

IDENTITIES OF DISPLACEMENT: WOMEN, HOME, AND  
TRANSNATIONAL VISUAL CULTURE

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation explores how gender and globalization interweave in visual culture from a transnational feminist perspective, aiming to challenge the neoliberal, gendered discourses of globalization and to offer an alternative framework for remapping the relationship between women and globalization. Employing the concepts of *home* and *displacement*, it examines the visual cultural practices of marginalized communities of women, which are negotiated in a global-national-local nexus. It discusses the specific visuality of Third World/South femininities in the First World/North media, the displaced Korean women's visual cultural works, and the video-making workshops for the women migrants in Korea. As a transnational feminist visual culture study, it provides both a critique of how women's experiences are represented in transnational visual culture, and an understanding of the ways in which transnational visual culture enables women to identify their location and agency in the complex encounter between locality and globality.

## **Introduction**

This dissertation examines identities of displacement in the context of transnational visual culture, looking at the ways in which cultural practices of marginalized communities of women are embodied in the gendered discourses of globalization and the conflicting dynamics among the global, the national, and the local. It aims to challenge the neoliberal, gendered narratives of globalization and to offer an alternative framework for remapping the relationship between women and globalization, locating its analytical position in the theoretical linkage between transnational feminisms and transnational visual culture studies.

Transnational feminist prisms offer two major threads for analysis: a critique of how women's experiences are represented in transnational visual culture, and an understanding of the ways in which transnational visual culture enables women to (re)imagine their locations in the complex encounter between locality and globality. On the one hand, a transnational feminist critique of visual culture examines how the gendered divide in globalization discourses reproduces the stereotypical images of marginalized communities of women. On the other hand, a transnational feminist look at visual culture explores the ways in which marginalized communities of women negotiate their identities and exert their agencies in everyday processes of cultural production and consumption, contributing to the deconstruction of the hegemonic discourses of globalization.

### **Purpose and Positionality**

This dissertation suggests that a transnational feminist perspective is viable for understanding women's locations and identities in the context of cultural globalization. A transnational feminist framework allows for an examination of spatial, temporal, and discursive

(dis)continuities in consideration of women's experiences of a transnational world. The attention to the impacts of global restructuring on women's lives, as well as the critical engagement with postcolonial feminisms, enables transnational feminist theorists to problematize the power asymmetries inherent in globalization processes, and to explore women's issues in transnational terms. In other words, transnational feminist approaches make it possible to consider the contextual changes caused by global capitalist expansion, and to reflect on them in light of colonial, imperial histories and discursive traditions.

As the term *trans* signifies, one of the strengths of transnational feminisms is the analytical focus on interconnectivity and relationality in exploring women's problems. Identifying a number of changes in the socio-political and economic landscapes, Chandra Talpade Mohanty raises a question, "What would it mean to be attentive to micropolitics of everyday life as well as to the larger processes that recognize the culture and identities of people across the globe?" ("Under" 229) Also, the critical insights from postcolonial feminisms and studies of women of color demonstrate the ways in which transnational feminists trace women's locations in historical, discursive, and relational terms, seeking to decolonize and democratize feminist scholarships. For Caren Kaplan, it is important to have a demystifying understanding of women's differences; and to utilize "the notion of location to destabilize unexamined or stereotypical images that are vestiges of colonial discourse and other manifestations of modernity's structural inequalities" (139). Likewise, revisiting her earlier critique of Western feminists' discursive colonization of Third World women, Mohanty draws attention to "what is unseen, undertheorized, and left out in the production of knowledge about globalization" ("Under" 230). Drawing on the transnational feminist accounts, this dissertation examines

women's locations and identities in transnational visual culture in consideration of global interconnectivity, discursive relationality, and historical (dis)continuities.

The transnational feminists' concern with marginalized communities of women and the power relations inherent in globalization processes points to the ways in which globalization intersects with differences of class, race, national hierarchy, and gender. Here, postcolonial and transnational feminists' interest in Third World women as social category is significant for political reasons. Calling attention to the "common context of struggle," Mohanty defines the Third World as a "sociopolitical designation" for people of African, Caribbean, and Latin American ancestry and indigenous peoples of the U.S., as well as "new immigrants" to the U.S., such as Koreans, Arabs, and Vietnamese (5). This dissertation's engagement with the Third World and women in the Third World/Global South allows for both a critical consideration of the uneven distribution of systemic power manifested in transnational visual culture, and an examination of the ways in which trans-cultural practices embody women's different experiences and subjectivities.

More importantly, the focus on marginalized communities of women sheds light on transnational feminist alliances "from below" which utilize the global media infrastructure and technologies in order to challenge the hegemonic discourses of globalization, and enable subaltern women to make their voices heard. As a transnational feminist project, this dissertation aims to envision women's solidarities across borders, both being attentive to differences among women, and revealing an alternative narrative of women and globalization.

This dissertation considers transnational visual culture as the focus of inquiry, highlighting the growing need for studying symbolic dimensions of globalization, such as the transnational circulation of cultural products and its resultant effect on various transformations of

locality. Given the centrality of visual forms of media and information to the construction of cultural discourses and identity formations in the context of cultural globalization, it is necessary to study the visual as a primary language through which people can communicate and understand the transnational culture of global postmodernity.

This dissertation looks at transnational visual culture as an important site where women locate their complex subject positions in the conflicting dynamics among the local, the national, and the global. Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright define visual culture as “the shared practices of a group, community, or society through which meanings are made out of the visual, aural, and textual world of representations and the ways that looking practices are engaged in symbolic and communicative activities” (3). Drawing critical insights from media/cultural studies and feminist theories, this dissertation analyzes women’s cultural practices that are mainly constructed in visual forms or that are manifested through particular ways of looking relations.

Focusing primarily on photographic media images and texts, such as film, television, video, and photography, this dissertation examines visual cultural practices which enable people to exchange meaning and value, and to identify their complex subject positions in everyday lives. The understanding of visual culture as practices is important for both exploring the ways in which people interact with a wide array of visual media to negotiate their locations and identities in the context of transnational flows of people and information, and illuminating the ways in which the power asymmetries embedded in globalization processes create specific visibility and affect the circulation of images across cultures.

This dissertation reflects on the question of identity in light of historical (dis)continuities and material conditions of transnational visual culture. Given that globalization adds a new dimension to the question of identity with an emphasis on its multiple, fluid, and contradictory

nature, the concept of cultural hybridity is helpful to understand the conditions of in-betweenness in the age of global postmodernity. Considering the limitations of the cultural imperialist thesis on global cultural exchange, it is important to note that the engagement with cultural hybridity permits a more inclusive framework to study transnational cultural flows, and points to the centrality of an individual's agency to everyday cultural practices. Challenging both the cultural imperialist thesis and the passive audience model, cultural hybridity offers a decolonizing understanding of the ways in which marginalized subjects serve as active agents of cultural negotiation, and draws attention to multidimensional flows of cultural globalization. Overall, the concept of cultural hybridity allows for an investigation of the complexity of identity not through merely recognizing the influences of the global on the local but through shedding light on subaltern agencies intrinsic to trans-cultural consumption and production.

This dissertation is dependent on feminist methodology, not because it utilizes distinctive practices and guiding principles of feminist research, but because it valorizes a specific perspective, that is, a feminist "situated" perspective.<sup>1</sup> The employment of a feminist situated perspective indicates not only a deconstructive approach to the research process, but also a located positionality of the researcher. In other words, a feminist methodology points to the application of a feminist situated perspective to the research process in terms of the deconstruction of the hegemonic frameworks of knowledge, the political imperative for feminist movements, and the historical and material grounds for analysis.

The idea of deconstructive approaches testifies to the positioning of feminist research in relation to the male-centered orientation in knowledge formation. For Marjorie DeVault, "the

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<sup>1</sup> See Haraway (1988) "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective."

heart of feminist methodology is a critique that views the apparatus of knowledge production as one site that has constructed and sustained women's oppression" (30). In this sense, deconstructive approaches refer to feminist critiques of the gendered construction of knowledge. Likewise, the employment of women's perspectives into research practices brings out questions about the supposed universality or neutrality in the production of knowledge. The deconstruction of universality signifies a challenge to the dominant categories of social analysis, as well as an emphasis on the specificity of women's experiences.

As both DeVault and Harding have observed, the political imperative for social change encapsulated in the history of women's activism is the other distinctive aspect of feminist methodology. DeVault pays attention to the political dimension of feminist methodology, seeing feminist research as "oppositional research" which aims to "promote social change" (225). DeVault contends that "what makes practice distinctively feminist is its relevance to change in women's lives or in the systems of social organization that control women" (3). Many feminist scholars identify the political stance of feminism as one of the working principles of feminist researches, attempting to discover the link between theory and practice. Similarly, characterizing feminist research projects as being attentive to "women's experiences in political struggle," Sandra Harding argues that "the questions an oppressed group wants answered" are "queries about how to change its conditions" (164). As a transnational feminist project, this dissertation endeavors to call attention to differences among women, and to reveal another understanding of the relationship between women and globalization, which challenges the male-centered discourses of globalization and sheds light on women's experiences and agencies.

This dissertation, a transnational feminist examination of visual culture, seeks to incorporate the researcher's location into analysis, underscoring the relationship between

experience and knowledge. As DeVault points out, “this call for visibility involves viewing the self as resource rather than contaminant” (41). The feminists’ attention to the visibility of the researcher or accountability emphasizes the demystification of research processes as well as the reconsideration of the researcher’s location. Furthermore, given the influences of postmodernism and the complexity of identity formation, the issues of subjectivity and agency are pivotal in both understanding differences in women’s experiences and exploring multiple, fragmentary manifestations of an individual identity.

As the researcher and author of this dissertation, I locate myself as a Third World woman, and a postcolonial/transnational feminist in political terms. Also, I am a South Korean, middle-class, and heterosexual woman, who was raised and educated under the intersectional oppressions of (post)colonialism, capitalist development ideology, and neo-Confucian patriarchy; and now I am a temporary resident woman of color living in the United States. Writing from this specific location, I hope my transnational feminist visual culture study will challenge the gendered discourses of globalization, reveal cultural practices of transnational feminist alliances from below, and demonstrate the ways in which marginalized communities of women exert subaltern agencies in their everyday practices of cultural negotiation.

### **Organization**

What follows is a brief outline of this dissertation. The first chapter offers a theoretical framework of this study as an attempt to reconfigure the relationships between women and globalization. The chapter aims to present a critical perspective for transnational feminist visual culture studies from which the concepts of *home* and *displacement* serve as tools for analyzing cultural representations of identities of displacement, and, in particular, marginalized

communities of women in transnational visual culture.<sup>2</sup> Locating its analytical position at the intersection between transnational feminisms and transnational visual culture studies, the chapter provides theoretical and methodological grounds for analyzing the ways in which the (re)imaginings of marginalized communities of women in visual culture illustrate the complexity of global/national/local dynamics. Moreover, given that this dissertation is concerned with cultural practices of marginalized communities of women, the concept of cultural hybridity allows for identifying the power relations inherent in globalization processes and understanding how globalization intersects with differences of class, race, ethnicity, nationality, and gender.

The second chapter investigates how the neoliberal, gendered discourses of globalization position marginalized communities of women in transnational visual culture, focusing on the ways in which the hegemonic visual regime of the First World/Global North media produces the specific visuality of Third World/Global South femininities. In particular, the chapter draws attention to the marginalization of women's experiences within the male-centered narratives of globalization, exploring the ways in which the gendered divide in globalization discourses reproduces the stereotypes of the so-called Third World woman; and calls into question the transnational circulation of sexualized and racialized imagery of Otherness. An analysis of the (re)imagination of Third World/Global South women in the First World/Global North media demonstrates how the global and the local interweave vis-à-vis historical (dis)continuities and discursive traditions. By employing discourse analysis as well as psychoanalytical film theories, specifically, the concepts of gaze, subject/subjectivity, abjection, and identification, the second chapter examines a series of stereotypical representations of marginalized communities of

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<sup>2</sup> I italicize the two terms, *home* and *displacement* in order to point to their conceptual issues and reconceptualizations.

women in the context of global capitalism, such as sweatshop workers, mail/online-order brides, and migrant domestic workers. The specific visibility of Third World/Global South women is discussed in terms of the idea of embodiment, femininities/masculinities, and representations of women's bodies.

The third chapter reflects on the relationships between *displacement* and *home*, illustrating the ways in which women in *displaced* positions redefine their locations and identities in transnational visual culture. Following de Lauretis' feminist articulation, the chapter explores both women's geographical displacement and their conceptual or psychological displacement by looking at diasporic representations of displaced women (138). In order to demonstrate the ways in which geographical displacement (re)configures a de-territorialized culture of "homelessness," the chapter analyzes cultural practices of diasporic Korean women in documentary filmmaking. Furthermore, the idea of "self-displacement" is employed to explore visual discourses of the *displaced* subjectivities of Korean women in consideration of the intersectional oppressions of patriarchy, Confucian ideology, colonialism, and nationalist discourses. Focusing on Korean women's experiences within the oppressive discourses, the chapter investigates how the women's visual cultural practices envisage the relationship between *home* and women in light of their experiences of *displacement*, and how the idea of "self-displacement" is central to the marginalized women's subjectivities and sensitivities.

The fourth chapter aims to reconsider the concept of *home* in the context of the transnational media environment, employing cultural studies approaches and feminist media theories. The chapter examines the ways in which transnational visual cultural practices allow marginalized communities of women to identify their locations and agencies by looking at the women's engagement with the visual media. I have conducted personal interviews with the

transnational brides in Korea who participated in the video-making workshops for women migrants. My interviews with the women migrants, who embody the global visibility of mail/online-order brides, permit another understanding of the relationship between women and globalization. Given the sharp increase of Southeast Asian brides in Korea,<sup>3</sup> it is important to explore the ways in which the women migrants who emigrated from (poor) Southeast Asia to (rich) Northeast Asia (re)define their locations in the context of cultural globalization. In this respect, an examination of the women migrants' transnational visual cultural practices provides an understanding of home as "a contested domain" inscribed with the local/national/global dynamics, pointing to the complexity of intra-regional, cross-cultural flows of globalization processes. While my interviews with the women migrants illustrate the ways in which the marginalized communities of women identify their locations and exert their agencies by actively engaging with transnational visual culture, the accounts of the Korean women who served as instructors and coordinators for the video-making workshops allow for a critical assessment of transnational feminist media movements.

The conclusion summarizes the key points encapsulated in each chapter, considering the major questions this dissertation has raised: how the problematization of *home* and *displacement* sheds light on an understanding of women's identities in the context of transnational flows of people and information, what a transnational feminist critique of globalization reveals about women's locations in light of the global/national/local dynamics, how women's experiences are represented in transnational visual culture, and how visual cultural practices enable women to redefine their locations in a transnational age. Furthermore, it assesses the extent to which this

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<sup>3</sup> For example, the number of Vietnamese brides has greatly increased from 134 in 2001 to 10,131 in 2006, which amounts to one third of the total foreign brides. "The Tragic Deaths of Vietnamese Brides." *The Hankyoreh*. (29 February 2008): 9.

dissertation contributes to the creation of women's solidarities across borders, seeking out both differences among women and an alternative narrative to the gendered, neoliberal discourses of globalization.

## Chapter I. Literature Review

Since the early 1980s, the term *globalization* has been salient for understanding socio-cultural changes in the context of global capitalism. Discussions of globalization generally focus on the restructuring processes that resulted from, capital flows, technological advances and the international integration of market. Indeed, during the past 25 years, people have witnessed the weakening of existing geographic divisions and administrative boundaries of nation-states, the increasing mobility of people, and the development of new communication technologies. These changes lead fundamental shifts in everyday cultural practices and interactions, drawing attention to the cultural dimension of globalization.

This chapter reviews cultural/media studies scholarship and feminist theories, and examines how critical engagement with the concepts of *home* and *displacement* helps explore the complexity of identities in the context of cultural globalization. The chapter aims to present a theoretical framework for transnational feminist visual culture studies, in which the concepts of *home* and *displacement* serve as tools for analyzing representations of identities of displacement in transnational visual culture and, in particular, the visibility of femininities. Not only do the concepts of *home* and *displacement* allow for a consideration of the relationship between the cultural context of globalization and identity formation, but they also provide a critical lens through which to examine the (re)imagination of marginalized communities of women in light of their discursive connections to gender and identity.

It is important to note that neoliberal discourses of globalization construct specific subject positions. For one thing, the First World, white, “masculine” orientation of globalization discourses often positions women as victims of globalization. Since most of the central issues surrounding globalization involve the macro- dimension of global economic restructuring,

globalization discourses tend to center on masculine accounts, such as the development of transnational corporations, global market integration, the spread of technology, and the free flow of capital. This kind of globalization discourse only stresses certain aspects of globalization processes, such as growth, expansion, and dominance, and commonly represents women not as active agents, but as passive victims of globalization. For instance, while a male administrative officer working in a big, fancy building of a transnational corporation symbolizes the masculine prosperity of globalization, an illegal immigrant woman working in a sweatshop embodies the feminine victimization of global capitalism. Moreover, the global capitalist culture tends to highlight the neoliberal ideals of free competition, equal opportunity, and individual choice, making it difficult to call attention to both the systematic inequalities inherent in globalization processes and differences of gender, race, class, and nationality in everyday experiences of globalization.

Looking at how gender and globalization interweave in visual culture from a transnational feminist perspective, I hope to challenge the gendered discourses of globalization and to offer an alternative framework. The focus of my inquiry is on marginalized communities of women, who are often considered victims or the Other under the influences of the gendered discourse of globalization and the lingering ideology of colonialism. Drawing on critical insights from transnational feminisms, I explore the ways in which both material and symbolic dimensions of globalization situate marginalized communities of women in consideration of the “power geometry” of globalization. According to Doreen Massey, the “power geometry” of globalization refers to the ways in which an individual’s experience of globalization is controlled and reinforced by power relations (“A Global” 25). In order to remap the relationship between women and globalization, I take two approaches. On the one hand, a feminist critique of

mainstream visual culture demonstrates how the gendered divide in the discursive formation of globalization (re)produces stereotypes of the so-called Third World woman. On the other hand, a feminist examination of visual culture illustrates the ways in which women's cultural productions and consumptions (re)articulate their locations and agencies, which testify to their everyday attempts to balance the conflicting demands of the local and the global.

Along with the development of communication technologies, globalization processes not only dramatically increase visual forms of media and information in everyday cultural practices; but they also facilitate global circulations of images. Given that the transnational formation of visual culture manifests globalization in everyday lives, it is important to look at the ways in which one's engagement with transnational visual culture (re)positions oneself vis-à-vis the existing subject positions. The chapter suggests that a transnational feminist perspective on visual culture provides critical and methodological grounds for analyzing the ways in which the (re)imagination of women in visual culture relates to the complexity of global/national/local dynamics. For example, while the U.S. media representation of a Vietnamese nanny in a (white) middle-class household can symbolize the global migration of female labor, the transnational consumption of *Sex and the City* by a Korean college girl can illustrate the ways in which she negotiates her location between global consumerism and local economic conditions. Here, the question is how visual culture incorporates the relationship between women and globalization. As W.T. J Mitchell points out, to study visual culture is to examine "the visual construction of the social" (170). In brief, an examination of women's cultural representations and consumptions demonstrates how different women negotiate their identities in the context of cultural globalization.

The chapter begins with a discussion of traditional conceptualizations of *home* and *displacement*, and then moves on to feminist understandings of the two concepts. The changing ideas of *home* are discussed in light of the gender binary central to discourses of space, mobility, and globalization. Also, the chapter explores how the concept of *displacement* contributes to an understanding of women's locations and identities in light of both material specificities involving histories of migrations and colonialism, and discursive oppressions of patriarchy and neoliberal capitalism. It then discusses the problems of the gendered, neoliberal discourses of globalization, locating the theoretical link between transnational feminisms and transnational visual culture studies. In order to frame this study as a transnational feminist visual culture study, the chapter tackles the issues of identity, globalization, and the notion of cultural hybridity in consideration of the power relations inherent in globalization processes and intersectional differences of gender, class, race, and national hierarchy.

### **A General Overview of *Home*, *Displacement*, and Globalization**

In general, cultural theorists have considered home in spatial terms. The Oxford English Dictionary defines home as “a place, region, or state to which one properly belongs, on which one's affections centre, or where one finds refuge, rest or satisfaction.” The most common denominator among traditional definitions of home is “the physical center of one's universe –a safe and still place to leave and return to (whether house, village, region, or nation), and a principal focus of one's concern and control” (Rapport and Dawson 6). In short, the general meaning of home has been associated with space, belongings, and origins, highlighting one's right and practice of controlling space.

It is important to note that contemporary understandings of home have certainly become more complicated and problematic as lifestyles diversify with people's migration and cultural fragmentation. Indeed, globalization adds another dimension to the debates concerning home. As David Morley has noticed, "Traditional ideas of home, homeland, and nation have been destabilized, both by new patterns of physical mobility and migration and by new communication technologies" (3). Globalization brings out the increasing interconnectivity of the world through technology, capital flows, commodities, images, and people. As people's cultural interactions go beyond a limited location, the spatial orientation of home needs to be challenged. In their anthropological study on the relationship between movement and identity, Nigel Rapport and Andrew Dawson point to the separation of home from geographic boundaries. Rapport and Dawson define home as "where one best knows oneself," paying attention to the ways in which home implicates "the ambiguities and fluidities" of identity (9). In the context of the cultural globalization, a broader definition of home is helpful to explore how people locate their home in their everyday cultural interactions at local, national, and global levels.

The reconsideration of home enables cultural theorists to rethink physical realities of home and to take notice of discursive dimensions of home. In her study on the expatriates on the Cayman Islands, anthropologist Karen Fog-Olwig, argues that the islanders "chose not to locate their home in 'reality,'" and created "their shared narratives of homelessness" (235). In other words, they build their own discourse of home based on their common stories of "homelessness," since their reality in a foreign country does not allow them to have a conventional life of home. Fog-Olwig makes the point that the experiences of migrant communities demonstrate the ways in which processes of identification involve both discursive backgrounds and social contexts (235). A broader understanding of home, which goes beyond fixed divisions and spatial boundaries, can

account for how the increasing migration of people and the configuration of the transnational media environment affect people's everyday lives and identity formations.

Although recent years have witnessed the sustenance of transnational communities, it cannot be denied that many people remain local with little experience of physical mobility. Nevertheless, globalization processes have affected almost everyone's way of life at the local level through transnational flows of capital, communication, products, and imagery. This means that the "paradigmatic experience of global modernity for most people ... is that of staying in one place but experiencing the 'displacement' that global modernity brings to them" (Tomlinson 150). In particular, the transnational media plays a dominant role in transforming people's experience of locality almost everywhere; global circulation of images and ordinary consumption of symbols from distant cultures testify to the ways in which transnational visual culture is central to an understanding of the relationship between the local and the global.

Further discussions of home tend to produce a more extensive understanding of *being at home*, as current living conditions get more complicated. Wendy Schissel suggests that *being at home* involves an individual's everyday life as a whole, including environmental, physical, conceptual, and metaphorical dimensions:

Home is a fluid concept that needs to be constantly "negotiated." Home is also, variously but exclusively, a homeland –indigenous or adopted –a sexuality, a body prescribed by moral or ableist codes, cyberspace, a community, or a place where caring occurs, sometimes at substantial cost to the caregiver. On the other hand, it may be what we are prevented from achieving (1).

This extensive understanding of home draws attention to various sites where an individual constructs her/his identities through the on-going process of negotiation. More importantly, the "fluid" feature of home illustrates "how we live in and through identities, bodies, places, and spaces in non-linear, incoherent and fragmented ways" (Schissel 1). In this respect, *being at*

*home* refers not so much to the conditions of safety, stability, or wholeness, but to the very process of tentative negotiation to achieve these conditions of “home.”

The development of communication technologies, such as the Internet and satellite broadcasting services, gives rise to the growth of diasporic communities, and this allows media scholars to rethink home in relation to the transnational media environment. Pointing to the centrality of media consumption to the creation of “spaces of belonging,” David Morley claims that home indicates both domestic physical spaces(s) in which people generally consume television, and symbolic definitions of home that include “the local, national, or transnational communities in which people think of themselves as being ‘at home’ ”(qtd. in Bielby 834). These two definitions of home point to the ways in which people’s everyday interactions with transnational media products materialize their own process of identity formation. While home as physical space implicates the ways in which an individual’s cultural practices relates to family dynamics, home as symbolic site reveals how the media enables a specific group of people to create their own collective narrative.

In general, the concept of *displacement* has been used to label poor neighbors in urban ghettos, border transgressors, and desperate prostitutes in dirty neighborhoods in the service of the socio-political ideologies. Cresswell examines the metaphors of displacement such as “weeds,” “diseases,” and “bodily secretions” used in the media and political discourses to mark “out-of-placeness” of people and actions (“Weeds” 330). For Cresswell, these metaphorical expressions originate from a belief that “place is one of the primary factors in the creation and maintenance of ideological values (what is good, just, and appropriate) and thus in the definition of appropriate and inappropriate actions and practices” (“Weeds” 334). As Cresswell points out, these metaphors for “out-of-place” people often refer to undesirable inhabitants including illegal

migrants, trespassers, and travelers, stressing their inappropriate and deviant conditions. The metaphorical representations of displacement imply various disorderly states which political discourses often utilize as a pretext to mobilize different ways to deal with the problems of “out-of-placeness” within a national context.

As Cresswell has observed, displacement “ceases to be a threat and becomes a virtue” in contemporary postmodern discourses, emphasizing the liberating possibility of multiple and flexible subject positions (“Weeds” 342). Some media/cultural theorists consider displacement as an analytical tool for examining identity formations, calling attention to international migration of people and the formation of the transnational media environment. In his discussion of the current transnational film culture, Hamid Naficy states, “For one thing, movement, displacement, and globalization have become endemic, on whose bases many people, particularly filmmakers and artists all over the world, are either forming or performing their identities” (9). For Naficy, “multiplicity” is central to cinematic manifestations of globalization, resulting from both “the increasing physical displacement and dispersion of people across the globe” and “the increasing consolidation and convergence of the media” (11). In other words, contemporary cinema materializes multiple subjectivities driven by people’s movements and media connectivity. The physical displacement of people creates multifaceted, hybrid, and contradictory identities as in the cases of exilic and diasporic films; similarly, multiple channels, devices, and platforms characterize the transnational media environment in which cultural products become displaced without either physically crossing national boundaries or being governed by cultural imperialism.

## **Feminist Understandings of *Home* and *Displacement***

One of the most important challenges to *home* involves its traditional association with women. As Susan Strehle has observed, home is conceived as “a place of domestic order, separate from the outer public world of commerce, government, law, and other social institutions in which men exercise worldly power” (1). Since the mutual identification of the mother and home derives from the long discursive tradition of patriarchy, home is often replete with feminine values, such as domesticity, settlement, and caring. Feminist scholars have questioned this hegemonic notion of home, attempting to deconstruct the idealized construction of home as a secluded place of domestic life and family. David Sibley states, “What is missing from the ‘house as haven’ thesis is a recognition of the ... tensions surrounding the use of domestic space, tensions which become a part of the problem of domination within families” (94). As exemplified by women’s problems, such as domestic violence, sexual exploitation, and patriarchal oppression, the gendered imagination of home has been deployed in the service of patriarchal discourses.

An attempt to deconstruct the traditional concept of home often exposes its unstable, disruptive aspects. Looking at different “home sites” identified in ethnographic case studies, Fog-Olwig claims that “home is rather a contested domain: an arena where differing interests struggle to define their own spaces within which to localize and cultivate their identity” (226). Just as home as a symbol of domesticity and family life derives from patriarchal discourses which rarely take account of women’s voices and experiences, the supposed homogeneity and safety of home correspond to the suppression of marginalized positions and ideas. As noted by Bidy Martin and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, who see Minnie Bruce Pratt’s autobiographical essay as a challenge to the coherent notion of home, home is inscribed with power relations.

Paying attention to Pratt's experiences of oppression caused by her differences of race, class, and sexual orientation, Martin and Mohanty contend, "'Being home' refers to the place where one lives within familiar, safe, protected boundaries; 'not being home' is a matter of realizing that home was an illusion of coherence and safety based on the exclusion of specific histories of oppression and resistance, the repression of differences even within oneself" (196). In this respect, the recognition of the contradictory dimension of home makes it possible to deconstruct the hegemonic idea of home and locate marginalized subject positions in consideration of illusory and disciplinary manifestations of power relations.

For instance, in her research on the new phenomenon of migrant housekeepers in Europe, Helma Lutz points to an entirely different meaning of home from the domestic servants' viewpoints. Based on empirical reports on the domestic workers' lives, Lutz argues that what is home to affluent white women means for their servants a place of social alienation and exploitation (97). In this sense, the contested or incoherent dimension of home can help cultural theorists investigate the ways in which individuals develop and maintain personal identities, undergoing cultural negotiations and ideological conflicts at multiple levels of "home sites." In particular, as exemplified by the current emergence of migrant domestic workers, it is important to mention that "globalization generates a new category of difference between women" (Lutz 90). Given that recent years of global capitalism have witnessed the feminization of labor and the increase of women's transnational migration, the "contested" dimension of home contributes to an understanding of power relations inherent in globalization processes and helps explore contradictory and fragmented aspects of marginalized subject positions.

In addition, the association of home with women draws attention to the ways in which space/place is gendered. Doreen Massey argues, "Woman stands as metaphor for Nature, for

what has been lost, and that place called home is frequently personified by, and partakes of the same characteristics as those assigned to Woman/Mother/Lover” (*Space* 10). More importantly, as Massey points out, the ways in which we conceptualize places correspond to the wide-ranging mode of dualistic thinking. Massey contends that “the Universal, the theoretical, the conceptual are, in current ways of thinking, coded masculine. They are terms of a disembodied, free-flowing, generalizing science,” while “the term ‘local’ displays ... a real consistency of gender association” (*Space* 9). In other words, while the masculine is generally associated with activity and freedom, the feminine often implies passivity and restraint. Certainly, the feminization of home signifies the symbolic link between the local and the feminine, and illustrates the ways in which the dualistic thinking is embedded in the gendered discourse of global/local dynamics.

Given the strong connection between femininity and locality, it is not surprising that women’s supposed roles correspond to what locality stands for. Trinh T. Minh-ha pays attention to “the naturalized image of women as guardians of tradition, keepers of home, and bearers of language” (15). The gendered dualism manifests itself in the ideological tie between women and tradition, which nationalist discourses have often utilized in the pretext of cultural continuity and historical legacy. Looking at the history of colonialism and imperialism, Susan Hayward considers the problematic of gender in nationalist discourses. Hayward states, “The nation pretends to be gender-neutral (in that it purports to dissolve difference) and yet the female body is closely aligned/identified with nationalist discourses” (97). The symbolic equation between the woman and the nation, as exemplified by the use of rape as a metaphor for the enemy’s occupation of the land, demonstrates how male-centered nationalist discourses exploit the traditional association of women and locality. More importantly, this discursive tradition plays an important role in shaping the gendered discourses of globalization in that the feminine, linked

with the local, often symbolizes passive and victimized figures vis-à-vis the masculine manifestations of globalization, such as market expansion, free-flowing capital, and economic prosperity.

Furthermore, the feminine association with locality draws a parallel to the problematic relationships between women and mobility. Tim Cresswell studies how cultural texts construct the tramp as a social type in the United States between 1869 and 1940, and calls attention to “gendered and embodied politics of mobility” (“Embodiment” 175). Cresswell argues that gender is crucial for understanding how mobility relates to power:

The equation that links mobility to freedom in the case of women is one that is linked to other dualistic typologies, the most prominent of which is public versus private space. While the private realm has been associated with stability, rootedness, and femininity, the public realm has been described as fluid, mobile, and masculine (“Embodiment” 178).

Not only has the dualistic thinking produced the hegemonic association of femininity with locality; it also has brought out negative discourses about mobile women who do not stay in “the private realm.” Given the masculine association with the “public” and power, it is important to mention that the women’s connection with the “private” demonstrates the ways in which political, social, and cultural discourse have defined women’s supposed places in patriarchal societies.

The dualistic thinking embedded in gender relations also involves the link between women and the body. Jan Jindy Pettman contends that gender plays an important part in creating the dominant discourses about the body, based on her analysis of international sex tourism. Pettman points out that these discourses are associated with binary oppositions such as mind-body, culture-nature, and public-private. Pettman states, “Enlightenment’s man is abstract, individual, centered on the mind, autonomous. Woman, on the other hand, is sexed, and there for

(heterosexual) men's sex and service. Men are subjects, women dependents, a 'body-for-others'" (94-95). The hierarchical dichotomies intrinsic to masculine/public versus feminine/private have configured normative gender roles, offering discursive grounds for stigmatizing "public women" and representing their bodies in negative terms.

In the context of the feminization of labor and migration, it is important to mention that the patriarchal discourse and the gendered dualism tend to construct the newly visible female workers of global capitalism not as active agents but as dislocated bodies. Indeed, the neoliberal discourses of globalization tend to create the specific visuality of the Third World/South femininities, as exemplified by migrant domestic worker, international sex worker, and cheap labor on the assembly line. Such visuality of the marginalized women's bodies signifies the transnational circulation of gendered, sexual, and racial imagery of "Otherness," stressing the lingering legacy of colonial discourses. (Mohanty 245-246). While the problematic relationship between women and mobility explains the ways in which the First World/North media stigmatize or victimize migrant female workers or *displaced* women, the feminine association with the body points to the ways in which globalization discourses consider these marginalized women only as a labor force or serviceable bodies, not as individual subjects. The stereotypical portrayals of Third World/South femininities indicate the enduring influence of the gendered binaries on globalization discourses, and demonstrate the ways in which asymmetrical power relations inherent in globalization processes inscribe women's bodies.

Meanwhile, Teresa de Lauretis sees displacement as a crucial point of articulation in understanding difference, which marks an individual's identity, trying to specify her own location in geographical and cultural terms ("Displacing"). For de Lauretis, displacement serves as a critical positioning in rethinking the feminist understanding of subjectivities:

The shift entails, in my opinion, a displacement and a self-displacement: leaving or giving up place that is safe, that is 'home' - physically, emotionally, linguistically, and epistemologically - for another place that is unknown and risky, that is not only emotionally but conceptually other; a place of discourse from which speaking and thinking are at best tentative, uncertain, and unguaranteed ("Eccentric" 138).

De Lauretis attempts to consider displacement as a way to address the importance of (self)-critical approaches to feminist consciousness, calling attention to the multiplicity of subject positions and the critical potential of marginality. It is important to note that displacement plays a crucial role in understanding women's experiences in identity conflicts in both geographical and conceptual terms. In other words, displacement not only functions as the point of identification for locating women's experiences in a specific historical, cultural, socio-political context; it also points to the way in which the intersectional oppressions of global capitalism, local tradition, and patriarchal discourses displace women's identities. In brief, the conceptualization of displacement permits feminist cultural theorists to investigate both women's geographical displacement and their conceptual or psychological displacement by looking at the ways in which women in displaced positions (re)imagine their experiences and identities.

For instance, the cultural works of diasporic Korean women, in documentary filmmaking and visual art, illustrate the ways in which geographical displacement (re)configures a de-territorialized culture of homelessness. *Sa-I-Gu* (1993), directed by Korean American female filmmakers Dai Sil Kim-Gibson and Christine Choy, deals with the April 29, 1992 riots in Los Angeles from the Korean female shopkeepers' perspectives. As a diasporic film, *Sa-I-Gu* portrays the ways in which the diasporic women embody their experiences of displacement, identifying their positions in the contradictory relationship between the Korean American community and the U.S. society. This feminist documentary film demonstrates how these displaced women negotiate their positions, undergoing ideological conflicts between their

indigenous discourse and the politics of the host country. Here, displacement serves as a critical lens through which to examine the relationship between women and globalization in visual culture, calling attention to women's experiences of dislocation/relocation and their impact on identity construction.

Moreover, "self-dis-placement" helps investigate marginalized women's displaced identities at home. While the attention to physical displacement points to diasporic, exilic, and transnational identities, the focus on psychological displacement leads feminist scholars to understand women's identities of out-of-placeness in relation to the intersectional oppressions of patriarchy, religious norms, colonialism, and nationalist discourses. Women's cultural practices, such as feminist photography and filmmaking, envision the relationship between home and women, often demonstrating how the socio-cultural discourses have made women feel displaced or out-of-place. For example, *Mad Women Project* [*Mich'innyŏn p'rojekt'ŭ*], a photography collection by Young-Sook Park, a Korean feminist photographer/activist, visualizes the patriarchal reality that makes every woman feel hysterical or mad. These photographs represent the displaced women who have experienced repression, violence, and inequality of male-dominated systems, highlighting the importance of self-dis-placement in women's identity formations. In many cases, women's psychological displacement is a result of patriarchal oppressions. However, it is important to mention that women's self-dis-placement functions as an important ground for uncovering their agencies and subversive transformations, given that the male-oriented discourses have produced and upheld the feminine association with "Otherness" for a long time.

In addition, displacement brings out the complexity of home, challenging the idealized definition of home. Citing Bidy Martin and Chandra Mohanty's essay on feminist politics, de

Lauretis contends that displacement means “leaving the comfort of ‘home’ after the realization that ‘home was an illusion of coherence and safety based on exclusion and repression and secured by terror,’ and thus taking the risk and struggling to rebuild identity and subjectivity, as well as community, as ‘the very house of differences’” (“Displacing”). Therefore, the idea of displacement as positionality enables feminist scholars to see women’s movements and struggles as a self-displacement, a way of consciousness-raising, which involves their active attempts to deconstruct oppressive discourses and to expose women’s experiences. The feminist conceptualization of displacement functions as a departing point for both investigating how women’s multiple positioning relates to their identity formations, and uncovering the ways in which women reclaim their agencies through assessing their locations in a self-critical manner.

Given the concern with marginalized communities of women, it is important to note that the concept of displacement as a critical position is not dependent on a simple valorization of self-conscious dislocation but a thorough articulation of differences. Pointing to the association of “decentered subjects” with democratic agencies, Bonnie Honig reconsiders the meaning of home in light of its supposed valorization of universalism and settlement:

It [to take difference seriously in democratic theory] is to give up the dream of place called home, a place free of power, conflict, and struggle, a place –an identity, a private realm, a form of life, a group vision –unmarked or unruined by difference and untouched by the power brought to bear upon it by the identities that strive to ground themselves in its place (567).

Honig argues for the importance of a critical positioning where one is aware of the power dynamics inherent in socio-political relations, refusing the comforts of home. In a similar spirit, Caren Kaplan rethinks issues of difference in relation to discursive traditions and historical backgrounds. Tracing the history of modern imperialism, Kaplan argues that “the emergence of terms of travel and displacement (as well as oppositional counterparts, home and location) in

contemporary criticism must be linked to the histories of the production of colonial discourse” (*Questions 2*). For Kaplan, the Euro-American discourses of displacement tend to bring out “ahistorical universalization and the mystification of social relations” (*Questions 3*). In other words, colonial and imperial ideologies have produced narratives of personal experiences, which mostly center on a conqueror’s adventure in an exotic land. These personal narratives of displacement hardly reveal historical, material conditions of the colonizers as well as those of the colonized.

Kaplan’s criticism on ahistorical universalism testifies to the importance of differences among women in understanding various manifestations of cultural globalization. Globalization discourses often highlight the far-reaching, homogeneous influences of globalization all over the world. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that an investigation of the relationship between women and globalization should begin with critical attention to historical and material specificities of the global/local nexus. As Kaplan points out, “the fragments and multiplicities of identity in postmodernity can be marked and historically situated” (*Questions 7*). Given that globalization allows cultural theorists to take notice of multiple and fragmented identities, the most important task is to examine the complicated subject positions in concrete terms, not to simply celebrate the liberal potential of postmodern identities. The ways in which marginalized groups of women experience the contestation and negotiation of their identities should be examined in relation to their particularities including historical roots, discursive grounds, and material conditions. This study’s reconsideration of *home* and *displacement* indicates not a mere celebration of unstable, flexible, and multi-layered identities but an urgent need to examine the complexity of postmodern identities in the context of transnational flows of people and information.

## **Gendered Discourses of Globalization and Transnational Feminist Approaches**

Feminist scholars have attempted to deconstruct male-centered views prevalent in dominant discourses and to uncover the ideological link between gender hierarchy and Cartesian dualism. In this spirit, feminist globalization theorists rethink the relationship between gender and globalization in feminist terms. With regard to the question of whether globalization is good for women or not, I agree with Alison M. Jaggar that the problems of globalization result from “its specific neoliberal mode of organization” rather than globalization itself (298). Considering the massive restructuring of the world economy and its overall effects on women in the Third World and the global South, the neoliberal mode of globalization tends to increase economic inequality rather than leading to global prosperity all over the world (Jaggar, 2001; Lutz, 2002; Mies, 1997). Indeed, the neoliberal configuration of global capitalism causes a concentration of wealth in certain parts of the world. Marginalized peoples in most regions, specifically women, suffer from disruptions of local economy and have no choice but to provide multinational corporations with their low cost labor.

While Jaggar attempts to assess the problems of neoliberal globalization from a feminist viewpoint, Carla Freeman challenges the hegemonic discourse of globalization using the gender lens. That is to say, Jaggar examines how globalization affects women’s realities in socio-economic terms; and Freeman explores the ways in which gender norms play an important role in creating globalization discourses. Freeman pays attention to the two distinctive categories in globalization literature, “macroanalyses of the history, structure, expansion of economic forms of globalization and microanalyses of women’s insertion into the global economy as workers and members of third-world countries” (1007). For Freeman, globalization discourses are characterized by the (re)configuration of gendered dichotomy,

which is “global: masculine as local: feminine” (1008). Not only have many globalization theorists considered globalization “masculine” or “macro,” as exemplified by free-floating flows of capital, market expansion, and time-space compression vis-à-vis technologies of communication and travel; but they also tend to imagine women as victims of “masculine” globalization. If the masculine stands for global expansion and transnational growth, then the feminine symbolizes local restraint and indigenous parochialism.

Furthermore, the gendered discourses of globalization imply the marginalization of women’s experiences in globalization processes, and point to the need for feminist critiques of globalization. Freeman states, “What is called for ... is a feminist reconceptualization of globalization whereby local forms of globalization are understood not merely as effects but also as constitutive ingredients in the changing shape of these movements” (1013). As Freeman points out, the gendered divide in globalization discourses rarely provides a proper framework for understanding the complicated dynamics between the local and the global. More importantly, the gendered discourses of globalization hardly pay attention to the ways in which women exert their agencies and actively engage with global postmodernity. In this sense, “a feminist reconceptualization of globalization” can offer an alternative critique of women’s representations and identities.

Feminist critiques of globalization have explored the problems of the gendered dichotomy in globalization discourses, attempting to expose women’s experiences and agencies in globalization processes. For instance, Alison Mountz and Jennifer Hyndman call attention to the ways in which feminists (re)define the global through “the intimate,” arguing that “the global and the intimate constitute one another” (446). Mountz and Hyndman see “the intimate” as an important dimension to an understanding of globalization processes:

We conceptualize the intimate as embodied social relations that include mobility, emotion, materiality, belonging, alienation. The intimate encompasses not only those entanglements rooted in the everyday, but also the subtlety of their interconnectedness to everyday intimacies in other places and times: the rough hands of the woman who labors, the shortness of breath of the child without medication, the softness of the bed on which one sleeps. (447)

To clarify, the focus on “the intimate” can help explore material and historical accounts of the global. Specifically, the marginalized aspects of globalization discourses such as a detailed account of a Mexican immigrant nanny’s responses to *Babel* and a Chinese high school girl’s excited remarks on a *Lost* fan video on YouTube. Critical reconsiderations of the gendered discourses of globalization can produce a more cautious, in-depth analysis of globalization processes in terms of interwoven relationship between the macro and the micro.

As a way to challenge the masculine narrative of globalization, this study calls attention the “the intimate” sites of globalization focusing on the issues of home, gender, and identity. As Ernestine McHugh has observed, it is important to consider “the fundamental power relations at the heart of the family and society, those of gender” in order to comprehend how individuals define themselves (594). Not only does home serve as a fundamental site of identity formations, which is mainly governed by patriarchal norms and cultural traditions, but it also is the most salient among intimate sites where an individual is experiencing the local/global nexus. Since women, specifically indigenous women, have been under the influences of oppressive discourses such as patriarchal ideologies, religious norms, and cultural traditions, the women’s engagement with global discourses often lets them have other desires. The intimate site of home obliges these women to stay bound to the existing gender relations, and to locate their positions vis-à-vis the interdependent relation between globality and locality. Indeed, gender relations are significant to examine the ways in which the global and the local interweave in

women's lives when we consider women's traditional association with home and locality as well as their marginalized positions in society.

Studies on identity formations in the context of the global media environment are often concerned with how people attempt to balance the contradictory demands of the local and the global, and how gender relations relate to these kinds of cultural conflicts. McHugh points to the importance of gender in understanding how "the motivating forces and differential effects of globalization" affect a young woman's "self-definition" (594). According to McHugh, who has done anthropological research on a Nepalese community, a young woman in a transnational community could "forge an identity that was both relational and independent – locally grounded yet effective in a cosmopolitan context" (594). That is to say, the process by which women, in particular those in the Third World/South, identify their locations in a transnational cultural context implicates continuous conflicts between locality and globality. These women try to claim their own agencies in everyday attempts to mediate the contradictions between traditional norms and global discourses.

Furthermore, questions concerning global/local dynamics and identity formations should involve an understanding of individuals' multiple positioning. Here, Ella Shohat's claim of "a relational understanding of feminism," becomes especially valid. For Shohat, the conditions of the contemporary times bring out the need to rethink the disciplinary boundaries and the Eurocentric entities such as "Middle Eastern women" and "third-world women" (1269). Shohat argues, "Any serious analysis has to begin from the premise that genders, sexualities, races, classes, nations, and even continents exist... as a part of a set of permeable, interwoven relationships. This kind of relationality is particularly significant in a transnational age typified by the global traveling of images, sounds, goods, and populations" (1269). The idea of

“relationality” makes it possible to understand the ways in which a woman (re)imagines her multiple, flexible, and contradictory positions. In other words, relational approaches move beyond a simple recognition of discrete cultures, enabling feminist scholars to examine the ways in which multiple sources of identity intersect, overlap, and conflict, and how globalization processes manifest themselves differently and similarly across the world.

Transnational feminism, which has been developed in the context of emergent global capitalism, seeks to examine intersections of race, gender, class, sexuality, and nationality in a transnational frame. As Breny Mendoza points out, transnational feminism implicates “the desirability and possibility of political solidarity of feminists across the globe that transcends class, race, sexuality and national boundaries” (296). It is important to mention that transnational feminisms are different from the earlier notion of “global sisterhood,” which First World, white, middle-class feminists advocated in the 1970s and 80s. While global sisterhood derives from the romantic and universal view of Woman, transnational feminisms foreground differences among women. Overall, postcolonial feminist studies and feminist theories of class, race, and sexuality play an important role in grounding transnational feminism in that the two feminist approaches make it salient to examine women’s locations in historical, discursive, and relational terms for understanding women’s differences.

One of the key tasks for postcolonial/transnational feminism is to decolonize feminist scholarship, as both Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Caren Kaplan contend. To decolonize feminist scholarship is to critique Western feminists’ Eurocentric, colonialist biases within feminist scholarship. For Third World/South feminists, the decolonization of feminist scholarship points to their attempt to uncover hidden accounts of marginalized women’s realities, just as Mohanty calls attention to “what is unseen, undertheorized, and left out in the

production of knowledge about globalization” (230). Similarly, Kaplan argues for critical engagement with “the notion of location to destabilize unexamined or stereotypical images that are vestiges of colonial discourse and other manifestations of modernity’s structural inequalities” (“Politics” 139). While Mohanty underscores the need to decolonize globalization discourses in consideration of the uneven distribution of systemic power, Kaplan urges feminist scholars to explore how the historical and material conditions relate to differences among women. Transnational feminist approaches have attempted to reconsider women’s different experiences in terms of historical (dis)continuities and discursive conventions by drawing critical insights from postcolonial feminism and critical theories of intersectionality.

The idea of “politics of location” has led feminist scholars to explore the complexity of women’s identities and to rethink material and historical conditions of women’s lives. The term, “politics of location,” first coined by Adrienne Rich, emerged in the 1980s as a way to deconstruct the universal, essentialist notion of Woman and expose the privileges and biases of mainstream white feminism. During her travel to Nicaragua, Rich recognized the geographical difference and the limitation of her perspective, and took notice of the power asymmetry embedded in feminist scholarship. Rich argues for the elimination of the privileged one’s suppression of the underprivileged voices. For Rich, her “struggle for accountability” means a struggle to “keep moving” (211). Rich states, “And, yes, I need to move outward from the base and the center of my feelings, but with a corrective sense that my feelings are not the center of feminism” (231). Rich’s concept of politics of location urges white, Western feminists to be aware of their intrinsic biases and privileges by “recognizing our location, having to name the ground we’re from, the conditions we have taken for granted” (219). The concept has been

widely applied to discussions of diasporic identities, the issues of differences, and postcolonial conditions.

For Kaplan, the transnational applications of politics of location point to the means to explore the representation of nation-states, the celebration of cultural pluralism, and the marginal subjects' attempts to locate their multiple positions. Kaplan argues that the term's critical revision embraces progressive understandings of transnational cultural practices, and suggests that it is important to challenge the "standard historical periodization" and "abstract spatial metaphors" ("Politics" 138). Kaplan notes, "[a] politics of location that investigates the productive tension between temporal and spatial theories of subjectivity can help us delineate the conditions of transnational feminist practices in postmodernity" ("Politics" 138). To put it differently, the notion of politics of location serves as a critical ground for examining postmodern identities in terms of historical, material, and discursive specificities because it foregrounds multiple, relational positions of subjects. If Rich's articulation of politics of location is an attempt to deconstruct the ahistorical universality of Eurocentric feminist scholarship, then the transnational feminist understanding of the concept brings out critiques of the hegemonic discourses and the dominant narratives.

Transnational feminist approaches offer an analytical framework to explore women's experiences in the context of cultural globalization; and, at the same time, they are helpful to envision a site for women's solidarity across borders. Mountz and Hyndman point out that "the 'trans' in transnational is not only about crossing boundaries where the politics of location and historical contingencies such as colonial histories differentiate, but also connecting across these differences" (458). In this respect, it is important to examine the ways in which women negotiate their positions in a transnational age, and to identify global commonalities as well as

local particularities. In a similar vein, Mohanty argues for “a belief in the importance of the particular in relation to universal – a belief in the local as specifying and illuminating universal” (224). Rather than merely seeking to trace different local representations of global culture, it is significant to explore the systematic inequalities inscribed on globalization processes through paying attention to both specificities of women’s cultural practices and the multiplicity of differences.

The transnational feminists’ focus on the universalities of globalization, and, specifically power relations inherent in the socio-cultural practices of global capitalism, corresponds to my interest in marginalized positions of women. Here, Mohanty’s approach is certainly valid. Mohanty argues for a new methodological direction for studying globalization based on historical materialism. That is to put “experiential and analytical anchor in the lives of marginalized communities of women” (231). Mohanty contends, “My claim is not that all marginalized locations yield crucial knowledge about power and inequity, but that within a tightly integrated capitalist system, the particular standpoint of poor indigenous and Third World/South women provides the most inclusive viewing of systemic power” (232). If the consideration of the woman’s standpoint within a patriarchal family helped expose the basic dynamics of gender relations, then an understanding of marginalized positions of women can demonstrate the ways in which globalization processes are inscribed with intersectional differences of gender, race, class, national identity, and global capitalism. Moreover, given the interwoven incarnation of globalization and colonial legacies, a critical look at cultural practices of marginalized communities of women allows for an examination of historical (dis)continuities embedded in globalization processes, and provides a cross-temporal framework for visual culture studies.

Transnational feminists have offered valuable insights in various disciplines with particular focus on the issues of women's human rights, international politics, and feminist movements. Transnational feminist perspectives have been helpful to challenge the traditional methodological framework mainly structured around the idea of nation-state, presenting different ways to understand women's transnational practices and multiple subjectivities.<sup>4</sup> However, they have not been much taken up by the field of transnational studies of film, media, and visual culture. One significant precursor is *Transnational Feminism in Film and Media* by Marciniak et al., a collection of essays on the transnational media landscape of the former Soviet Union. Focusing on the conceptual territories of transnational, exilic, and diasporic films, which are characterized by "a concern with borders, migration, and foreignness," the book underlines "the necessity of approaching a 'transnational genre' from perspectives of feminist politics and aesthetics" (9-10). Paying attention to the post-socialist region, the book attempts to deconstruct the first-third world binary, shedding new light on the so-called Second World in discussion of cultural globalization.

Transnational feminist approaches are useful for both interrogating how transnational media practices represent gender relations and women's locations, and discovering room for transnational alliances among women in a transnational media environment. For instance, Patricia White sees the documentaries of U.K. filmmaker Kim Longinotto as transnational feminist practices. White states that Longinotto's works "compare and connect gendered spaces and practices across cultures and borders without disavowing the power of gaze (and of

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<sup>4</sup> See Ella Shohat, Introduction. *Talking Visions: Multicultural Feminism in Transnational Age* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999)1-13; Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, "Transnational Feminist Cultural Studies: Beyond Marxism / Poststructuralism /Feminism Divide." *Between Women and Nation: Nationalism, Transnational Feminism, and the State*. eds. C. Kaplan, N. Alarcon, and M. Moallem (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999) 349-364.

language, capital, religion, history, etc.), shaping these relations and rendering them intelligible” (120). Longinotto’s strategy separates from the methodological tradition inherent in the mainstream U.S. representation of Third World women in which they are often portrayed as passive victims, not active agents. White defines Longinotto’s films as a manifestation of “transnational feminist solidarity,” borrowing from Mohanty’s account. (127). Transnational feminist perspectives are significant for uncovering alternative media practices through which women can form transnational alliances in tandem with critiques of historical (dis)continuities and discursive biases, given that colonialist and imperialist legacies still affect marginalized communities of women.

One of the strengths of transnational feminist approaches is to provide a broader framework to examine issues of gender, race, class, national identity, and sexuality in relation to the global power dynamics. Raka Shome argues that transnational feminisms are distinct from multicultural feminisms. Transnational feminisms point to “the ways in which America’s violent relations with “other world (which are outside of North Atlantic geographies) continue to impact diverse populations in different parts of the world as well as within the United States” (256). On the other hand, multicultural feminisms tend to examine women’s intersectional oppressions within specific national contexts. On the whole, transnational feminisms enable feminist scholars to draw attention to power relations inherent in globalization processes, and to consider in-between locations and identities in transnational terms.

Furthermore, transnational feminist perspectives permit communication/media scholars to examine global media practices in consideration of gender relations and issues of women’s identity formation. Shome identifies key issues in contemporary studies on the transnational media and gender: “the politics of representation, examinations of the cosmopolitan, relations

between white femininity and the transnational, AIDS and globalization, global technologies, and audience studies” (258). As exemplified by the shared interests between the two fields, transnational feminist perspectives serve as a critical lens to which look at the relationship between media practices and gender relations in transnational media studies. Shome argues that “a transnational feminist impulse offers us the resources to continually foreground the complex global relations through which various ‘insides’ and ‘outsides’ of globality are being violently redrawn today, and the role of gender in such redrawings” (265). Therefore, transnational feminist perspectives play an important role in uncovering another narrative of globalization, and allow feminist scholars to examine how the multiplicity of differences (re)defines women’s locations at the global/national/local levels.

Meanwhile, it is necessary to mention that the notion of women’s transnational solidarity often brings out criticisms on transnational feminist approaches. As Mendoza points out, transnational feminisms leave “a theoretical and political void to understand the transnational linkage between Third and First World women, and to develop a feminist transnational solidarity that takes into account what divides women” (304). It is difficult to claim that there exists a common ground for women’s transnational alliances, considering the fragmented divisions of feminism as well as the geopolitical asymmetry of global capitalism. In a sense, the very focus on differences and transnationality does not leave much room for creating transnational feminist solidarity in *practical* terms, given that transnational feminisms begin with the consideration of differences between women going beyond the fixed boundaries of nation-states. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that transnational feminist approaches seek to uncover a site for transnational feminist coalition in historical materialist terms, whether it is temporarily negotiated or spatially fragmented.

Moreover, criticisms on transnational feminism often point to transnational feminists' engagement with postmodernist critiques of culture, arguing for more attention to political dimensions, specifically the contradictory relationship between the First World/global North and the Third World/global South. Mendoza points out that the limitations of transnational feminisms mostly derive from "an undertheorization or an inadequate treatment of political economic issues within feminist postcolonial criticism and their entrapment in cultural debates (310). Also, Eliza Noh expresses skepticism over postmodernist trends in transnational feminist critiques, contending that they "fail to account for, in a nonreductive way, the theoretical and material significance of race and coloniality in processes of transnationalism" (133). If Mendoza attempts to shed light on asymmetrical power relations in globalization processes and their impact on women's different realities all over the globe, then Noh tries to underscore the connection between contemporary transnational culture and imperial, colonial legacies. These criticisms make it possible to reassess socioeconomic and geopolitical hierarchies and the enduring currency of anti-colonialist perspectives. Given that salient to transnational feminism is the separation from the old binaries, such as the national versus the international and the First World versus the Third World, a transnational feminist critique aims to offer a more relational understanding of how women and globalization interweave through self-reflective considerations of its biases and limitations.

Transnational feminists' attempts to reconsider different locations of women often produce self-critical understandings of transnational feminist practices. One example is Mary Queen's article on the digital circulations of representations of the Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan (RAWA). Calling attention to the "process through which cyberspace circulations construct the 'Other Woman' and reinforce the rationality of U.S.

concepts and practices of democracy and women's rights," Queen examines the ways in which the unequal access to global technology results in the neoliberal feminists' appropriation of Third World women's struggles (472). Even though the transnational media have recently provided more diverse and accessible outlets for democratic practices, the structural asymmetries still define contemporary discursive formations. As in the case of Queen's study, critical attention to differences among women is a deconstructive way to examine how globalization and gender interweave, and to locate a possible ground for women's cross-cultural solidarity in decolonizing terms.

### **Situating a Transnational Feminist Visual Culture Study: Identity, Globalization, and Cultural Hybridity**

My study aims to explore the relationship between women and globalization, drawing critical insights from transnational feminist theories within postcolonial frameworks, looking at cultural practices of marginal communities of women in transnational visual culture. A transnational feminist perspective provides two directions of analysis: a critique of how women's experiences are represented in transnational visual culture, and an alternative look at the ways in which transnational visual culture contributes to women's (re)imagination of their locations and identities in the conflicting dynamics between globality and locality. The transnational feminist engagement with transnational visual culture studies draws attention to symbolic dimensions of globalization, such as the global circulation of transnational cultural imagery and its impact on the transformation of locality.

More importantly, it is significant to consider the visual as a primary site in which people interact with the culture of global postmodernity, given the centrality of visual media to

the construction of cultural identity. Along with the development of communication technologies and its resulting interconnectivity across the globe, current times have witnessed the predominance of visual forms of media and information. As globalization processes give rise to the increase of visual contents in everyday cultural practices, globalization manifests itself through transnational formations of a visual regime. My engagement with visual culture as the object of study stems from the idea that visual culture studies aim to produce “a social theory of visibility,” which tackles “the social context of the ‘seeing’ and the ‘seen’” as well as “the intentionality of the practices that relate these two moments” (Jenks 16). The focus is on how transnational visual culture illustrates the relationship between women and globalization by examining the power relations intrinsic to everyday practices of looking and knowledge production.

My study proposes that a critical understanding of construction of femininities in transnational visual culture demonstrates how women’s cultural practices relate to the complexity of global/national/local dynamics. For example, while the U.S. media representation of a Vietnamese nanny in a (white) middle-class household can be understood in light of the global migration of female labor, the transnational consumption of *Sex and the City*, a U.S. television show, by a Korean college girl can illustrate the ways in which she locates herself between global consumerism and local economic conditions. As Jennifer Doyle and Amelia Jones have observed, the new feminist scholarship in visual studies rigorously engages with theories of intersectionality in order to examine “the female subject as both viewed and viewing and as embodied and socially and politically situated in specific and particular ways” (607). Given the transnational feminist concern with differences between women and marginalized communities of women, my study belongs in the new feminist accounts of visual

cultures, which are “informed, intersectionally, by other complex theories of identity and meaning,” and “can expand but also refine how we think about identity and visuality as well as the conceptual categories that are central to our work, such as history, experience, and difference” (Doyle & Jones 614). In this respect, how a woman interacts with transnational visual culture should be examined in consideration of her multiple, fluid subject positions, seeking to identify the intersectional factors of her difference and their relationship to her everyday cultural practices.

In a sense, central to cultural globalization is the fact that globalization processes have produced various displaced subject positions in which people are removed from indigenous territories and cultural sources. The prevalence of displaced subject positions is one of the representative aspects of globalization because of the increase of international migration, the formation of transnational communities, and daily consumption of global cultural products. In other words, global flows of people and media bring out new cultural subjects, whose cultural practices are not necessarily restricted to geographical boundaries. The conditions of displacement, which derive from global changes in political, economic, and cultural environments, testify to global interconnectivity and the changing influence of geography on people’s lives. Furthermore, transnational migrations and global media flows raise important questions about home and identity formation, pointing to the idea of non-place-based, flexible, and multiple positioning of an individual vis-à-vis complex dynamics among the local, the national, and the global. For example, I locate myself in various and fluid positions: a heterosexual woman, an Asian, a South Korean national, a temporary resident living in a small town of the U.S. Midwest, a postcolonial feminist, and so on. Indeed, identities are not necessarily bound to fixed categories of geography and administration.

In general, identity allows one to define who she or he is and presents the link between the world and the individual. Identity involves specific conditions or characteristics that make an individual different from another individual and enable her or him to identify with certain groups of people. While subjectivity implicates a sense of being subjected to complex social relations and cultural discourses, identity points to processes of self-expression and cultural negotiation given its “constructed nature” (Robins 174). Globalization testifies to the complication of identity. If the weakened role of the nation-state brings out the contestation of national identities, then the global circulation of media products points to the homogenizing effects of commercial culture. Furthermore, as Kathryn Woodward argues, identities in the contemporary world originate from “a multiplicity of sources – from nationality, ethnicity, social class, community, gender, sexuality – sources which may conflict in the construction of identity positions and lead to contradictory fragmented identities” (1). The traditional concept of identity mainly involves the principles of unity and continuity, given its focus on self-definition and collective identification (Woodward 15). Meanwhile, the growing complexities and interconnectivities in transnational societies highlight the need to rethink identity in relation to the complications of human relations in the changes of the existing boundaries.

Not only does cultural globalization challenge the old frames of identity, but it also produces new perspectives on identity. Pointing to the emergence of new kinds of postmodern subjects in the cultural context of late capitalism, Stuart Hall notes, “[T]he subject assumes different identities at different times, identities which are not unified around a coherent ‘self’” (277). For Hall, the contradictory, multiple, fluid nature of identity is salient for new postmodern subjects. Indeed, global flows of people and information have complicated socio-cultural environments and challenged the earlier definition of identity. Overall, contemporary

discussions about identity tend to emphasize flexible and fragmented identities rather than stressing self-coherent and collectivist identities.

“Diaspora,” principally applied to Jews, refers to a dispersion of people belonging to one nation or having a common culture beyond their land of origin. While the traditional definition of diaspora involves the traumatic history of the Jewish community, it is more generally used to describe all kinds of groups who have an experience of dispersion, such as immigrants, refugees, exile communities, and ethnic minorities. Transnational flows of people and information in tandem with the development of global media calls attention to the diasporic dimension of identity formations. Diaspora implicates the complex relationship between the local and the global in that it conveys the sense of a shared culture with no fixed spatial boundaries. Marie Gillespie argues, “A diasporic perspective acknowledges the ways in which identities have been and continue to be transformed through relocation, cross-cultural exchange and interaction” (7). As Gillespie points out, diaspora has significant implications for studies of cultural globalization, given that it calls attention to cultural interactions beyond national and geographic divisions. In this regard, the new understanding of diasporic identities incorporates deterritorialization, one of the general features of cultural globalization, which mainly points to the way in which “complex connectivity weakens ties of culture to place” (Tomlinson 28). Certainly, the growth of diasporic communities demonstrates how transnational media enables people to sustain and reshape a specific cultural territory by facilitating social interactions without temporal and spatial restrictions.

Furthermore, given the diminished role of nation-states in globalization processes, diaspora adds a new dimension to community building. Focusing on complexities and divisions within public spheres in the context of globalization, David Morley points to the emergence of

“diasporic public spheres,” which are “transnational in form” (125). The formation of diasporic communities materializes transnational public spheres, which are not fixed on spatial and administrative boundaries, calling attention to a new communal site in which marginalized communities of people form transnational alliances and exert their agencies. Diaspora brings out the need to rethink identity in the context of cultural globalization, highlighting the proliferation of displaced subject positions and the detachment of locality in everyday cultural interactions.

Diaspora allows for a new mode of critique to examine minorities’ discourses against the normative mainstream, offering another conceptual framework for understanding cultural identities. Not only does diaspora enable a displaced subject to define one’s self, which is internally claimed, but it also brings out an externally assigned perspective from which to critique the hegemonic discourses. The conceptual framework of diaspora makes it possible to challenge the existing discourses so as to uncover marginalized and invisible accounts within the dominant framework. Discussions of diaspora demonstrate how material and symbolic dimensions of globalization processes complicate identity; and, at the same time, they allow an understanding of the ways in which transnational migration and the global media environment cause significant changes in everyday cultural practices. Given the context of cultural globalization, it is important to rethink one’s home in consideration of a variety of displaced subject positions inherent in globalization processes and their multiple, flexible, and contradictory formations.

The concept of cultural hybridity is important for exploring diasporic culture, in particular, the relationship between marginalized communities of people and cultural globalization because cultural hybridity allows for an understanding of subject positions in

which individuals negotiate their identities and exert their agencies in everyday cultural practices. While cultural imperialism and the hypodermic needle models associated with the Frankfurt School tend to see media consumers as “cultural dupes,” active audience approaches overly focus on subversive, resistant readings of media products. The concept of cultural hybridity separates from these polarizing concepts of cultural interactions, and foregrounds reciprocal interfaces between the global and the local; that is, global cultural discourses are negotiated by specific local practices. The concept of cultural hybridity is useful to examine the ways in which Third World/South women articulate their identities because it brings out the central role of specific localities in (re)formulating global cultural discourses. Indeed, the notion of cultural hybridity indicates that subaltern agencies do exist in transnational cultural interactions.

It is important to mention that my employment of cultural hybridity differs from a celebration of cultural pluralism. As Marwan M. Kraidy points out, many of media studies that deal with cultural hybridity tend to “minimize the importance of structural issues” (*Hybridity* 5). Analyses of cultural hybridity in most cases highlight only processes and outcomes of cultural negotiation without exploring how structural problems, such as colonial histories and material inequities, affect particular instances of cultural interactions. Therefore, hybrid formations in transnational media practices simply serve as examples of cultural pluralism, not as manifestations of power relations inherent in transnational cultural practices. I believe the unequal distribution of power and resources still plays an important role in defining the ways in which the global and the local interweave, although cultural globalization encompasses local cultural resistance, cross-cultural fusion, and global cultural diversity. As Kraidy suggests, hybridity should be considered “as a zone of symbolic ferment where power relations are

surreptitiously re-inscribed” in light of historical (dis)continuities and material conditions of globalization (*The Global* 460). My understanding of cultural hybridity foregrounds attention to structural issues in understanding transnational cultural interactions, and points to the importance of subaltern agencies in examining instances of hybrid cultural formations.

Furthermore, the concept of cultural hybridity attests to postmodern identities of global capitalism. Identity gives an individual a location in the world and makes sense of one’s socio-political and cultural surroundings. Hybridity testifies to the very condition of in-betweenness, given that globalization has provided new ways to examine issues of identity with an emphasis on its multiple, fluid, and contradictory features. Here, identity is no longer bound to single and fixed categories. As in the cases of members of diasporic communities, a postmodern subject often locates her/his position between one site and another. Ien Ang defines hybridity as “a heuristic device for analyzing complicated entanglement,” that is able to undermine dominant structures through “the interstitial insinuation of the ‘different’, ‘the other’ or the ‘marginalized’ into the very fabric of the dominant” (150). To clarify, the concept of hybridity calls into question the existing power dynamics between center and periphery, North and South, drawing attention to trans-cultural and boundary-blurring aspects of identity formations.

If the concepts of *home* and *displacement* are helpful to understand what constitutes identity in the context of cultural globalization, then the concept of hybridity allows for an interrogation of “complicated entanglement rather than identity, togetherness-in-difference rather than separateness and virtual apartheid” (Ang 141). In particular, given the long histories of colonial/imperial dominances and transnational migrations, it is necessary to “pose locality in its cultural complexity,” as Kraidy points out (*The Global* 457). In the context of increasing interconnectivity in the age of globalization, the question of identity construction points to an

exploration of multiple, fluid, and contradictory subjectivities of a hybrid subject rather than an identification of one's location within specific categories of communities. In other words, most salient is an attempt to articulate an individual's complicated standing within her/his interwoven relationships among different categories of identification, not an endeavor to list an individual's various subject positions.

In general, the shift of attention from globalization to transnationalism/transnationality is another cultural theorists' critical effort to challenge the existing structures of power relations. In a similar spirit, the idea of cultural hybridity suggests that cultural globalization does not necessarily mean binary cultural flows between center and periphery or the global North and the South. Koichi Iwabuchi points out that there have been few studies that explore how non-Western cultural centers of power such as Japan and Brazil interact with other non-Western cultures (50). Indeed, the global has been mainly associated with the West as in the cases of the 1960s and 70s cultural imperialism. However, as Iwabuchi has observed, the emergence of non-Western cultural centers of power embodies the notion of cultural hybridity in various directions. According to Iwabuchi's account, "the Western gaze, which has long dominated the material and discursive construction of non-Western modernity, is now melting into a decentered global gaze" (45). The non-Western cultural centers of power demonstrate the ways in which transnational cultural flows become multidirectional, and challenge the Eurocentric belief in the hegemony of Western culture in non-Western regions. The complexity of global cultural flows poses questions about the supposed dominance of Western culture, and brings out the need to "decenter" cultural discourses of globalization vis-à-vis new configurations of power dynamics.

My study aims to offer another account of “decentering” globalization. The focus on marginalized women’s cultural representations and practices in an Asian context can illustrate intra-regional and multi-layered dynamics of transnational cultural practices. For instance, given the increasing visibility of Southeast Asian (mail/online-order) brides in Korea as well as in the Korean media, it is important to look at the ways in which the women who emigrated from (poor) Southeast Asia to (rich) Northeast Asia locate their positions in the global/national/local nexus. According to the chief counselor working for the Vietnamese Women Culture Center in Korea, many Vietnamese brides become disappointed at their living conditions and domestic lives in Korea. One of the main reasons is that they tend to have thought of Korea as a wealthy and prosperous country based on the fancy imagery of the exported Korean TV dramas.<sup>5</sup> Empirical researches on transnational media practices are helpful in both identifying the ways in which Southeast Asian mail/online-order brides engage with the transnational media environment, and examining how they (re)build their new home through their everyday cultural negotiations.

My transnational feminist critique of visual culture aims to challenge the gendered, hegemonic discourses of cultural globalization by looking at the ways in which marginalized communities of women (re)claim their locations and subaltern agencies in everyday cultural practices. My critical engagement with the concept of cultural hybridity and transnationality/transnationalism corresponds to Ella Shohat and Robert Stam’s “polycentric media studies” (17). Arguing for “relational” approaches to media studies in temporal, spatial, and disciplinary terms, Shohat and Stam contend that it is important to “inculcate the habit of

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<sup>5</sup> Son, Sung-Rak. “Need to Be Free from Biases against Vietnamese Brides.” *The Seoul Economic Daily* (18 February, 2008): 38.

thinking multiculturally and transnationally and contrapuntally, of deploying multiple historical and cultural knowledge, of envisioning the media in relation to mutually co-implicated communities” (17). In this respect, a relational understanding of transnational visual culture makes it possible to situate specific cultural practices in complex frames of cultural interactions, and to draw attention to intertwined, polyphonic features of cultural interfaces.

Not only does the concept of cultural hybridity foreground the reconsideration of the unequal distribution of power and resources in light of historical (dis) continuities and material conditions of globalization, but it also helps examine the ways in which the complicated subjectivities of the subaltern mitigate and negotiate global cultural discourses in multiple directions. Given that cultural hybridity implicates the importance of human agency, it permits an exploration of the ways in which the oppressed exert their subaltern agencies in their everyday attempts to negotiate global cultural discourses in specific local practices.

My concern with subaltern identities of marginalized women attests to my positionality as a Third World/South feminist. On the one hand, my study aims to contribute to the deconstruction of hegemonic, Eurocentric discourses. Following Mohanty, I call attention to the importance of discursive power in exerting subaltern agencies. Mohanty distinguishes “a discursive self-representation” from “a material reality.” Discursive dimensions are more crucial for marginalized groups of people to redefine their locations and identities because a material reality is strictly governed by structural inequities. Therefore, for Third World/South feminists, the starting point for decolonizing critique and feminist activism should involve “a discursive self-presentation,” which is challengeable and negotiable. Mohanty states, “If this were a material reality, there would be no need for political movement in the West” (74). Criticizing the Eurocentric biases in Western feminism, Mohanty urges Third World/South

feminists to interrogate colonial legacies and structural asymmetries inscribed in Western discursive formations.

Indeed, Third World/South feminists' interest in decolonizing discursive formations is still significant because Eurocentric, imperialist perspectives are largely embedded in contemporary discourses of globalization. In particular, the specific visuality of Third World/South femininities, such as international sex workers, migrant domestic servants, and cheap labor on assembly line, implicates the dominance of Western economic power and the victimization of people in the Third World/South. For instance, *Desperate Housewives* presents the character of Xiao Mei, a Chinese immigrant housekeeper, as a great help to an American middle-class family. The Chinese housekeeper becomes a sex partner for the husband, and later serves as a surrogate mother on behalf of the wife. The character of Xiao Mei, who gets transformed from a domestic worker to a sex partner/surrogate mother, incorporates the neoliberal, gendered discourse of globalization. This kind of representation often (re)produces the Third World female stereotypes which embody "the part of passive victims lacking any form of agency" (Shohat 1269). Overall, the gendered, neoliberal discourses of globalization tend to recreate the so-called the "Third World woman" in global visual culture, exemplified by Amelia, a Mexican nanny in *Babel* (2006), and Senay, a Turkish chambermaid in *Dirty Pretty Things* (2002). These images of women of color point to the lasting power of colonial and imperial discourses, and serve to "construct discourse of globalization as capitalists, as Western-centric, and as the only possible future for the 'global economy' " (Nagar et al. 262-263). The reproduction of "marginalized" femininities and their transnational circulation bring out questions about transnational media consumption and spectatorship in terms of the lingering legacies of colonial, imperial discourses, the Otherness of women of color, and the

male-centered discourses of globalization. In this context, a Third World/South feminist's political aim is to critique the hegemonic discourses in consideration of historical backgrounds and material conditions.

On the other hand, my study aims to shed light on subaltern women's cultural practices, which contribute to transnational feminist alliances "from below." The development of new communication technologies, such as the Internet and satellite broadcasting systems, has brought out the fundamental conditions for cultural globalization, providing a new opportunity to make collective action. Anyone can participate in such political activities without associating with specific nation-states so as to draw attention to underrepresented issues. Paying attention to the emergence of women's cross-border affiliations, Avatar Brah points out that "the space of global' can be a space for imagining and negotiating alternative transnational conceptions of the person as 'holder of rights' that are distinct from the current notions of citizenship" (42). The new public forums of globalization function as vital sites in which subaltern subjects can make their voices heard and develop transnational alliances by themselves. Although not all subaltern subjects are able to access global communication technologies because of the geopolitical asymmetries inherent in globalization processes, it is important to note that the restructuring processes of globalization provide indigenous and marginalized groups of people with alternative outlets for representation and political movement.

Among the newly emerging women's movements, transnational feminists call attention to feminist alliances across borders in specific local practices which display a critical break from the old thesis of global feminism. As Grewal and Kaplan have observed, the expression of "transnational" movement signifies "an alternative to the problematic of the 'global' and the 'international' as it was articulated primarily by Western or Euro-American second wave

feminists as well as by multinational corporations, for which ‘becoming global’ marks an expansion into new markets” (666). The Eurocentric models of global feminist activism depended on the romantic notions of global sisterhood and the Woman’s issues without consideration of differences among women. Here, it is necessary to mention the implications of “the transnational” which is clearly distinct from “the global.” As François Lionnet and Shu-Mei Shih point out, the transnational can be considered as “a space of exchange and participation wherever processes of hybridization occur and where it is still possible for cultures to be produced and performed without necessary mediation by the centre” (5). While the global signifies the binary between centre and periphery and Eurocentric homogeneity, the transnational provides room for understanding complex flows of cultural exchange, cultural hybridity, and, more importantly, subaltern agencies. Focusing on “transnational” cultural practices of marginalized communities of women, my study attempts to locate subaltern subjects, who dynamically negotiate their identities in everyday cultural practices and serve as active agents for “transnational” feminist movements.

In order to form transnational feminist alliances, it is more important to identify a critical premise for understanding each other rather than to try to define universal issues in women’s lives. Brah argues for “a recognition of another’s ‘difference’ without ‘Othering,’” as a foregrounding principle for transnational feminist activism (44). Brah presents a peace rally entitled “The International Day against War and Racism” as an example because the rally is the space in which a “new oppositional political subject” appeared in the context of transnational socio-political movements. Brah contends that “the public discourse itself marks a new subjectivity that invokes commonality and difference as relational configurations instead of oppositions” (44). That is to say, transnational political subjects should collaborate within in-

between spaces and borderlines without negating differences. The Eurocentric models of Western feminism hardly envision women's cross-border alliances because their imperialist discourses position Third World women as "Other." In order to locate subaltern women's voices in new political sites of transnationalism, it is important to recognize differences among women from a de-Westernizing point of view and to identify a transnational feminist premise for women's coalitions.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has reviewed cultural/media studies scholarship and feminist theories on *home* and *displacement*, and discussed how they help examine issues of identities in the context of postmodern capitalist globalization, so as to present a theoretical framework for transnational feminist visual culture studies. The chapter has outlined the changing ideas of *home* in terms of gendered dichotomies inherent in discourses of space, mobility, and globalization. Pointing to the implications of *displacement* in both geographic and psychological terms, the chapter has explored how the reconceptualization of the term helps understand women's locations and identities in relation to colonial legacies, histories of migration, and oppressive discourses such as patriarchy, religious traditions, and global capitalism. Focusing on the theoretical link between transnational feminisms and visual culture studies, this study is deeply indebted to feminist critiques of the gendered discourses of globalization, postcolonial feminisms, and critical theories of women of color. All of these theoretical traditions have long noted differences between women, and the intersection of gender with class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, and structural inequities. Furthermore, the discussions of diaspora, cultural hybridity, and subaltern identities point to both the complex relationship between globalization and identity

formations and the centrality of human agency to transnational cultural practices, calling into question the power asymmetries embedded in globalization processes and discourses.

The chapter has raised several questions about the relationship between women and globalization in transnational visual culture: how the reconsiderations of the concept of *home* contribute to an understanding of women's identities in the context of globalization; what a feminist critique of globalization reveals about women's multiple, fluid locations in light of the concept of *displacement*; how women (re)imagine their locations in transnational visual culture, and how local cultural practices enable marginalized communities of women to redefine their identities in relation to global cultural discourses. The transnational feminists' interest in marginalized communities of women and the power relations embedded in structural and discursive dimensions of globalization permits an interrogation of these issues and an examination of how globalization intersects with multiple differences of gender, class, race, and national identity.

Moreover, critical attention to marginalized communities of women sheds light on transnational alliances "from below," which derive from the development of the global media environments. Not only does an exploration of transnational feminist alliances in visual culture demonstrate how subaltern women speak for themselves, but it also challenges gendered, Eurocentric discourses of globalization and reconfigures the relationship between women and globalization. As a transnational feminist project, my study has a political task to envision women's solidarity across borders, as well as to seek out both differences among women and alternative narratives to the gendered, neoliberal discourses of globalization.

## **Chapter II. The Gendered Discourses of Globalization in Visual Culture: Third World/South Femininities in the First World/North Media**

The reconfiguration of gendered dichotomy often characterizes globalization discourses. If masculinity generally stands for globalization/globality, a powerful movement toward progress and prosperity, then femininity, mainly associated with locality, tends to be associated with victimized figures produced by the restructuring processes of “masculine” globalization. In most cases, globalization processes have been presented as “masculine” or “macro,” as exemplified by free-floating flows of capital, market expansion, and time-space compression in tandem with the development of technologies of communication and travel. The gendered, neoliberal discourses of globalization implicate the marginality of women’s practices and experiences in globalization processes and point to the need of a feminist critique of globalization.

This chapter tackles the relationship between gender and globalization by looking at the ways in which the First World/North media’s construction of Third World/South femininities are embodied through the gendered, neoliberal discourses of globalization and the contradictory dynamics among the global, the national, and the local. In particular, the chapter attempts to shed light on the marginalized women’s experiences within the “masculine” narrative of globalization, looking at the ways in which the gendered divide in globalization discourses constructs the specific visuality of Third World/South women. My focus on femininities underscores the conceptualization of gender as a socio-cultural construct, which can be challenged and transformed. More importantly, as Rosalind Gill and Jane Arthurs point out, the engagement with femininities provides “a response to the growing body of literature on masculinities which locates masculinity not in bodies coded as male, but as a circulating set of

discourses” (444). As a transnational feminist critique of the hegemonic visual culture, the chapter explores how the transnational circulation of the marginalized femininities relates to historical (dis)continuities and discursive conditions in the context of global capitalism.

Employing textual analysis, discourse analysis, and psychoanalytical film theories, the chapter discusses a series of stereotypical representations of marginalized communities of women, such as factory workers, mail/online-order brides, and migrant domestic workers. The specific visuality of Third World/South women is analyzed in terms of representations of women’s bodies, the gendered, neoliberal discourses of globalization, and conflicting notions of *home* and *displacement*. My analysis of the representations of Third World/South femininities in the First World/North media demonstrates the ways in which globality and locality define each other, and provokes critical questions about transnational media spectatorship and consumption in the context of transnational visual culture.

The chapter begins with a brief overview of globalization imagery and its transnational circulation in contemporary visual culture. Visual vocabularies of globalization are found in media documentations such as newspaper photographs and documentary footage. In particular, First World/North documentaries about globalization, including *Mardi Gras: Made in China* (David Redmon, 2005), *Manufactured Landscapes* (Jennifer Baichwal, 2006), *Life and Debt* (Stephanie Black, 2001), and *The Take* (Avi Lewis, 2004), tend to portray the realities of globalization processes in polarizing terms. To put it differently, given that these documentaries attempt to shed light on globalization problems, the visualization of globalization often highlights the contrast between “rich” regions and “poor” regions, which accounts for “bright” sides of globalization and “dark” or “hidden” sides of globalization. Looking closely at the globalization imagery and the representational practices employed in the documentaries, I

explore the ways in which the gendered, neoliberal discourses of globalization frame the Third World vis-à-vis the First World, and how marginalized communities of women are situated within the narratives of the social divide between North and South.

In order to reflect deeply on the ways in which Third World/South women are located in the polarized, gendered, neoliberal discourses of globalization, the chapter focuses on the ways in which First World/North narrative films and TV dramas (re)imagine marginalized communities of women in the context of global capitalism. In particular, it investigates the historical and discursive backgrounds of the stereotypical representations of Third World/South women, such as faceless factory workers on assembly lines, exotic mail/online-order brides, and a serving class of women of color, in consideration of multiple differences of race, class, gender, ethnicity, and national identity. While my analysis of the documentary films calls attention to the power asymmetries inherent in the uneven processes of globalization, my examination of the Third World/South femininities in the fictional narratives allows for an understanding of the current representations within the cinematic history of women of color. Not only does my discussion of the representations of Third World/South women in both non-fictional and fictional narratives point to the specific visuality of the marginalized femininities in the context of global capitalist expansion, but it also illustrates the transnational circulation of particular visual vocabularies and representational practices of the neoliberal, gendered discourses of globalization.

First of all, my analysis of the Third World/South femininities in the First World media focuses on representations of women's bodies, and, more specifically, the specific visuality of the commodified body. Considering the global trend of feminization of labor and migration, the marginalized communities of women often embody cheap labor, sex services, invisible

domestic help, and human trafficking. Examples include *Bordertown* (Gregory Nava, 2006), *Dirty Pretty Things* (Stephen Frears, 2002), and *Desperate Housewives* (2004).

Second, the ways in which the marginalized women are located in the neoliberal, gendered narratives of globalization illuminate the complex interface between gender and other differences. For instance, the media representations of mail/online-order brides testify to the intersectional oppressions of gender, race, nationality, and global capitalism. As narrative films like *Mail Order Wife* (Huck Botko and Andrew Gurland, 2004) and *A Foreign Affair* (Helmut Schleppi, 2003) demonstrate, the new form of international marriage as a transnational commercial practice can be understood in terms of the gendered, racialized relation between First World/North masculinities and Third World/South femininity. In other words, a critical look at the representations of mail/online-order brides allows for an understanding of the ways in which the marginalized women are situated in relation to economic and cultural realities of globalization, as well as a consideration of what kind of men would want a mail/online-order bride and what kind of women would be a desirable candidate for a Western man's companion.

Last, the First World/North media representations of the Third World/South women provide an opportunity to examine the relationship between "home" and the "Other." As exemplified by *Desperate Housewives*, a popular U.S. ABC drama series, and the film *Babel* (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2006), the stereotypical portrayals of migrant domestic workers incorporate the idea of "home" as a contested domain of global/local dynamics. Indeed, the depictions of the "Other" in a context of "home" bring out a more intimate dimension of globalization, and illustrate the ways in which the First World/North media locate the marginalized communities of women within the local dynamics of "home" and gender relations.

The purpose of this chapter is to offer a transnational feminist critique of the gendered,

neoliberal mode of globalization discourses. Looking at the globalization imagery circulated in contemporary visual culture and how the mainstream media situate the marginalized communities of women, the chapter discusses how the representations of the Third World/South women are related to the current incarnations of globalization and the Eurocentric/imperialistic discursive conventions, such as the rescue fantasy and the victimization. My intention is not to point out simple connections between the portrayal of Third World/South women in the First World/North media and the actual realities of the marginalized communities of women. It is, however, to explore the symbolic dimensions of globalization focusing on the power relations encapsulated in the discursive construction of Third World/South femininities in transnational visual culture. In particular, the chapter tackles the specific visuality of Third World/South women in relation to historical (dis)continuities and discursive traditions, focusing on the (re)imagination of “otherness” and its transnational circulation. In conclusion, the chapter raises critical questions about global media spectatorship and transnational cultural consumption in consideration of the transnational configuration of visual culture.

## **1. Globalization Imagery: The Third World/South in Globalization**

### **Documentaries of the First World/North**

Globalization has become a buzz word in academic discourses as well as in the mass media beginning in the late 1980s. Globalization implicates a hopeful expectation for a more liberal, prosperous life or a gloomy outlook of multinational corporations’ domination over the globe. Just as scholarly attempts to consider the realities of globalization present the polarizing

scenarios of globalization, images of globalization tend to be divided into contrasting sides, pro-globalization and anti-globalization. Communication researches on media images of globalization demonstrate that media coverage has been mixed, providing “a nuanced view of globalization” (Marks et al. 615). In other words, globalization has been portrayed in both positive and negative terms; and this testifies to the long, heated debates over globalization among different groups of people as well as the general evolution of globalization discourses.

My analysis of globalization imagery focuses not so much on how globalization imagery illustrates the two polarizing perspectives on globalization, as on the ways in which globalization imagery positions marginalized communities of people and how it situates the so-called Third World/South in globalization discourses. How do images of marginalized regions and of marginalized people create a specific narrative of globalization? Are they used to portray globalization in a positive light or in a negative light? How are they positioned within the hegemonic discourses of globalization in relation to the images of the First World/North? How are these images related to historical legacies and discursive conventions of the colonial/imperial past?

A content analysis of the media coverage of globalization over 20 years by the Associated Press (AP), one of the biggest news agencies of the world, demonstrates that the reports have stressed the positive aspects of globalization on economic growth while highlighting its negative aspects on environment, poverty, and employment, calling attention to the complexity of the media coverage and the multifaceted conceptualization of globalization (Marks et al. 633-634). Given the extensive use of AP news materials all over the globe, the different views on globalization in the AP coverage point to the particular orientations in globalization discourse. Similarly, another research on the coverage of globalization by the *U.S.A*

*Today and Time* reveals “an unordered collection of ideas and images, both positive and negative, which are not necessarily shaped into a broader picture,” and points out that the negative sides of globalization are covered on a regular basis (Starr 4). Considering the power relations intrinsic to globalization processes and their far-reaching influences on people’s everyday lives, it is important to note that globalization is characterized by its benefits as well as its detriments, often causing a lot of conflicts of interest among various communities of people. Not only does globalization mean the increasing interconnectivity across borders, but it also indicates the expansion of multinational corporations beyond national boundaries and the destruction of local economy.

According to Marks et al., “[a] positive overall frame existed early on in reporting, but the frame became negative in the late 1990s” as contentious events occurred, such as the Seattle riots in 1999, and the World Trade Center bombing on 11 September, 2001(634). If the earlier configuration of globalization discourses tends to draw attention to economic growth, heightened efficiency, and social democratization, the later consideration of globalization points to the challenging issues of power asymmetries, economic inequities, and environmental problems in the context of global capitalist development. While the Seattle protests of 1999 provided people with an opportunity to rethink the hopeful promises of globalization calling attention to its harmful impacts on environment and socio-economic conditions, the World Trade Center bombing of 2001 made people aware of the downside of globalization. To be sure, the increasing fear of terrorism often highlights the possible threat and danger that globalization may bring out, and testifies to the vulnerable realities of the globalized world in which the unequal distribution of power frequently causes conflicts and struggles. Marks et al. contend, “Global terrorism is seen as the dark side of globalization and poverty. The poor and marginalized ‘explode into

violence,' high unemployment leads to endemic poverty which in turn leads to anger and a desire for revenge; globalization results in the 'have-nots' which breeds terrorism" (624). Viewed in this light, the development of new technologies and the transnational flows of people and information, which were initially considered to be beneficial aspects of globalization, serve not as the material foundation for a more liberal and democratic society, but as the very condition for a more vulnerable and dangerous world threatened by global terrorism.

It is important to note that the dark sides of globalization, such as the threat of global terrorism and the issues of poverty and social inequality, are often associated with the Third World/South. In the context of the neoliberal incarnation of globalization processes, the negatives of globalization are often spatially bounded to the Third World/South in terms of the problems of poverty, unemployment, and socio-political conflicts. In contrast, the First World/North represents the positives of globalization, such as economic prosperity, social democratization, cultural diversity, and technological efficiency. Also, the media imagery of the increased security and border control in the U.S. airports demonstrates the way in which people living in the Third World/South are imagined as marginalized but threatening figures that need to be monitored or controlled. Overall, little consideration of the power asymmetries inherent in globalization processes often causes the Third World/South to symbolize the dark sides of globalization, testifying to the influence of the gendered, neoliberal discourses of globalization.

Within the discursive context of the polarizing narratives of globalization, contemporary Western documentaries about globalization attempt to call into question the detrimental outcomes of globalization by tracing the dark sides of globalization within the realities of the Third World/South. One of the ways in which underdeveloped countries embody the negatives of globalization can be found in a seemingly straightforward documentation of what changes

globalization processes have brought out in those regions. *Manufactured Landscapes*, a film about photographer Edward Burtynski, who has been acclaimed for his unique representations of industrial scenes and environmental problems, looks at China's industrial development in the context of economic globalization. The film begins with an eight-minute tracking shot of the 480-meter-long factory floor on which thousands of Chinese workers are busy working on assembly lines. This overwhelming image vividly demonstrates the systemic power of global capitalism and its huge impact on the local. Similarly, *Life and Debt*, Stephanie Black's analytical documentary about the controversial relationship between globalization and the Third World, presents Jamaica as a transnational space where global flows of people and capital have been shaping the everyday reality of the national. Jamaica in *Life and Debt* is the very place in which the power asymmetries inherent in globalization processes manifest themselves through the striking contrast between bright smiles of Western tourists and frustrated sighs of indigenous workers.

*Manufactured Landscapes* reveals the downside of globalization, focusing on the ways in which globalization processes have harmful impacts on environment and people all over the globe. One of the most salient examples is a scene in which local teenagers are trying to scavenge and take apart huge oil tankers on Chittagong beach in Bangladeshi. Not only the beach full of rusting shipwrecks and oil wastes but also the young boys who are doing the apparently dangerous, low paid job exemplify the negative effects of globalization on the Third World/South. In this manner, the film points to the detrimental outcomes of globalization, drawing attention to the debris of industrialization and technological development. If the image of mountains made up of discarded computer parts questions the naïve ideal of material prosperity, then the shots of the indigenous children who are cheerfully playing on the e-waste

hills provide viewers with an opportunity to think about the risks that global capitalism poses against the human conditions.

In general, *Manufactured Landscapes* displays a critical stance toward the neoliberal incarnation of globalization given its central concern with the environmental issues. However, it is important to note that the cinematic images of the Third World/South only serve to materialize the negative effects of globalization rather than pointing to the systematic contradictions intrinsic to globalization processes. For instance, the film tends to frame China's industrialization and urbanization as a state of disarray and unrest. The film presents the making of a 600-kilometer reservoir at the future site of the Three Gorges Dam, for which a huge scale of destruction and relocation of adjacent villages were required in the pretext of progress. Furthermore, the film calls attention to the rapid urbanization of China by both illustrating the contrast between new urban spaces and old neighborhoods in Shanghai, and juxtaposing a night club full of young people with an interview with an aged lady who is forced to sell her beloved house and to move out of the city. If the images of the construction of a large reservoir embody the detrimental effects of globalization on environment, then the cinematic depiction of the reckless urbanization illuminates the negative link between the neoliberal incarnation of late capitalism and the changing realities of the local.

As photographer Edward Burtynski focuses on the growing tension between the convenience of economic development and the harmful effects of global industrialization on the globe, the portrayal of China's urbanization and industrialization sheds light on the environmental issues, and, more importantly, makes the Third World/South seemingly responsible for the negative manifestations of globalization. By rendering the "manufactured landscapes" of the Third World/South visible, the film underscores the unbalanced and

controversial reality of the modern China, which seems to result from short-term economic policies of the local authorities or careless practices of the indigenous people. The film's representation of the globalized China illustrates the ways in which the negatives of globalization are spatially bound to the Third World/South, making the power asymmetries inherent in globalization processes invisible.

Lack of understanding of the complicated relations between the local and the global often positions the Third World/South as distant and isolated from the realities of the First World/South. The basic premise of *Manufactured Landscapes*, a record of Edward Burtynski's excursion to China, foregrounds the fundamental difference between the Third World/South as the being-looked-at and the First World/North as the subject of looking. For instance, the moving images of the film often end up as Burtynski's still photographs. As the camera zooms out of the photographic frames, the audience realizes that these still images are actually hanging on a gallery wall in front of Western viewers. Meanwhile, director Jeniffer Baichwal tries to add another dimension to the film by offering interviews with the native workers who function only as part of the backgrounds in Burtynski's photographs. Nevertheless, the very premise of the film as well as the photographer's general focus on "landscapes" frames the imagery of China's industrial revolution not as a realistic rendering of globalization, but as a tourist's depiction of a foreign, remote region in the context of global capitalism. As Peter Debruge points out, the film "serves as a staggering wake-up call, underscoring how far removed Western consumers are from the production of everyday objects. Quite literally 'made in China' pic goes a long way to explore the implications of that phrase" (27). Viewed in this light, the film's cinematic representation of the Third World/South offers another stereotypical image of underdeveloped countries, underpinning the neoliberal discourses of globalization.

While *Manufactured Landscapes* tends to render people living in the Third World/South invisible with its focus on the environmental issues, *Mardi Gras: Made in China* calls attention to the marginalized laborers in underdeveloped countries, emphasizing their invisibility to people living in the First World/North. In the beginning of *Mardi Gras: Made in China*, the director David Redmon asks drunken Mardi Gras celebrators on the street of New Orleans if they are aware of the origins of Mardi Gras beads they are currently using for the festivities. To be sure, the responses from the young Americans, such as “don’t know,” “don’t care” and “they’re beads for boobs,” do not show any interest at all. The camera moves from the jolly Americans on the street full of discarded Mardi Gras beads to the inside of a factory in Fuzhou, China, where groups of Chinese teenage girls are busy manufacturing those beads. The grim reality of Chinese girls, who work 16 hours a day for about 10 cents an hour exposed to dangerous chemicals, is contrasted with self-indulgent Americans who do not feel any need to think about the downside of globalization. Although the film attempts to shed light on the negative effects of globalization by illustrating the huge difference between the U.S. context and the Chinese situation, the film’s focus on the contrasting realities only underscores the distance between the First World/North and the Third World/South. In a sense, the film successfully traces the transnational flow of the manufactured goods; but the viewers are likely to merely witness the sufferings of the Other rather than reflecting on the power dynamics encapsulated in those realities, given the fundamental visual difference between the two polarizing realities. Once again, the negatives of globalization are spatially bounded to the Third World/South.

Likewise, *Life and Debt* foregrounds the cultural divide between developed countries and underdeveloped countries by intercutting the images of cheerful tourists with those of the native people who are struggling to make a living in the context of International Monetary Fund’s

supervision. As in the case of *Mardi Gras: Made in China*, mass tourists from the First World/North seem entirely oblivious to the desperate situation in Jamaica and the ways in which their leaders at home play a role in creating this kind of harsh reality in the Third World/South. Not only do the images of Western tourists, who are satisfied with the beautiful scenery and the cheap prices of commodities, make the viewers uncomfortable; but they also testify to the seemingly unbreakable barrier between the First World/North and the Third World/South. The images of the people from North America and Europe as cheerful, naïve, and totally unaware of the negative effects of globalization on underdeveloped countries may allow the viewers to have an interest in the other reality of globalization. However, it is important to mention that the emphasis on the difference and distance between the two worlds tend to position the Third World as an embodiment of the downside of globalization rather than raising critical questions about the problems of global capitalist expansion and their detrimental impacts on people all over the globe.

Both *Mardi Gras: Made in China* and *Life and Debt* draw attention to the polarizing realities of globalization, juxtaposing the images of the native people who are struggling to make a living with those of people living in the First World/North who are enjoying some festivals or vacations. *Mardi Gras* reconsiders the negatives of globalization by illustrating the contrast between the First World/North and the Third World/South, and the striking differences among various groups of people involved in the complex dynamics of global capitalism, such as local workers, factory owners, international buyers, and transnational consumers. A scene in which American men on the street of New Orleans are whistling for a girl exposing herself for a Mardi Gras necklace creates a sharp contrast to the following scene in which Chinese female workers are living in a factory compound surrounded by barbwire fences. The owner's remarks

on the “convenient” factory facilities and his reasonable policies of “punishment” are in contrast to the workers’ accounts of the poor working conditions and the exploitative regulations. In this manner, *Mardi Gras* demonstrates the ways in which the power asymmetries of global capitalism generate different subject positions and polarizing realities.

In a similar spirit, *Life and Debt* employs the representative strategy of contrast and comparison throughout the film in order to illustrate the ways in which globalization has put detrimental influences on Third World countries. The film juxtaposes the peaceful images of Jamaica from a Western tourist’s point of view with those of the native people’s everyday realities, underscoring the huge contrast between the two perspectives. The images of beautiful oceans and laid-back natives from a tourist’s point of view often conceal the local people’s struggle over the economic predicaments and social unrest. A scene in which Western tourists are participating in a beer drinking contest relaxing themselves is followed by the images of the natives working at the hotel, such as an old female maid, a young male janitor, and an English speaking presenter who is continuously encouraging the tourists to enjoy themselves in such exotic surroundings. The film ends with the most striking visual parallel between the images of the strangers’ vacation spot and those of the native people’s living place. The shots of the natives’ protests are put next to those of the tourists who are leaving for their home in the First World/North after their vacations abroad. If the locality of this Third World country is embodied through the cinematic images of social conflict and chaos, such as the police chasing the demonstrators, the street full of burning cars and debris, and the violent confrontation among people, then the shot of the tourists who are getting on a plane without looking back symbolizes the supposed location of the Third World vis-à-vis the First World. Just as the tourists simply come back to their home with no lingering interest in Jamaica, the neoliberal

logic of global capitalism only focuses on prosperity and growth in the First World/North because the negative effects of globalization are bound to the Third World/South.

In *Mardi Gras*, filmmaker David Redmon attempts to make a connection between the two worlds. When the filmmaker shows his footage of the bead factory in China and asks the Mardi Gras celebrators how they feel about them, many of the Americans seem surprised at the Chinese workers' working conditions and low wages. On the other hand, the Chinese female factory workers pass around the pictures of the Mardi Gras festival in New Orleans, laughing at the seemingly "crazy" Americans who are exposing their butts and breasts just for getting "ugly" beads they made. The interviewees in both sides appear astonished at the ways in which Mardi Gras beads are traveling from China to New Orleans, and their noticeably different values and uses. Although the filmmaker seeks to find a way to link the two polarizing worlds, the interviewees' reactions implicate neither relational understanding nor sympathetic identification. Just as the Chinese workers cannot understand why the people in New Orleans exchange nudity for hideous, colorful beads they made, the Mardi Gras celebrators hardly imagine the harsh realities of the Third World country because "Americans do not work like that," as the head of a U.S. importing company says.

The harmful aspects of globalization are often exemplified by the images of local workers who are struggling under the oppressive working conditions. Given that the documentary films about globalization discussed here attempt to draw attention to the ways in which the neoliberal incarnation of globalization negatively affects marginalized communities of people, it is important to mention that the cinematic portrayals of female workers in underdeveloped countries mainly center on the fragmentary images of their manual labor and body parts. *Mardi Gras* demonstrates the harsh working conditions of the Chinese female

factory workers by listing a variety of images of the production process of Mardi Gras beads. It seems that the filmmaker tries to show the ways in which these women work in the prison-like factory, taking the risk of a lot of dangerous situations, such as the use of unsafe machinery, high electrical heat, and hazardous chemicals. For instance, there is a scene in which a Chinese female worker is busy linking colorful beads using an electrical machine. With the subtitle saying “actual time,” the camera stares at the fast-working hands of the girl from the back. In this manner, the close-up shots of the Chinese female workers’ hands with many scars and their fast, repetitive movements tend to highlight the manual labor itself, reducing the women of color into fragmented bodily images, which do not allow them to be seen as individual subjects. Not only do these kinds of images exemplify the specific visuality of Third World/South women whose bodies are being widely commodified or exploited for industrial production; but they also testify to the feminization of labor, one of the most representative aspects of global capitalism.

More importantly, the cinematic depiction of the Asian woman’s working hands corresponds to the widely accepted stereotype of Asian females as manual laborers. According to Evelyn Hu-Dehart’s account, the “myth of nimble fingers” is an “ideological construct,” which has justified the economic exploitation of Asian women and reproduced the colonialist notion that Third World women are intellectually inferior (“Asian Women” 225). The representations of the working bodies and body parts of women of color illuminate the ways in which Third World/South women have been situated in the intersecting oppressions of gender, race, and class hierarchies. In a similar spirit, calling attention to the new association of Asian female body with “transnational working body,” Laura Hyun Yi Kang argues, “Asian women have been figured as naturally suited, logically sanctioned, and above all, *proper* to the labor

demands for transnational capitalist growth and international political harmony as we enter the next century” (404). According to Kang, Asian women’s supposed properness is generally based on a series of their stereotypical characteristics, including “docility, youth, digital nimbleness, stamina, keen eyesight, muscular flexibility;” and this tends to rationalize the ways in which transnational corporations exploit Asian women’s putatively appropriate labor (404). Meanwhile, an American interviewee in *Mardi Gras*, who is attending a business school, has a seemingly simple and clear explanation of why the Chinese women work 16 hours a day in order to get only \$30 a week. He explains in a cool manner that such a payment is good money for them because they are poor. If the lingering stereotypes of the Asian woman provide a rationale for transnational corporations to appropriate Asian women’s labor, then the mere acceptance of the existing economic inequities between the First World/North and the Third World/South renders the harsh realities of underdeveloped countries a natural outcome of global capitalism.

*Life and Debt* also deals with the issue of feminization of labor, presenting the controversy over the Kingston Free Zone. The images of local workers entering into a factory are followed by the bird’s-eye view shots of the huge factory compounds. The female garment workers, who seem to be middle-aged, talk in front of the camera about their work, general working conditions, and salaries. Not only does the film portray the ways in which these women work at the garment factory with the consecutive shots of their sewing hands; but it also offers these women’s individual accounts of their hardships, including the reduction of their salaries, the growing competition with Asian workers, and their protest against the factory owners. Here, Dong-Sook S. Gills’ remark on the “race on the bottom” syndrome is relevant. Gills makes the point that “the footloose nature” of transnational companies’ investment tends

to move to less developed countries from the countries with the improved wages and working conditions, pointing to the “increase in a downward pressure on wages” (“Neoliberal” 5). Viewed in this light, the representations of the middle-aged female workers in *Life and Debt* demonstrates how multinational corporations exploit the supposedly cheap female labor, pointing to the ways in which the growing competition among workers within Third World countries puts detrimental effects on each other.

More importantly, the images of the aged garment workers in *Life and Debt* testify to the historical root of the exploitation of marginalized communities of people. One of the female workers states, “It’s like we’re working under slavery,” and complains about their poor working conditions and low wages. If *Mardi Gras* presents a story about Chinese factory girls who are struggling to survive the economic hardships of the newly industrialized country, then *Life and Debt* highlights the historical (dis)continuity in the realities of the indigenous people from the colonial past to the current times of global capitalism. In this respect, both films allow for a contextual understanding of the ways in which the First World/North media positions the Third World/South women within the neoliberal, gendered discourses of globalization.

Given the growing criticism on the neoliberal incarnation of globalization, it is important to note that the cinematic representations of the Third World/South began to shed light on local people’s realities. For instance, *Mardi Gras: Made in China* presents the bead factory workers’ everyday routines within the compound of the factory, paying attention to their personal backgrounds and individual accounts. An interview with an 18- year-old female worker permits the viewers to understand why she ends up working in the bead factory and how she feels about her work and life in general. She had to work in the factory instead of going to a college because her parents did not have enough money to educate all of their

children. She has been sacrificing herself in order to support her younger brother. As in the case of this girl, the female workers in the bead factory are poor and uneducated; and most of them need to support their family members living in rural areas of China. The workers' personal accounts testify to the Third World realities that force the marginalized communities of women not to leave the factory despite the terrible working conditions and low wages.

The filmmaker of *Mardi Gras: Made in China* follows a female factory worker's vacation to her home during the Chinese New Year holiday, placing her lower-class family in contrast to the factory owner's upper-class lifestyles. Indeed, there exist huge differences between the owner's luxury house equipped with a high-tech security system and the worker's old house in a small fishing town. After showing that the female worker gives her little brother a small robot toy as a present, the filmmaker lets the viewers take a look at the room of the owner's son, which is filled with expensive looking toys. In this manner, *Mardi Gras: Made in China* brings out the issue of class difference in the Third World/South, which gets more complicated vis-à-vis rapid industrialization and global restructuring processes.

Furthermore, in *Mardi Gras: Made in China*, the female workers' personal accounts call attention to the ways in which globalization processes interweave with local specificities and gender relations. The film focuses on the economic hardships in rural areas of China in the context of speedy urbanization and industrial development. A scene in which the female worker's family members are collecting oysters on the beach is followed by an interview with her father, in which he said that he would send her outside the country to make money. Then, the camera zooms in to her smiling face. Her father's statement points to the very place of a lower-class woman in an underdeveloped country; she is supposed to support her family sacrificing herself for her brother's future. Given the strong influences of patriarchal discourses

and gender hierarchy, it is important to mention that neoliberal restructuring processes of global economy tend to cause the exploitation of marginalized communities of women.

The documentary films about globalization present another aspect of the Third World realities, drawing attention to native workers' challenges against the neoliberal incarnation of global capitalism. Considering the increasing concern with anti-globalization movements and human rights activism, it is possible to say that the documentary films discussed here attempt to offer a critical look at global capitalism. *Mardi Gras: Made in China* includes a brief scene in which Chinese factory workers have a rally for demanding better working conditions, and explains how difficult their fights have been under the oppressive authorities. If *Mardi Gras* sees the Chinese workers' gathering as a burgeoning movement against transnational corporations, then *Life and Debt* underscores the fact that the local people's struggle against global capitalism is central to everyday realities of Jamaica. *Life and Debt* provides a series of images of the marginalized people's protest, such as street fighting, the police chasing people, and burning cars; and these images symbolize the social unrest which global capitalism has brought to the Third World/South.

*Mardi Gras: Made in China* is also different from *Life and Debt* in portraying the ways in which the native workers seek to survive the globalized capitalist system. *Mardi Gras: Made in China* ends with the images of the Mardi Gras beads thrown away on the streets of New Orleans after the night of celebration, as the narrator reads a letter written by a Chinese woman working in the bead factory. The letter says, "We need to work. We don't want them to stop buying beads. We want to stop punishment." The letter testifies to the position in which these women are placed in the global/local nexus; they have no choice but to work in order to live. While *Mardi Gras* attempts to demonstrate the ways in which women in the Third World/South

are struggling to survive the hardships of global capitalism, *Life and Debt* offers an example of how the local people have tried to challenge the neoliberal mode of globalization. The ending of *Life and Debt* presents an interview with an indigenous woman working at a plantation, which the native people organize in order to achieve “self-reliance” and “self-supply.” This co-op plantation, which aims to break from the growing dependence on multinational corporations for food supply, provides an alternative narrative of globalization in the Third World/South, pointing to the native people’s active challenges against global capitalism.

*The Take* (2004), another documentary film about globalization, which was directed by Avi Lewis, a self-proclaimed anti-globalization activist from Canada, takes a look at the ways in which people in the Third World/South seek to find a way to survive the global capitalist system. The film deals with the takeover of closed plants by worker cooperatives in Argentina, positing workers-run plants as a potential alternative to the dominance of transnational corporations. Unlike the other films discussed here, *The Take* focuses on indigenous people’s challenges against global capitalism, following the process of the laid off workers’ struggle toward the takeover of their car factory from forming a collective to garnering the support of local community. Also, the film presents similar experiences of workers at Zanon tier factory and the Brukman garment factory, illustrating how the workers’ collectives serve as an alternative industrial organization defying the neoliberal incarnation of globalization.

In dealing with the workers’ takeover of their closed factory, *The Take* focuses on their personal stories and everyday experiences rather than reflecting on the complex context of economic collapse of Argentina. The film presents the family life of a laid off factory worker and the workers’ meetings filled with humor and respect, and provides heartfelt interviews with the workers. Specifically, the representation of the Brukman garment factory workers adds

another dimension to the imagery of marginalized communities of women. The workers, who are mostly middle-aged women, fight against the owner's eviction notice, having a rally on the street and confronting with the police force. Not only do these women embody the marginalized women's agencies and actions, but they also exemplify a close relationship among worker cooperatives. There is a scene in which a woman talks about how the fellow workers of the garment factory helped her sister get through cancer treatment whereas previously she had been coerced to take unpaid leave to receive medical care. In the following scene, the interviewee and her sister join the garment factory workers' fight on the street. In this manner, the film illustrates the ways in which everyday lives of people living in the Third World/South are closely interwoven with globalization processes, no matter how you adjust to the changes brought by the global capitalism.

As exemplified by the garment factory workers, the local workers who appear in *The Take* are not necessarily associated with the negatives of globalization in that they work together to create an alternative form of industrial operation, refusing to get victimized. Although the film includes the typical imagery of labor protest, such as the workers' street battle with the police, it portrays the ways in which the workers seek to take creative measures to survive rather than describing the conflict itself. As Guy Westwell points out, the film provides "something more attuned to the times: a gentle, more conciliatory approach to radical change" (78). To be sure, it is important to mention that the film's presentation of the challenges against globalization still looks idealistic and unpromising. Nevertheless, the film's engagement with the local workers' resistance against the neoliberal incarnation of globalization is worth considering because the native workers represented in the film negate the

imagery of the Third World/South as the passive victim of global capitalism given their hard work and earnest struggle toward survival.

The First World/North documentary films discussed above demonstrate the ways in which globalization discourses position the Third World/South in relation to the First World/North. While the positive aspects of globalization, such as prosperity, efficiency, and interconnectivity, tend to be associated with the First World/North, the negative elements of globalization correspond to the conditions of the Third World/South, such as social inequality, environmental problems, rapid industrialization, and uneven development. Furthermore, the marginalized communities of women represented in the films testify to the feminization of labor which results from global restructuring processes, as demonstrated by the fragmented bodily images of the female factory workers on assembly lines. Not only do the representations of Third World/South women attest to the specific visuality of marginalized communities of women within the gendered, neoliberal discourses of globalization; but they also illustrate the ways in which both global capitalist system and local specificities redefine the marginalized women's locations.

In general, the documentary films about globalization attempt to rethink the current logic of global capitalism by drawing attention to the detrimental effects of globalization. However, the ways in which the films depict the Third World/South in contrast to the First World/North tend to underline the fundamental difference between the two worlds without fully reflecting on the power asymmetries inherent in globalization processes. Given that the negatives of globalization are often associated with the harsh realities of underdeveloped countries, it is important to note that the Third World/South is considered to be responsible for the problematic of globalization rather than being exploited or oppressed by the systemic power

of transnational corporations. Moreover, the neoliberal ideals of global capitalism, such as free trade, individualism, self-governance, and fair competition, tend to frame the negatives of globalization as a supposed reality of underdeveloped countries, not as an outcome of the neoliberal incarnation of globalization. Overall, the documentary films try to problematize the global restructuring processes, but their visual vocabularies of globalization are mainly situated in the neoliberal, gendered discourses of globalization.

It is noticeable that some of the documentary films call attention to the marginalized people's agencies, focusing on their individual accounts and concrete experiences. In particular, the cinematic depictions of the local workers' protests against global capitalism demonstrate the ways in which marginalized communities of people are struggling to survive the oppressive realities of globalization. Indeed, there are some accounts of active and conscious efforts to defy global capitalism, which cancel out the passive, victimized imagery of the Third World/South. Nevertheless, the documentary films about globalization do not necessarily go beyond the gendered, neoliberal discourses of globalization because they present neither an alternative narrative of globalization nor a possible site for transnational alliances. Not only do the representational strategies of contrast and compare between the Third World/South and the First World/North keep the viewers from having a relational understanding of globalization; but they also produce the striking visual contraries between the two worlds, pointing to the narrative orientation toward the gendered, neoliberal discourses of globalization.

## **2. The (Re)imagination of Third World/South Women in the First World/North Media**

Globalization discourses often produce the specific visuality of Third World/South women in transnational visual culture given that the marginalized women are often portrayed as cheap labor on assembly lines, migrant domestic workers, and mail/online-order brides. These images of Third World/South women exemplify the representative features of global capitalism, such as the feminization of labor, the increase of transnational migration since the 1990s, and the rapid industrialization in underdeveloped countries. Looking at the representations of Third World/South women in the First World/North media, I examine the ways in which globalization discourses produce the specific visuality of marginalized communities of women, which often results in the transnational circulation of the gendered, sexualized, and racialized imagery of “Otherness”/foreignness. The analytical focus is on how marginalized communities of women are situated within the gendered, neoliberal discourses of globalization, and how the global and the local interweave in relation to historical (dis)continuities and discursive backgrounds in transnational visual culture.

The First World/North films and TV dramas, which will be discussed below, include *Bordertown* (Gregory Nava, 2006), *Dirty Pretty Things* (Stephen Frears, 2002), *Mail Order Wife* (Huck Botko and Andrew Gurland, 2004), *A Foreign Affair* (Helmut Schleppi, 2003), *Babel* (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2006), and *Desperate Housewives*. They present the stereotypical images of marginalized communities of women in the context of globalization, such as factory workers, sex workers, mail/online-order brides, and migrant domestic workers, pointing to the ways in which globalization processes have redefined the women’s locations and everyday realities. Indeed, the marginalized women represented in these dramatic narratives embody identities of displacement in the age of globalization. These women are displaced subjects who have left their “home” and migrated to an unfamiliar place to have a better life. More importantly,

the Third World/South women are often displaced within the narratives because they tend to be imagined as the “Other” in relation to Western subjects or merely presented as fragmentary, fetishized images with little agency and history.

Given the representational conventions involving women of color and Third World women, it is important to mention that the legacies of colonial, imperial discourses have created the essentialist images of the marginalized communities of women. As Chandra Mohanty has observed, many Western representational practices “discursively colonize the material and historical heterogeneities of the lives of women in the third world” (53). Much of the hegemonic literature in the First World/North has displayed a tendency to portray Third World women as a homogenized group with no consideration of differences of race, class, ethnicity, culture, and religion. Mohanty calls attention to the ways in which Third World women are homogenized, arguing that the average third world woman has very specific characteristics that are considered essential to her character: she is poor, uneducated, passive, and ignorant (56). The essentialist characterization of the average third world woman testifies to the supposed place of the marginalized women; they are positioned as submissive victims.

Indeed, there exists the link between the discursive colonization of the Third World woman and the stereotypical images of marginalized communities of women constructed in the hegemonic narratives of globalization. For one thing, the homogenization of the Third World women often causes the marginalization of the Third World women’s accounts and the ignorance of the women’s experiences in the pretext of the economic development of underdeveloped countries. Also, the notion of the average third world woman brings out the erasure of subaltern agency. The earlier Western literature on Third World women positioned them as essentially inferior subjects suppressed by sexism, colonialism, and traditional norms, often being used to

highlight the modern imagery of First World women as independent, liberated, and educated figures. In a similar spirit, the essentialist characterization of Third World/South women results in the victimization of the marginalized communities of women in masculine discourses of globalization because of the focus on the women's working bodies and labors as well as little concern with their individual agencies. Viewed in this light, the First World/North media representation of Third World/South women allows for an examination of the ways in which globalization discourses construct the specific visuality of marginalized communities of women in consideration of historical (dis)continuities and discursive backgrounds. The homogenizing, essentialist tendency in the representative conventions involving Third World/South women provokes critical questions about how the displaced locations of the marginalized communities of women relate to their material histories, specific localities, and gender relations.

In the following, I examine the media representations of Third World/South women in terms of the visuality of the commodified body, identifying the stereotypical images of the marginalized women in the context of global capitalism. Second, I look at the ways in which the dramatic narratives of these media texts situate the marginalized communities of women in order to explore the intersectional relations among gender, race, nationality, and global capitalism. And then, I discuss the First World/North media representations of Third World/South women in light of the changing ideas of *home* and *displacement*. Given the sharp increase of identities of displacement in the age of globalization, the cinematic depiction of the "Other" in a context of "home" permits an understanding of a more intimate dimension of globalization; and demonstrates the ways in which the First World/North media (re)imagine the marginalized communities of women in relation to historical, discursive, and material specificities of the global/local nexus.

The films and the TV dramas, which will be discussed below, provide the representative images of Third World/South women in the context of globalization, including factory workers, migrant domestic workers, international sex workers, and mail/online order brides. Dong-Sook S. Gills points out, “The production (the material) and the symbolic (the ideational) are not at all separated in the process of globalization but tightly integrated” (“Globalization” 108). Indeed, not only do these images testify to the dominant logic of global capitalism; but they also exemplify transnational flows of people and information. Furthermore, the contemporary repertoire of Third World/South women’s images reflects the enduring legacies of colonial histories and imperial discourses given the wide-ranging victimization of women of color. Overall, an examination of the media stereotypes of marginalized communities of women allows for an understanding of the ways in which globalization discourses locate the women’s positions within the complex interrelationships among globalization processes, oppressive ideologies, and socio-political contexts of locality.

### **The Third World/South Woman as Factory Worker**

Both *Bordertown* (Gregory Nava, 2006) and *Dirty Pretty Things* (Stephen Frears, 2002) present the image of the Third World/South woman as cheap labor on assembly lines. Based on the true story of one of the numerous female homicides in Ciudad Juárez, *Bordertown*, a U.S. film, portrays the ways in which Mexican women working in maquiladoras are exploited and oppressed from a Mexican-American female reporter’s point of view. The opening titles inform the viewers of the general context, saying that the North American Free Trade Agreement allowed the U.S. corporations to open more than 1000 factories in the tax-free production sites right across the U.S.-Mexico border. The titles also point to the fact that the maquiladoras

employ mostly local women to work long hours with little money without offering any security measures for them.

*Dirty Pretty Things* is a British drama about a relationship between two illegal immigrants living in London, a Nigerian man and a Turkish woman. Senay, played by Audrey Tautou, works as a hotel maid and then as a low-paid worker for a garment sweatshop. She embodies the marginalized position of an undocumented immigrant woman in a transnational city in the age of global capitalism. As Evelyn Hu-Dehart has observed, global capitalism is characterized by “a labor strategy that stresses minimizing cost and maximizing flexibility” (“Globalization” 248). The cinematic depiction of the Third World/South woman as cheap labor on assembly lines in both *Bordertown* and *Dirty Pretty Things* exemplifies the transnational corporations’ exploitation of low-cost female labor in the context of spatial mobility of people and capital.

*Bordertown* depicts Juarez, the city of free trade, as a site of political insecurity and social conflict, beginning with the images of a border town, such as a poor and dirty neighborhood, and the corrupted police force trying to confiscate the local newspapers in which a murder incident of a Mexican female worker is being reported. The camera moves to the inside of the maquiladoras, which are lit by cold, blue-toned fluorescent lights, and then follows the assembling process of big TV screens and the young female workers’ swift movements on the assembly lines. When the end of the first shift is announced, the workers leave their assembly lines promptly, and at the same time, another group of women pour into the factory for the second shift. The visual presentation of the female workers’ collective, prearranged actions in the dehumanized, overwhelming atmosphere of the maquiladoras points

to the ways in which the systemic power of global capitalism locates Third World/South women according to the basic strategy of minimum cost and maximum production.

While *Bordertown* visualizes a huge, systematically organized space of global capitalist production, *Dirty Pretty Things* portrays a garment sweatshop as a hidden site of global economic exploitation. In *Dirty Pretty Things*, not only is the garment sweatshop located in the outskirts of London; but it is also full of illegal immigrant women, who have to secretly work in such a dark and confined space. With a warning that the immigrant authorities are coming, all the female workers move rapidly to a secret room in the back, leaving only the male owner behind. The instant visual transformation from the sweatshop fully packed with the immigrant women into the space empty except for the male owner signifies the very reality of marginalized communities of women in the global core of late capitalism. If thousands of garment sweatshops are secretly scattered throughout global cities contributing to transnational corporations' exploitation of women's labor, then the illegal immigrant women in the film are invisible subjects placed in the marginalized sites of global capitalist production. As exemplified in the film, Third World/South women are positioned within the hidden bottom of the global stratum in late capitalism.

In both *Bordertown* and *Dirty Pretty Things*, the marginal status of the Third World/South woman who serve as cheap labor on global assembly lines, is often linked with the issue of sexual violence against women. In *Dirty Pretty Things*, when the owner of the sweatshop finds out Senay is being pursued by the immigration police, he threatens her that he would report her unless she performs oral sex on him. The image of Senay's sexual subjugation to the employer illustrates the ways in which the marginality of the Third World/South woman in the new order of global capitalism corresponds to the overall vulnerability of women in

terms of sexual violence against women, violation of women's human rights, and exploitation of women's labor. The employer forces her to perform oral sex rather than urging her to have intercourse with him, saying that he understands she is a virgin and a Turkish girl. In the scene in which the employer takes advantage of the illegal immigrant woman, *Dirty Pretty Things* points to the ways in which marginalized communities of women are situated at the most vulnerable position under the systemic power of global capitalism.

In a similar spirit, *Bordertown* equates the economic exploitation of Mexican women's labor in the maquiladoras to the numerous female rapes and homicides. The earlier scene of the inside of the factory is followed by a scene in which Eva, one of the factory workers, takes a bus to return to her distant home after her shift. After the other workers get off the bus, Eva is the last passenger still in the night bus. The driver asks her if he can stop by a gas station on the way to her destination, and Eva agrees. When Eva starts to feel suspicious about the bus route, it is too late. Finally, the driver takes her to a remote place and forces her to get out of the bus. Despite her desperate resistance and begging, the driver sexually assaults her along with another man, who strangles her and then bites her on the bare breast. The two attackers, believing her dead, bury her alive in the middle of a desert. However, at the time of dawn, the camera spots a tiny movement in the shadowy desert. Half-buried in sand and dust, she wakes up and begins to move her wounded body in order to escape. Along with the vivid depiction of the sexual violence, the film visualizes Eva's vulnerability by presenting the nighttime images of the town, which is full of darkness, crime, and corruption. Eva has to walk through the dark alleys of the town in order to take a bus to go back to her far-away home; and she must risk the long, dangerous commuting to make a living. The cinematic depiction of Eva's experience testifies to the fact that multinational corporations are operating based on the labor strategy of

minimizing cost and maximizing production, pointing to the problems of global economic exploitation and the issues of human rights of marginalized communities of women.

The sexual violation against the Third World/South female workers in both *Dirty Pretty Things* and *Bordertown* demonstrates the masculine orientation of the neoliberal discourses of globalization. J.K. Gibson-Graham calls attention to the connection between the language of rape and that of capitalist globalization:

Capitalist social and economic relations are scripted as penetrating “other” social and economic relations but not vice versa. (The penis can penetrate or invade a woman’s body, but a woman cannot imprint, invade, or penetrate a Man.) After the experience of penetration –by commodification, market incorporation, proletarianization, MNC invasion –something is lost, never to be regained. All forms of noncapitalism become damaged, violated, fallen, subordinated to capitalism. (122).

If the rape of Eva signifies the capitalist penetration of the border region of Mexico, then her wounded body stands for the massive destruction of local geography and culture. Likewise, Senay’s sexual subjugation to her employer as well as her loss of virginity in exchange for migration to U.S. indicates the capitalist domination over marginalized communities of women. As exemplified in the two films, Third World/South women get exploited, violated, and victimized within the gendered narratives of globalization.

The link between the exploitation of women’s labor and the issue of sexual violence against women implicates the very position in which the Third World/South woman is situated in the context of globalization. Dong-Sook S. argues, “In the case of women’s labor experiences, the complex ways in which gender hierarchy, national capital, foreign capital, and the state negotiate and adapt to the forces of economic globalization expose women to diverse mechanisms of exploitation” (“Globalization” 117). *Bordertown* clearly exemplifies the ways in which various forces of global capitalist expansion put marginalized communities of women

in more dangerous and vulnerable positions. In the film, Eva, the only survivor of the continuous female homicides, attempts to expose her story in order to catch her attackers with the help of Lauren, played by Jennifer Lopez, a female news reporter for the *Chicago Sentinel*. They soon realize that the Mexican government, the local businessmen, and the transnational corporations have been cooperating in order to hide the incidents and bury the truth about the realities of the local women working in the free trade zone.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the economic exploitation of Third World/South women in *Bordertown* and *Dirty Pretty Things* demonstrates the ways in which global capitalism engages with the oppressive discourses in order to sustain the gendered, neoliberal mode of globalization. As Evelyn Hu-Dehart has observed, “It is not just the gendered quality of the international division of labor that is so problematic, but that the gendered division is inferred and inscribed as a permanent hierarchy that is further reinforced by race, class, and nationality differences, as well as denial of immigration and citizenship rights in the case of the smuggled and undocumented” (“Globalization” 251). The Mexican women in *Bordertown* are employed by the U.S. corporations to work long hours with low payment to produce mass quantity products, risking their everyday safety. The patriarchal, colonialist belief that poor, low-skilled, and uneducated women of color are naturally suited for the kind of manual labor, has been employed to naturalize the exploitation of marginalized communities of women, reproducing the Third World/South female stereotypes in globalization discourses.

### **The Third World/South Woman as Mail/Online-Order Bride**

Both U.S. films *A Foreign Affair* (Helmut Schleppi, 2003), and *Mail Order Wife* (Huck Botko and Andrew Gurland, 2004) provide another stereotype of the Third World/South female, which is the image of mail-order bride, or more precisely online-order bride. In *Mail Order Wife*, documentary filmmaker Andrew, played by director Andrew Gurland himself, decides to make a documentary about Adrian, an overweight doorman living in Queens, who plans to get a mail-order wife. Since Andrew funds the marriage in exchange for the right to film the whole process, Lichi, Adrian's Burmese bride-to-be, comes to the U.S. As Lichi begins to live with Adrian, the filmmaker discovers that the American husband tends to treat his Asian bride like a domestic servant or a sexual object. Soon, Adrian's abuse of the foreign wife leads the marriage to fall apart, and Lichi is getting closer to Andrew. The character of Lichi, a mail-order bride from South Asia, reflects the historical association of Asian women with mail-order brides, stressing the link between Asian women and their supposed suitability for sustaining patriarchal values. On the other hand, *A Foreign Affair* presents a variety of Russian mail-order brides, pointing to the socio-economic conditions of Eastern European countries since the collapse of the Soviet Union. *A Foreign Affair* is a story about the two brothers, who participate in an international marriage agency's tour to Russia. After their mother dies, the brothers cannot manage the house, so they decide to get one mail-order bride for the two of them.

In *Mail Order Wife*, the characterization of Lichi brings out the historical continuity in (re)shaping the cinematic discourse of Asian femininity. Renee E. Tajima identifies two dominant stereotypes of the Asian woman that have remained in the repertoire of Asian female images in the history of U.S. cinema. Tajima notes, "There are two basic types: the Lotus Blossom Baby (a.k.a. China doll, geisha girl, and shy Polynesian beauty), and the Dragon Lady (a.k.a. prostitutes and devious madams)" (309). According to Tajima, Asian women in film are

usually Lotus Blossom Babies, passive figures that serve only as love interests for white men, or Dragon Ladies, partners in crime with men of their own kind (310). Likewise, Jessica Hagedorn points out that the depiction of Asian women in U.S. cinema is based on “a mixture of fascination, fear, and contempt.” Hagedorn states, “If we are ‘good,’ we are childlike, submissive, silent, and eager for sex, or else we are tragic victim types. And if we are not silent, suffering doormats, we are demonized dragon ladies-cunning, deceitful, sexual provocateurs” (74). Such images have long been reproduced and widely circulated either to illustrate the Oriental domesticity of Asian women, or to represent the deviant quality of women of color, contributing to the perpetuation of the Otherness in transnational visual culture.

The characterization of Lichi is reflective of the two seemingly polarizing stereotypes of the Asian female. Venny Villapando points out, “A major cornerstone of the mail-order business is the prevalence of racial stereotype. They have a wide spread effect on the treatment of women, and influence why so many men are attracted to mail-order romance (323). In the beginning of the film, Lichi embodies the Lotus Blossom Baby, who is making an effort to fulfill all the white man’s desires. The camera shows the ways in which Adrian helps Lichi get used to her new life with him. Adrian teaches Lichi how to clean the toilet, make a chili, putting post-its on the wall to remind her of the important points. As Adrian forces Lichi to feed the big snake with a live mouse, she gets extremely scared and finally bursts into crying. When the filmmaker questions Adrian’s domineering attitude toward her, Adrian talks about Lichi’s personal stories showing the old photographs of her family members. Along with Adrian’s voice-over narration about her poor childhood and the tragedy of her family, the black/white photographs of her family members are juxtaposed with the shots of Lichi in which she enjoys the New York scenery, tastes cotton candies, and looks around a lot of foods in a

restaurant with a smile. Adrian's story about Lichi's tragic past ends with a scene in which Adrian sympathetically pats Lichi's shoulder and says, "It's okay." This sequence illustrates how Adrian positions himself in relation to Lichi; the First World man rescues the Third World woman from the oppressive conditions in the native home. In the following scene, Lichi comes out of the house and approaches to Adrian, who is lying down on the bench. Sitting over his body, she shaves his face gently and carefully. In this manner, the portrayal of Lichi tends to be compatible with the Oriental female, who is submissive, innocent, and victimized, pointing to the lingering legacies of Eurocentric, imperial discourses.

Although *Mail Order Wife* was produced in 2004, its treatment of the interracial relationship between the white male and the Asian female derives from the discursive conventions of the earlier Hollywood films. Gina Marchetti examines the Hollywood's treatment of Asians by looking at the cinematic depiction of interracial sexuality in the mainstream films produced between 1915 and 1986. Focusing on the way in which narratives featuring Asian-Caucasian sexual relationships work ideologically in light of culturally accepted notions of nation, class, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation, Marchetti argues that all the movies "attempt to save the Anglo-American by saving the white woman from sexual contact with racial other, rescuing the nonwhite woman from the excess of her own culture, or spiritually saving the couple from a living death by allowing them to be symbolically assimilated into the American mainstream through their romance" (218). In the case of *Mail Order Wife*, the preliminary relationship between Adrian and Lichi is based on the representative convention that the white male seeks to realize an American dream saving the nonwhite female from the uncivilized culture of a Third World country.

If the initial image of Lichi as being obedient, innocent and eager to serve white men, is associated with the “good” Asian woman, then the later transformation of Lichi’s character corresponds to the stereotypical figure of the Dragon Lady. As filmmaker Andrew learns of Lichi’s sufferings under Adrian’s domination, he asks her to move out of Adrian’s house and offers his apartment as a shelter. She begins to work as a maid for Andrew and his girlfriend in Andrew’s home, studying to become a caterer. Along with Adrian’s abuse of Lichi, there is another justifiable reason for allowing filmmaker Andrew to help Lich run away from Adrian: that is, Adrian’s marginal status and undesirable masculinity. The character of Adrian, an overweight doorman, who is a working-class Irish man with lack of education and social skills, exemplifies “a mismanaged life” in the context of neoliberal discourses. Pointing to the extension of market values to social subjects, Wendy Brown argues, “[n]eo-liberalism normatively constructs and interpellates individuals as entrepreneurial actors in every sphere of life. It figures individuals as rational, calculating creatures whose moral autonomy is measured by their capacity for “self-care” –the ability to provide for their own needs and service their own ambitions.” Not only does the characterization of Adrian as an undesirable man who has no capability of self-governance allow the viewers to understand why he wants or needs to shop for a wife, but it also justifies Lichi’s escape from Adrian.

In a sense, Lichi’s experience of “a mismanaged life” leads her to become independent and knowledgeable, and refuse to be a victim. After starting a sexual relationship with Andrew, Lichi makes it clear that she wants to get married in order to obtain a green card. Later in the film, as she realizes her second marriage is also falling apart, she gets frustrated with her life in the U.S. acting strangely and irrationally, and eventually leaves Andrew taking his expensive paintings. Soon, Andrew and Adrian find Lichi in a different catalogue of mail/online-order

brides, and they conspire to bring her back to America for revenge. Lichi agrees to come to the U.S. in order to meet her new husband-to-be, an aged man, who is being hired by Andrew and Adrian. Disguised as an innocent Asian girl with a different name, Lichi appears wearing a traditional costume. Here, she personifies the role of the Lotus Blossom Baby, who is eager to sexually serve the future husband in a motel room right after she meets him. When she confronts Andrew and Adrian and finds out their scam, she expresses her anger and frustration calling them “losers.” The character of Lichi gets changed into the figure of the Dragon Lady, who is sly, manipulative, and willing to use her sexuality to get what she wants. By portraying the ways in which Lichi performs the role of the Lotus Blossom Baby in order to get married to another American man, the film allows the viewers to sympathize with her two ex-husbands, Adrian and Andrew, both highlighting the Otherness of the Asian female and pointing to the growing suspicion about migrant people from underdeveloped countries.

As Nicole Constable has observed, the representative images of mail-order brides are simplistic and dualistic in that they are either “willing and helpless victims of controlling western men, or alternatively as shrewd foreigners out for a green card and a free meal ticket through marriage fraud and an immigration scam that dupe innocent U.S. men” (13). Indeed, not only is the characterization of Lichi limited to these two one-dimensional images of mail-order brides, but the transformation of Lichi from the Lotus Blossom Baby into the Dragon Lady also stresses the mysterious, deviant Otherness of women of color. Furthermore, the parallel between the earlier stereotypes of the Asian female and the representation of Lichi in *Mail Order Wife* illustrates the ways in which the existing conventions of Eurocentric discourses reproduce the Oriental femininity in relation to the context of globalization and the intersectional oppressions of patriarchy, imperialism, and racial politics.

The cultural practices of mail/online-order brides could be seen as romantic encounters across national borders. However, these transnational romances are fundamentally based on the commodification of marginalized communities of women. In a sense, the development of global capitalism even allows a man in the First World/North to shop for a wife at a cheap price in a huge collection of Third World/South women with just a few simple clicks. Both *A Foreign Affair* and *Mail Order Wife* exemplify the commodification of Third World/South women in their portrayals of transnational brides. In the case of *Mail Order Wife*, the ways in which Adrian treats Lichi are basically reflective of the positioning of a mail/online-order bride as a commodified figure. Adrian forces Lichi to serve both as a maid who takes care of all the domestic works, and as a sex worker of whom he makes a deviant sex video. For instance, filmmaker Andrew gets furious when he discovers a Polaroid picture Adrian took in which Lichi is putting the scary snake around her naked torso in the dark basement. This image of Lichi as sex toy for the American husband demonstrates the very status of Lichi as commodity; that is, one of his purchased goods which is only valued for her body and service. Later, Adrian agrees to divorce Lichi on the one condition that Andrew gives him the money he paid to marry Lichi, and this reaffirms the commercial nature of the marriage. Evelyn Hu-Dehart argues, “Just as American transnational capital has constructed Third World women as particularly adept at garment assembly work, so have American men fetishized these same women as particularly seductive as girlfriends and attentive and submissive as wives, uncorrupted by Western feminist ideas and values” (“Globalization” 251). The representation of Lichi in *Mail Order Wife* illuminates the ways in which First World/North men usurp the Third World women’s labor and sexuality. In a sense, it is possible to argue that there is not much difference between

transnational companies' employment of Third World women and the First World man's purchase of the Third World bride given the shared capitalist logic of labor strategy.

Similarly, *A Foreign Affair* portrays Russian mail/online-order brides as commodities. Although *A Foreign Affair* deals with the issue of international marriage, the film mainly focuses on the two brothers' personal transformations during their search for a wife in Russia. The elder brother falls in love with filmmaker Angela, who is making a documentary film on transnational marriage, and finally transforms himself from an old-fashioned sexist farmer to a supportive husband. Meanwhile, the younger brother, who is a passive man with little confidence in his masculinity, begins to enjoy spending time with women. From the beginning, the two brothers' interest in a Russian bride is located in her labor as a domestic worker. Jake, the elder brother, even compares the cost for hiring a local housekeeper with the price of the international marriage tour. After coming to Russia, the two brothers look over the huge catalogues of young girls and make a sort of shopping list, selecting possible candidates for their wife. On their way to the first meeting with their bride candidates, the American men are told that each of the Russian girls is wearing a color-coded name tag which corresponds to her English speaking ability. In a sense, the women living in the poor country are categorized and coded like commodities so that a man from the rich country shops for his wife in an easier and more convenient manner.

More importantly, *A Foreign Affair* attempts to explore why American men are obsessed with exotic mail/online-order brides. The scene in which documentary filmmaker Angela talks to the American men, who desire to get a Russian bride, points to the lingering impact of patriarchal discourses on the increasing practices of international marriage. The American men, most of whom are middle-aged, complain about contemporary American women, arguing that they are spoiled and shallow, or tend to want to be a CEO not wanting to take care of her own

children. Some of the American men argue for the desirability of Russian women, who they hear are honest and straightforward. Overall, the First World/North men's fascination with mail/online-order brides from developing countries is based on these women's supposed reservation of traditional femininity, which testifies to the discursive legacies of the colonial past and the persistent power of patriarchal ideologies.

### **The Third World/South Woman as Domestic Worker**

Both *Babel* (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2006) and *Desperate Housewives* (2004), a popular ABC drama series, present the Third World/South woman as domestic workers, a servant class of people, which illustrates the trend of feminization of labor in the context of global capitalism. Given the historical presence of women of color as domestic servants, it is possible to say that the current representations of Third World/South women as nannies, maids, and housekeepers are not unconventional. Nevertheless, as Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild have observed, a growing number of the nannies, domestic workers, and caregivers tending to homes and families in the First World/North are underpaid and overworked women of color from the Third World/South. With the increase of transnational migration, a great number of women from the Third World/South immigrate to the First World to get a job; and many of these women tend to end up as domestic laborers because they cannot find any other ways to support their poor families and indebted nations. According to Patrick McCormick, more than half of all domestic workers in the European Union are women from Third World countries such as the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Thailand (43). Both *Babel* and *Desperate Housewives* point to the ways in which Third World/South women serve as the domestic help in the First World/North.

*Babel*, a film of an international co-production, follows multiple stories taking place in four different countries including Morocco, Japan, Mexico and the United States. One plot involves the lives of an American couple, Richard and Susan, who came on vacation to Morocco hoping to solve their own marital problems. As the death of their third child has strained their marriage greatly, they are having difficulty communicating each other. After Susan gets shot on the tour bus, their situation becomes more complicated. Another plot takes place in the United States where Amelia, a Mexican nanny working for Richard and Susan in their California home, takes care of their children, Mike and Debbie. Given that Richard and Susan left Amelia in charge of their children, Amelia is forced to look after their children by herself much longer than she expected. Finally, she decides to bring them to her son's wedding in Mexico because she could not find any responsible person to take care of them.

The character of Amelia, a Mexican nanny, reflects the current reality of marginalized communities of women, highlighting the fact that the majority of domestic workers in the U.S. are Latinas. More importantly, the representation of Amelia testifies to the controversial phenomenon of "mommy drain" in underdeveloped countries. Amelia, a middle-aged Mexican woman, has accepted a life of displacement in order to offer a better life to her children and other family members, giving up her role as the mother and living as the nanny for the American children. In *Babel*, the Mexican nanny cannot get away from her work even on her own son's wedding day; and she has to leave the wedding party early because her American children are supposed to attend their soccer practice the next morning. Throughout the film, Amelia does not stop looking after Mike and Debbie. She comforts Mike with kisses when he goes to bed, and she feeds Debbie during her son's wedding banquet. It is possible to say that she is more obligated to Mike and Debbie than her own son, who has been living without her direct care.

Since its premiere on ABC on October 3, 2004, *Desperate Housewives* has been very popular winning Emmy and Golden Globe awards. The drama series follows the lives of a group of women living in a beautiful suburban neighborhood, as they struggle to work through domestic problems, personal issues, and mysteries. *Desperate Housewives* presents the character of Xiao-Mei, a Chinese maid, who appears in the later episodes of season two and the opening episodes of season three. Xiao-Mei works for Gabrielle, one of the female leads of the show, who is a Mexican immigrant and a former model. The initial representation of Xiao-Mei corresponds to the traditional image of the Third World/South woman as a victimized figure. When Bree, the prototype of perfect housewife, participates in a luncheon party in a neighbor's house, she is very impressed by the great taste of her neighbor's pudding. In the middle of the luncheon, the immigration police come to the house with a warrant. Soon, one of the immigration officers finds Xiao-Mei, who is decorating a cake in a hidden room. The white male officer asks Xiao with comforting gestures whether the host is the person who has locked her up, and she timidly nods her head. As the host is being arrested for involuntary servitude, the guests become shocked by the fact that Xiao-Mei was a slave of their neighbor. While the first image of Xiao-Mei as being busy in preparing dessert in a concealed room like a slave illustrates her victimized status, the scene in which the white male officer saves her from the owner tends to recreate the colonial narrative of the rescue fantasy. To put it simply, the victimized woman of color still get rescued by the white knight in the current U.S. TV drama.

Just as Amelia in *Babel* is willing to take care of the American children rather than paying more attention to her own son, Xiao-Mei is portrayed as being suited for housekeeping works. After getting rescued from the slavery, Xiao-Mei moves into Gabrielle's house and begins to live with Gabrielle and her husband Carlos until she goes back to China. Although

Gabrielle gets mad at first finding out Xiao-Mei was mending Gabrielle's expensive clothes without her consent, Gabrielle soon realizes Xiao-Mei has excellent sewing skills. Xiao-Mei, who seems to be happy with Gabrielle's reaction, leads Gabrielle to the kitchen, and shows all the foods she has prepared for Gabrielle and Carlos. Xiao-Mei urges Gabrielle to taste some of her dessert and asks her with a shy smile, "You like?" Not only do Xiao-Mei's voluntary labor and subservient attitude make Gabrielle want to keep Xiao-Mei as her maid, but they also naturalize the positioning of the Third World/South woman as servant class. As Lisa Lowe has observed, the current incarnation of globalization is primarily based on "racialized feminization of women's labour, a process which renders women's work as naturally more "flexible," "casual," and "docile," justifying the wide-spread exploitation of women of color (Lowe 160-1). In this respect, both Amelia and Xiao-Mei exemplify immigrant female workers from Asia and Latin America who are naturally suited for manual labor and caring jobs. According to Evelyn Hu-Dehart, "Such social reproductive labor has always been associated with women's work and continued to be debased and devalued when "industrialized," that is, performed for payment by Third World Women for their largely white and affluent First World "sisters" in a racial division of labor" ("Globalization" 250). As in the cases of *Babel* and *Desperate Housewives*, privileged women in the First World/ North could hire Third World/South women to do their household tasks; and the location of marginalized communities of women as the domestic help is often justified by the discursive construction of their seemingly natural attributes and voluntary attitudes.

Another commonality between Amelia's and Xiao-Mei's characterizations is the strong anxiety over their illegal status in the United States. On the way back to the U.S., Amelia and Santiago, her nephew, have some problems with the U.S. border control because she does not

have the American parents' letter of permission which allows the children to travel with her. Upset by continuous inspections and interrogations, Santiago drives away from the inspection officers, and forces Amelia and the children to get out of his car in a dark desert. The next morning, Amelia realizes that they are in the middle of nowhere without water, so she looks for help leaving the children under a tree. Although she fortunately encounters one of the border control vehicles, she immediately gets arrested, being blamed for abandoning the children. When she is investigated by a U.S. immigration officer in a confined space, she is seen as greatly terrified and scared. The scene begins with the close-up shot of Amelia's shaking hands, and is followed by the full shot of the immigration office in which she is sitting in front of the officer's desk. When Amelia tells him leaving gray streaks of tears on her dirty face, "Mike and Debbie are like my own children," he bluntly replies, "But they are not your children." The officer's cold remark summarizes the fundamental status of Amelia as a foreign nanny; that is, she is expendable and replaceable. The immigration officer says that the parents would not press charges because the children are safely rescued. Then, the immigration officer tells her that she would be immediately deported by the U.S. government because she has been illegally working in the U.S. Amelia begs the officer to reconsider her deportation, and says, "I've been here for 16 years. I have my things here. I made a life here, sir." As the camera mainly focuses on Amelia's face for a long duration, the viewers could realize her frustration and despair. The juxtaposition between Amelia's emotional reactions and the officer's cold attitude testifies to the power asymmetries inherent in such instances of border control. Unable to go stay in the U.S., she gets deported to Mexico, and finally hugs her son with tearing eyes. The ways in which the immigration officer interrogates Amelia illustrate the contradictory location of illegal migrant workers in the context of global capitalism. Although they are necessary figures in the economy

of the First World/North that provide cheap labor for both households and factories, they are in fact consumable and disposable figures.

The character of Xiao-Mei in *Desperate Housewives* is associated with the continuous fear of deportation. As Gabrielle and Carlos are frustrated by their failed attempt for adoption, they find out Xiao-Mei has been getting a lot of letters from the U.S. immigration office regarding her illegal status. They talk to an immigration officer and realize that Xiao-Mei can stay in the U.S. if she gets pregnant with an American citizen. So, they ask her to be a surrogate mother. Although Xiao-Mei, who is a virgin, is terrified by the idea of having a baby, she soon agrees to be a surrogate and becomes pregnant. After Gabrielle finds out Carlos and Xiao-Mei are having an affair, Gabrielle kicks Carlos out of their house. But she keeps Xiao-Mei as a maid and a surrogate. As the tension between Gabrielle and Xiao-Mei increases, they fiercely argue each other. Gabrielle threatens Xiao-Mei, saying that she is going to put Xiao-Mei on the first plane to Shanghai right after the baby is born; and Xiao-Mei gets frightened. In a sense, most of the choices Xiao-Mei make are driven by the threat of extradition from the U.S. Although Gabrielle and Carlos do ask Xiao-Mei to be a surrogate mother, in actual fact, the illegal migrant woman does not have any other choice but to accept their offer. The representation of Xiao-Mei in *Desperate Housewives* demonstrates the essentially vulnerable status of an illegal immigrant, pointing to the ways in which the Third World/South woman are located at vulnerable and marginalized positions in the context of globalization.

In *Desperate Housewives*, the relationship between Xiao-Mei, an Asian woman, and Gabrielle, a Latina woman, brings out the controversial relations among women of color. When Gabrielle tries to persuade Xiao-Mei not to go back to China and to work as her maid, she stresses their common grounds as migrant women from Third World. Gabrielle says to Xiao-Mei,

“We’re alike. I got nothing. That’s why I love America. Anything is possible.” Although Gabrielle tends to focus on their similar backgrounds as immigrants, Xiao-Mei’s position is clearly distinguished from Gabrielle’s. For instance, the framing of the two characters visualizes their unequal positions in comparative terms. By the end of the episode, the camera looks at Xiao-Mei mending the hem of Gabrielle’s dress. In this scene, Gabrielle stands up still seen from a low angle, whereas Xiao-Mei bends her knee looking up to Gabrielle. The framing of the two characters as well as the use of different camera angles highlights the fundamental difference of their positions, simply negating Gabrielle’s remark on their common bonding as women of color.

The association between the two immigrant groups just functions as the privileged one’s ruse to exploit the underprivileged one. When Xiao-Mei runs out of Gabrielle’s house after a huge fight, Gabrielle and Carlos come to see a friend of Xiao-Mei in a Chinese restaurant packed with Asian customers. When Xiao-Mei’s friend tells Gabrielle that she heard Gabrielle would send Xiao-Mei back to China, Gabrielle says, “Has this country come to the point where you can’t joke with the help?” Angry with Gabrielle’s manipulative attitude, Xiao-Mei’s friend yells at Gabrielle, “You treat her like dirt. She’s just a poor, innocent girl trying to live the American dream. Just like your ancestors.” Gabrielle replies, “Don’t give me the “we are the world” crap” stressing Xiao-Mei’s powerless position essentially different from hers. Finally, Gabrielle threatens Xiao-Mei’s friend that she would make the U.S. authorities arrest Xiao-Mei, an illegal migrant woman, who runs away with an American baby, and that she would ask the health department to inspect the restaurant if Xiao-mei’s friend does not help her locate Xiao-Mei. The ways in which the show plays with the history of the immigrants are reflective of the tension among various minority groups in the U.S. It is important to mention that the show tends to downplay the racial and gender dynamics inherent in the configuration of the new servant class

by presenting the relationship between a Latina housewife and an Asian maid. In this manner, the relationship between the First World/North woman as the employer and the Third World/South woman as the domestic help is simply framed only as the issue of class or social position without exposing the exploitation of the women of color throughout the history of colonization and economic expansion.

### **The Third World/South Woman's Body: Commodification, Sexualization, and Abjection**

The stereotypical images of Third World/South women discussed above point to the commodification of the marginalized woman's body in the context of global capitalism given that they serve as cheap labor on assembly lines, domestic workers, and mail/online-order brides. It is important to mention that the commodified body of the Third World/South woman often manifests itself through sexualization. For instance, the representation of Lichi in *Mail Order Wife* visualizes the White man's sexual fantasy about an exotic Asian girl. Lichi is having hard time living with Adrian, and then, finally she comes to filmmaker Andrew's apartment with a videotape that Adrian has made of her. As Lichi mumbles about her life with Adrian, Andrew and the translator begin to watch the videotape together. In the black/white footage of the videotape, Lichi is portrayed as a young Asian girl in an adult video. As the camera frames her in a medium shot, Lichi lifts her t-shirt near the breast according to Adrian's order, and then, she is forced to repeat "Daddy always wins." More disturbing is the next scene in which Lichi, dressed as a high school girl, is standing in front of the camera on the shadowy, gritty basement. After Lichi takes off her shirt, Adrian orders her to lick the dirty basement floor in a voice-over. It is possible to argue that such images of Lichi are intended to

demonstrate the ways in which Adrian has abused her. However, the body of the Third World/South woman is presented in a highly sexualized manner exemplifying another exploitation of the marginalized women's bodies.

Similarly, the representation of Xiao-mei in *Desperate Housewives* points to the commercial value of the Third World/South woman's body as both manual labor and sexual service. After having a big fight with Gabrielle, Carlos is sitting on a couch watching TV, and Xiao-mei approaches to him with a plate of roast beef sandwiches wearing only a white, low-cut slip. Xiao-mei sits beside Carlos, and asks him to have the sandwiches, saying "Taste good. Real good." At first Carlos refuses the sandwiches telling her that Gabrielle would not allow him to eat red meat, but Xiao-mei urges him to eat them saying softly with a secretive smile, "I will not tell." The portrayal of Xiao-mei in this scene is reflective of the ideal of Oriental woman, who is domestic, submissive, and greatly sexualized. Not only does the sexualized depiction of Xiao-mei highlight another use value of her body as object of sexual interest, but her remark on the sandwiches also implicates the sexual tension between the two and her voluntary attitude. The parallel between the marginalized woman's physical labor and sexual service is also found in the case of *Dirty Pretty Things* in that Senay is both economically and sexually exploited by the owner of the garment sweatshop.

Along with the sexualization of the Third World/South woman's body, it is noticeable that the commodified bodies of marginalized communities of women are often controlled and monitored by the employer/buyer. In *Mail Order Wife*, the sexualized, domesticated body of Lichi is represented as one of the husband's possessions that he could control and modify for his benefits. For instance, not long after Lichi moves into Adrian's house, he takes her to the doctor's appointment for a routine checkup. With the help of the translator, Lichi realizes that

Adrian was planning to have her get a tubal ligation, a surgical procedure of female sterilization, without her consent. As Lichi leaves the clinic getting extremely upset, the filmmaker criticizes Adrian's selfish decision only to terminate the documentary project. Adrian's attempt to control Lichi's body derives from the fact that he did "purchase" the Third World/South woman's body, although he seems to believe that he did "rescue" Lichi from her oppressive reality in the underdeveloped country. In this manner, the First World/North male's control over the Third World/South woman's body brings out the very meaning of the commodified body, which is purchasable, disposable, and manageable in the service of the controlling owner.

Likewise, the representation of Xiao-mei in *Desperate Housewives* exemplifies the ways in which the Third World/South woman's body is utilized in various ways under the governance of the employer/owner. Xiao-mei, who was once forced to work as a house slave in a hidden room, agrees to be a surrogate mother for Carlos and Gabrielle. After the success of the insemination, Carlos is eager to take care of Xiao-mei forcing Gabrielle to throw away all the fragranced hair products and even offering their master bedroom to Xiao-mei. As Carlos and Gabrielle try to sleep on the small, uncomfortable bed in Xiao-mei's room, Gabrielle complains about Carlos' naïve attitude toward Xiao-mei. When Carlos tells Gabrielle that Xiao-mei is the priority because she is the mother of his child, Gabrielle replies, "She's the oven.... well-cared for, well-paid oven." Finally, Gabrielle kicks Xiao-mei out of the master bedroom, and Gabrielle's behavior leads Carlos to get mad at Gabrielle allowing him to have more sympathy toward Xiao-mei. The ways in which Gabrielle defines Xiao-mei's position as "the oven" point to both the commodified status of Xiao-mei's body and the idea of home as a contested domain in which the power asymmetries cause tension and conflict. Later, Gabrielle gets suspicious about the relationship between Carlos and Xiao-mei. When Gabrielle takes

Xiao-mei to the gynecologist for a regular checkup, Gabrielle asks the doctor to check whether Xiao-mei is still virgin or not. In the next scene, the doctor examines Xiao-mei and gives a thumb down to Gabrielle who is waiting behind the door. Not only does Gabrielle monitor Xiao-mei's body, but she also starts surveillance on Xiao-mei secretly placing a lot of baby monitors all over the house. Finally, Gabrielle hears the dialogue between Carlos and Xiao-mei through the neighbor's baby monitor and witnesses their affair in the garage. Gabrielle kicks Carlos out of the house, but she does not allow Xiao-mei to move out. When Xiao-mei asks Gabrielle if she could go, Gabrielle replies, "No. You can start dinner," and reminds Xiao-mei of the fact that she is the boss of Xiao-mei. Overall, Xiao-mei's body is represented as one of Gabrielle's purchased goods, which could be examined without Xiao-mei's knowledge, secretly watched, and variously utilized in the service of the employer. More importantly, given that Xiao-mei has an affair with the husband, the characterization of Xiao-mei embodies the notion of the deviant sexuality of the Oriental female, and reaffirms the increasing anxiety over (illegal) immigrant groups in globalization discourses. Since the show does not allow the viewers to identify with the character of Xiao-mei, the threat against the American family, the First World/North employer/owner's control over the Third World/South woman's body is easily justified and naturalized.

Given that the Third World/South woman experiences difficulty in keeping the right over her own body in the global context of exploitation of feminine labor and sexuality, the marginalized women's bodies represented in the First World/North media texts are often associated with Julia Kristeva's notion of the "abject." In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva defines the abject as that which "disrupts identity, system, order," pointing to the instable nature of

subjectivity (4). For Kristeva, bodily substances such as blood, menses, urine, semen, saliva, and feces involve the initial instances of “abjection”:

A wound with blood and pus, or the sickly, acrid smell of sweat, of decay, does not signify death. In the presence of signified death –a flat encephalograph, for instance – I would understand, react, or accept. No, as in true theater, without makeup or masks, refuse and corpses show me what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. These bodily fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being. My body extricates itself, as being alive, from that border. (3)

Since such bodily substances confuse the distinction between the outside and the inside, Kristeva’s conceptualization of the abject is based on the rejection of the integrity of the body. In this respect, the abject signifies border-crossing, transgression, and the removal of boundaries, pointing to its ambiguous quality and the resultant fear and fascination.

It is important to note that the representation of the Third World/South woman’s body is often aligned with the abject, given its commodified and marginal status, or the loss of bodily integrity. The abjection of the marginalized women’s bodies points to the close connection between the female body and the abject, and signifies the threat to cross the existing borders and boundaries. For example, the images of the Third World/South women in the First World/North media texts discussed above often involve the bodily substances. In *Desperate Housewives*, the representation of Xiao-mei’s maternal body exemplifies the notion of abjection. When Carlos and Gabrielle participate in the wedding reception of their neighbor, Xiao-mei, who is experiencing labor pains, comes to find them. As she yells at them it’s time to give birth to the baby, her water breaks on the floor of the reception room which is packed with the guests. This dramatic exhibition of Xiao-mei’s abject body highlights Xiao-mei’s secondary position vis-à-vis those of the guests, framing the Asian female body as the figure of being-looked-at. In this respect, Xiao-mei is presented as doubly abject because of the display of her

bodily substances as well as her marginalized status. Later, the scene in which Xiao-mei gives birth illustrates another dimension of abjection. Standing on both sides of Xiao-mei, Gabrielle and Carlos gets emotional apologizing to each other and shaking their hands over the laboring Xiao-mei. As Xiao-mei's labor pains get severe, Carlos starts filming the process. Finally, the doctor lifts the baby out, and the three people become entirely puzzled at the baby. The baby from Xiao-mei's womb is an African American because the clinic made a mistake in the insemination process. Indeed, Xiao-mei's body, which is supposed to be the "oven" for Carlos and Gabrielle, is appropriated by another without her knowledge. The representation of Xiao-mei's maternal body illustrates the multiple violations of the Third World/South woman's body, and points to the abjection of the commodified, racialized, sexualized body, which brings out fear and anxiety over the object.

Likewise, the portrayal of Senay in *Dirty Pretty Things* corresponds to the process of abjection. For instance, a scene in which Senay performs an oral sex on the sweatshop owner demonstrates Senay's abjection given the involvement with the bodily fluids. Later, Senay's body is once again represented as the abject in a scene in which Senay loses her virginity to the hotel manager in exchange for her safety and freedom. The representation of Senay's abject body points to the very vulnerability of marginalized communities of women under the systemic power of global capitalism, illustrating the ways in which the commodified body is easily transformed into the abject body. Also, the sequence of the sexual violence against Eva in *Bordertown* presents Eva's body as the abject in that her body, which is checkered with the different kinds of bodily wastes, gets dumped in the middle of desert. Eva's abject body and the bodily images of the other victims reveal the ways in which the marginalized woman's bodies are sexualized, violated, and abandoned.

Drawing on Kristeva's notion of abjection, Barbara Creed's psychoanalytic study of the horror film includes other instances into the category of abjection. One of these is the corpse, which Creed defines as "the ultimate in abjection" (9). In *Bordertown*, the representation of the dead bodies of the rape/murder victims embodies the "ultimate" abjection. During Lauren's flight to Mexico, she looks at the photographic images of the victims on the notebook screen. The disturbing images of the corpses are marked by the evidences of abjection, helping the viewers visualize the severe violence against them. One photograph contains a bloody, dead body with smashed head, and another image frames a naked woman's body with a big bite mark on the breast. Not only does the representation of the dead bodies of the Third World/South women signifies the previous processes of abjection, but it also underscores the abject status of these women whose bodies are eventually disposed after they become useless.

Furthermore, the images of the dead bodies in *Bordertown* are used to implicate the fear and anxiety which the abject brings out to subjectivity. For one thing, the sequence of Lauren's encounter with a mass grave in the junk yard exposes her confusion over her identity. As a successful news reporter, Lauren has identified herself as an American and a First World/North woman. However, as Lauren investigates the murder incidents working with Eva, one of the victims, she sympathizes with the marginalized women in Mexico. Disguised as a factory worker, Lauren experiences the life of the Third World/South woman and then finally confronts the driver who attacked Eva and other women. As Lauren runs away from the driver and another mysterious attacker, she accidentally falls into a mass grave, surrounded by the hundreds of the dead bodies of women. By presenting a list of shots of the decomposed, barely recognizable corpses, the film allows the viewers to feel Lauren's extreme fear and anxiety. Lauren's encounter with the dead bodies in the mass grave enables her to realize the abject,

which is essentially part of herself despite her rejection and denial. Here, the representation of the abject body signifies Lauren's internal struggle over her subjectivity given that she does not want to embrace her Mexican identity in order to protect her existing boundaries.

Later in *Bordertown*, the images of the dead bodies of the victims are used to portray the parallel between the economic exploitation and the sexual exploitation of Third World/South women in the context of gendered, neoliberal incarnation of globalization. Along with Lauren's voice-over narration, the film ends with the images of the newly found dead bodies juxtaposed with those of female factory workers in the maquiladoras. This montage sequence highlights the fact that the factory workers and the victims belong into the same group of women, who cannot help but go to work for the transnational companies everyday despite the exploitation of their labor and the prevalent threat against the violation of their bodies. Alicia Schmidt Camacho points to the link between "captive labor and captured sexuality" in the history of Mexican women in the border space:

The abuses of Mexican women suffer in the international division of labor entail the decomposition of the integral body into its constituent parts: head, hands, arms, breasts, trunk, and legs. Repetitive labors of assembly and service are themselves forms of institutionalized gender violence that seek to detach women's critical agency from their bodily functions. For women in the border region, the *feminicidio* distorts and mirrors the sanctioned theft of their bodily integrity in migration and at work. (283)

The abjection of Third World/South women's bodies or the loss of the marginalized women's "bodily integrity" signifies the collapse between the two seemingly different worlds, illustrating the ways in which the gendered, neoliberal logic of global capitalism governs Third World/South women's bodies in commercial, sexual, and discursive terms.

## Conclusion

If the documentary films about globalization point to the divide between the First World/North and the Third World/South in terms of the polarizing narratives of globalization, then the narrative films and TV programs present the specific visuality of Third World/South femininity in the context of global capitalist expansion. Given the link between the Third World/South and the negativities or marginalities of globalization, the First World/North media's representations of the Third World/South discussed above are reflective of the gendered, neoliberal discourses of globalization.

There exist some commonalities in the different images of marginalized communities of women including the factory worker, the mail/online- order bride, and the domestic worker. First of all, the stereotypical images of Third World/South women point to both the globalized mode of the feminization of labor, and the power asymmetry inherent in globalization processes. Second, the First World/North media's (re)imagination of Third World/South femininities illustrates the ways in which the contemporary images of marginalized communities of women are mainly based on the discursive conventions in representing women of color within the traditions of Hollywood cinema and Eurocentric discourses. Just as the character of an Asian mail/online-order bride in *Mail Order Wife* can be considered the mixed product of the two Asian female stereotypes, the Lotus Blossom Baby and the Dragon Lady, the representation of a Latina nanny in *Babel* attests to the lingering influence of the hyper-sexualized image of Latina women by showing her kissing with a strange man in her son's wedding party.

Most importantly, the cinematic portrayals of Third World/South femininities center on the specific visuality of the women's bodies. In *Bordertown*, the images of the Mexican factory workers are presented by a list of shots of fragmentary images of their bodies and body parts,

which are easily exploited and disposed. In addition, the cinematic depictions of the Third World/South women's bodies are highly commodified. The character of Xiao-Mei in *Desperate Housewives* demonstrates a variety of commercial values imposed on the Third World/South woman's body given that she serves as a domestic worker, a sex partner, and a surrogate mother for an American family. In other words, the Third World/South female body is being sold as several components of the so-called social reproductive labor. Not only do the representations of marginalized communities of women in the First World/North media testify to the historical (dis)continuity and the discursive legacies of colonial/imperial past, but they also materialize the new realities of global capitalism underscoring the influence of the gendered, neoliberal discourses of globalization.

### **Chapter III. The Visual Accounts of Displacement: Korean Women, Diaspora, and Home**

This chapter reflects on the relationships between *displacement* and *home*, illustrating the ways in which women in displaced positions (re)imagine their locations and identities in transnational visual culture. Drawing on de Lauretis' feminist conceptualization of displacement as a critical positioning for reconsidering the issues of subjectivity, it explores both women's geographical and psychological displacement (138). Looking at Korean women's cultural practices within the modern history of visual culture, the chapter investigates how they envisage the relationship between home and women vis-à-vis the material and symbolic conditions of being out-of place.

For one thing, I examine the representation of diasporic Korean women in documentary films in order to demonstrate the ways in which geographical displacement configures a de-territorialized culture of "homelessness." For another thing, the idea of "self-dis-placement" is employed to analyze Korean women's diasporic subjectivities represented in visual media works in light of the intersectional oppressions of patriarchy, Confucian ideology, colonialism, and nationalist discourses (de Lauretis 138). A critical look at Korean women's visual cultural practices allows for an understanding of the marginalization of women, whose subjectivities can be characterized by a sense of being-out-of-place in the prevalence of the gendered discourses and practices. By calling attention to diasporic subjectivities of Korean women at home and abroad, the chapter suggests that geographical/material displacement as well as discursive/symbolic displacement generates a diasporic location in which a subject exerts her subaltern agency through critical practices of self-dis-placement.

Utilizing the concepts of *displacement* and *home*, I analyze Korean women's and overseas Korean women's visual cultural practices in terms of the representation of diasporic

subjectivities and subaltern agencies. The focus is on how the representations of “displaced” Korean women embody their marginalized positionalities and diasporic sensitivities through their everyday cultural negotiation/contestation in the context of a global/national/local nexus. In the first place, my analysis of the representations of diasporic Korean women aims to reveal the ways in which they redefine their locations in transnational and cross-cultural terms going through the complex process of deterritorialization/reterritorialization. In the second place, my examination of diasporic subjectivities of Korean women at home, which can be interpreted as wandering or exilic sensitivities with implicit longings for the (imagined) home, allows for another understanding of the discursive control of the systematic power and its impact on marginalized communities of women. The visual accounts of “displaced” Korean women are discussed in consideration of different historical phases of the Korean diaspora and the social, historical, and cultural contexts of Korean society so as to identify the common tropes and cultural conventions circulated and mediated by Korean women.

Diasporic cultural practices call attention to the ways in which geographical displacement produces multiple, shifting subjectivities, and demonstrate how people of diasporic communities negotiate their positions undergoing a variety of conflict between their indigenous discourses and the socio-cultural conditions of the host country. In this respect, diaspora serves as a critical lens through which to examine the relationship between women and globalization in the context of transnational visual culture, drawing attention to diasporic women’s experiences of physical and psychological displacement, the interweaving manifestation of locality and globality, and the construction of identities of displacement.

In order to explore Korean women’s identities of displacement, the first part of the chapter examines the documentary representation of diasporic Korean women, paying attention

to the historical specificities of the Korean diaspora and their impact on diasporic Korean women's lives. First of all, looking at the displaced Korean women's experiences represented in *A Forgotten People: The Sakhalin Koreans* (Dai Sil Kim-Gibson, 1996), *The Murmuring* [*Najŭn moksori*] (Young-Joo Byun, 1995), and *Dear Pyongyang* (Young-Hi Yang, 2005), I examine the ways in which the history of the colonial/imperial past produces the marginalized, invisible identities of displacement. Second, *Sa-I-Gu: From Korean Women's Perspectives* (Dai Sil Kim-Gibson & Christine Choy, 1993), *Wet Sand: Voices from L.A. 10 Years Later* (Dai Sil Kim-Gibson, 2003), and *Motherland: Cuba, Korea, U.S.A.* (Dai Sil Kim-Gibson, 2006) enable me to discuss the representation of diasporic Korean women's lives in light of a variety of contemporary socio-economic conditions, such as global capitalism, transnational migration of labor, and racial politics. Lastly, a critical look at *First Person Plural* (Deann Borshay, 2000) and *The Grace Lee Project* (Grace Lee, 2005) permits an examination of the complex issues of identity formation in terms of multicultural sensitivities and transnational subjectivities of diasporic Korean women. With the exception of *The Murmuring*, the filmmakers of the selected films are diasporic Korean women.

The second part looks at displaced Korean women at home, focusing on the controversial relationship between home and women. Arguing that the concept of "diaspora" allows for a relational understanding of displaced locations in both material and symbolic terms, I examine the representations of Korean women's experiences vis-à-vis those of diasporic Korean women. Just as the experiences of physical displacement redefine diasporic Korean women's identities, the oppressive conditions of the Korean patriarchal society tend to make Korean women feel like they are living in a foreign country, where they feel "displaced" and "homeless." In other words, while the consideration of geographical/material displacement

points to diasporic, exilic, and transnational identities, the focus on the discursive/symbolic dimension makes it possible to examine a woman's self-location as being out-of-place in the context of the intersectional oppressions of patriarchy, traditional norms, colonial legacies, and nationalist discourses.

In the second part, I examine the representation of Korean women's mental and psychological displacement at home looking at their visual cultural practices, such as photographic works and documentary films. *Mad Women Project* [*Mich'innyŏn p'rojekt'ŭ*] (1999-2005), a photography collection by Young-Sook Park, a Korean feminist photographer/artist, visualizes a woman's "self-dis-placement" under the dominance of patriarchal ideology that often makes a woman feel hysterical or mad. *Peekaboo: To Be / Not to Be* [*Itta /ŏpta*] (Kyoung Lee, 1999), a documentary film, points to the complex dynamics of patriarchal discourses and the gendered, displaced sensitivities of Korean women. *Kŏryu: Southern Women/South Korea* (Soyoung Kim, 2000) provides multiple portraits of women's lives tracing three generations of Korean women; and it portrays the ways in which Korean women have been struggling to negotiate their locations between the oppressive conditions and the unfulfilled desire. These Korean women's visual media works allow for an understanding of how the gendered, oppressive discourses have displaced women in symbolic terms, and illustrate how women's self-dis-placement functions as an important ground for both challenging the hegemonic discourses and uncovering their subaltern identities.

This chapter employs the conceptual framework of *diaspora*, and, more specifically, the relationship between *home* and *displacement*, to investigate the complex dynamics among the local, the national, and the global, as well as to explore "displaced" identities of marginalized communities of women. *Diaspora* implies a sense of being alienated and

marginalized from the mainstream because what is central to diaspora is constant contestation between the home and the host country. The general marginalization of women under the predominance of patriarchal discourses has contributed to the positioning of women as “diasporic” within the society as in the cases of Korean women at home. Furthermore, the combination of patriarchal ideology with Confucian traditions tends to intensify a sense of self-displacement of Korean women. For example, the Confucian tradition, which stresses the woman’s supposed role as mother and housewife, believes that a married woman essentially belongs to the husband’s home, even forbidding her to visit her parents’ home. In this regard, the Korean woman’s domestic space and her married life in the husband’s home often produce Korean women’s diasporic subjectivities and exilic sensitivities.

What follows is a transnational feminist critique of the relationship between the Korean diaspora and diasporic Korean women in transnational visual culture. I review the conceptual framework of diaspora in terms of its origin, evolution, and socio-cultural implications in order to situate diasporic Korean women’s visual cultural practices within the specific context of the Korean diaspora. I also provide a brief discussion of the Korean diaspora in light of the motherland’s political, historical, and cultural contexts, and examine the ways in which the particular experiences of physical and psychological displacement redefine diasporic Korean women’s locations and identities. In so doing, this chapter emphasizes that critical attention to the relationship between *home* and *displacement* is important for understanding women’s subjectivities in relation to the context of cultural globalization, differences among women, and transnational visual culture.

## **1. Diasporic Korean Women, Displacement, and Home**

## **An Overview of Diaspora**

According to sociologist Robin Cohen, “The term, ‘diaspora’ found in the Greek translation of the Bible, originally meant ‘to sow widely’” (507). The term, principally applied to Jews, refers to a physical dispersion of people belonging to one nation or having a common culture beyond their land of origin. Taking notice of the expansion of its applicability, William Safran notes, “Diaspora is now deployed as a metaphoric designation to describe different categories of people – expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants, and ethnic and racial minorities” (qtd. in Cohen 514). As Cohen points out, given the increasing international migrations and the absence of a stable and pluralist social order, many states have turned away from assimilating or integrating immigrants; and, at the same time, immigrants no longer desire to abandon their past (507). Moreover, the process of globalization has made it possible that ethnic minorities’ connection with their homelands can be preserved.

Robin Cohen identifies common features of the diasporic communities, such as dispersal from an original homeland to two or more foreign regions, a collective memory/myth about homeland, a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a troubled relationship with host societies such as a lack of acceptance and a sense of empathy with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement (515). Furthermore, Myria Georgiu, who has studied the relationships between ethnic media and ethnic identities in the context of cultural globalization, suggests a set of criteria to be central for the definition of diaspora in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These criteria include a transnational dispersion of a group of people from an original homeland, a strong sense of the common history of their migration journey, contradictory or troubled relations both with the country of origin and the country of settlement, challenges to fixed origins, the centrality of images and

imagination in sustaining a sense of belonging, the nature of the imagined community as decentralized, and diasporic existence in virtual and real space. Comparing Cohen's criteria with Georgiu's, it is noticeable that Georgiu's criteria point to the central role of communication media in constructing diasporic communities around the world in the age of cultural globalization.

Although there are some features common to a variety of diasporic communities, it is important to mention that there exist differences among them. One example is the Chinese diaspora, one of the biggest diasporic communities scattered all over the world. Stephen Chan, whose major research interest is international politics, points out, "The Chinese diaspora is unlike those of others: no loss of country; no mass enslavement and transportation; no sustained persecutions; and no mass exoduses even in times of civil war. Their multiple sites of relocation were largely to do with the desire for economic betterment" (81). Unlike the case of international immigration of political refugees, the Chinese diaspora was formed by the gradual flow of immigrants who were seeking a new job and a better life. Stephen Chan contends that "a myth of economic prosperity" leads the Chinese community to bind itself together (83). As in the case of the Chinese diaspora, diasporic communities have undergone a distinctive process of configuration in terms of their common historical experience and cultural heritage. In this context, it is probable that the term "diaspora" has lost its traditional association with the exile from home and the myth of return. Diaspora is currently used to describe the very condition of dispersion of a specific ethnic community beyond the boundaries of nation-state.

In their study on the Asian diasporas in Australia, Stuart Cunningham and John Sinclair argue that most definitions of diaspora highlight the marginal status of those groups within the host society. In other words, although they settled outside their lands of ethnic origins, they still

“maintain strong sentiment or material links with them” (9). Because of the forces of globalization, diasporic culture can be formed and reinvented more easily today than ever before. Domestic products from homelands, such as foods, clothes, and media products, flow much more rapidly around the world thanks to transportation advances and market incentives for global business. According to Cunningham and Sinclair, diasporic experiences generate the desires to want to “stay in touch with news and popular culture from homelands” and they become transformed into “demand for certain kinds of media services and cultural products” (6). Referring to traditional values, religious beliefs, and cultural traditions, communication media enables members of diasporic communities to maintain the familiar cultural environments of the home country across the boundaries of nation-state.

Indeed, the global media environment restructured by the proliferation of digital technologies and satellite broadcast services fulfills the diasporic desire to feel connected with the homeland. Based on her ethnographic study on the Chinese diaspora in the United States, Cindy Hing-Yuk Wong, a cultural studies scholar, points out, “Many regularly watch either tapes and satellite services for two hours every night and find the times spent watching programming at home relaxing. Certainly news broadcast reinforces an immediacy of identification” (96). As the contemporary media environments permit migrants to have immediate access to events in their homeland, they retain a sense of belonging to a diasporic community which utilizes the same cultural traditions and values.

Not only does the concept of diaspora implicate the centrality of shared experiences for binding and maintaining oneself, it also points to the complexity of cultural negotiation in the context of transnational migration. Relating diasporic experiences to both cultural politics of the past and contestation over national identity, Stuart Hall examines black British films in light

of the construction of new ethnic identities. According to Hall's account, the diasporic experience generally involves "the process of unsettling, recombination, hybridization, and cut-and-mix" (447). Here, the term diaspora is used to consider the ways in which cultural identities are negotiated through hybridization and transformation in historical contexts of displacement rather than being employed to reveal a specific group's collective longing for the home and homeland. In other words, given the prevalent processes of deterritorialization/reterritorialization in the age of globalization, the concept of diaspora has lost much of its traditional implications, and more widely serves as a mode of cultural critique for exploring multiple, fluid identities and cross-cultural sensitivities. In this respect, the conceptual framework of diaspora enables me to suggest that diasporic Korean women and Korean women at home share a sense of displacement which derives from the historical and cultural conditions of dislocation and relocation.

### **The Korean Diaspora and Displaced Korean Women**

Although the Korean diaspora is not one of the most recognized subjects of diaspora studies because of its size and visibility, the Korean diaspora, which was formed throughout more than a hundred years of history, exemplifies a distinct case of transnational migration and cultural negotiation. According to Inbom Choi, who researches the transnational Korean community in relation to international economy, 5.7 million ethnic Koreans in the diaspora are scattered all over the world in 151 countries; and the United States and China have the largest numbers of these Koreans, with respectively 2.1 million and 1.9 million (26). There are some disputes over whether the Korean diaspora exists or not, given the numbers of overseas Koreans and the degree of geographic dispersion. Despite the limited dimensions of the Korean

diaspora, I. Choi sees the Koreans' "conscious efforts to maintain the collective ethnic identity" as the key qualifying element for the formation of the Korean diaspora, arguing that "Korean diasporic communities are active in forming ethnic communities associations" (16). Indeed, more than 2000 of these Korean ethnic communities associations all over the world attest to the very existence of the Korean diaspora.

Diasporic communities can be categorized by different formations, such as "victim diasporas" and "trade diasporas." "Victim diasporas" refers to transnational ethnic groups who experienced a scarring historical event as the beginning of a forcible displacement from their homeland as in the cases of the Armenians, Irish, and Palestinians. One example of "trade diasporas" is the Chinese diaspora, which is characterized by its operation of a transnational economic network (Cohen, 1997). Unlike these cases, the Korean diaspora has continuously evolved through several different phases of displacement rather than just having one diasporic formation.

The first phase of displacement of Koreans from their homeland occurred under Japanese colonial oppression. During the period of 1910-1945, a large number of Korean workers left their homeland and settled in Manchuria, Sakhalin, and Japan. According to Inbom Choi, although Korean emigrants during this period are generally characterized as "indentured labor migrants," the Korean diaspora can be defined as a "victim diaspora" rather than a "labor diaspora" because many of them were forced to leave their homeland under the colonial rule (15). Although World War II ended in 1945, many of the dislocated Koreans could not return to the Korean peninsula. Furthermore, the Soviet occupation of Sakhalin prevented the Korean workers from returning to the homeland; and many Koreans in Manchuria, Siberia, and Japan also stayed there because of the ensuing Korean War, postwar economic hardships, and

political turmoil. As Sonia Ryang points out, the demographic map of the Korean diaspora reveals “the cartographic traces of colonialism, World War II, and the Korean War and the Cold War” (1). Indeed, diasporic Koreans in Japan, China, and the former Soviet Union are considered the living reminders of the tragic history of the nation which has been a battleground for the world superpowers.

The following phases of Korean migration are characterized by continual immigration waves to the United States. During the period of 1953 through 1965 at the end of the Korean War, many Koreans entered the U.S. Those Koreans mainly consisted of spouses and children of U.S. military personnel and Korean children adopted by American families. Later, the Immigration Act of 1965, which removes “national origins” as the basis for American immigration policy, facilitated another wave of immigration (Minato). I. Choi notes that the Korean government’s adoption of “an active emigration policy as part of domestic population control” resulted in the massive Korean immigration to the United States for better economic opportunities (15). In this respect, this phase of Korean displacement can be described as a “trade diaspora.” From 1975 to the 1990s, more than half a million Koreans immigrated to the United States, especially Los Angeles. Korean Americans rank as the fourth largest Asian group in 1990 within the U.S. with a population of over one million (Minato). According to the 2000 U.S. census, the total Korean American population is approximately 1.41 million; and Korean American immigrants have settled primarily in California (345,882), New York (119,846), and New Jersey (65,349).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> “In Observance of Centennial of Korean Immigration to the U.S.” *National Association of Korean Americans*. www.naka.org, 2003. Web. 02 February 2010.

The configuration of Korean diaspora illustrates that the history of the Korean diaspora cannot be separated from that of the homeland, given the incessant influence of colonial and imperial powers on the Korean peninsula throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The fact that overseas Koreans are mainly concentrated in the United States, Japan, and China brings out the significance of historical legacies for understanding diasporic experiences. In her study of Korean American women's cultural works, Laura Hyun Yi Kang points to the complexity of Korean American women's cultural identities. L. Kang argues, "While their exploration of the historical imbrications of the United States in (South) Korea accent a Korean American *postcoloniality*, their sustained yet complicated *diasporic* orientations towards the Korean homeland unsettle any sense of the national boundaries of the United States – and Canada – as impermeable and autonomous" (216). Viewed in this light, overseas Korean women's experiences are interwoven by a series of historical events such as colonization, intra-national divisions, imperial dominance, (forced) displacement, racial discrimination, and global capitalism.

Along with the traumatic legacies of Korean history, Korean women have experienced subordination and marginalization within the Confucian patriarchal culture; and these intersecting oppressions have prevented them from speaking their own stories. As Elaine H. Kim points out, "Korean women's experiences of history have been buried under layers of male narratives, Korean, Chinese, Japanese, and Western" (14). For instance, one of the main reasons for the historical ignorance of the issues of Korean "comfort women" derives from the general marginality of women's histories. These women's accounts were hidden under layers of male-centered discourses, such as the dominant focus on Korean men's experiences of

forced labor under Japanese colonial rule, cold war ideologies, national militarism, and general disinterest in women's human rights.

Looking at Korean women's diasporic experiences represented in Korean American women's literature and art, L. Kang points out that the notion of home as the woman's place is central to their positioning in everyday life. According to L. Kang, the diasporic Korean women's cultural works "interrogate the presuppositions of "rootedness" that work in various contexts to confine women "at home" – in the private sphere, in the patriarchal family with its matrix of compulsory heterosexuality, and in terms of a singular ethnonational loyalty – or to exclude them from claiming "home" in host countries in the context of immigration" (216). Here, diasporic experiences not only complicate any fixed notion of identity in a single place or culture, but they also question the normative meaning of "home." In this sense, the critical focus on *home* and *displacement* permits an understanding of experiences of overseas Korean women, and brings out a reconsideration of Korean women's location displaced against the hegemonic patriarchal discourse.

In the following, I examine visual accounts of displaced Korean women at home and abroad, which represent their different histories and experiences. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that these visual accounts represent identities of displacement pointing to some commonalities, such as the portrayal of diasporic subjectivities, the central concern with Korean women's cultural negotiation in the complex process of identity formations, and the attention to self-displacement as the starting point for identifying subaltern agencies.

### **Making Home in Foreign Lands: Diasporic Korean Women in Documentaries**

Diasporic Korean women's experiences are related to different phases of the Korean diaspora, such as the "victim diaspora" and the "trade diaspora." While *A Forgotten People: The Sakhalin Koreans* (Dai Sil Kim-Gibson, 1996), *The Murmuring* (Young-Joo Byun, 1995), *Dear Pyongyang* (Young-Hi Yang, 2005), and *First Person Plural* (Deann Borshay, 2000) present diasporic Korean women who are marked as living reminders of the traumatic historical events, *Sa-I-Gu* (Dai Sil Kim-Gibson & Christine Choy, 1993), *Wet Sand: Voices from L.A. 10 Years Later* (Dai Sil Kim-Gibson, 2005), *Motherland: Cuba, Korea, U.S.A.* (Dai Sil Kim-Gibson, 2006), and *The Grace Lee Project* (Grace Lee, 2005) focus on Korean women migrants' experiences in foreign lands where they or their parents voluntarily came for economic success. If the first group of the films involving the "victim diaspora" mainly addresses nostalgia for home, a life in exile, and tragic memories of the past, the others deal with diasporic subjects' everyday struggles in the "trade diaspora," extrapolating on contemporary issues of the Korean diaspora.

#### Diasporic Korean Women and the Traumatizing Past

*A Forgotten People: The Sakhalin Koreans* (Dai Sil Kim-Gibson, 1996) sheds light on the lives of diasporic Koreans who were forced to come to Sakhalin island under Japanese colonial oppression, presenting their personal stories in relation to the historical backgrounds. Dai Sil Kim-Gibson, a Korean American female filmmaker, looks at the lives of the displaced Koreans from another diasporic Korean's point of view. *The Murmuring* [*Najŭn moksori*] (Young-Joo Byun, 1995), which is the first film of a trilogy dealing with the controversial issue of Japanese military sexual slavery, offers the hidden stories of the former Korean comfort women in Wuhan in China. *Dear Pyongyang* (Young-Hi Yang, 2005), a documentary film by a

Zainichi Korean filmmaker, provides a historical account of the lives of diasporic Koreans in Japan by presenting her own family's story. While *A Forgotten People* and *The Murmuring* are dependent on individual testimonies by the first generation of Korean migrants who directly experienced the process of forced dislocation and painful relocation, *Dear Pyongyang* attempts to reconsider the diasporic past from the second generation's perspective.

*A Forgotten People* and *The Murmuring* are filled with a feeling of abandonment and nostalgia for home in the context of the Korean "victim" diaspora. In these two films, diasporic Koreans' home and homeland tie to neither concrete objects nor personal relationships. Indeed, the diasporic subjectivities are embodied by their sensory experiences of home, given the long duration of displacement and little resource of communication. Sarah Pink, a visual anthropology scholar, argues for the idea of the "sensory home," which refers to home as "a domain of different sensory elements (smell, touch, taste, vision, and sound) that is simultaneously understood and created through the sensory experience and manipulation of these elements" (48). The ways in which the displaced Koreans remember their home and homeland mainly involve sensory experiences and metaphors because the material conditions of the forced displacement do not leave many concrete reminders of home with the first generation of Korean migrants, such as pictures of their parents and close family members still living in the home country.

First of all, old Korean songs are often used to illustrate diasporic Koreans' nostalgia for home. *A Forgotten People* begins with an old woman's voice singing a Korean folksong; and this song soon becomes overlapped by the director's brief overview of the Sakhalin Koreans' history. During the Asian/Pacific war, Japan drafted about six million Koreans as laborers; and one and a half million of them were sent abroad. The Sakhalin Koreans refer to

the roughly 43,000 Korean laborers who were taken to Sakhalin island in the early 1940s to work in the coal pits, railroads, and forests. After the World War II ended, the displaced Koreans had to wait more than fifty years to go home because of the world superpowers' struggle over the island. Later in this film, another old Korean folksong is heard when a former forced laborer visits his friends' graves, lamenting their unfulfilled wishes to come back home. In this manner, these songs deliver the collective feeling of longing for home or homeland and a sense of bitter grief. In her study on the Korean diaspora in the former USSR, Hae-Kyung Um explores the relationship between music listening patterns and identity formation, pointing to the fact that the first generation of Soviet Koreans has a strong preference for Korean traditional music (133). Also, Um points out that the new types of Soviet Korean music, which are popular in all Korean communities in the former Soviet Union, are characterized by the feeling of "longing for home" (136). Overall, the popularity of old Korean songs and the "longing for home songs" indicates the importance of the "sensory home" in the Korean diaspora, given the painful experiences of dislocation and relocation.

In *The Murmuring*, old Korean songs serve as a way to express the former comfort women's nostalgia for home as well as to remind them of a sense of Korean identity. The film introduces the three aged Korean women, who worked in the comfort houses in Wuhan, China during the Sino Japanese War and got abandoned by the Japanese army. The camera looks at Hong Gang-Lim, who is sitting on the entrance of her house, and then moves into the inside from which a very faint sound of music comes. As the camera looks through her furniture, clothes, photographs, and other belongings within the small, dark space, the audience hears a Korean folk songs playing on her old stereo. Both the visual presentation of her personal space and the sound of one of the "longing for home songs" materialize the life of the former comfort

woman in the diaspora. Soon, the audience sees the two former comfort women, Ha Koon-Ja and Hong Gang-Lim, sing together an old Korean song which they learned at home when they were young. The title of the song is “Living Away from Home” [T’ahyangsari], which was released in 1934. The lyrics say, “I count the years I spent away from home. My youth is gone. And now I am too old.” As they sing together shedding tears of bitter grief, the camera slowly moves from their faces to the sky over the window. Later, Ha Koon-Ja, talks about Hong Gang-Lim’s remarkable memory of the Korean folk songs. Ha Koon-Ja says, “Though she can’t understand either Chinese or Korean any more, she’s never forgotten these songs.” Then, Ha Kun-Ja begins to sing an old version of the Korean national anthem, which was banned under Japanese colonial rule. In a sense, singing old Korean songs is the only possible way to remember their home in that they have lost all material connections with their homeland and families after more than 50 years of the forced exile.

It is important to mention that many of the former comfort women in the Korean diaspora decided not to return home after the defeat of Japan in the World War II. Given the Confucian value of women’s chastity, their experiences as Japanese military sexual slaves would be shameful for themselves as well as their families. Pointing to the oppressive nature of the Confucian patriarchy, Chungmoo Choi pays attention to the word, “hwanyangnyŏn” (homecoming women), which is “the emblem of promiscuity” (13). The “homecoming women” refer to those women who were initially sent to Qing China in the mid-seventeenth century as tribute items for Qing’s suzerainty over Korea. After they became useless as sexual workers, they returned home only to be stigmatized as defiled and promiscuous. C. Choi argues, “The etymology of the term precisely illuminates the position of Korean women victimized by their own history of foreign dominations and homonational misogyny” (13). Given that it would be

difficult to bear the stigma of the “homecoming women,” many of the former comfort women chose to stay in a foreign land rather than returning home. In this respect, the former comfort women’s love for old Korean songs, which they learned at home in the 1930s or 40s, implies their lonely and alienated lives in the diaspora. Having no family members or friends around, singing an old Korean song alone was one possible way to allow the former comfort women to express their diasporic sensitivities and nostalgia for home.

Furthermore, old Korean songs are used in *The Murmuring* to highlight an intimate bond among the former Korean comfort women in the diaspora. Before the filmmakers go back to Korea, they have dinner with the three former comfort women and their families. The displaced women earnestly ask the filmmakers to try to help them visit Korea before they die; and then Hong Gang-Lim begins to sing old Korean folk songs including “Arirang.” Listening to her singing, Ha Koon-Ja sheds tears silently; and the eldest woman, who is suffering from Alzheimer’s disease, begins to perform a traditional dance to the song. In this manner, the displaced Korean women share their diasporic experiences and reaffirm their longing for home and homeland, embodying their sensory experiences of home. This scene illustrates the ways in which the displaced subjects (re)create the sense of being at home through their bodily expressions, such as singing, hearing, dancing to the songs, and having a meal with the fellow migrants, in order to materialize their cultural memories of home.

Food is another trope to represent diasporic Korean women’s nostalgia for home. *The Murmuring* presents a scene in which Ha Koon-Ja, one of the former Korean comfort women, prepares a meal for the filmmakers. After showing the old comfort houses in Wuhan, the camera follows her to a local market. As she buys some vegetables from a Chinese vendor squeezing through the big crowd of the local people, the audience realizes that she has fully

accustomed to the Chinese ways of life. Then, she prepares a meal in a small apartment unit. Washing rice, she talks to the camera, “Not Chinese, but Korean. Koreans should eat Korean rice. Chinese rice is not as sticky as Korean rice.” Given the importance of rice in the traditional Korean diet, it is noteworthy that eating Korean rice is another way to remember her home and to perform her Korean identity, pointing to the idea of “culinary citizenship, a form of affective citizenship which grants subjects the ability to claim and inhabit certain subject positions via their relationship to food” (Mannur 13). Although one’s diet could be considered a matter of simple choices or personal preferences, the sensory experience of eating Korean rice implicates the displaced Korean woman’s “culinary citizenship” and their constant efforts to keep a link to home in the life of the forced exile.

In a similar spirit, *A Forgotten People* looks at different generations of the Sakhalin Koreans who tend to (re)create their sensory experiences of home, adhering to traditional cultural practices. In the film, there is a scene in which the Sakhalin Koreans celebrate “Full Moon Festivals,” one of the traditional holidays of Korea. Many of the aged Koreans enjoy traditional Korean food, watching young girls’ Korean folk dances and often humming the familiar tunes. Also, *Dear Pyongyang* begins a story of a diasporic Korean family in Japan with a scene in which the parents and the filmmaker, the daughter, are having a Korean meal together on the New Year’s Day. Not only is the ritual of the traditional holiday central to diasporic cultures, but it also testifies to the embodied experience of home. As Magdalene Ang-Lygate contends, the exploration of *home* involves not so much as the “place” of home as “the ways in which the home we think we have left have shaped us” (379). In *Dear Pyongyang*, the director’s camera looks at the parents sitting in front of a dining table filled with Korean foods, as the father tells the director that she should get married to a Korean man. The audience soon

discovers that this seemingly ordinary family in Korea Town in Osaka is marked by the sad history of the Korean diaspora in Japan. The father, who came to Japan during the colonial times and became an ardent communist and leader of pro-North movement, sent his three sons to North Korea under a repatriation campaign in the early 1970s. While the early pictures of the father taken with the government officials of North Korea demonstrate his lifelong belief in North Korean communism, the current images of the father, who sings loudly an old Korean song in a shabby loungewear, embody the typical figure of an aged Korean man. These scenes in which the diasporic Koreans enjoy Korean foods and sing old Korean songs illuminate the ways in which the embodied experiences of home are (re)created to evoke the cultural memories of home and homeland.

If the bodily, sensory, and affective experiences of home attest to diasporic Koreans' nostalgia for home, then the visual tropes of geographical/physical displacement stand for a sense of abandonment or desertion. For the colonized Koreans in Sakhalin, the sea signifies their frustration at being far away from home rather than the hope for returning home. Looking at the sea, they often prayed for their return to Korea; and more importantly, they felt frustrated with the great distance between Sakhalin and the Korean peninsula. Likewise, the sea of Wuhan in *The Murmuring* represents a feeling of isolation and rejection for the former Korean comfort women. The images of border spaces, such as the sea, ports, and ships, are related to their exilic experiences under Japanese colonial oppression rather than signifying a dream of their homecoming journey.

In *Dear Pyongyang*, the shots of the sea are used to visualize the situation of family separation and the unrealistic hope for family reunification. After presenting a brief overview of her family's past, the camera looks at her mother who is busy packing daily necessities for

the family members in North Korea. The images of her mother taping several big packages for shipping in the living room are followed by the shot of the sea with the head of the ship on which the director and her parents are sailing. Along with the announcements in a high-pitched North Korean woman's voice, the film presents the images of the ship that just left for Pyongyang, and shows the director's parents standing in the cabin. The camera looks at the father who is staring at the sea over the window, and then slowly zooms in on the waves on the sea. The image of the sea waves viewed from the ship moving forward is accompanied by the director's voice-over narration: "Thirty years ago, my brothers left with one-way ticket and went through this route. I wonder what they thought about when they looked at the same sea I'm looking at now. Is this sea separating "this country" from "that country" or connecting the two countries?" And then, the camera cuts to the image of the sea with the tail of the ship, indicating the long journey from Japan to North Korea and the distance between the two. The images of the three sons, the daughters-in-law, and the grandsons/daughters in North Korea are often crosscut with those of the sea. The shot of the father who is staring at seagulls flying over the sea is followed by the images of the family members in North Korea, such as the earlier photographs of the three sons, and the footage of the grandson/daughters who are opening the gifts from Japan and expressing their gratitude to the grandparents. Looking at the images of the separated family members, the audience hears the director's comments on their lives in North Korea. The camera dissolves to the shot of the sea with the tail of the ship, and then cuts to the father in the cabin. The director's narration says, "The separated people are connected by this ship." As in the case of *Dear Pyongyang*, the visual metaphors of migration and separation, such as the sea, ports, and ships, produce a diasporic sense of abandonment and loneliness, testifying to the traumatic history of the forced displacement.

It seems to be ironic that the diasporic Koreans in *A Forgotten People* and *The Murmuring* show a keen sense of nostalgia for home even though they have felt abandoned and forgotten by their home country. The reason for their constant longing for home derives from their tragic experiences under Japanese colonial rule. In *A Forgotten People*, a woman named Kim Bok-Soon talks about the unlawful death of her father. According to Kim, the Japanese soldiers killed many Korean laborers, including her father, in a moment of anger just after the war ended in defeat. One of the Sakhalin Koreans describes his experience under Japanese colonial rule as “being treated like horses and oxen.” In *The Murmuring*, the former Korean comfort women’s testimonies present their scarring experiences of Japanese military sexual slavery. Looking back on how painful her life was as a comfort woman, Ha Koon-Ja, one of the Korean comfort women, says that the area of comfort houses in Wuhan was called the “blood-sucking village.” Her vivid testimonies, which are intercut with the historical images of the comfort houses, such as the service room and the signboard, point to the persistent impact of the traumatizing past on the displaced subjects in the victim diaspora. In a sense, for the diasporic Koreans in the two films, the strong nostalgia for home results from the very experience of Japanese colonial oppression.

Similar to the (re)creation of the “sensory home,” the traumatic memories of the colonial past hidden in the Korean diaspora are represented by bodily images. For instance, *The Murmuring* ends with the images of the naked body of a former comfort woman. Despite the dim lighting and deep shadows, the audience can see how weak and damaged her aged body is. As the camera looks through the torso, including her skinny shoulder, breasts, and belly, the audience soon realizes that her body is filled with many scars besides a surgical wound on her abdomen. In this manner, the images of the displaced Korean woman’s aged, wounded body

embody the painful experiences of the colonial and patriarchal oppression, calling attention to the sensory experiences of the traumatic past still kept on the bodies of the displaced subjects.

In a sense, the very existence of the colonial legacies led the diasporic Koreans to be more dependent on their memories of home rather than having resentment over the home country's long ignorance of their hardships in exile. As Anita Mannur has observed, the condition of dislocation/relocation implicates "the desire to simultaneously embrace what is left of a past from which one is spatially and temporally displaced, and the recognition that nostalgia can overwhelm memories of the past, allowing the colors of history to seep out of the mind's eyes" (12). Overall, the displaced Korean's specific experiences in exile produce a strong sense of nostalgia for home, making them primarily consider themselves as the victims of Japanese colonialism. Here, Sonia Ryang's discussion of the "politico-classical model" of diaspora is relevant for understanding the first generation of the diasporic Korean community. According to Ryang, this kind of diaspora, exemplified by the cases of the Jewish and the Armenian diasporas, is based on "ethnic persecution as the cause of eternal dispersal and the loss of homeland" (xv, *Writing*). Both *A Forgotten People* and *The Murmuring* demonstrate the ways in which the traumatizing experiences of the colonial oppression generate a strong feeling of nostalgia for home and homeland as well as collective sentiments among diasporic Koreans.

While *A Forgotten People* and *The Murmuring* focus on the displaced Korean's yearning for home in light of the shared experiences of Japanese colonial rule, *Dear Pyongyang* attempts to reconsider the past through an honest dialogue between the first and second generations of Koreans in Japan. The film provides a scene in which the father is checking his suit and medals for his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday party. As a prominent leader of pro-North Korean movement, the father is trying to put numerous medals on his suit, asking the mother to place

the symbol of Kim Il-Sung near to the heart. The camera gazes at the father's shiny medals which stand for his whole life as an ardent activist for North Korean communism. What follows are the representative images of the North Korean government, such as a collective march of people, waving flags, and huge statues of Kim Il-Sung on the streets of Pyongyang. At the party on the next day, the father gives a thank you speech to the guests, stressing his responsibility for making his family members enthusiastic workers for the home country. The father's ideological speech is mixed with the director's voice-over narration in which she questions his contradictory attitude. Her narration says that she feels like running away and wants to ask her father why he still believes without a doubt in the North Korean government even though he knows how his three sons and their family members struggle with the economic hardships and the socio-political oppression of the home country.

Later, the ideological mask of the father gets removed by the daughter's camera. Three years after the party, the director poses the long banned question within her home; that is, whether the father regrets his choice to send his three sons to North Korea. The father says that he sometimes thought it would be better not to send them away even though he had no choice back then. Moreover, in the end of *Dear Pyongyang*, the father finally permits his daughter to revoke her North Korean nationality, acknowledging the political changes of the current times. In the film, the reconsideration of the past is represented by the visual contrast between the earlier images of the father as a strong advocate for the North Korean ideals and those of the aged father who laughs a lot and even gets shy whenever telling his love story with the mother. If *A Forgotten People* and *The Murmuring* display diasporic sensitivities of the first generation of the displaced Koreans by focusing on their direct testimonies about the experiences of the

forced displacement, then *Dear Pyongyang* offers a more nuanced, personal narrative of the Korean diaspora from one of the second generation's point of view.

### Diasporic Korean Women and the Experiences of Dislocation/Relocation

*Sa-I-Gu: From Korean Women's Perspectives* (Dai Sil Kim-Gibson & Christine Choy, 1993), *Wet Sand: Voices from L.A. 10 Years Later* (Dai Sil Kim-Gibson, 2003), and *Motherland: Cuba, Korea, U.S.A.* (Dai Sil Kim-Gibson, 2006) present the lives of overseas Korean women vis-à-vis contemporary socio-economic conditions, such as global capitalism, transnational migration of labor, and the racial politics of the host country, drawing attention to the complex process of deterritorialization/reterritorialization. Viewed from the perspectives of Korean female shopkeepers, *Sa-I-Gu* (literally, "April 29") portrays the April 29, 1992 riots in Los Angeles after four white officers accused in the beating of Rodney King received a verdict of not guilty. Offering individual interviews with the diasporic Korean women, the film examines their experiences of the riots in light of the relationship between the Korean diasporic community and the host society. *Motherland: Cuba, Korea, U.S.A.* introduces diasporic Koreans in Cuba, a relatively unknown group in the Asian diaspora, from a Korean American woman's point of view. The two films center on diasporic Korean women's experiences of dislocation and relocation in the Korean "trade" diaspora, given that the two groups of diasporic Koreans left the home country mainly for economic prosperity.

*Sa-I-Gu* and *Motherland: Cuba, Korea, U.S.A.* reveal some common features of the Korean "trade" diaspora in making new a home in foreign lands. First of all, family is central to the diasporic Korean women in the two films. The Korean female immigrants in *Sa-I-Gu* tend to put great importance on their families, especially their children. *Sa-I-Gu* begins with an

interview with a Korean female immigrant, Jung Hui Lee, who lost her son, Edward Jae Song Lee, during the riots; and then presents the footage of her son's funeral. Looking at the earlier photographs of the mother, the audience learns that she came to the U.S. because she wanted to raise her children in the country of more resources and better opportunities. She talks about how hard she worked to get her children educated, working as a janitor at night without having a babysitter. Another Korean woman says that she was happy to come to the U.S. mainly because her children were pleased to go to an American school where they could be free from the burden of heavy homework and severe competitions. A Korean American youth briefly comments on his parents, "They gave up everything for their children." Considering the fact that many of the Korean immigrants in the "trade diaspora" were well-educated, middle-class people in Korea, it is significant that most of them came to the United States risking what they had achieved in Korea in order to give their children a chance to live a better life. In a sense, these diasporic Koreans' general priority of their own families over other things can be linked with the imposition of the model minority stereotype on Korean Americans.

In *Motherland: Cuba, Korea, U.S.A.*, the director, a Korean American woman filmmaker, presents the life story of Martha Lim Kim, a Korean Cuban woman, whose grandparents came to Cuba in the early 1920s as plantation workers. Martha, a retired university professor of Marxist philosophy, was one of the strong supporters for the Cuban Revolution. Similar to the Korean women migrants in *Sa-I-Gu*, Martha is represented as a hard-working woman who has tried to become a good example for her three daughters. One of her daughters says that Martha taught her daughters important values such as honesty, discipline, and consideration. Family is one of the most primary concerns for the diasporic Korean women's lives in both Cuba and the U.S. In these two films, home does not necessarily involve

homeland, given that the struggle for dislocation/relocation in the trade diaspora is about making a new home for the family, not about returning to an old *home*.

*Sa-I-Gu* and *Motherland: Cuba, Korea, U.S.A.* focus on diasporic Korean women's self-reflection on their relational locations in the Korean diaspora. *Sa-I-Gu* questions how the Los Angeles (L.A.) riots affect the diasporic Korean women, who have believed the myth of American dream. Given the fact that the Korean American shopkeepers suffered nearly half of the city's one billion dollar loss, the riots forced the Korean community to rethink its relationship to the host society. According to producer Elain Kim, *Sa-I-Gu* originated from the realization that most of the Korean female immigrants neither knew what was going on in the American society nor had any media coverage on what they felt about the situation. Elain Kim states, "We thought that it would be really great to find a way to give these Korean immigrants a chance to have their say" (Song 232). In *Sa-I-Gu*, a Korean female shopkeeper describes her feelings as "totally confused" and "angry at everybody," and another woman says, "There is a huge hole in America." Filmmaker Dai Sil Kim-Gibson states, "*Sa-I-Gu* was prompted from my heart when I saw all these Koreans who came to this country and worked so hard; everything they worked for just turned into ashes one morning" (P. Kim 15). In the film, most Korean female interviewees say they feel betrayed and frustrated. Overall, the riots make those Korean women reconsider the existing relationship between themselves and the host society, and force them to develop a socio-political perspective going beyond the personal dimension. For instance, the mother of Edward Jae Song Lee realizes that the death of her son results from the social problem. She says, "At the time, I thought it was one man who shot him; but if I think of it broadly, it was not an individual. It was not just an individual matter. Something is drastically wrong." Another shopkeeper points out that the police did not come to Korea town

because they were busy protecting Beverly Hills. Moreover, one woman contends that the media attempted to frame the incident as the conflict between African Americans and Korean Americans; although she felt it results from a long history of racial conflicts in the United States. In this manner, *Sa-I-Gu* illustrates the ways in which the diasporic Korean women locate their positions in the context of the socio-political conflicts, drawing attention to the resulting changes in their diasporic sensibilities and identity politics.

In *Wet Sand: Voices from L.A. 10 Years Later*, filmmaker Dai Sil Kim-Gibson revisits the survivors of the L.A. riots in order to reflect on the root causes of the racial politics and the urban problems. The film opens with a scene in which Jung Hui Lee thinks of her lost son who was one of the 52 Korean victims of the 1992 Los Angeles upheaval. The images of her visiting her son's grave are juxtaposed with her interview sequence in *Sa-I-Gu* as well as the news footage of the riots. Rethinking the past and the meaning of her son's death, Jung Hui Lee expresses a sense of frustration and disappointment: "It was like holding wet sand tightly in your hand. If you hold a fistful of sand and the sand is wet, it becomes one big lump. But if the sand dries, it will slip out of your fingers until there is nothing left." Her poignant remark is overlapped with the images of the Korean American's political demonstrations right after the 1992 riots. The opening sequence points to the lingering impact of the tragic event on the Korean diaspora and its socio-political implications; and then is followed by a historical overview of the racial problems of the U.S. Going beyond the parameter of *Sa-I-Gu*, the film offers diverse voices from the minority communities including Blacks, Latinos, and other Asians so as to assess the current racial dynamics in the urban space. Later, the film presents another familiar person from *Sa-I-Gu*, Young Soon Han, whose small store got burned down during the riots; and who talks about her economic difficulties and emotional damages. By the

end of the film, Young Soon Han, who started her new career in Eastern medicine, confesses her small but important change: “I could look around at others, how hard other people’s lives are.” In this manner, not only does *Wet Sand* highlight the displaced Korean women’s changed perspectives which are marked by the political awareness and the relational understanding in comparison with *Sa-I-Gu*, but it also attempts to provide a critical look at the American society.

*Wet Sand* demonstrates the broader perspectives of the displaced Korean women as well as the filmmaker’s more active engagement with the political issues. Kim-Gibson argues for the improvement of education and awareness: “I’m trying to suggest, in my film, if there is a hope, it’s with the younger generation, and it’s with their education. So if there is something that we should be doing, in concrete terms, we should lobby; we should do everything that we can to improve the educational system of the inner cities of America” (P. Kim 16). Although the film tends to exhibit a sense of pessimism over the racial issues and the urban problems, as exemplified by several interviewees’ remarks on the high possibility of another upheaval, the film offers a site of hope and change. There is a scene in which Jenny Lee, the daughter of Jung Hui Lee, works as an elementary school teacher in a multi-ethnic classroom. As she talks about the diversity of her school and the change in the children’s awareness, the camera stares at the different faces of the children. By presenting the story of one of the second generation of the displaced Korean women, who works toward a multiethnic, multicultural society, the film visualizes a different future for diasporic Korean women and allows for another understanding of their diasporic subjectivities and political consciousness.

While *Sa-I-Gu* and *Wet Sand* explore how the historical event of the host country affects the Korean women immigrants who have been only interested in economic prosperity and their own family’s welfare, *Motherland* provides a possibility for transnational solidarity of

diasporic subjects by paralleling a Korean Cuban woman's story with a Korean American filmmaker's self-reflective account. *Motherland* begins with the director's words over the shots of the Havana beach in Cuba; "America, my adopted *home*, makes me feel *homeless*." And then, the film introduces Martha, who enables the director to redefine motherland and home. Soon, the audience realizes that the director, who once believed in an American dream, feels increasingly homeless as corporate capitalism, consumerism, and militaristic ideology dominate the U.S. society. The director takes a look at the ways in which Martha lives in the "enemy" country of her adopted home, questioning how Martha feels about Cuba and her motherland. Martha states, "I am who I am because of the Revolution," arguing that the Revolution allowed Korean Cubans to be included in the mainstream. Soon, the film juxtaposes Martha's strong belief in the Revolutionist ideal with her sister's love for the U.S. Camela, Martha's elder sister, who came to the U.S. after the Revolution, enjoys a middle-class American life in Miami. In this manner, the film illustrates that the two sisters hold different socio-political positions; and underscores the ways in which their diasporic lives are governed by their different values.

Portraying different lives in the Korean Diaspora in Cuba and the U.S., *Motherland* allows for a relational understanding of diasporic subjectivities in the context of global capitalism and transnational politics. The images of Camela's family gathering in an American suburban home are followed by the contrasting shots of the rich and the poor, respectively the downtown Miami and a poor neighborhood nearby. Camela's family members talk about the bad economic conditions of Cuba worrying about their Cuban relative's lives. However, what follows are the peaceful images of Martha and her daughter in their beautiful house. The film's juxtaposition of the two different lives of the diasporic Korean women as well as the

contrasting words presenting their different socio-political perspectives points to the very nature of diasporic identity, which is fluid, multidimensional, and continuously negotiated in a global-national-local nexus.

By the end of *Motherland*, the director pays attention to the link between herself and Martha as diasporic Korean women. The camera looks at the director standing on the Brooklyn bridge, zooming out from the American flag and then slowly panning to the Statue of Liberty. The director's voice over narration says, "I felt at home with her, my fellow Korean migrant, a sister. Martha helped me realize that home could be and should be the ever growing circle of migrants working together to make every corner of the earth our motherland." Here, Katarzyna Marciniak's comment is salient for assessing the Korean American woman filmmaker's look at the Korean Cuban woman's life. Marciniak argues, "The experience of filmmakers' border crossing is crucial for a twofold understanding of cinema: as a transnational medium that has always defiled rigid notions of national borders, and as an art form of a moving image with a subversive potential and power to comment upon social and political issues" (33). Drawing a parallel to the portrayal of Martha's life in Cuba, *Motherland* presents the filmmaker's own experiences of dislocation/relocation as a Korean American female immigrant, providing a series of the photographic images of her past, such as her childhood in North Korea, the day of her college graduation, and her deceased mother. Not only does the cinematic representation of the different lives of the diasporic Korean women demonstrate the ways in which the experiences of displacement and settlement constitute different positionalities in the Korean diaspora; but it also attests to the progressive potential of diasporic subjectivity, which serves as a ground for mutual understanding and transnational solidarity. The filmmaker's "experience of border crossing" allows her to get rid of the initial anxiety over the socio-political changes in

her adopted home, and to be aware of both the strength of diasporic subjects and the possibility of alliances across the borders. While the diasporic Korean women in the victim diaspora tend to redefine their diasporic identities in light of the past-oriented longing for home and homeland, the Korean women migrants in the trade diaspora attempt to locate their positions in their everyday process of deterritorialization/reterritorialization.

### Diasporic Korean Women and the Issues of Identity

*First Person Plural* (Deann Borshay, 2000) and *The Grace Lee Project* (Grace Lee, 2005) explore the complex issues of identity formation, calling attention to the imaginary construction of home and homeland in the complicated process of cultural negotiation. These two films attempt to reconsider the Korean diaspora in light of what Sonia Ryang calls “the personal-modern model” of diaspora, which is concerned with “ontological insecurity and an ongoing crisis of identity, generally associated with modernity and the consequent rise of the reflective self” (xv, *Writing*). Overall, the two films portray the ways in which diasporic subjects seek to specify their positions by either overcoming the loss of the original home and homeland, or challenging the hegemonic discourses involving racial and ethnic stereotypes.

*First Person Plural* is an autobiographical documentary made by Deann Borshay, who was among thousands of South Korean orphans sent to the U.S. in the 1960s to be adopted and raised by American families. Presenting her struggle to unravel the mysteries surrounding her adoption, the film sheds light on a hidden dimension of the Korean diaspora. As Richard H. Weil, who studies international migration patterns points out, transnational migration of children for adoption is “a significant type of migration both because of its increasing volume over time and because the factors involved clearly illustrate how particular cultural and

political factors can retard or accelerate the international movement of people” (276).

Considering South Korea’s previous reputation as the “orphan-exporting nation,” it is important to note that diasporic experiences of adopted Koreans need to be discussed as part of the history of the Korean diaspora.

*First Person Plural* begins with a scene in which filmmaker Borshay, who was adopted by Arnold and Alveen Borshay in 1966, introduces herself with three different names, dates of birth, and brief personal histories. Looking directly at the camera, she poses questions about her identity, which is fragmentary, multidimensional, and controversial. Her voice-over says, “My name is Kang Ok-Jin. I was born on June 14, 1957. I feel like I’ve been several different people in one life. My name is Cha Jung-Hee. I was born November 5, 1956. I’ve had three names, three different sets of histories. My name is Deann Borshay. I was born on March 3, 1966, the moment I stepped off the airplane in San Francisco. I’ve spoken different languages and I’ve had different families.” The intro shot of her face gets transformed several times with different lighting effects, framings, and even a solarized silhouette, visualizing her plural, fluid subjectivities.

Utilizing the archival footage of the Korean War and 8mm home movies, *First Person Plural* traces the process through which the adopted Korean woman struggles to reveal her true identity in light of the conflicting relationship between the imaginary home in Korea and the adopted home in the U.S. The filmmaker experiences confusion between her actual memories and the official facts in her adoption documents; and this leads her to investigate the truth about her adoption. Soon, she finds out that her birth name was Kang Ok-Jin and that she was switched at the last minute with Cha Jung-Hee, another girl who had lived in the same orphanage. She discovers that she is not the person she thought she was, and that her birth

family members are alive in Korea. In order to resolve the lingering questions about her true identity, she travels to Korea in order to meet her birth family. Pointing to “the complex gendered, racial, psychic, and material economies of transracial adoptions,” Jodi Kim describes the film as “a case of a forced “mistaken identity” and the proliferation of identities it sets into motion” (860). Indeed, the film presents a personal account of a Korean adoptee’s experiences of involuntary dislocation and relocation, which brings out the hidden dimension of the Korean diaspora.

In *First Person Plural*, the images of the Korean adoptee’s childhood photographs and videos correspond to her “ontological insecurity” in that the Asian girl is always surrounded by her Caucasian parents, brother, sister, friends, and even blonde-haired dolls, being situated as the essential Other. Given the fact that the majority of Korean adoptees have been adopted by middle or upper-class white couples in white suburban communities, it is important to note that this demographic background positions the adopted Koreans quite different from Korean migrants. The photographic images of young Borshay with her white family members demonstrate the ways in which the very conditions of everyday life made adopted Koreans “strangers to their own bodies” (Hubinette187). This fundamental gap between the material body and the demographic surroundings often results in a crisis of identity as in the case of the film. If diasporic communities of people often struggle to position themselves between the original homeland and the host country, then the Korean adoptee has a hard time in locating her place between her material home and her imaginary home because the very condition of everyday life makes her feel displaced in the most intimate space. In this respect, the private, personal domain of home is central to Borshay’s diasporic experiences and sensibilities.

If the Korean adoptee's identity crisis in *First Person Plural* derives from her bodily difference, which has positioned her as the essential Other within the white family, then *The Grace Lee Project* deals with a different kind of existential uncertainty questioning how a diasporic Korean woman can distinguish herself from the racial, ethnic stereotypes. *The Grace Lee Project*, a hilarious autobiographical documentary, is about Korean American female filmmaker Grace Lee's exploration of the personal and social implications of the name, Grace Lee, that stands for an oppressive stereotype of Asian femininity. Lee, who grew up seeing herself unique in a white community in Missouri, realizes that there are many Asian girls named Grace Lee after moving to New York and California where Asian-Americans live in large numbers. Determined to find exceptions to the stereotype, the director embarks on a search for other Grace Lees, and meets different and remarkable women.

As Lee interviews people about the Grace Lees they knew, she learns that most of the Grace Lees share some characteristics: they were all smart, nice, accomplished, quiet, polite, and petite. Thinking about the implications of these generic images of the stereotype, the director visualizes images of the Grace Lees of the world as "thousands of interchangeable drones" in the form of flash animation. The montage of the different Grace Lees the director meets is followed by the animated image of the statistically average Grace Lee with the descriptive captions of the representative characteristics of the stereotype. The generic type of Grace Lee is an American-born Korean woman, who is 25 years old, lives in California, is 5 feet 3 inches tall, has had three and a half years of piano lessons, and probably has a master's degree. The ways in which the animated images of the generic Asian female stereotype get multiplied and blended together represent the imaginary existence of Asian femininity for both

herself and others under the influence of racial and sexual discourses, pointing to the insecure nature of diasporic Korean women's identities.

*First Person Plural* and *The Grace Lee Project* frame home and homeland as a domain of contestation. In *First Person Plural*, home is the source of emotional and psychological disarrangement for the adopted girl, who has been trying to make her adoptive parents happy by transforming herself into an American girl. When Borshay talks about the confusion between her actual memories and the factual record on her adoption file, her mental conflict is portrayed as a haunting dream mixed with her fragmentary memories of home and homeland, such as the image of poor Korean children in an orphanage, the old photograph of her birth father, and the images of her old home. Such cinematic presentations of her original home raise questions about the normative meaning of home as the object of romantic nostalgia, and, at the same time, bring out the enduring legacy of her experience of forced displacement which has dominated her psyche even in the form of a haunting dream.

While *A Forgotten People* and *The Murmuring* tend to look at home and homeland as the place of constant longing for diasporic Korean women, *First Person Plural* deconstructs the romantic myth of returning home from the Korean adoptee's point of view. The filmmaker's first trip to Korea is characterized by the bodily resemblance between her and her birth family, given that her racial difference made her feel alienated from her adoptive family throughout her childhood. As the camera slowly stares at the faces of her birth family members including her mother, sisters, brothers, and nephews in the Korean home, a sense of "physical closeness" is visualized from the Korean adoptee's point of view. Then, the camera looks at the director, who sheds tears silently holding a Korean dictionary in her hand, and her birth mother sitting next to the director with tears in her eyes. This emotional image testifies to the tragic reality of

transnational adoption and its lingering effect on the separated family members. Despite the visual similarity between the filmmaker and her birth family, it is quite difficult for her to feel a sense of real intimacy because of the language barrier. When the filmmaker visits Korea once again with her adoptive parents, it becomes clear that she positions herself near to the American parents. The disparity between the visual and the aural in scenes in which the filmmaker is with either her birth family or her adoptive parents represents the fundamental condition for the Korean adoptee's ontological insecurity.

*First Person Plural* portrays the ways in which the Korean adoptee experiences sensory elements of home and homeland, following her and her adoptive parents during their travel in Korea. The filmmaker's encounter with home and homeland involves her sensory experiences of Korea, such as tasting Korean foods on the street, looking around local merchants, and sightseeing in the Korean Folk Village. However, the Korean adoptee's sensory experiences of home and homeland are not same with those of the diasporic Korean women in *A Forgotten People* and *The Murmuring*. The scenes in which she walks through a local market in Seoul with a curious face signify her position as a visitor/tourist in the motherland, not much different from her adoptive parents because her sensory experiences are not associated with the imaginary home. In a sense, the deconstruction of the Korean adoptee's fantasy of returning home results from the fact that her longing for the original home and homeland mainly derives from her feeling of ontological insecurity given that her bodily differences constantly make her be positioned as the Other within her American home.

In *First Person Plural*, the meeting between the filmmaker's two families completes the Korean adoptee's deconstruction of her imaginary home. While her adoptive parents have supported the filmmaker's decision to find out her true identity, her birth family members

express a little anxiety about her film wondering if her film would give a bad impression of the family. Her mother and brother say to her that she should be happy with her American parents, stressing that they sent her to the U.S. because they wanted her to have better opportunities. With the help of the translator, the Korean adoptee can understand what her brother and mother say to her; but she feels the distance between her and her birth family. In this manner, the barrier between Borshay and her birth family becomes noticeable despite their bodily similarities and seemingly shared feelings of regret. In a scene in which the Korean adoptee bursts into tears listening to the foreign words from her birth mother, the bodily difference that has often alienated the Korean adoptee from her Caucasian family is no longer salient for locating her real home because language and cultural differences are far more noticeable. After the meeting, she says in front of the camera, "I felt more like a visitor, a temporary visitor to the family. ... Only way for me to be able to get closer to my mother is to acknowledge that she hasn't been my mother over thirty years." Later, in the hotel room, the American mother asks the Korean adoptee whether the meeting with the Korean family would change their existing relationship. Borshay tells her adoptive mother that she actually feels closer to her adoptive mother after the meeting with her birth family. With tears in her eyes, the Korean adoptee says to the American mother, "I think you're my real mother," and then they embrace each other reaffirming the "real" relationship between them. As in the case of the film, transnational adoptions bring out "kinship" being disjointed from "its purportedly natural connection to the nation" (E. Kim 521). By the end of the film, Borshay talks about her childhood fantasy in which she could be sent back to her birth family in Korea if she was really good to her American family and well-behaved in the school. She acknowledges that she finally becomes free from this kind of childhood fantasy about her original home. This

realization attests to the deconstruction of the diasporic dream of returning home in that her affective and sensory experiences with the original home allow her to realize her adoptive home as the real home, although her American home has been a site of displacement and contestation.

*First Person Plural*, a Korean adoptee's personal journey for tracing her origin, offers another understanding of the issues of transracial adoption in the Korean diaspora by focusing on the emotional and affective dimension as well as the socio-political backgrounds. In a scene in which the filmmaker visits the orphanage to which she was once taken, the audience realizes that this kind of story is not unique but ubiquitous. The shots of the filmmaker who looks around the old orphanage including the big dining room, the bedroom with the old furniture, the huge closet for the orphans, and the empty playground are juxtaposed with the archival images of the abandoned Korean children after the Korean War. The black and white images of the homeless children materialize the shameful history of the Korean diaspora. The filmmaker talks about her past as a Korean adoptee: "There was also a lot of sadness that I think that we couldn't deal with as a family. And a lot of that sadness had to do with loss. I was never able to mourn what I had lost with my American parents." In a sense, the Korean adoptee's experience of displacement involves the most personal and intimate dimension in that she is positioned as being out-of-place within home. Also, the Korean adoptee's feeling of "loss" originally derives from the nature of transnational adoption as "a type of forced migration," which is caused by the power asymmetries inherent in the global geopolitics (J. Kim 866). In this manner, the film illustrates the ways in which the experiences of abandonment, dislocation, and relocation produce the multiple, contradictory, and fluid subjectivities of the displaced Korean woman.

While *First Person Plural* displays the ways in which a displaced subject locate her place by revisiting the romantic ideal of home and homeland, *The Grace Lee Project* demonstrates how a diasporic subject makes her own *home* by challenging her supposed position within the host country. In *The Grace Lee Project*, Korean American filmmaker Lee meets with different Grace Lees, including an Asian American news reporter of the model minority type, a pastor's kid who is a U.S.C. graduate, a Lesbian activist, an ardent social worker for black communities, and a Korean adoptee who shares her home with her friend's family who ran away from the abusive father. The different representations of the living Grace Lees signify an attempt to deconstruct the racial and sexual discourses, highlighting the sharp contrast between the animated images of the generic stereotype and their living counterparts.

*The Grace Lee Project* ends with the lively images of the director meeting with each of the Grace Lees. Looking at the sequence in which these diasporic Asian women are talking to each other, laughing at each other, or standing shoulder to shoulder with smiling faces, the audience can see a sense of identification and solidarity among them. Along with the cheerful images of the Grace Lees, the director's voice-over says, "By now, my fear of being compared with or even mistaken for another Grace Lee has disappeared. In fact, whenever I hear of another me, I'm instantly curious about who she is, what she's doing, and how she's made things in her life so far. I can't wait to meet the rest of us." Shedding light on different lives of diasporic subjects who have tried to live their own lives based on their own choices, the film challenges the hegemonic discourse of Asian femininity and provides a possible ground for identification and alliance among diasporic Asian women. Overall, *First Person Plural* and *The Grace Lee Project* portray another kind of diasporic subjectivity, which allows for a reconsideration of the meaning of *home* within conflicting realities of everyday life in the

diaspora, not within recurring memories of the past, pointing to the ways in which diasporic Korean women negotiate their locations under the influence of the hegemonic discourses of the host country.

## **2. Being Diasporic at Home: Korean Women and the Embodiment of Self-**

### **Displacement**

Given the cultural tradition of Confucian patriarchy, it is important to note that the Korean woman's life can be described as "diasporic" in that the predominance of male-centered discourses generally position women as being out-of-place. The Confucian patriarchy was firmly established in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century in Korea, as the rights of primogeniture and the records of male genealogy became customary (Lee & Soh 70). According to Jeong-Ok Kim, one of the Confucian ethics books specifies the woman's supposed responsibilities, such as cooking, sewing, cleaning, giving birth to sons, and obeying unconditionally the husband and the father (185). In a sense, the Korean woman's life in those days was not about herself but about the men she lived with. For instance, one of the Confucian norms forced a Korean woman to leave her own home for marriage and to live only as a member of her husband's family for the rest of her life. In other words, if a Korean woman marries a man, she needs to assure herself that her parent's home is no longer her home. In the context of the strong implementation of the Confucianist patriarchal values, she belongs to her husband's home and family and has to adhere to the gendered codes of socio-cultural conduct. Just as diasporic communities of people miss their homeland, struggling with the harsh realities of the host society, the Korean woman yearns for her original home, making conscious efforts to transform herself into a member of the new family. In this respect, the traditional norm that rarely permits

a married woman to visit her parents' home made the everyday experiences of the Korean woman similar to those of people in diaspora. Although the material oppression of the Confucian patriarchy has been weakened, the lingering legacies of the gendered discourses tend to situate the Korean woman as a diasporic subject at home.

In the following, I examine visual media works produced by Korean women, *Köryu: Southern Women/South Korea* (Soyoung Kim, 2000), *Mad Women Project [Mich'innyön p'rojekt'ũ]* (a photography collection by Young-Sook Park, 1999-2005), and *Peekaboo: To Be / Not to Be [Itta /öpta]* (Kyoung Lee, 1999), looking at the lives of Korean women in light of the concepts of home, displacement, and diaspora. First of all, these cultural works present Korean women's diasporic subjectivities by focusing on their experiences of physical and psychological displacement. *Köryu* begins with several definitions of the word "köryu," including "temporary abode," "migration," and "the cycle of life and death," drawing attention to Korean women's history of dislocation/relocation. According to Soyoung Kim, the filmmaker, the title of the film is in part based on the fact that Korean women have had to migrate voluntarily or involuntarily in the historical contexts of modern Korea, such as Japanese colonial oppression, the Korean War, the ensuing economic hardships, and the process of rapid industrialization. Filmmaker Kim sees Korean women's experiences of displacement as one of the driving forces for creating the women's liberal and subversive ideas under the oppressive Confucian patriarchy (Lee 148). In general, filmmaker Kim's central concern with Korean women's experiences of dislocation corresponds to her viewpoint as a follower of Korean women's journey, as well as the film's overall visual imagery made up of roads, buses, trains, stations, and the sea.

In the first section of *Kōryu* entitled “Keep a Diary, Grandma,” the filmmaker follows the traces of her deceased grandmother in Kosōng, her family’s hometown. In Kim’s cinematic journey to the southern part of South Korea, she recollects her grandmother through (re)enacting the sensory experience of home, just as the diasporic Korean women try to remember their original home through old Korean songs and traditional meals. Looking at a forked road signposted to Kosōng, the audience hears an aged woman singing a Korean folksong in a subdued tone and a group of women inaudibly whispering. A little later, Kim tells the audience that she often thinks of her grandmother when she misses the taste of grandmother’s food. In an old local marketplace, she recalls her grandmother’s story about Ch’ungmu kimpap, a famous dish in the fishing village; and then buys Hanch’i squids, her grandmother’s favorite fish. Just as diasporic Korean women are dependent on Korean folk songs and traditional food so as to look back upon their original home and family, Kim’s memory of her grandmother is associated with her sensory experiences. Korean women’s diasporic sensitivities and their cultural memories are represented by their sensory experiences of home constituted in similar rural and domestic settings.

“Women’s Writing: Korean Eulogies,” the second section of *Kōryu*, focuses on the tradition of women’s writing, as filmmaker Kim discovers that her grandmother wrote eulogies for the neighbor women. Following the traces of women’s writing, Kim meets with an aged woman who wrote eulogies for her neighbor women just like her grandmother. This woman states that she only wrote Korean eulogies because most women were not allowed to learn Chinese characters, which were used in the mainstream literature. Her remark implies the existence of an alternative mode of Korean women’s cultural practices as exemplified in the form of Korean eulogies. According to Yoon-Ho Kang, it is ironical that the tradition of

Korean women's writing plays a historical role in preserving Korean literature because Korean women were only permitted to learn Korean, which was considered the second-rated, vulgar language (267). In other words, the marginalization of Korean women from the male-dominated culture unintentionally results in the significant development of Korean literature. In *Kōryu*, the aged woman reads eulogies in a low voice as if singing a folksong, sitting on the floor of a traditional Korean house. Her reading voice is combined with the images of the woman's spaces within the house, including the kitchen and the room where the handloom is kept. Here, the filmmaker's personal memory of her grandmother permits her to rethink the tradition of women's writing, pointing to the specific experiences of Korean women. The Korean women's writing in this film can be considered a cultural expression of diasporic subjectivities in that Korean women utilize their own language reflecting on their particular experiences of dislocation/relocation, just as members of diasporic communities seek to preserve their original cultural heritages rather than being assimilated into the host culture.

The second section of *Kōryu* ends with a visual embodiment of the diasporic subjectivity of the Korean woman who has to leave her original home marrying into another family. As the camera stares at the home, it gradually recedes from the view as if she looks back at it from the bus moving away. The visual representation of the woman's leaving accompanies another eulogy of the aged woman. She whispers with a sigh of grief, "A woman's fate is sad. My parents raised me as tenderly as a boy. A woman's fate is sad. But now I have to leave them to get married. I know their eyes are following me out of the door. I feel sad that I haven't been a better girl." As exemplified by the eulogy, the Confucian gendered norms force the Korean woman to live an exilic life, which is marked by the longing

for her original home and the experience of physical and psychological displacement in the husband's home.

*Peekaboo: To Be / Not to Be* provides the representation of Korean women's self-displacement, focusing on the domestic life of contemporary Korean housewives. The film introduces the typical life of Korean housewives living in a suburban neighborhood, and presents these women's personal accounts of psychological dislocation in the background of their own domestic spaces. When one of the housewives talks about her general anxiety over the current condition and unnecessary obsession with domestic works, the camera stares at her with her daughter who is continuously blocking the mother's face and making noises during the interview. Also, there is a scene in which another interviewee complains about her decreasing sense of self-esteem as she lives as a housewife. Soon, the audience realizes that she is sitting on the floor of the kitchen. In this manner, the ways in which the Korean housewives are situated within a seemingly confined space of home embody a feeling of psychological displacement and entrapment.

In a similar spirit, *Mad Women Project* visualizes a sense of alienation and disarrangement in a domestic setting. One photographic image contains a middle-aged housewife standing in front of the kitchen sink full of bloody, sliced fishes. She looks elsewhere with a disoriented face holding a kitchen knife in her hand, representing a state of mental dislocation. The image of this mentally unstable housewife produces a sense of anxiety and self-destruction because of both the knife and the sliced fishes which symbolize her repressed anger and its violent manifestation. In another photo, a woman in wet clothes looks at the camera directly standing in the center of a bathroom where there is a big stack of laundry. The image in which she is just standing showing no interest in doing laundry signifies a

housewife's psychological state of being out-of-place as well as her oppressive location under the patriarchal dominance. Likewise, there is a photograph in which a middle-aged woman stands in the green room holding a water hose in her hand. She waters the floor, not the plants, looking over the window, as if her mind is somewhere else. The images of the seemingly delusional housewives, whose bodies are disjointed from their minds, illustrate the Korean women's self-designation as displaced subjects within the patriarchal space of home. As Andrea Nicki has observed, "Women become mentally ill as they realize to an extreme degree feminine norms of dependency, vulnerability, and helplessness in order to escape constraining traditional female roles" (84). In this sense, the photographic images of *Mad Women Project* visualize the "mentally ill" women, who feel trapped, alienated, and frustrated under the patriarchal system given the realization of the marginalized position of women.

As the title of the film signifies, in *Peekaboo: To Be or Not To Be*, the Korean housewives' experiences of psychological/ mental displacement are central to the discursive construction of the patriarchal home. Within the film, the personal space of the Korean housewives is just a small fraction of the domestic space; and it gets often violated by the children. This kind of visual representation of the housewives indicates their displaced position at home, which makes them continuously question whether they exist or not. Likewise, in the photographic images of *Mad Women Project*, the domestic spaces are portrayed as unorganized, messy, and unclean, testifying to the oppressive system of the patriarchal society. In a sense, the patriarchal home is not an organized, peaceful haven for the oppressed women, but a place of alienation and frustration. A poem entitled "Na Hye-Seok Complex" [Nahyesök k'ömp'ülleksü] written by Korean female poet Seung-Hee Kim, reflects on the life of the "New

Woman” [Sinyōsōng] in the modern history of Korea, who was a prominent painter/feminist writer:

The woman has no home in the past, present, and future/Her father’s home/ Her husband’s home/her son’s home/ None of them is her home/... / The woman/ Why/ In order to build her own home/ She needs to tear herself into pieces/ Like black butterflies, like white butterflies/ Why the woman/Always thinks about her unnatural, violent death/In order to build her own home. (qtd. in H. Kim 123)

Not only does this poem point to the nonexistence of the Korean woman’s home under the influence of the Confucian patriarchy; but it also considers the ways in which the oppressive discourses punish or execute the rebellious female subject who wants to “build her own home.” In a sense, being the Other at home is a natural outcome of the predominance of patriarchal discourses. Nevertheless, as the photographer of *Mad Women Project* points out, “What is valuable is the woman’s energy which is strong enough to make her crazy. Also, what is significant is the woman’s enthusiasm that leads her to go beyond the confinement of the existing order” (S. Kang). Indeed, the label of “crazy” refers to “people who are simply non-conformist or who challenge the status quo” (Nicki 87). In this respect, critical attention to women’s self-dis-placement allows for an understanding of women’s hidden histories and cultural legacies, and permits a revelation of women’s subaltern agencies in their displaced positions.

*Kōryu* attempts to reconsider the history of the earlier generation of Korean women, as the filmmaker gets interested in one of her father’s memories of the grandmother. The grandmother visited her sister-in-law in Kosōng one year before she died, and said to her, “I’ve come all this way, but I still can’t see my leper [mundungi].” According to Kim’s father, the word “leper [mundungi],” which refers to one’s husband in that region, is an ironic expression

that blurs the line between abuse and a pet name. In this manner, the filmmaker attempts to unearth the grandmother's "unwritten diary," which is filled with the hardships she had to endure by herself because of her husband's deportation to North Korea. Given the ideological conflict involving the intra-national division, the grandmother had to live down the stigma of her husband being a communist, and take care of her children by herself. In this context, the grandmother's journey to home before her death indicates her desire to discover what she has lost in the turbulent history of Korea. Grace M. Cho points out that "an unspeakable trauma does not die out with the person who first experiences it," quoting Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok's concept of the "transgenerational phantom" (6). The ways in which the filmmaker explores grandmother's "unspeakable trauma" emerged from the father's memory testify to the relationship between history and memory in the form of "transgenerational phantom." According to Young-Jae Lee, "*Kōryu* is a film about "absence"; the late grandmother, the unspoken words, and the displaced beings. Things of absence hint about their stories as if ghosts incessantly haunt us. Therefore, there are always traces of ghosts between the camera and the subject" (151). In a sense, given that Korean women have been marginalized within the male-centered discourses, a feminist attempt to reveal the women's hidden accounts is like ghost hunting because of the shared belief in the existence of "ghosts."

*Peekaboo: To Be / Not to Be* offers another example of "transgenerational phantom" in a scene in which a housewife talks about her mother, who wanted a different life for the daughters. The shots of the interviewee in which she is busy doing a variety of household tasks are followed by the photographic images of her mother. The juxtaposition of these two women's images embodies a sense of cross-generational haunting, as the audience learns that the housewife often blames herself for disappointing her mother hiding her true feelings from

her mother. Given the oppressive realities of Korean women's past, it is important to note that the Korean women's experiences of physical and psychological displacement often manifest themselves through different representations of the same trauma, which is the supposed woman's life as the domestic housewife.

The last section of *Kōryu* calls attention to the lives of the younger generation of Korean women. A woman in her forties, the owner of a teahouse, tells the audience that she could not go study abroad because she had to take charge of the family business. A young girl in her early twenties says boastfully that her mother finally approved of her plan to become a filmmaker after her long struggle. She says that she even had run away from home to go to a film festival. These contemporary Korean women have confronted a common dilemma between self-oriented desires and traditional responsibilities for home and family. In a sense, this dilemma can be seen as part of cultural negotiation between the global and the local, signifying an ideological conflict between Western individualism and the enduring legacies of Confucian patriarchy. Although they express their sympathy for the earlier generation of Korean women who could not have different choices because of the socio-political conditions, it is important to note that they are not entirely immune to the experiences of their grandmothers and mothers. In this respect, a sense of self-displacement has lingered over the several generations of Korean women. These Korean women who made a self-centered choice for their own lives do not necessarily remove their bond to home and family; just as diasporic people cannot abandon their connection with their original home or homeland no matter where they are.

## Conclusion

The representations of Korean women at home and abroad illustrate the ways in which the experiences of material and symbolic displacement position the Korean women as diasporic subjects whose identification practices of self-displacement generate their subaltern agencies and fluid sensitivities. While the cases of diasporic Korean women point to the centrality of geographical/physical displacement to the formation of their identities, those of Korean women at home highlight the experiences of symbolic/discursive displacement under the oppressive discourse of the Confucian patriarchy. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the displaced Korean women at home and abroad share the diasporic subjectivity which results from the connection between the geographical and the psychological displacement as well as the lingering legacies of the gendered discourses in both the Korean society and the Korean diaspora.

One of the commonalities found in the visual representations of the displaced Korean women is the lasting influence of the hegemonic, gendered discourses on the lives of Korean women at home and abroad. The former comfort women in *The Murmuring* have been oppressed by the Confucian patriarchy given that they could not go back to Korea because of the shame. Likewise, the Korean adoptee in *First Person Plural* becomes the victim of the forced migration because of both the Westerners' demand of female babies of color and the Koreans' preference of male babies. In a similar spirit, if *The Grace Lee Project* is an attempt to criticize the racialized and sexualized stereotype of Asian women widely circulated in the host country; then *Mad Women Project* is a feminist visualization of the woman's marginalization in the everyday reality of the Korean society. Although each of the Korean women's cultural works deals with different systems of power and oppressive discourses, the

dimension of gender is relevant to all the representations of the displaced Korean women. In this respect, the feminist idea of self-displacement, a critical positioning for articulating women's locations, allows for an understanding of diasporic subjectivities of the displaced Korean women as well as a reconsideration of their political awareness and subaltern agencies.

Another commonality involves the concept of "transgenerational phantom." Abraham and Torok point to the relationship between the haunting and its psychological implications:

It is a fact that the "phantom," whatever its form, is nothing but an invention of the living. Yes, an invention in the sense that the phantom is meant to objectify, even if under the guise of individual or collective hallucinations, the gap produced in us by the concealment of some part of a love object's life. The phantom is therefore also a metapsychological fact: what haunts are not the dead, but the gaps left within us by the secrets of others (171).

This conceptualization of "transgenerational phantom" could be applied to all of the selected visual cultural works because each of them can be considered an attempt to trace "the gaps left within us" in the lives of the displaced Korean women. While *A Forgotten People: The Sakhalin Koreans* (Dai Sil Kim-Gibson, 1996) and *The Murmuring* (Young-Joo Byun, 1995) try to present the hidden accounts of the traumatizing past, *Dear Pyongyang* (Young-Hi Yang, 2005) and *First Person Plural* (Deann Borshay, 2000) seek to offer a personal narrative of the Korean diaspora by revealing the family secret. Likewise, *Sa-I-Gu* (Dai Sil Kim-Gibson & Christine Choy, 1993), *Wet Sand: Voices from L.A. 10 Years Later* (Dai Sil Kim-Gibson, 2005), *Motherland: Cuba, Korea, U.S.A.* (Dai Sil Kim-Gibson, 2006), and *The Grace Lee Project* (Grace Lee, 2005) attempt to uncover what has haunted diasporic Korean women within the context of the host society, challenging the hegemonic discourses and identifying their relational locations. Moreover, *Kōryu: Southern Women/South Korea* (Soyoung Kim, 2000), *Mad Women Project* (a photography collection by Young-Sook Park, 1999-2005), and *Peekaboo: To Be / Not to Be*

(Kyoung Lee, 1999) reconsider “transgenerational phantom” inherent in the Korean women’s experiences, shedding light on the persistent dominance of patriarchal discourses. A critical look at Korean women’s experiences of displacement and home identifies “the gaps,” the marginality or the problematic of the women’s lives by tracing “the secrets,” the concealed accounts of the existing generations.

#### **IV. Displaced Women Imagine Home: Transnational Feminist Visual Cultural Practices**

This chapter aims to reconsider the concept of home in the context of transnational flows of people and information, employing cultural studies approaches and feminist media theories. The globalized trend of feminization of labor and the subsequent increase of transnational migration of Third World/South women draw attention to new configurations of marginalized communities of women and their experiences of displacement in the context of transnational media environments. By looking at the women's engagement with the visual media, the chapter examines the ways in which transnational visual cultural practices enable marginalized communities of women to identify their locations and agencies.

As an attempt to offer an account of the "intimate" dimension globalization, this chapter focuses on women's transnational cultural practices in the Asian context, which point to complex and multifaceted flows of cultural globalization. In particular, the sharp increase of women migrants in Korea adds another dimension to globalization, specifically the intra-regional dynamics of globalization among Asian countries. According to Korea National Statistics Office's report in 2007, there were 36,960 cases of marriage to a foreign spouse in Korea as of 2006, which accounts for 11.9 percent of the total marriages registered in that year. Seventy-five percent (30, 208 cases) out of the total were between a Korean man and a foreign woman. As Cheong-Seok Kim has observed, the recent increase of international marriage between Korean men and foreign women "has been accompanied by the diversification of the nationality of the foreign wife" (141). While ethnic Koreans in China followed by the Japanese consisted of the majority of the foreign wife by around the end of 2000, women from Southeast and other parts of Asia, such as Vietnam, Mongolia, Philippines, and Cambodia, have become the majority of transnational brides since then.

Not only does the growing number of Southeast Asian brides in Korea point to the new direction of transnational migration within the Asian region, but it also raises questions about the ways in which transnational brides who emigrated from (poor) Southeast Asia to (rich) Northeast Asia redefine their locations in a specific global-national-local nexus. According to Hyeon-Mee Kim, the sharp increase of Vietnamese brides in Korea in part results from the emergence of consumerist culture and Western wedding practices in Vietnam, as well as the popularity of Korean pop culture among Vietnamese youths (“Global” 23). In this light, the women migrants’ everyday interactions with transnational visual culture provide an understanding of home as “a contested domain” inscribed with the political economy of globalization; and demonstrate the complexity of intra-regional, cross-national flows of cultural globalization (Fog-Olwig 226).

Women’s human rights organizations and cultural institutions in Korea have attempted to help women migrants make their home in the foreign land and adjust to new cultural environments, providing them with a variety of educational projects including Korean language classes and cooking lessons. The media workshops for migrant women, considered one of the successful projects for women migrants, were designed to give the women an opportunity to express themselves through the medium of video. Focusing on the women migrants who participated in the video making workshops, this chapter explores how the displaced women’s transnational media practices enable them to (re)build their home in a specific context of the local/national/global nexus. Along with the women migrants’ self-made videos, their individual comments on transnational media consumption and the video-making process allow for another understanding of the relationship between women and globalization in transnational visual culture. Furthermore, the chapter attempts to consider the possibility of transnational feminist

alliance and the potential of feminist media activism based on the self-critical assessments provided by the media workshop instructors and coordinators.

### **An Overview: Subjects, Contents, and Methods**

This study is an attempt to rethink the relationship between women and globalization, looking at how marginalized communities of women negotiate their identities through their everyday interactions with transnational visual culture. The main subjects of this study are transnational brides living in Korea. I consider the transnational brides “marginalized” because of their position as minorities within the host country and their experiences of physical and psychological displacement, which in most cases result from their “marginalized” status in the home country. By incorporating the displaced women’s autobiographic visual representations and personal interviews, I examine how they locate their positions in the context of transnational visual culture by reflecting both on the existing representational conventions and the expression of themselves in visual forms.

The informants of this study include ten transnational brides, two Korean media/video-making instructors, and two Korean program coordinators. All the informants participated in the media workshops for women migrants. One is “The Media Workshop for Women Migrants in Dangjin (2007),” which is a sub-program of the International Women’s Film Festival in Seoul. The other is one of the Daegu Women Migrants Human Rights Center projects entitled “Finding a Road through Crossing Boundaries: Women Migrants Independent Films Screening (2008).” The video-making workshop in Dangjin produced nine short self-made videos by the women migrants and a behind-the-scene documentary. The women migrants who participated in the workshop in Daegu created seven autobiographic videos. This study combines personal

interviews with the displaced women and their self-made videos; and their spoken accounts provide the contextual information about their videos as well as their experiences of the video-making process.

The women migrants are transnational brides who emigrated from their native countries to South Korea after they got married to Korean men. Six of them are from the Philippines, and the rest of them include a Vietnamese, a Chinese, a Cambodian, and a Spanish national. Five of them are around thirty, three are in their mid or late thirties, one in her late forties, and one in her early twenties. Three Filipino women, who are members of the Unification Church, came to Korea more than ten years ago, pointing to the earlier existence of transnational brides in South Korea. In general, the Unification Church initiated the earlier marriage migration into Korea as exemplified by these Filipino women. Among the rest of the women migrants, one has lived in Korea for about eight years, and six of the women from two to four years.

It is important to mention that there are differences between the two regions, Daegu and Dangjin. Daegu is one of the metropolises in South Korea, while Dangjin is a medium-sized town situated near rural areas. According to Hae, the organizer of the Daegu workshop, the women migrants living in Daegu have a relatively high level of education; and, in many cases, their spouse works in the city as a factory laborer, a construction worker, or a maintenance man. There are only a few whose husband has a white-collar job. Most of the women migrants living in Dangjin do not have a high level of education; and their husbands are generally manual workers. A few of the women migrants in Dangjin live in a rural area distant from the town, doing small-scale farm work.

Although the transnational brides I interviewed had little history of a romantic relationship with their spouse, many of them met their husband through personal connections

rather using international marriage brokerage services. Only Mijeong, a 22-years-old Cambodian woman, got married to her Korean husband through an international marriage agency where her aunt worked as a broker. According to Cheong-Seok Kim, the growth of international marriage brokerages brought about the increase of transnational brides since 2001 from Southeast and other poor countries of Asia, including the Philippines, Mongolia, Vietnam, and Cambodia (145-146). Indeed, current times have witnessed the increase of a specific type of interracial marriage, which can be categorized as “transnational labor migration” (H. Kim “Cultural” 80). Many of women migrants in Korea belong in the category of “transnational labor migration” because marriage provides women in developing countries with a chance to migrate to developed countries for better economic opportunities. As Hyeon, one of the instructors points out, the workshop participants are generally in better positions than other foreign wives in terms of economic conditions, family support, and educational backgrounds. It is probable to say that those women who came to Korea through international marriage brokers are more likely to be in deprived situations, considering the average clients of international marriage brokerage services. Also, they may have not had same knowledge about their Korean husbands before the marriage as those transnational brides who met their husbands through personal connections. Given that there exist differences among women migrants in Korea, the workshop participants can be described as less “marginalized” and more interested in the educational, cultural projects for women migrants.

The other group of the informants consists of Korean women. The two media/video-making instructors are in their mid-thirties, who have worked on independent filmmaking with a strong interest in women’s problems. The two Korean program organizer/coordinators are middle-aged women, who are older than the women migrants and the instructors. While the

instructors had no experiences of working with women migrants before the workshop, the coordinators developed a relatively close relationship with the women migrants because they had been in charge of the previous projects for transnational brides.

The initial contact with my informants was through the institutions that had supervised the media workshops for the women migrants: Dangjin Cultural Center and the Daegu Women Migrants Human Rights Center. The program organizers/coordinators, who are working for the institutions, informed the media workshop participants of the outline of my study, and helped me recruit the subjects. They knew much about the women migrants because they had worked on other projects for women migrants in the respective region for several years. After studying the women migrants' self-made videos, I conducted personal interviews with the "directors" in consideration of the individual authorship: eight of them had one-to-one interviews, and the two women, who are co-directors, talked to me together. Although group interviews are useful for promoting further discussions and sharing ideas among the subjects, I chose to do personal interviews because their differences in Korean language competency, age, and nationality could keep some women from telling their own stories in a group discussion. Each interview took about one hour on average and was tape-recorded. Some visual materials were used for eliciting discussions including the videos made by the subjects, the visual images from the Korean TV programs about women migrants, and the online advertisements of international marriage brokers.

Most of the interviews with the migrant women were carried out in Korean. All of the transnational brides could speak Korean, although there were considerable differences in their speaking abilities. Eight of them spoke mainly in Korean, one Filipino woman in English, and the Spanish woman used Spanish and English together. Some Filipino women spoke in English

occasionally when they could not think of proper words in Korean. In general, there was not much difficulty in communication between me and the women migrants. There was a little difficulty only in the case of the Spanish woman whose husband sometimes helped me communicate with her when she spoke in Spanish. Meanwhile, my interviews with the Korean workshop instructors and coordinators offered additional background information about both the video making process and the women migrants' lives, and enabled me to reflect on my discussions with the women migrants in more contextual terms.

The interview questions were mostly about the women migrants' engagement with the media workshops, focusing on the ways in which they have interacted with the visual media both in their everyday lives and during the media workshops. The interview topics included their personal history, transnational media consumption practices, reactions to the Korean media representation of women migrants, and experiences of the video making process. The Korean media instructors and coordinators discussed the general operation of the workshops, and reviewed the successful and disappointing aspects of their projects in light of transnational feminist media activism and women migrants' human rights. Given that my discussions with the women migrants contain some personal issues and sensitive subject matters, I use pseudonyms for all the women migrants and the Korean interviewees.

### **The Media Workshops for Women Migrants: Participatory Video and Self-Representation**

Not only does the recent development of new digital technologies allow more and more people to have an opportunity to express their ideas freely and distribute them easily; but the

increasing concern with subaltern agencies in theory and practice also brings out the use of video in marginalized communities projects. In general, there are two kinds of video-making projects: collaborative and participatory videos. According to Relebohile Moletsane et al., the collaborative video-making involves the researcher working with a group of participants to create a video production, while a group of participants primarily create their own video texts with only minimal assistance from the researcher in the participatory video-making (318). In this respect, the videos created by the women migrants can be described as the participatory video in that the media workshops were designed to enable the marginalized women to represent themselves through the use of the visual medium. As Mike Evans et al. points out, “Participatory video has emerged as a key tool in putting together process and product in ways that provide avenues for marginalized communities to participate both in forms of critical self-analysis and ways of self-representation” (87). The basic principle for the media workshop is the migrant women’s self-representation through portraying their feelings and thoughts by themselves. Hae, the coordinator for the Daegu workshop, stressed the unique value of the media workshop, differentiating it from the previous projects that permitted women migrants to learn particular things only necessary to adjust themselves to the Korean society, such as Korean language, foods, and cultural traditions. As Hyeon, one of the instructors pointed out, most of the existing projects for migrant women are actually to help Koreans get along with them more easily by teaching them Korean culture and language; but the media workshops are significant because it aimed to let the women migrants speak for themselves. According to Jung-Hye Yang’s study on the media representation of women migrants, the education projects for women migrants sponsored by the government are often presented as the solution for women migrant’s problems (61). In general, women migrants have been forced to learn Korean culture and life styles. Viewed in this light,

the media workshops are distinct from the existing projects because they aimed to let the women migrants' voices be heard.

The principle of self-representation was applied to the practical operation of the media workshops. In general, the media workshops were short-term projects; the Dangjin workshop took three weeks; and the Daegu video-making project was made up of eleven weekly sessions during the period of three months. The media workshops started with an exercise of self-expression; the migrant women were asked to make a storyboard using their personal photographs or other visual images, and to present their stories in front of the other participants. As Jin states, her role as the media workshop instructor was to bring up the basic idea, and then lead the women migrants to develop it on their own and share it with the others. Here, the concept of "transactional communication" is salient for understanding the participatory model. According to Hsian-Ann Liao's account, transactional communication is "the opposite of a one-way, persuasive process" and "a dialogue, wherein sender and receiver of messages interact to arrive at shared meanings and mutual understanding" (109). In this respect, the media workshops employed the idea of "transactional communication" so as to encourage individuals' participations and motivate collective actions of communities.

In a similar vein, the working principle of the media workshops is making a video "by" the women migrants, not creating a video neither "on" nor "for" them. For instance, the behind-the-scene documentary for the Dangjin workshop presents a scene in which the participants create a mind map, drawing pictures and assembling images. A Vietnamese woman talks about her tragic life characterized by a poor childhood, continuous labor, and little education, showing the image of a crying girl included in her mind map. A Filipino woman puts the picture of a lock and chains in her mind map; and then, in the next scene, she relates the image to her frustration

about her father-in-law who always wants to control her actions often making her feel trapped. In the interview, Suang, a Chinese participant, said she enjoyed the creation of a mind map: “It was very fun to make a story drawing pictures and picking out some images. It also gave me an opportunity to realize what the other participants thought and how they felt about their lives” The representation of the women migrants working on the introductory exercise of self-expression in the documentary points to the main concern of participatory communication. As Renuka Bery and Sara Stuart contend, participatory communication puts an emphasis on “who is communicating” because “who creates the message shapes its content, perspective, and impact” (305). The instructors were all aware of the position of the women migrants as the speaking subjects for the media workshops. The instructors, Jin and Hyeon, believe that the self-expressive accounts by members of marginalized communities are fundamentally different from those mediated representations by professional filmmakers, highlighting the importance of self-representation in feminist visual culture.

Along with the self-expression exercise, the media workshops allowed the women migrants to watch other independent or participatory videos made by other groups of women, such as adolescent girls, housewives, and women of disabilities, in order to help them develop their own ideas about the video making. According to instructor Jin, watching other women’s videos and films in the workshops is effective for both eliciting discussions and drawing attention to women’s issues. Jin wanted the women migrants to think about what messages their self-made videos would deliver to the audience, and to reflect on the meanings of their works as women migrants’ voices. Shabnam Virmani argues that “exposing women to the actions of women struggling elsewhere” provides exemplary models of women, and “contributes to the overall process of empowerment of women” (234). Not only does this kind of participatory or

activist media offer an opportunity to speak for themselves to members of marginalized communities; but it also produces the potential outlet for distributing and sharing their experiences and political beliefs.

In particular, video has its own merit as a more democratic and accessible medium for addressing the issues of underrepresented people. Pointing to the significance of video as a representational tool for developing grassroots movements, Virmani contends that video can “break through both the barriers of space (which theatre suffers from) and literacy (which the print media suffer from)” (234). In the interview, the participants talked about their general experience of the visual medium as a tool for self-expression:

Rina: It was very fun. Actually I had worried about how I could learn to make a video before the workshop began. I was more anxious than the others because my Korean was not good. I just tried to follow what the instructor taught me during the workshop. It was not difficult. I really enjoyed the workshop. I felt time pass faster when I was involved in the video-making.

Pat: I liked the video camera. It's easy for me to make a video. I didn't have enough time for working on my video, so I'd like to have more time if I had another chance to make a video.

Ann: To make a video was generally easy for me. The editing was a little difficult, but the shooting was easy and fun.

Given that the women migrants are neither fluent in Korean nor skilled in computer technology, video can be one of the most effective and accessible tools for them to represent themselves and exert their agencies.

Video is often considered an appropriate aid for self-expression, specifically, in the cases of marginalized communities of people, considering their relatively low levels of education and resources. However, it is important to note that the media workshops permitted the women migrants to have another kind of literacy; that is visual/media literacy. After the self-expression

and idea-development exercises, the women migrants learned to operate video cameras. The behind-the-scene documentary portrays their first encounter with the visual medium. The instructors explain all the details of the camera operation to the women migrants who seemed to be a little nervous, including how to turn it on, how to change batteries, and how to put a tape in the camera. As the women migrants operate the video cameras by themselves, the atmosphere begins to change. They go outside the building and shoot film of each other, talking and laughing over their cameras. According to instructor Jin, the women migrants' participation in the media workshops tend to have given them a sense of self-pride because their family members were often surprised at the fact that they made a video by themselves. Sumon Tuladhar, who studied on the participatory video-making project for women in rural Nepal, makes the point that the participatory video is generally designed to "break through the two stereotypical concepts on technology –first, gender bias; and second, the myth that video technology can only be done by professionals" (114). To be sure, the workshop participants were satisfied with their experiences of the video production as well as the people's reactions to them.

Lucy: It was fun to make a video. I enjoyed the overall process. I felt like I became a director. I didn't think I could make a video by myself without going to a film school or something.

Sehyun: After watching my video, many people said it was good. They said I did well although it was my first time to make a video. I had a lot of interviews because of my video. I want to make more videos if there is another chance.

Rose: I really enjoyed the video-making workshop. It was hard and time-consuming, but I felt good after finishing my video. Also, my experience of the workshop would be useful for other things. I think I can teach my children to make a video later.

In the context of the rapid development of digital technologies, the marginalized women's active engagement with the visual medium and the new computer technology provides them with

visual/media literacy and a sense of self-competence, which allow the women migrants to both access other outlets of communication and reconsider their overall capabilities.

In my interviews with the women migrants, all of them said they enjoyed the video-making production although it was sometimes difficult for them; and, in particular, they took much pleasure in the shooting process. In the behind-the-scene documentary of the Dangjin workshop, there is a scene in which the women migrants watched their recorded tapes together, commenting freely on them and sometimes laughing at the images. For the majority of the women, it was pleasant to watch each others' tapes together after they had finished shooting at home by themselves. Suang, a Chinese woman, says, "It was fun, especially, when we watched our recorded footage together at the cultural center. We often laughed at the other participants' mistakes." Sook, the coordinator for the Dangjin workshop, said that it was very entertaining to everyone to look at their recorded tapes together because they could enjoy their unsophisticated and natural presentations of their own lives. Here, the medium of video not only functioned as a tool for their self-expression, but it also facilitated communication among the participants.

Furthermore, according to coordinator Sook, the media workshops gave the women migrants a chance to have a closer relationship with the others as they shared their life stories participating in the self-expression exercises and watching the raw presentations of their family lives together. Highlighting the significance of collectivism in involving production practices, Virmani argues, "Filmmaking itself becomes a social process. Through this process, a group of women consolidate their sense of history and self, using the filmmaking exercise as a platform, as a tool" (236). Although the self-made videos produced in the media workshops are individual accounts of the migrant women, it is important to note that the collaborative process of the workshops provided the marginalized women with a sense of communal bond; and that their

video making experiences can be described as “a collectively negotiated articulation of a set of experiences, emotions, and convictions (236).

### **Transnational Brides, Home, and Displacement: Visual Autobiographies and More**

Given the basic purpose of the media workshops, the self-made videos by the women migrants are considered their visual autobiographies. In general, the running time of the videos is between four and seven minutes; and the subject matters are usually related to what they could easily find in their everyday lives, such as their family, daily routines, social activities, and key concerns. In terms of formal aspects, the videos are characterized by bilingual or multilingual audios and subtitles, the use of self-narration or self-interview, and the focus on the domestic space. In many cases, the family members of the women migrants participated in the video production, mainly in the shooting process. Given the general focus on the women migrants’ family life at home, their husband often helped them shoot their domestic life, such as doing household chores, studying Korean language, and spending time with the children. Because of the family member’s participation, some of the women migrants’ videos are similar to home videos. Although the quality of the videos is not sophisticated, the individual presentations of their experiences of dislocation and relocation illustrate the ways in which they struggle to adjust to the Korean society and culture, seeking to identify their locations in the contradictory dynamics among the global, the national, and the local.

It is not surprising that the women migrants’ stories about themselves tend to center on their family and domestic life because they are primarily housewives. Hyeon, one of the instructors, said that it was a little difficult for her to deal with the similar contents of the recorded tapes, which are mostly about their family lives often ending with a conventional image

of a happy family. Based on my interviews with the women migrants, many of them wanted to use their videos in order to show their lives in Korea to their family members in the home country. Also, it is noticeable that the video making process provided some of the women with an opportunity to take another look at their lives as if they wrote diaries of their own. Overall, considering the common characteristics of the videos and the women migrants' comments on their experiences of the workshops, I locate their self-made videos between letters and diaries.

In the women migrants' visual accounts of their lives, the self is often located between the new family in the host country and the original family in the home country, often pointing to their constant attempts to create a balance between the two families. In many cases, their self-representation is divided into two parts: one is a depiction of their family life in Korea and the other is a collection of their personal photographs, such as still images of their parents, sisters, brothers, and friends in the home country. For example, in the opening of one of the women migrants' videos entitled *Family*, the camera shows a house on the countryside in a long shot. Her voice-over narration says in Vietnamese, "Whenever I see this scenery, it reminds me of my hometown." After the title in both Korean and Vietnamese is shown, the shot of her wedding photo in which there are her parents-in-law, herself, and her husband, is followed by the photographic image of her big Vietnamese family. The camera then traces her contemporary life in Korea, showing her doing household chores and having a Korean breakfast with her husband. The ending section of the video features another wedding photo of her and her husband, and several images of her Korean life accompanied by a cheerful music. The ways in which she presents herself in the video demonstrate her attempt to locate her position between her original home and her new home in Korea, drawing attention to the tension between the two homes and multiple subjectivities of the displaced subject.

In a similar manner, Jenny, a Filipino woman, positions herself between her Korean family and her Filipino family. In the beginning of the video, holding the camera in her hand, Jenny introduces her Korean family including her mother-in-law, father-in-law, and husband within the domestic space. Then, the video presents her daily life, such as waking up her husband, having a meal with her parents-in-law, and going to church. The moving images of her Korean life are followed by the photographic images of her Filipino family paired with her voice-over narration in Korean. Her narration says, “I miss people in Philippine.” And then the images of her parents, sisters, brothers, and friends are accompanied by a joyful Filipino music. The video ends with her narration in Philippine, “I miss you all. I really miss you all.” As in the case of the Vietnamese bride’s video mentioned above, the connection between the Korean life and the Filipino life is found in the very title of Jenny’s video, “The Story about My Family.” The self-presentation in the two videos centers on the transnational brides’ relationship with the two families, which is crucial for them to (re)define their locations.

For Ella, a Filipino bride, her video, entitled *On the Way to My Parents-in-law’s House*, is a visual account of her longing for the original home and family. The video portrays Ella’s one day visit to her parents-in-law’s house in a rural region. Her camera follows each of her Korean family members, including her mother-in-law cooking in the kitchen, father-in-law working in the field, and husband talking to her father-in-law. On her way back home, the camera gazes into the dark tunnels as the car is moving through it; and then dissolves to the photographic images of her Filipino family. Her voice-over narration says that visiting her parents-in-law’s house tends to make her realize she misses her Filipino home and family. The video ends with her narration of a small hope that her family members could come to visit her soon and have a good time together in Korea.

Given that these women migrants visualize their original home only presenting their personal photographs, it is important to note that the renderings of the two homes are quite different because of the general perceptions regarding moving images and still images. The Korean home appears to be a reality, while the native home looks like fractions of memory or objects for nostalgia. However, the ways in which they trace their relocation from their parents' home to their husband' home signify their active attempts to locate themselves through lively reflection on home and displacement. Not only do the women migrants' visual accounts demonstrate how the experiences of displacement bring about their multiple sensitivities; but they also indicate their on-going negotiation between the two homes rather than an impulsive prioritization of one home over the other.

In general, the tension between the Korean home and the original home is salient for those women migrants who came to Korea several years ago. While the earlier generation of the transnational brides focuses on their current lives in Korea, the recently married women migrants tend to express their longing for the original home in a more explicit manner. The Korean instructors and coordinators mention that many of the participants wanted to use their works as a video letter to their family in the home country. They wanted to show their everyday lives in Korea to their parents, sisters, and brothers because it would be hard for their family members to visit Korea given the financial situation.

The women migrants' yearning for the original home and family is often materialized by the employment of epistolary forms into their self- representation. For instance, Suang, a Chinese woman, attempts to document her daily life and social activities through the use of the visual medium. Her video opens with a medium shot of her looking at one of the photo albums in the living room. As the camera zooms in on the photo of her family members back home, Suang's

narration says, “Whenever I look at these photos, I miss my home. I miss my mother and sisters. But I am not alone in Korea.” As in the case of Suang’s video, for most of the women migrants, the photographs of their original family and friends are central to their homesick sentimentality and nostalgia for home.

Suang: Photos... I used to take a lot of pictures in China. I took wedding photos here, but since then I haven’t taken many pictures. Whenever I miss my family, I tend to look at the photographs I brought from China. When cleaning the house, my husband often finds my family photos I looked at and told me, “Put away these photos.” And then, I say, “Oh, here they were. I forgot putting them here.” I tend to look at the photos regularly.

After Suang expresses her longing for her Chinese home, the video presents her daily activities, such as taking lessons at the cultural center with other foreign wives, having dinner with her husband, and studying Korean in her room. The audience then sees another shot of her looking at some photographs. This last sequence of the video displays the images of her photographs, which demonstrate how she lives in Korea and with whom she spends time. Her last remark is “I am happy and have fun in Korean life.” Overall, Suang’s self-made video is framed as a letter addressed to her family members back home, which aims to let them know she is well and happy in Korea.

Likewise, the video made by Lucy, a Filipino woman, entitled *A Letter to My Dear Mom*, takes the form of a letter. Lucy’s video portrays her daily routines and social activities, such as reading books to her son, taking cooking lessons at the local institute, and riding a bicycle on the street. By the end of the video, Lucy speaks to her mother in Philippine sitting with her son in front of the camera. She says to the camera, “I hope you are always well. You don’t need to worry about me. I love you all.” As in the case of Suang’s work, Lucy’s video serves as a letter addressed to her mother back home, which reflects her desire to show her new life in Korea to her mother. In the interview, Lucy said, “My mother was worried about me very much. So I

wanted to show her how I live in Korea. I wanted to let her know that she doesn't need to worry about me because I'm doing okay. ... I have only one hope. I hope my mother will visit Korea to see me soon." In a sense, given the intention to send the videos to their original family, these two women's visual accounts attempt to highlight the lively aspects of their lives in Korea, rather than explicitly addressing their longing for home and feelings of displacement.

Pointing to "epistolary" as a distinct characteristic of postcolonial, exilic, and diasporic filmmaking, Hamid Naficy notes that "exile and epistolarity are constitutively linked because both are driven by distance, separation, absence, loss, and by the desire to bridge the multiple gaps" (101). Drawing on Naficy's categorization, the women migrants' videos like Suang's belong into the genre of "letter-films" in that they take "the form of epistles addressed to someone either inside or outside the diegesis" (101). Although these women's works do not directly involve the epistolary media such as airmails, international phone calls, and emails, not only their mode of address but also their overall format brings out the women migrants' diasporic sensitivities and nostalgic feelings.

The women migrants' videos, characterized by epistolary designs, often present the seemingly positive aspects of their everyday life in Korea, such as their happy moment with their Korean family, active involvement in the institutional projects or local events, and gathering with other transnational brides. However, for some displaced women, the life in Korea is often inscribed with a sense of confusion and loneliness; and their self-made videos function as a tool for expressing a feeling of despair and displacement. For instance, Pat, a Filipino woman, portrays her Korean home as a site of contestation, shedding light on the ways in which a displaced subject adjusts to new cultural surroundings. After introducing herself in front of the camera, she begins to show her life in Korea. The next scene is in her parents-in-law's house

where Pat is busy preparing food for the ancestral rites table in the kitchen. The images of Pat preparing food alone in the kitchen are juxtaposed with those of her in-laws talking to each other in the living room. Her voice-over narration says that performing ancestral rites is the most difficult work for her because she has to prepare a lot of food and get along with her Korean in-laws. After the in-laws are gone, her husband comes to the kitchen holding the camera in his hand. He asks, “Are you still washing dishes?” Pat replies, “Yes, I’m almost done,” and the camera pans to a mountain of the washed dishes on the counter top. Although her voice-over narration says that her husband tries to help her and makes her laugh, the visualization of her Korean life as the eldest daughter-in-law signifies a feeling of despair, as well as a sense of contestation within the home. When asked about her family members’ reactions to her video during the interview, Pat points to the problematic aspect of her video:

Actually, my parents-in-law didn’t see my video. In my video, I talked about the huge responsibility of the eldest daughter-in-law and the burden of holding ancestral rites. So, I don’t want my parents-in-laws to watch my video. My husband said it was good. He knows holding ancestral rites is very hard. He doesn’t like the tradition either.  
Question: Were there any questions about the ancestral rites sequence at the screening?  
Yes, there were a few. Someone asked me if my mother-in-law knew about that. I said, “Yes. She knows.” Actually, I lied at the screening.

Not only does Pat’s video display her displaced position and feelings of frustration and confusion over the cultural difference, but it also points to the patriarchal dynamics inherent in the Korean family relations. My interviews with the women migrants also reflect their struggles to adjust to the Korean patriarchal culture:

Sehyun: I sometimes feel annoyed at Korean TV dramas.  
Question: What aspects do make you annoyed?  
Sehyun: In many cases, the parents-in-law are against their son’s marriage. If their son’s lover gives birth to a child, the mother-in-law forces her to give up her baby. There are many of this kind of stories.

Suang: I don't like to watch the Korean TV dramas which deal with the relationship between the daughter-in-law and the mother-in-law. There are lots of them and they are very similar to everyday realities. I get irritated whenever I watch the mother-in-law being hard on the daughter-in-law.

Ann: I think the Korean culture is very different from my home country's. If people get married in my country, they can do all the things as they want to. They can do house chores together, if they want to. The parents-in-law rarely interfere their daughter-in-law's life in my country.

As these accounts indicate, the women migrants tend to experience difficulty in situating themselves in the existing order of the Korean patriarchal family. When asked about their consumption of Korean TV programs, most of the women migrants expressed their dislike of the Korean TV dramas centering on the conflict between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law. This points to the women migrants' frustration over the cultural differences, and illustrates the ways in which their specific locations relate to their media consumption practices.

In the epilogue of Pat's video, the contestation within the home is once again represented in the relationship between Pat and her husband. Pat is shooting film of her husband, who is sitting in the living room taking care of some plants. Holding the camera in her hand, Pat asks her husband about his hobbies. As he talks about his hobbies, such as gardening and raising rabbits as pets, Pat moves the camera from her husband to the plants and then moves back to him. As her camera only stares at the plants for a while, her husband asks her to pan the camera to him several times waving his hand. Finally, he gets angry and cries out, "Why did you move the camera all the time when I was talking? I don't want to talk any longer." Her video ends with the still image of his angry face accompanied by the sound of lilting music. As in the case of the ancestral rites sequence, Pat's epilogue visualizes the idea of home as "a contested domain: an arena where differing interests struggle to define their own spaces within which to localize and cultivate their identity" (Fog-Olwig 226). Also, the ending sequence testifies to the power

relation between the subject and the object of looking. Pat talked about the epilogue in the interview:

Actually I didn't pay attention to my husband. I just wanted to shoot the plants. My husband got really angry. He said that he won't help me with the video any more. It seems that he really wanted to talk about his hobbies. I didn't want that part to be included in the video, but the instructors encouraged me to do. Many people said the epilogue was very funny.

Although Pat's epilogue is considered a humorous rendering of her relationship with her husband, it is important to note that Pat's video exhibits a sense of contestation and the power dynamics within the home site in a frank manner.

Furthermore, Nana, a young Vietnamese woman, presents her emotional conflicts and longing for home in the video. After the title, *Longing and Dreaming*, Nana is shown in a medium shot, sitting on the corner of the room. Staring at the camera, she says, "We have our breakfast between 5:00 and 6:00 am. After my husband goes to work, I am all alone at home. I am sad and lonely." Along with the photographic image of a city in Vietnam, the audience hears her singing a sentimental song in Vietnamese. The lyrics say, "I miss my home wherever I am. I love you where you are. Wind and cloud cry since you're gone. Are you happier far from here? All by myself I'm soothing my longing." This sentimental song is accompanied by a series of shots of Nana in which she is gazing into the distance over the sky, singing softly, and sitting alone in the room. These self images of Nana are juxtaposed with the symbolic images of her loneliness and longing for home, such as a flying helicopter over her apartment building, a bird in the sky, and the urban scenery of Vietnam. All the visual images paired with her voice singing the sentimental Vietnamese song materialize her everyday experiences of physical and

psychological displacement. Overall, Nana's video is quite different from the other women migrants' works in terms of its sentimental mood and close attention to her emotional turmoil.

Given the forthright presentation of Nana's feelings of loneliness and despair, it is important to look at the ways in which the other participants react to her works. Coordinator Sook said she was very surprised at Nana's video, although it does not contain specific messages:

Maybe because I heard about how Nana got married to her husband. He has kind of mental disability. His disability seems to be very serious. Even when Nana came to register for the cultural center, another person had to escort her and her husband to here. Whenever I think about her, I cannot help but wonder how long she could live here. How could she continue to live like that? I sometimes talk to my husband about her situation, feeling confused. I think she's good at singing. I'd like to give her an opportunity to develop her talent. After listening to what I said, my husband said, "If you did that, you would destroy her family."

Not only did coordinator Sook understand Nana's visual account in contextual terms, but she also related Nana's situation to her own personal experiences as a woman. Likewise, some of the other women migrants tend to pay attention to Nana's honest presentation of her life as a lonely foreign wife. In the behind-the-scene documentary, Nana's interview is intercut with the visual images from her video. Nana says, "I don't know about my hope in the future. I don't know about my husband's situation exactly. I don't know what I can expect from him." The camera cuts to the two women migrants, who are watching Nana's video in the editing room. Along with the intercutting shots of the two women looking at the video and the images from Nana's video, the audience hears their instant reactions to Nana's self-representation:

Suang: Aren't there any shots of her husband?

Rina: No.

Suang: I feel heartbroken because it's too sad. I feel like crying.

Rina: She's alone.

Suang: Isn't she feeling lonely? She looks like being in agony.

Rina: She is still alone. I feel bad seeing that she is alone all the time.

As they have observed, the self-made video by Nana only focuses on her inner self, while most of the women migrants' videos center on their relationships with family. Nana's video includes neither a single shot of her husband nor an image of herself as a housewife. Although I could not have a chance to interview Nana because of the worsened situation of her marriage, it is important to mention that Nana's involvement in the video-making process permitted her to express her emotional conflicts and allowed the other participants to rethink the experiences of dislocation/relocation. As a means to reflect on her emotional distress and psychological displacement, Nana's self-made video is considered a secret diary in which she could express her inner feelings or reveal deep frustration about her displaced position in the foreign country.

Meanwhile, for those women migrants who have lived in Korea for about ten years, their videos of self-representation do not necessarily involve the tension between the native home and the Korean home. As in the case of Nana's video, the early comers' visual accounts of their lives can be categorized as diaries because their engagement with the visual medium allows them to reconsider their positions and identities. For example, Sehyun, a Vietnamese woman, who came to Korea nine years ago, presents her daily life and introduces her family members in the video, just as the new group of foreign wives do. However, Sehyun's video does not deal with her original family back home, only centering on her life in Korea as mother and wife in a multicultural family. Sehyun's video starts with her short remarks on her experience of displacement, which are also shown in subtitles. She says, "Since I came to Korea, I have been sad and missed my family and friends so much. However, as time passed, I have my babies and feel much happier." Sehyun's video portrays her domestic life and everyday interactions with the family members, highlighting the fact that she is now happy with her husband and two daughters although she had many difficulties adjusting to Korean culture. In this manner, Sehyun's

engagement with the visual medium provides her with an opportunity to look back on her life in Korea, and redefine her current location. When asked how she felt on the completion of her video during the interview, she says, “I felt happy when I finished my work. It was the first time for me to make a video by myself. I felt good and comforted because I told my inner feelings and thoughts making the video. I cried many times during the process.” Considering her previous experiences as a foreign wife, it is understandable that Sehyun’s video functions as a diary in which she is finally allowed to reveal herself, looking back on her thorny passage of life from Vietnam to Korea.

The video made by Rina, a Filipino woman, shares some similarities with Sehyun’s video. Rina, who is 49 years old and a member of the Unification Church, came to Korea 13 years ago after she got married to a Korean man. Similar to Sehyun’s account, Rina’s video begins with Rina’s self-interview. Rina speaks to the camera in broken English and a little bit of Korean, “I made this video. I hope you understand it. Thank you for watching. I hope you like this program. Sorry I do not speak “Korean” [han’gukmal] very much. Watch my video tape. Thank you.” And then, the camera cuts to Rina’s house in a rural region, and follows Rina to the kitchen, bathroom, bedroom, and living room presenting her everyday life with her husband and three daughters. Rina’s video briefly deals with her past, showing the photographic images of her Filipino friends, the wedding ceremony, the marriage oath of the Unification Church, and her family travel to Philippine. Nevertheless, just as Sehyun’s video centers on her contemporary life in Korea, Rina’s video focuses mainly on the Korean home, not her original home. In Rina’s video, there is a scene in which she visits the next door granny’s house. From Rina’s point of view, the camera moves into a small, outdated house, and looks at an aged Korean woman, who seems to be extremely sick and weak, lying down on the floor. Rina’s voice-over narration says, “Just like

my mother-in-law... lying down... She was very sick. The granny reminds me of my mother-in-law. I'm showing a video of the granny because I miss my mother-in-law." For Rina, making a video about herself offers an opportunity to remember her past, and reminds her of the hard times. When asked about her personal history during the interview, Rina talks about the troubling relationship with her mother-in-law:

I was very stressed because of my mother-in-law. It was so hard in the earlier times. My mother-in-law was very ill. I worked very hard to take care of her. I wanted to learn Korean in the church, but I couldn't because I had to look after my mother-in-law and children by myself. I couldn't go out and had to stay at home all the time. My mother-in-law died three years ago. After that, I could go out, learn Korean in the cultural center, and meet with other people. I really enjoy the recent changes.

Although Sehyun's and Rina's videos focus on their everyday activities as in the cases of the new comers' works, the representations of the two women's lives demonstrate their conscious efforts toward self-reflection rather than their longing for the original home. In a sense, the reason that Sehyun's and Rina's videos are mainly concerned with their lives in Korea may be their experiences of economic hardships and emotional sufferings before they came to Korea.

Question: How do you feel about your life in Korea?

Sehyun: Korea is much better than Vietnam in terms of the living conditions and the family life. Actually, my life in Vietnam was very hard. I couldn't go to school much when I was little. Even though I went to school from time to time, I had to go home early to prepare meals. I was seven or eight years old. I couldn't finish my elementary school. My family was very poor. I wanted to play when I was little, but I couldn't. Although my father made side dishes, I had to cook rice and soup. I had to burn trees and leaves to cook. It was too difficult for me. I feel angry and sad whenever I think of those times.

Rina: I did not live only in Philippine. I used to live in Singapore and Hong Kong.

Question: Why did you live in those countries? Was it because of your job?

Rina: Yes, I just went there in order to make money. I have six brothers. All of my brothers got college education and got a good job, but I couldn't go to a college.

Question: When did you begin to work?

Rina: I was 21 or 22 years old when I came to Singapore. At first I couldn't get a job because I was too young. So I changed my age to 28 years old on my immigration document and then I began to work. ... I worked at a restaurant. I also worked as a

domestic worker. Sometime I couldn't sleep more than two hours a day. I worked in Singapore about four years and then in Hong Kong about five years.

Just like Sehyun, Rina said in the interview that she was very happy about her video. Instructor Sook said she was surprised at Rina's active involvement in the media workshop. According to Sook's account, although Rina was so shy that she was reluctant to show her recorded tapes to the class, she was actually the most enthusiastic participant who often spent the longest time in shooting. Both Sehyun's and Rina's videos display their lively interactions with the camera as a tool for self-expression. Their videos share a section of self-interview in which each of them talk about their feelings and thoughts in front of the camera. In the case of Sehyun's video, she is alone at home after her daughters left for the kindergarten. Sitting in a dining chair, Sehyun talks to the camera about her domestic life and Korean language studies. Likewise, in Rina's visual account, she sits in front of the camera in the living room after seeing off her husband and children. Looking directly at the camera, she begins to speak in Korean and then continues to speak in English. She states, "I can't speak Korean very well. I don't know how to write Korean. I feel very... very sorry to my husband and children. But I'm confident. I will study harder and learn from the children. I'd like to do my best. I wanna be a Korean because I'm here. I wanna speak Korean well." Viewed in this light, their use of the video camera enables them to talk about themselves and, more importantly, to have time to themselves.

While Sehyun and Rina utilize the medium of video in reflecting on their past, the two middle-aged Filipino women, Rose and Ann, attempt to find a way to help other women migrants using the visual medium. Both Rose and Ann are members of the Unification Church and came to Korea in 1997. Their video, entitled *Learning Korean Language*, aims to give information about Korean language classes to women migrants who recently came to Korea.

Their visual account, the only video which centers on neither family issues nor domestic surroundings, introduces Korean language classes in the community centers, and presents interviews with the women migrants and the instructors involved in the classes. Standing in front of the camera, Rose and Ann encourage “new comers” to come to study the Korean language, and inform them of the contact information along with the subtitles. When asked about the reason for making this video during the interview, they said they had difficulty in learning Korean because there was no place for women migrants to study Korean before:

Rose: Our experiences made us realize that women migrants should learn Korean language as soon as possible. There was a friend of mine who got divorced because of communication difficulty. If you learn to speak Korean, you can communicate with Korean family members.

Question: Were there many couples who got separated because of communication problems?

Rose: Yes, there were many.

Ann: My reason is the same. I wanted to let other women migrants know that there are Korean language classes nearby. And, I wanted to tell them not to feel lonely. I wanted to show where the community centers are. If a mother-in-law gets this information, she could make her daughter-in-law go to one of the centers to study Korean language.

For Rose and Ann, their interactions with the medium of video provide them with an opportunity to think about their previous experiences in Korea and to relate them to current situations. While Sehyun and Rina employ the visual medium into self-reflection on their lives in Korea, Rose and Ann utilize the medium in order to help new transnational brides based on their actual experiences.

To be sure, for the earlier generation of women migrants, the life in Korea means a constant struggle to adjust to the new cultural environments and to overcome everyday prejudice and discrimination. In many cases, when the women migrants talk about themselves, their stories often involve the experiences of unfair treatment and gendered values in the Korean society:

Sehyun: I and my husband once visited his aunt's house when we went to the Vietnamese Embassy in Seoul. His aunt thought I couldn't understand Korean. When I was in a different room, she told my husband, "If your wife won't give birth to a boy next time, you need to let her go back to Vietnam." Neither she nor my husband knew that I overheard what she said. I cried a lot and felt very miserable after I heard that. How could she say that?

Jenny: I really want to have Korean parents-in-law realize we are the same, we are human, and we have feelings. I tend to cry because of my parents-in-law. They don't know anything about my culture. I feel they like me but sometimes they speak bad words to me. I haven't got bad words from my parents.

Suang: There is no difference between men and women in China. If there is work, men and women work together. To work together is okay with my husband, but it is not okay with my parents-in-law. When we went to my parents-in-law's house, my husband tried to help me make dishes in the kitchen. My mother-in-law said, "Men should not do this kind of work." I couldn't understand why Korean men shouldn't do domestic work.

Pat: A few months ago, I went to a grocery store and bought a drink. Its price was 2000 won. I handed 10,000 won to a cashier, who was a middle-aged Korean woman. She gave me back only 5000 won, not 8000 won. As I pointed out her mistake, she just said, "I'm sorry" without any further explanation, and gave me the rest of the change. She must have tried to deceive me because I'm a foreigner. I experienced many cases like that.

As exemplified by these women migrants' experiences, transnational brides' lives are often inscribed by both prejudice toward the "Other" from Southeast and other underdeveloped countries in Asia, and forceful imposition of patriarchal norms of Korean culture. Considering the relatively marginalized positions of the women migrants in the host country, their engagement with the communication medium allows them to reveal their feelings of confusion and frustration. According to Hae, one of the coordinators, she has been trying to find a good project for women migrants, which enables them to express themselves and feel relieved or fulfilled after finishing it, as in the cases of video making and theatre play workshops. Likewise, coordinator Sook points out, "The media workshop project provided me with an opportunity to rethink about women migrants' issues in a different angle. As the workshop proceeded, they

could expose their painful experiences in living the life of displacement and uncover their own voices.” Given the marginalized status of women migrants, the use of visual media as an aid for self-expression is effective for both making the marginalized voices heard and developing a ground for grassroots media activism.

It is important to mention that the self-made videos by the women migrants illustrate differences among women. Most salient is the case of Helena’s work. Helena, a Spanish woman, who is the only European woman among the participants, came to Korea five years ago after she got married to her Korean husband in Spain. Her video, entitled *Connection*, is based on her philosophical ideas about science, nature, and people, and makes the point that there should be no discrimination since all human beings originate from the same place. Her video is made with excerpts from nature documentaries and photographic images of her family members, ending with a positive slogan, “Let’s make a better world. Fighting! ” When I asked about why she made this video, she said that her video was basically aimed for her friends in the center:

Helena: I hope people see that movie. I hope my friends (women migrants) understand my video and I hope it could affect their lives. I think there is no fault with those who get discriminated. It is the fault of those who discriminate them. I want to let them know that it’s not your fault and that you don’t need to care what others say.

Question: Did you make the video in order to show it to the other migrant women?

Helena: Yes, I wanted them to see it, although I had been thinking about the idea for a very long time.

Question: What were the reactions to your video?

Helena: I got the similar questions as you had. Many people said my video is different from the others’ works.

Just as her video is different from the other women migrants’ works, the ways in which she lives in Korea as a foreign wife are different from the others given that she has relatively less pressure to adjust to Korean culture. For one thing, she can communicate with her husband

without learning Korean language because he speaks Spanish at home. Moreover, when asked about her reactions to the Korean TV programs about women migrants, Helena said that she did not like the programs' overall representation of transnational brides. Helena states, "Many of Korean parents-in-law often tell foreign wives that you need to be a Korean in order to live here. But I don't like the idea. There exist other foreign people who do not live like that. ... I feel these programs seem to impose the particular ways of life on women migrants." Given the widespread racism against dark-colored people and the biased look at migrant people from underdeveloped countries in Asia within the Korean society, it is understandable that Helena's experience is quite different from the other women migrants' everyday encounters with Koreans. Although Helena belongs in the group of transnational brides, her differences of race, ethnicity, nationality, and cultural background allow her to locate her position somewhat distant from the other foreign wives. In a sense, Helena's different position permits her to critique the discriminative practices of the host country even though she does not necessarily identify with the victims of the discrimination.

### **Toward Transnational Feminist Media Practices: Critiques and Activisms**

Given the differences of race, ethnicity, nationality, and cultural/educational background among the women migrants, it is important to note that the media workshops can be considered a site of transnational women's alliance. Also, the development of relationships between the foreign participants and the Korean instructors and coordinators adds another dimension to the transnational feminist approaches to feminist media activism. Since the purpose of the media workshops was to enable the displaced women to express themselves in visual forms, the overall

progress of the workshops was governed by the working principle of making their voices heard. During the interview, instructor Jin confessed that it was difficult for her to get close to the women migrants at first because they often got victimized and hurt living the life of displacement. Jin says, “I decided not to be hesitant to ask them questions. I told them that I would ask them any questions whenever I get curious, and that it would be entirely up to them to answer the questions I asked. They could talk to me about their personal stories only if they’d like to.” While Jin was trying to be cautious in approaching the women migrants in consideration of their specific situations, instructor Hyeon had some difficulty in encouraging the participants to reveal themselves to the others. Hyeon states, “Some women talked about their concerns and troubling experiences. But many of the women’s stories could be summarized as the idea that “I’m happy with my family in Korea.” I had to realize that it was hard for them to share their personal experiences without knowing each other very well. I could not force them to do that.” Given the general marginalization of the women migrants in the host country, it is necessary to explore not only how the use of visual media serves as an aid for self-representation, but also how it could facilitate discussions about their lives and affect the group dynamics of the workshops.

While the women migrants’ experiences of displacement attest to more careful approaches to the creation of communal environments, the differences among them attest to the need to be attentive to their different backgrounds and concerns. Instructor Hyeon calls attention to the formation of the class itself, which is made up of women from different nations:

It was hard for me that different nationals were mixed in the same group. There were several Filipino women, so it was good that they could help each other. But, in case there was only one national, it was difficult to help her. Another problem is that there was huge difference in computer skills among them. Although they were grouped together as women migrants, I think more specialized, differentiated trainings are required. I’m

thinking about employing some of the women migrants, who are good at speaking Korean and operating cameras and computers, as teaching assistants for upcoming workshops.

While communication problems could be resolved through the inclusion of translators in the process, as in the case of the media workshop in Dangjin, the gap in computer skills among the women migrants requires more consideration in organizing a media workshop, drawing attention to the issue of unequal access to digital technologies in the context of cultural globalization.

In terms of the use of visual media in everyday life, there exist differences in the ways in which they engage with digital technologies. For instance, Mijeong, a 22- year- old Cambodian woman, said that she had never used a computer in Cambodia. She learned to use computer programs as she participated in the media workshop. On the other hand, Jenny, a 31- year- old Filipino woman, said that she contacts her Filipino family every day using a web cam, online chatting programs, and personal blog services. The apparent digital divide between the women migrants is related to their differences of nationality, class, and cultural/educational background. Mijeong, who worked at a hair shop in Cambodia, is the eldest daughter of a poor family in a rural area. She got married to her husband because her aunt, who was working for an international marriage agency, arranged a meeting with the Korean man. Jenny, a college graduate, worked for a company in Philippine, and met with her Korean husband through her Filipino friend. She is now working as an English instructor in a private education institute. As the significant gap between the two women indicates, transnational feminist projects should be designed to consider differences among women. More importantly, considering the

sophisticated broadband infrastructure in Korea,<sup>7</sup> not only is the women migrants' achievement of computer skills necessary for them to be aware of the socio-political conditions of the host society, but it also is significant for both communicating with others and finding an outlet for presenting their own voices.

Given the diversity of women migrants, there exist some difficulties in offering inclusive methods and differentiated contents. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that women's transnational collaboration in the media workshops produces a communal environment for the women migrants, where they could raise their own voices and exert their agencies.

Sehyun: I really enjoyed working with the instructors. They treated me like a sister. Whenever I asked questions, they answered kindly and taught me the same thing several times. I cried when the workshop was over. They were so kind.

Suang: I liked the instructors' general attitude. They were kind and enthusiastic.

Mijeong: The instructors helped me a lot. I couldn't speak Korean well. I hadn't used a computer before the workshop. They made extra efforts to teach me.

In particular, the screening itself is central to the creation of communal environments. The participants' reactions to their videos at the screening allows for a reassessment of the power of participatory video:

Pat: I cried after I saw the completed version of my video. I really liked it. I was very impressed. The participants watched the videos together and all of us cried. I didn't know how I would feel upon the completion of my video. I finally realized I made my own video when I watched the final version.

Hyeon: I was really shocked.

Question: Why do you think they all cried?

Hyeon: I think maybe they became emotional because they saw the images of their family members back home in the videos. I was so surprised that I began to consider

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<sup>7</sup> According to Harvard's Berkman Center for Internet and Society, Japan, Sweden, and South Korea are highest ranked in Internet broadband access among 30 OECD countries. For further information, see "Next Generation Connectivity: A Review of Broadband Internet Transitions and Policy from Around the World." *Federal Communications Commission*, 13 October 09. Web. 27 January 10.

doing more projects with the women migrants. For me, the workshop was just another work at first, but their reactions at the screening made me want to continue to work with them.

According to coordinator Sook for the Dangjin workshop, the women migrants' participation in the women's film festival had a good influence on their lives. Sook said their involvement in the screening lessened the pains they experienced as displaced subjects because it was the first time for them to be recognized as an agent. In my interviews with the women migrants, they talked about their participation in the screenings:

Rina: I did not know at first my video would be shown to other people. I was worried a lot because my video was not good. Many neighbors came to the screening, including my family. Some of them saw my interview on TV and recognized me. My husband really liked their interest in my video and my daughters were very proud of me.

Jenny: I enjoyed the film festival. I made new friends through the festival including a Filipino friend.

Rose: I really enjoyed the screening. I finally realized that I made a video by myself although it was not perfect. After the screening, many people said that they were very impressed and that my video was great. And some people asked me about why I chose my topic and how I worked on my video.

Lucy: I was very surprised that many people came to the screening. I wanted them to get rid of their existing prejudices about foreign wives after watching the videos.

Viewed in this light, the screening in which they are positioned as the "authors" of their videos, functions as an important site for both making the women migrants' voices heard, and sharing their ideas and feelings with other women.

The screening of the women migrants' videos constructs communal environments for the women migrants as well as Korean women. In the interview, pointing to the role of the media workshop in developing further feminist discussions and activist projects in the local context, instructor Jin said she was very satisfied with the audiences' reactions to the women migrants' videos at the screening in the region where these women lived:

The number of the audience was more than 150. The reactions were good. Many Korean women's reactions include "Their problems are the same as ours," "It must be harder for them because they are foreigners." I think the Korean women could understand the women migrants' problems in light of overall gender problems. There was no social worker who takes care of women migrants in the region. I heard one social worker who had been in charge of youth programs began to have interest in the issues of women migrants after the screening, and then changed her area of work. I believe this would be an achievement of the media workshop. The media workshop is not just for making a video and learning some technical skills, but for helping underrepresented people speak for themselves and communicate with more people.

Given the participatory communication of feminist media projects as in the cases of the media workshops, it is important to consider not only the ways in which marginalized communities of women engage with visual media, but also how they utilize their visual accounts for distributing their ideas and beliefs. As Alexandra Juhasz has observed, "feminist collaboration can be fully realized only when it creates feminist reception" (91). As instructor Jin's experience of the screening demonstrates, the feminist reception at the screening creates another ground for transnational feminist alliances, and makes the screening itself a safe and inclusive community for women. Moreover, in the context of the rapid increase of transnational brides in Korea, raising awareness among the local people is essential for helping the women migrants adjust to the new cultural surroundings.

Considering the potential of transnational feminist media activism, the media workshops are described as an important cornerstone for further development. For instructor Hyeon, the most valuable achievement of the media workshops would be the participants themselves, who could become media activists for their community:

I want to develop several media activists out of the media workshop. Next year, they could continue to work on another media workshop. I hope someday the women migrants bring their self-made videos to local broadcasting stations to get them to be aired. After the air time is fixed, they would encourage their community members to watch the video. I hope they contact other communities to form a network and then organize another screening.

As Hyeon states, the purpose of participatory media projects for marginalized communities of women is not just enabling them to present themselves, but allowing them to circulate their own voices and to develop their political power. For coordinator Hae, the women migrants' critical perspectives made her realize their political potential as media activists for their community:

We once discussed the differences between the Korean womanhood and the womanhood in their home countries. I was surprised at their sharp and thoughtful critiques. I even thought why these bright women made their videos just on their family. I felt their perspectives were critical.

The practices of participatory media as in the cases of the media workshops are quite different from those of the mainstream media, given that the authors of the texts are essentially the subjects.

The women migrants' experiences with the Korean society lead them to have a strong desire to talk about themselves in their own voices. When asked about possible subject matters for future projects in the interview, Rose said that she would like to show foreign wives' energetic activities in the Korean society, such as doing social services and working as a multicultural instructor for children, which prove they could do anything just like Korean women. For Ann, her next project would be an education program which informs Korean parents-in-law of the culture of their daughter-in-law. In a similar spirit, Sehyun said she would like to make a video for her Korean female neighbors so as to explain cultural differences among Asian countries, such as how Vietnamese people are different from Japanese people. Pointing to the common threads of women centered media, Ariel Dougherty argues that the "media evolve from needs, not impose some prescription of commercial media onto people." Given the existing conventions of victimization and Othering in representation of marginalized

communities of women, their grassroots media activism should be based on their “needs” to present their voices and views. Indeed, as Jung-Hye Yang has observed, the Korean media does not shed much light on women migrants’ experiences and voices. According to Yang, they are ranked as the third largest sources for news on women migrants’ issues, but their roles are very limited mainly serving as the “reactor” (71). Viewed in this light, as the women migrants’ plans for their future projects demonstrate, not only does their involvement in the video-making process help them redefine their locations and identify their “needs,” it also leads them to work toward the creation of alternative representations.

### **Conclusion**

The self-made videos by the women migrants can be described as visual autobiographies, which are generally placed between letters and diaries. The women migrants’ experiences of dislocation/relocation are often represented by the tension between the native home and the Korean home, although the videos display differences in the degree of the tension and the longing for the original home. The visual and textual differences of the videos illustrate the women migrants’ different experiences of displacement and home in terms of the duration of Korean life, the cultural/educational backgrounds, and the issues of class, ethnicity, and nationality. Considering the general focus on self-representation in the media workshops, many of the videos are characterized by the use of self voice-over narration or self interview, the presentation of their personal histories, the attention to the domestic space, and the different visual registers between the moving images and the photographic images.

Given the centrality of the tension between the original home and the new home to the women migrants’ videos, Efren Cuevas’ discussion of immigrant autobiographic films is

relevant for understanding the displaced women's visual representations of the self. Drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's chronotopic analysis of literature, Cuevas points out that the chronotopic approach is helpful in the study of immigrant accounts because it "foregrounds the temporal and spatial experience so crucial in immigrant lives" (59). For Bakhtin, the focus on time and space is essential for analyzing the narrative: "It is precisely the chronotope that provides the ground essential for the showing-forth, the representability of events. And this is so thanks precisely to the special increase in density and concreteness of time markers –the time of human life, of historical time –that occurs within well-delineated spatial areas" (250). In this respect, the women migrants' autobiographic accounts implicate the significance of their experiences of time and space. For instance, the difference between the photographic images of their original home and family and the moving images of their new Korean home and family attests to a "time marker," pointing to the temporal passage from their home country to Korea.

Furthermore, the focus on the domestic space in the women migrants' videos indicates their quest for "home," or the displaced subjects' strong desire to settle in the new place. Although the women migrants' concern with the domestic space can be related to their position as housewives, it is important to note that the spatial representation of the self in the present times vis-à-vis the rendering of their past through the photographic images of their original home and family with little spatial markers not only underscores the successful creation of "home" in the host country, but also signifies the temporal distance between the two homes. With the exception of Nana, the ways in which the women migrants place themselves with their husband and children in the current domestic space illustrate their desired or identified position as a dweller/resident, not as a wanderer/stranger in the foreign land. Moreover, the use of self-narration or self-interview in the videos brings out the women migrants' completion of the

process of dislocation/relocation in that their words tend to summarize their experiences of the past, highlighting a sense of recollection and a feeling of equilibrium. Overall, most of the visual autobiographies by the displaced women demonstrate their spatial and temporal experiences of displacement and home.

The media workshops for the women migrants can be considered an attempt to create a transnational feminist alliance through their active interactions with visual culture. Not only does the displaced women's use of video help them identify their locations in the complex dynamics among the global/the national/the local, but it also allows them to communicate with others within a communal environment. Pointing to the power of video to transform individuals and environments, Shirley A. White notes, "While video is a tool, it becomes more than a tool when used within developmental conceptual frameworks such as self-concept, reflective listening, dialog, conflict management, or consensus building" (100). As exemplified by the cases of the media workshops for the women migrants, a participatory engagement with the visual medium produces some changes for marginalized communities of people.

In terms of transnational feminist collaboration, the media workshops create a starting ground for transnational feminist media activism. As Virmani points out, participatory videos like the women migrants' works "can be used to 'close the loop' and move us away from dominant, vertical modes of communication into more dynamic lateral and circular ones" (234). Calling attention to the women migrants' desire to work on journalistic projects and team works, instructor Hyeon talked about a possible plan for distributing the women migrants' videos:

I'm thinking about utilizing public access networks for distributing the women migrants' videos. To begin with, we can air the videos on the cable television network in the borough, and to share their stories with other community members. If we could utilize

the public access network within the region, this could be a great example of media activism for women migrants.

Although the short history of the media workshops does not allow for a definitive picture for further development, the marginalized women's active interactions with transnational visual culture enable them to make their voices heard and help them make those voices keep alive. As H. Kim points out, it is important to see a woman migrant as a "transnational" subject, whose agency is powerful enough to migrate to a foreign land for better future and to actively seek to identify her multiple, fluid locations (34). Given the general imposition of Korean cultural values on women migrants, not only does critical attention to the marginalized women's self-representation help them negotiate their in-between location, but it also contributes to the creation of transnational feminist alliances.

Furthermore, considering the working principle of participatory media inherent in the overall video-making process, the media workshops for the women migrants can be considered as an example of feminist participatory communication. Pointing to the critical potential of a feminist perspective on participatory communication, Hsiang-Ann Liao identifies the connection between participatory communication and feminist paradigms:

A feminist account of participation is situational, contextual, open, and political. It is local, communal. It is neither total nor universal. It is about multiplicity and differences. People are at the center of development. A feminist account of participatory communication also transgresses the boundaries established by top-down development practices. Participation is for the regeneration of situated knowledge. There is the effort to restructure the existing orders for a better, more responsible account of people's lives. Knowledge claims within a feminist notion of participation will need to come from the matrix of class, race, gender, state, and location. (115)

In this respect, the videos created by the women migrants provide the situated knowledge of the new marginalized group of women in the context of globalization in Asia, and, at the same time, the important role of the screening in both challenging the hegemonic discourses and

developing the political awareness indicates the feminist engagement with the participatory video-making projects. Also, as exemplified by the problems of the media workshops, it is important to mention that feminist participatory media practices should be considered in light of differences among women and multiplicity of women's locations.

### **Notes on Interviews**

#### Transnational Brides (pseudonyms)

Sehyun: Vietnamese, 37 years old, the Dangjin Cultural Center, Jan. 3, 09.

Suang: Chinese, 32 years old, the Dangjin Cultural Center, Jan. 3, 09.

Jenny: Filipino, 31 years old, the Dangjin Cultural Center, Jan. 3, 09.

Rina: Filipino, 49 years old, the Dangjin Cultural Center, Jan. 3, 09.

Mijeong: Cambodian, 22 years old, the Daegu Women Migrants Human Rights Center, Jan. 7, 09.

Rose: Filipino, 38 years old, the Daegu Women Migrants Human Rights Center, Jan. 7, 09.

Ann: Filipino, 39 years old, the Daegu Women Migrants Human Rights Center, Jan. 7, 09.

Lucy: Filipino, 28 years old, the Daegu Women Migrants Human Rights Center, Jan. 7, 09

Pat: Filipino, 30 years old, the Daegu Women Migrants Human Rights Center, Jan. 7, 09

Helena: Spanish, 29 years old, Helena's home in Daegu, Jan. 8, 09.

#### Korean Instructors and Coordinators (pseudonyms)

Jin: instructor, Jin's home/office in Seoul, Dec. 29, 08.

Hyeon: instructor, the Daegu Women Migrants Human Rights Center, Jan. 08, 09.

Hae: coordinator, the Daegu Women Migrants Human Rights Center, Dec. 31, 08 and Jan. 08, 09.

Sook: coordinator, the Dangjin Cultural Center, Dec. 30, 08 and Jan. 04, 09.

## Conclusion

Drawing on transnational feminist approaches, this dissertation has examined the visual cultural practices of marginalized communities of women which are (re)configured in the gendered, neoliberal discourses of globalization and the conflicting dynamics among the global, the national, and the local. The critical engagement with the concepts of *home* and *displacement* allowed for an examination of how the gendered divide in globalization discourses constructs the specific visuality of Third World/South femininities, and provided a reconstructive understanding of the ways in which transnational visual culture enables marginalized communities of women to identify their locations and exert their agencies.

In order to present a transnational feminist redrawing of the relationship between women and globalization, this dissertation combined two analytical threads: a critique of how women's experiences are represented in transnational visual culture, and a consideration of the ways in which transnational visual culture contributes to women's (re)imagination of their locations in the complex encounter between locality and globality. Chapter II critiqued the First World/North media's construction of Third World/South femininities in light of the masculine narratives of globalization and the Eurocentric representational conventions of women of color. Chapter III explored the *displaced* Korean women's creation of their *home* in transnational visual culture, looking at the ways in which the women's visual media works embody their experiences of physical and psychological displacement. Chapter IV examined the case of transnational feminist visual cultural practices, calling attention to the participatory process of the video-making workshops for the women migrants in Korea. If the self-made videos by the marginalized women demonstrate their everyday cultural negotiation in a specific context of

the global-national-local nexus, then their spoken accounts of the video-making experiences point to the potential of transnational feminist media activism.

As pointed out in chapter II, the specific visuality of Third World/South femininities in the context of global capitalist development draws attention to the ways in which the hegemonic visual regime is governed by the neoliberal, gendered discourses of globalization, and the lingering legacies of colonial, imperial discourses. The three dominant Third World/South female stereotypes – the factory worker, the mail/online- order bride, and the domestic worker – are reflective of both the globalized mode of the feminization of labor and the power asymmetry inherent in globalization processes. At the same time, the First World/North media's (re)imagination of Third World/South femininities points to the transnational circulation of sexualized, racialized Otherness. Embodying the abjection, the Third World/South women's bodies are inscribed with the gendered manifestations of global capitalism and historical/discursive (dis)continuities.

The hegemony of the gendered, neoliberal discourses of globalization over contemporary visual culture underscores the need to critique the symbolic dimension of globalization. Paul Smith pays attention to the shift in the configuration of global capitalist expansion:

Multinational capital formation –with its daily extension of capital's domination, and the deepening divide between rich and poor in both international and intranational contexts –no longer makes its claim through direct colonial subjugation of the subject, but rather by the hyperextension of interpellative discourses and representations generated with and from a specifically new form of capital domination. Thus, it is important to recognize that domination occurs intensively at the levels of discourse, representation, and subjectivity. (138)

Given the transnational flows of information and imagery and their immediate and encompassing spread, the systemic power of global capitalism not only shapes the material

realities of people but also redefines their personal, intimate, and affective experiences. The idea of “neo-liberal governance” is one of the representative examples of the discursive power of the global capitalist logic. Calling attention to the contemporary media’s representation of white working-class women as talkative, overweight, alcoholic, and vulgar, Bev Skeggs takes notice of the extension of the neoliberal market ideology into the formation of public morality. For Skeggs, the particular visualization of white, working-class women is “an attempt to reconstruct the boundaries of regulation and order and legitimate various forms of external state control and mechanisms of self-governance via the transfer of self-responsibility (neo-liberal governance)” (968). Indeed, the neoliberal globalization imposes its market principles, such as deregulation, liberalization, and privatization on individual subjects at the symbolic and discursive levels. Just as the notion of free competition governs the neoliberal market, the status of a neoliberal subject is determined by her/his own ability to compete with others. Viewed in this light, the neoliberal ideology tends to frame the predicaments of marginalized communities of people as personal problems without considering the power asymmetries embedded in the global capitalist system.

Furthermore, it is important to mention that the neoliberal discourses complicate the position of women. Given the prioritization of individual ability, neoliberalism, which is “rhetorically gender-neutral,” foregrounds the success of the most competent “individual,” not the man (254). Within the neoliberal framework, the specific visuality of Third World/South femininities in the First World/North media is likely to be considered the failure of these women’s self-governance, rather than the outcome of the uneven distribution of power and resources. Pointing to the post-feminists’ complicity with the neoliberal economy logic, Angela McRobbie critiques the media representation of commodity feminism: “[j]ust because

feminism finds a place in the everyday vocabularies of popular culture, does not mean that the ideological force of these forms is somehow depleted, or that the power relations inscribed within these modes of entertainment melt away” (543). Not only do neoliberal economic rationalities produce the prevalence of images of professionally successful women, but they also negate differences of race, class, nationality, and ethnicity. As McRobbie points out, a critique of neoliberal renderings of women requires the “resuscitation and re-conceptualization of feminist anti-capitalism” (548). As evidenced in chapter II, a transnational feminist perspective is salient for both calling attention to the marginalization of Third World/South women, and examining the ways in which the neoliberal, gendered discourses of globalization interweave with multiple differences among women.

Chapter III discussed how the experiences of material and symbolic displacement position the Korean women as diasporic subjects by examining the visual cultural practices of Korean women at home and abroad. While the cases of diasporic Korean women illustrate the ways in which the experiences of geographical/physical displacement redefine their identities, those of Korean women at home portray how the oppressive discourses and practices of the Confucian patriarchy have inflicted the women with symbolic/discursive displacement. Although each of the displaced Korean women’s visual cultural works deals with different systems of oppressive power, it is important to note that the representations of the women’s diasporic subjectivities and cross-cultural sensitivities attest to the historical specificities and the socio-political backgrounds. Here, Lisa Lowe’s engagement with the “materialist concept of hybridity” is relevant because it permits an understanding of the ways in which the histories of oppression bring out the “material traces of hybrid cultural identities” (82). For instance, the representation of the Korean adoptee in *First Person Plural* involves a variety of historical

conditions, such as the experience of forced migration, the Korean War, and the gendered discourses of the Korean society, and the racial dynamics of the U.S. In this respect, the Korean adoptee's hybrid cultural identity is inscribed with her particular experiences of oppressive histories and material conditions.

Chapter III suggested that the displaced Korean women at home and abroad share the diasporic subjectivity, which results from the Korean women's marginalized position under the influence of the hegemonic discourses. The feminist idea of self-dis-placement, a critical positioning for articulating women's locations, allows for a reconsideration of diasporic subjectivities of the displaced Korean women as well as a revelation of their subaltern agencies and alternative narratives. Given the long-buried accounts of Korean women's histories, a critical look at Korean women's experiences of "displacement" identifies "the gaps," the marginality or the problematic of their lives, and sheds light on their subversive efforts to build their own "home" or attempts to challenge the male-centered system.

As a way to remap the relationship between women and globalization, chapter IV reflected on the potential of transnational feminist cultural practices. Centering on the experiences of dislocation/relocation, the self-made videos by the transnational brides are considered visual autobiographies, which are generally placed between letters and diaries. The visual accounts of the women migrants foreground the tension between the native home and the Korean home, illustrating the women's different experiences of displacement and home in terms of the duration of Korean life, the cultural/educational backgrounds, and the issues of class, ethnicity, and nationality. Specifically, the women migrants' videos signify the centrality of their experiences of time and space in negotiating their locations and identities. Also, the attention to the domestic space in the women migrants' videos indicates their search for "home,"

or the displaced subjects' strong desire to settle in the new place. Overall, the visual autobiographies by the transnational brides materialize their spatial and temporal experiences of displacement and home in that their engagement with the visual medium allowed them to exert their agencies in both portraying their everyday lives and reconsidering their transnational subjectivities.

Not only do the visual accounts of the women migrants demonstrate the ways in which they have struggled to negotiate the contradictory dynamics of the global, the national, and the local, but they also point to their agencies which led them to migrate to the foreign land for better living conditions. Although the women migrants are positioned as "marginalized" in socio-cultural terms within the host country, they tend to have experienced a kind of empowerment through the process of dislocation/relocation. Feminist ethnographic studies on transnational migration of women draw attention to the ways in which women's experiences of displacement provide them with new possibilities, often offering an opportunity to realize self-competence (Ganguly-Scrase & Vogl 7). Viewed in this light, the engagement with the visual medium allowed the women migrants to reflect on their transnational subjectivities, and to exert their subaltern agencies to make their voices heard.

Moreover, chapter IV discussed the media workshops for the women migrants in light of transnational feminist media activism. The women migrants' videos present the situated knowledge of the new marginalized group of women in the Asian context of globalization; and, at the same time, the screening of the videos helps the audience as well as the women migrants develop political awareness and challenge the hegemonic discourses. As an example of feminist participatory media, the video-making workshops for the women migrants create a communal site, in which they spoke for themselves and communicated with other groups of

women. In a sense, this communal site can be considered a “home” for transnational feminist alliances. Going beyond the binary of “home/not home, of safety and risk, and to imagine an alternative,” Allison Weir argues for the reconceptualization of home as “a space of mutuality and conflict, of love and its risks and struggles, of caring and conflictual connections to others”(8). The communal site, which the media workshops formulated, can be described as “an alternative home,” because it is a place of safety and dialogue for different communities of women.

As exemplified in chapter IV, transnational feminists’ interest in marginalized communities of women’s cultural practices sheds new light on transnational alliances “from below,” which often utilize the technologies and infrastructures of the global media environments. As Lisa McLaughlin has observed, transnational feminist approaches add a new dimension to the understanding of counterpublic sphere. McLaughlin argues, “Thinking through transnational feminism goes beyond locating Anglo American feminists’ complicity in colonial and neocolonial discursive formations, instead offering an opening into collective feminist praxis within global contexts and revealing new possibilities for feminist alliances across geographical and social locations” (167). Not only do transnational feminist perspectives provide an analytical lens through which to rethink the ways in which the restructuring processes of globalization dislocate/relocate women’s positions, but they also call attention to differences among women in both historical and discursive terms. The employment of transnational feminist approaches to the creation of counterpublic sphere permits a cross-cultural and decolonizing formation of transnational feminist alliance. More importantly, as in the cases of the media workshops for the women migrants in Korea, transnational feminist

perspectives bring out a more decentering understanding of global visual culture, which the premise of global sisterhood cannot provide.

I have examined the relationship between women and globalization in the context of transnational visual culture. Overall, my study followed the two analytical directions of visual culture studies: “visual culture studies should take as its primary object of critical analysis the master narratives that are presented as natural, universal, true and inevitable and dislodge them so that alternative narratives can become visible” (Bal 22). On the one hand, I critiqued the hegemonic visual regime governed by the neoliberal, gendered discourses of globalization in chapter II in terms of the specific visuality of Third World/South femininities. On the other hand, in chapter III and IV, I examined women’s experiences of displacement and home represented in transnational visual cultural practices, focusing on their transnational subjectivities and subaltern agencies in the process of cultural negotiation. Not only does my transnational feminist study on visual culture highlight the enduring influences of the Eurocentric, male-centered discourses on Third World/South women within “the master narratives,” but it also illuminates the ways in which transnational visual culture enables marginalized communities of women to identify their locations and agencies, making “alternative narratives” visible.

My examination of the visual cultural practices of marginalized communities of women brings out the “affective turn” in social and cultural studies. Identifying the attention to the body and the focus on emotions as the two predecessors of the affective turn, Michael Hardt argues for its significance:

The challenge of the perspective of the affects resides primarily in the syntheses it requires. This is, in the first place, because affects refer equally to the body and the mind; and, in the second, because they involve both reason and the passions. Affects

require us, as the term suggests, to enter the realm of causality, but they offer a complex view of causality because the affects belong simultaneously to both sides of causal relationship. They illuminate, in other words, both our power to affect the world around us and our power to be affected by it, along with the relationship between these powers. (viii)

The focus on affects allows for another understanding of the relationship between the mind and the body in light of cultural and political meanings of emotions and their impact on bodies. Given the gendered dichotomies in the hegemonic discourses, a feminist engagement with affects can produce an alternative narrative of women and globalization. For one thing, my discussion of the specific visuality of Third World/South femininities can be related to the issue of “affective labor,” which refers to “gendered forms of labor that involve the affects in a central ways –such as emotional labor, care, kin work, or maternal work” (Hardt xi). If the representation of Amelia, a Mexican nanny, in *Babel* points to her emotional involvement with the American children, then the character of Lichi in *Mail Order Wife* illustrates the ways in which the affective labor of a housewife is commodified in the context of global capitalism.

In addition, Sarah Ahmed’s theorization of “affective economies” adds another dimension to the discussion of discursive constructions in terms of emotions, bodies, and signs. Ahmed’s “economic model of emotions suggests that while emotions do not positively reside in a subject or figure, they still work to bind subjects together,” and stresses the need to consider how emotions work “to mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between individual and the collective” (119). To put it differently, given that emotions are hardly located in a specific body or object, they can be circulated in economic terms moving between signs and bodies. As Ahmed has observed, “the global economies of fear” tend to reconfigure the contemporary realities since September 11 in terms of the threat of terrorism, the border control, and the public anxiety over the Other (128). In this respect, my analysis of

the women migrants' visual autobiographies can be framed as the Other's experiences of border-crossing. Also, the representation of Xiao-mei in *Desperate Housewives* can offer an examination of the ways in which fear as an affective economy works to control and exploit the Third World/South woman's body. Overall, the focus on affects can expand my discussion of the relationship between women and globalization in transnational visual culture, and shed new light on the feminist efforts to challenge the gendered binaries, such as reason/emotion, mind/body, and public/private.

Whether women live in the Global North or the Global South, the visual media bring out the contradictory dimensions of women's locations in terms of complicated experiences of displacement and home. If the concept of *displacement* involves material and symbolic levels of being out-of-place, then the notion of *home* points to the complexity of cultural negotiation and the exertion of agency. Moreover, women's histories, experiences, and subjectivities testify to the significance of *displacement* and *home* in both deconstructing the male-centered discourses, and uncovering women's own accounts. Just as displacement indicates women's involuntary migration and socio-political marginalization, home signifies women's subordination under the patriarchal order. As evidenced in my study, it is more important to mention that the feminist reconceptualizations of the two concepts reveal the hidden accounts of women's experiences. If displacement is rethought as women's experiences of mobility and empowerment, then home is reclaimed as a communal site in which different subjects create solidarity through mutuality and conflict as in the case of the media workshop for the women migrants in Korea. Viewed in this light, my study, a transnational feminist project, sought to critique the hegemonic narratives, and, at the same time, it exposed women's accounts that

have been buried under the male-centered discourses through utilizing the feminist strategy of deconstruction/reconstruction of meaning.

Indeed, the visual media play an important role in situating women in the contradictory dynamics of the global, the national, and the local. In the context of global capitalist expansion, not only does the global visual culture produce the cosmopolitan subject of postmodern consumer culture; it also highlights the gap between the local reality and the global desire, often putting a Third World/South woman in a conflicting position. Given the predominance of neoliberal ideologies and post-feminist ideas, a transnational feminist perspective is salient for investigating the experiences of marginalized communities of women, because it permits a consideration of the power relations inherent in globalization processes and the lingering legacies of colonial, imperial discourses.

As my dissertation shows, a transnational feminist visual culture study challenges the hegemonic discourses of globalization and envisions transnational feminist alliances. It allows me to valorize differences among women once again, and to rethink the ways in which globalization interweaves with multiple differences of class, race, gender, and nationality. Moreover, it leads me to deeply reflect on a transnational feminist reworking of *home* and *displacement* in order to locate the displaced or marginalized women's home in which they can speak for themselves and exert their subaltern agencies. My dissertation serves as the starting point for my future studies on transnational visual culture, which will explore women's cultural practices and negotiations in light of historical (dis)continuities and discursive (re)constructions of global postmodernity.

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