

Remaking the Korean RomCom: A Case Study of *Yeopgijeogin geunyeo* and *My Sassy Girl*

Abstract

Since 2001 the Korean film industry has become one of the strongest in the world outside the U.S. and India, with local movies accounting for almost 50 per cent of overall ticket sales and often outperforming the biggest Hollywood blockbusters. In recent years Hollywood has turned its attention to Korea, as reflected in the increasing number of articles in trade journals such as *Variety* and *The Hollywood Reporter* that focus on Korean movies and particularly studios' acquisitions of remake rights to films such as *My Wife is a Gangster* (*Jopok manura*, 2001), *Oldboy* (2003), *The Host* (*Gwoemul* 2006), *The Chaser* (*Chugyeokja*, 2008), and many others.

This paper focuses on a case study of *My Sassy Girl* (*Yeopgijeogin geunyeo*), a romantic comedy directed by Kwak Jae-young based on a series of autobiographical stories posted on the Internet by Kim Ho-sik, and its Hollywood remake directed by Yann Samuell, which was recently released direct to DVD in the U.S. I perform a close comparative reading of both versions of the film, discussing similarities and differences with regard to their narrative and formal strategies, their approach to the romantic comedy genre, and their ideological perspectives on gender, sexuality, class, and nationality. By putting in conversation a textual analysis of *My Sassy Girl* with the creative and cultural choices that were made in translating it for American audiences, I aim to provide a kind of cultural barometer for assessing both the global circulation of Korean popular culture and the continued power of hegemonic U.S. values within an increasingly hybrid mediascape.

Biography

Dr. Jane Chi Hyun Park has a Ph.D. in Radio-TV-Film from The University of Texas at Austin and a M.A. in English from the University of California, Irvine. Her research focuses on representations of race and ethnicity, particularly of East Asian peoples and cultures in film, television, popular music and new media. She has published articles in *Global Media Journal* and *World Literature Today* and book chapters in *East Main Street: Asian American Popular Culture* edited by Shilpa Davé, LeiLani Nishime, and Tasha Oren (NYU Press, 2004) and *Mixed Race in Film and Television* edited by Mary Beltrán and Camilla Fojas (NYU Press, 2008). Her first book, *Yellow Future: Oriental Style in Contemporary Hollywood Cinema* (University of Minnesota Press, forthcoming 2010), examines the ideological role of Asiatic imagery in U.S. films from the 1980s to the present.