

Women's Desire, Heterosexual Norms and Transnational Feminism: Kitahara Minori's Good-bye Hallyu

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Summary

Japanese mainstream media have stereotyped Japanese *Hallyu* fans as "middle-aged," asexual and unhappy women. A right-wing backlash since 2012 further made them targets of xenophobic as well as sexist attacks. After socio-historically contextualizing this constructed fan image, this article probes Kitahara Minori's *Good-bye Hallyu* to ask, "if *Hallyu* has empowered the audience, how has it done so?"

Introduction

The television drama series that stands for the rise of the *Hallyu* in Japan is *Winter Sonata* (Kyōul yōn'ga in Korean, *Fuyuno sonata* in Japanese), starring Pae Yong-jun and Cho'e Chiu,¹ which aired in 2003 (Kim 2010; Han 2012).² Although *Winter Sonata*, centering upon a tragic romance, was largely supported by female viewers, the historical drama, *Dae Jang-geum* (*The Great Jang-geum*) starring Lee Yōng-ae which aired in 2005, successfully captured male as well as female viewers. Yet Japanese mainstream media have stereotyped Japanese fans of these dramas as "middle-aged," asexual and unhappy women. Meanwhile, the economic impact of *Hallyu* triggered the quick development of the Shin-Ōkubo entertainment district in Tokyo, catering predominantly to female fans (Kitahara 2013b, 61-62). The boom also inspired *Hallyu* enthusiasts to take Korean language and culture courses; and to travel to the shooting locations of *Winter Sonata*, which signaled "changes in gender dynamics and inter-Asian cultural flows," since tours to Korea were

previously dominated by Japanese male travellers (Hirata 2008, 143).³ This shift in cultural flow has triggered distinctive – sometimes politically charged – inquiries by scholars and audience members due to the complex history of Japan-Korea relations. These complexities include ongoing tension regarding Japan's colonization of the Korean peninsula, the colonial gaze maintained by many Japanese through sex tourism after Korea's independence, and South Korea's official ban of cultural imports from Japan until the late 1990s (Hirata 2008). As discussed below, the political context faced by *Hallyu* fans has become even more complex since 2012, when anti-Korean backlash against the *Hallyu* wave became predominant in Japan.

While some academic authors dealing with the Japanese fans have shown that *Hallyu* had a positive impact on their perception of Korea (see Ahn 2008; Hirata *ibid*; Mōri 2008; Kim 2010), the concept of women's desire has allowed the feminist popular writer and entrepreneur Kitahara Minori to go farther to explore both the liberating effects of *Hallyu* and the ideologies behind a right-wing backlash against it. This article will contextualize *Hallyu* fans' resistance to and negotiation with dominant norms about heterosexual desires and national belonging by probing key issues raised by Kitahara and her collaborators in the collection of interviews and essays they published entitled *Good-bye Hallyu* (*Sayonara Kanryu*, 2013b).



Figure 1: From left, *Good-bye Hallyu* (Kitahara 2013b) and *Patriot Housewives* (Kitahara and Park 2014).

Kitahara Minori's *Good-bye Hallyu*

Kitahara Minori is a non-fiction writer, who has published more than 10 single- and co-authored books and also runs Love Peace Club, a company based in Tokyo that sells "adult goods" for women. As a widely read non-academic essayist and a contributing editor for *Shūkan Asahi*, she covers a wide range of issues including crime and sexuality, popular culture, and social movements, each of which symbolizes a significant aspect of contemporary Japanese society (Kitahara 2000, 2011, 2013a, 2013b; Kitahara and Park 2014). Resonating with other feminist writers, scholars, and activists in Japan and elsewhere, Kitahara's works have addressed gendered forms of domination, oppression, and violence prevailing in Japanese society while self-reflectively questioning how gender affects her own experiences and subjectivity (Kitahara 2011, 201; Matsui 1990). While specializing in feminist critique on sexuality and the body, her critical examination of social issues also extends to xenophobia and discrimination against Korean diasporas.⁴

According to Kitahara, the book proposal for

Good-bye Hallyu was born out of her genuine excitement as a *Hallyu* drama fan in 2011. However, the political and social context surrounding fandom drastically changed in 2012, coinciding with the beginning of the second term of Prime Minister Abe Shinzō, who maintains a strong connection with ultra-right nationalists as well as bureaucratic and business elites (Bix 2015, Kitahara and Park 2014). The tension between Japanese fans of *Hallyu* and mainstream culture was exacerbated by anti-Korean hate demonstrations in Shin-Ōkubo, Tokyo and Tsuruhashi, Osaka, in which *Hallyu* fans became a target of verbal attacks. *Good-bye Hallyu* notes that Kitahara has also received verbal threats and harassment via phone calls and online; and Han Tong-hyōn describes the increasingly hostile media environment surrounding Korean diaspora youths in Japan (Kitahara 119,174-185, 2013).





Figure 2-4: Anti-racism activists counteract an extreme-right hate speech demonstration on a main street in Kyoto on December 7th, 2014. This marked the fifth year anniversary of anti-Korean campaign by *Zainichi Tokken wo Yurusanai Shimin no Kai* (Zaitokukai, or Group of citizens who do not tolerate privileges for ethnic Korean residents in Japan) targeting at an ethnic Korean elementary school in Kyoto, claiming that it illegally occupies a public playground. On December 10th, 2014, the Supreme Court rejected Zaitokukai's appeal and upheld lower court rulings that ordered them to pay compensation to the school.

Photo by Rio Akiyama.

Reflecting upon these shifting tides, the book covers the "genealogy of women's desires" (Kitahara 2013b, 7) and fan voices, and provides socio-political analysis of these attacks on female *Hallyu* fans, combining the transcripts of discussions with other contributors and her essays. Written between 2011 and 2012, some of the essays, which feature various types of fan involvement and the author's own observations, have been published in major magazines, such as *Shūkan Asahi* and *Josei Kōron*. In a casual and dynamic manner, Kitahara discusses pleasures that *Hallyu* brings its fans with leading figures from various fields: feminist academics such as the sociologists Ueno Chizuko and Shibuya Tomomi

and the psychologist Nobuta Sayoko discuss the wider social context of *Hallyu*'s popularity; the media scholar Yamashita Young-Ae provides a glimpse of public seminars that she has facilitated to watch and discuss contemporary Korean dramas; and Han Tong-hyōn depicts how *Hallyu* differed from preceding images of Korea from the perspective of a Korean diaspora youth in Japan. A provocative exchange between the female-targeted adult DVD producer Makino Eri and Kitahara illustrates the alternative image of manhood depicted by the Korean male stars. Interviews with popular writer Nishimori Michiyo and transgender blogger Shōnen Ayachan explore *Hallyu* in its relationship with media production and consumer culture in Japan. The diverse sociocultural backgrounds of the contributors are a crucial subtext-and they either support or complement Kitahara's appreciation of *Hallyu* from differing angles – yet her views, as a Japanese heterosexual female fan around forty years old, remain central to the whole book.

Good-bye Hallyu has provided her and some of her collaborators with an opportunity for full-fledged criticism about misogyny and exclusionary nationalism maintained in and through Japanese popular culture: attractive and caring male stars in *Hallyu* offer a mirror image that reflects "what Japanese men are not" for this author and her contributors. For Kitahara, "to consider why *Hallyu* was so much fun – or why it has become a target of hostility" meant "to think about women ... and men in this country. This gradually grew to my reflection on the relationships between [women and men], and [how it connected to the one between] the neighbouring country and today's Japan. Before I knew it, *Hallyu* had become a perspective through which I look at the world" (Kitahara 2013b, 11).

My selection of Kitahara's book for this article is not to suggest that it represents Japanese feminists' entire response to *Hallyu*. Rather,

Kitahara's analysis of *Hallyu* and her work in general intrigues me because two dominant approaches within feminist movements, namely radical feminism and transnational feminism, seem to be valued and advocated simultaneously. Although some academic feminists have attempted to combine them, I have not seen such a relationship explored by a well-known non-academic Japanese author prior to Kitahara. When she foregrounds women's sexual autonomy and their entitlement to explore their erotic fantasies and desires, her rhetoric echoes that of radical feminists, who consider sexual oppression-women's sexual subordination and control by men in particular-to be the fundamental mechanism that produces gender inequality in society (Mandell 2010, 22). On the other hand, by locating the mainstream media's bashing of female *Hallyu* fans within intensifying xenophobia and ethnocentrism in Japanese society, *Good-bye Hallyu* moves away from radical feminists' conventional focus on racially and socioeconomically privileged women (See Song 2009, Kikuchi 2010). Drawing the reader's attention to both the sexism and xenophobia that inform the landscape of Japan's public culture today, *Good-bye Hallyu*'s collective exploration echoes the transnational feminist concern over the redistribution and maintenance of socio-economic inequalities now maintained through the global flows of capital, people and commodities (Kim-Puri 2005, 142; Mayuzumi 2014).

The question that guides my article is about Kitahara's and her collaborators' argument - if *Hallyu* has empowered the audience, how has it done so? In what follows, I will contextualize how women, especially the category of "middle-aged women," have collectively appeared as the key constituency of the fandom. Next, I will discuss the ideologies about feminized domestic work and romantic love that underpin Japanese society's status quo, which have contributed to the particular formation of *Hallyu* fandom as well as the mainstream

media's trivialization of their impact. At the end, I will highlight diverse fan voices in *Good-bye Hallyu* and critically examine binary comparisons (i.e., Men vs. Women and Japanese vs. Korean). In so doing, I will extend Kitahara's work by articulating the multidimensional working of gender, race/ethnicity, and sexuality in Japanese female fans' engagement with *Hallyu*. I will employ an intersectional approach to delineate the "simultaneity of race and gender as social processes" (Nash 2008, 89), allowing me to investigate the overlapping areas of gender and race/ethnicity - and how gendered asymmetry informs racial ethnic inequality and vice versa - in Japanese reception of *Hallyu*.

Social Construction of the 'Middle-Aged' *Hallyu* Fandom in Japan

The image of *Hallyu* fans as "middle-aged" women originally appeared in the Japanese media when fans enthusiastically gathered to welcome Pae Yong-jun at Narita Airport in April 2004. Even though this group of people was only a small fraction of the many *Hallyu* fans in Japan, Kim Hyeweon suggests, this was a moment when audience members recognized each other as a community via the image circulated by the media (Kim 2010, 3). Statistically speaking, women between 40 and 60 are the demographic that predominantly does unpaid care work, looking after children, the elderly, and ill and disabled members of Japanese society (Lee 2010).

The "good wife, wise mother" ideology implemented by the Japanese government in the late nineteenth century constructed the private sphere (i.e. home or '*katei*') primarily devoted to women's affective labour to establish the foundation of the modern nation-state and capitalist society (Koyama 1994). Simultaneously, Japan's colonization of the Korean peninsula (1910-1945) provided a significant context for the establishment of modern Japan, from the ideology of

racial/ethnic superiority to industrial development. Although economic and political paradigms have shifted since then – from industrial economy and nation-state building to post-industrial economy and globalization – the right-wing backlash against *Hallyu* fans indicates that the fundamental place that family and women's bodies occupy in the maintenance of national identity and capitalism continues to be crucial. As discussed earlier, the circulated media image of early fandom was not necessarily a misrepresentation. But as Kim and others suggest, what appears to be a spontaneous expression ("affection," "romantic desire," etc.) was rather a social construct: Japanese television programs mostly target young audiences and ignore middle-aged and elderly women, Korean dramas' emphasis on home and kinship helped to gain their support because of their commitment to affective work, which had been categorically made invisible from the public sphere, was suddenly made visible and given an identity and a sense of community through *Hallyu* (Kim 2010).

Key concepts constituting the modern nuclear family include monogamy and romantic love (*ai* or *ren'ai*). In this configuration, marriage is the ultimate consummation of romantic love. Furthermore, the notion of romantic love is conceptually linked with one's personhood, while affairs and sex work are presupposed to entail minimum personal attachment (Fujimoto 2001, 50). Moreover, gender ideologies, such as assertions about the biological differences between men and women and their inherent belonging to the public and private spheres respectively, are maintained through public education, medical discourses, occupational segregation, unequal wages and unpaid domestic work. In addition, in Japan the wife of the eldest son conventionally has the filial obligation to care for aging parents (Lee 2010, 648-649). In practice romantic love is not stressed for men; even though the modern family is conceptually hinged upon romantic love, actual Japanese middle-class men are

largely mobilized for corporate-driven capitalism and expected to "fight 24 / 7" for their company.⁵ As a result, the idea of romantic love that circulated among women via Japanese films, novels, *manga* and news does not match with actual romantic relationships in which most men would look for a female partner so that she will take the primary care role for his children and parents (Kitahara 2013a; Nemoto 2008). Meanwhile, the double standard means that there is little criticism of married men's sexual involvement outside of marriage. Moreover, this distinctive set of assumptions about marriage and extra-marital sexual release have been underpinned by the dominant image of younger female and racially marginalized women in the sex trade, whose existence reveals another set of age-based and racial biases. In addition, Japanese women as a group remain marginal within the arenas of politics and media production (Kitahara 2013, 81-82).

The media's representation of *Hallyu* fandom was merged with a derogatory discourse about middle-aged women's excessive desire, creating a discursive sanction aiming at the maintenance of the status quo on multiple fronts: first of all, a woman's search for "true love" – real, romantic feelings and acceptance of her whole personhood – outside of marriage unsettles the ideological ground for unpaid care work, therefore it must be prohibited; secondly, Korean media commodities' successful performance within the Japanese market and overseas is reduced to a domestic issue (i.e. personal expression of women's sentiments) in order to deny its economic and cultural importance; third, the discursive construction of this desire as abnormal when it is felt by a particular age and gender ('middle-aged women') presupposes their submission to a patriarchal and mono-ethnic family unit. The label "abnormal" also carefully avoids a condemnation of miscegenation, thus leaving room for Japanese men with disposable income (typically, 'middle-aged men') to continue their

involvement with non-Japanese women in the sex trade both at home and abroad.

To critically intervene against this pathologized fan image constructed in the media, sociologists and media scholars have explored diverse fan desires and motivations, arguing that *Hallyu* promotes cultural values thought to be missing from Japanese society.



Figure 5: Choshinsung (Supernova) fans surround magazines displayed at a bookstore, waiting for the *Hallyu* group's appearance at a promotional event in Osaka on June 13th, 2015.

Ahn Jeong-mee suggests that *Winter Sonata* and other Korean dramas depict strong family ties, and the Japanese audience projects nostalgia for what their society has lost. Furthermore, Pae Yong-jun calls his fans "my family" (*kazoku no minasan*); the word family is

also employed by fans amongst themselves – the fan community (Ahn 2008, 205). Kim Hyun-mee maintains that the popularity of *Winter Sonata* and Pae Yong-jun derives from Japanese women's "realistic" desire to change gender relations in Japan; male characters in the drama presented an alternative masculinity from that of self-centered Japanese men (Kim 2005, cited in Ahn 2008, 205). Meanwhile, scholars such as Mōri Yoshitaka and Hirata Yukie have observed that *Hallyu* urged some members of the Japanese female audience to correct their ignorance about and prejudice against Korea (Hirata 2008; Mōri 2008). Until 2003, the Japanese perception of Korea had been mostly painted through "gendered imperialistic desires" which had been reproduced via colonial tours to the Korean peninsula and Northern China (then called the State of Manchuria). Also, after Japan's defeat in the WWII, *Kisaeng* tours were popular among Japanese male tourists in the 1970s to 1980s (Hirata 2008, 146). Hirata's and Mōri's interviews reveal that *Hallyu* and cultural activities stemming from it have given Japanese female fans access to contemporary realities in Korea and have inspired their critical reflection upon the discrimination against Korean diaspora in Japanese society. In summary, these audience studies have sought to show both the active engagement of the fans and *Hallyu*'s positive impact upon society.

Women's Entitlement to Desire

In *Good-bye Hallyu*, Kitahara and her collaborators suggest that Korean male stars have provided Japanese female viewers with fantasies to fill the gap between the ideal of romantic love and on-going sex discrimination in society. Her appreciation of *Hallyu* male stars as a counter image to the Japanese masculine ideal is not necessarily unique, but is supported by her findings. Furthermore, her dialogues with collaborators successfully reveal heterogeneous ways in which audience members make sense of the appeal of *Hallyu*

and negotiate with stereotypical images of the fan. For example, Yamashita Young-Ae describes the enthusiastic engagement of Japanese female viewers with Korean dramas because they depict characters' dialogues in realistic ways and empowered women characters more straightforwardly than do Japanese dramas, reflecting both the rich storytelling tradition and democratic and feminist struggles in Korean society.

What further distinguishes *Good-bye Hallyu* is its contributors' extensive critique of particular forms of heterosexual relationships shaped through Japanese popular culture, and the way they help explain the appeal of *Hallyu*. They argue that Japanese cultural industries are centred upon men's desires and women are only encouraged to express motherly, sexless love towards young Japanese male stars. For example, Shinoda Sayoko calls Japanese female fans' enthusiasm as their "revenge against male[-centric] culture (*otoko bunka e no fukushū*)" (Kitahara 2013b, 61). Meanwhile, their passion is not acknowledged as "normal" by the public because the targets are not Japanese, which, as Shibuya Tomomi asserts, is underpinned by the "deep consciousness of ethnic discrimination" (67-68).

Kitahara calls Japanese masculinity "rotten, mental macho that is not useful for anything" (45). To her, the popularity of Japanese female idol group AKB48, often framed as the "national-scale idol" (*kokumin teki aidoru*) and the male gaze implicated in it resonate with her perception of Japanese machismo: "[Japanese men] never understand my criticism. They feel comfort with easily controllable girls like AKB48... They are too weak to accept mature women and their opinions; instead, the men totally reject these. And the harder the girls work, the more compliments the male producer receives about his excellence. After all, the girls are a fantasy of men's society" (ibid.).

Another example of Japanese macho is the male

dance-music unit EXILE, whose lead dancer Kitahara perceives as displaying the "power to intimidate others and [maintain] his dignity as a man"(48). Makino Eri similarly points out, "Japanese men are very proud and they are difficult to deal with; but they are psychologically vulnerable [...]. And they [feel entitled to] criticize women" (135). In contrast to this chauvinism, Kitahara maintains, "*Hallyu* .., beautifully exhibits men's muscles - their chest, wide shoulders, long arms and legs, height, and well-balanced physique - that women cannot own ... In contrast to men who appeared in *Hallyu*, the Japanese macho is a body-less, absurd one, who does not love any [real] woman"(45). She highlights the male K-pop group, TVXQ, to illustrate her point. "I feel nothing but beauty and eroticism in them... I had not seen this type of masculinity before them" (48). This poignant observation implies the Cartesian binary of mind and body in Japanese popular culture, in which the disembodied subject occupies a dominant position whereas racialized and gendered others are linked with material substance of the body.

As Ueno Chizuko points out and Kitahara agrees, *Hallyu* is a media phenomenon whose depiction of alternative masculinity is a version of fantasy. Shōnen Aya-chan is quite aware of this point, as her remark states: "it felt good to buy a whole bunch of products that had good-looking guys printed on them. It was like 'whoa, I am consuming men!'"(105). To be precise, because this is about consuming a 'fantasy,' doing so might play out differently depending on one's individual investment in the domestic 'marriage market.' According to non-fiction writer Nishimori Michiyo, a young unmarried female viewer who is actively looking for a partner is likely to view Japanese stars as a symbol of their future mate and Korean star images as mere fiction, so investing in *Hallyu* would thus mean that she had given up on the possibility of falling in love with a real man (76).

In other ways, *Hallyu* comes across as familiar in Japan. Han Tong-hyŏn makes this point from her distinctive perspective when she discusses the reception of Korean popular culture prior to *Hallyu* among classmates and friends at a Korean school in Japan, such as the television drama series *Sandglass* (*Moraesigye* 1995) depicting civilian oppression and democratization movement during the 1970s and 80s in South Korea. While these older dramas felt familiar through her ethnic identification as a Korean diaspora, Han can relate to the "coolness" of *Hallyu* because of its continuity with the culture she is exposed to daily - that is, Japanese and Euro-American pop culture. She became aware that the Japanese audiences "who likes good-looking and cool things listen to K-pop too"(114). To many other *Good-bye Hallyu* contributors, however, it is *Hallyu*'s difference from the Japanese norm that allows them to envision gender utopia and critically examine the institutionalized patterns of domination and oppression in Japanese society, eloquently conveying their premise that the personal is political.

Nevertheless, Kitahara's and her collaborators' analyses tempt me to consider the shortcomings of their binary categories, such as Japanese men versus Korean men and women versus men. First of all, the appearance of homogeneity and transparency within a national community is a discursive effect, which visual culture is part of, that effaces divisions and negotiations within each national category - for instance, non-heterosexual pleasures evoked by *Hallyu* are mostly made invisible by scholarly discourses, the public media and fan communities. Similarly, limited scholarly attention has been paid to Japanese female viewers' response to female Korean stars. Furthermore, this contrast between Japanese men and Korean men creates an impression that this type of sexism and misogyny is culturally or ethnically specific to Japanese men, limiting the scope of theorization within the nation-state boundaries.

Since the concept of 'Japanese' signifies a difference from Asian others and the West in the context of Japanese society, criticism of "Japanese men" connotes their separation from the rest of the world - possibly implying "backwardness" compared to the West or Korea - unless the feminist herself attempt to deconstruct this category.

As stated above, Kitahara's critique actually overlaps quite well with the Cartesian divide of mind and body maintained within and outside of Japanese society: physical exposure (i.e. nudity) has characterized the representation of underprivileged individuals in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, economic status and age in visual representations; physical markers of race and nation are constructed as an obstruction that must be transcended through the hype of digital-mediated communication, reinforcing the superiority of mind vis-à-vis body (See Boler 2007, Hall 1990). Although this divide has primarily meant objectifying both women and racialized men, eroticized young male images have been mobilized to sell menswear, grooming products and consumer magazines for some decades (See Nixon 1997). Kitahara's points about Japanese hegemonic masculinity should be further contextualized within the transnational circulation of masculine images. In return, this transnational analysis would assist us to further understand ways that the particular conditions of Japan-Korea relations are manifesting through popular culture.

In addition, I would suggest that the relationship between the Japanese female fan and the Korean male star is more complex and cannot be captured by a "single axis" framework of sexism (Nash 2008, 89). Here, the concept of the gaze allows an intersectional exploration of power dynamics between the fan and the star. At the most superficial level, Kitahara's admiration of male K-pop singers' physiques reminds me of the white "male gaze," which dominates the fetishized female

body (Mulvey 1975). It appears that her excitement derives from metaphorically or figuratively claiming the dominant position over the Korean male body, subverting traditional gender roles. However, she also asserts that *Hallyu* is liberating for her because it helped her to accept masculine difference, constructed as the opposite of the feminine, as something good, a version of masculinity that does not entail misogyny. Therefore, Kitahara's approach to *Hallyu* does not necessarily transgress the normative construction of heterosexuality based on the binary concept of sexual difference (i.e. heteronormativity), but sustains it. To substantiate my argument even further, in fact, *Hallyu* fans' fantasies, cited by Kitahara, are more conventional than swapping between the top and bottom positions. Some fans simultaneously express their attraction towards "good-looking bodies" (*kirei na karada*) and fantasies that replicate the typically feminine (or "bottom") position: "I want to be caressed and I want to be told 'I love you'" (Kitahara, *ibid.*, p. 81). This fan projects her fantasy towards the star – she is the one who actually has the power to shape the imaginative relationship – yet she keeps her "bottom" (or passive) position in this scenario. Fan narratives indicate that the binary opposition within heterosexual romance is reinstated by their encounters with Korean stars rather than unsettling (or 'queering') it.

While other contributors to *Good-bye Hallyu* tend to focus on the positive impact of *Hallyu*, Ueno Chizuko is a "devil's advocate" who questions the meaning of romance, friendship and kinship that Japanese female fans see in *Hallyu*. She speculates that Korean stars' ability to speak in Japanese to fans reinforces the Japanese female audience's easy consumption of Korean male images; moreover, the fan's enjoyment of this convenient access, made available through consumer culture, hinges upon the economic and political hierarchy maintained between the Japanese and the Koreans since the colonial era

(Kitahara *ibid.*, 145). Kitahara responds to Ueno that female fans are motivated to study Korean language, exemplified by the 200,000 copies of NHK's Korean language course textbooks sold when *Winter Sonata* was first aired in Japan; and they explain that effort to learn the language by saying "I want to write 'I like you' in Korean!" (146). Ueno is skeptical about this new relationship sought by the fans and doubtful that this will eventually lead to their critical reflection upon unresolved colonial legacies – most notably, she thinks it will not lead to a necessary reconsideration of Japanese military's sexual exploitation of Korean women and girls during WWII (i.e. the 'comfort women' issue). By contrast, Kitahara considers the younger generation's detachment from historical context to be a blissful condition, allowing their uncompromised admiration of Korean products' superiority over Japanese counterparts. As this exchange between Ueno and Kitahara illustrates, the Korean 'other' circulated via consumer culture is a fetish, stripped of wider social and historical processes through which the 'other' became known to 'us' (Ahmed 2000). Constructive approaches discussed by Yamashita Young-Ae in *Good-bye Hallyu* resonate with Hirata (2008) and Mōri (2008), indicating that it is up to the voluntary efforts of the consumers to cultivate their curiosity about Korean people, culture, society and history.

Conclusion

The media is a pivotal site upon and through which dominant gender relations are reinforced at the intersection of the local and global (Shome 2006). Significant research has demonstrated that the female body functions as a surrogate for national tradition, which national communities and diasporic families symbolically defend against transgressions as they undergo cultural hybridization (Handa 2003; Oza 2001). Echoing events elsewhere in the world, Kitahara and her collaborators' analysis of *Hallyu* fandom as well as the anti-

Hallyu backlash vividly illustrate that female sexuality and identity are re-imagined and re-asserted in response to the image of alternative masculinity presented by the performers. The discussion above has also shown some possible directions of transnational feminist theorizing for race/ethnicity, gender and sexuality working across national boundaries. The hegemonic Japanese masculinity, which Kitahara and others have interrogated, was established in relationship with other hegemonic and subordinate masculinities such as the white man and the Korean man in the representational practices of politics and culture.

Furthermore, to acknowledge diversity within the category of women, the implication of various masculinities in the system of domination must be examined as an intersecting process of gender, race/ethnicity, sexuality, class, (dis)ability and age, which does not simply add up but reinforces each other (Crenshaw 1991; Mayuzumi 2014; Nash 2008). Gender-focused research highlights *Hallyu* as an opportunity for Japanese female viewers to move beyond the usual confinements of home and national borders through tourism and affective bonds with stars and other fans. My analysis has taken an intersectional approach to illustrate that, although this appears to temporarily liberate the fans from gendered restrictions in society, their fantasies projected on Korean male stars might not interfere with the ideological underpinnings of the modern family, such as romantic love and heterosexuality. As Kitahara points out, Korean stars' alternative masculinity – the non-violent, caring and visually pleasing ideals of manhood – assists some viewers to affirm their identification with a feminine position and actively perform it in imaginary settings. I have also suggested that the physical and emotional emphasis of Korean stars, as opposed to the disembodied status of Japanese men, might be pertinent to the Cartesian binary of mind and body that works to underscore Japanese male

hegemony. Feminist research done from a transnational perspective about Japanese society is growing, but it is still marginal (Kikuchi 2010). I hope the theoretical blue-print offered in this article will contribute to further discussion about gender, sexuality and empowerment involving Japan and Japanese-Korean relations from a transnational feminist perspective.

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SPECIAL FEATURE

Hallyu: The Korean Wave and Asia (5 of 6)

Jooyeon Rhee and Nissim Otmazgin, "Expanding Transnational Dialogue in Asia through *Hallyu*."

Nissim Otmazgin, "A New Cultural Geography of East Asia: Imagining A 'Region' through Popular Culture."

Mary J. Ainslie, "K-dramas across Thailand: Constructions of Koreanness and Thainess by contemporary Thai consumers."

Millie Creighton, "Through the Korean Wave Looking Glass: Gender, Consumerism, Transnationalism, Tourism Reflecting Japan-Korea Relations in Global East Asia."

Jooyeon Rhee, "Gendering Multiculturalism: Representation of Migrant Workers and Foreign Brides in Korean Popular Films."

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Notes

¹ The name order of Japanese and Korean actors, writers, DVD producers and academic authors follows that of the original language: the given name follows the family name.

² *Winter Sonata* was broadcast by NHK in 2003 and re-broadcast in 2004 responding to popular demand. According to NHK Broadcasting Research Centre's survey in September 2004, 90 percent of survey participants knew that *Winter Sonata* was broadcast in Japan, and 38 percent had watched it (Kim 2010, 2). In the same year, it was estimated that the revenue generated by *Winter Sonata* reached 50-100 hundred million yen. While the popularity of Korean dramas was already high in Taiwan, China, and Vietnam, at that time Japan became the biggest market for Korean broadcasting content, accounting for 61.9 percent of export in 2005 (Han 2012, 132). Han Youngkyun (2012) points out that this breakthrough first puzzled the Korean public, who had assumed *Hallyu*'s popularity in Asia would only be a short, temporary boom. But soon this unprecedented popularity of Korean drama influenced the overall shift in the domestic public perception of *Hallyu*, its sustainability, and its ability to represent national identity.

³ The number of Japanese travellers to Korea in 2004 grew by 35.5 percent from the previous year (Hirata 2008, 143).

⁴ Kitahara's recent book, *Okusama wa aikoku* (Patriot Housewives, 2014), co-authored with

journalist Park Sunyi, analyses housewives' motives for getting involved with extreme right-wing groups.

⁵ This phrase became a meme after being used in a promotional campaign for the supplement drink, 'Regain,' in 1988.