

Appropriated Koreanness: Orientalism, Authenticity, and the Mutated Authority of “Eat Your Kimchi”

Despite the vast research on how Koreanness is determined by Koreans, little is known about how it has been defined by those not from Korea. With the ubiquitous nature of the internet in being everywhere and from nowhere has led to modern mediatized and online communities which promote fabricated and disjointed connections. These communities challenge traditional identity formation or Koreanness and thus create new spaces where non-traditional authorities can claim authenticity. For the purpose of this paper I explore how Eat Your Kimchi (EYK), a popular internet video blog detailing the exploits of two expatriate Canadians and their lives in Korea, creates a new form of authority and appropriates Koreanness by using a combination of Orientalism, feigned intellectualism, cultural proximity and what I refer to as “mutated authority,” to create their own authentic form of Koreanness. An analysis of EYK yields that Koreanness can be defined and co-opted by “non-Korean” forces through a process of redistributing authority. It is through the breaking down of traditional post-colonial understandings of authenticity and authority that creates a space for a new authentic, new real. It is here that EYK resides, drawing upon the lack of understanding or value of what was previously considered authentic to a new understanding that authenticity is what we socially construct it to be.

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“One can consider authenticity as a fluid, rather than an inherently fixed, term to reflect the actual living cultural contexts of a contemporary society” (Oh 2014, 69). Looking at authenticity as a moving socially defined concept and not as a static removes the post-colonial authority structure, this enables authenticity to be reclaimed by those who had previously been disregarded. Anthropologist Eric Wolf notes “We can no longer think of societies as isolated and self-maintaining systems” (1982, 390), as globalization has furthered the intermigration of peoples across the globe we are faced with crumbling ideas about authentic culture. Yet Korea has routinely believed that it is a singular nation of singular people (*hankyoreh hanminjok*) (Shin 2006, G.-S. Han 2007) with the myth that its culture has only been created by Koreans (Yi 2003). As is the notion that to be able to be an authoritative source on Koreanness you must have some recognizable element of a socially constructed Korea (Ahn 2014). This can be garnered or obtained in a variety of ways, whether it is through ethnic representation (having Korean ancestry), being of Korean ethnicity and raised within the context of Benedict Anderson’s “imagined community” of Korea (Anderson 2006). Ethnicity can also be categorized in the multicultural sense as Everett Hughes described it “an ethnic group is not one because of the degree of measurable or observable difference from other groups; it is an ethnic group, on the contrary, because the people in and out of it know that it is one; because both the *ins* and the *outs* talk, feel and act as if it were a separate group (Hughes [1971], 1984, 153-154).

The process of reorganizing authority and authenticity has been common in Korea. Scholars discussing the “folklorization” of culture such as Hyun Key Kim Hogarth suggest that “Against the back drop of global cultural homogenization, ancient folk rituals are revived and reinvented with changed

ritual procedures and meanings to make them more appealing to the masses” (Kim Hogarth 2001, 281). It is this process of folklorization and reauthorizing of culture to better suit the needs of the contemporary is the same process that alternative communities, such as foreigners, use to justify its position as an authority of Koreanness. However a key difference in the process is that these alternative authorities are not sanctioned by any “Korean” authority but have instead taken the mantle of responsibility upon themselves, utilizing exoticism and othering to empower their own privileged position, and therefore from that position of power further their own vision on Korean culture and identity.

Authenticity can also be “duly authorized, certified, or legally valid” (Bruner 1994, 400), as from a socially accepted source, i.e. the Korean government. Authority can also be granted by “lived experience” (Schulze 2013, 490). For the purpose of this paper I explain that Eat Your Kimchi (hereafter EYK), an internet video blog detailing the exploits of two expatriate Canadians and their lives in Korea, creates a new form of authority and appropriates Koreanness by using a combination of Orientalism, feigned intellectualism, cultural proximity and what I refer to as “mutated authority,”¹ to create their own authentic form of Koreanness.

Orientalism, Cultural Proximity, and *mutated authority*

In order to understand the means in which EYK co-opts and appropriates Koreanness for its own purpose it is necessary to understand the process in which it accomplishes it. EYK utilizes a multi-faceted approach for redefining and recreating Koreanness. The first tool of the cultural imperialist is Othering via Orientalist framing. Othering refers to the Occidental Other, specifically white Canadian authorities. Through drawing on their Western and white identities they have power over non-western, non-white cultures. With respect to post-colonial Korea, the Korean government has been attempting to “overcome the dominance of Western culture” (Ok 2016, 2), to reestablish the cultural superiority that has been lost by multicultural education (Kim 2008). This loss of “cultural ground” to the West is then furthered via orientalist examinations of Korea. This can be seen in how Korean pop music (hereafter K-Pop) is viewed as culturally authentic or inauthentic depending upon Western cultural understandings (Oh 2014). Therefore as orientalist values dominate the Korean cultural landscape it becomes possible for forces such as EYK to utilize their exploration of the “exotic”, “weird”, and different Korean cultural artifices to create a space for commentary and ultimately control over the native subject. However, Orientalist authority is insufficient in the task of creating an “authentic” form of culture, as Chuyun Oh continues on to point out. In her exploration on the K-Pop idol group Girls Generation, she notes that Koreanness is characterized via its hybridity in simultaneously accepting and rejecting Western and Asian stereotypical markers, that “the notion of authenticity has been a constructed myth that exclusively legitimizes the racially ‘unmarked’ privilege of white people and their appropriations of others since the colonial era”(2014, 69). With the concept of an “authentic” version of Korea being more challenged EYK incorporates more than Orientalist power constructs to develop its alternative Koreanness.

¹ I use the term mutated authenticity by building upon Chuyun Oh’s “Multicultural Mutated Koreanness” (MMK). For Oh MMK was the appropriation of diametrically opposed views, “whiteness/non-whiteness and Koreanness/non-Koreanness and freely appropriate any cultural markers including the hegemonic notion of whiteness” (Oh 2014, 69) for the purposes of this paper Mutated Authority, it refers to how EYK rejects their place as a figure of authority before acting out as the authority of the subject.

EYK is at its heart an entertainment device, growing out of the desire to personally catalogue the experience of moving and working in a foreign country, yet over the years transformed into a medium for entertainment review and tomfoolery. Yet how is it that a video blog explicating the adventures of two “ordinary” Canadian expats became a source of cultural exploration and critique? Modern communication via online streaming is a post-modern form of communication that relies on a two-way dialogue with the content creator and the fan (Tolson 2010). This new form of mediated communication has led many younger generations to pursue knowledge and instruction online as opposed to traditional forms of media such as films, books, art, etc. Jürgen Habermas, in his book *The Structural Transformation of Public Sphere*, addresses that free-thinking citizens are capable of mediating the power between state and private spheres about public issues (1994). Habermas expressed how he perceives that the public has gone “from public critically reflecting on its culture to one that merely consumes it” (1994, 175). It is through the internet that many of the public can critically (or perhaps more accurately uncritically) consume culture. Knowing that post-modern information is spread via new forms of communication has worked in EYKs favor for presenting their own version of a Korean authentic, as the curious public can quickly and easily digest their user-created content. Furthermore, popular culture is increasingly being valued as a legitimate source of information as Dich notes that it “can be a productive site of inquiry, allowing students to derive understanding of publics from popular culture” (Dich 100, 2016). This would explain how EYK forms plausible and coherent messages about Korea that are uncritically accepted by much of its audience, this is accomplished in part through its cultural proximity to Korea as a means of authority.

Marion Schulze, in her analysis of online-fandom of Korean dramas came to the important realization that there exists a power of “lived experience” in classifying accurate portrayals of Korean culture (Schulze 2012). Using the notion of “Hierarchy of Credibility” first discussed by Howard Becker (1983, 90) posits that audiences will be more willing to accept and agree with the ideological positions of those that are in positions of power. Schulze illustrated that public online communities would attribute authority to those that had “lived experience” in Korea, trusting them more than those without the suitable experience. In understanding that proximity to a location such as Korea, could provide a greater “understanding” of that said location further proves problematic when the traditional definitions and proximities are explored. While we can assume that those that pass some arbitrary benchmark for expertise is nothing more than a benign problem, the myth of cultural identity has proven that it becomes increasingly difficult to isolate origins, or as Gerd Baumann put it “identity is a matter of situation and context” (1999, 58). While Benedict Anderson might point to the imagined notion of Korea, we are nonetheless forced to try and define its boundaries and included elements.

Yi Jeong Duk addresses the concept of Korean Culture in his analysis of Choe Jun Sik, a scholar supportive of traditional culture theory, that all Korean culture is still determined by its traditional values. Yi points to a failure of Korean scholarship to address truth of Korea (Yi 2003). Yet what is Korea? How can we define what Korea is when it means so many different things to different communities, What is being realized in this new age is that there no longer exists this hard and fast boundary of identity, that force and unfamiliarity has rebranded Korea in to Legion, for it is many things to many different communities. This concept of Korean culture presumes the clear continuity and boundedness of Korea, what Connor determined when searching for the meaning of nation, for him it was “a group of people who feel that they are ancestrally related” (Connor 1993, 382). However there is ample evidence

that this definition of Korea, is nonexistent, Cedarbough Saeji, writes “what is considered Korean today contains numerous elements borrowed from other cultures. Fixed territories, as we see in the Korean peninsula, do not necessarily translate into bounded cultural units” (Saeji 2015, 7). In understanding the “imagined community” (Anderson 1983) that forms the basis of our understanding of “Korea” we can begin to see how EYK has been able to further develop its credentials as an expert or arbiter of Korean culture. When EYK operates its studio and filming within Korea not only does its physical proximity to the accepted powerbase of Korean culture, the Korean peninsula, further its credibility in the Beckarian sense, the breakdown in traditional understanding of community and ethnicity establishes the credentials of EYK.

The process for gaining authenticity for EYK is complicated, it is not enough to utilize white privilege and stereotyping via Othering, nor is it enough to claim authenticity in the form of an expert granted through real and perceived physical or cultural closeness. The final step required to cement its position as an authority on the topic of Koreanness, the last piece of the puzzle comes in the form of rejection of the mantle of authority followed by the reaffirmation of the surrendered authority. In the post-colonial world of modern media consumption it has been found that the average public citizen does not obtain information directly from experts but typically through the mass media (Wilson 1995). Derek Koehler expressed how In a world where media is expected to be balanced, giving equal weight to both sides of an argument has led to a sense of *false balance*, applying balancing methods in situations that evidence overwhelmingly supports one side (i.e. global warming), but this *false balance* “can distort the perceptions of expert opinions even when participants would seem to have half the information needed to correct for its influence” (Koehler 2016, 1). What this means for EYK is that they are able to create authority by rejecting it followed by acting as an authoritative force. I refer to this as *mutated authority* where the rejection and presentation of being an authority provides a duality that creates a space of authenticity and the perception of real. The process of rejecting the position of authority can be viewed as a form of self-reduction. Whereas self-enhancing comments have been shown to lower the positive reception of statements (Godfrey, Jones, and Lord 1986) self-reduction acts as a means of generating trust. This trust can be abused, and once gained self-enhancing can be used to further increase the perception of being a source of expertise (Packard, Gershoff, and Wooten 2016). What this means for EYK is that once they find a means of obtaining trust self-enhancing statements such as hyperbole, boasting, or broad seemingly irrefutable claims the audience further is willing to believe what they say as truth. This *mutated authority* is then created through the process of obtaining trust and then promoting their own agenda’s about their construction of Koreanness. Once the authority has been acquired the audience has little to do but either accept at face-value the truth presented or instead reject the material as false. While this paper does not explore the success rate of these statements, the former appears to more commonly occurring leading to the formation of an alternative “Koreanness”.

An Analysis of “Eat Your Kimchi”

EYK originally began in May 2008 as a personal video blog for Martina and Simon Stanz, two Canadian expatriates English teachers in Bucheon, Korea. The video blog first focused on cataloging the daily activities and trials of their adjustment to life in Korea, the initial video being taken of their first meal in Korea. According to the Stanzs, the purpose for the blog was purely personal “to show our families what life is like in Korea because after all they had no idea what it was like and were worried

about us.”² With humble beginnings EYK began to gain popularity online, during which began to transition full-time into video production. With the shift from teaching to content creation EYK changed its appearance and began offering more and different forms of content. Content that was originally focused on how to live as an English Teacher was replaced by cultural commentary, travel, food, and music reviews. The more polished version of EYK began to take more risks in its choice of content, talking about political, social, and contemporary issues in Korea becoming a mixture of news and entertainment. Following the shift EYK increased their position as acting as an authentic authority of Korean culture and Koreanness. This is achieved through a variety of ways, appropriation of Korean authority, physical proximity to Korea, false intellectualism and *mutated authority*.

Orientalism and Appropriation of Korean Authority

EYK fuses its unique position among Korean in its critique and construction of Koreanness. Martina and Simon, frequently make reference to their status as outsiders, and use their Canadian citizenship as a means of commenting on Korea. On their video blog they have several different channels each directed at a different aspect of Korean culture; i.e, food, music, travel etc. Relying on their perceived cultural superiority they frequently would look down upon the content of their discussion as a means of reframing the argument to their will. Just as Edward Said described Western understandings of Islam and the Orient, “The Orient and Islam have a kind of extrareal, phenomenologically reduced status that puts them out of reach of everyone except the Western expert. From the beginning of Western speculation about the Orient, the one thing the Orient could not do was to represent itself.” (1978, 283) EYK found the ability to co-opt Korean culture and repurpose it for Western consumption. This was accomplished through a variety of means, first through the naming of its various channels on the blog. EYK has frequently named its video segments using long positive sounding names that are then abbreviated into acronyms. Names such as; Wonderful Adventure Now Korea, Wonderful Treasure Find Korea, Food Adventure Program For Awesome People, are shortened to W.A.N.K., WTF Korea, and FAP FAP respectively. The choice of these names is a subtle means of critiquing the material they discuss, each of the names they chose are modern English variations of vulgarity. WANK and FAP FAP referring to masturbation and masturbatory sounds, with WTF being a written shorthand for “what the fuck” a phrase often used to express the incredulity or absurdity of a situation. These derogatory names serve a dual purpose, they are used to further their perception as “everyman” commenters of society, which will be discussed later, and to reinforce their superior status as white, English speaking Canadians. By taking a condescending attitude towards the content they are producing they are controlling the perception of their audience, further creating the appearance that they the creators have special understanding and insight into the material, in effect propping them up as the authority of Korean culture.

This exoticism of Koreanness can be seen in the text of their videos as well. Looking at the episode “How Have You Become More Korean”³ is helpful in understanding their Orientalist view of Korea. In the episode they express the things they have learned during the seven years they have spent in Korea. Martin begins speaking to their history “In the seven years that we’ve been living in Korea, we’ve come to realize that your identity isn’t just determined by your family and your upbringing. Even if you move to another country as a grown-ass adult you can have your tendencies and your identity

² <http://www.eatyourkimchi.com/how-we-started-blogging-full-time/>

³ <http://www.eatyourkimchi.com/how-have-you-become-more-korean>

change significantly.” Martina continues on to express that these identity changes are not limited to “culture shock kind of way” but as to real changes in identity. This reference is not by accident, by dismissing culture shock experiences, they strengthen their position as experts of Korea, in a Beckarian fashion, in one fell swoop they have carved out a space as authorities on what is acceptable as Korean identity while deterring challenges to their authority. After dismantling potential challengers to their authority on Korean identity, they further exoticize cultural practices and realities of Korea. This reduces the validity of objections to authority. This is most evident in the praise given to the white rice, a common staple in the Korean diet, and chopsticks.

EYK describes how their diet shifted living in Korea, through anecdotes they express their attempts to “fight” the change in diet by upholding commonly thought of Western diet of bread over rice. Yet as they came to accept the change in their diet and “gone native” so to speak they felt better about themselves. Martina describes a trip to Europe where they were unable to have rice as being extremely difficult. This attempt a comic story, is used to latch onto the belief that “real” Koreans must have Korean food wherever they are in the world. This appropriation of Korean habits backs up their transition to arbiters of Koreanness. However, these “changes” in their identity are merely for show, Martina subtly and deftly looks down upon the very food that she claims to be so important to her, in her description of Korean rice “It should be nutritionally devoid. That’s what I want. I want the most nutritionally devoid rice that you can hand me.” This negative analysis of Korean staple reminds her viewers that she has not abandoned her “true” values as a Canadian, but just has the power to comment on the superficiality of the particular food. Martin continues this exotic Othering in his praise for the chopstick. “I firmly believe that this is a universal truth that can be proved by science, through very many algorithms and theorems: chopsticks are the superior utensil”, “forks and knives are so barbaric.” This preference of Korean utensils over western cutlery is an attempt to show their superior understanding of an otherwise “backwards” tradition. These attempts to Other and exoticize Korean culture underpins their authority to delineate what is and isn’t acceptable as Korean thus furthering their own brand of Koreanness.

EYK combines this orientalism with appropriation of credibility from a variety of “Korean” sources. Appearing as an authoritative figure on Korean topics is commonly accomplished through the appropriation of the “Korean” Soo Zee. Soo Zee, an ethnic Korean National who works for EYK. Soo Zee routinely stands in to lend support to any argument they might be making. The implications of using a single person as justification for broader claims about the culture of Korea as a whole is shocking, (albeit not unusual). EYK uses this tactic frequently when their position of authority could be challenged due to insufficient Korean skills, lack of firsthand knowledge, or whenever they are challenged by one of their commenters.

Physical and Cultural Proximity to Korea

EYK is meant to act as a bridge between cultures, helping predominantly North American, Southeast Asian, and other non-Korean audiences navigate and access Korean culture, life, and history. While there are some Koreans that are members of the audience, as well as Korean staff members working as a part of the EYK studio, it largely exists as a vehicle for Western Other and Orientalism under the misnomer of friendship and fandom. While EYK produces and films their content almost exclusively

in Korea, according to the media company MashableAsia, the Korean audience is only at 3%⁴ of which foreigners based in Korea could make up part of the total. Comparatively the Korea Times reported the US fan base to account for 45% of viewership⁵. Furthermore, according to its webpage EYK only builds content that it feels it will be beneficial or wanted by its audience, therefore with a predominantly foreign audience they tend to make content that is directed against Korean culture, or rather originates from non-Korea.

EYK uses its physical location in Korea as further proof of authenticity and authority in its depictions of Korean culture. Since the majority of the viewers who consume EYK do not live⁶ in Korea they are forced into a binary argument where they must either accept what is being shown or told to them as fundamentally true, or reject what is being shown to them. This is illustrated by Marion Schulze in her analysis of K-drama fans, “the importance of lived experience also establishes a ranking system among international fans. The more lived experience a viewer can advance, the more legitimation is given to her/his interpretation” (Schulze 2013, 390). EYK as being a Korean based production has the highest level of authority and legitimacy as perceived by fans and viewers. Additionally in their videos they frequently leave the studio to head into the public world of everyday Korea. These excursions into public Korean space reinforce the legitimacy of their claims as cultural experts in Korea. Even while their trips outside do not challenge the carefully manicured vision of Korea they have espoused, they are instrumental in defeating challenges of a fake studio. It is through these real-world visits, that they capture the first and third identifiers of Bruner’s authenticity (Bruner 1994, 399), being credible and convincing, while also original and not a copy of the Korean landscape.

Feigned intellectualism and mutated authority

EYK frequently uses feigned intellectualism, to further their position as authorities of Korean culture, they accomplish this through the use of vague statistics, the use of tautological arguments, and false ethnography to create a form of authority. In the episode “Prostitution in South Korea” is exemplary of how they use cultural superiority to express the sex industry in Korea. The episode begins with an anecdote about a local K-pop celebrity being involved in a sex scandal, they follow this up by affirming their own intellectual capabilities, “For us we weren’t surprised about this whatsoever...” implying they have a unique set of knowledge or insight into Korean culture and happenings. This is followed by a mixture of both cited “one-in-five men in South Korea use a prostitute once a month and uncited statistics, “prostitution accounts for 4% of the GDP of South Korea.” The use of statistics is a means of establishing credibility and authority with their audiences, and has been shown that being viewed as reliable in one area will be presumed to be reliable in another area (Lankes 2007, 681). This creation of reliable information in one aspect is further suspected in others. But just as Mark Twain’s quote oft attributed to British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli “There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics” illustrates these statistics are not all of what they seem. In the cited quote above EYK “mistakenly” misinterprets the number of men believed to use the sex industry on a monthly basis to be all men, and not only those in their 20’s as the referenced statistic indicates.⁷

⁴ <http://mashable.com/2014/01/05/eat-your-kimchi/#Po185JRHj5q1>.

⁵ <http://www.koreatimesus.com/eat-your-kimchi-to-success-you-bet/>

⁶ Or do not have an IP address that originates in Korea.

⁷ <http://www.eatyourkimchi.com/prostitution-in-south-korea/> (1:06)

EYK creates a form of *mutated authority* through its rejection of being an authority figure. This rejection works to undermine the belief in traditional authority. Mutated authority is also accomplished by building a persona of an “everyman” through the use of lurid and taboo titles for their video series. This use of data to represent the narrative of Korea EYK has created is a frequently seen in both their written and filmed content. In the episode “Teen pregnancy in South Korea” at the very beginning of the clip describing teenage pregnancy EYK explicitly state that “We are not South Korean Teenage girls” and then proceeds to use data from Wikipedia derived from the OECD, as well as personal anecdotes to justify the idea that teenage pregnancy does not exist is so low in Korea. While they accept the dubious and hazardous nature of trusting Wikipedia as a source of legitimate information, they only use it as a false warning, recognizing that they do not need to have a formal source of data to accomplish their message. Following their anecdotes Martina and Simon proceed to take a tactic of using hyperbolic false predictions and then dismissing them to gain credibility with the audience. Simon starts off by explaining the difference in teenagers in the west versus those in Korea. Teens “in the west have been poisoned by the devil and God has turned their backs on them and as a result he has bestowed his graces on Korea and doesn’t let them get pregnant as teenager.” This scene in the episode is meant to display humor, joking that Korean youth maintain a purity that has been lost by their Western brethren, not only does this come across as orientalist in upholding the purity of values marking Korea boys as non-threatening, and girls as virginal, it propagates a myth that Korean teens are for all effects and purposes asexual. The use of humor is used to further their image as approachable and “one of the guys” thus trustworthy. In “Sexuality” EYK uses feigned intellectualism through its “logical” breakdown of the role of sex in young couples. This is especially apparent in their misunderstanding of Sex and Sexuality.

Looking at “The Gyopo Experience featuring Jen” Martina interviews a fellow YouTube personality Jen, of From Head to Toe⁸, about her experience as a Korean-American gyopo. Jen, an ethnic Korean born and raised in the United States, is interviewed to help inform the audience on the experience of being a multi-cultural dual-identity individual. The interview goes into the details of how Jen experienced culture as a self-proclaimed foreigner. The use of interview with a Korean diaspora is a means of appropriating the assumed legitimacy of their knowledge. EYK not considering or passing as Korean use the cultural and ideological capital of Jen “the gyopo” to further their own identity creation of Koreanness. For EYK, the experience. In addition to the video post EYJK wrote on the topic of identity, in response to how Jen was curious as to whether EYK considered themselves Korean-Canadians or Canadian-Koreans. Their response illustrates their attempts to combine feigned intellectualism, cultural proximity and *mutated authority* to be able to talk definitively on the subject.

It caught us really off guard. It’s not something we ever thought about. “Neither” is our first response. We have no Korean blood in us. We’re not Korean. Jen went on to say, though, that we’re in many ways more Korean than she is. We’ve been living in Korea for over six years now. We’ve been really immersed here. We have a home, a business. We eat Korean food every day. We speak Korean every day (not high level Korean, though: but more than enough to carry on conversations). We pay Korean taxes. When we were in LA, we were culture shocked by all of the things that are not like how they are in Korea.

But that’s not the point of our conversation. Though we’ve spent most of our adult lives in Korea, we still don’t consider ourselves Korean, yet we’ve adapted to Korean culture in many ways.

⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/user/frmheadtotoe>

Those of you angry Tumblerinas, please note: WE ARE NOT CALLING OURSELVES KOREAN. We were fascinated by the question, though, and what it implies.⁹

This post by EYK elucidates their position on the matter of identity, they are very forthright and clear in the implication that they do not personally identify as Korean. The rejection of the notion that they could classify themselves as Korean comes off as honest but also designed to preserve their position as Other.¹⁰ Relinquishing their “Canadianness” by obtaining a mix would rob EYK of their ability to speak freely on the subjects at hand. When pressed by Jen, they resort to a traditional understandings of ethnicity and misplace it as cultural identity (Baumann 1999, 19). Through the cultivation of personal identity, they override any questions that might connect them to a different identity. In rejecting Koreanness they are creating space for themselves to be critical, and defining on the topic of what is and isn’t Korean. For Eat Your Kimchi it is enough for them to be non-identifying with Koreanness, for how could the traditional models they use to define Korean are insufficient in providing what is real. For them blood is the only representative that matters in this instance to be a qualified expert on Korean identity and culture. However it begs the question, what is it that makes someone a member of an ethnicity? For Jen, the diasporic Korean, there remains a gray area that would allow for non-traditional members to exist. For EYK there can be no equivocation, Koreanness is not determined by anything other than ancestry.

The use of interviews is a means of false ethnography, in that EYK is creating a scenario in which they can ask loaded questions and not experience any pushback. When pushbacked by their interviewee is encountered the questions are summarily dismissed. Lastly, Eat Your Kimchi also creates a sense of authority through its process of answering questions. This authority is found in their responding to what their viewers want, therefore enabling a closed-loop of rational where their answers are all that matter. This is an example of the feigned intellectualism, utilizing a false ethnographic account to reinforce the values they initially espoused.

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Conclusion

Eat Your Kimchi is an example of how modern mediatized and online communities create fabricated and disjointed connections. EYK operates in a temporal plane of Koreanness that has been defined by those not from Korea, just as Eun-Young Jung discovered that “the Korean Wave may not be as ‘Korean’

⁹ <http://www.eatyourkimchi.com/the-gyopo-experience/>

¹⁰ The passage continues with “Back in the day, your language and your geographical location and your nationality and your heritage were very often all the same. A Korean person spoke Korean and lived in Korea and had Korean family. There was little mingling. But the world has changed a lot in the past 100 years. My parents are from Poland, but they have half-German grandparents. Then they moved to Canada. My first language was Polish, but then I dropped it for English. Now I’m living in Korea, and my identity and career are all based on Korean stuff. What do I identify as, then?” Further illustrating the position that cultural identity is a product of blood, that pluralism of cultures is a myth.

or as authentically Korean' as people might imagine" (2009, 78), through projection and a perceived cultural superiority, Korea is safely identified and defined via online community. The conclusions that can be drawn from EYK is that Koreanness can be defined and co-opted by "non-Korean" forces through a process of redistributing authority. It is through the breaking down of traditional post-colonial understandings of authenticity and authority that creates a space for a new authentic, new real. It is here that EYK resides, drawing upon the lack of understanding or value of what was previously considered authentic to a new understanding that authenticity is what we socially construct it to be.

In creating a separate and alternative to traditional "Koreanness" EYK illustrates that in the post-colonial post-modern world traditional definitions lack the substance they once could muster. The breakdown of the modern nation state through multiculturalism and pluralism has made it impossible to delineate truth from fiction as first-hand experience has been exchanged for anecdotal evidence in the form of internet communities. The mutated Korea that has been created becomes just as viable and real to its community as that of traditional Korea is to its denizens. Thus as further digital exploration and community building occurs we face a departure from the traditional sense of identity, not only in the form of medium but also in the ownership and membership within these communities.

The modern identity of community are challenged, while Anderson elicits that the vast majority of people cannot or do not choose their nationality, national identity is viewed through the prism of family history and birth. This allows citizens the ability to naturally accept the civic roles thrust upon them. However as the community grows beyond its physical boundaries and into the nether of cyberspace re-evaluation of the meanings of the community are also in place, we now have a situation where those who look different, speak differently, and think differently ultimately represent a faction of real life. Where they demonstrate that you don't have to be traditional to be real.

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