Neither Dokdo, Nor the DDP: An Argument for Negative Hybridity

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I. Introduction

In its most commonly deployed usage, hybridity serves to define the intermingling of differing ethnic and national cultures, especially in the post-colonial paradigm, where the culture of colonizers mixes with the traditions and customs of the nation that it occupied, or where migrants find a space for their own cultural practices within the culture of their destination. However, the transformations of globalization that have been in process since the mid-20th century have created a blending of cultures that is quite different from the usual processes of imperial colonization, but that nonetheless reflect a similar intermingling of local and non-local culture to which the term hybridity equally applies.

This second form of hybridity is often understood as the reductive process of homogenization of local cultures through the effects of Westernization. In the most typical framing of this phenomenon, the 'richness' of local traditions and practices are outpaced by the irresistible invasive force of generic American/European commercial culture, replacing longstanding custom with shallow, vulgar faddishness, and though this perspective might have some superficial redolence, it fails to properly capture the complexity and dynamics of the processes involved. At the other end of the scale is the perspective that construes this hybridity as a liberating force of deterritorialization, which "releases reflection and engagement from the boundaries of nation, community, ethnicity or class" and whereby "fixities have become fragments in the kaleidoscope of collective experience" (Pieterse 89). This approach presents the dislocation and destruction of hybridity as a process as purely positive and utopian, and whilst it negates the naïve essentialism of the former approach, both perspectives appear inadequate to the task of rendering the complexity of the operation and effects of hybridization, principally because they differ merely in their attitude toward

Trans-Humanities, Vol. 8 No. 1, February 2015, 131–152

the positive content of the cultural mélange and its value of authenticity.

Though the power of the nation-state may have receded over the course of the last half century against the onslaught of globalization, national identity continues to be asserted as a cornerstone of community identity, and is even manifested in the re-emergence of extreme forms of ethno-nationalism, notwithstanding globalization's claims for post-nationhood. Similarly, the boundaries of ethnicity and class have shown no indication of progressive abatement. The challenge for hybridity as a theoretical concept, then, is to account for the 'global mélange' of cultures whilst avoiding the pitfalls of essentialism and utopian rhizomatics, and, simultaneously, to account for the recrudescence of the boundaries of nation, ethnicity and class that hybridity, as a category of postmodern, post-national identity, sought to unsettle.

In this paper, I shall attempt to outline the key terms of this challenge for hybridity through an analysis of the contradictions of local and global identity in contemporary South Korea. Rather than perceiving the two terms of this contradiction as either hopelessly and impossibly deadlocked or capable of some utopian synthesis by means of which they can peacefully and productively coexist (which would respectively form the conclusion of the first and second approach outlined above), I shall argue that what the concept of hybridity infers is the dialectical opposition of the two positions; that is, the negative relation of one to the other. Accordingly, the concept of hybridity ought to be reframed: It is not a positive product of the commingling of cultural content, nor a conceptual container for "the ways in which forms become separated from existing practices and recombine with new forms in new practices" (Rowe and Schelling 231). Rather, it is a negative formal movement that emerges as a rejection of the false choice between local and global identity presented by globalization's narrative of progress. In making my argument for the reconceptualization of hybridity as a form of negativity, I will be relying at least in part on Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek's ontology of 'transcendental materialism' (a term conferred upon Žižek's ontological project by Adrian Johnston, though not directly employed by Žižek himself), and particularly his mode of dialectical materialism, which relies heavily on a return to the thought of, and thus the language of, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. The question that I shall seek to address is this: Is hybridity as a cultural mélange the inevitable synthetic product of the processes of globalization, or can the concept of hybridity be pushed further, beyond this admixing of cultural content into a formal reflection? Further, must the post-national, post-

colonial subject choose between a regressive attachment to authentic local identity and the embrace of postmodern hybrid identity, or is there another choice available?

Ⅱ. The South Korean Local and Global

Like many nations of similar size and standing, South Korea finds itself in 2014 on an uncertain path to future development. The story of its rise from almost complete destruction during the Korean War to being amongst the first tier of developed economies is well known: South Korea is currently the fifteenth largest economy in Asia by GDP ("GDP") having undergone a period of intense economic development throughout the 1970s and 1980s, and weathering the Asian financial crisis of 1997 and the more recent global downturn with only minimal periods of reduced growth. It has adapted eagerly to new forms of information and communication technology, and presently holds the highest level of broadband connectivity anywhere in the world. Culturally, however, South Korea is among the more conservative of Asian nations, possessing a firm sense of national identity and a defensive mind-set that reflects its physical situation as a small country nestled between two larger neighbours and bordered to the north by a foe with whom it is still, technically, at war.

Whilst the threat of renewed conflict with the North is vague but ever present, the greater perceived threat to the nation inheres to the cultural arena, and finds expression in the form of tension between assertions of local and global identity. One can see this tension 'on the ground' in South Korea, as one can in many nations, in the form of traditional domestic restaurants and retailers that sit cheek-to-jowl with largely American-owned, though internationally distributed, franchise operations, a tangible manifestation of the competing economic interests at stake behind the apparent clash of cultures. However, the opposition between local and global is not merely a clash of competing brand identities. In the context of the present stage of globalization, the preponderance of North American, European and even Japanese brands has become a symbolic representation of the perceived vulnerability of national sovereignty opposite the irresistible advance of transnational capital.

If a principle opposition that serves to organize identity and open a space for hybridity is that between the local and global, it is appropriate at this

point to briefly describe how each term in the opposition is manifested in culture. I will turn first to local identity: This can be loosely defined as the adherence to the codes of romantic national identity, or what can be referred to as 'traditional' or 'vernacular' culture. Under this heading fall all that signifies that which is traditionally 'Korean'—the Korean flag, *hanbok* (the national costume), food, vernacular architecture and interior design, celadon ceramics, folk music, traditional art and every other aspect of culture that expresses affinity with these codes. It can also be said to include more seemingly 'modern' categories of culture that might eschew the visual codes of tradition but nonetheless function as expression of the vernacular: Korean pop music, dramas and television shows. Whilst all of the foregoing elements are complex in their own right, the common quality that affirms their inclusion in a set is their introversion: They are readily identifiable as specifically Korean and do not draw on any external identity for their manifest content.

The category against which the local is defined is that of the global. This should not be taken as all culture that is not local, but rather that which is global *in a specifically Korean context*. This category is therefore defined by its 'extroverted' perspective: It is culture that looks beyond Korea for the foundations of its identity. Most readily placed into this category are the foreign-owned but locally franchised non-Korean restaurants and shops—Starbucks, Dunkin Donuts, McDonalds and so on—that become a common feature of so many town and city streets. The category also includes many brands and products draw upon some other national identity for their cohesion—French-branded coffee, Japanese clothing chains, Italian pasta sauce and such-like. What matters for each of these examples is not the reality of their provenance but their stated identification, for it is this discursive positioning that defines the product as a concept and not the underlying reality. This specifically Korean globalism can also be detected in architecture, for instance, the kitsch appropriation of idioms of the classical style (columns, arches and so on) as decorative features, and in the growing fondness for European cars as status symbols. It is also cogently attested to by the longstanding devotion to the study of English, an industry that is currently worth some $15 billion dollars annually (Park 51).

There are two points to note about this specifically Korean category of the global. Firstly, it is not concerned with the world in general so much as it is a particular stratum of global civilization. The non-contiguity of the global with the international can be attributed to what John Ralston Saul

calls the "mystification of civilizational structures" by which the "language of globalisation [has] been confused—intentionally mixed—with that of neo-liberalism" (Saul 196). The 'global' should therefore not be confused with international culture for it actively overlooks countless national cultures that fail to conform to its vision or gainsay its particular version of reality. Rather, it should be taken to indicate the commodified culture of certain economically developed nations insofar as it points towards a refined sense of taste and appreciation for pleasure (which will be more closely defined in due course). In this sense, global culture in the Korean context is for the most part an idiolect of branding. This leads into the second point to note, which is that the Korean global is almost exclusively a bourgeois mode of discourse, in that it is inextricably linked with the delineation of bourgeois values, desires and aspirations. This is not to suggest that bourgeois identity is exclusively performed under the colours of globalism, but where such strands of meaning are present, the effect is almost always the alignment of the material of which it forms a part with the performance of bourgeois rather than working class identity. Central to what ties the exposition of global cultural content with bourgeois values is the aspirational mode in which it is presented: The pleasures made available to those who identify within this manner of discourse are won by possessing a competitive advantage in terms of sophistication, worldliness and spending power. Embracing the global thus becomes understood as a prerequisite for upward social mobility. There is nothing, however, inherently 'bourgeois' in the global; its bourgeois qualities are discursively constructed. The same qualifications apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to presentations of the local.

Accordingly, expressions of local identity inhere more to working class codes of signification. As a corollary of this condition, working class identification necessarily takes on a tenor of conservatism, regression, introversion and parochialism as a result of being placed in opposition to the outward-looking and worldlier aspirations of bourgeois identification. Whilst the latter is spurred to draw upon a range of cultural material in the pursuit of its aims, working class identity is driven inwards and made to circulate and reiterate a limited number of identificatory touchstones. Again, this is not indicative of any defining characteristic of working class identity in general but a condition of its having to define itself in this particular instance as the opposing term to the extroversion of bourgeois identification.

Codes of local and global identity emerge then as expressions of class identification and therefore we can understand their opposition as symptomatic

of what Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe have termed the irreducible antagonism that is innate to any social body (xiii–xiv). This suggests that the opposition between the local and the global should be considered in a greater hegemonic context. The antagonism between local and global identity should not be construed as some struggle over which is the 'truer' of the two positions, i.e. which is the more 'authentic' of the two identities (which reduces the opposition to an essentialist argument), but rather a symptom of the underlying antagonism that prevents the two being reduced to a one. In other words, it is impossible for local identity to triumph by recapturing some imaginary organic unity of prelapsarian Korean identity, just as it is impossible for the global position to reduce Korean identity to just one more appropriated code of identification, equal and compatible with any other commodified national identity.

The challenge for hybridity is therefore to properly represent this deadlocked opposition, and in this, there appears to be two directions in which hybridity can turn. The first path is to dismiss the irreducibility of the opposition between the global and local and declare a unity of ends for both terms, making the claim that both local and global identities are compatible and can coexist with damage to the interests or identity of either group. This manoeuver is what I will term 'ideological hybridity,' as it serves to diffuse the opposition by obscuring it through ideological speech.

The second direction requires hybridity not to disguise the irreducibility of the opposition but to express this irreducibility as its very condition. Hybridity would therefore conceptualize the negative, incomplete and unstable nature of globalized identity: not resolved or reduced but as a figure of formal potential and possibility, and neither introverted nor extroverted but opened onto the future. The task now, then, is to give body to these two forms of hybridity by locating them in the context of contemporary South Korea. I shall begin by briefly examining the conditions that have brought the opposition between the local and global into its present prominent relief.

Ⅲ. Globalization and Progress

In the most fundamental sense of the term, globalization refers to a process of integration and a reduction of barriers made possible by technology, legal structures and capital flows. It is both "the closer integration of the countries

and peoples of the world […] brought about by the enormous reduction of costs of transportation and communication, and the breaking down of artificial barriers to the flows of goods, services, capital, knowledge" (Stiglitz 9), and "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by event occurring many miles away and vice versa" (Giddens 64). Globalization is at heart an economic concept, but its effects are deeply felt in the arenas of politics, sociology, cultural studies, environmental studies and many other areas besides. There is a wealth of literature on the subject of globalization, representing a wide range of perspectives and interests, and hence there is not one distinct, single movement that we can call 'globalization'—as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri note, "globalisation is not one thing, and the multiple processes that we recognise as globalisation are not unified or univocal" (xii). Despite this polyvalence, it is possible to conceive of globalization as a discrete set of phenomena that can be distinguished from that to which it is in opposition; namely, tradition, regionalism, nationalism and isolationism.

Although the enthusiasm for framing the most recent wave of globalization (that is, the one that began in the 1950s and continues to this day) in eschatological terms—as a conclusion to the battle of ideological grand narratives and the 'end' of history[1]—has all but vanished, the forces set in motion under the banner of globalization continue apace. The 'closer integration of countries and people of the world' cannot be reduced to an evolutionary process or a benefit of technological advances. It is a state of affairs that has been sought and occasioned by a distinct set of strategies. Whilst these strategies equally cannot be reduced to the pure economic determinism of the classic Marxist 'base and superstructure' model of social relations, it is not difficult to detect the impetus of economic interests motivating the supposedly natural gravitational forces that are bringing nations 'closer together' via the carefully structured architecture of transnational trade agreements and the exchange of commercial culture. We should treat with suspicion, then, any discursive strategy that aims to paint globalization in the colours of progress, modernity or inevitability.

Perspectives such as these are ideological in the classic sense of the term, in that they are acts towards a 'determining consciousness' that seek to alter

1. See Fukuyama, Francis. *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Free Press, 2006. Print.

an individual's understanding of his or her conditions of existence. When changes to a person's social and economic conditions are portrayed as part of a wider evolution of the species rather than a deliberately engineered set of circumstances designed for economic benefit, then resistance to such changes cannot but appear ignorant, futile and regressive. The processes of globalization are frequently narrativized as progressions both at a general and local level, and consequently, local acts of resistance to these processes seem to be little more than tilting at windmills—atavistic protests of fossilized unions or 'backward' farmers. In this sense, ideology serves to set the agenda and frame the narrative of change, thus pre-emptively robbing any resistance of the discursive grounds on which to resist.

A second, more subtle effect of ideological speech is the reduction of seemingly intractable contradictions between social actors and their interests into a smoothly resolved synthesis in which both parties of the opposition lose nothing, and their respective interests perfectly align into a new form. This type of speech might be termed a 'utopian synthesis'—an 'everyone wins' scenario that follows the dialectical cliché of thesis-antithesis-synthesis, whereby two positive terms meld to produce a positive synthesis as a third term which occasions no loss for either party in the process. This resolution, however, only occurs at the level of representation. The contradiction is reconfigured at the level of the symbolic, but there are no alterations to the real conditions of the opposition which underlie the representation. Ideology, therefore, is "a fantasy-construction which serves as a support for our 'reality' itself: an 'illusion' which structures our effective, real social relations and thereby masks some insupportable, real, impossible kernel" (Žižek, *The Sublime Object* 48). Ideological speech frames areal contradiction as already resolved by declaring a unity of aims between the parties of the contradiction. The two become one and the negativity that put them asunder is sublimated into a coincidence of desires. It is on the basis of this model that we can posit that any claims for a 'utopian hybridity' in which contradictory identities can comfortably coincide as ideologically weighted.

The symbolic efficiency of this model of utopian synthesis relies on the assumption that the terms of the contradiction existed prior to the contradiction itself. On this basis, they can be construed as equivalent positive entities separated only by the proper understanding of their circumstances. Ideological speech therefore serves to intervene in the opposition in order to symbolize it as a trivial matter of perspective. However, this intervention is only possible when

it is prefaced on the equivalence of the opposing terms, but it is ideological speech that also posits this equivalence. As an effect of this discursive strategy, local and non-local identities can be fashioned as merely different 'flavours' of the same product, and thus compatible and capable of co-existing.

It follows then that the reverse of the ideological strategy that posits positive terms that exist prior to the contradiction that puts them in opposition with one another is to invert the logic of the schema itself, and propose that it is in fact the contradiction that precedes the emergence of its opposing terms, i.e. the terms of the contradiction emerge only as a result of the contradiction itself. As the antithesis stands in contradiction to its thesis, it must therefore be understood that the antithesis precedes its thesis.

This impossibility of this sequence is only insurmountable when the thesis is understood as a positive term that is complete and self-sufficient prior to the emergence of its antithesis. However, when the thesis is understood as being already a negative quality, then the logic of the dialectical process becomes a little more apparent. There is no original unity from which the negative of the antithesis then emerges in opposition; rather, the semblance of the original unity of the thesis emerges only after the emergence of the antithesis. Like Ferdinand de Saussure's concept of the signifier (an approach to linguistics whose break with the orthodoxy of its time was the acknowledgement of the absolute contingency of the relation between a signifier and the concept to which it referred, thus giving rise to a 'structural' linguistics), it is a schema in which there is no positive value, only the endless play of differentiation. The synthesis of the thesis and antithesis under this 'negativized' schema is quite different from the utopian unity of two equivalent positives into one co-existence. Instead, synthesis — the 'negation of the negation,' in Hegel's terms — involves the overlapping of two negatives. The result is the negative thesis with something taken away.

Žižek has made this 'dialectics of negativity' a cornerstone of his ontological project since his earliest works, and so it is worth indulging a slightly lengthy quotation as a summary of the process:

> This, then, is the dialectical process: an inconsistent mess (first phase, the starting point) which is negated, and, through negation, the Origin is projected or posited backwards, so that a tension is created between the present and the lost Origin (second phase). In the third phase, the Origin is perceived as inaccessible, relativized — we are in external reflection, that

> is, our reflection is external to the posited Origin which is experienced as a transcendent presupposition. In the fourth phase of absolute reflection, our external reflexive movement is transposed back into the Origin itself, as its own self-withdrawal or decentring. We thus reach the triad of positing, external reflection, and absolute reflection. (*Absolute Recoil* 145)

The 'negativization' of the dialectical process involves the addition of a fourth step to the triad of thesis-antithesis-synthesis, a reflective movement in which the sublimated content is reinscribed into the thesis, allowing us to perceive how the conditions realised via the synthetic reduction were in fact 'always already' present in the originating concept. The moment of sublimation is thus the moment of an *event*—an occurrence that reconfigures not just our understanding of the present but our understanding of the past as well, after which 'nothing will ever be the same.' Žižek frequently cites the abstraction of Wassily Kandinsky as an example of such an evental rupture: His break with figurative representation not only redefined the bounds of abstract painting, but brought into relief the abstraction underlying even figurative art.

The task now at hand is therefore to demonstrate the relevance of this dialectical structure to the understanding of the conditions of local and global identity currently under discussion. To that end, I shall argue that the utopian view of hybridity as a harmonious coincidence of identities can belong only to the moment of external reflection, the third phase of the dialectical movement. What is needed is thus to continue this movement by reflecting it back into the originating term, and thus to reach the moment of absolute reflection, in which hybridity is reasserted as a negative relation. In the terms of a specifically Korean hybridity, this will entail decentring the originating unity of that which was earlier referred to as the traditional Korean identity, and contradictory 'global' identity against which it is defined. The first step, then, shall be to get a clearer understanding of the particular conditions that brought these two opposing identities to the fore.

Ⅳ. National Brands and Monopoly Claims

Although the manner in which an individual's nationality is configured into an identity is a matter of personal particularity, at the level of culture, a national identity exists only insofar as it is enunciated. The cultural iteration of

a national identity might be prefaced on a range of aims—national solidarity during wartime, for example, or the sacrifice of respite and leisure time during periods of intense economic development—and whatever the intent, there is nothing to support the notion that any aspect of a national identity could exist as a unifying quality prior to its being stated. The emergence over the past two or three decades of a theory and practice of 'nation branding' obliquely attests to this assertion. Just as a brand marque unifies the complex legal and physical structure of a corporation into a distinct symbolic identity, the practice of nation branding aims towards reducing the endless complexity of a national grouping into an identity under which it can sell itself. The return in both cases is the same: the accrual of rent from monopoly claims. Under the logic of nation branding, a nation trades on its 'uniqueness,' attracting investment and foreign currency and boosting property prices and exports by distinguishing its own culture and identity from that of rival nations. Once this unique identity is established, any increase in value that results is thus a monopoly claim in that is yielded on account of these 'special qualities.'

As David Harvey observes in his essay "The Art of Rent: Globalization, Monopoly and the Commodification of Culture," the process of establishing these special qualities inevitably leads to a contradictory state of affairs: The pursuit of rent from trade based on the particularity of a local identity provokes the resistance of those whose identity is traded upon, on the basis of the very uniqueness that is stated in order to stake a monopoly claim. As Harvey explains:

> The most avid globalizers will support local developments that have the potential to yield monopoly rents even if the effect of such support is to produce a local political climate antagonistic to globalization. Emphasizing the uniqueness and purity of local Balinese culture may be vital to the hotel, airline and tourist industry, but what happens when this encourages a Balinese movement that violently resists the 'impurity' of commercialization? (101)

What can be detected in this contradiction is the retroactive projection of unity upon the originating term as an effect of its narrative transformation. The process of commodifying the uniqueness of a culture for the purpose of staking a monopoly claim upon it leads to opposition to its being traded upon on account of that very uniqueness. However, this process does not only

underlie the marketing of a local culture as a product for touristic consumption. It can also be detected in the long-term repositioning of a nation from a locally-focused and inward-looking system to a node in the transnational flows of trade and capital. This also requires that the process be culturally realized via a narrative progression that must posit an origin and future as a means to overcome the inherent non-coincidence of interests.

Angus Cameron and Ronen Palan interpret this process as the production and reproduction of spatial forms. The movement from a local to national to global space that is central to the process of globalization requires a narrative construction of a spatio-temporal matrix as a means to impose its institutional vision. The first phase of the process consists of "a stated (in other words, narrated, represented and performed) conception of spatial form which is either taken to exist now, to have existed in the past and/or which is predicted in the future—the global, for instance, in the case of globalization" (Cameron and Palan 70). Two spatio-temporal positions must be therefore accounted for: "First, a retroscriptive account which provides the origins of the spatial narrative; and second, a proscriptive account, which provides the end point" (70).

The identification of the spatial and chronological sequence that links the two states is the second phase of the process, and the third phase requires the identification of a causal dynamic. In the case of globalization, this causal mechanism is "almost routinely said to be economic; the power and reach of capital bursting through conventional territorial boundaries" (Cameron and Palan 71). The fourth phase of the process involves the response to the reimagining of space that results from its narrative transformation. In the case of globalization, these responses have included "corporate restructuring, product rebranding, welfare retrenchment, fiscal reorganization, labour-market adjustment, and most visibly of all, violent mass protest" (71). The fourth phase then leads back into the first and a cyclical movement is established. It is in this fourth phase, therefore, that we can posit a space for the movement from external to absolute reflection.

The historical and future spaces correspond to the local and global identities that were earlier established. Local identification—traditional, pastoral, introverted—leads into the globalized identity of the future, in which Korean identity is coterminous with an internationalized bourgeois cultural space in which any world citizen can establish an identity. What we can expect to find between these two contradictory positions is a narrative process that orders

them into a temporal progression, and resolves the contradiction between them by positing a space in which the two opposing identities become one. We might also expect resistance to this narrative process to take the form of a reassertion of the primacy of the originating term—a kind of over-identification with local identity as a prelapsarian fullness which must be recaptured. I believe that the opposing positions can be illustrated quite cogently by conceiving them as captured in two very different, but also strangely similar, forms: The disputed islets of Dokdo (which stand for local identification) and the Dongdaemun Design Plaza (DDP), a neofuturistic development in central Seoul, designed by British-Iraqi architect Zaha Hadid, which represent the global position. Not only do the two objects give body to a particular understanding of Korean identity, but the conceptual distance between them serves to adumbrate the narrative transformation that leads from national to global space. Whilst neither object ought to be construed exclusively as an icon for either local or global concerns, they serve the current purpose as comparable 'centres of gravity' for the circulation of symbolic meanings. I cite these objects as a rhetorical device on account of the uncanny similarity of their form, and intend no reduction of the complexity of their cultural meaning.

I turn first of all to the islets Dokdo, which are known as the Liancourt Rocks in English, and are the subject of a long-running territorial dispute between Korea and Japan—though it is a dispute that is fought more through rhetoric than via the mechanisms of international jurisprudence. Although Japan may occasionally reiterate its claim to the islets, they are recognized as a Korean territorial possession, and it is unlikely that any serious challenge to the status quo will be mounted any time soon. Notwithstanding, the islets assert a prominent cultural presence not only as a bone of contention with Korea's former colonial occupiers, but as an object that forms a part of the set of the signifiers of 'traditional' Korean identity.

It is difficult to avoid the temptation to view this relation of Dokdo to Korean identity in general from a psychoanalytic perspective: The privileged meaning accorded to the featureless rocks represent the ultimate elevation of an ordinary object to the dignity of the sublime Thing. It thus constitutes a fetish object, into which some power of fascination inheres in defiance of reasonable explanation. Its deployment as a visual icon in sentimental nationalistic television montages on national holidays and in countless posters and displays that aim to raise awareness of the Dokdo 'issue' betray its ideological function: It acts as the object of desire around which a certain form of Korean identity can

be organized. Its inherent meaninglessness and timelessness as an unadorned rock in the middle of the sea are the very features that render it suitable to the role as a 'special' object, for it must always remain at a physical distance and so is always 'just out of reach.' The threat to its sovereignty only adds to its elevated status, as it adds an intersubjective dimension to its desirability—it is particularly appropriate that the perceived threat to Dokdo should come from the old colonial enemy, Japan, who now continues to threaten the unity of Korean identity by coveting its object of desire.

The particular type of Korean identity that the image of Dokdo supports is that in which 'Koreanness' represents a lost originary unity—a fullness and presence of identity that was unthreatened by historical rupture or the intrusion of an 'other.' It is Korean identity that was timeless and unbounded but is now incomplete. It is an identification that is prefaced on the desire to regain this originary fullness and thus is manifested in the signifiers of this lost past—a narrow tranche of traditional culture, folk art and custom that circulates (with varying levels of commitment to authenticity) around the void of this lost unity. Outside of this identification, Dokdo remains, of course, 'just a rock,' but from within, it stands for the fullness of a past that was lost and must be regained. It is needless to say that this unity can never be regained. This is essential to the identity's efficient functioning for two reasons: First, it necessitates the constant reiteration of the performance of the identity; and second, it allows the desire of the subject who performs the identity to circulate an object that can never be possessed and must always remain at a distance relative to the subject, thus maximizing the potential for enjoyment.

This introverted, 'traditional' concept of Koreanness aligns more closely with the values of the working class and older generations, but there is no particular quality of the identity itself that make this a necessary affinity. Rather it is the interests and motivations that underlie the pressure for change—the 'causal dynamic,' to use Cameron and Palan's term—that determine the affinity of a particular group with a particular identification. This turning inwards towards a lost historical unity is a defensive reaction to the imposition of another object of desire and the identity that forms around it. In this case, it is a 'global' identity, wherein the national 'Thing' is replaced by a succession of bourgeois consumer products from a variety of national origins. A premise essential to this identification is the interchangeability and basic equality of all bourgeois national-cultural forms—not least of all one's own. It calls therefore for the relinquishing of the 'local' object in preference for the enjoyment offered

by the 'global' bourgeois object. The subject must eschew any attachment to the 'oneness' of local identity and pursue instead the mysterious 'global' object manifested in an ever-changing set of objects of desire: Italian pizza, German cars, Japanese sushi, British raincoats, Spanish ham, American computers and so on *ad infinitum*.

This code of bourgeois pleasure is very much in evidence in contemporary Korean consumer culture and is particularly prevalent in television advertisements and modern dramas, both of which appear to emerge from some non-specific bourgeois Westernized otherworld. When a national identity requires expression in this milieu, it is strictly in its commodified form, signifying in exactly the same fashion as does a brand marque or product line. In other words, signifiers of national culture stand only to represent some facet of the consumer's identity such as it is defined in the process of desiring the object to which they attach. They are temporary, ephemeral and addressed towards a specific outcome, existing only to support the enjoyment of an object for as long as it remains desirable.

Identifying within this globalized desire therefore requires substituting the unity of the One for the multitude of partial objects that stand in for the global Thing. But as has already been established, the unity of the One only emerges (as something that has been lost) as a response to the statement of its antithesis, the global multitude. What is it about the global that provokes this particular recoil? I would suggest that it is the concept inherent in the global that all national identities are interchangeable, and so no particular national identity possesses any special quality. This fungibility is a consequence of their commodification—in order to be traded, a national identity must be repurposed as a consumable experience, which requires that it be purged of any quality that marks it as an exclusive 'essence' possessed only by those inside the group.

When construed in terms of the object of desire, it becomes quite clear that the opposing positions cannot be reconciled. Any synthesis of the opposition would require that the unified One sacrifice its completion and fullness and accept the equivalence of Korean identity with all other national identities. The strategy for effecting this synthesis would therefore require that the loss of the essential character of Korean identity be narrated as a gain; that is, as a progression and an achievement that serves the interests of all. It is as a fundamental part of this strategy that we should understand the existence of the DDP.

Hadid's DDP encapsulates the malleable form of the global object with much the same efficiency as Dokdo stands for the Korean national Thing. It is uncommitted in every sense of the term: Its undulating curves and bulges offer no indication of its purpose or origin, and tie it to no particular place or tradition. Its only reference is to the genre of which it is a part, i.e. the contemporary vogue for neofuturist non-geometric forms that have erupted in cities around the world that serve to mark their affinity with the globalized economic order. The DDP's presence in Dongdaemun is an essential part of its meaning, as the space that it occupies required the razing of a well-loved stadium, a long-established marketplace and a plethora of bustling side-streets and alleyways in which the living history of this entrepreneurial corner of old Seoul was written. In its place stands the anonymous curvilinear form of a structure with no clear function beyond its intent to signify the road to the future by erasing the local past and installing the global in its place.

At a more pragmatic level, the DDP represents a perspicuous example of a city's use of architecture in the pursuit of monopoly claims, as described by Harvey in the essay earlier cited. The DDP's function in and of itself is less important than its function beyond itself: It stands as an effort to establish Seoul's international identity and so to draw international trade, investment and tourism, and therefore increase property values and rent returns. A structure by an international big-name architect bolsters Seoul's status as a first tier international capital city and marks its suitability as a nexus in the transnational flows of investment capital, and so stands as a statement of institutional commitment to the values of globalization.

This institutional commitment to globalization must also be consummated at a more personal level by the citizens of the city and nation whose economic and cultural interests are being repositioned. The architects of the transformation must 'sell' the nation's brand image not only to the world but to its own people. It is this necessity that introduces the contradiction that structures the opposing positions of local and global identity, whence emerges the local One, captured in the image of Dokdo, and the global many, which can be understood to inhere to the futuristic form of the DDP.

The synthesis of this opposition therefore requires that individuals identify as 'global Koreans' by desiring within the discourse of globalization. The irresolvable contradiction falls away as local object of desire is substituted with the global multitude of objects and Korean identity becomes one among many equivalents. The loss is obscured by the narrative of progress: It is understood

as a part of Korea's economic and social development and therefore in the interests of all. Relative to this narrative, Global Korea is the future (progressive, sophisticated, modern) and traditional Korea is of the past (regressive, rural, archaic), and nothing has been lost in the process. Local identity and global identity have become a unified hybrid.

There are countless cultural manifestations of this hybrid identity in which the codes of Korean culture recede to the status of decoration or branding: traditional walls and eaves transplanted onto shop-fronts and restaurants in concrete city blocks; rice wine (*makgeolli*) reimagined and rebranded as an aspirational lifestyle product; the concerted efforts of government organizations to market Korean food overseas; and the prideful inflation of the impact of Korean popular culture around the world under the title of the Korean Wave (*hallyu*) — these all stand as efforts to iterate not the superiority of Korean identity but its absolute equivalence with other national identities. This synthesis is ideological because its fundamental claim is that, by being inserted into a series of interchangeable national identities, the contradiction between the opposing positions of local and global Korean identity was never a contradiction to begin with, and so the two terms can resolve to one term without any loss occurring.

V. Ideological and Negative Hybridity

Hybridity is ideological when it frames the imposition of identity as a progressive succession, obscuring the contradiction that arises from the reorientation of interests by representing it as a resolved synthesis in which all interests coincide. In the case of contemporary Korean identity, this ideological hybridity effectively functions as the claim that the DDP and Dokdo are one and the same, so the path from local Korean identity to global Korean identity results in a gain rather than a loss, and an achievement rather than a sacrifice. By identifying within the discourse of 'global Korea,' goes the claim, subjects can have it both ways. However, what actually results is the undignified colonisation of Korean identity by the forces of commodification, reducing tradition and custom to surface and styling.

This synthesis represents the movement of external reflection, in which the two opposing terms are united into one. Ideological hybridity can therefore be construed as the conceptual reification of the movement of external reflection,

in which global and local identity are sublated a positive third term. It follows then that negative hybridity is the result of the movement from external to absolute reflection that is achieved by the transposition of the negative movement of the contradiction into the originating term. So what exactly does this movement from external to absolute reflection portend for local and global Korean identity?

The first necessary step is to recognise that the notion that local Korean identity once possessed a fullness, purity and unity that it has now lost due to some incursion of modernity is nothing more than an effect of structure. It is only because local position is placed in contradictory opposition to the global position that this fullness and purity can be posited. Specifically, the global term posits that all national identities are equivalent and interchangeable, and so the local position recedes from the global by insisting on the privileged status of Korean identity, and demands that it be protected from intrusions from outside. At the same time, the antithetical term posits global identity as a progression, which means that the local position cannot but appear as regressive. Local Korean identity emerges therefore introverted, conservative and excessively preoccupied with a past state of imaginary fullness only as a consequence of the contradiction opened up by the iteration of global identity.

Local identity must therefore disavow the privileged status of Korean identity as an organic unity that has been now been lost and accept that this unity as an illusion caused by the structure of the contradiction. However, in relinquishing this object of desire — the national 'Thing' — another structural effect of the contradiction falls away: the notion of progress that supports global identity's status as an historical inevitability and constrains the relative positions to a narrative timeline in which one succeeds the other.

This moment is essential to the movement from external to absolute reflection. Negative hybridity rejects the privileged status of local identity but whilst also rejecting the notion of progress inherent to the antithetical term. In the proper 'negation of the negation' that constitutes the dialectical movement, this doubled negativity that would empty out the thesis term also does the same work of negation to the antithetical term. This action brings us to the stage of negative hybridity: the rejection of the local as a privileged organic unity and the rejection of the global as a necessary historical progression. Whereas ideological hybridity disavowed the contradiction whilst favouring the global, negative hybridity rejects the opposition between local regress and global progress as false, and rejects the forced choice between local and

global identity. If ideological hybridity stands for the absolute equivalence of all national identities and our freedom to move fluidly between them, then negative hybridity recognises the insufficiency and inadequacy of national identity *tout court* by recognising that ideological hybridity emerges as a result of the dialectical process being arrested prematurely.

Negative hybridity, as the movement of absolute reflection, consists therefore in the negation of the structural effects upon local and global identity that result from their being posited in opposition to one another. Once this opposition has been collapsed, we can perceive that the choice between local and global, between tradition and modernity, and between regress and progress was a false one that must be rejected. What remains is not local Korean identity, nor global Korean identity, but a Korean identity that is free to constitute itself in the space opened up by negative hybridity. It is a space that is defined by what it has lost, namely the hegemonic imposition of identity that emerged from the local-global narrative. It is beholden neither to the organic unity of the Korean 'Thing,' nor the procession of objects emerging from the bourgeois global discourse. From this open, negative space, a new contradiction will inevitably arise to inscribe some positive content onto the constitutive void, and the process will begin again. Negative hybridity will remain defined, however, not as any particular content, but as the formal movement that rejects false choices and collapses contradictions.

Negative hybridity, then, cannot be described in terms of its content. It is not possible to assign in any particular positive characteristics in the contemporary Korean context because it consists only as a movement of a formal negativity. It can only be designated in terms of what it rejects and uncouples from the concept of 'Koreanness.' It acts, therefore, upon positive content, but only to disrupt and unsettle that content by making it reveal that which has been left unstated. It acts by rejecting the enjoyment that emerges from the sublime object offered by local and global identity in favour of some future identity that will emerge from the actuality of everyday practice. It is clear, then, what negative hybridity demands should be rejected: the object of desire that inheres to both Dokdo and the DDP. Korean identity through the lens of negative hybridity belongs neither to the sentimental pursuit of a prelapsarian past, nor to a commodified global future. It is not a choice between local and global, nor a false compromise between them, but an invitation to write identity from below.

What guarantee does this movement of absolute reflection offer against its

resulting state being another fantasmatic construction? This is certainly a danger if it is perceived that this product of the dialectical process is identity as a *tabula rasa* upon which, in some hyper-postmodern fashion, any possible content might be inscribed. The rejection of a narrative of progress/regress consists a rejection of narrative as a formal restraint, but not a rejection of the content upon which it acted. The content remains, but its form is shattered. Negative hybridity is thus both the breaking down of identity and the incitement to reconstruct. This does not forfend the possibility of the subsequent emergence of another ideological identity, but that is not its purpose. It is a formal movement against narrative—the very form of fantasy. Its purpose—and this is what makes it particularly apposite to the analysis of claims for identity both national and post-national—is to recover the content lost to the formal process of narrative. It stands therefore as an attempt to traverse the fantasy of ideological hybridity and to consider the concept from a new perspective.

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Abstract

This paper argues for a reconceptualization of hybridity. Rejecting the definition of hybridity as a 'cultural melange' as ideological, it reconstructs the contradiction inherent to hybridity as a dialectical opposition, and then, following the dialectical materialism of Slavoj Žižek, this paper follows this opposition through its dialectical resolution. Consequently, the model of hybridity that claims the compatibility of local and global identity is resisted in preference to a form of negative hybridity that rejects the choice between local and global identity as false. This theoretical model is played out with reference to contemporary South Korean identity, using the tension between local Korean culture and an intruding global culture to explore the contradictions that hybridity tries to contain and the motivations that give rise to them.

Keywords: Hybridity, globalization, dialectical materialism, Slavoj Žižek

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