivalent hybridity,* in which the dominant and the minority are keeping an intellectual distance from each other, *hyphenated hybridity* promotes the tension between these differences and motivates the subject's articulation of the difference.

VI. Case study 3: Yamantaka//Sonic Titan

When you are watching a stage performance by Yamantaka//Sonic Titan (hereafter YT// ST),[36] as they enter the performance venue with a homemade paper lion, resembling the long, elaborate and decorative lion from the Chinese Lion Dance (except their lion is in black and white), you notice right away that they are not going to be subtle about their cultural appropriation. The lead singer Ruby Kato Attwood makes a dramatic entrance to the stage wearing a white head piece made out of cheap plastic zip ties. All members of the band are wearing black outfits and kabuki theatre-like white face make-up. Yet not everyone is as dramatic as Attwood, with a full-on lace gown. The cultural mash-up is not only apparent in their visual display but also evident in their use of different ethno-musical instruments such as a Tibetan prayer bell, an aboriginal drum and so on. They also use home-made instruments, alongside regular rock instruments: guitar, keyboard and drums. Borrowing a short text from the band's web site, "YT // ST is an Asian, Indigenous and Diasporic Art Collective"; which is the band's ethnic spectrum and, in a way, represents a new landscape of the mixture of ethnicities in Canada. In the formation of the band's identity, they utilize "the poorly appropriated styles of Noh, Chinese Opera, Chinese, Japanese and First Nations Mythology, Black & White Television, Psychedelia & Rock Operatics into a sensory feast of nigh-monochromatic costuming, unique

[36] The following description of their performance is my personal observation from the January 18, 2013 performance at the Garrison, Toronto.

hand-built musical instruments and their own mangaesque cardboard 'NEVERFLAT' style of 2.5D set design" (ytstlabs.com). Their debut album, *YT//ST* (2011), a mixture of different musical genres, received critical attention from *Pitchfork*, a leading online indie music publication: "volcanic prog-rock colored with equal parts post-punk urgency, stoner-metal heft, and psychedelic pop whimsy" (Berman, n.p). In addition to Berman's description of their mash-up of different genres of music from different eras and origins, they employ sound making similar to Buddhist meditation chanting. Their lyrics are incomprehensible for the most part. Their use of voice is another sound making instrument. In both their musical and visual amalgamation of cultural references, they do not provide you with any specific point of origin. Their intentional blurring of ethnic boundaries confronts conventional images of ethnic subjects, not to mention ethnic *female* subjects[37]. They express their intention to "replace colonial representations of ourselves and our histories with our own *self-identification*" (my emphasis; http://paperbagrecords.com).[38] This ethnic declaration by YT//ST extends Chow's third mimeticism beyond self-referentiality; what they are articulating is nothing that is familiar to us. Their mesh of different ethnic references and cultural adaptation/appropriation conclude in a new form of hyphenation that defies any conventional expectation of ethnicity. Their self-identification and self-ethnicization are not an attempt to portray authentic ethnicity, as often expected by western audiences. They ethnicize themselves in a way that is not clearly definable; which ethnicity are they performing? What is their ethnic foundation?

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[37] The core members of YT//ST are female: Ruby Kato Attwood and Alaska B. They do collaborate with various musicians who are male and transgender on a project and performance basis. Refer to the "Performativity of Artist/ Performativity of Art Work" section in the *Performativity | Ethnicity | Repetition* segment for further discussion on the gender subjectivity and her performative sense of *becoming*.

[38] "Yamantaka // Sonic Titan", Paper Bag Records, accessed January 10, 2013, http://paperbagrecords.com/artists/yamantaka-sonic-titan

The above questions do not need to be answered. Chow talks about the interpellation of the ethnic subject as "an ethnic person's practice of internalizing a cultural stereotype of herself" (2002, 108). Expanding from Louis Althusser's concept of *interpellation*, in which the subject is being hailed by the various apparatuses of civil society, she elaborates the process of self-referential (confessional) internalization of ethnicization during the interpellation process.[39] As she explains it is through coercive mimeticism, Chow's third mimeticism, that the ethnic subject performs her own ethnicity — "Asianness," "Arabness," and so on — in order to meet social and cultural expectations, not necessary forced but expected. What makes the ethnic subject mimic her own ethnicity or answer to the hail, "Hey, You! Korean," is that "only by answering such a call, only by more or less allowing one's self to be articulated in advance by this other, symbolic realm, can one avoid and postpone the terror of a radically open field of significatory possibilities ... *terror of complete freedom*" (emphasis in the original, 2002, 110).

In their multiple ethnic hyphenation, YT//ST ignore society's interpellation. They are not afraid of *not* belonging to a pre-set group that is socially endorsed. They are embracing the complete freedom of being hyphenated: *neither* ethnic (members range in various racial mixes) *nor* non-ethnic (Canadian).

VII. Case study 4: June Pak's *retelling* (2012)

Script: June Pak
Actor: Marlene Handrahan
Lighting: Rafael Ochoa
Camera 1: Rafael Ochoa
Camera 2: June Pak
Underwater camera: Michael Vass

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[39] See the "Performativity of the Artist/Performativity of the Artwork" section from *Performativity | Ethnicity | Repetition* for further discussion of the relationship between the subject and her performativity toward the societal interpellation.

Editing: June Pak

As the viewer walks into the darkened gallery space, she will become aware that multiple projections and monitors are arranged in such a way that the viewer can only watch partial views of the entire installation at a time. There are three components in this installation: multiple takes of an actor performing a *script* that I wrote about myself (I will call this component *retelling by Marlene H.* for the sake of the clarity of this writing), myself being submerged under water (*retelling by June P.*) and typing of the script that Marlene H. performs (*retelling by script)*. The phrases in the script range from factual information to more personal details:

I was born in Korea.	*I am the 4th daughter of my father.*
I am small.	*I am afraid of falling.*
I fell once from a see-saw.	*I have a small cut under my nose.*
I just turned 40 today.	*I am afraid of falling in love.*
I am afraid of falling out of love.	*I lived in Seoul for 18 years.*
I live in Toronto.	*I lived in Windsor.*
I work in London.	*I speak Korean to my parents.*
I sometimes notice myself searching for words in Korean.	*I sometimes forget how to spell.*
I have a dog.	*I speak Konglish with my sisters.*
I have four sisters.	*I'm afraid of falling.*
I don't know how to ride a bike.	*I don't know how to swim.*
I grew up in Seoul.	*I am Korean.*
I am Canadian.	*I have secrets.*
I like sleeping in.	*I have four nephews.*
I have one niece.	*I have a mother.*

I have a father. I have one grandmother in Houston.

The multiple videos in *retelling* are presented within the gallery space using projections and television monitors. The sounds from each video bleed into each other, creating a sense of chaos, as one traverses the installation space. By presenting multiple sounds and images in one open space, a visceral sensation caused by the collision of the aural and the visual is generated. I want the viewer to question the legitimacy of the performer and her declared identity, as the viewer gets lost in the installation space due to the lack of any clear indication of how to view the work among the cacophony of video and sound.

The multiple videos of *retelling by Marlene H* are deliberately placed around the space to create spatial distinctions and guide the viewer's sight line among multiple videos. The large projection carries a prominent position in the gallery, mimicking the cinematic viewing experience, while the two small TV monitors resemble the more intimate setting of a domestic, personal viewing experience. The projection is a compilation of multiple takes while the two TV monitors show continuous loops of one take per monitor. The DVD for the compilation video has been programmed to play in auto-shuffle mode. Just like shuffling songs on your MP3 player or a CD player, the DVD searches for a different track to play when it reaches the end of one track. Since the shuffling is automatically generating the order of play out of four given tracks, the order of appearance for each track is random. Sometimes one track could repeat two or three times. Due to the random shuffle mode, it is unlikely that multiple viewers will have the exact same experience. On one monitor, the actor's back is turned towards the viewer. She performs her lines but we don't see her face. Another monitor presents a conventional "talking head" framing of the actor. On the wall adjacent from the *retelling by Marlene H.* projection, *retelling by script* is projected. Each phrase from the script is being typed just to be erased as soon as the

full sentence is completed. *retelling by June P.* is projected onto a plinth-like structure, slightly off to the corner. The video shows an Asian female body (myself) being submerged under water. She is unable to hold her breath and floats back up towards the surface of the water. This gesture, an attempt to submerge oneself under water, repeats multiple times.[40] The sound from the video is low and muffle since I have slowed down the speed of the video. A set of speakers is placed opposite from each other, creating an underwater rumble as an ambient soundscape for the entire installation space.

As the Caucasian actor's declaration of her Asian identity shapes up into a story of a person who was born in Korea but now lives in Canada, the nature of the fictional character's origin begins to raise doubts concerning the actor's truthfulness, triggering questions, in fact, about whether she is a fictional character or a real person. Paul Bowman reflects on Rey Chow's complex position on ethnicity and identity in his introduction to *The Rey Chow Reader*:

> "having" or "being" this or that ethnicity is not an inevitability, and ethnicity is not a natural or spontaneous property of the world. Rather, notions, categories, and conceptual universes of ethnicity are discursive constructions. One is not *born* ethnic; one *becomes* ethnic. One's ethnic identity and cultural "place" and "status" are determined in contingent and variable ways (xvi).

The contradiction of a Caucasian actor claiming her identity as Korean-Canadian creates a gap between the visual (a non-Asian actor) and the aural (the statements she articulates), triggering a sense of doubt about the work. What you hear does not match what you see. The actor assumes a dual role in *retelling*; she plays a Korean-Canadian woman (by declaring her "fake" identity), at

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[40] The plinth that I am projecting the video of myself submerging under water resembles the size of my squatted body. This image is similar to that of a photograph of myself sitting inside the locker for *June on June: a photo album*. The repetitive act of performative gesture continues to appear in my work.

the same time she is being truthful to her profession (by performing her character who is Korean-Canadian). In this dual existence, her articulation of a performed identity instigates questions concerning the ambiguity of her identity in the viewer's consciousness. The contradictions between the aural and the visual suggest the political sense of articulation. Having a voice means your opinions and thoughts can be heard. Having a voice means you can stand up for your beliefs. Having a voice means you can articulate yourself to others. Marlene H., in *retelling,* acts her part from the script that was written by me, about myself. She embodies my voice. Now, the interesting question is *what happens to my body when my voice escapes me and is replaced by another body?*

My first and most direct attempt at addressing the issue of ethnicity and its visualization is in this work *retelling*. As I questioned the relevance of ethnicity and identity in articulating my own understanding of ethnic others and nationhood, I began to wonder: what are the elements that denounce one's identity, who defines what constitutes a different ethnic identity and, according to what/whose motivation, how are these boundaries set? By employing a technical apparatus within the installation setting in order to generate multiple auditory, visual and spatial relationships, I am providing the groundwork for these discussions to occur within the work.

Locating Multiculturalism Between Commodification and Ideology

The concept of multiculturalism has been widely adapted and applied in Western contemporary thinking. Living in inter-cultural societies, particularly in urban centres, it is almost impossible not to notice cultural diversity. In Canada, there is not only a general "acceptance" of the social order, but it is part of the official policy in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (set by the Trudeau Government in 1982). However, as Will Kymlicka underlines in his report *Multiculturalism: Success, Failure, and the Future* (2012), it is problematic to think that multiculturalism offers a utopian outlet towards the hope of "replacing older forms of ethnic and racial hierarchy with new relations of democratic citizenship", as if any previously existing racial tension has been resolved; it is equally shortsighted to abandon what it has established, and declare "the death of multiculturalism" (1). Then, what is the future of multiculturalism?

Keeping these bifurcate debates in mind, I would like to reflect on how this complexity has been manipulated and simplified in popular media. In its attempt to include ethnic diversity, popular media tends to translate difficult and multi-layered issues into a universalized and oversimplified rhetoric of a harmonious society, perpetuating a kind of tactical multiculturalism. One such example is the Tim Hortons' TV commercial *Proud Fathers*.[41] In analyzing the commercial, I will discuss the simplified, and therefore problematic role the ethnic subject is often assigned to play in order to portray Canada's seemingly "perfect" image of multiculturalism at work. Discussing the commercial in light of rethinking the application of ethnicity as a commodified object, not as a self-identified subject, I am borrowing Rey Chow's analysis of *stereotyping*, both representational and theoretical, as a means to elaborate how the

[41] You can watch the full commercial here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QINv6rebyTU (accessed September 11, 2011)

concept of *difference* has been used to commodify and categorize ethnicity in inter-cultural, multi-cultural society. In addition, Jean-Luc Nancy's articulation of "the inoperative community" will be considered as a different way to imagine *community*. In the Nancian sense of community, acknowledging the discomfort of conflict and tension is an essential aspect of forming a community, rather than reaching for a harmonious unification. In order for a community to have a self-defining identity, it is crucial for its members to function as a distinctive unity with respect to their own history. In this sense, maintaining cultural *difference* should be a key attitude in shaping a multi-cultural society. However, in Nancy's difficult argument on community (it is difficult because he is intentionally contradicting our conventional notion of community as a harmonious and agreeable unit), the concept of *difference* is not to be manipulated for creating the end result of a congenial community, but rather it is for facilitating the notion of "singular plural."

As an intriguing theoretical backdrop for the positioning of the ethnic subject in a multi-ethnic society, the concept of *difference* is discussed in this writing from a personal, micro, level — the two fathers' dilemma concerning their relationship to mainstream Canadian culture — to a broader, macro, societal functioning of multiculturalism: can the ethnic subject keep her difference yet be part of a collective community? Or is it *necessary* for the ethnic subject to keep her difference in order to be accepted, as difference is a valuable currency in a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic community?

I. *Proud Fathers:* Two Fathers' Dilemma

In 2006, the Tim Hortons' TV commercial *Proud Fathers* aired in Canada during the Turin Winter Olympics. The commercial is a sentimental story of unacknowledged love between a father and a son at a hockey rink. Amongst these overt representations of Canadian nationalism — hockey, Tim Hortons, the Olympics (all of which constitute problematic tropes intrinsic to Canadian identity) — the main characters in this heartwarming story are Chinese immigrants: the immigrant father, the "1.5 generation" son (this is the *problematic* generation, the in-between generation or hyphenated generation, the one that I belong to[42]) and the second generation Chinese-Canadian grandson, who is "invisible" during this commercial.[43] The commercial is basically a short film, portraying the hardship that immigrant families endure. There is an implied sense of authenticity, as the commercial starts with an opening text that reads "based on a true story." In a flashback to the son's childhood, the father prevents the son from playing hockey. He tells his son "you must study hard, not just hockey all the time" as he pulls him out of the street hockey game. The father continues pressuring the son to focus on his studies instead of watching the hockey game on TV. Later, however, we find out that the father secretly attended the son's hockey games. As proof to the skeptical son, the father pulls out an old wrinkled photograph of his son in his hockey jersey (it is a bit of mystery how the son was able to play on a hockey team with the father's strong disapproval). The son finally realizes that his father has cared for him all these years. The commercial ends with the son expressing his gratitude towards

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[42] See the "Studying Through Hybridity: *Ambivalent Hybridity* and *Hyphenated Hybridity*" section in *Hyphenated Ethnicity* for further discussion of the hyphenated subject.

[43] The commercial's portrayal of the immigrant family is quite male-centric. This could be a reflection of many aspects such as the Chinese patriarchal tradition, and the male dominant hockey culture. We see the mother briefly in the commercial, but she does not have any significant role in this story. However, I am not going to focus on the gender issue in this segment, as it diverges too much away from the main topic of the segment. Rather, I have designated a segment entitled *Performativity | Ethnicity | Repetition* for more detailed discussions on gender performativity and subjectivity.

his father's love. At the end, of course, the commercial reminds us of the product that they are selling with a carefully composed shot of Tim Hortons coffee cups with the text "Every cup tells a story." The family members' newly found understanding towards each other comes together at this hockey rink with a cup of Tim Hortons coffee on a cold winter day. How easy it is to be one harmonious family!

It is worth noting that at that point in time Vancouver, B.C. (with the highest Asian immigrant population density in Canada) had secured its position as the host for the 2010 Winter Olympics. Perhaps it was a strategic choice to portray a Chinese immigrant family in a central role in this commercial while Canadians were getting ready to "hype up" national pride. Let's take a moment to pause and reflect upon the above sentiment, in which I just made a clear distinction between Canadian (white, "non-ethnic") and ethnic Canadian (non-white, in the case of *Proud Fathers* Chinese-Canadian).[44] This distinction leads to a view that different ethnic groups carry their own values and concerns regarding the shaping of their identity, apart from a national, unified identity. As Benedict Anderson redefines the nation as an imagined community where it is no longer blood (race and history) that bonds the members within a community but rather language (culture) that holds the weight in making a community/nation, it is impossible and counter-productive to state that there is only one unifying national identity. However, it is inevitable that there is such desire: "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson, 6).

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[44] Here, my use of the terms "ethnic" and "non-ethnic" is for the purpose of a clear description between different ethnic groups in Canada for the sake of the argument in this writing. I discuss further on the definition and use of the term *ethnicity*, and its complexities in *Thinking Ethnicity Through Visuality and In/Visibility* in terms of the current debate on the liberal application of ethnicity, as *we are all ethnic*. Particularly, see the "Ethnicity vs. Race: The Good, The Bad, and The Ambivalent" section for detailed theoretical discussion on the term "ethnicity" vs. "race."

It is particularly difficult to suggest, or state, that there is one collective national identity for Canada, as Canada is not only a multi-cultural but also a multi-nation state with two nations: English and French. Eric Taylor Woods, in his discussion of nation and nationalism in a multination state such as Canada, emphasizes the importance of acknowledging the existence of multiple nations within one country in terms of maintaining its unity:

> [I]f Canada were to successfully avoid breaking apart, it needed to cast off the vision that it was a *nation* state, as it had been represented since the 1960s, and instead recognize that it was a *multination* state. (emphasis in the original, 271)

In this multination state, according to Will Kymlicka, immigrants have shown a high level of identification with Canada, "as high as amongst the majority native-born white English-speaking population." However, interestingly enough, "[t]he only two groups that exhibit significant ambivalence about identifying with Canada are the two national minorities — the Québécois and Aboriginals" (2011, 284). This simplistic statement by Kymlicka, that immigrants have shown a high level of identification with Canada, is problematic as the set standard of measurement is decided against a pan-Canadian national identity, mainly referring to "native-born white English-speaking population." Pan-Canadian nationalism, that is English Canada's ideology, only provokes further conflict and division within Canada not only by excluding the Québécois, but also further segregating non-white Canadian population as "others." As a remedy for this conflict, many scholars, including Kymlicka, who support liberal multination federalism have emphasized the importance of keeping a sense of distinctive cultures in order to recognize the uniqueness of each nation's culture and heritage. Kymlicka defines nations as "historical societies, more or less institutionally complete, occupying a given territory or homeland, sharing a distinct language and societal culture" (Kymlicka qtd. in Woods, 273). Essentially, what he is

promoting is to allow each nation to keep its own national unity by preserving its own distinctive culture: language, history, societal fabrication, etc. However, Woods is critical of this kind of co-dependent relationship between nation and nationalism, with each nation's distinctive cultural heritage defining its national identity: "Québécois nationalists represent French Québec, pan-Canadian nationalists represent English Canada, and so on. Indeed, for multinational federalists, nation and nationalism are virtually indistinguishable" (276). In this sense, there is a danger of assuming one collective nationalism within one nation, as if all the members of that nation share the same outlook of one united, collective autonomy; this leads to "cultural essentialism." Hence, it is, in Woods' opinion, more relevant to disconnect the tie between nation, as "territorially bound, historically constituted", and nationalism, in that the nation's members "share certain collective desires, namely, the desire for collective self-determination" (Woods, 272). As long as the concept of nation and the ideology of nationalism are intertwined, the periphery nations, "generally distinguished from 'ethnic groups' arising from immigration," are forced to share a collective desire for inclusion, not self-determination like that of Canada's constituent nations (*Ibid*.). The question remains: can ethnic groups be part of the same desire? Or, is it realistic to think that ethnic groups can be part of the same desire while keeping their own distinctive values? Even with Canada's multicultural policies as an official cultural platform for the celebration of cultural diversity and inclusivity, Himani Bennerji argues that it is naive to think there is equality between diverse groups in Canada: "Speaking here [in Canada] of culture without addressing power relations displaces and trivializes deep contradictions" (2000, 97). The father and the son in the commercial *Proud Fathers* are trapped in this systemic obligation of playing the polite racialized ethnic role as immigrants in order to keep pan-Canadian nationalism alive, in which the image of a unified Canada as culturally diverse and inclusive is presented

under the tag-line of multiculturalism at the core of national values. As a result, they have to show their degree of support (or rejection) for the dominant culture in order to solve an identity dilemma: *I am Canadian, not Asian-Canadian* and *I am Asian, never fully Canadian*.[45]

In contrast to my initial and simplified distinction between "Canadian" and "ethnic Canadian," the separation between the native-born, White, European descendant Canadian and the "other," non-White, ethnic Canadian actually preserves Canadian national value as an inclusive society. As Bannerji's critique of Canada's managerial scheme of multiculturalism states, "[t]he discourse of multiculturalism, as distinct from its administrative, practical relations and forms of ruling, serves as a culmination for the ideological construction of 'Canada'" (*Ibid*, 96). This ideology continues to place the ethnic, visible minority groups in a peculiar position in the larger picture of Canada: "On the one hand, by our sheer presence we [visible minority] provide a central part of the distinct pluralist unity of Canadian nationhood; on the other hand, this centrality is dependent on our "difference," which denotes the power of definition that "Canadians" have over "others" (*Ibid*.). In addition, what makes the commercial *Proud Fathers* interesting and worth a much closer reading is that the dilemma of belonging is not only between "ethnic" and "non-ethnic" groups, but also among ethnic Canadians themselves — between the father and the son. The commercial's portrayal of the two characters' attitude towards hockey illustrates the level of "assimilation" that the immigrant family must bear; the son supports his young son's interests in hockey, unlike his father who prevented him from playing it, as one example. Does this mean then, in this commercial, that the son has lost his "Chineseness" in exchange for becoming Canadian? The son speaks English without an accent, in comparison to

[45] See sections I, II and III in *Hyphenated Ethnicity* for further discussions on the influences of postcolonialism and institutionalization on the hyphenated subject's positionality. Also, see the "The Invisible Transformation Project" section in *Thinking Ethnicity Through Visuality and In/Visibility* for further discussions on what it means to have a visible representation of one's ethnicity within the dominant power's structure of ethnicity.

his father who has a thick Chinese accent. Does this mean he is more "Canadian" than his father? The father is portrayed as an authentic Chinese father who has "Chinese" values. Does this mean he will never become fully Canadian? However, the "authentic" Chinese father says "double, double" (lingo popularized by Tim Hortons patrons, meaning two creams and two sugars in a coffee) as he passes a cup of coffee to his son. The immigrant man is using a colloquial Canadian expression. The commercial also alludes to friendship between the father and the caretaker at the hockey rink by showing them sharing a cup of coffee in the past and continuing to do so in the present. They also know each other's name. The caretaker, Charlie, is the one who knows the father's "secret", subtly indicating the Canadian (White) man is the only one who knows the entire story. Does this indicate the father has been accepted as Canadian despite the fact that he is "different"? Perhaps it is more beneficial for a multicultural society to have someone like him who keeps his Chinese values and accent to maintain his "Chineseness." By keeping his ethnic/cultural difference clearly marked as Chinese, the end result of multiculturalism can be easily explained as a well-rounded construction of living harmoniously while maintaining cultural diversity in a multi-ethnic society.

When we trace back the conceptualization and theorization of *difference*, in terms of its relation to diverse ethnic groups outside of the US and Western Europe, it leads to the birth of an academic discipline called Area Studies. David L. Szanton summarizes the history of Area Studies in the US in the introduction to the book entitled *The Politics of Knowledge: Area Studies and the Disciplines*: "During the War [the Second World War], many of the few US specialists on other regions of the world … became intelligence analysts in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and helped train officers for overseas commands and postwar occupation forces" (9). Those who served in the OSS became part of the new US government

security and intelligence agencies, or returned to university life when the War was over. Considering there was a tight tension between the Soviet Union, China and the US after the War, with the emergence of the Cold War, there was a tremendous amount of funding from various foundations such as the Ford and Rockefeller foundations and the Carnegie Endowment in order to support US researchers who helped increase the government's "ability to understand and act effectively in previously unfamiliar nations and societies all across the globe" (*Ibid*.). The motivation to study the Other (outside of the US) is clearly driven by political and economic forces.

Through his Asian specific lens, Naoki Sakai explains the initial formation of Asian Studies, a branch of Area Studies, as a natural default of the Western/non-Western binary opposition: "Things Asiatic were brought to scholarly attention by being recognized as 'different and therefore Asian.' Then, tacitly from the putative viewpoint called 'the West,' 'being different from us' and 'being Asian' were taken to be synonymous in its anthropologizing gesture" (2000, 790). However, Sakai brings another level of complexity to the concept of difference. Considering the origin of the name "Asia" itself is a construction by the West, the outsider, for the purpose of setting a clear distinction of "being different from us", he wonders who should associate to the name "Asia" and identify themselves as "we Asians"; for example how Japan can remain part of Asia after what the Japanese people did to people in Asia during the fifteen-year Asia Pacific War? In this sense, should Japan, being the forceful invader, be considered to be in the same category as the West, an entity that is not of the East? The absurdity of this arbitrary binary construction and division between the West and the East becomes even more evident when we acknowledge that the term West applies specifically to Western Europe and North America, and excludes Eastern Europeans, or those nonwhites living in the West, for example

African-Americans or Asians in England who have lived in the same social and cultural formations with whites (796). Hence, he asks us to think about this:

> Can we continue to ignore the wide diversity of contexts in which the very distinction between the West and the Rest is opportunistically drawn, and the economic and social conditions that allow some people to *afford* to be "Western" while not allowing others? (emphasis in the original, 801)

The dilemma the father and the son have in the Tim Hortons commercial becomes a lot more complicated than simply a decision about which ethnic group they belong to. Rather, the root of the ethnic dilemma is in question; what does it *mean* to be Asian or Asian-Canadian? At the end of the commercial, however, we discover that the father was secretly supportive of the son's love for hockey. This restores the unity in this family drama; because the family members now share a common understanding and love for hockey, they are now one happy family living in a culturally diverse place. This harmonious unity is, nonetheless, possible only under the hegemony of EuroCentric Canadian values. The complexity of the issue has been simplified for the one united sense of belonging. The father's *ethnic difference* is easily replaceable with a collective desire for inclusion. The swift representation of this transition is possible when ethnicity is treated as a "thematic concern." The thematic tendency of ethnicity, as Rey Chow elaborates, leads to "the level of a more or less realist cultural content, so that, while ethnic details and characters may make interesting stories, they do not necessarily tell us anything new about writing or the act of representation per se" (Chow 2002, 51). Ethnic difference and cultural diversity are utilized simply as commodities for promoting a success story for the workings of multiculturalism.

Despite the son's "Canadianness," the commercial's depiction of this family is a typical representation of ethnic others who are in need of being accepted by the dominant culture.

Regardless how "Canadian" the son is, or has become, he remains an ethnic other who needs to work at *becoming* Canadian. In their paper entitled "Sociocultural Analysis of the Commodification of Ethnic Media and Asian Consumers in Canada", Dal Yong Jin and Soochul Kim celebrate the fact that this Tim Hortons commercial portrays the Chinese immigrant family in a central role in mainstream media:

> Unlike the usual mainstream television commercials in Canada that typically portray Asians in the background or in groups, the Tim Hortons' commercial [they are referring to *Proud Fathers*] introduces an intergenerational relationship in a Chinese-Canadian story and portrays an experience relating to hockey that every family in Canada can relate to. (563)

Although I do not want to dampen the celebration of ethnic diversity in mainstream media, a statement such as the one Jin and Kim are making is troublesome and requires a second look at this kind of "feel-good" representation of multi-ethnic society. This kind of "all-ends-well" representation of the ethnic subject in a commercial like *Proud Fathers* is a constructed image that simply serves the purpose of the dominant society's self-flattering moment of what appears to be ethnic equality being achieved and practiced. In this multi-cultural, multi-ethnic web, the father and the son in *Proud Fathers* are stuck between two dilemmas: *I am Canadian, not Asian-Canadian* and *I am Asian, never fully Canadian*. When the authors refer to "an experience relating to hockey that every family in Canada can relate to," I wonder what families they are referring to. We know that not every family in Canada can afford to send their kids to hockey camps and sign them up for teams. Do they mean middle-class families with economic comfort? The tradition of playing hockey resonates with different groups of people in Canada, which perhaps requires having to grow up in Canada. In that sense, are they excluding immigrants who

do not have the same kind of sentimental connection to hockey? Or are they indicating that by being part of hockey culture, you will finally achieve "every family" status in Canada? Does this Chinese family, in the commercial, finally become part of dominant Canadian society and its culture by accepting the importance of the tradition of hockey? This seemingly simple representation of a Chinese-Canadian family in this commercial leads to complex issues of nation and identity, or national identity. In order for Canadian multiculturalism to work, it seems that maintaining the representation of the Other, as different from *Us,* is a necessary tactic: "To accept the role of ethnic is also to accept a gentle marginalization, it is to accept that one will never be just a part of the landscape but always a little apart from it, not quite belonging" (Bissoondath qtd. in Wood and Gilber, 683). The dilemma continues to exist.

In the following sections, I am going to examine two elements that cause the dilemma which the two fathers are facing: stereotyping, in terms of keeping and distinguishing difference, and a forced sense of unified community, in which the members of the community must submit to the top-down fabrication of togetherness.

II. Stereotyping in the Inter-Cultural Relationship

As the commercial *Proud Fathers* suggests, we should believe that all Canadians are equal; that we, Canadians, admire hockey. The use of stereotype in this commercial perpetuates reductive representations of ethnicity for both immigrants and Canadians. However, the sentimental message that this commercial carries is only possible, or I should say it can only be achieved successfully, through the use of stereotypes. I want to contemplate the very precarious nature of stereotyping in studying inter-cultural relationships; on the one hand, the word *stereotype* has pejorative connotations and, in the case of this commercial, could refer to the

generalization of inter-cultural representations, but on the other hand, it is an inevitable means through which we can understand different cultures, as an entry point to another culture.

The term *stereotype* comes from a mechanical printing process in which a printer would pre-arrange a set of characters or words that repeat often throughout the printing process instead of re-setting the individual pieces of typeset over and over again. Rey Chow focuses on this original coinage of the term, rather than viewing stereotypes as a problem in cognitive psychology, a state of mind that refers to incorrect generalization. She also shifts our attention to the original printing function of stereotype, as "a deliberate process of *duplication*" (emphasis in the original; 2002, 54). By doing so, she elaborates on the possible function of stereotyping as a form of imitation that can be utilized for critically engaging with a given social or political order: "[i]f stereotypes are, as they are often characterized to be, artificial, exaggerated, and reductive, such qualities must be judged against the background of (the mechanics of) representational duplication or imitation" (*Ibid*.). The Chinese family in the Tim Hortons commercial *Proud Fathers* is a product of a shallow stereotypical representation of an immigrant family. The commercial's portrayal of an immigrant family's struggle and generational gap, and also overcoming all those hardships, is not a unique one; it is rather familiar and predictable. However, I am not critiquing this kind of stereotypical rendition of an immigrant family's life in Canada per se. After all, it is a TV commercial that needs to appeal to a large audience. Rather, I am interested in the mass media's use of stereotype in which the message of the commercial *imitates* a larger nationalistic rhetoric of multiculturalism; it *duplicates* the societal construction without being critical or creative. As it is an inevitable tool for studying inter-cultural relationships, stereotyping should not be simply dismissed as a negative representation of relations. Instead, the ways in which power dynamics influence the stereotyping process should

be discussed: *who is doing the stereotyping? who is being stereotyped? how is stereotyping being accepted and endorsed?* As Chow points out in the case of the racist rejection of black people, this racism is equally common among Asians, both in Asia and within the US, "but often it is only white people's stereotypes of blacks that receive media attention." She continues by questioning "[c]ould this be because it is not only the stereotypes themselves but also *the power behind their use* that accounts for their perceived atrocity" (my emphasis, *Ibid*., 60).

Figure 2
Ying Man
Larry Feign

Chow's use of examples of Larry Feign's cartoons explains the tie between political power and the use of stereotype. Larry Feign is a cartoonist who worked at the South China Morning Post in

the 1980s and 1990s. He was fired from the paper for an unknown reason, presumably for a political reason. In one of his cartoons, *Ying Man* (figure 2), a young Asian guy is wearing a T-shirt with a non-sensical English phrase, and the caption reiterates the absurdity of the common display of misused English language: "English: once the living language of Shakespeare; now being bludgeoned to death by Japanese garment manufacturers." Many of Hong Kong's cultural critics disliked Feign for his use of stereotypes in commenting on the postcolonial mess in Hong Kong, that is not quite Chinese and failed attempt to be British. Chow states one of those criticisms:

> … such a derisive description at the expense of Asians could only have come from a *gwailo*[46], who (as is often the case in a place such as Hong Kong) is lamenting the destruction of a noble European language at the hands of yellow savages. (2002, 90)

In this criticism, Feign is implicated of being "just another racist Westerner" (*Ibid*., 91). However, the other side of the illustration shows the middle-aged Caucasian man, standing next to the young man, wearing a nonsensical Chinese letter on his T-shirt. The contradictory humor in Feign's cartoon is lost in this kind of criticism. This critique of Feign's work, being pro-Western, anti-Hong Kong, is excellent proof of the critic himself being that same *gwailo*, the ignorant Westerner, that he is accusing Feign of being. He doesn't acknowledge, or is incapable of noticing, the same bludgeoned application of the Chinese language. This is the very precarious nature of stereotyping; even in critiquing stereotyping, one can fall into using another form of stereotyping:

> By revealing that the political state, too, is no more than a user of stereotypes, Feign brings to light the fact that stereotypes are not so much about subjective cognitive

[46] *Gwailo* refers to "foreigners" or "foreign devil" in Cantonese. It is widely used and carries the sense of derogatory meaning.

> processes as about power and competition: the injuries, violence, and aggression commonly attributed to stereotypes are not so much the intrinsic qualities of stereotypes themselves as they are the effects of those in power who must, in order to stamp out competition and preserve their own monopoly, forbid to others the privilege of stereotyping. To this extent, Feign has, precisely through his cartoons, committed the enormity of usurping this privilege from the political state. (2002, 72-81)

Similarly, the critique of the commercial *Proud Fathers*' use of stereotype should not be limited to the simplified representation of an immigrant family, but also in the way the tropes of Canadian nationalism are used. With these stereotypical representations of Canadian unity, the vicious cycle of copying the false original continues to produce deceptive representations of ethnic harmony in this multicultural society.

Another form of stereotyping that Chow discusses is a *theoretical stereotype*.[47] As a result of the debate between 'subjective' and 'political' paradigms of ethnicity, the entire discourse ends up producing a *theoretical stereotype*, in which the cultural and political frameworks limit the ethnic subject as a theoretically commodified subject.[48] Once theorization occurs, the ethnic subject needs to ask a different kind of question:

> No longer would it be sufficient to ask, How does an ethnic subject come to terms with his or her identity? Instead, ... What ideological forces are there, if any, that would enable the individual representative of an ethnic minority to move beyond, or believe she could

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[47] The discussions on the "authentic" native, which reflects this essentialized theoretical stereotype, can be found in the "Performative Ethnicity" section in *Performativity | Ethnicity | Repetition*. Also, see "The Institutionalization of Postcoloniality" section in *Hyphenated Ethnicity* for a more detailed investigation into the relationship between theory (and institution) and the ethnic subject.

[48] See the "Ethnicity vs. Race: The Good, The Bad, and The Ambivalent" in *Thinking Ethnicity Through Visuality and In/Visibility* for an elaborated debate about these paradigms. Also, see the "Performative Ethnicity" section in *Performanitivity | Ethnicity | Repetition* for an alternate way in which the ethnic subject can dispute theoretical stereotyping while actively sustaining her own self-determined ethnicity.

> ever move beyond, the macro sociological structures that have already mapped out her existence — such as, for instance, forces that allow her to think of herself as a "subject" with a voice, as a human person? What makes it possible for her to imagine that her resistance-performance is her ultimate salvation, her key to universal humanity, in the first place? (*Ibid*., 32)

The father and the son in the *Proud Fathers* commercial are stuck in a theorized realm of ethnicity, where "sociological structures have already mapped out [their] existence." In this preset structure of *theoretical stereotype*, it is ever more crucial for the ethnic subject to resist the objectification of ethnicity. By means of theorizing ethnicity, terms such as *Chineseness* have been ratified as a norm within Chinese Studies, an academic discipline that separates Chinese film, literature, arts from the studies of modern film, literatures and arts. Chow sees a problem in this categorization of *Chineseness*, as not only in its cultural essentialization, but more so in its tendency to set a cultural hierarchy; in which, for example, not only Chinese literature remains to be subordinate to Western, modern, literature, as allegorical, but also sets a hierarchy within Chinese language by placing the academic priority on Mandarin as China's "standard language," dismissing all the other dialects spoken in China, not to mention Cantonese spoken in Hong Kong (1998). To further engage in this theoretical stereotyping of Chineseness, Chow points our attention to the dilemma of the Chinese diaspora:

> Meanwhile, the émigrés who can no longer claim proprietorship to Chinese culture through residency in China henceforth inhabit the melancholy position of an ethnic group that, as its identity is being 'authenticated' abroad, is simultaneously relegated to the existence of ethnographic specimens under the Western gaze. (*Ibid*., 20-21)

Subjects of Chinese diaspora are expected to perform the "authentic" Chineseness that is set by

the dominant culture.

III. Is Multiculturalism Well-Packaged Idealism?: ~~Asian~~[49] Ethnicity in Canadian Television

The use of Canadian nationalism as a tactic is not new in advertising campaigns and TV commercials. The Molson Company used a similar sentimental approach in their Molson Canadian beer commercial *I Am Canadian: The Rant*[50] in 2000:

> Hey, I'm not a lumberjack, or a fur trader....
> I don't live in an igloo or eat blubber, or own a dogsled....
> and I don't know Jimmy, Sally or Suzy from Canada,
> although I'm certain they're really really nice.
>
> I have a Prime Minister, not a president.
> I speak English and French, not American.
> And I pronounce it 'about', not 'a boot'.
>
> I can proudly sew my country's flag on my backpack.
> I believe in peace keeping, not policing,
> diversity, not assimilation,
> and that the beaver is a truly proud and noble animal.
> A toque is a hat, a chesterfield is a couch,
> and it is pronounced 'zed' not 'zee', 'zed' !!!!
>
> Canada is the second largest landmass!
> The first nation of hockey!
> and the best part of North America
>
> My name is Joe!!
> And I am Canadian!!!
>
> Thank you.

While "Joe" in *I Am Canadian: The Rant* stands in front of a large projection of a Canadian flag

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[49] The word "Asian" has been crossed out, yet left in place for the reader to see it. This is to emphasize the inadequate practice of categorization of ethnicity, yet the necessity of keeping the word in place in order to reveal the current application of ethnic categorization and unresolved issues of ethnicity. This act reflects Derrida's notion of *sous rature*.

[50] You can watch the full commercial here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WMxGVfk09lU (accessed August 15, 2013)

and flashing images of Canadian "symbols," as he declares his Canadian identity, he is setting himself apart from the neighour to the South. In order to paint a picture of pro-Canadian sentiment at the expense of an anti-American one, the Molson beer commercial is consolidating an image of Canadian collective identity by using a few stereotypical tropes of Canada. For Canadians, "to have a clear identity is to be different from Americans" (Hedley qtd. in MacGregor, 284). The Tim Hortons' commercial *Proud Fathers,* on a different tact, plays with the aspect of ethnic diversity in Canada, the new representation of Canada, as a multicultural society that embraces diversity. Regarding this new image of Canada, the question that I want to raise is not whether the visible minority is now part of the majority. Instead, I want to bring forth *how* ethnicity is being portrayed and *how* this kind of representation of ethnicity has had an impact on our collective consciousness with respect to understanding ethnic identity. I want to take another look at this falsified representation of a harmonious multicultural society through considering the government's political and managerial agenda.

The term multiculturalism can be, according to Will Kymlicka, defined as "[i]deas about the legal and political accommodation of ethnic diversity" that emerged in the West in order to replace "older forms of ethnic and racial hierarchy with new relations of democratic citizenship"(1). The representation of Canada as a multicultural society has been reinforced through political tag-lines and the media. On the official Canadian Citizenship and Immigration web site, the government proudly states: "In 1971, Canada was the first country in the world to adopt multiculturalism as an official policy".[51] During the Pierre Trudeau government, in 1982, Canada not only declared multiculturalism an official policy but also confirmed every Canadian citizen's rights regardless of one's race or ethnicity through the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

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[51] "Canadian Multiculturalism: An Inclusive Citizenship" <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/multiculturalism/citizenship.asp>

However, the original motivation behind the official multicultural policy has very little to do with so-called ethnic groups in Canada, but rather it is a political gesture to mend the tension between the English and the French groups in Canada. In their essay "Multiculturalism in Canada: Accidental Discourse, Alternative Vision, Urban Practice", Patricia K. Wood and Liette Gilbert demystify Trudeau's multiculturalism by referring to his own book entitled *Towards a Just Society*:

> [F]irst, that the policy was never more to him than a necessary appendix to the Official Language Act, and second, that it was not the embodiment of a vision and therefore did not contribute to Trudeau's contemplation of Canadian nationalism. Indeed, the policy was more about acknowledging past tensions than it was about developing an alternative vision for the future. (679)

Even though multiculturalism, for the Liberals, "was not a goal or a vision in and of itself", it was a necessary addition "to a national bilingual policy introduced to recognize Francophones and Québec" (*Ibid*., 682). Once multiculturalism was recognized in official policy in 1971 and reinforced in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982, the policy of multiculturalism allowed immigrant communities to gain a place in Canadian laws: "The revised law of 1988 includes both the recognition and development of cultural heritage, and the legislative shift to promote equality, political participation and institutional reform" (683). To even further impose politically correct representations of ethnic diversity in Canada, the Broadcasting Act was introduced in 1991 in order to include the "cultural mosaic" of the Canadian multicultural system. Tim Hortons wisely chose the theme of "Canadian-ness" as the company's marketing tool ever since the opening of its first chain in Hamilton, Ontario in 1964. Tim Hortons was founded by a retired Canadian hockey player Miles Gilbert "Tim" Horton. From the use of hockey as a national icon

throughout their marketing scheme to the promotion of community building through their charity work, Tim Hortons continues the nationalistic image of the company. It is no accident that they are utilizing the hockey rink as a place for unified multi-cultural and multi-generational site in this commercial.

Despite its attempt to create a more inclusive society for those who are not part of Canada's founding nations (English and French), "multiculturalism was predominantly a way to deal with the 'immigrant issue'" (Ibid.). Sneja Gunew further engages in the topic of multiculturalism and its use in multi-ethnic society:

> … multiculturalism deals with the management (often compromised) of contemporary geo-political diversity in former imperial centres and their ex-colonies alike. It is also increasingly a global discourse since it takes into account the flow of migrants, refugees, diasporas, and their relations with nation-states. (22)

The policy aims to manage diverse ethnic groups in a cohesive and controlled manner. Kenan Malik questions the concept and application of cultural diversity in a multicultural society, as "the multiculturalist *description* of society is a highly distorted one, while the multiculturalist *prescription* creates the very problems it is meant to solve" (my emphasis, 362). While the descriptive nature of multiculturalism creates an idealized view of society, the prescriptive function of multiculturalism institutionalizes diverse cultures as a fixed and controlled state of being. With this idealized view of multiculturalism, there comes the use of terms such as "woman of colour" and "visible minorities", "which once again serve to reinforce the notion of a legislative centre or norm" (Gunew, 25) in order to institutionalize the workings of multiculturalism. Alana Lentin argues that the evolution of multiculturalism is driven by an artificial transformation of our understanding of 'race', replaced with 'culture', in order to avoid

racial tension in the post-Second World War West:

> Multiculturalism can be seen as an institutional policy that, by replacing an analysis of the link between racism and capitalism with a focus on the importance of cultural identity, depoliticized the state-centred anti-racism of the racialized in postcolonial societies ... As a policy, multiculturalism would have us see our societies as 'race-free' and culturally rich. (380-81)

In what appears to be a post-racial age, the emphasis is now on terms such as 'culture', 'ethnicity' and 'identity', "as a means of bringing about a state of 'racelessness'" (382).[52] The calculated application of multiculturalism as an ideology depoliticizes and neutralizes the much needed political debates and discussions in forming a community/nation that is aware of its own limits and potentials.

IV. Inoperative Community

At a first glance, the Tim Hortons commercial *Proud Fathers* is innocuous. It even tries to present a transition in traditional values between generations, attempting at a realistic reflection of changes within an immigrant family. However, the problem with this commercial lies in its subtle (or maybe not so subtle) way of marketing an idealized notion of Canadian nationhood by portraying the integration of generations of immigrants, as if all is well in this hockey rink. If this kind of non-race/history-based nationhood is what Canadian multiculturalism promotes, this idealized nationhood echoes what Benedict Anderson calls an "imagined community." In his studies of nationalism and nation-state, Anderson defines nation as "an imagined political

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[52] See the "Ethnicity vs. Race: The Good, The Bad, and The Ambivalent" section in *Thinking Ethnicity Through Visuality and In'Visibility* for further discussions on the "Post-race era," and its contradicting result of creating institutional racism.

community — and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (6). Anderson expands the notion of nation as a variable and artificial state that is "conceived in language, not blood" (145). In "making/imagining" nations, Anderson puts a great deal of emphasis on the role of print press in order to connect the members of an imagined community. Similar to Anderson's claim of the importance of language through print press, this commercial triggers "our" imagination of Canada as a diverse, multi-cultural and inclusive community (nation). This fluid concept of nation and nationhood is a useful tool in re-inventing the concept of nationalism that is no longer attached to race, history and culture. However, Bennerji raises a question, within the context of Canadian multi-cultural policy: "whose imagined community or community of imagination does it embody? And what are the terms and conditions of our "belonging" to this state of a nation?" (91).

The kind of perfectly packaged image of a nation/community that the commercial portrays is what French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy sees as a problematic view, a falsifying message, that has been manufactured. He challenges the homogeneous notion of society, the traditional sense of community (defined by race, nationality, patriotic narratives, etc.) and re-examines it through the lens of multiple singularities. The concept of multiculturalism seems to fit well with Nancy's notion of community in that both concepts acknowledge the multitude of beings and accept the diversity that forms a society. However, upon closer inspection, the fundamental binding force in multiculturalism lies within the dominant power's desire to unify the minorities. In contrast, Nancy's articulation of the concept *inoperative community* relies on the absolute autonomy of singularity that is independent from the hierarchy of authority and essentialism, not only when it is suitable to the dominant power or when it fits the nation's strategy:

> A singular being does not emerge or rise up against the background of a chaotic, undifferentiated identity of beings, or against the background of their unitary assumption, or that of a becoming, or that of a will. A singular being *appears,* as finitude itself: at the end (or at the beginning), with the contact of the skin (or the heart) of another singular being, at the confines of the *same* singularity that is, as such, always *other,* always shared, always exposed. (emphases in the original, 1991, 27-28)

Nancy emphasizes the co-existence of the Self and the Other within one being, *singular plural*. This is his understanding of singularity as an active organism of the *inoperative community*, the community that is formed by an anti-hierarchical mode rather than a falsely harmonious nationhood. Nancy promotes a sense of community that is aware of the existing conflict within the members of community: "[c]ommunity is made of the interruption of singularities" (31). The concept of the "interruption of singularities" is an intriguing one to contemplate for a moment. Since Nancy's notion of singularity advocates the shared being of the Self and the Other, the "interruption of singularities" could result in an unresolved sense of self. I believe that this sense of being unresolved should not be viewed as undesirable. Rather, this is a necessary step in order for the Self to actualize her identity by accepting conflict, interruption and dissimilarity. Instead of focusing on the unified collective sense of community, Nancy advocates the notion of *unworkings*[53] of the being-in-common:

> Community is not the work of singular beings, nor can it claim them as its works, just as communication is not a work or even an operation of singular beings, for community is simply their being — their being suspended upon its limit. Communication is the

[53] Nancy borrow's Maurice Blanchot's notion of "unworking" in his writings on community: "(…) referring to that which, before or beyond the work, withdraws from the work, and which, no longer having to do either with production or with completion, encounters interruption, fragmentation, suspension. Community is made of the interruption of singularities, or of the suspension that singular beings *are*" (Nancy 31).

unworking of work that is social, economic, technical, and institutional. (31)

This sense of *unworking* motivates the act of *interruption* for singular beings to pluralize themselves. Similarly, in order to demarcate my true sense of identity, it is essential that I am fully aware of the disruption within my own hyphenations: Korean-Canadian, Ethnic-non-Ethnic, the East-the West.

In contrast, the perfect hockey rink that the commercial *Proud Fathers* is presenting as a place of conviviality is nothing but a manufactured image of Canada. The commercial adheres well to Canada's public image as a multicultural and inclusive society. Its portrayal of a Chinese immigrant family is textbook perfect in terms of representing new immigrants' struggles to overcome the hardship of adjusting in a new society. Two generations later, these new immigrants are all part of Canadian society, that is as long as they mimic their required (or assumed) Canadian-ness. This "perfect" integration of different ethnic groups is only possible when the minority mimics the majority. However, what the minority is mimicking is based on a fabricated illusion of "Canadian-ness" in an effort to display a perfectly harmonious society.

Soyang Park illustrates Nancy's concept of inoperative community by utilizing the 2002 World Cup Football Fandom in South Korea in her essay "Inoperative Community in Post-Authoritarian South Korea: Football Fandom, Political Mobilization and Civil Society" (2010). An online football fan club "Red Devil", which was formed in 1993, gained its popularity during the 2002 World Cup in Korea. The Red Devil phenomenon was mobilized by mass voluntary organization, emerging out of "netizens." They organized street-cheering events and posted instructions on rules and methods to be observed during the street-cheering events in various public venues where the games could be watched. They revitalized the sensitive, often political taboo, topic of North Korea by utilizing a phrase such as "1966 Again", which referenced the

unexpected win by the North Korean team against Italy in the 1966 World Cup in England. This led to the "Knowing North Korea Better" campaign amidst the surfacing of a discussion around the reunification of the peninsula to the general South Korean public. The political and societal impact this grassroots football fan club had in reshaping post-authoritarian society is tremendous. Its operational structure, without conventional hierarchical order between the members, and with voluntary-based involvement, exemplifies Nancy's notion of community that fosters "not only intimate communication between its members, but also its organic communion with its own essence" (9). The fans demonstrated "the kind of community based on 'being-in-common' or a network of singularities, rather than on a universalizing, essentialist power" (Park, 198). Park emphasizes the importance of resisting the authority and social hierarchy in order for inoperative communities to emerge "through the self-actualization of new subjectivities" (*Ibid*., 197). Similar to Nancy's notion of community of being, the Red Devil phenomenon is meaningful due to the "transgressive moments and practices by the public in self-mobilization that subverted ideological and historical taboos" (*Ibid*., 205).

In 2006, the mayor of Seoul tried to revitalize the Red Devil excitement, with help from a corporation, in order to boost the city's economy. This effort failed miserably. A community of singular beings can form an identity of its own, but when a pre-configured identity precedes the forming of a community, the result is confusing and artificial. This failed attempt at revitalizing the Red Devil's collective unity is a good example of Nancy's critical reading of a traditional sense of community, where community is treated as a predetermined product. The hockey rink in the commercial *Proud Fathers* is a such site, a well-packaged display of what the dominant culture wants to portray as the end result of a perfectly harmonious community. I would like to present two artists who employ a sense of community in contrasting manners: Rirkrit Tiravanija

and Santiago Sierra.

Tiravanija became known in the art world with his "cooking" work in the 1990s. He transformed gallery spaces into working kitchens where he cooked and served food to the viewer/participants. With this kind of work, he attempted to question the conventions of art history[54] and demonstrated his refusal to label his work according to the existing genre of art: "Is this sculpture?", "Is this installation?", "Is this performance?" Nicolas Bourriaud, in order to describe this kind of work, coined the term *Relational Aesthetics*, which puts the emphasis on the social interaction rather than the objecthood and commodification of art work, and questions the hierarchical relationship between the viewer and the artist/art work. Despite the participatory openness within the work, Claire Bishop challenges the superficial democratic exchange of Tiravanija's work, as "the structure of his work circumscribes the outcome in advance, and relies on its presence within a gallery to differentiate it from entertainment" (69). The community that Tiravanija creates is within the frame of the prescribed safety of the gallery setting.

In contrast, Bishop brings forth Santiago Sierra's work as an example of relational work that provokes unease and discomfort instead of belonging. In return, she believes that the work truly agitates the conventional sense of community. In Sierra's work *Wall Enclosing a Space* (2003) for the Spanish pavilion in the Venice Biennale, he blocked off the entrance to the building, and only allowed viewers with a Spanish passport to enter the pavilion through the back of the building, where two immigration officers were inspecting passports. Upon entering the space, the viewer was confronted by an empty space with nothing but gray paint peeling off the walls and some left-overs from the previous year's exhibition. Those who are allowed to enter the gallery building must be aware of the selective process that heightens the privileged

[54] This kind of work is, actually, not that provocative; consider the Happening movement and Fluxus in the 1960s.

citizenship which separates them from others who were denied the entry. Bishop articulates, borrowing Laclau and Mouffe's theory of democracy as antagonism,[55] the contrasting sense of community in these works; while Tiravanija's work requires a unified subject in a preset community of conviviality, Sierra's confrontational rejection of the viewer without a Spanish passport provides "a more concrete and polemical grounds for rethinking our relationship to the world and to one other" (79). This view echoes Nancy's notion of inoperative community, in which the presence of conflict and tension is necessary for a community to build its own identity, subjectivity. The ethnic subject (the Chinese family) in the Tim Hortons commercial has been *produced* with the final outcome, a harmonious representation of multiculturalism, in mind. In this process of manufacturing multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, unity, the subject's active identification that acknowledges constant flux has been ignored.

V. Epilogue

I am sitting at a pub called Sam Ryan's in *Itaewon*[56] in Seoul, waiting for the Olympic gold metal hockey game to start. I can spot a bunch of white boys wearing Canadian hockey jerseys. The atmosphere is a familiar one, a typical pub that you find on College Street in Toronto: wooden furniture, stools by the bar, dart boards in one corner, large TV screens scattered around the pub. This kind of interior is quite different from other Korean establishments. Everyone here speaks English. There is a group of Asian girls at the next table to

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[55] In Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's book *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (1985), they argue that "a fully functioning democratic society is not one in which all antagonisms have disappeared, but one in which new political frontiers are constantly being drawn and brought into debate — in other words, a democratic society is one in which relations of conflict are *sustained*, not erased" (emphasis in the original, Bishop, 65-66).

[56] *Itaewon* is an entertainment district in Seoul, well-known for its high density of foreigners' hang-out places. It is located near the US military base, which contributed to its initial gathering of foreign restaurants and attractions. Now, many returning Koreans, who lived abroad in western countries, have opened up businesses in this area.

us who are clearly displaying their "Canadianness": wearing shirts with Canada on them, holding a pair of mittens with a Canadian maple leaf, talking about their hometown Vancouver, etc. I can hear them dropping a few words in Korean, with a slight accent. Perhaps, they are (ethnic) Koreans but were born in Canada. Why was I eager to come to this pub and watch the game with other Canadians?[57] I don't even like hockey. This pub reminds me of the hockey rink in the commercial *Proud Fathers*; regardless of my own lack of interest in participating in this event of national pride, I am a by-product of this manufactured national unity. The only difference is that I am in Seoul, not in Toronto. Is this essentially what it comes down to, needing to have a site of collegial gathering for ethnic groups to come together? Canadians are an ethnic group here. Olympics, hockey, beer: Is this a sign of globalized capitalism at work? Are we, then, all essentially actors playing our roles in a given setting and situation?[58]

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[57] The two fathers in the *Proud Fathers* commercial would understand my dilemma.

[58] The answer, or at least an attempt to answer this question, is expanded upon and discussed in the "Performativity of the Artist/ Performativity of the Artwork" section in *Performativity | Ethnicity | Repetition* in relation to the subject's self-intentionality with the respect to the terms *performativity* and *performance*.

Performativity | Ethnicity | Repetition

The concept of *performativity* is the driving force in this segment. Even though the theoretical framework of understanding performativity originates from Judith Butler's feminist writings on *gender performativity,* I am drawing a connection between performative gender and ethnic performativity. In both encounters, there is a strong sense of consciousness in enacting one's ethnicity and/or gender. The cultural and societal constructions, as given, are challenged, questioned and destabilized by the subject in order to establish her own identity. In addition, I am drawing from Karen Barad's writing on posthuman performativity in which non-human matter is seen equal to human subjects in terms of understanding materiality in a horizontal relationship in order to break the hierarchical binary relation between "subject/artist" and "object/artwork."

If we premise performativity theory on the Butlerean sex/gender relationship, I believe there is a close conceptual link to the race/ethnicity relationship; the term *sex* refers to biological human traits while the term *gender* reflects socially and culturally constructed notions. This distinction is similar to that of the distinction between the use of race and ethnicity in current cultural studies; *race* refers to biological conditions (through physical appearance), while the term *ethnicity* refers to theoretical and cultural constructions. As an act of breaking away from the pre-existing constructions of ethnicity, I will be discussing the concept of "having a voice", by utilizing Gayatri Spivak's essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in relation to the process of *becoming*.

Repetition is another tool that I employ in order to articulate the performative subject. I am going to examine the term *repetition* as a medium — not simply as a conceptual and formal construction in the making of artwork but more as a direct element in framing the viewer's

understanding of the relationship between the artist and the artwork. In this exploration of repetition, I am going to bring forth ways to approach the artwork as its own performative entity; I will argue that an artist's repeated use of similar themes, forms, and concepts enhances the possibility for the artwork to be autonomous.

I am using a number of Hong Sang-soo's films in order to examine his application of repetition between films in which certain motifs (such as characters, conversations, settings, and so) are repeatedly used. Also, I will reflect on my work *June on June: a script* in relation to the use of repetition in order to articulate the connectivity and distance between the two Junes, the principal characters I have created for this work. The cyclical return of the same motifs within Hong's films creates a sense of independent existence for the work, that provides the recognition of the work not only as a film made by Hong the filmmaker but as an entity that carries its own agency and reflects its own history.

I. Performativity of the Artist/ Performativity of the Artwork

In order to properly make use of the term *performativity*, it is necessary to distinguish between *performance* and *performativity* (see Table 1 for a quick comparison between the two terms). When one uses the word *performance*, it is understood that there is a clear separation between the actor and the audience, as the actor is performing a given role for the audience. In this relationship, both participants — the performer and the audience — are aware of each other's roles and presence. In contrast, the term *performativity* is used when the emphasis is on the process of *becoming* and defining the subject. Judith Butler compares gender performance in theatrical and non-theatrical acts:

> [T]he sight of [a] transvestite onstage can compel pleasure and applause while the sight of the same transvestite on the seat next to us can compel fear, rage, even violence. ... In

> the theatre, one can say, 'this is just an act,' and de-realize the act, make acting into something quite distinct from what is real. Because of this distinction, one can maintain one's sense of reality in the fact of this temporary challenge to our existing ontological assumptions about gender arrangements. (1988, 527)

In this sense, the concept of performance stabilizes each participant's roles, that are preset for them to perform, or act out, what is expected. However, as Butler points out:

> On the street or in the bus, the act becomes dangerous, if it does, precisely because there are no theatrical conventions to delimit the purely imaginary character of the act (...) There is no presumption that the act is distinct from a reality (...) There are no conventions that facilitate making this separation. (*Ibid*.)

Performance	**Performativity**
acting	doing
voice	voicing
role	subject
expressive	performative

Table 1. A comparative chart: performance vs. performativity

Butler is not dismissing theatrical performances' social and political engagement with the audience and their attempt at breaking the boundary between the actor and the audience (especially in modern theatre) but rather highlighting the temporal and formal conventions of theatre that safely guard performed reality from lived reality. By admitting the vulnerable state of gender identity and formation in real life, she is emphasizing the importance of the subject's active articulation and the performative embodiment of gender. Adopting Simone de Beauvoir's claim "one is not born, but, rather, *becomes* a woman" (emphasis in the original, qtd. in Butler,

1988, 519) in her discussions on sex and gender, Butler intensifies the cultural interpretation and significations of *becoming* woman:

> [T]o be a woman is to have *become* a woman, to compel the body to conform to an historical idea of 'woman,' to induce the body to become a cultural sign, to materialize oneself in obedience to an historically delimited possibility, and to do this as a sustained and repeated corporeal project. (*Ibid*., 522)

Butler develops her theory of performativity from the British philosopher J. L. Austin's notion of the *speech act,* what he calls "performative utterance." Austin claims "to *say* something is to *do* something; or in which *by* saying something we are doing something" (emphases in the original, qtd. in Miller, 226). Hence, language takes priority over doing in this speech act; for example saying "I do" at a wedding ceremony, in this sense of speech act, is already representing participation in the marriage. However, Butler presents a different way of looking at this linguistic power over the subject's self-articulation by reexamining Louis Althusser's notion of *interpellation*.[59]

The notion of interpellation indicates that by responding to the hailing "Hey, you there!" a subject is admitting to the given position that fits the the social, cultural and political context and framing (such as "Family," "Church," "School," and "State" that are institutionally reproduced condition of ideology) where the hailing is coming from. The reaction to the hailing confirms one's position in society:

> By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion he [*sic*] becomes a *subject,* (...) because he has recognized that the hail was "really" addressed to him, that "it was *really* him who was hailed" (and not someone else) (...) The existence of ideology

[59] See the "Case study 3: Yamantaka//Sonic Titian" section from *Hyphenated Ethnicity* for the brief discussion on the ethnicization and interpellation through Rey Chow's notion of coercive mimeticism.

> and the hailing or interpellation of individuals as subjects are one and the same thing. (emphases in the original, Althusser, 163)

While Althusser's interpellation is closely tied to the subject's relation to authority, as a unilateral act, Butler extends the notion of social constructivism to the performative subjectivity that provides for discursive practices, in which the subject gains her own active means to respond (or decides not to turn around) to the hailing: "gender is itself a kind of becoming or activity, and that gender ought not to be conceived as a noun or a substantial thing or a static cultural marker, but rather as an incessant and repeated action of some sort" (1990, 112). It is not sufficient to have a place in social and political constructions (being hailed), but, more importantly, it is crucial to analyze how and why one reacts to the call: "Who is speaking? Why should I turn around? Why should I accept the terms by which I am hailed?" (1995, 7).

Until now, I have been examining the notion of performativity in the sense of subject formation, that is specific to the human subject, gendered subject. In the context of my research, as a practicing artist, this conscious subject can be translated as "the artist." However, I wonder if the artwork can carry its own agency? Can the work "speak" for itself? Can an inanimate object (artwork) be performative? In order to find an answer to these questions, I turn to the theoretical physicist and feminist theorist Karen Barad. Her writing on non-human performativity disrupts the comfortable exchange between social practice and subject (human) formation. Barad starts by challenging the theoretical mode that gives language too much power, in which the matter of language, in particular speaking, takes priority over materiality and its signification: "How did language come to be more trustworthy than matter? Why are language and culture granted their own agency and historicity while matter is figured as passive and immutable, or at best inherits a potential for change derivatively from language and culture?" (801). Her argument, in a way,

bridges Austin's language-based "performative utterance," which relies entirely on the spoken language, and the discursive subject formation in Butler's theory of performativity, in which not only spoken language but body language, gesture, clothing, etc. become valuable elements in the subject formation:

> Performativity, properly construed, is not an invitation to turn everything (including material bodies) into words; on the contrary, performativity is precisely a contestation of the excessive power granted to language to determine what is real. ... [P]erformativity is actually a contestation of the unexamined habits of mind that grant language and other forms of representation more power in determining our ontologies than they deserve. (802)

By questioning the ultimate power that language has over the process of representation, ignoring the materiality of bodies — "human" and "nonhuman" — Barad raises an alternative way to discuss the idea of representation. Instead of remaining trapped within our socially constructed descriptions and realities in a static relationality, in the way we believe that a mirror reflects the same image and perpetuates the same "difference," she proposes the notion of *diffraction*, borrowing from Donna Haraway: "Diffraction is a mapping of interference, not of replication, reflection, or reproduction. A diffraction pattern does not map where differences appear, but rather maps where the *effects* of differences appear" (emphasis in the original, Haraway qtd. in Barad, 803). The notion of diffraction opens the door to a broader understanding of the exchange between subject and object, as well as nature and culture dynamic. Unlike the manner in which representationalism uses the relationship between the original image and the reflected image as consecutive to one another, separating "the world into the ontologically disjoint domains of words and things" (811), Barad seeks a view that is not necessary consequential but rather

advocates autonomous agencies for both human and nonhuman subjects.[60] In terms of nature and culture, she does not propose the hierarchical order that we find in the traditional Western Cartesian distinction between subject vs. object: "If performativity is linked not only to the formation of the subject but also to the production of the matter of bodies, (...) it is all the more important that we understand the nature of this production" (808). The inclusion of matter having its own agency provokes a sense of conscience beyond language, social and cultural constructivism, and the hierarchical dichotomy of nature/culture, subject/object, and theory/ practice.

Barad furthers Butler's challenge to institutionalized social laws as a measure to which a subject responds by creating the term *intra-action*: "[i]t is through specific agential intra-actions that the boundaries and properties of the 'components' of phenomena become determinate and that particular embodied concepts become meaningful" (815). As opposed to the commonly used term *interaction,* which "assumes that there are individual independently existing entities or agents that preexist their acting upon one another," the notion of *intra-action* marks an important shift in the reconceptualization of agencies' materialization (Barad interviewed with Adam Kleinman, 77). Barad's expansion of intra-action agencies takes the nature of matter not just as "mere stuff, an inanimate given-ness," but rather as a "substance in its iterative intra-active becoming — not a thing, but a doing, a congealing of agency" (*Ibid*., 80). By acknowledging the presence of agency in matter, boundaries between "subject" and "object", "culture" and "nature", and "human" and "nonhuman" gain new intra-active possibilities that constitute discursive practices not only within "linguistic representations, or even linguistic performances," but

[60] This, in a way, echoes Jean-Luc Nancy's notion of *Inoperative Community*, in that meaning of being a member of a community does not entail having to submit to societal hierarchy, but rather being aware of the conflict. See the "Inoperative Community" section in *Locating Multiculturalism Between Commodification and Ideology* for further expansion on the Nancian sense of community.

"mutually implicated" within the material (2003, 821-822). If nonhuman matter (material, nonhuman entity) functions on an equal level with human matter, the notion of performativity, the act of *becoming*, can be applied to the material. Therefore, the artwork, the nonhuman matter that I am dealing with in my research, is an entity in its own right with its own agency.

A combination of Butler's theory of performativity, in which the emphasis is on the (human) subject's interference of the preset hierarchical position of the societal construction of gender, and Barad's articulation of intra-action agencies (apparatus of every particle), allow for the full sense of performativity to be discussed in relation to the artist (as a maker and the subject of her own work) and the artwork (as an artist's work/object/act, and as its own entity). In the same way that the ethnic artist refuses to be categorized, the work by an ethnic artist should not be interpreted and analyzed through the ethnic lens only.

II-a. Performative Ethnicity

Performativity theory, which emphasizes the act of *becoming,* as opposed to submitting to the assigned gender, is, according to J. Hillis Miller, "a depressing theory because it assumes I am not innately anything." At the same time, Miller continues, "[i]t is an exhilarating theory because, apparently, it blows the gaff on the familial, social, ideological, and political forces" (225) that have confined one's identity according to the norms of a society. Straddling between being lost, in terms of not having an innate foundation, and accepting the possibilities of forming a new identity, I see the theoretical connection between the uncertainty of gender formation and peculiarity of ethnic articulation.[61] The process of *becoming* woman begins to

[61] See the "Ethnicity vs. Race: The Good, The Bad, and The Ambivalent" section in *Thinking Ethnicity Through Visuality and In/Visibility* for the debate on 'neo-racism' as an ironic result from the 'post-race era' view on ethnic equality.

work only when she "disrupt[s] the categories of the body, sex, gender, and sexuality and occasion their [her] subversive resignification and proliferation beyond the binary frame [the heterosexual binary of man vs. woman]" (Butler, 1990, x), which is similar to that of the process of ethnic formation that is, according to Rey Chow, strongly tied to the politics of reassessing the power relation between centre and margins:

> [B]ecoming visible is no longer simply a matter of becoming visible in the visual sense (as an image or object) but also a matter of participating in a discursive politics of (re)configuring the relation between center and margins, a politics in which what is visible may be a key but not the exclusive determinant. (2007, 11)

Being visibly ethnic, or declaring one's ethnicity, is not simply a matter of regurgitating what has been defined as ethnic but more importantly how the ethnic subject confronts preset definitions of being ethnic. Just as Butler sets the distinction between sex and gender, "[w]hen Beauvoir claims that 'woman' is a historical idea and not a natural fact, she clearly underscores the distinction between sex, as biological facticity, and gender, as the cultural interpretation or signification of that facticity" (Butler: 1988, 522), I see a similar analogy in the debate between race and ethnicity; race as biological (i.e natural), ethnicity as a culturally constructed notion. However, how do you *become* this conscious (ethnic and gendered) subject who can destabilize social norms and challenge cultural conventions when the notion of *becoming* is closely associated with the idea of cultural formation? Even when you are resisting societal categorization, this rejection is still tied to a given society's framework. How do you, then, participate in "a discursive politics of reconfiguring the relation between center and margins," if the motivation to resist is still within the framework of the dominant culture?

While the term *ethnicity* is an intellectually formed notion based on cultural and social

norms that are especially influenced by neoliberal declaration of the 'post-race era,' the ethnic subject continues to struggle to combat and resist the set predicament of being ethnic, that is being labeled as *ethnic,* which further perpetuates the racial division due to the necessity to occupy a given position as the ethnic subject.[62] As we have established that the term *performativity* does not necessary rely on the performance act, as seen on stage or with an actor playing a role, but rather constitutes strategic tactics by the subject to overcome socially and culturally assigned identity, it is in my interest to investigate the method of the self-identification process that ensures the subject's own, self-motivated agency. In addition, if performative agencies, according to Barad, are not only limited to human bodily matter, but can be expanded to nonhuman matter, then it is also possible to engage the concept of performativity in understanding nonhuman agencies. In order to do so, I am going to turn my attention to the idea of having a *voice*, being heard, being an emancipatory subject/object. Here, my use of the term *voice* does not only refer to the act of speaking, the vocalization of one's thoughts and opinions, but rather expands to the act of *doing*. By obtaining Canadian citizenship, for example, you are declaring, without words (although you do have to declare this in words at the citizenship ceremony), your willingness to be a Canadian citizen. This act is not only about your shift of position from being an immigrant to a citizen, but also entails your decision to give up your original homeland and citizenship.[63] "Having a *voice*" could lead to another form of categorization if it is not articulated by the subject herself, that is if the dominant power "allows" the minority a voice, that minority group can only voice within the given parameters provided by

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[62] See the "Postcolonialism and Its Aftermath" section in *Hyphenated Ethnicity* for further clarification on the topics of institutionalization of ethnicity. Also see sections I & II in *Locating Multiculturalism Between Commodification and Ideology* for discussions on multiculturalism and its impact on simplified representation of ethnicity.

[63] This is only necessary when one's homeland, such as Korea, does not allow dual citizenship.

the majority. Or, what is projected as a voice of the margins is generated, in actuality, by the centre's motivation to "free" the oppressed, according to the dominant groups' cultural, social, political and religious measures.

In her canonical essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Gayatri Spivak questions the maneuvering interference of imperialist power — commonly understood as a case of "White men saving brown women from brown men" (93) — in the process of defining colonial subjectivity. Spivak is particularly interested in the subjectivity (or lack thereof) of women of colour: "The necessary stratification of colonial subject-constitution in the first phase of capitalist imperialism makes 'color' useless as an emancipatory signifier" (90). Alecia Youngblood Jackson brings forth the argument of feminist researcher Michelle Fine, namely that "participants' voices offer a decoy when feminist researchers rely on them as innocent, monolithic, or singular, *as if the voices say it all*." (emphasis in the original, Fine qtd. in Jackson, 2003, 697). In this approach to generalization and simplification in emancipatory feminist research, greatly formed by white, western researchers, there is a tendency to idealize voices. Jackson continues "[t]his romanticization of voices leads to emancipatory researchers' tendencies to idealize and totalize their participants' experiences, ignoring the messiness of their multiple subjectivities and contextual realities" (*Ibid*.). As controversial as it is, Spivak's extreme example of the British abolition of widow sacrifice (*sati:* the Hindu practice of burning a widow on her husband's funeral pyre) in 1829 speaks directly to the interference of the colonizer in the name of "white men saving brown women from brown men." However, she does not stop her criticism there; she problematizes the other extreme that was generated by white women from the nineteenth-century British Missionary Registers with their Indian nativist argument; "The women actually wanted to die'" (93). According to the laws of Hinduism, the widow sacrifice

(non-suicide) is an exception to the general scriptural doctrine that teaches suicide is reprehensible because it was viewed as a form of pilgrimage; "[t]his suicide that is not suicide may be read as a simulacrum of both truth-knowledge and piety of place" (96). It was praised as a "reward," according to those who support *sati* as a rite of passage for the widow, as it was a honorable act, a respectable tradition. Hence, the act of paying attention to this Hindu local tradition, that is often overlooked by westerners, of widow sacrifice is another white feminist's gesture of building the female empowerment for the Third World woman. This is, yet again, another case of white feminists deciding for subaltern woman. In this view, however, the argument becomes more complex because the gesture appears to be protecting tradition and providing a rational place for the local natives to nurture their values.

This concept of a "nativist" view is a complex notion that I would like to investigate further. Rey Chow starts the chapter entitled "Where Have All The Natives Gone?", in her book *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies,* with an example of her own experience of sitting on a faculty search committee at the University of Minnesota, for the specialist in Chinese language and literature position. One of the candidates, from the People's Republic of China (PRC), gave a talk based on the eighteenth-century classic *The Dream of the Red Chamber*; she discussed that the reason we still enjoy reading this classic is because "no particular interpretation of this book could exhaust the possibilities of reading" (1993, 27). During the search committee's discussion, one faculty member, an American Marxist, expressed his disdain towards the candidate due to her "capitalist" attitude, which, in his opinion, does not explain why "we" enjoy reading *The Dream of the Red Chamber* but rather adheres to the candidate's own political leaning towards capitalism. Chow compares her colleague's reaction to that of the western anthropologist who does not want to see the

"natives" gaining their own cultural explorations and learning about cultures other than their own:

> The fact that she did not speak from such beliefs [the candidate's nation's (PRC) official political ideology] but instead from an understanding of the text's irreducible plurality (an understanding he equated with "capitalism") greatly disturbed him; his lament was that this candidate had betrayed our expectation of what Communist "ethnic specimens" ought to be. (27-28)

The search for "authentic" natives leads to various (perhaps unintended) forms of inequality, generalization, simplification and essentialization of the ethnic other. The reaction of Chow's colleague, as a non-Chinese intellectual considering Chinese literature and its reception, represents the limited general bifurcation of "native works" by western perception, in which "native works" are either categorized as "timeless (in which case they would go into art museums) or as historical (in which case they would go into ethnographic museums)" (37). By placing native works (and artists) in either art museums or ethnographic museums, the dominant system is able to keep the complex and pluralistic native (ethnic) subjects in place to remain as a mere image, another representation. Chow borrows Fredric Jameson's statement "[t]he visual is *essentially* pornographic" in his exploration of film culture — in that "[p]ornographic films are (...) only the potentiation of films in general, which ask us to stare at the world as though it were a naked body" (qtd. in Chow, 1993, 29) — and draws a parallel with images of natives, ethnic subjects, as the passive victims on display.

Ironically, an attempt to "liberate" the marginalized, the colonial subject (to refer back to Spivak's writing, the Third-World woman), ends up locating "natives" in a place where another form of exploitation occurs. Anglo-American, Eurocentric liberal humanism operates within the

kind of subject-constitution that seeks the process of making "the native more like us [the dominant] by giving her a 'voice'" (*Ibid*., 35). In both cases of *speaking for* the subaltern — the imperial abolition of *sati* as a crime and as an honor to the widow from the nativist perspective — the subaltern woman has been used as a political tool for others to demonstrate their own measures of "freedom." Spivak, therefore, answers her own question "Can the Subaltern Speak?" with "no"; "[t]he subaltern cannot speak. There is no virtue in global laundry lists with 'woman' as a pious item" (104). Spivak argues that the reason for the subaltern's inability to speak is not because there are not enough references to locate a subaltern subjectivity through various modes of life/culture, but because, as Chow explains, "'speaking' itself belongs to an already well-defined structure and history of domination" (1993, 36). If the subaltern can speak, she is no longer subaltern since the voice is not her own but rather that of the Western intellectuals. It is only when we acknowledge that the subaltern cannot speak, Chow continues, "we can begin to plot a different kind of process of identification for the native." Taking from Spivak's example of the young Hindu woman, Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri, who hanged herself in her father's apartment in North Calcutta in 1926 during her menstruation so the suicide would not be misunderstood as a result of an illicit pregnancy, Chow expresses how a silent gesture is a way that the subaltern woman can leave her voice to be heard (Ibid.).

II-b. Woman in Shirin Neshat's *Turbulent* (1998)[64]: For Whom Does She Sing?

Artist Shirin Neshat left Iran in 1974 to study in the US. While she was studying in California, the Islamic revolution (1978-79) took over Iran. When she finally returned to Iran in 1990, she was shocked by the changes that her homeland went through: "the difference between

[64] You can watch the entire video here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f2DNMG2s_O0, as a split screen, single-channel video.

what I had remembered from Iranian culture and what I was witnessing was enormous" (Neshat qtd. in Navab, 43-44). When she came back from the visit, she shifted her focus to portray Iranian women and their oppressed social position in her work. In 1999, as a consequence of critiquing the current situation in Iran, the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran declared the artist Shirin Neshat an enemy of the State and the Revolution (Leleu, 76). She has been living in the US in exile, unable to go back *home*; in other words, her knowledge and perception of current Iran is from the outside, from the West. Does this make her work another form of Orientalist view of the Middle East? This kind of criticism does not take the diasporic condition of the artist into consideration, that of one who carries melancholic attachment to her homeland. Another criticism, which interests me, is that Neshat is recreating the monolithic image of the "Third World Woman,"[65] and perpetuating the binarism of "Us" and "Them", and Man and Woman. However, this criticism comes from placing Neshat as a "native informant," who could speak for authentic Islamic culture, and is expected to express cultural essentialism. Undeniably, though, she does use stereotypical tropes of Islamic culture and images of the oppressed Islamic female in her work.

I am going to analyze her earlier work *Turbulent* (1998), one component of the quasi-trilogy including *Rapture* (1999) and *Fervor* (2000), in order to investigate a possible way of reading her work that challenges a criticism of binarism. Unlike *Rapture* and *Fervor*, where the male and female opposition is portrayed through groupings of each gender, *Turbulent* presents each gender individually. There was a controversy due to Neshat hiring Moroccan actors to play Iranian men and women in *Rapture* and *Fervor* (Shaw, 2001) while the two performers in

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[65] Behind this view, there is another layer of criticism in the relationship between her art being exotic and its appeal to the art market. The marketability of art work in association with an artist's ethnicity is a critical area of research that I would like to pursue in near future.

Turbulent are both famous Iranian singers. With the above components of *Turbulent* in mind, I am going to direct my attention away from the generalization of the gender debate in her work, and discuss performativity, particularly the female singer's positionality in *Turbulent*.

Turbulent is a dual-screen video installation. When I walked into the darkened installation space, I felt immediately separated from the outside space. There are two large projections on opposing walls. The viewer is forced to watch one screen at a time; are we supposed to choose between the two sides? Both screens show the same theatre, one is filled with an audience and the other is left empty. With the start of the music, a man and a woman walk on to the stage on each screen: the male performer faces an audience, and the female performer faces an empty theatre. He is on stage, facing the all male audience who are sitting scattered around, all, including the performer himself, are wearing the same outfit, black pants and a white shirt. He bows to the applauding audience. Then, he turns his back to his audience and faces the viewer/camera. With confidence, he sings a love poem by Rumi in Persian. While he is singing, on the opposite wall, the female performer is standing still facing the empty seats. The man finishes his song and receives applause from the audience. As he bows to his audience, a deep and mysterious sound emanates from the female side. She is not singing with words, rather making primal, bodily sounds: hum, moan, chant, wail, howl, etc. The man on stage begins to pay attention to the female performer (it is not clear if the audience is reacting the same way as the male performer). Unlike the men on the opposite wall, all wearing modern Western clothes, she is in a black chador. The camera is steady for the male singer, but it moves and circles around the female signer. Her emotionally charged performance fills not only the projection space but the entire installation space. The dynamic camera movement create a more animated scene for her performance. These contrasting images between male and female performers represent the

freedom/oppression opposition in relation to Islamic cultural gender segregation. While standing between this tension, however, I realized that the work carries another narration beside the obvious gender inequality and the oppressed female position in Iran.

Both performers are famous Iranian singers: Shahram Nazeri and Sussan Deyhim. Since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, there has been a ban on women singing in public. Considering this law, having Sussan Deyhim in this work adds another layer to the work, that it is not simply an acted performance by Deyhim for Neshat's work but a reflection of her own lived experience as a female performer in exile. Another subtle yet important aspect of the work is that the sound and the image are slightly out of sync from each other. With the slight disjunction of the sound and the image, the question of the performative role that *both* performers (the issue is no longer just about the female subject) are undertaking in this work arises; are they both performing what is expected by society? As Alison Butler points out, "the performance [in *Turbulent*] could not exist without (that culture's) symbolic laws" (qtd. in Rounthwaite, 171), the portrayal of these performers cannot be read without relating back to a generalized display of both male and female roles in current Islamic Iran. However, what Neshat articulates in *Turbulent* is that the female performer is the one who breaks away from this cultural tradition. While the male performer is showing mastery of his singing ability that is socially accepted and expected, and represented by having an audience, the female singer is making sound that is not familiar to any existing form of music. The presentation of the female performer wearing a black chador and singing in a non-lyrical, non-language-based song could be interpreted as another representation of female oppression. But we need to take a closer look at how she and her performance have been treated. The movement of the camera is lively; it puts the focus on the performer. The empty auditorium is no longer a sign of invalidity. Compared to the stationary camera work for the male performer,

in which the camera is simply there to record the performance and the passive audience members, the camera work for the female performer activates the setting, the performer, and the viewer. Even with an audience, the male singer is aware of the viewer outside of the frame. He is not singing to his audience, but to us. Perhaps he wants our approval as well now that he has his own culture's acceptance. In contrast, the female performer engages with neither the viewer nor the empty theatre, or even the male performer across the space. She is performing for herself.

III-a. Performative Repetition

Judith Butler advocates the repetitive nature of identity formation in her writings on gender performativity:

> [G]ender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time — an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*. (*Ibid*)

Identity does not, according to Butler, rely on pre-set and pre-existing conditions, but rather is formed by ongoing repetitive performative acts. These acts are similar to that of Sisyphus, who, as punishment from the gods, had to complete the impossible task of rolling a rock to the top of a hill, that rolls back down as soon as it reaches the top. Instead of giving up the task, Sisyphus continues to roll the rock to the top of the hill again and again. Albert Camus interprets this apparently hopeless labour as Sisyphus' will to overcome the punishment, not in terms of failure. When he rolls the rock back up the hill, he overpowers the punishment given by the gods, and becomes his own conscious man:

> It is during that return, that pause, that Sisyphus interests me. ... That hour like a breathing-space which returns as surely as his suffering, that is the hour of consciousness.

> As each of those moments when he leaves the heights and gradually sinks toward the lairs of the gods, he is superior to his fate. He is stronger than his rock. (121)

Camus's reading of the myth of Sisyphus encourages the conscious decision that one makes over one's fate. Through his repetitive act, Sisyphus becomes the absurd hero, the modern being. The moment of pause — before the hill, before he rolls the rock back up the hill — fosters the slow and meditative process of assuring one's subjectivity, one's consciousness. This is the moment of the subject's existential shift. Stemming from Camus's insertion of human consciousness in to the Sisyphean gesture, Emma Cocker sees "the potential to be inflected with cultural specificity at particular historical junctures" in this seemingly aimless and repetitive act. Cocker furthers her reading of the Sisyphean repetition as a possible means to shift "a sense of futility and an individual's resignation to the rules or restrictions of a given system or structure, through resistance, towards a playful refusal of the system's authority" (268). When the Sisyphean repeated "failure" meets the active performative act, there is a possibility to counteract the given rules and affirm one's own sense of being through one's own conscious choice. In other words, the notion of performativity cannot be accomplished without the act of repetition. The formation of identity can only be addressed by actively building through experiences. This notion of hopeless and absurd Sisyphean labour stimulates my sense of investigation of identity as it is only through these repetitive tasks that I can perform the uncertain process of hyphenated identity.[66] This, also, echoes Barad's concept of the *intra-active* framework that promotes a continuous repositioning of the relationship between subject and object, human and nonhuman, and artist and artwork.

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[66] See the "The Invisible Transformation Project" section in *Thinking Ethnicity Through Visuality and In/Visibility*, and the "June on June: a script" section later in this text for discussions on my own approaches of the use of repetition in my visual work.

Cocker utilizes various artists' work to support her argument of challenging the system's authority through repetitive acts. She applies the Sisyphean absurdity in reading Conceptual artworks. Seemingly simple and logical rules of repetition in serial works, for example Sol LeWitt's instructional drawings, upon closer inspection (possibly while following the instructions and completing one of LeWitt's wall drawings), reveal "the threat (and promise) of error or failure" (271). Once the existence of possible failure is understood, the purposeless labour becomes a conscious act with potential collision and friction that destabilizes authority: "The loop of Sisyphean repetition becomes adopted then as a model for deliberately and infinitely generating error as a productive force" (272). I would like to examine Hong Sang-soo's films through this lens of Sisyphean failure and repetition in order to understand his process of articulating subjectivity, his own and his character's. The cyclical repetition between his films and himself, which I will further elaborate in the following section, is a key component to activating the conscious performativity in his work and his own subject formation as a filmmaker.

IV. The Sisyphean Cycle in Hong Sang-soo's Films

I would be stating the obvious if I said that there were repetition in Hong Sang-soo's films. But I am still going to say it; there is repetition in Hong Sang-soo's films. Formalistic tropes are the most obvious ones: repetitive dialogue, actions, scenes, locations, etc. Because of this repetition, his films have been criticized as a regurgitation of the same film over and over. In her review for *The Day He Arrives* (북촌방향, 2011), Maggie Lee wonders if there is anything left for the audience besides repetitive self-satisfaction: "Hong Sang-soo's oeuvre is becoming as self-reflexive and cyclical as the serpent that swallows its own tail. When not making films about

filmmakers making films, (...) he is making films about filmmakers who cannot make films." (n.p). On the other extreme, this formalistic repetition is what draws people's attention to his films. For the occasion of the Cinema Guild DVD release of *The Day He arrives,* Kevin B. Lee produced a video essay as a bonus feature. Lee's video analysis of the film reveals, to my surprise, the meticulous structure of the film using repetition in a mechanical sense. However, there are too many analyses written on this kind of technical and formalistic use of repetition in Hong's films. I am more interested in exploring a broader operation of repetition that constructs not only a cyclical cause and effect within a film but generates inter-connectivity between the filmmaker (outside the film) and his films (inside the film). When you pay a bit closer attention, you will notice something odd about this seemingly mundane and aimless repetition. There is a reluctantly repeated display of Hong's "surrogate" (mainly male protagonists) in many (I think it might be safe to say all) of his films, and repeated characters and storylines from film to film. By examining this repetitive relationship between the filmmaker and his films, I believe that there is a sense of the Sisyphean cycle within Hong's films. He employs repetition as a *performative* tool in order to establish conceptual and philosophical self-discovery for himself and his characters.

Hong Sang-soo structures his films within similar settings, characters and circumstances. The main character is always coming in (returning or visiting) from somewhere else (from abroad or out of town) or leaving for a short trip. The characters in his films are always intellectuals, often artists or filmmakers. Scenes take place in restaurants or small drinking holes, and they are all set in contemporary Korea, except for his 2008 film *Night and Day* (밤과 낮). Conversations are intentionally ambiguous and contain multiple meanings.[67] Hong's technical

[67] I wonder how this subtle nuance in his use of language (not only in his choice of words but more in the mannerism that actors deliver the lines) translates in English, or other non-Korean languages. Hong talks openly about his love for Korean language: "When asked about the dialogue, or lack thereof, in his films, Hong said that his films are first and foremost written for Koreans and his love of the Korean language" (Hartzell, "My Moments with Hong). However, I am going to postpone my inquiries into the process of translation for another time.

use of the camera is extremely minimal: shots are continuous and steady, no camera movement within one scene, and most of the shots are medium-length. In case the viewer gets too comfortable, or gets "bored," he jerks you right out of it by zooming in or out quickly or pans across the frame (in what appears to be an amateur-like technique). He might want to remind us that we are watching a film, a made-up story, by making us aware of the camera's presence, even though it appears to be ordinary. Out of these technical and structural settings, there are conceptual and philosophical dots[68] that we must connect, as many of Hong's protagonists repeatedly "beg" us to do. Marc Raymond analyzes Hong's films as essays, by using Timothy Corrigan's writings on the essay film in which a strong reflection of personal examinations is present in a film, in order to dissect Hong's own position as a filmmaker within his own films. Following Raymond's approach in looking at Hong's films as one long thread, I am going to examine the use of repetition as an overarching approach in order to establish the connectivity between Hong (the director), his philosophy, and his "surrogate" characters' identity.[69]

Love affairs and love-triangles frequently appear in Hong's films. These affairs are treated as mundane elements of everyday life, or as unspoken fantasies for men. In *Oki's Movie* (옥희의 영화, 2010), the young director character Nam Jin-gu is cornered by a young female student during a Q/A session. She interrogates his personal affair from the past, stating that her friend used to date him while he was her teacher. This affair ruined her friend's life. He simply

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[68] Philosophical, as a reference to a comment out of the Q & A scene in *Like You Know It All* (잘 알지도 못하면서, 2009), where a questioner ends her frustration by saying "You are not a director, but a philosopher." Dots, as a reference to many of his films, in which his protagonist talks about how we understand the world by connecting seemingly unrelated dots throughout our life.

[69] For the record, Hong never directly addresses questions surrounding references to his personal life in his films. However, due to the repeated representation of his protagonists as a film student, a director or a film professor (all of which he once was or currently is), it is hard not to draw conclusions. These "surrogates" do not just resemble Hong's professions, but, more interestingly, these characters are also used as a virtual stand-in for him in terms of expressing his filmmaking and life philosophy. In this sense, there is a light touch of autobiographical elements in his storytelling.

states that he does not recall this and refuses to talk about his personal life at a forum where you are supposed to talk about films. She continues the interrogation by connecting his film and his personal life: "Your film is just about you", pointing out that it is only natural to talk about his personal life within the context of his film. After an initial shot of the female student asking the question, the camera is stationary on Nam Jin-gu's face for the rest of the scene. The student's accusation functions like a voice-over, perhaps representing his guilt or conscience. Nam abruptly ends the question by saying "I'm not making films anymore. Satisfied?"[70] This scene is a rare (maybe the only) moment in which Hong brings up the rumor of his personal affair with one of his students while he was teaching at the Korea National University of Arts.[71] Is this scene his way of confessing? Or is this his way of showing the absurdity of the film industry's never-ending interest in personal gossip?

In *Like You Know It All* (잘 알지도 못하면서, 2009), a female student asks the following question: "Why do you make films like this? People don't understand your films anyway, so why do you keep making them?" In response to the question, the protagonist, Kyung-nam, delivers the following speech:

> If you don't get it, then you don't get it. I just make them and the rest is up to you. My films are not the dramas that you're used to. No clear messages, ambiguous at best. No beautiful images, either. I can do only one thing. I jump into the process without preconceived ideas. [I don't control it, rather the process allows me to discover constantly.] I gather the pieces I discover and make them into one. You might not like

[70] The translation of what he says renders as definite the state of his filmmaking career. However, what he says in Korean is less certain: "저, 지금 영화 안 만듭니다", which translates more closely to "Currently, I'm not making films." Did the translator take too much liberty here or is it because it is less awkward within the context of the situation?

[71] In addition to being a rumor around film circles, his affairs with students are mentioned in his biography page here: http://mirror.enha.kr/wiki/%ED%99%8D%EC%83%81%EC%88%98

> the result. No one might. I believe all precious things in life are free. I want to be modest.[72]

It is difficult not to see this as Hong discussing his own philosophy of filmmaking. The film critic Darcy Paquet remembers having a hard time pulling any definitive answers from Hong in terms of discussing his intentions in film: "Two times in the past I have interviewed Hong Sang-soo, and both times the interview has ended with me feeling like a chess player who's just lost a match." The interview ended with Hong turning the tables: "But Darcy, you're the film critic. I'm more interested to hear what you think about that question" (2013). Kyung-nam, Hong's surrogate figure, does not provide any more clear answer to the questions around his content and motivation in the Q & A scene above, but Hong is taking this opportunity to express his filmmaking philosophy to his audience.

In *Woman on the Beach* (해변의 여인, 2006), the protagonist, Kim Jung-rae, again a director, is struggling with writing a script for his next project. At the mid-point of the film, he returns to the beach after running away from the woman he seduced two days prior. He approaches two women (addressing the one who resembles the woman he ran away from) and asks for an interview for the script that he is currently writing. He asks questions such as: "Do you trust people easily?" "Do you like dogs?", "What do you believe in?" "Do you like stars up in the sky?" "What makes your life [most] difficult?" Are these questions really for his film or are these more for getting to know her because he is attracted to her? Actors who worked with Hong revealed that they go out for drinks and spend quite a bit of time talking to Hong (maybe this is his way of "interviewing" his actors) before the shooting starts. Again, the boundary between his film making practice and what the fictitious character does in Hong's film becomes

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[72] I have added a few more words that were not translated in the subtitle. Again, this is one of the difficulties of watching foreign films; you have to rely on the translator for your understanding of the film.

blurry. It is a known fact that Hong does not write a full script for a film, but rather he writes on the day of the shooting at the location, just for the scene that he is shooting that day. When Jung-rae gets picked up by his friend at the end of the film, he tells his concerned friend that he finished writing the script: "Yeah, I think it's pretty good. These two pages. ... maybe tomorrow it'll look like shit to me." It is unclear whether the above interview material was used in this script.

Through what appears to be personal and mundane exchanges in *Oki's Movie*,[73] Hong critiques the current film industry's obsession towards commercial success. In the first short film entitled "A Day for Incantation" in *Oki's Movie*, the young film director Nam Jin-gu, who also works as a sessional instructor in a film department, talks about the financial hardship he is faced with while working on his independent films. In the conversation scene with Prof. Song, he tells the young filmmaker Nam "nothing good comes from chasing after money. (...) struggling artists like you [referring to the young filmmaker Nam] can't make films anymore when there's no more money around. (...) Film as an art is finished. It's dead. It's the same overseas. (...) Let's just read. In such a rotten world, only books will save us. Only books." During the Q/A scene that I mentioned above, Nam Jin-gu criticizes Korea's education system when he talks about having a "theme" in films, or the audience's constant search for a theme in his films: "We've just been taught that way. Teachers always ask 'What's the theme?'" In a roughly twenty-minute long film, Hong manages to throw sharp criticisms on the Korean cultural industry and education system.

Another use of repetition in Hong's film comes through the inter-connectivity between

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[73] *Oki's Movie* is structured as a compilation of four short films by four different directors: three by the characters in the film and one by someone outside of the film, perhaps by Hong himself. He is employing the omnibus film style, which is, defined by Mark Betz, "a multidirector film constituted as a combination of episodes, each singly authored yet connected to others in contiguity to form a whole." In comparison, Betz makes a clear distinction to the episode film which is done by one director. Hence, Hong is dancing between the two styles (Reymond, 29).

his films. This is complicated, yet one of the most intriguing aspects of his filmmaking. I am going to use two examples: one is the inter-connectivity between two different films a few years apart, *The Day He Arrives* (북촌방향, 2011) and *Woman on the Beach* (해변의 여인, 2006), and another example is within one film (*Oki's Movie*, 2010). In *Woman on the Beach*, the character Jung-rae, the director, talks about a short synopsis for the script he is working on. Under the title *About Miracles*, he wants to tell a story about a man who experiences hearing the same music by Mozart in three different times and locations. He does not think this is a mere coincidence. He convinces himself that once he figures out why this happened, "he can unravel a secret to the world." He spends ten years searching for the answer. Jung-rae does not know yet how to end the story; he talks about some sort of a string that connects all the secrets together, but is unsure about how to wrap it up. Five years later, Hong makes *The Day He Arrives,* which is filled with coincidence and chance. Did he find the answer to the search that he started in *Woman on the Beach* in *The Day He Arrives*? Or is this a continuing search for Hong?

Oki's Movie, with its multiple short films, is a perfect example of inter-connectivity. Let me explain this with a visual aid (see Table 2: the shaded area in grey in the table indicates the director/narrator of each film). The inter-connectivity between all four films demonstrates not only Hong's ongoing investigation into the inner workings of coincidence in our daily lives, but also illustrates that his use of repetition is not just a formal strategy. The last short film is called "Oki's Movie" directed by Oki. At the end of this short, we hear Oki's voice-over narrating her motivation behind making this short film: "[In life] things repeat themselves with differences I can't understand. I wanted to see the two side by side. I chose these actors for their resemblance to the actual people. But the limits of the resemblance may reduce the effect of the two put together." This narration inserts another layer of repetition in *Oki's Movie* through the method of

a “film within a film”; we become fully aware of this fourth film as a film made by Oki, another filmmaker who is making this film within the film that Hong made. In this ever evolving Sisyphean cycle, Hong is repeating his performative act as a filmmaker and as the subject of his film. At the same time, because of the repetitive exchanges within his films, his work constantly produces new meanings; for example, watching *Woman on the Beach* after watching *The Day He Arrives* provides one way of reading the film while if the order was reversed, you might catch different meanings. In this sense, his films are autonomous entities that nurture their own life similar to Barad’s notion of matter generating its own performative meaning.

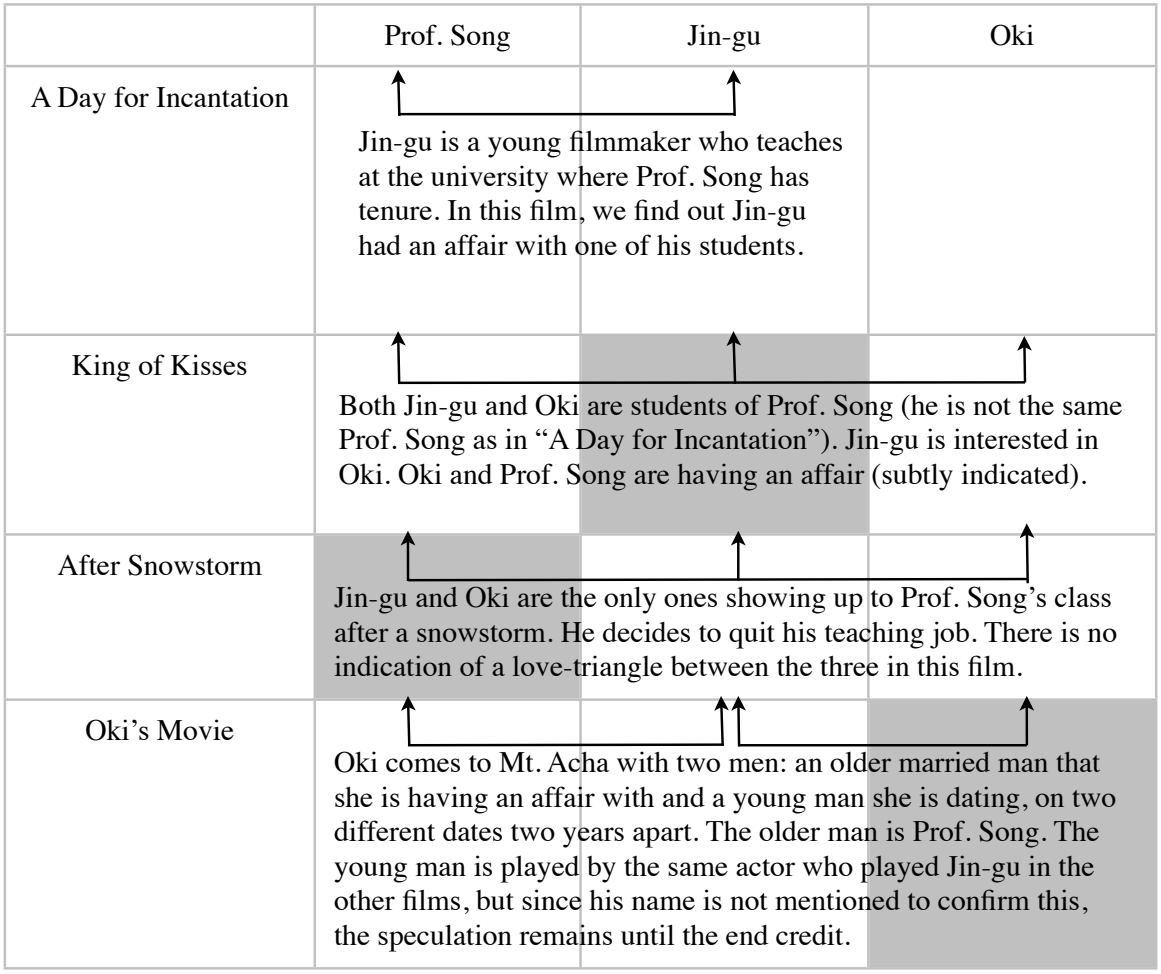

Table 2
Visual plot summary of *Oki’s Movie*

V. *June on June: a script*

June 1 and June 2 know each other well, for the most part. At some moments, they seem to know each other so well, they do not even need to explain themselves to each other. At other moments, one might wonder how they can even live together if they argue over such little things. They are distinctively autonomous entities; yet they seem to be inseparable. The second scene in the school hallway is a good example of how they show their oneness by sharing a "song." They argue about little things, yet agree on a lot of other things. *June on June: a script* utilizes the conventions of the screenwriting tradition with elements such as characters, setting, and plot. Yet the application of those conventions are interfered with by unproductive structures such as having two characters with the same name (raising the question whether the two Junes one person or two characters with the same name), and the plotless storyline.

Yes, "June" is my name. No, this script is not an autobiography in the traditional sense of telling stories or revealing personal history/memories. In her book *Woman, Native, Other* (1989), Trinh T. Minh-ha distinguishes two different styles of autobiography: one of the *written-self,* and the other of the *writing-self*. The *written-self* is more a conventional style of writing *about* the self, about one's body, one's inner life, and so on. In this kind of writing, "a consolidation of writing from the self", the author and her subject exist as finished products, as the author is separated from her work. The *writing-self* style of writing, "a scriptive act," creates "redoubled images" that "form and reform, neither I nor you". In this kind of writing, the author and her work are both a work in progress (22-29). *June on June* is, perhaps, self-referential, maybe even self-reflective. June 1 and June 2 do not represent the double identity of my hyphenated being, rather they animate the absurdity of being hyphenated. They are willing participants who activate the cyclical state of being *in-between*. They do not have to carry the duty of representing me, the

artist.

The script's structure is repetitive. For example, there is a visitor who is expected to arrive at some point. Each scene ends with the two Junes talking about the expected arrival of the guest, resembling Vladimir and Estragon's indefinite waiting in Samuel Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot* (1953). Unlike the reader of *Waiting for Godot*, the reader of *June on June* does not even know the name of the guest that the two Junes are waiting for. But there is a great deal of care being paid towards these unknown guests; June 2 is knitting a blanket for them. In the hallway scene (the second scene), June 1 is writing inside the locker with white paint, covering up the surface. Am I repeating my own act of painting and repainting in *The Invisible Transformation Project*? June 1 and June 2 have appeared in my work in many different ways and forms over the years. They have been sharing the same space with a certain degree of tension and comfort. They are slowly learning to live together.

This script manifests into three different forms: visual art (a photo album accompanies the script), literary work (as it is in the format of screenwriting), and a sound work (there is an original composition by Jazz composer and sound improvisor Ken Aldcroft, for the "song" in the hallway scene). When I present the work at 26 in August, 2014, as part of my dissertation exhibition, I will be knitting the red blanket that June 2 is making in the evening scene, adding a performance element to the work. This act complicates the relationship between the two June characters and myself: am I reenacting the character June 2 by knitting the red blanket?; am I playing the June 2 role for the exhibition? I am also going to have some props from the script at the site such as the book, *The Doubl*e, that June 1 is reading in the evening scene, suggesting the presence of June 1.

Postscript

The problem with the current cultural climate is that the concept of inclusivity only functions at the surface level. There is a celebratory mood of cultural and ethnic diversity in multicultural festivals, official ethnic group designated months — for example, in Canada: February is Black History Month, May is Asian Heritage Month, June is National Aboriginal History Month,[74] and there are culture-themed art exhibitions, and so on. However, these various social apparatuses for marginalized groups, created in order for them to have a place and a voice in this multi-ethnic, multi-cultural society, serve as another form of restriction. This is the paradox of neoliberalism; it packages ethnic and cultural difference as a celebration of cultural diversity and racial equality while disguising governmental standardization (for example, new immigration laws, tightened border controls, the Foreign Workers Program, etc.) and corporate economic gains. Because of these superficial mechanisms of inclusive gestures in the current cultural climate, it is ever more crucial for the ethnic subject to actively and critically engage in cultural and ethnic constructions.

While working on my practice-based Phd research, I have been engrossed in a number of questions/dilemmas regarding the current state of the ethnic subject's positionality:

1. Can the ethnic subject keep her *difference* yet be part of a collective community? What does it mean to be part of a community? What does it mean to be different? In this current multi-ethnic, multi-cultural society, the concept of difference operates as a valuable instrument for the dominant society's mandate of being a progressive "multicultural" unit. Ethnic and cultural differences are commodified in exchange for the sense of acceptance extended to the minority

[74] Canadian Heritage, http://www.pch.gc.ca/eng/1323803726195

groups. Differences are categorized and institutionalized in order for the dominant power to manage the various ethnic groups. Cultural diversity is recognized and approved based on the boundaries of the dominant power's comfort level; the degree of difference is measured by how well cultural and ethnic dissimilarities can be integrated into the rest of society. In this sense, becoming part of the main social structure means that you are agreeing on the terms and conditions of the majority. Therefore, it is no longer sufficient to have a place in social and political constructions, but, more importantly, it is crucial to analyze how and why one reacts and responds to those apparatuses.

2. What does it mean to have visual representation? Does having clear visuality increase the possibility of gaining *visibility*? What does it mean to have one's ethnicity clearly visible? Does the visibility limit the potential to establish a self-determined identity? There is a danger of perpetuating socially constructed images of ethnicity when one decides to keep ethnicity *visible*. One might end up performing what is expected of the ethnic being. In contrast, if one resists being categorized, it seems that it would be a better solution to be *invisible*; to blend with the rest. However, this has a danger of leading one to be criticized as being "assimilated" or "white-washed." How should the ethnic subject deal with this dilemma? Are there only two choices, either of belonging or rejecting categorization? How do you *become* this conscious subject who can destabilize social norms and challenge cultural conventions? Even when you are resisting societal categorization, your rejection is still tied to the given society's framework.

3. What is the relationship between the ethnic (non-white) artist and her artwork? Can the ethnic artist sustain her criticality through her work beyond the ethnic lens? I am Korean-Canadian; a

so-called ethnic subject, an ethnic artist. At the same time, I am a contemporary being. My own association to ethnicity changes and fluctuates over time; it is similar to any form of identification process in this contemporary world. You are constantly influenced by things you see and read, exchanges you have with others, places you go to, and so on. As much as I am in constant flux, my artwork evolves on its own. Once the work leaves my studio, I am no longer in charge of "speaking" for it. The work will have to face diverse types of viewers. Can the artwork carry its own agency? Can the work "speak" for itself? Can an inanimate object (artwork) be performative? Because the work is an autonomous entity, keeping a critical distance between the artist and the work is necessary. However, is this critical distance even possible?

This has been a challenging topic of research for me for the last four years. I have a strong urge to come up with an answer to all these questions, and provide solutions to contentious issues surrounding ethnicity. However, generating debates is, I believe, a more beneficial and auspicious act for the future development and understanding of ethnicity and the ethnic subject. Instead of erasing racial tensions by manufacturing theoretically ambivalent or neutral terms such as *ethnicity* or insisting on segregating racial groups in their authentic, racially homogeneous, groupings, it is more productive to face the limitations of the current system and begin the process of change with criticality, which can only be activated by having proper debates on the issue at hand. Having said that, what comes after the debate? There are numerous books, articles, and essays written about how to talk about ethnicity, how to think critically in resisting societal prejudice, and how to analyze the current imbalance of power between the majority and the marginalized. I have gathered together a number of thinkers' writings in my dissertation in order to present alternate ways to engage in the conversation. However, there is a

lack of discourse around the aspect of making in relation to art practice that deals with issues around ethnicity. My writing on *performativity* references more direct methods through which the ethnic subject can negotiate this complex web of societal constructions of ethnicity.

As an ethnic artist, I felt discomfort in having to operate within a preexisting intellectual and theoretical framework that promotes definitions of ethnicity. Theoretical writings reside in an authoritarian place above practice, and use artworks as either examples of theory or illustrations of theoretical applications. In my research, I am shifting this power dynamic in order to activate self-determination as a deciding factor for the ethnic subject/artist. I see making artwork as a performative act in which the ethnic subject/artist becomes the catalyst for actualizing her own positionality without having to answer to any authority for historical validation. The ethnic subject's self-determination can be translated in multiple ways: the Muslim woman deciding to put her veil back on, the young musicians asserting their multi-ethnic hyphenations, and June 1 and June 2 sharing a space of tension and comfort as long as they desire.

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