TRANS-
HUMANITIES

Title : "Local" Hybridity and the "Translocal" Identities of Korean Subalterns and Asian Migrant Workers: Looking at the South Korean Film, *Banga*, *Banga*!

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Source : *Trans-Humanities*, Vol. 6 No. 3 (2013), pp. 133–155
Published by : Ewha Womans University Press
URL : http://eiheng.ewha.ac.kr/page.asp?pageid=book10&pagenum=060600
Online ISSN : 2383-9899

"Local" Hybridity and the "Translocal" Identities of Korean Subalterns and Asian Migrant Workers: Looking at the South Korean Film, *Banga, Banga!**

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I. Introduction

The Korean film *Banga, Banga!* was directed by Sang–Hyo Yook and released in September 2010. Like *Searching for Ronny* (2009) and *Bandhoby* (2009) representing Asian migrant male workers named Ronny and Karim, *Banga, Banga!*'s main background is the marginal city of Ansan, well known for the Banwol industrial–complex, located outside of Seoul near the west coast of South Korea. The city of Ansan is populated by Asian migrant workers, some of whom have lived there for over 10 years; the urban poor of rural origin who have either failed to enter into Seoul or have been expelled from Seoul and forced to move to a marginal place; the Korean workers and lower–level office staff who work in the Gesung factory making chairs; and activists advocating for the rights of migrant workers.

Portrayed in the film are the lives and cultures of those vulnerable populations within South Korea, who have become even more impoverished and cruelly shunted aside under neoliberal globalization. The protagonist of this film, Tae–Shik Bang (alias "Banga" which he uses to get a job by pretending to be from Bhutan) and his old friend Young–Cheol are Korean

* An earlier draft was presented at the 2011 HK International Conference on Cultural Hybridity and Migrating Identities ("'Local' Hybridity and the 'Translocal' Identity of Asian Migrant Workers: Looking at the South Korean Film, *Banga, Banga!*"), which was held by Ewha Institute for the Humanities at Ewha Womans University, Seoul, South Korea, June 3–4, 2011. I am indebted to Robert J. C. Young, Chang Mi–Young, Isabel Pires de Lima, Claire Alexander, and my discussant Lee Kyung–Ran for their thoughtful comments and discussion.

men belonging to a new type of subaltern who has emerged and propagated rapidly in Asian locales[1] in the era of neoliberal capitalism. Together with them, Korean workers such as factory manager Mr. Choi and clerk Miss Oh as well as Asian migrant workers, working at the factory of Gesung, are shown in the movie. Included among them, are Al from Bangladesh, Charlie from Nepal, Michael from Uzbekistan, Laza from Indonesia, and Rose from Vietnam. On the other and marginal terrains different from metropolitan cities such as New York and London, both Korean subalterns and Asian migrant workers may represent something like "Asian local hybridity" against metropolitan hybridity by displaying their new translocal identities and agencies.

Starting in the late 1990s, as part of the mass migration of people across the globe, workers from minor countries in Asia have migrated in greater numbers to not merely Western metropolises but also sub–imperial Asian countries, making the construction of hybridized subjectivities within particular locales a meaningful realm of research and cultural analysis. The places where migrant workers have settled down and created particular locales demonstrate vividly the process of "local hybridity" in transnational flows. Asian migrant workers who have lived in South Korea for more than 10 years, for instance, perform their transnational agency in linking their countries of birth with their new places of settlement, in adapting to and in transforming their newfound homes. While unsettling and overcoming the binaries of "country of birth" and "country of settlement," they may show Asian "local" hybridity.

Understanding these things demands the coining of new concepts that both critique and correct the dominant understanding of the transnationalization of migrant subjects as ungrounded and deterritorialized. For instance, a concept of the local is necessary that recognizes it not as a fixed and essentialized entity, which becomes a passive recipient of the forces of homogenization from globalization, but as an active process that constructs itself by responding in various ways to global forms of agency. As Michael Woods states, nor is locality something that emerges through a top–down process of globalization, but rather something that is produced and constantly reconfigured through

1. The reason for using "locale" or "local," rather than "area," is to avoid the colonialist/imperialist meanings associated with "Area Studies," which was given a historical mandate as a discipline to divide and research the various areas of the world according to the national interests of United States.

an interactive process where both global agents and local agents actively intervene (498).

"Hybridity" (with "in–between–ness" or "third space") is a concept that has been developed within postcolonial cultural theory to redefine the notion of cultural identity in our era of globalization. Problematizing the binaries of "colonized/colonizer," "West/non–West (Asia)," and "center and margin," which have been used to essentialize and homogenize cultural identity, it challenges notions of pure cultural identity that underlie cultural nationalism or national essentialism. As such, this concept of hybridity has been considered as a tool of decolonization to open up a space for more fluid identities constructed through interaction with diverse cultures by Homi Bhabha (1994), Robert Young (1995), Arif Dirlik (1999), and Ien Ang (2003). Even though I think that this concept still has the theoretical potential to help redefine the cultural role or function of postcolonial subjects in the 21st century, as I shall argue in this paper, there are some serious limits to the dominant concept of hybridity posited from global metropolitan diasporic locations.

With this critical consciousness in mind, in the second section, I begin with a discussion of works by Robert Young, Arif Dirlik, and Ien Ang as a means to recuperate and transform the concept of hybridity so that it can be redeployed in a new direction. This means that I do not reject this concept outright unlike Aijaz Ahmad (1995), Bart Moore Gilbert (1997), and Ella Shoha (2000) who sharply point out the dangers of hybridity remaining complicit with Western or global culture and ignoring the structured collision of uneven forces. Thus, I shall argue for the concept of "local" hybridity as ensuring the localizing initiative which opposes a discursive field centering on global metropolitan locations. Based upon this conceptualization, the Asian local hybridity of *Banga, Banga!* will be examined by focusing on the sub–imperial aspects of South Korea.

In the next two sections, I further problematize the concept of hybridity from the perspectives of gender and tranlocalization in order to pre–empt some of its potential problems and extend some of its prominent possibilities. In the third section, I propose the gendering of Asian local hybridity, as part of overcoming the masculinism embedded in Asian local patriarchy. Then, the double processes of complicity with and resistance to masculinity/patriarchy, as represented in *Banga, Banga!*, will be analyzed. In the fourth section, I shall explore the translocalizing aspects realized in Asian local hybridity, and

then elaborate the meaning of translocal identities and agencies presented by Korean subalterns and Asian migrant workers in the movie.

II. Localizing "Hybridity": Asian Local Hybridity under Sub–imperialism

According to Robert Young, one of the first scholars to engage with Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity positively, the word "hybridity" originally referred to the crossbreeding of animals such as wild boars with domesticated hogs or the cross–pollination of fruits and plants such as grapes with roses. As such, it did not initially refer to the human species. In the mid–19th century, however, with the rise of a Western science intent on denying the theory of monogenesis, which postulated the separate origin of the "white" and "colored" races, this once value–neutral concept became expanded to include the human sphere. While the evolutionary theory of multiple species asserted only change and no essential differences between a living organism and its mutant, the pseudo–scientific evolutionary theory that superseded it in the latter part of the 19th century began to assert differences of inferiority and superiority within the social evolutionary process so that the concept of hybridity began to take on racist meanings that had once lain dormant beneath Western–dominated culture (Young 6–19). According to Young, one reason that an organic paradigm of hybridity asserting the coexistence of incompatible elements could develop so quickly was because of the development of Western capitalism (4). In providing this historical context, Young points to the nascent racist and capitalist meanings within this concept as well as the critical means to overcome them in using the work of Mikhail Bakhtin.

Also affirming the critical potential of the concept of hybridity to destabilize all essentialized concepts of cultural identity and forge radical alternatives is Arif Dirlik. Critical of a simplistic understanding of hybridity as the facile combination of elements from universal standards or abstract principles, however, Dirlik asserts the need to historicize this concept in terms of the historically–specific structures and locations in which it has been produced. There is the danger otherwise of reducing the diverse forms of marginalities that have been produced within various social–historical locations to the abstract concept of hybridity and thereby eliding the critical differences of power,

inequality, and exploitation that exist among them (106–09). Going a step further, Dirlik also proposes an "indigeneous community" or an "indigenous subject"—as part of the grand concept of "indigenism"—to designate the different forms of marginalities and to oppose the logics of globalization and/or transnationalism imposed by global capitalism. According to him, the indigenous subject is not a pure subject completely divorced from a hybrid subject that has now emerged within the global diasporic discourse. Nor is "the indigeneous" something that is unilaterally subordinated to the global. Rather, the indigeneous can be viewed as something that emerges through mutual interaction with the global, forming an "indigeneity–based hybridity" that can serve as a resource to resist the imperializing forces of global capitalism.[2]

If hybridity is a concept that needs to be historicized, it is a concept that, for Young and Dirlik, also needs to be revamped in order to neutralize the racist and capitalist elements within it. One of the most productive discussions of hybridity as a task and project is by Bakhtin, who has coined the term, "intentional hybridity." In contrast to the concept of "organic hybridity" that remains mute and opaque even as it smoothly assimilates differences and externalities, thus becoming the basis of human life and culture, "intentional hybridity" posits a form of hybridity that aggressively engages with disparate things outside itself. In the process, it may even split from itself. As such, it is a dynamic, contestatory, and argumentative term (Young 21–22). Within this concept of intentional hybridization, differences become erased as well as created in the shock of engagement so that "the same no longer remains the same and the different no longer simply different" (Ibid. 26).

Extending Robert Young's concept, Dirlik interprets Bakhtin's concept of organic hybridity as both a historical and linguistic artifact and a cultural identity that has the potential to easily transform itself through encounters with the everyday. It is thus impossible to speak of it as a pure and exclusive form of consciousness (Dirlik 116). Dirlik's concept of intentional hybridity, meanwhile, derives much of its radicality from the possibility of flinging open the door of organic hybridity to the interaction of multiple forces and structural contradictions. Still, Dirlik distances himself from Young's tendency to overemphasize the conflictual nature of intentional hybridity,

2. Within a similar context, Jeon Key–ahn also asserts the utility of the concept, "indigenous hybridity."

asserting that,

> … [E]ndless contestation and conflict … are hardly a desirable condition of everyday life, which requires some coherence and unity.… [I]ntentional hybridity is important to Bakhtin in challenging the hegemony of a single voice, but equally important I think is Bakhtin's stress on the illumination of one consciousness by another. (Dirlik 117)

Highlighting the importance of a dialoguing subject, Dirlik discusses instead two forms of hybridity, as it were, two kinds of consciousness and language that come into dialogue while maintaining an interactive pattern of rhythm and echo that resonate and respond to each other even as they remain separate.

Ien Ang, on the other hand, utilizes the concept of hybridity as a heuristic device to analyze complicated entanglements. Viewing hybridity as the state of being "together–in–difference," she argues that being caught in entanglements, which give rise to complicated phenomena, is not an exception but an ordinary state of affairs. For Ang, therefore, hybridity is "a critical force that undermines or subverts from the inside out, domination formations through the interstitial insinuation of the 'different,' the 'other' or the 'marginalized' in the very fabric of the dominant" (150). Within this framework, ambivalence also becomes reinterpreted, not as an indecisive state of being but as being culturally receptive and vulnerable to the other, which is necessary for living together in difference. Meanwhile, an overall re–evaluation of the concept of hybridity will likely occur through "examining *the specific contexts and conditions* in which hybridity operates" (Ang 150, emphasis original). In other words, through recognizing the importance of the local and the particular contexts and conditions in which hybridity occurs, encompassing various changing locales, historicizing actual hybridities, and "localizing hybridity" (Brudzinsky 1), we can grasp the full meaning of hybridity. In a word, it is necessary to historicize and localize "other hybridities."[3]

Based upon this discussion, I use the term, "local," rather than the term, "indigenous," favored by Dirlik and Jeon. In emphasizing placedness and grounded–ness, the term, "local," overlaps in significant ways with the

3. This idea is taken from Gayatri Spivak's "Other Asias."

concept of "indigeneity." Nonetheless, I still prefer the term "local" because it is both more encompassing and has a greater potential to intervene into the interactive and mutually constitutive relations with the "national–regional–global" scale. It is only by examining the tightly knit social relations among the various scales that compose place and space from within the "local" of the global South that we are able, I feel, to even begin to capture the complicated entanglements between difference and discrimination. Doing so will not only reveal the various patterns of domination and subordination that emerge and are reproduced as various classed, gendered, and nationalized groups re–established within a transnational frame, it will also reveal how novel forms of classed, gendered and capitalist exploitive relations are being constructed within the locale in interaction with the "national–regional–global," thus forming a "local" hybridity.[4] Of course, the subalterns constituting this "local" hybridity have continuously spoken to global–metropolitan–diasporic discursive subjects. However, the voice of the local hybrid subalterns has not been heard. *Banga, Banga!* represents those muted voices and languages dispersed among Asian marginal locales. Now it is time to listen to them attentively.

Ansan, the locale of Asian local hybridity in *Banga, Banga!*, is populated by various subalterns. They experience several kinds of conflict and suffering in competition for better jobs and more money. As minorities or precariats propagated in neoliberal and neoconservative Asian states, they cheat other subalterns rather than collaborate with them. Their impoverished lives are propped up by "sub–imperialism" established in Asian locales. Here, it is necessary to understand what "sub–imperialism" means. After being liberated from long imperial domination, some of the previously colonized countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America often talk anti–imperialist but walk sub–imperialist and collaborate with imperialist expansion as we see in the wake of the rise of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) as well as Asian Tiger economies of South Korea, Singapore, Taipei, and Hong Kong. Aside from lubricating world neo–liberalism, hastening world eco–destruction and serving as coordinator of hinterland looting, this new form of imperialism called "sub–imperialism" is characterized by much greater recourse to

4. Compared to W. E. Murray's concept of "localized hybridity" proposed within a similar context, the concept of "local" hybridity places more importance on local agency.

"accumulation by dispossession,"[5] the appropriation of non–capitalist' aspects of life and environment by capitalism, and the super–exploitation of migrant laborers from previously colonized colored people.

The sub–imperial aspects in *Banga, Banga!* are demonstrated through the power and discrimination harshly enforced on the migrant workers from minor Asian countries by Korean men. Mr. Choi, a manager of the Gesung factory, forces Asian immigrant workers to do more work for less pay. He even extorts the money they saved for five years. As for Banga, he is unable to secure work for many years due to his inferior "specs" (qualifications) and ratty appearance. He "licks" at his friend, Young–cheol, who runs a karaoke that barely brings in any business. By pretending to be a foreign worker from Bhutan, who goes by the name of Banga, Bang Tae–shik finally manages to get a job in the Gesung chair factory. In order to woo Rose, a female migrant worker from Vietnam, for whom he feels love for the first time in his life, "Banga" even stages a fake immigration crackdown. After Young–cheol sells the karaoke business, he persuades Banga to extort money from migrant workers caught trying to forge social security cards. Banga falls into Young–cheol's enticements, having no place to live in Ansan. They run away to their hometown with the migrant workers' money to open a barbeque restaurant. Being driven into a downward socio–economic position, they choose to sacrifice and exploit other subalterns rather than devote themselves to transforming the sub–imperialistic capitalism in solidarity with other Asian migrant workers.

However, Banga and Young–cheol show some aspects of opposing the sub–imperialism implied in Asian local hybridity. Looking at the steam rising from cooking rice, Banga remembers Rose reminiscing about steamed rice in Vietnam. In the countryside, the steam from cooking rice, which is said to rise like smoke through a chimney, has become a symbol of the emotional and affective ties tying Asian people of rural origin. Then, he decides to go back to the Immigration Office where the migrant workers are being held. Acting in solidarity with other Asian migrant workers who get harassed and arrested as illegal aliens by the state, Banga is finally on the side of "foreign"

5. According to David Harvey, "accumulation by dispossession" is a concept which defines the neoliberal capitalist policies from the 1970s and to the present day, as resulting in a centralization of wealth and power in the hands of a few by dispossessing the public of their wealth or land.

workers in South Korea. Following his footsteps, Young–cheol also returns to "foreign" workers in adversity. He had always considered them beneath himself. After hearing their songs at a singing contest for foreigners in the last scene and being touched by the sadness and hardship evoked within their songs, however, he collaborates with Banga in preventing these migrant workers from being expelled. Here, the role of savior that Banga and Young–cheol play in relation to Asian migrant workers is different from the role generally played by upper class men in sub–imperial societies. That is because Banga and Young–cheol may have to suffer punishment from state power due to their actions. As Asian gendered subalterns, they do not wholly succumb to the sub–imperial nation–state but are ready to suffer danger and trouble and show their own opposing agencies. That's the specific aspect of Asian local hybridity under sub–imperialism, represented in *Banga, Banga!*

III. Gendering "Local" Hybridity against Asian Local Patriarchy

A groundbreaking development in the latter part of the 20th century has been the development of a paradigm that views human identity through the intersecting categories of class, race, and gender. In the late 1990s, however, some of these categories are being obscured as issues of race and ethnicity come to the forefront. With race and ethnicity moving into the center of politics, interest in class and gender has become diminished and neglected. With ethnicity becoming a powerful force in reshaping collective identities in today's world of globalization, class, sexuality, and cultural hybridization are all experiencing a form of "ethnic structuring." After criticizing this trend towards the "racialization and ethnicization of politics," Dirlik contends that the mutual imbrication of the differences of class, sexuality, ethnicity, etc., can be understood only within a particular context (99). Though I agree with his assertion, I also problematize it from the perspective of gender by holding that a discussion of "local" hybridity in a particular context will not necessarily result in an elaboration on the intersecting aspects of class and race with gender.[6]

6. Within a similar critical context, Claire Alexander (2011) suggests "gendering cultural hybridity." However, she does not go toward and struggle with the rubric of class–race–gender.

The concept of "gender" (or gender/sexuality), which emerged in the field of feminist theory, has also quickly developed into "intersectional theory" that examines in an expanded frame the links between class, race, and gender. The field, known as "intersectional subjectivity theory," has played a crucial role in addressing the multiple, provisional, and resilient ways in which subjects are constructed through various intersecting axes of identities in the globalization era. With the influence of intersectional subjectivity theory now extending far beyond its initial birthplace in feminism—a comprehensive understanding of identity through the class–race–gender rubric is now required in many disciplines.

Through new forms of connection and domination in the 21st century, however, the axes of class, race, and gender are now also being linked to the axes of nationality, language, culture, and ethnicity, putting into play dynamic and novel forms of hybridized agency that traverse the boundaries of the indigenous, environmental, queer, and global justice movements. Situated in particular places, there is much conflict and friction between these differing forms of activism. Nonetheless, novel forms of collaboration and activism are also made possible by carefully examining each of their boundaries and steadily carving small interstitial spaces between them. Most of postcolonial theorists in and outside South Korea have recently considered these intersecting political categories in their work as part of their vision of developing new forms of knowledge production and activism. Even so, many either fail to mention gender as one of the main categories in understanding the process of subjectification or they quietly ignore it altogether.

As a category that is involved in producing and preserving the Western, modern/postmodern world system of capitalism, nationalism, militarism, and patriarchy, gender is necessary to understand both the historical processes of subjectification and the contemporary forms of exploitation under the global, neoliberal system. Starting from the 15–16th century when Asia, Africa, and Americas had begun to be divided and plundered by European imperial powers, to the contemporary era when the intersecting forces of colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, liberal democracy, and neoliberalism are intervening in our cultures and epistemes, gender has been playing a central role in the reproduction of resources, human beings, and labor. If so, gender should be thought of as a general frame and not just a particular case. Following the lead of this kind of thought, our present world can be called not simply the "world system" but a "global capitalistic patriarchal regime." This renaming would

be the first step in the gendering of "local" hybridity, enabling to oppose too much emphasized ethnicization of political economy.

Crucial in this gendering, however, will be the need to develop some methodology that can insert a class–race–gender paradigm into an analysis of "local" hybridity. Here, the basic assumption is that it is impossible to understand the intersections of class, race, and gender without referring to the spatialized differences within particular locales. Starting with that, two procedures will be suggested: 1) to render visible the gendered subalterns among small–scale farmers, urban poor, irregular workers, and migrant workers who are becoming increasingly impoverished and relegated to the shadows of the global economy as a result of the sub–imperialism established in Asian locales through global or Western imperialism; 2) to expose the complicity and collusion between sub–imperialism and patriarchy that are further making gendered subalterns silent and invisible, so as to uncover their voices and agencies hidden underneath the dominant and exploitative structures.

In examining the identities and agencies of Asian gendered subalterns within sub–imperial and patriarchal symbolic structures, it is important to reflect on their particular experiences of living with and fighting against such structures. It is only by illuminating the complicated agency of subordinated and gendered subjects in classed environments that the potentialities of resistance and transformation embedded in such experiences will also be appreciated. Moreover, it will be necessary to acknowledge that these performative exercises of agency occur on uneven terrain as they are situated in particular socio–cultural situations and places (Hilsdon 135–36).

The complicated interlocking identities and agencies against Asian local patriarchy may be shown amongst the female subaltern characters portrayed in the film: Miss Oh and Rose. Miss Oh does office works in the factory and Rose lives with her son Dan–Poong as a migrant worker. Neither of them, however, is weak or passive. In talking back to power or responding in creative ways to the daily acts of sexual harassment from their Korean supervisor, Mr. Choi, they both display an unusual strength of character. Mr. Choi exhibits a macho attitude towards women, treating them casually as sexual objects and spends his time and energy exploiting even more vulnerable people who have little power within the sub–imperial capitalist patriarchal system, rather than trying to change the system.

In response to Mr. Choi's directive that foreign workers should work

on Sundays while Korean workers rest, foreign workers suggest settling the question of whether they should work through a "foot–volleyball" match between the Korean and migrant workers. With both teams tied in the final match, Miss Oh takes advantage of a loophole in favor of the foreign workers so that they win and are allowed to also take Sunday off. In another incident, when the foreign workers hold a protest to ask for the return of the money that Mr. Choi had stolen from the workers' fund, she leaves a microphone, placed near the supervisor when he is being questioned by inspectors and boss, broadcasting his lies and publicly embarrassing him. That act shows her solidarity with weak people as well as her cleverness and flexibility in dealing with masculine persons properly.

Rose also expresses herself fearlessly in fluent Korean against each situation of denigrating or cheating her. Even though she has a hard life, she doesn't allow herself to wallow in self–pity. When her boss sexually harasses her, she even violently swears at him. Meanwhile, when Banga, unaware of Vietnamese custom, gives her a pair of pants denoting her sexual consent, she swiftly gives him a kick in the shin. She also brings Banga to task on each and every one of his faults, including his pretense of being Bhutanese and faking an immigration raid. In a situation where neither the option to return to Vietnam nor settling down in South Korea is viable, she does not give up her dream to keep her life free and hopeful.

Even though Miss Oh's and Rose's opposing agencies against specific local patriarchal situations are not persistent but intermittent, they may embody their own potentiality and capabilities of demonstrating the significance of the problematics of gender. In comparison with Miss Oh's, Rose's situation is worse because she has been super–exploited and in danger of being imprisoned as a female migrant worker. The labors and beings of other invisible but existent Asian migrant female workers prefigured by Rose provoke us to think of the ways of building a bottom–up counter–hegemonic "global capitalistic patriarchal regime."

IV. Asian "Translocal" Identities and Agencies Constructed through Translocalizing "Local" Hybridity

Understanding Asian "local" hybridity demands a reflection not only on the gendering processes inherent within it but also on the social interaction of

the "locales." According to that reflection, localities and places that form one node in the global network need to be understood as either flexible entities (which creates particular localities through various flows of globalization and through its complicated interactions) or social constructions (which possess interlocking and interactive elements through active movement and exchange) (Lee 3).[7] Accordingly, the particularity or locality of a place is not something that exists within the "local" itself, but is rather something that is formed through interaction with various social processes and places.

This conceptualization of the local can also bring the concept of the translocal or translocalism. "Translocalism" should not be understood as the facile traversing of geographical boundaries between various locales. Rather, it should be understood as the incitement of mutual interaction and constitutive relationships among various locals. In order to facilitate this shift in understanding, however, transnational subjectivities and places should be understood not in terms of deterritorialization, where the particularities of a place are being erased, but in terms of reterritorialization, where they are reorganized and restructured. In particular, viewed from the perspective of migrant subjects and migrant communities, translocalism is a "process where a member of two spatialized communities mixes the contexts of points of departure and arrival through migration and, without losing a sense of membership or the particular qualities of each community, expands upon the meanings of both so that a new context emerges" (Lee 4). As such, translocalism forms an important basis for the constitution of new local hybrid identities for migrating subjects.

An important element to consider when viewing the phenomenon of "local hybridity" from the perspective of migrating subjects is how they try to keep in play their places of origin alongside their place of destination. This includes the various relations of families, economies, religions, and politics located within each place. In that sense, "translocalism" can be considered a subtle yet significant strategy in forming and maintaining a transnational network. Representing agents of "globalization from below," their agency takes on particular meaning and tremendous power when viewed collectively. In sum, translocality does indicate not a "third space" but a space that becomes actualized locally through being simultaneously imbricated in particular

7. Lee Young-min's presentation paper provides a good overview of the recent debates about this concept of translocalism within Human Geography.

spaces (Lee 6). Globalization and transnationalism are not effected through deterritorialization but through localization.

The main subjects of these translocal practices, meanwhile, are often migrant workers or subalterns from farming communities within the country of destination. In negotiating with and interacting in the marginalized locales from the metropolis, these two classes of people form new hybridized subjectivities. Through migration, some particular relations that were formed in either the migrant workers' country of origin or the subalterns' farming communities may become severed and erased. But others may continue to be maintained and reconfigured, and thus so become the basis for a novel self constructed along multiple axes and on multiple levels. Said to "emerge through geographical movement and continuous emplacement at various levels" (Lee 7), these migrant identities not only keep alive and in play their relations with their relatives in their country of origin but also introduce emotional exchanges with their new friends in their destination countries.

With the subjectivities of these subjects being constructed not only within their country of destination but also within their country of origin, the concept of translocalism can be considered more appropriate than the concept of transnationalism. Meanwhile, transmigrants who reside in particular locales with local residents, engage in their everyday practices, forms of political resistance, economic strategies, and cultural hybridity structured within the various local places and contexts in which they are located (Lee 8; Kwon 387–88). While this type of translocalism can be partially attributed to the development of information communication technologies, they also point to the important roles that new subalterns, including migrant workers, are playing in constructing "local" hybridity and prefiguring "translocal" identities and agencies.

This translocality is shown well in Al from Bangladesh, Charlie from Nepal, Michael from Uzbekistan, Laza from Indonesia, and Rose from Vietnam. Rose gets along well with the male foreign workers, sharing with them an easy sense of intimacy. This sense of intimacy can be glimpsed when the workers sing a Korean song, "The Rose," working together in one sprightly animated scene.

> How you smell like a rose
> How you wake me up before you go

Just like a thorn on fresh leaves
In some ways, you resemble a rose.

Your appearance is like a rose
When I call you
When I call you
I will call you a rose.

How you smell like a rose
How you wake me up before you go
If I put that pretty flower on my bosom
Never am I envious of any prince in a fairytale.
(translated by the author)

당신에게선 꽃 내음이 나네요
잠자는 나를 깨우고 가네요
싱그런 잎사귀 돋아난 가시처럼
어쩌면 당신은 장미를 닮았네요.

당신의 모습이 장미꽃 같아
당신을 부를 때 당신을 부를 때
장미라고 할래요.

당신에게선 꽃 내음이 나네요
잠 못 이룬 나를 깨우고 가네요
어여쁜 꽃송이 가슴에 꽂으면
동화 속 왕자가 부럽지 않아요.

The song fuses the beautiful image that Koreans have of the rose and the beautiful person of Rose herself. Among the male foreign workers, there is no trace of the sexism found in both Young-cheol and Mr. Choi.

One day, the Asian migrant workers, enticed by Banga who is trying to

attract more customers to Young-cheol's karaoke so that he doesn't go out of business, visit Young-cheol's establishment with Banga, and experience "ppongjak," the Korean version of "teurot," for the first time in their lives. Explaining to them that teurot is the Korean people's soul, Young-cheol teaches them the words and meaning of the lyrics of the song, "Chan, Chan, Chan."

> The lipstick on the cold glass
> Buried and stiff under music
> The woman in the deep of the night
> When sadness rises like smoke above slender shoulders
> Coming towards my approaching self, feeling love
> Chan, Chan, Chan while throwing laughter and banging our glasses
> However, those words that you cannot give me love
> Those words that you cannot love me
> Looking drearily outside the window
> Jururuk, jururuk, jururuk, jururuk
> Rain drops that fall all night. (translated by the author)

> 차디찬 그라스에 빨간 립스틱
> 음악에 묻혀 굳어버린 밤 깊은 카페의 여인
> 가녀린 어깨 위로 슬픔이 연기처럼 피어 오를 때
> 사랑을 느끼면서 다가선 나를 향해
> 웃음을 던지면서 술잔을 부딪히며 찬찬찬
> 그러나 마음 줄 수 없다는 그 말
> 쓸쓸히 창 밖을 보니
> 주루룩 주루룩 주루룩 주루룩
> 밤새워 내리는 빗물.

Listening to Young-chul's explanation, the migrant workers tell him how they find strange some expressions such as "sadness rises like smoke" and "throwing laughter." They also tell him their local expressions for the sound of rain: "jururuk, jururuk" in Korean. They include "name, name"

in Bengalese, "shalara, shalara" in Nepalese, "shalang, shalang" in Uzbek, "byu byu" in Indonesian, and "rawoo, rawoo" in Vietnamese. After deciding to participate in a foreigners' singing contest, they eagerly practice the song, "Chan, Chan, Chan" in the karaoke and the factory, and then the loneliness, sadness, and love that Koreans feel in this song are combined with the particular emotions of the migrants singing it. When they sing it together in the prison of the Immigration Office, in Korean language mixed with their own tongues, "Chan, Chan, Chan" becomes imbued with their feelings of sadness and powerlessness, along with their fear of being deported.

When the Asian migrant workers are barely released from the prison thanks to their touching song and Banga's appeals to the immigration officers and then can participate in a song contest for foreigners, Al is shown to be unable to start singing, "Chan, Chan, Chan," because he learns that his wife, Camela, has left home. At this point, Banga starts singing the Bengalese song, "Camela Song," which he has been practicing in Bengalese. Others join him. Even though their sad song is limited in fighting the state power of Korea to construct and constrain Asian migrant workers' corporeal and social worlds, nonetheless, it still demonstrates the unexpectedly advanced cultural solidarity that the migrant workers and Korean gendered subalterns are forging in the complicated reality of a sub–imperial capitalist patriarchal system. This song performs the intimate encounter between Korean culture/language and other Asian cultures/languages.

Banga's and the Asian migrant workers' subaltern voices further articulate the cultural construction of a transitional identity and test the limits of dominant social configurations. In becoming aware of where, why, with whom, and to what power structures they have to talk back to, they also come to change their tune. Even though their song does not express a complete socio–cultural totality or wholeness, nonetheless, it discloses something more dynamic, empowering, and self–aware than the sense of alienation that the wretched of the earth are said to experience under globalization (Torres 171). As a vector of linguistic, familial, racial, and cultural differences, they refuse the exclusive xenophobia that insists upon ahistorical notions of authenticity and purity of one's own culture. By continuously expressing their sense of otherness through integrating their otherness into the dominant culture of that place of settlement, in *Banga, Banga!*, Asian migrant workers perform the "translocalizing" project of local hybridity going toward an othered subjectivity. By "othered subjectivity," I do not mean a subjectivity which

identifies with otherness as a form of self–discipline or self–regulation. Rather, it refers to a subjectivity which transforms its own homogeneous sense of self into an indeterminate state of being through accepting a heterogeneous other. In breaking down the boundaries between the self and other, it deconstructs binaries. In engaging in a continuous process of cultural translation with another, it also rejects the possibility of a singular space of othered subjectivity for a space of complexity and contradiction.

V. Conclusion

In *Banga, Banga!*, singing is a locus of cultural translation where the Korean subalterns and other Asian migrant workers speak together and create another language in spite of conflicts due to their social and cultural differences. During the cultural practice of song creation, hints of cultural otherness are insinuated into and combined with other things. These mutual insinuations constitute a kind of Asian local hybridity. Banga could not say that he is a Korean man whom Rose desires because his identity is so hybridized that it is unclear whether he is a Korean or a Bhutanese man. By letting Asian migrant workers escape from imprisonment and start anew, he further shows us the potentiality of a translocal agency against the sub–imperial Asian local patriarchy. While sustaining various contacts with Korean subalterns, the migrant workers from minor Asian countries also interact among themselves and engage in constant exchanges of emotion and affect with their hometown people through phone conversations or photos stored in their cell phones. Thus, they construct and reveal vividly the translocality of hybridized subjects located in a marginal Asian locale such as Ansan.

In the film, Ansan emerges as a locale engaging in constant dialogue, exchange, and contestation with the sub–imperialistic and gendered political–economic structures of South Korea. Within such a space, diverse translocal gendered subalterns are shown to contest and collaborate as they traverse various axes of identity including class, race, and gender. As such, Asian "local" hybridity embodied in *Banga, Banga!* demonstrates something that is other than mere interstitiality, something that is a kind of other Asian identity with its own specific consciousness of language and self as well as its own dialogic and negotiatory capabilities through its translocal identities and agencies. The last scene of Banga's, Rose's, and Dan–Poong's riding a motorcycles together

smiling suggests a new future possible with their hybrid cultural abilities.

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Abstract

As part of redeploying the theoretical potentiality of hybridity, I hold that more attention should be given to the discursive location of Asian minor locales against the discursive power of global metropolitan diasporic location. This attention leads us to a task of localizing hybridity, which can posit the concept of Asian "local" hybridity. The South Korean film, *Banga, Banga!*, is a cultural text that embodies it vividly. Korean subalterns and Asian migrant workers in the movie speak to people located in global metropolitan cities as well as Asian metropolises. To listen to them attentively, it is necessary to propose the concepts of sub–imperialism, Asian local patriarchy, and translocalism. The marginal city of Ansan emerges as a locale engaging in constant dialogue, exchange, and contestation with the sub–imperialistic and gendered political–economic structures of South Korea. Within such space, Korean subalterns and Asian migrant workers create another language through singing together in spite of their social and cultural differences and conflicts. As they traverse various axes of identity including ethnicity, race, class, and gender, they show their translocal identities and agencies to contest and oppose the sub–imperial Asian local patriarchy. As such, Asian "local" hybridity embodied in *Banga, Banga!* demonstrates something that is other than mere interstitiality, something that is a kind of other Asian identity with its own specific consciousness of language and self as well as its own dialogic and negotiatory capabilities through its translocal identities and agencies.

Keywords: local hybridity, sub–imperialism, Asian local patriarchy, translocalism, *Banga, Banga!*, Korean subalterns, Asian migrant workers

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Received: 6 September 2013
Reviewed: 24 September 2013
Accepted: 30 September 2013