

**Introduction to *Three Asias: South Korea  
Korea's In-Betweeness***

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Korea's In-Betweeness has served as a site of detriment and fortune. Sandwiched geographically between China and Japan, the Korean peninsula has functioned as a natural bridge between the continental China and the Japanese archipelago thereby benefiting from protective borders and preservation of domestic affairs but also suffering from military invasions and diplomatic meddling. Likewise, the in-betweeness has allowed Korea to play a crucial role as both recipient and transmitter of cultural heritage. In this way, the in-betweeness has engendered, at times, unnecessary attention and at other times unfortunate neglect from its neighbors as well as from the West. Surveying the long history of Korea, this pattern has been repeated over and over again, but it has been especially evident during the past century and a half during which Korea, and for that matter the region as a whole, has undergone rapid political, economic, and social transformation. In the twentieth century, imperialism and cold war politics, in particular, have left an indelible mark on the way modern Korean history has evolved, with the two Koreas not only separated but still hovering in-between without resolution whether regarding their Japanese colonial legacy or with respect to the civil war that created North and South Korea.

As for Korea's status and position in East Asia, whether economically, technologically, or even in the area of sports or in literary accomplishments, South Korea has always been considered a step or two behind Japan.<sup>1</sup> Compared with China, Korea's custom and culture are, more often than not, perceived as derivative of China's long and monumental cultural heritage. Although both of these characterizations might be misleading and inaccurate, betwixt Japan and China, Korea has indeed experienced its share of "being outdone" by its neighbors. This second-class status has created a level of insecurity that propels Korea to want to "catch up" and more precisely to surpass its neighbors. This in-betweeness, whether

<sup>1</sup> South Korea seems to feel an extra burden in the area of not yet having produced a Nobel Laureate in literature. Japan has had two winners (Kawabata Yasunari, 1968, and Oe Kenzaburo 1994), and Gao Xingjian (China/France) received the Prize in 2000 (although this win has been repudiated by the Chinese Government). For more on sports and East Asia, see Victor Cha. Another area in which the three Asian countries vie for recognition is in sports and in hosting the Olympic Games both of which have become an important symbol marking a nation's arrival at modernity.

perceived or real, is especially perplexing for South Korea as it wants to take its place on the world stage and receive recognition for its post-liberation progress and modernization. This recognition has not come easily, either from its closest neighbors or from the larger world.

Given this dilemma of in-betweenness which South Korea (I would include Korean Studies in Western academia as well; “Korea” refers hereafter to “South Korea,” unless otherwise specified) has occupied in comparison to Japan or China (including the academic study of those 2 cultures), the attention that contemporary Korean popular culture—Korean film, television drama, and pop music—receives from abroad as well as from within Korea itself has been remarkable. This recent outpouring of interest in Korean popular culture as well as “things” Korean have been given the name *hallyu*, often translated as “Korean Wave,” and is usually described as the successful reception of Korean popular culture outside its borders by its East Asian neighbors, in Southeast Asia, and in more distant parts of the world, including North America and Europe. Though the term *hanliu* (寒流) was first coined by a Chinese journalist reporting on the popular reception of Korean television dramas and pop bands in China, it was quickly adopted by the Korean cultural industry and changed to *hallyu* (한류/韓流) by substituting the “cold” *han* with the “Korean” *han*.<sup>2</sup> According to its most general definition, the term *hallyu* describes the successful reception of Korean popular culture outside Korea. But *hallyu* is much more complicated and varied than it appears.<sup>3</sup> Among many other things, *hallyu* has become a catchword used in re-defining the cartography of Korean culture in contemporary times, and it is deployed as a vehicle encompassing the globalization (the flow or dissemination) of Korean culture and the display of modernization

<sup>2</sup> Because of Korean phonetic conventions, the pronunciation of 한류 becomes *hallyu* rather than *hanryu*. The McCune-Reischauer Romanization system I am using is based on phonetic representation and not transliteration of Korean morphology.

<sup>3</sup> From my own readings and research, it is unclear as to exactly what *hallyu* describes or what it refers to because of the vastness of its usage. As a noun, it appears to capture the popularity of Korean pop culture abroad, but used as an adjective, the word becomes more ambiguous. For instance, “hallyu star” seems to refer only to those entertainers who have become recognized and popular in the larger Asian context. For example, Pae Yongjun, the star of the popular TV drama *Winter Sonata* is always referred to as a “hallyu star,” whereas an actor like Kim Yujin, who has successfully crossed over to the West as one of the cast members of the American TV series *Lost*, is not called a “hallyu actress” or “hallyu star,” from which I conclude that there is a difference between hallyu and Hollywood star. In fact, as more and more Korean actors, singers, and idol groups aim to enter the U.S. entertainment industry, they are not being marketed or labeled as “hallyu.” In this respect, I wonder if hallyu is a reference to a regional phenomenon rather than a label accepted world-wide.

of Korea as a nation. As Gi-Wook Shin has shown, for Koreans, the concepts and acts of globalization and nationalism pose neither a conflict nor a paradox, rather they enhance each other like two sides of a single coin. This dual agenda—globalization and nationalism—as it has been constructed through discourse, policy, and industry, is an attempt to move away from the position of in-betweenness and to take center stage vis-à-vis its neighbors Japan and China. However, it is also evident that Korea's in-betweenness, such as its perceived racial and cultural relationship with its fellow East Asians, is what has helped Korea successfully advance its *hallyu* agenda.

I will begin with a discussion of *hallyu* because this subject is one of the most talked- and written-about subjects in recent years. With respect to early twenty-first century East Asian culture, *hallyu* has forced us to reexamine the dynamics of the three Asias—China, Japan, Korea—and to reconsider the important theories of transnationalism, globalization, and regional identity through the lens of Korea's popular culture. While neither of the essays in the Korea section of this *Three Asias* volume is about *hallyu* per se, both essays are keenly aware of it and are informed by it—Karen Thorber's essay on East Asian literary communities and literary worlds, and Aryong Choi's reflective interview with the film director Park Chan-Wook. The three books reviewed in the Korea section also address *hallyu*'s impact one way or another—whether it is through various analyses of the Korean Wave in Asia (Chua and Iwabuchi), the new South Korean film renaissance (Choi), or the representations of Asian and Asian Americans in Hollywood films (Park). I will now examine *hallyu* as a way to think about the history of Korean transnationalism and what Korea's in-betweenness enables or disables.

The amount of scholarship on *hallyu* is considerable, and these studies have taught us much about the transnational flows of media, the formation of fan culture, about regional influences, etc. Here, however, I would like to pose the following questions and explore how the articles we present in this volume attempt to engage explicitly and implicitly with some of these questions: How should we understand the past, present, and future of *hallyu* and other cultural productions such as film and literature?; What is the cultural politics of *hallyu* and what kind of cultural capital or soft power does it, or should it, wield?; How might the Korean Wave help us gain a firmer historical understanding of transnationalism and transnational processes?; After a decade of invoking its celebratory status, how might we more critically examine *hallyu*?; How can the study of *hallyu* critically intervene in the discourses of contemporary globalization and multiculturalism that teem with neo-orientalist tendencies?

The Korean cultural industry has been working overtime to advance *hallyu*.<sup>4</sup> Everywhere one goes in Korea—from the capital city to the provincial towns—one encounters “something hallyu.” If not pictures of Korean celebrities emblazoned on t-shirts, calendars, and stationary, or projected on digital screens,<sup>5</sup> then as a showcase of Korea through festivals<sup>6</sup> and news reports of Korean popular culture events and the activities of its fans abroad. The immense popularity of Korean television dramas, in particular, has precipitated a whole new set of cultural industries in which the government, the private sector, and universities all over the country are taking part. In particular, the Korea Tourism Organization under the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Sports, has been intensely promoting Korea through their “Visit Korea” campaigns. For example, it actively promotes TV drama tour packages, which take visitors to filming locations of popular dramas.<sup>7</sup> The number of these packages has ballooned in the recent years. Riding on the current popularity of Korean television dramas and pop music, the government has also initiated what they call the “Han Style” to brand aspects of Korean culture that are putatively representative of Korea: The five “Han” items are hanbok (traditional Korean clothes), hanji (traditional rice paper), hangûl (Korean script), hanok (the traditional Korean house), hansik (Korean food), and hanguk ûmak (traditional Korean music). As stated on their website, Han Style aims to generate a “new appreciation of Korean traditional culture” and expects to “enhance the national image” in order to increase the “Korea premium.”<sup>8</sup> Moreover, universities have established Hallyu Studies as a legitimate object of study leading to graduate degrees.<sup>9</sup> What all of these dizzying activities

<sup>4</sup> It is not a surprise, therefore, to see that the current Minister of Culture, Sports, and Tourism (MCST) is none other than Mr. Yu Inch'on who is an award-winning Korean actor and who played the young Lee Myungbak, the current President, in the 1989 television drama “The Age of Ambition” (Yamangûi sewôl), a biopic of President Lee's rags-to-riches story—from poverty to a Hyundai executive. Lee was born in Osaka, Japan in 1941 prior to the 1945 Liberation from Japanese colonialism.

<sup>5</sup> One of the most successful marketing tools that Lotte Hotel employed in order to attract overseas guests was to install and project digital images of celebrities' photos.

<sup>6</sup> A Hallyu Dream Festival took place in the ancient capital city of Kyôngju from 10 September to 12 September 2010.

<sup>7</sup> cf. the Korea Tourism Organization <[http://english.visitkorea.or.kr/enu/SI/SI\\_EN\\_3\\_4\\_2.jsp](http://english.visitkorea.or.kr/enu/SI/SI_EN_3_4_2.jsp)>. See also Kim and Park. Their study shows that there is a direct correlation between hallyu and tourism in Korea. In particular, they show that Chinese who have “consumed” Korean popular culture, have greater intentions of visiting Korea.

<sup>8</sup> South Korea Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism <<http://www.han-style.com/english/hanstyle/strategy.jsp>>. Oh and Jang have shown that the number of Japanese studying Korean in Japan has increased exponentially in the last decade.

<sup>9</sup> See for example, Hanyang University and Kyunghee University. Many of these studies are conducted through “Cyber Colleges” or online universities. Hallyu Studies

suggest is that the reach of hallyu is wide, from tourism, to national branding and into the academy, leaving no aspect of Korea disconnected from hallyu discourse, policy, and industry.

If the speed at which the Korean Wave hit the different shores in the hemisphere is not astonishing enough, the speed at which scholarly articles and books have been published as well as the endless number of reports, blogs, college level courses, academic conferences, workshops, expos, grants, and special projects all point to an amazing level of interest in this topic. In the past decade there have been more books and special volumes of journals published on some aspect of the Korean Wave than books on, for example, Korean literary criticism or Korean literary history. Here is just a partial list of publications in English: a special volume of *Korea Journal* (Winter 2005); *Korean Pop Music*, ed. Howard (2006); *East Asian Popular Culture*, eds. Chua and Iwabuchi (2008) (reviewed in this issue by Jung-Yup Lee); a special volume of *Southeast Review of Asian Studies*, Vol. 31 (2009); *Pop Goes Korea*, Russell (2009); and *Complicated Currents*, eds. Black, Epstein, and Tokia (2010).<sup>10</sup> Many of the above examine the transnational flows of Korean media culture from one national context to another and the implications that this movement has had on nationalism, regionalism, and globalization. Given the remarkable impact that the Korean Wave has had on Korea's domestic economy, politics, and culture, as well as the unexpected recognition that Korea has received internationally, it is no wonder that the Korean Wave has become an object of intense curiosity and scrutiny.

Thus far, the activities surrounding *hallyu* appear to have generated a great deal of cultural capital and have helped to establish an overall positive image of Korea abroad, which has been the basic underlying goal of hallyu. This is especially true of the Korean film industry.<sup>11</sup> Korean films are receiving world-wide attention when they are screened at prestigious international film festivals, and often receive not just a warm and degrees are usually granted through business programs or hospitality studies, and in some cases in Cultural Studies programs which are also fairly new.

<sup>10</sup> These are just a few examples of English language publications that have been published in the recent years. Kyung Hyun Kim and Youngmin Choe are in the process of editing yet another volume on Korean popular culture. The *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies Journal* has published a significant number of articles on Korean popular culture. The number of Korean language and Chinese language studies on the subject of *hallyu* is quite substantial (cf. *Works Cited*).

<sup>11</sup> By "positive image" of Korea through Korean films, I am not referring to the subjects depicted in the films. In fact, many critically acclaimed films, such as films by Park Chan-wook or Kim Kiduk, do not depict Korea or Korean society favorably. What I mean here is that the international recognition of Korean directors and the quality of their work, in general, have contributed to the positive image of Korea.

reception, but some of the highest honors. Directors such as Bong Joonho, Lee Changdong, Kim Kiduk, and Park Chan-wook have all been active since the 1990s and their work makes up a significant part of the history of contemporary Korean cinema which also, coincidentally, parallels the rise of *hallyu*. Among the growing number of Korean directors who are quickly becoming known outside Korea, Park Chan-wook has quickly earned the status of a “transnational auteur” with the success of his Vengeance Trilogy, especially the second installment, *Oldboy*, which received the Grand Prix award at the 2004 Cannes International Film Festival (Nikki Lee). The Vengeance Trilogy, consisting of *Sympathy of Mr. Vengeance*, *Oldboy*, and *Sympathy for Lady Vengeance*, has acquired a kind of cult status especially after being distributed on DVD by Tartan Asia Extreme. Receiving critical acclaim at Cannes certainly propelled *Oldboy* on to the international stage, but more importantly, *Oldboy* is an excellent example of transnationalism at work in film adaptation, distribution, and reception. It was originally adapted from a Japanese manga by the same title, and due to the popularity of Park’s filmed version, Bollywood has remade the film titled *Zinda*, and Hollywood will soon follow with its own remake.

At a glance, the success of Park’s three films could be ascribed to their slick stylistic tone, to the bizarre but compelling characters, and to his meticulous mise-en-scène. In the case of the Vengeance Trilogy, and despite some extremely disturbing scenes, viewers despite their national “identity,” can readily identify or “sympathize” with the universal themes of human suffering and the emotion of anger. Aryong Choi’s interview with the director regarding the last installment in the trilogy, *Lady Vengeance*, however, shows that the film actually teems with references to specific events in Korean contemporary history, references that could easily be missed if, as Park states near the end of the interview, one has not shared the same temporal space in history. Yet what is apparent in *Lady Vengeance* is that because the film doesn’t make explicit references to events such as the bombing of KAL 858 that killed everyone on board, the trial of Kim Hyônhûi (the North Korean spy found guilty of bombing KAL 858), or the serial murder case known as the “missing frog boys,” even those who might have shared the same historical temporal space have, in the frenzy of time’s passing, simply forgotten these harrowing events. To be sure, the reading of the film is made richer knowing the specific historical references, but not knowing about or having forgotten these events makes an even more powerful point, which is that these events, as tragic as they were at the time, are essentially unknown to most non-Koreans or have been forgotten by most Koreans. The film thus suggests that the real tragedy is *not knowing* and *not remembering*,

a sin for which we all might seek redemption.<sup>12</sup> As Choi suggests in her interview, one of the successful aspects of Park's films resides in his raising awareness without provoking resistance. Park's *Lady Vengeance* does avoid direct political criticism, but like the two previous installments, it can be argued that the scenes of intense awareness, both bodily and emotional, are metonyms for direct political criticism. That is, the criticism comes to bear through the extreme level of pain and discomfort shown on the screen and, hence, felt by the viewer.

Korean auteurs like Park and Korean films in general can be said to be part of *hallyu*, yet the relationship between Korean cinema and *hallyu* is still somewhat elusive given the shift cinema and film studies have been experiencing in academia both in Korea and in the United States. In many studies on *hallyu*, film is rarely examined closely, though it is mentioned briefly. Rather, studies on Korean films tend to stand on their own. Since the publication of Hyangjin Lee's *Contemporary Korean Cinema* (2000), there has been a steady stream of volumes and monographs on Korean cinema with the latest being Darcy Paquet's *New Korean Cinema: Breaking the Waves* (2009) and Jinhee Choi's *The South Korean Film Renaissance: Local Hitmakers, Global Provocateurs* (2010) (Jinhee Choi's book is reviewed by Yun Mi Hwang in this volume). As the titles of these two books suggest, Korean cinema has undergone significant changes as it has transformed from a floundering industry to a flourishing one. As outlined in Jinhee Choi's book, as well as elsewhere, Korean cinema benefited greatly from the changing policies of the South Korean government, business, and the film-going audience who all contributed to the renaissance of the Korean film industry in general and to film studies in particular. As part of Korea's *seggyehwa* (globalization) project, first initiated by then President Kim Youngsam (1992-1997), the Korean film industry received both moral and financial backing which resuscitated a struggling industry that was being dominated by Hollywood films and was insignificant abroad at least in comparison with the Chinese and Japanese film industries that were growing and establishing themselves in, for example, U.S. academia. While both Korean cinema and other popular culture media benefited directly from government policies and business investments that identified "culture" or soft power as a crucial component of their capital, Korean cinema vaulted into a different position than, for example, Korean television dramas and pop music. Whereas TV dramas and music have squarely remained as *hallyu* products, film has taken on a more elite status, perhaps due in part to its circulation in international film festivals and,

<sup>12</sup> Ignorance and forgetting are prominent motifs in *Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance* and *Oldboy* as well.

thus, to the increasing number of opportunities to study Korean films side by side with other national cinemas.

This shift in the status of Korean cinema has produced exciting transnational studies where it is not simply a matter of comparing Korean cinema as a “late comer” or as “inferior” to Chinese and Japanese cinemas (Hunt and Leung), instead, the works presented in Hunt and Leung’s *East Asian Cinema: Exploring Transnational Connections on Film* examines how new aesthetics, new collaborations, and new identities get produced when films work transnationally not only through East-West interactions but also intra-regionally in East Asia, i.e., Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Thailand. Christina Klein, on the other hand, revisits the East-West binary in her essay written for The American Studies Association where she clearly shows how Korean cinema matters for American studies. Klein argues that contemporary Korean films such as Bong Joonho’s *Memories of a Murder* or *The Host* are not mere American/Hollywood programmatic fare as many would assume, but these films are creative engagements with Hollywood genres that inform not only Korean history but more precisely the transnational history that has attended the relationship between Korea and the United States. Jane Chi Hyun Park’s *Yellow Future* (2010), reviewed in this volume by Susan Napier, takes another approach to exploring East-West transnational connections through her examination of the “Oriental style” in post 1970s American films that are dotted with depictions of Asia. Both Klein’s and Park’s studies and readings of specific filmic texts destabilize the hegemonic position of the West, or Hollywood more precisely, and posit new visions of Asia and Korea. It is unlikely that Hollywood or the U.S. will be removed from their dominant positions. However, what transnationalism enables is that dominant film genres and styles can be remade, as it is the case with Korean films.

Yet to say that *hallyu*—the transnational flow of cultural objects—is a completely new, twenty-first century phenomenon would be inaccurate just as the term describing Korea as a “hermit nation” has been.<sup>13</sup> While indeed there are new aspects of this cultural material reality, Korea has interacted and engaged in cultural and commercial exchanges with its East Asian neighbors throughout their long histories.<sup>14</sup> Certainly, these

<sup>13</sup> One of the first usages of Korea as a “hermit nation” comes from William Elliot Griffis’ book, *Corea, the Hermit Nation* (1882), which outlines the history of Korea from ancient times to the late Choson dynasty. Griffis never visited Korea and wrote his history based on observations of Korea from Japan and through secondary sources. In contemporary times, this description has been applied to North Korea primarily by the U.S. government and the media to account for N. Korea’s isolationist stance.

<sup>14</sup> For early history of Korea and her interactions with China and Japan, see Jonathan Best’s study of the kingdom of Paekche and David C. Kang’s recent publication.

exchanges were not always mutual and were oftentimes the result of violent and unfortunate wars, but it is undeniable that China, Japan, and Korea were intertwined with each other through their commercial, political, and cultural interests long before *hallyu*. That is, Korea has always been transnational and transcultural. In our enthusiastic celebration of *hallyu* and the globalization of Korean culture we very often overlook historical processes. As Stuart Hall says,

So when we are talking about globalization in the present context we are talking about some of the new forms, some of the new rhythms, some of the new impetuses in the globalizing process. . . . but . . . it is located within a much longer history. We suffer increasingly from a process of historical amnesia in which we think that just because we are thinking about an idea it has only just started. (19-20)

Of course, we do not want to fall into the trap of asserting historical equivalences or engage in what I call historical excavation where one goes further and further back in search of historical precedence and origins.<sup>15</sup> But we want to be sure to examine *hallyu* in its historical context and in relation to longer historical dynamics.

Karen Thornber's essay "Traveling Writers and Texts," following Hall's advice, recognizes that twenty-first century popular culture connects China, Japan, and Korea. She rightly points out that *hallyu* should be seen as an instance in a long history of cultural interactions. Her article examines the vibrant interactions among and between various Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Taiwanese authors and their literary works in the post-1945 era, and she does so in the framework of what she calls "postcolonial literary contact nebulae." The common perception was that in the aftermath of Japan's defeat in WW II, the Communist victory in China, and Korea's civil war, and of course, the Cold War geopolitics that governed the entire region, these countries were relatively disconnected from one another, if not outright antagonistic toward each other. Thornber, however, shows that East Asian writers were devoted to forming literary communities that communicated across borders, ideologies, and languages despite their many differences.

<sup>15</sup> The danger I see in historical excavation is that these projects sometimes become ultra nationalistic. While I have not read the following books, and therefore cannot comment on their content and arguments, the titles suggest that the origin of *hallyu* can be located in pre-modern Korea: Im Chae-hae's (ed.), *Kodae edo hallyuga issôtda* (Hallyu Also Existed in the Pre-modern Times) (2007), and Hyôn Muwa's, *Hallyu ûi wonjo Paekche munhwa* (The Origin of Hallyu, Paekche Culture) (2005). The latter is a children's picture book.

Intertextual references and translations of each others' literary works were frequent, and through these contact zones, East Asian writers and intellectuals forged alliances over and beyond official State discourses. In many cases, as Thornber points out, their literary works offered apologies for and took critical positions against their own governments. "Traveling Writers and Texts" urges us to re-examine one of the most prominent and enduring modes of communication and cultural exchange—literature—in the midst of our media-driven (film, television, and the Internet) world in the twenty-first century.

Although her article in this volume focuses on the post-1945 period, Thornber has written a larger work on the transculturation of Japanese literature in China, Korea, and Taiwan during the early twentieth century when Japan was an imperial power. Thornber and many other scholars in the recent years have studied the Japanese colonial period and have mapped out the various intra-regional movements of people, ideas, and the arts. Colonial Korea and Taiwan and semi-colonial China were linked at multiple levels—from governance, commerce, finance, technology, to language and especially through popular culture, urban culture, and mass culture as part of the Japanese empire, but through global capitalism and colonial modernity they were also connected to the rest of the world.<sup>16</sup> Notwithstanding what appears to be signs of modernity and "catch up," however, the underlying asymmetrical power relation and unevenness between the metropole and the colonies continues, and has been well documented. Ann Stoler and Frederick Cooper in their study of colonialism entreat us to take into count, "the hierarchies of production, power and knowledge that emerged in tension with the extension of the domain of universal reason, of market economy, and of citizenship" when considering the "culture of [post/colonialism] and its relationship to [post/modernity]" (3-4).

I add the post/colonial and postmodern to Stoler and Cooper's statement in order to underscore the continuities that exist between early twentieth century Korea under Japanese colonialism and early twenty-first century Korea under global capitalism. While the Korean Wave promotes a view of a hip, cosmopolitan, artistic Korea, a country that appears to have overcome colonialism, militarism, a country that has achieved a global modernity, we cannot dismiss the hierarchies that still operate within the production, consumption, and reception of Korean contemporary popular culture in the post/colonial twenty-first century. To be sure, we

<sup>16</sup> The following are a sample of works that address cultural exchange during the Japanese colonial period: Michael Robinson's study on colonial radio, Kim Brandt's book on *mingei*, and Serk-Bae Suh's article on the Japanese theatrical performance of the beloved Korean tale Ch'unhyang.

need to give praise where it is due and celebrate the many successes of *hallyu*. On the other hand, we also need to acknowledge the hegemonic power that Japan, China, and in particular, the United States wield in their practices of reception of Korean popular culture. There needs to be a careful study of how Hollywood and the U.S. continue to instill dependence on the part of Korea. This can be seen in the ultimate goal of the Korean cultural industry which is to “succeed” in the U.S., and in the aspiration of many Korean entertainers (including their agents, producers, and fans) which is to become a “Hollywood” star.<sup>17</sup> For this they need to hone their English; *hallyu* stardom, the adoration of fans from Japan, China, and other parts of Asia is not enough.

Furthermore, as Korea perceives itself as having won a rightful place in the global arena of modern nations through its cultural productions, it also needs to reexamine its human rights practices, and in particular, its immigration and labor policies regarding the treatment of people from all parts of Asia and Africa who now go to Korea to seek opportunities. And of course, S. Korea has to tackle its relations with N. Korea. Headlines on 29 November, 2010, point to increased tension on the Korean peninsula where the North’s artillery attack killed two S. Korean marines and two civilians, and injured more than a dozen others. This attack, as well as increased activities at a uranium enrichment plant in N. Korea, have put Japan, China and the U.S. on alert, and have left many guessing about what this latest provocation will lead to. Does *Hallyu* have a place in North-South diplomacy? Or is *Hallyu* simply serving as fodder for generating anti-S. Korean propaganda? The multiple dilemmas and opportunities of Korea’s in-betweenness remains with us to this day.

<sup>17</sup>The singer-actor Rain (Bi) has made several attempts via his concerts in Madison Square Garden and in Las Vegas, as well as starring in the film *Ninja Assassin* (2009). Others include Jeon-Ji-hyun who starred in *Blood: The Last VampireX* (2009) and changed her name to Gianna Jeon for her debut as Byung-hun Lee in *G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra* (2009). The female idol group “The Wonder Girls” opened for the Jonas Brothers in 2009. What is interesting and troubling about these ventures into Hollywood films is that all these Korean actors and entertainers were cast as fantasy figures.

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