

## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF-

Rachana Son for the degree of Master of Arts in English presented on June 12, 2018.

Title: Scripts and Minoritarian Subjectivity: Examining Ambivalence and Asian Diasporas in Kim Jee-woon's *The Good, The Bad, The Weird*, Kim Fu's *For Today I Am a Boy*, and R. Zamora Linmark's *Rolling the R's*

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This thesis explores the roles of scripts in shaping minoritarian subjectivity through Kim Jee-woon's film *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* (2008), Kim Fu's novel *For Today I Am a Boy* (2014), and R. Zamora Linmark's novel *Rolling the R's* (1995). In all three works, diasporic characters of Asian descent express ambivalence towards hegemonic forces and mimic existing film and television scripts that uphold whiteness and heterosexuality. However, rather than becoming whitewashed from mimicking those scripts, these characters retain their minoritarian subjectivity as exiles and racialized queer subjects. I argue that scripts do not necessarily trap minorities into normative structures, but instead the faithful reenactment of scripts through remaking films and mimicry can be used to undermine hegemonic forces when used to express Otherness and diaspora.

In my first chapter, I link *The Good, The Bad, The Weird's* ambivalent tone with melancholia related to the Korean diaspora. Using David Eng's work on melancholia, I reveal how the film's titular characters treat colonized Korea as a lost object in scenes where Korea is discussed or presented through flashbacks. Drawing from Constantine Verevis' *Film Remakes*, I also explore how *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* is a transformed remake of *The Good, the Bad,*

*and the Ugly* (1966) and how changes to the latter's semantic elements help incorporate the Korean diaspora into the former's narrative. These changes demonstrate how cultural contexts could be transfigured between works to illustrate minoritarian subjectivity.

In my second chapter, I examine how and why *For Today I Am a Boy* and *Rolling the R's* racialized queer characters mimic white heterosexual scripts while also retaining their alterity and undermining those scripts. I pair Sara Ahmed's *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* with *For Today I Am a Boy* to outline ways heterosexual scripts shape queer bodies through affect. I also use Homi Bhabha's model of colonial mimicry to argue that white heterosexual scripts will partially fail when the Other tries to mimic normative film and television scripts. In my analysis of *Rolling the R's*, I argue that the novel presents ways racialized queer subjects could disrupt normative spaces, appropriate white icons, and express same-sex desires through mimicry.

Because these three works differ in form and relevant theories, this thesis presents a wide applicability of scripts in analyzing diaspora, melancholia's ambivalence, and minoritarian subjectivity.

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Examining Ambivalence and Asian Diasporas in Kim Jee-woon's *The Good, The Bad, The  
Weird*, Kim Fu's *For Today I Am a Boy*, and R. Zamora Linmark's *Rolling the R's*

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

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Rachana Son, Author

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## Introduction

My thesis started out as an opportunity to learn about Asian American literature, a subject I was unfamiliar with but felt like I should know more about. As a Cambodian-Vietnamese American, I felt the need to become a scholar in Asian American literature and research creative works by people like me. That is not to say I was uninterested in this subject; I wanted to know how and why these works were connected when there is no singular “Asian American” experience. Nevertheless, my motivation for this thesis seemed to be rooted in some sense of obligation that I still have trouble fully articulating and understanding. I thought that if I did not tackle Asian American literature, who else would?

However, because of the interactions I had with my colleagues, professors, and thesis committee members during this master’s program, the motivation for my thesis transformed as I was introduced to specific works and theories that I wanted to study further. The introduction to affect theory through my coursework posed a daunting yet exciting challenge as this new framework made me consider phenomenology while analyzing film and literature and how emotions could shape individuals and groups. With this theory’s potential in explaining processes of group formation, affect theory may help me determine whether the connections between works in a genre like Asian American literature are affective in nature. Furthermore, I was particularly fascinated by Sara Ahmed’s *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* and her argument about how social scripts reinforce heteronormativity through comfort and discomfort (147) because she presented a different side to queer studies through affect. I was also drawn to Homi Bhabha’s concept of colonial mimicry as a potential intervention to undermine social scripts and reveal how heteronormativity and colonialism are intertwined. Then, David Eng’s scholarship on

melancholia, ambivalence, and minoritarian subjectivity became the final component to link together two years' worth of readings and theoretical work together.

While I was learning about these theoretical frameworks, I also encountered the three artifacts that became central to my thesis: Kim Jee-woon's film *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* (2008), Kim Fu's novel *For Today I Am a Boy* (2014), and R. Zamora Linmark's novel *Rolling the R's* (1995). As I will explain in more detail, each artifact corresponds to some aspect of the theories listed above. The interactions with these artifacts and theories gradually transformed my thesis from a general overview of Asian American literature to an analysis of scripts, mimicry, melancholia, and diasporic subjects. While my project still focuses on people of Asian descent based on the characters from these central artifacts, the purpose of this thesis is no longer centered around feelings of obligation based on my ethnic and racial identities. Instead, I hope to build upon Ahmed, Bhabha, and Eng's work while also putting them in conversation with each other and the three artifacts in order to define and demonstrate the roles of scripts in minoritarian subjectivity.

As mentioned earlier, "scripts" have also been used figuratively in the concept of social scripts that according to Ahmed "shape bodies and lives" (145) by informing what behaviors are considered ideal and how to live an ideal life. However, I refer to "scripts" throughout my thesis mainly in a literal sense as the "typescript of cinema or television film" ("script, n.1") that people can recite or act out. The focus on literal scripts reflects the thesis' artifacts and their engagement with the scripts from specific film and television programs such as *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* (1966), *Sabrina* (1954), and *Charlie's Angels* (1976). As a film remake, *The Good, The Bad, The Weird's* engagement with *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly's* script could be examined by comparing their narrative structures and iconographies. As novels, *For Today I Am a Boy* and

*Rolling the R's* engagement with scripts could be found in the textual depictions of their characters mimicking pop culture figures. Furthermore, this emphasis on literal scripts allows us to analyze cinematic or television scripts' formal structures, compare/contrast the characters from the thesis' central artifacts with the scripts they emulate, and identify ideal behaviors also found in theoretical scripts.

As minoritarian subjectivity is another focus of my thesis, Eng's work on melancholia has been invaluable in understanding the possible reasons as to why minorities seem ambivalent to hegemonic forces and alterity. Deriving from Sigmund Freud's model of melancholia as "a theory of unresolved grief," Eng describes melancholia in "Melancholia in the Late Twentieth Century" as the "refusal to sever any attachments to [a] lost object" (1276). This refusal creates an ambivalent state of continual grief where it would seem beneficial to let go of this "lost object" but for some reason or another, that attachment remains. Eng argues that minoritarian subjectivity manifests when "women, homosexuals, people of color, and postcolonials are all coerced to relinquish and yet to identify with socially disparaged objects" (1278). In other words, lost objects for minorities are objects hegemonic forces fail to recognize or deem valuable, and minorities are placed in an ambivalent state where they must simultaneously reject and identify with these objects.

Melancholia seemingly creates a deadlock where minorities internally fixate on the "socially disparaged," leading to minorities becoming incapable of challenging the structures that contributed to their ambivalent state in the first place. However, melancholia has been framed as a destabilizing force when it is not characterized as a pathologized form of mourning but rather as conflict and a form of agency. In "A Dialogue on Racial Melancholia," a work that focuses on how melancholia may affect the Asian American psyche during processes like assimilation, Eng

and Shinhee Han describe how interpreting melancholia as “conflict rather than damage not only renders it a productive category but also removes Asian Americans from the position of solipsistic ‘victims’” (693). Assimilation involves internalizing norms that are “often foreclosed” to people of color in the United States such as “whiteness, heterosexuality, middle-class family values” (670). For Asian Americans and other minorities, adopting these norms require relinquishing Otherness, so when minorities refuse to relinquish that Otherness by simply existing in an ambivalent state where they are pressured to adopt norms they cannot fully embody, they demonstrate agency in their conflict and negotiation with norms.

This productive form of melancholia has helped me navigate works featuring diasporic Asian characters who express ambivalence about their surroundings despite the various structures continually devaluing their existence. Along with not outwardly challenging colonial, racist, and heteronormative forces, these diasporic Asians even mimic scripts found in television and movies that uphold whiteness and heterosexuality. Here, I use the terms “diasporic” and “diaspora” to mainly refer to the “displacement and dispersal over time and space” of people (Banerjee 7) for the histories of these specific Asian characters involve migration through exile or immigration. It is important to recognize that diaspora studies have “been increasingly divorced from teleologies of return” (Banerjee 9), for reducing diasporic individuals and populations to a place and/or a desire to “return” to that place is not only inaccurate regarding certain diasporic experiences but also reifies problematic notions of populations belonging only to certain places. Thus, terms describing characters as, for example, “Korean,” “Chinese,” or “Filipino” are not meant to reduce these characters to their ethnicities or some “country of origin.” Rather, these terms reflect part of the characters’ identities without immediately specifying how those identities came to be.

In order to examine the various ways diasporic subjects express melancholic ambivalence, I will focus on the aforementioned three artifacts and the scripts they draw from. The first work is Kim Jee-woon's *The Good, The Bad, The Weird*, a Korean remake of Sergio Leone's spaghetti western *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*. This film features three Korean exiles, Park Do-won (The Good), Park Chang-yi (The Bad), and Yoon Tae-goo (The Weird), in Japanese-occupied Manchuria who follow a treasure map that eventually leads them to a three-way shootout, much like in the original film's script. *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* features the conflict between the Imperial Japanese Army and the Korean independence movement of which none of the protagonists directly partake in, even though Japan colonized Korea and was a major factor in this Korean diaspora (such ambivalence is similar to Leone's characters not taking a side in the American Civil War). The next work, Kim Fu's *For Today I Am a Boy* chronicles the life of Peter Huang, one of four children of Chinese-Canadian immigrants, and how Peter navigates being a closeted trans woman. Peter often looks to films and TV starring white women in heteronormative roles and at times mimicks those roles. Eventually, Peter rejects her assigned gender and adopts the name "Audrey" after her idol, Audrey Hepburn. Lastly, I will analyze R. Zamora Linmark's *Rolling the R's* (1995), a novel spotlighting the predominately Filipino youth of Kalihi, Hawaii in the 1970s and their antics centered on their emerging sexualities, oppressive school systems, Hawaiian pidgin, American pop culture, or, more often than not, all the above. One of these Filipino youths, Orlando Domingo, obsesses over actress Farrah Fawcett and wants to be her to the point that he dresses up as her and only answers those who call him "Farrah." Another youth, Vicente De Los Reyes, is a closeted gay boy who only feels comfortable expressing his desires by role-playing disco divas like Donna Summer and singing songs directed at a male lover.

While the characters from these three works initially appear to be indifferent to or even complacent about oppressive forces as they adhere to existing scripts made by or featuring white and/or heterosexual people, they never actually disavow their minoritarian subjectivity. In fact, the characters' faithfulness to these scripts reveal how scripts ultimately fail in suppressing the characters' alterity. Furthermore, mentions of specific Asian diasporas reoccur throughout these works via characters' dialogue, appearance, and feelings marking them as the Other within the spaces they occupy. Thus, scripts do not necessarily trap minorities into normative structures, but rather faithful reenactment of scripts through the processes of remaking films and mimicry could be used to undermine hegemonic forces and express Otherness and diaspora.

The thesis' artifacts could also be linked by American imperialism especially when considering the United States' involvement in the Korean War and its aftermath as well as the United States' colonization of the Philippines. Ambivalent relationships towards the United States have been portrayed through the appropriation of Hollywood tropes as in the case of Bong Joon-ho's films. In movies like *The Host* (2008), Bong Joon-ho "reworks genre conventions, using them as a framework for exploring and critiquing South Korean social and political issues" (Klein 873). Similarly, perhaps the thesis' artifacts and their mimicry of American pop culture communicate ambivalence towards the United States. However, the focus on American imperialism goes beyond the current scope of this thesis.

In my first chapter, I will discuss how *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* engages with multiple genres and transforms the cultural context of *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* (while also remaining largely faithful to the latter's script) in order to integrate the Korean diaspora into the film. Throughout my work, I will analyze the domestic release of *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* as opposed to its international version, which deemphasizes the Korean independence

movement and other “plot elements that might confuse non-Korean viewers” (M. Cho 47). Using David Eng’s “Melancholia in the Late Twentieth Century,” I establish a link between melancholia and diaspora through the film’s treatment of Korea as a “lost object” for the protagonists. Along with consulting Eng, I build on the existing scholarship by Michelle Cho and Stephen Teo on Kim’s film and its ambivalence. Cho and Teo argue that the film’s fidelity to both the Manchurian western and spaghetti western genres causes ambivalence in the film’s tone and audience. I also draw from Constantine Verevis’ work on film remakes to illuminate the specific alterations made to *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* in creating *The Good, The Bad, The Weird*. Verevis would call Kim’s film a “transformed or disguised remake” because while it retains *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*’s narrative structure, *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* changed some of the original film’s “semantic elements” like setting and time as well as characters’ ethnicities and names (84). These altered semantic elements are critical in converting the culturally specific aspects of Leone’s film such as the Civil War to something that would fit *The Good, The Bad, The Weird*. These changes also help establish the Korean diaspora context for Kim’s film.

Each of the protagonists of *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* embodies at least one unique change to the source film’s semantic elements, and those changes aid in communicating different melancholic behaviors. Do-won is named unlike his counterpart Blondie/“The Man with No Name” (The Good), but in exchange for gaining a name, Do-won has no country. While Do-won and Blondie appear to lack some crucial part of their identities, these characters do not dwell on what is missing; instead they persevere as bounty hunters in a world that privileges material wealth. For Chang-yi, his character combines *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*’s roles of Angel Eyes (The Bad) and the one-armed bounty hunter, the latter role providing Chang-yi with a

vendetta against Tae-goo and an obsession over their past encounter in Korea. As for Tae-goo, he is marked as “weird” in part because of his social status as a peasant whereas Tuco (The Ugly) is more visibly marked by his ethnicity. Tae-goo’s social status provides insight for his ambivalence towards Korea where he would be disadvantaged whether or not the country is colonized by the Japanese.

In my second chapter, I will analyze both *For Today I Am a Boy* and *Rolling the R’s* as they illustrate how and why racialized queer characters mimic white heterosexual scripts while also retaining their minoritarian subjectivity and undermining those scripts. I draw upon Ahmed’s *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, which explains the role of emotions in shaping bodies and how queer subjects may become shaped by the heterosexual scripts from their surroundings through comfort and discomfort. While I also cite Ahmed’s argument that queer subjects can “rework” scripts (152), I suggest that scripts do not require strenuous reworking to accommodate queer bodies because scripts, particularly literal ones, could be mimicked. Under Bhabha’s model of colonial mimicry, when the colonized Other mimicks the colonizer, the mimicry must partially fail through the emergence of difference in order to prevent the colonized Other from becoming the colonizer’s equal (126). Thus, when a racialized queer subject mimicks white heterosexual scripts, they cannot fully embody white and heterosexual ideals because they must be recognized as the Other; consequently the white heterosexual script must partially fail too. Bhabha’s colonial mimicry is featured in Eng and Han’s “A Dialogue on Racial Melancholia” where the authors explain how the ambivalence in colonial mimicry is a reflection of the ambivalence in melancholia. The link between melancholia and diaspora is reinforced when considering how racialized queer subjects are diasporic, occupying a space with norms that

they cannot fully emulate while also negotiating available, normative scripts for their identity formations.

I pair *For Today I Am a Boy* with *Rolling the R's* in a single chapter because of how they build on each other when juxtaposed; the former explicitly provides the various elements involved in the mimicry of white heterosexual scripts while the latter demonstrates different applications of this mimicry. More specifically, in *For Today I Am a Boy*, Peter's imitation of the white housemaker and Audrey Hepburn (and by extension the Cinderella script) outlines the affective forces and objects present during mimicry. *Rolling the R's* then shows how racialized queer subjects can disrupt normative spaces, appropriate white icons, and express same-sex desires through mimicry.

While these two chapters appear to not have much in common, each chapter addresses what the other overlooks in theoretical and formal approaches to melancholia, scripts, and diasporic subjectivity. In the case of *The Good, The Bad, The Weird*, the absence of queer sexualities and the overwhelmingly cis-male cast provide relatively few opportunities to examine the film using queer theory. Of course, a queer framework could still be applied to this film, perhaps to comment on the absence of queer characters or argue that the film challenges heteronormativity by featuring characters uninterested in reproduction. Yet, these observations are not unique to Kim's film when there are other artifacts that better model how queer bodies may actively interact with the heterosexual script. *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* seems to offer little in undermining heteronormative scripts in comparison to works like *For Today I Am a Boy* and *Rolling the R's* featuring fleshed-out queer characters and their negotiations with heteronormativity.

At the same time, *For Today I Am a Boy* and *Rolling the R's* mainly portray characters mimicking pop culture scripts instead of depicting the exact scripts themselves. While it's true that these works occasionally provide excerpts of those scripts such as Donna Summer's lyrics to "No More Tears (Enough is Enough)," these scripts are mediated through the novels' primary narratives, preventing readers from examining scripts in their entirety. Viewers can immediately close-read a film's script and its formal techniques through their auditory and visual experiences of the film. Thus, film remakes like *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* provide opportunities for direct cross-comparisons of scripts and potential alterations to scripts' cultural contexts whereas the novels above often just allude to scripts in pop culture. Furthermore, film studies and theory could be utilized through *The Good, The Bad, The Weird*, encouraging a cross-disciplinary approach to melancholia.

By having these artifacts complement each other in their formal differences and relevant theories, I present a wide applicability of scripts in analyzing diaspora, melancholia's ambivalence, and minoritarian subjectivity whereas previous scholarship has mainly approached these subjects separately. Regardless, this project still offers just a sample of potential artifacts, scripts, and theoretical applications. Therefore, I intend for this thesis to have implications beyond the works and contexts it examines as well as to encourage future scholarship on new ways to understand minoritarian subjectivity.

Korean Diaspora and Melancholia in Kim Jee-woon's  
*The Good, The Bad, The Weird*

As a Korean remake of Sergio Leone's *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* (1966) and tribute to both the spaghetti western and Manchurian western genres, Kim Jee-woon's *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* (2008) appears to fall under the category of genre films, "commercial feature films that, through repetition and variation, tell familiar stories with familiar characters in familiar situations" (Grant xvii). For *Slant Magazine* movie reviewer Simon Abrams, *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* exemplifies the genre film's pitfalls. Abrams argues that Kim's "boisterous pastiche" of tropes from spaghetti westerns and Manchurian action films (of which the Manchurian western is a sub-category) demonstrate "how meaningless" the genres could be, claiming the film has "no tension... and no satisfying justification given for its existence save for a throwaway line from the Good about how life in their time is essentially a matter of either chasing others or being chased." *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* seems to not add anything new to the genres it emulates or *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* aside from a brief philosophical musing that becomes out-of-focus according to Abrams. The movie seems to "go through the motions" of spaghetti and Manchurian westerns as the lack of tension may signal a lack of effort in making the narrative engaging beyond the fact that it copies Leone's film.

Ironically, *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* has attracted scholarly attention because of its "boisterous pastiche" of genres and fidelity to *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*'s narrative. Unlike the *Slant* review, Michelle Cho and Stephen Teo's analyses of *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* views the film's heavy reliance on the spaghetti western and Manchurian western's tropes in a more constructive manner based on how these genres' respective individualist and nationalistic attitudes clash. The conflicting genres create narrative and formal tensions which

Abrams claims are absent from the film. Cho argues that “the film’s narrative loose ends... are symptoms of an ambivalence created precisely by fidelity to multiple generic mappings, which convey the film’s own complicated position as it addresses multiple audiences” (46). As a genre film faithful to at least two different genres, *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* could cause some viewers dissatisfaction because of the “loose ends” resulting from the difficulty in meeting varying audience expectations. Rather than presuming a viewer’s dissatisfaction as a sign of the film being “meaningless,” Cho frames dissatisfaction as evidence of the film’s ambivalence—its state of being pulled in at least two different directions/genres.

In this chapter, I build on the existing discussions regarding *The Good, The Bad, The Weird*’s ambivalence and fidelity to multiple genres, and I argue that the film’s ambivalence signals melancholia related to diaspora. Set in Japanese-occupied Manchuria sometime during the late 1930s to early 1940s, *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* preoccupies itself with Korea through Japan’s annexation of the country, the presence of the Independence army and movement, and hints of the protagonists’ pasts in Korea. The film’s main characters, especially Chang-yi, treat Korea as a “lost object,” linking melancholia to the Korean diaspora. Simultaneously, the same characters also express melancholia through their ambivalence towards anticolonial Korean nationalism and their fixation with material wealth.

I incorporate Constantine Verevis’ work *Film Remakes* in my analysis, namely on his account of the characteristics of a “transformed remake,” in order to highlight the strategies *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* employs to integrate the Korean diaspora into its narrative while still being faithful to *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*. A transformed remake is a remake that follows the narrative structure of the original film while also changing its “semantic elements... that comprise the film’s iconography” such as “character names, gender and/or race, cultural

setting, temporal setting and even the genre” (84). The two films differ in cultural contexts, for Kim’s film features the Second Sino-Japanese War whereas Leone’s film takes place during the American Civil War. By considering the shift in cultural contexts between films, I argue that *The Good, The Bad, The Weird*’s diasporic setting and accompanying melancholia are mediated through altering the semantic elements of *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*’s script—the foundation for the film’s narrative structure as well as its semantic elements whereby scenes, dialogue, action, and the like are outlined. Some of these changes are reflected in the titular characters of Kim’s film, who each express melancholia differently: Park Do-won (The Good) has a name but no country unlike his Leone counterpart “The Man with No Name”; Park Chang-yi (The Bad) is a composite character with an added backstory and vengeful motive contributing to his melancholia; and Yoon Tae-goo (The Weird) is marked as different or “weird” primarily through his social status as a peasant unlike his counterpart Tuco who is marked by his ethnicity.

As discussed in the introduction, I concentrate on “scripts” because scripts, both literal typescripts and figurative social scripts, seemingly can reinforce certain ideals or norms like whiteness by prompting certain behaviors in actors. Despite being a remake about Korean exiles, Kim’s film transparently engages with an existing screenplay or script that casts predominately white characters, which may interfere with *The Good, The Bad, The Weird*’s depiction of minoritarian subjectivity within the Korean diaspora context. However, if a remake like Kim’s film can change not just the original characters’ ethnicities but also the cultural setting and other related semantic elements, then scripts originally centered on whiteness may not automatically whitewash the scripts of transformed remakes. The transformed remake may provide ways to rework existing scripts with different cultural contexts in order to explore themes related to minoritarian subjectivity like diaspora and melancholia.

Before analyzing *The Good, The Bad, The Weird*, the Manchurian western and spaghetti western genres need to be examined to understand the significance of the film's ambivalence towards nationalism. Manchurian westerns refer to the late 1960s and early 1970s South Korean films featuring Manchuria as a territory that for Koreans "conjures up nationalist claims of ancient historical connections on the one hand, and on the other, it reminds [Koreans] of the nationalistic struggle against the colonial rule of Japan, with the battleground of this struggle being Manchuria rather than in Korea itself" (Teo 57). Nationalism operates in the Manchurian western genre through the belief that Manchuria belongs to Korea along with using Manchuria as a stand-in—an imaginary space to an extent—to reaffirm Imperial Japan as Korea's enemy. The emergence of Manchurian westerns stems from the production of South Korean war narratives since the start of the Cold War, the production possibly symptomatic of some resistance towards South Korea and Japan forming a relationship following WWII (An 795). However, Kim Jee-woon's use of the Manchurian western genre is an afterthought, a means to an end in creating a Korean Western because "Korea didn't have the wide-open spaces" needed for a western setting (Teo 55). The fact that Manchuria was not part of Kim's original plan indicates that Kim created *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* not to reinforce anticolonial sentiments but because he primarily wanted to create a western film, which may contribute to the film's ambivalent tone towards nationalism. Yet, *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* still paints the Japanese army as incompetent and even cowardly towards the film's protagonists, such as near the end of the film when Taegoo threatens to chuck dynamite at the Japanese army which immediately retreats despite vastly outnumbering him. It's ambiguous whether jabs at the Imperial Japanese Army signify Kim deliberately working with Manchurian western conventions or not.

One of the film's main reasons for its ambivalence towards Korean nationalism despite being partially a Manchurian western is because of Kim's blatant repetition of the individualism found in spaghetti western genre conventions and *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*'s script. Both Leone and Kim's films spotlight the spaghetti western's "emphasis on personal greed and materialism" whose protagonists "are focused on individual gains and private material rewards" (An 802). The buried treasure in both films drive the plot, leading to the main characters crossing paths and eventually participating in three-way shoot-out—a Mexican stand-off—where the survivor takes all the loot. The Mexican stand-off demonstrates an "individual and interiorized violence" (M. Cho 63) between the titular characters and conflicts with nationalistic attitudes such as those found in a Manchurian Western. In order to stay faithful to Leone's screenplay, *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* must push aside the various factions (the Imperial Japanese Army, Korean independence movement, Chinese bandits) informing Manchuria as a site of nationalist and imperialist disputes so the Mexican stand-off can occur. The characters even comment on the necessity of the stand-off with Do-won questioning why he must become involved, to which Chang-yi replies, "Can't call it a real game without Park Do-won." Both the Good and the Bad lean on the fourth wall, making transparent how the Mexican stand-off requires all three characters. Chang-yi's comparison of the shoot-out to a "game" also acknowledges how trivial the protagonists' internal conflict is in comparison to the conflict between the Imperial Japanese Army and the Korean independence movement. Like *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* and other spaghetti westerns, Kim's film highlights how its protagonists place importance on material things and themselves as opposed to a nation and its people by remaking Leone's Mexican stand-off.

Yet even in its irreverent tone, *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* contains serious and even poignant moments where the film treats Korea as a site of trauma and loss. The film suggests a correlation between Korea and traumatic loss whenever it focuses on Chang-yi's encounter with Tae-goo in Wonsan five years before the present narrative. When a henchman informs Chang-yi during a movie screening that Tae-goo has the treasure map, the mere mention of Tae-goo's name causes Chang-yi, who was just laughing at a film, to drop his smile. The camera pans closer to Chang-yi and shadows overlay his face, visually representing how Chang-yi is retreating into himself, no longer engaged with his surroundings. We witness Chang-yi's memory when the scene cuts to Tae-goo staring down at the camera, which we later discover is the moment before Tae-goo chops Chang-yi's finger off. Tae-goo appears blurry at first, signaling that Chang-yi is experiencing a flashback, but the camera focuses until Tae-goo's features are sharp enough that the shot resembles less of a flashback and more like the present moment. The film cuts to a close-up of Chang-yi's profile where we see him staring blankly ahead as he lies on a bed as opposed to lounging at the movie theater, indicating a substantial amount of time has passed while Chang-yi was trapped by his memory of Tae-goo. Even after five years, the event haunts Chang-yi to the point his mind replays the encounter as though he is experiencing it in the present.

The film's depiction of Chang-yi's retreat into his psyche demonstrates how Chang-yi has yet to move on from his trauma. His preoccupation with a traumatic experience aligns with Freudian melancholia. According to David Eng, melancholia can be summarized as the "pathological form of mourning" resulting from the "refusal to sever any attachments to the lost object" and "the melancholic becomes instead haunted" by the "lost object" (1276). In other words, melancholia is the failure to move on from loss and objects associated with it, perverting

mourning into an obsession so that a melancholic subject is haunted by their loss. Chang-yi appears to be a melancholic subject because of his loss to Tae-goo and hence title of the “best” in the continent. To be fair, his melancholia is justifiable if mourning “depends on the successful replacement of one lost object by another, more attainable object” (J. Cho 50). The trauma of losing a finger involves permanent bodily loss, and Chang-yi’s prosthetic finger seems to be a mere placeholder as opposed to a “successful replacement” for his lost object; consequently, Chang-yi is unable to “properly” mourn. Since the loss of the finger has become associated with the moment where Tae-goo beats Chang-yi, Chang-yi is always reminded of his loss as it is permanently inscribed to his body.

Melancholia, however, does not just cause a subject to turn inwards but also maneuvers the body in the outside world as an affective force. In the lead-up to the Mexican stand-off, Chang-yi states to Tae-goo and Do-won that he has “lost everything” because of them. He describes how “those left behind feel empty” like himself and that “to fill the void, [he’s going to] play a game with” Tae-goo and Do-won to “get rid of both [of them] at once.” Once again, Chang-yi is preoccupied with his previous losses to Tae-goo, which are now compounded by the recent deaths of his men. On a meta-level, *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* requires the Mexican stand-off to pay homage to Leone’s work. However, the Mexican stand-off is character-driven as well, fueled in part by Chang-yi’s inability and unwillingness to or reconcile with his losses. Chang-yi’s missing finger once again acts as a reminder of Wonsan and forces Tae-goo to confront his past as the “Finger Chopper.” The finger’s absence, marked by the metal prosthetic’s failure to adequately replace the real finger, could tell a story, as demonstrated by Chang-yi holding his mutilated finger to his ear, asking if Tae-goo can “hear that?” (Figure 1). The missing finger propels not just Chang-yi but Tae-goo in the past as well; the scene

transitions to the flashback of Tae-goo staring down at Chang-yi, now coupled with the sound of Chang-yi's finger being sliced off, and then the camera immediately cuts back to the present Tae-goo. Perhaps Chang-yi is not the only melancholic figure if Tae-goo is also haunted by the past.

Korea is mostly absent from the main narrative, only appearing in flashbacks or in discussions between the film's characters. Like the memory of Wonsan haunting Chang-yi, Korea may haunt its diasporic populations as the lost country because of Japanese colonization. Ambivalence towards Korea makes sense when considering the film's Korean exiles having a connection to Korea, but that same connection also alludes to Japan's imperialist presence in the country. Melancholia is forced upon diasporic Koreans, invoking how minoritarian subjects including "women, homosexuals, people of color, and postcolonials [who] seem to be at greater risk for melancholia" because those subjects are "coerced to relinquish and yet to identify with socially disparaged objects on their psychic paths to subjectivity" (Eng 1278). Experiencing melancholia involves various factors that cannot be reducible to an unwillingness to mourn what is lost. Rather, melancholia illuminates how oppressive structures and oppressors can force an individual or group to adopt minoritarian subjectivity. For the Korean exiles during the Japanese occupation, Korea may be the lost object. How can an exile "successfully" mourn for a country when they are without one and are constantly reminded of that fact? The diasporic subject is trapped in an ambivalent state—identified with a nation once considered theirs while simultaneously denied a nation, thus resulting in a fragmented national identity.

If we consider the minoritarian subject's relationship to melancholia, Chang-yi's embodiment of his loss could be reframed in the context of ambivalent affects superimposed onto Korea as a lost object, thus illustrating some ways diasporic subjects may express

ambivalence towards nations. As stated earlier, the objects of loss for Chang-yi are his finger and his title as the “best” in the continent courtesy of Tae-goo. Teo argues that Chang-yi’s desire to be the “best” is “the manifestation of the ‘nationalist’ impulse behind his character” but Chang-yi otherwise “has only vengeance in his heart” (Teo 70). Meanwhile, Cho argues that Chang-yi “ironically... is the most nationalist character and the bearer of memory” (67). Regardless of how nationalistic Chang-yi is in comparison to the other two protagonists (interestingly Teo calls Do-won the most nationalistic [71] while Cho calls him the least [67]), Chang-yi is characterized as unwilling to forget his trauma in Korea, with his body carrying—embodying—his loss in Korea as shown, of course, through his missing finger and how his hair grew out over the last five years (the flashbacks depict him as having shorter hair in the back and his bangs not covering his right eye). Perhaps Cho and Teo’s disagreement on Chang-yi’s nationalism is a sign of the character’s ambivalent relationship to Korea and his way of interacting with diaspora. Vengeance is a sign of Chang-yi’s selfishness but, when taking into account Cho’s reading of that vengeance as a “bearer of memory,” could also be interpreted as Chang-yi’s connection and identification with his nation regardless of the accompanying pain in doing so.

With his vendetta against Tae-goo driving most of his actions, Chang-yi deviates from his Bad counterpart Angel Eyes, who lacks a similar backstory and whose main motivation is acquiring the buried treasure; these differences between the two Bad characters suggest that Chang-yi’s melancholia is not inherited from Angel Eyes. Throughout Leone’s film, Angel Eyes “appears to be always on the periphery, meaning that he is not paired with either the Good or the Ugly, and his character seems to struggle for equal attention in the film” (Teo 63-64). Whereas Chang-yi is paired with Tae-goo through vengeance, Angel Eyes lacks such a connection with Tae-goo’s counterpart, Tuco. Furthermore, because Angel Eyes appears “on the periphery” or

from the sidelines of the film's main action, he is the least developed character of the "Good-Bad-Ugly" triad. Chang-yi, in contrast, has a more developed character arc due to his history with Tae-goo, leaving Do-won as the only protagonist whose past is absent from Kim's film. Despite how Kim's film closely follows the plot of *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*, the added depth to the "Bad" role in *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* reveals a significant change to the original script.

Based on the parallels between Chang-yi's melancholic history and "one-armed bounty hunter's" backstory from *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*, Chang-yi is actually a composite character. In Leone's film, the one-armed bounty hunter confronts Tuco over the latter maiming him, similar to how Chang-yi reminds Tae-goo of their Wonsan encounter. While holding the bathing Tuco at gunpoint, the bounty hunter explains how he has been searching for Tuco in the last eight months and states, "Whenever I should have had a gun in my right hand, I thought of you." Along with the fact that both Chang-yi and the bounty hunter were mutilated by the Weird/Ugly character, the bounty hunter is also unwilling to move on from his trauma and seeks revenge instead. The bounty hunter's missing right hand, like Chang-yi's missing finger, is an embodied reminder turned to obsession over the past. However, *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* frames the bounty hunter as a joke instead of a melancholic figure as Tuco unceremoniously shoots him dead and states, "When you have to shoot, shoot. Don't talk." Tae-goo, in contrast, seems to regard Chang-yi with seriousness, addressing the latter by name as he explains that he has "left everything behind when [he] left Korea" and that Chang-yi should "forget it, too." As a fellow exile, Tae-goo recognizes Chang-yi's melancholia and its ties to Korea but urges Chang-yi to move on as he supposedly had. Tae-goo's sympathy makes sense within the narrative as Chang-yi's role is neither minor nor expendable, unlike the bounty

hunter's role. By being the Bad with the bounty hunter's backstory, Chang-yi is granted much more screen time to showcase his melancholic moments and leave an impression on other characters as well as the film's audience.

As stated earlier, Chang-yi's status as a composite character is part of larger series of changes to *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*'s semantic elements, wherein these changes establish Kim's film as a transformed remake of Leone's film. The transformed remake is also defined by its "minor alterations to [the original film's] key syntactic elements" (Verevis 84), which refer to "the various relationships that are established between these semantic elements, the way these are organised in a similar manner to create a narrative structure" (84). The syntactic and semantic are not necessarily opposites because syntactic elements usually arrange semantic elements into a cohesive narrative, so the syntactic influences the semantic and vice versa. In the case of Chang-yi as a composite character, combining Angel Eyes and the one-armed bounty hunter into one role would be considered an altered semantic element because "character types" such as the "Bad" archetype fall under a film's semantic elements (84). Furthermore, because semantics is concerned with meaning, changing the Bad affects how we understand that character. As the original "Bad," Angel Eyes is understood as the film's villain; in contrast, Chang-yi, though still a villain, is more of a melancholic figure from being the Weird's victim. The syntactic elements of the original film, which encompass the narrative structure and characters' relationships with each other, are also affected as demonstrated by the added dynamic between the Bad and the Weird. While this initially seems like a major change as opposed to a minor one, the syntactic elements of *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* overall remain unchanged because Kim's film follows the original's script, and Chang-yi still dies like both his source characters.

If we consider how other categories of remakes range in levels of fidelity to their original films, *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* perhaps best fits the transformed remake category through its ambivalence in choosing when to adhere or depart from the original film's script. Along with the transformed remake, Verevis defines another category of film remakes, the "*close or direct remakes*," as remakes that "seek to reduce difference between themselves and their originals by sharing both syntactic elements (plot structure, narrative units, character relationships, etc.) and semantic elements (specific names, settings, time frames, etc.)" (84). By claiming that direct remakes "seek to reduce difference between themselves and their originals," Verevis implies that, on one hand, a film remake will always be different from the original and the differences can only be "reduced" rather than erased. On the other hand, by "seeking" to reduce those differences, a "direct remake" actively tries to be as close to the original film as possible both in syntactic elements and semantic elements. The active quality of remakes also appears in Verevis' definition of transformed remakes as they "*make* minor alterations to key syntactic elements" and "*substantially transfigure* the semantic elements" of original films (84; emphasis added). The transformed remake's retention of the syntactic elements of a source film distinguishes it from another category called the "non-remakes," which makes major changes to both narrative structure and film iconography (Verevis 85). These categories not only illustrate the diversity of remakes but also reveal transformed remakes' general ambivalence to source films, reflecting *The Good, The Bad, The Weird*'s own ambivalent tone, as the transformed remake is positioned somewhere between the other two "as points along a continuum" (85).

Because the changes to the original film's semantic elements are most likely intentional in a transformed remake, the transformation of the *Ugly* to the *Weird* in the film's title indicates a meaningful modification to the Ugly character. In an interview with *Electric Sheep* magazine

where Kim explains some of the changes to Leone's film, Kim states, "when you call a character 'Ugly' it's very limiting... [but] when you call a character 'Weird' it triggers your imagination, it makes you excited and it makes you expect more." While his reasoning is vague regarding how "Ugly" is more limiting than "Weird," Kim hints at the semantic differences between these words. Perhaps "Ugly" is limited by its negative connotations as "*The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly* has become the representative model of a triangular antagonism which upsets the good/bad binary, which, before Leone's film was seen as the fundamental opposition of the Western" (Teo 37). In other words, the Ugly destabilizes or "upsets" the concepts of good and bad as moral oppositions as being neither "good" nor "bad," making Leone's film and spaghetti westerns in general the anti-Western. At the same time, Tae-goo as the Weird also complicates the "good/bad binary" by again creating a triangle formation, which is visually represented through the Mexican stand-off. Furthermore, Teo argues that personality-wise "the Weird is really the Ugly" and notes that the actors, "Song Kang-ho and Eli Wallach, are about evenly matched in terms of their acting and in their clownish interpretations of their respective characters" (65). Both the Weird and Ugly act as the comic relief, with Tuco's actor (Wallach) most likely influencing Tae-goo's actor (Song). Even Tae-goo and Tuco's mannerisms are similar, as demonstrated in their gleeful run once they discover the hidden treasure's location. Therefore, the change from "Ugly" to "Weird" may not lie in Tuco/Tae-goo's role or personality.

If we recall how semantic elements can refer to a film's cultural context, the reasons for Tuco and Tae-goo being the Ugly or Weird change along with the shift in cultural context from Leone's film to Kim's. Both "ugly" and "weird" have connotations with alterity as they deviate from ideal qualities, though what qualifies as the ideal or not ideal depends on context such as location, history, and culture. However, because alterity is contextual, Tuco and Tae-goo are

recognized as the “weird” for separate reasons. In the case of Tuco, he is portrayed as a Mexican minority in the United States while Blondie and Angel Eyes are white Americans. Throughout Leone’s film, Tuco’s ethnicity is signaled by his tan skin, his occasional use of Spanish, and his full name, Tuco Benedicto Pacífico Juan María Ramírez. On the other hand, Tae-goo is ethnically Korean like Do-won and Chang-yi and is recognized as such by other characters. For example, in the scene where Do-won captures Tae-goo for the treasure map, Tae-goo tries to pass as Chinese by saying, “I don’t speak Korean” in Mandarin. Obviously not falling for Tae-goo’s act, Do-won mutters, “You’re Chinese, are ya?” and continues to apprehend him.

Rather than portraying Tae-goo as ethnically different from his co-leads, Kim signals Tae-goo’s “weirdness” by having Tae-goo be dismissive of Korean nationalistic sentiments. While it has been previously established that the three protagonists demonstrate some ambivalence towards Korean nationalism, Tae-goo appears completely unaffected by the conflict between the Japanese army and Korean independence movement over Manchuria. As for the Good and the Bad, Do-won is employed by the Korean independence movement, thus siding with them even if he is motivated by the promised money, and Chang-yi expresses disgust over his employer for “selling off [his] country” to the Japanese. Tae-goo meanwhile lacks any nationalistic attitudes as demonstrated in his interactions with Suh, a double-agent posing as an independence fighter. Suh tries to convince Tae-goo to voluntarily hand over the treasure map by claiming that part of Manchuria “originally belonged” to the Koreans and that the map would somehow help Korea, citing the “nationalist claims of ancient historical connections” to Manchuria that characterizes the Manchurian western (Teo 57). Here, Suh expects Tae-goo to be moved by those nationalist claims as a Korean, but Tae-goo simply interjects with, “Whatever, Mr. Independence. My map’s got nothing to do with that.” Much like how the spaghetti western

genre prioritizes individualism and material wealth, Tae-goo values the map for its possible treasure over it being a possible asset for the Korean independence movement.

Tae-goo's ambivalence to Korean nationalism appears to be connected to his status as a peasant-commoner, which recalls the hierarchy of social classes during pre-colonial Korea. Tae-goo's ambivalence could be read as melancholic, as he calls the colonized Korea his "home" when he describes his dream of pastoral Korea to Do-won, even though Tae-goo could be interpreted as the "character most representative of a desire to forget national origins" (M. Cho 65) in his disavowal of his past as the "Finger Chopper." As Tae-goo reveals his dream of "going back home and buying [himself] some land" while he and Do-won prepare to sleep by the fire, the camera pans to his illuminated face as his eyes seem to look beyond the camera, his demeanor completely open to not just Do-won but the audience as well (Figure 2). Yet, with Do-won's question of "Why buy land when your country's stolen?" Tae-goo appears far less emotionally open with the light on his face dimming as he turns away from Do-won. While Tae-goo does not explicitly refer to "home" as "Korea," Do-won accurately interprets what "home" means to Tae-goo by specifying home as the "stolen" country, which once again emphasizes Korea as a possible lost object for diasporic individuals. Tae-goo reaffirms "home" to be Korea when he replies to Do-won with, "For folks like us, it's the same living under nobility or the Japs." Tae-goo views Korea as a "home" in an ambivalent manner through his contrasting body language. First, his body and face are open to the sky and firelight as he imagines a pastoral Korea. Then his body retreats into the shadows when forcibly confronted with the bleak realities of Korea as a country once ruled by nobility and now Japan, neither of which Tae-goo sees as advantageous to his social status if the "folks like [him]" suggests his dissociation with nobility and a pre-existing ambivalence to Korea based on class discrepancies. As a melancholic

commoner, Tae-goo willingly embraces his fantasy of Korea but simultaneously rejects Korea as a place that reminds him of his criminal past along with his commoner status.

While the “nobility” and “commoners” dichotomy is present in other histories and cultures, the “nobility” Tae-goo refers to, the *yangban*, is culturally specific to pre-colonial Korea. *Yangban* refers to “a class of scholar-officials” of high birth during the late Joseon dynasty (1700-1910) who “controlled most of the land in the countryside” (Uttam 54) despite “numbering no more than 5 percent of the total population” (Park 167). Meanwhile the commoner class, the largest of the social classes at 70-80% of the total population (Uttam 59), included people of “widely varying occupations and degrees of wealth” who “were mostly peasants but also artisans and merchants” (Park 167). The English subtitles for *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* translate *yangban* into “nobility,” and while accurate, the translation fails to encompass the nuances of *yangban* within pre-colonial society. Because they held most of the government offices, it was “the Yangban aristocracy, not the Korean king who dominated the central state bureaucracy” (Uttam 6). The *yangban* were also lauded as academics and they “strictly controlled the flow of knowledge” (59). For the *yangban*, the purpose of education was “to produce officials who were skilled at classical Chinese and thoroughly versed in the Confucian classics” (Jang 197). Because the *yangban* restricted others from accessing education, commoners could not participate in politics, and thus the latter had little to no influence in government (Uttam 59). In light of the *yangban*’s control over land and government, Tae-goo’s response to Do-won’s question, “Why buy land when your country’s stolen?” makes sense when accounting for the unlikelihood of a peasant successfully buying land from the *yangban*. For Tae-goo, the commoner holds little power, regardless of whether Korea is ruled by the *yangban* or the Japanese.

By considering the characteristics of these different social classes in Korea, we can observe how *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* marks Tae-goo as “weird” for being possibly the only commoner among the triad as signaled through his informal dialect and lack of a noble surname. The focus on linguistic difference and names recalls how Tuco’s use of Spanish and his full name separates him from Blondie and Angel Eyes. Much like how “nobility” does not encompass the nuances of *yangban*, Tae-goo’s informal dialect, which may reflect an uneducated background as education was only available to the *yangban*, is difficult to translate into English. However, the subtitles attempt to signal this informality to English speakers by adding “man” at the end of some of Tae-goo’s lines such as when he screams at Do-won, “You can’t do this to me, man!” The subtitles also have him referring others like his grandmother in a casual manner (in the subtitles, Tae-goo calls his grandmother “granny,” an equivalent to the Korean informal form of grandmother, “*halmae*”). Neither Do-won nor Chang-yi’s dialogue hints at being as informal as Tae-goo’s, except when Do-won seems to mock Tae-goo’s dialect with “You’re on thin ice, man” during their brief brawl over the treasure site. Tae-goo also differs from the other protagonists through his surname “Yoon.” Both Do-won and Chang-yi share the surname “Park” (or “Pak” in some romanizations), and “[according] to master narratives, [the ancestor] of most of the Pak... [is] King Kyŏngmyŏng (Pak Sŭngyŏng, r. 917–23)” (Park 168). As a “master narrative,” the royal connotations of the last name “Park” may not accurately reflect one’s noble heritage, especially if “probably no more than one-quarter of South Koreans can actually find themselves or recent ancestors in a genealogy” (168). Nevertheless, the shared “Park” surname still implicitly signals noble ancestry. When also considering how their dialects differ from Tae-goo’s, perhaps Chang-yi and Do-won belonged to a higher social class, such as the *yangban* or *chungin*—the class below the *yangban* but above commoners (167)—prior to their exile. These

claims about the protagonists' exact social statuses back in Korea are, of course, merely speculative as *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* reveals little about these characters' pasts. Even so, Tae-goo's dialect, surname, and disassociation from the *yangban* strongly hint at his "weirdness" being class-based as these traits do not overlap with the Good and the Bad's traits.

As we have observed so far, the changes to *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*'s semantic elements, as a means to transform the film's cultural context and to depict melancholia related to the Korean diaspora, seem to center on Chang-yi and Tae-goo and their Leone counterparts. Meanwhile, Do-won and his role as the Good appear unaffected by those changes; thus, his melancholia is difficult to characterize. *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* reminds viewers that Do-won and Blondie are the same character through similar close-ups as they force Tae-goo and Tuco respectively to dig for the buried treasure (Figure 3). As a direct reference to *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*'s cinematography, Do-won is set in front of the cloudless sky, squinting at the Weird under the brim of his hat. The intensity of the close-up communicates the imposing presence of both Good characters while the clear blue background complements their calm demeanor. Furthermore, like Blondie, Do-won "remains an enigma" (Teo 71) as he lacks a past and never reveals his personal desires. Do-won nearly shares his own dream if the buried treasure were real with Tae-goo as the camera similarly pans on his illuminated face, but the moment is lost when he realizes that Tae-goo is asleep. While *The Good, The Bad, The Weird*'s fidelity to Leone's script has established the ambivalent tone that points to melancholia, Do-won's fidelity to Blondie's character seems to reveal little about his melancholic attitudes towards diaspora as Do-won inherits Blondie's closed nature.

If we recall character names as part of a film's semantic elements (Verevis 84), Do-won's own name alters the Good's role from "The Man with No Name" to "The Man with No

Country,” to use Teo’s moniker for Do-won (71). The lost object of Korea becomes inscribed into Do-won’s person much like Chang-yi’s melancholia. In a sense, *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* equates names with countries because Blondie is characterized as an enigma for his lack of name as opposed to being a diasporic subject; from this logic, if the Good loses a country, he must instead gain a name. As Tae-goo’s surname and Tuco’s full name signal their minoritarian subjectivity, Blondie’s lack of a name presents a fragmented identity. Despite this, “The Man with No Name” continues to live in anonymity as a bounty hunter, an occupation shared with Do-won, and Blondie’s lack of a name appears inconsequential to his work. Do-won expresses a similar attitude towards country and nationality as things ultimately inconsequential when compared to wealth. In his reasoning for chasing after Chang-yi, Do-won first explains to Tae-goo that Chang-yi is a “bad guy,” but also adds, “If you have no country, you still gotta have money.” Do-won recognizes that money is a necessity no matter where he goes or whether he has a country. That is not to say Do-won dismisses Japan’s annexation of Korea; he appears to show contempt towards the Japanese through his casual attitude as he guns down a large portion of the Japanese army and through his question to Tae-goo, “Why buy land when your country’s stolen?” To an extent, Do-won, like Chang-yi and Tae-goo, accepts his status as an exile as Korea’s nationhood is largely out of his control; what Do-won does have control over is his livelihood capturing “bad guys” because they are “bad” and he gains money out of that. Once again, the spaghetti western’s theme of material wealth manifests through Do-won’s philosophy. Yet in a world where money matters above nations and names, perhaps chasing after money is neither simply good nor bad but is instead an ambivalent way of living.

The significance of examining *The Good, The Bad, The Weird*’s attitudes towards Korea and exiles resulted from existing scholarship and other commentary on the film at best

acknowledging the Korean diaspora despite the film's varying portrayals of melancholia through the titular characters. Additionally, identifying *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* as a transformed remake presents possible ways to transfigure films' cultural contexts. By altering the semantic elements of *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*'s script, Kim's film demonstrates how narratives can build on existing scripts to explore both works' shared themes like commentary on material wealth's importance as well as culturally specific ideas such as Korean diasporic subjectivity and former class systems. While this chapter only focuses on one remake and its source film and thus could benefit from examining other portrayals of diaspora, this analysis of various moments from *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* and changes to the original film's semantic elements can hopefully spark further discussions regarding the connections between ambivalence, melancholia, and diaspora.

## Reworking White Heterosexual Scripts through Mimicry in *For Today I Am a Boy* and *Rolling the R's*

In her chapter “Queer Feelings” from *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2014), Sara Ahmed argues that heterosexuality is a script that influences how bodies, including queer bodies, orient themselves in the world. Scripts enforce norms by “[shaping] bodies and lives, including those that follow and depart from such narratives in the ways in which they love and live, in the decisions that they make and take within the intimate spheres of home and work” (145). Scripts offer expectations that multiple bodies can act out much like how actors can rehearse and perform the same script anywhere and at any time. If scripts can mold all bodies regardless of whether those bodies fit into normative structures, then scripts appear to be unaffected by those bodies. Thus, queer bodies may feel a “gap between the [heterosexual] script and the body” (152) by not conforming to the heterosexual ideal. However, this gap may present an opportunity to “rework” the heterosexual script or, in other words, make some sort of adjustment in acting out the script or even the script itself (152).

Reworking the heterosexual script seems impossible at first when that script is found in movies, television, and other forms of pop culture. A study featured in a 2007 issue of *The Journal of Sex Research* suggests that “televised enactments of the Heterosexual Script are the most reified and least variable versions of the cultural-level script and that they have pervasive normalizing and regulatory functions” (Kim et al. 145). If the heterosexual script articulated in pop culture is so resistant to change, then queer bodies may feel less inclined to “rework” the heterosexual script with little to no pay-off for their efforts. Instead, queer bodies may feel pressured by pop culture to conform to the heterosexual script and reject their queerness.

Yet, novels such as Kim Fu's *For Today I Am a Boy* (2014) and R. Zamora Linmark's *Rolling the R's* (1995) feature queer characters embracing pop culture and following heterosexual scripts to express their queerness. For example, Peter Huang, a Chinese-Canadian trans woman and *For Today I Am a Boy*'s protagonist who idolizes Audrey Hepburn and her role in *Sabrina* (1954), adopts both Hepburn's appearance and name as she departs from her assigned gender. In a scene where Peter, dressed as Audrey Hepburn for a Halloween party, looks into a mirror, Peter sees the "iconic Audrey, only with Adele's almond eyes, her sloping cheekbones" with the "face a little more drawn, a little harder, but undeniably her" (Fu 228). Along with comparing herself to Audrey Hepburn, Audrey/Peter compares herself to her sister Adele. While Audrey/Peter is aware of how she differs from Hepburn, she embraces her differences because she still perceives herself as "undeniably" Audrey. The differences are not explicitly marked as either alluding to Audrey/Peter's Chinese heritage or assigned gender, and even though "almond eyes" seem to immediately evoke what would be considered "Asian features," the remarks about the face appear ambiguous in regards to whether the text is referring to Audrey's Chinese heritage or assigned male gender.

While gender and race do often intersect in discussions about identity, Fu's text fixates more on Audrey's racialized features differentiating the mimicker from the mimicked as though calling attention to how the racialized Other could never become like their white counterparts. This attention to difference manifesting through mimicry recalls Homi Bhabha's model of "colonial mimicry" and its "desire for a reformed, recognizable Other" (126). During the process of creating a "reformed, recognizable Other," "slippage" occurs to mark the Other as "*a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" (126). Colonial mimicry is all at once effective and self-defeating for the colonizer in that the colonized subject is shaped to resemble

the colonizer but must remain as the less privileged Other. Furthermore, the constant presence of difference undermines colonial forces acting upon the Other, preventing the Other from fully assimilating. Much like how colonial mimicry partially fails to fully assimilate the racialized Other, mimicry causes the heterosexual script to partially fail in shaping the queer body to heteronormativity. The intertwining of the heterosexual script and colonial mimicry in Fu's text reveals how heterosexual scripts in pop culture can reinforce whiteness as a norm. At the same time, the faithful reproduction of a script through mimicry demonstrates that "reworking" the heterosexual script takes less strenuous effort than expected for an unyielding script to accommodate a queer body.

In this chapter, I will explore the ways characters from *For Today I Am a Boy* and R. Zamora Linmark's *Rolling the R's* (1995) undermine not only heteronormativity but also colonial forces by mimicking various heterosexual scripts in pop culture. *For Today I Am a Boy* outlines the affective forces and objects involved in the mimicry of white heterosexual scripts. Meanwhile, *Rolling the R's* presents the nuanced applications of mimicking white heterosexual scripts by disrupting normative spaces, co-opting white icons, and expressing same-sex desires. While "scripts" have been defined as "a metaphor for conceptualizing the production of behavior within social life" (Simon and Gagnon 98), I will treat scripts in a more literal fashion by examining scripts that are explicitly designed to be mimicked and rearticulated by subjects/actors. Treating a script as a "metaphor" renders a social script vague, for a metaphorical script is understood as available in the world but inexact in its "conceptual" form; "slippage" is less recognizable when the point of reference is unclear. For scripts to be mimicked and "slippage" to occur, they may need to take a stable form like a typed manuscript so the mimicker and the mimicked could be easily compared as their differences would be easier to

identify. Additionally, I will argue that melancholia links colonial mimicry and the mimicry of heterosexual scripts, for scripts exist in the spaces diasporic characters inhabit. As the previous chapter had explored, melancholia continues to be useful in describing how the Other navigates diasporic spaces and in presenting ways to live without suppressing minoritarian subjectivity.

In order to rework literal heterosexual scripts, queer subjects in these novels not only copy dialogue and actions provided by these scripts but often incorporate props such as clothing to amplify mimicry as well. *For Today I Am a Boy* illustrates the use of props as Peter mimicks a TV hostess while cooking “[naked] except for the apron” (Fu 44) as an adolescent. While cooking dinner, Peter watches the cooking show and makes “a seductive face at the TV screen, imitating the show’s host: an older Italian woman, fifty and sumptuous as an overstuffed sofa” (44-45). Peter further mimics the hostess by pouting and saying in unison with her, “Half the flavor is in the presentation” (45).

Peter’s state of dress and imitation of the hostess highlight the interactions between multiple bodies during mimicry. As shown through Peter “making a seductive face at the TV screen” (44), mimicry is not a one-way action from the TV to Peter; rather, mimicry goes back and forth between bodies. Even when the TV screen does not react to Peter, Peter directs that “seductive face” at the television in response to the hostess’s own actions. The apron acts as another object intensifying this interaction, and Peter’s nakedness aside from the apron implies that other objects/clothing would interfere with the mimicry of the TV hostess. Thus, Peter’s mimicry calls for objects that complement a given script.

The interactions of bodies resonate with Sara Ahmed’s “model of sociality of emotions,” a framework that resists viewing emotions as something subjects and objects simply possess. Ahmed’s model shows how “it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others,

that surfaces or boundaries are made: the ‘I’ and the ‘we’ are shaped by, and even take the shape of, contact with others” (10). Emotions are forces rather than states of being that shape the surfaces of bodies responding to one another. The self (“the ‘I’”) and those the self aligns with (“the ‘we’”) lack stability and cannot exist by themselves as long as contact with others—things and people considered outside the self—help shape the “I” and the “we.” In other words, emotions help conceptualize the self and the other.

Ahmed’s model also emphasizes the dynamic quality of emotions and its objects. Ahmed argues that while “it is the objects of emotion that circulate, rather than emotion as such,” she “still explores how emotions can move through the movement or circulation of objects... [which] become sticky, or saturated with affect, as sites of personal and social tension” (11). Affective forces do not cease their movements at a body or object. If a body or object appears to “have” an emotion, the body or object is sticky with that emotion but does not possess that emotion because emotions continually circulate. Bodies themselves do not produce emotions either.

In a mode akin to Ahmed’s model of emotions, Peter does not simply hold or produce the feminine homemaker persona, which may be considered a feminine affect. Peter, as stated before, bases this persona on the TV hostess. Meanwhile, the hostess is reenacting the homemaker persona that has circulated as a cultural script in media. Furthermore, the hostess is likely reading from a literal script created by writers who also reference similar manuscripts. Therefore, the affective forces of the feminine homemaker persona are not produced from one source but circulate between bodies through mimicry.

As for the apron Peter wears, it appears to be an object of emotion, sticky with femininity. The significance of the apron appears even earlier in the novel when Peter, as a

young child, drew Peter as a “Mommy” in a “What I Want to Be When I Grow Up” assignment. Young Peter calls upon the images of mothers in “magazine ads and picture books, always bending at the waist over their tied aprons with their breasts on display—serving pancakes, wrapping presents, patting the heads of puppies, vacuuming sparkling clean floors” (3). Through Peter’s repeated exposure (signaled through “always”) to a feminine figure, Peter views the maternal apron as an object sticky with femininity long before wearing the apron.

Like the apron, clothing and other accessories heavily play into Peter’s femininity as Peter mimicks Audrey Hepburn and later adopts her namesake. Hepburn’s appeal perhaps involves her association with Cinderella according to Rachel Moseley in her essay “Trousers and Tiaras: Audrey Hepburn, a Woman’s Star.” Moseley describes the “Cinderella motif” featured in many of Hepburn’s films as “a staple of feminine culture, from the childhood fairytale, to the before and after, rags to riches fashion and beauty makeover of girls’ and women’s magazines, women’s film” which offer “the magical spectacle of transformation and the promise of a better self and a better life” (39). The defining feature of the “Cinderella motif” is the apparent ability for women to drastically transform through clothing. If a beautiful dress and slippers were enough for Cinderella to transition from an abused stepdaughter in rags to a Princess with a Prince Charming, then women’s lives too could be changed through a “makeover” of sorts.

Peter’s own fascination with Hepburn in *Sabrina* seems to center around how Sabrina, Hepburn’s character, transforms like Cinderella through clothing. Peter describes rewatching specific scenes with Sabrina “pacing in an organza Givenchy gown and pear teardrop earrings... black slacks and a black shirt that plunges down her back” (Fu 62). Additionally, Peter alludes to the Cinderella motif by stating, “Sabrina goes to Europe to become even more sophisticated, even more perfect” (62). The juxtaposition of Peter’s descriptions of Sabrina communicates how

Sabrina became “more sophisticated, even more perfect” through her dress. The transformation is not one where Sabrina’s character changes but rather she becomes a better version of herself through her makeover.

As *Sabrina* repeats the Cinderella formula, the Cinderella motif reveals itself as a script in its replicability, familiarity, and use of props. As a “staple of feminine culture,” the Cinderella script is a specific kind of heterosexual script that presents a possible life and coupling with a Prince-like character. Peter seems to latch on to the script and the prospect of transforming into a better version of oneself. Peter’s own narrative and transition from Peter to Audrey resonates with the Cinderella script, in which Peter transform into Audrey for one Halloween party before permanently becoming Audrey at the end of the novel. When Peter puts on various clothing and accessories, these objects appear to merge with Peter’s body:

Nothing would be as good as how it felt: the sweet constraint around my hips from the dress, tight as a sausage casing, squeezing joy into my skull, making it swell. The satin on my hands, my spidery eyelashes, the weight of the hair and the jewelry. I loved the sound of the gown’s train swishing behind me. It felt like something restored: a tail cut off and regrown. (227)

The dress seems to produce discomfort at first in its “constraint” as though it is too tight for Peter’s body. But tightness also means form-fitting, the dress clinging onto Peter—to Audrey—as though it was made for her. The skin-tight dress could be read as the closing gap between the Cinderella/Hepburn script and Audrey’s body. Both the apron and dress stick to the skin as close as possible without any barrier creating the gap between the script and Audrey. Clothing can also stretch and be tailored to fit body, demonstrating how objects associated with scripts are moldable.

Along with facilitating the heterosexual script as accessories, the clothing, eyelashes, wig, and jewelry also become part of Audrey. The eyelashes and wig specifically extend Audrey's body, lengthening her own eyelashes and adding hair to her scalp, while the wig and jewelry add to her weight. The gown's train is another extension of Audrey, who likens it to an appendage. For all the years Audrey had repressed her gender identity, the dress acts as a conduit for gender expression, a "tail cut off" alluding to past repression (with a strong implication of outside forces acting upon Audrey as "cut off" suggests someone had removed the tail) and "regrown" gesturing towards expression.

In contrast to the text's focus on Audrey's feelings as she mimics a script, common reenactments of the Cinderella script portray the visual changes of a Cinderella figure's appearance as opposed to the visceral changes she feels during the transformation. The privileging of the visual reinforces itself when the motif appears in films such as Hepburn's. The Cinderella script is, in Moseley's words, a "magical spectacle"—the transformation meant to be watched from the outsider's perspective. Yet, *For Today I Am a Boy's* depiction of this Cinderella transformation resists Audrey's makeover as a spectacle in part through Audrey's narration. By depicting Audrey's sensations while dressing as Hepburn, the novel reveals a different side of the Cinderella script: the perspective of the Cinderella figure. The novel's heavy focus on affect mitigates the treatment of Audrey's body as a spectacle wherein trans bodies have been and continue to be othered. Having Audrey portrayed as feeling "good" also resists pathologizing her body as a trans woman.

While Audrey's decision to mimic the Cinderella script could be explained by her desire to transition from "Peter" to "Audrey," her reasons for mimicking a white woman is rather ambiguous. In fact, Audrey's desire to become like Audrey Hepburn could be viewed as a desire

to become white and reject her Chinese heritage, which implies that race could be hidden or even transformed during the makeover process. This interpretation, however, overlooks how Audrey idolized her older sister Adele alongside Hepburn. When asked what Peter wanted to be for Halloween, Peter suddenly remembers watching *Sabrina* in theaters with older sister Adele and “[wanting] to be like Adele, the way she looked silhouetted by the screen, more striking than the thirty-foot-tall Sabrina” (224). Even with Sabrina’s literal larger-than-life appearance onscreen, Adele manages to outshine Sabrina, displacing Hepburn’s character as the subject for Peter to mimic. This memory leads Peter to dress up as Audrey Hepburn, suggesting that being Sabrina/Hepburn would help Peter become more like Adele. Returning to the scene where Audrey/Peter sees her reflection as she dons her Hepburn costume, Audrey takes note of the racialized features shared with Adele—the “almond eyes” and “sloping cheekbones”—as well as her own likeness to Hepburn (228). Audrey juxtaposing her sister with Hepburn and embracing her likeness to these two women reveals the varying factors that could explain why a queer, racialized subject would adhere to and depart from a white heterosexual script. Due to the entanglement of whiteness and heterosexuality in the Cinderella/Hepburn script, Audrey is thus placed in an ambivalent position where she considers both her race and gender as opposed to prioritizing one aspect of her identity. Even if Audrey wanted to disavow her shared Chinese heritage with Adele, the logic of colonial mimicry would make this disavowal difficult as Audrey’s “Otherness” would “slip” up during her mimicry of Hepburn.

Audrey’s ambivalence while mimicking a white heterosexual script suggests a connection to the ambivalence defining melancholia. As we recall from the previous chapter, melancholia is the “refusal to sever any attachments to the lost object” whereas mourning would move on from that loss (Eng 1276). David L. Eng and Shinhee Han build on this melancholic framework by

explicitly linking melancholia and colonial mimicry through their shared ambivalence; they argue that the “ambivalence that comes to define Freud’s concept of melancholia is one that finds its origins in the social, in colonial and racial structures impelling systems of mimicry and man” (677). Ambivalence from holding onto lost objects come from societal structures, specifically colonialism and race, and in turn, those structures encourage colonial mimicry. Eng and Han also envision mimicry and melancholia as the outside reflecting the inside by “[connecting] Bhabha’s observations on mimicry in the material space of the colonized with its transposition into the psychic domain through the logic of melancholia” (676). In other words, colonial mimicry is an outward expression of the colonized Other’s melancholia. Rather than merely signaling a desire by the colonized Other to become like the white colonizer, mimicry can instead signal loss and the inability or refusal to let go of lost objects.

While the term “diaspora” is not explicitly used in Eng and Han’s work, the “material space of the colonized” where colonial mimicry and Asian Americans occupy allude to the Othering expatriates experience as they occupy spaces that refuse to accommodate or fully recognize their minoritarian subjectivity. Furthermore, depending on the specific material space, certain scripts may be more visible or available to mimic. Regardless of their time spent in the United States or whether they are natural-born citizens, “Asian Americans are typically seen by the mainstream as perpetual foreigners based on skin color and facial markings” (Eng and Han 671). Asian Americans’ racialized features not only mark Asian Americans as the Other in contrast to the white majority but also communicate the narrative of departing from some country of origin even if that narrative happened generations ago. The Asian American as a diasporic subject may consciously or unconsciously latch onto available scripts provided by the colonized space, for those scripts indicate how to live and become recognized as a person.

However, it is important to recognize that the colonial mimicry Eng and Han examine is in the context of the United States where Asian subjects navigate their space differently than, for instance, how the leads of *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* navigate Manchuria during the Second Sino-Japanese War or possibly how Audrey navigates Canada as a Chinese-Canadian. Even within the context of the United States, Asian-Americans experience diaspora and its accompanying melancholia differently. These different contexts would be more useful in considering how diaspora may inform why some racialized queer subjects mimic white heterosexual scripts while others do not. If the diasporic subject occupies a space where pop culture overwhelmingly provides white heterosexual scripts, then that space will set the terms for mimicry. For the diasporic subject who is less exposed to whiteness or in ways different from Asian-Americans, their melancholia may be more centered on colonization and social class discrepancies as in the case of Kim's film.

Melancholia's "refusal to sever any attachments" could encompass a subject holding onto something when norms seek to sever such attachments, thus granting the melancholic subject more agency in deciding what attachments to keep as opposed to simply reacting to loss. Eng and Han envision the more productive melancholia as the "absolute refusal to relinquish the other—to forfeit alterity—at any costs" (694). The melancholic subject chooses to accept their difference, more specifically their minoritarian subjectivity, even as forces like heteronormativity and whiteness encourage subjects to forgo non-normative characteristics and behaviors (at least to the point where the melancholic could still be Othered). In that sense, the mimicker and their melancholia play larger roles in undermining colonial forces, displacing the colonizer and their desire for have the colonized be "almost the same" as them.

The shift in power away from the colonizer through melancholia mirrors the shift in power away from sexual scripts, leading to a relatively empowered mimicker who can choose whether to embrace any aspect of their alterity. In regards to the effort of “reworking” heterosexual scripts, the queer subject remains to some extent passive during mimicry because mimicry will inevitably cause “slippage” and destabilize scripts without any other action from the mimicker. Nonetheless, the mimicker is somewhat active in reworking heterosexual scripts through melancholic practices of holding onto alterity. If we revisit *For Today I Am a Boy* under the lens of melancholia, we could view the train of Audrey’s Hepburn dress—the “tail cut off and regrown” (Fu 227)—as a representation of a “lost object” Audrey may choose to renounce or keep. As discussed previously, the cut-off tail could be read as a metaphor for Audrey having to repress her femininity. An alternative interpretation would view the discarded tail as a phallic symbol that Audrey rejects. Meanwhile, the “regrown” tail as the feminine train represents the object Audrey decides to keep in a melancholic sense despite the dress possibly Othering Audrey as a trans woman. The manifestation of Audrey’s alterity is not just the result of “slippage” via mimicry, but it is a conscious choice made by Audrey to embrace her alterity.

Embracing alterity during mimicry not only could allow subjects to depart from norms but also could disrupt normative structures as demonstrated in *Rolling the R’s*. In Linmark’s novel, Orlando Domingo, a high school senior, demands to be addressed as “Farrah” and dresses like Farrah Fawcett and her character Jill Monroe after watching *Charlie’s Angels* (1976). The mimicry starts with “his addiction to Farrah’s blond mane” (Linmark 23) but progresses to donning Jill Monroe-inspired outfits (24). The outfits seem to change weekly, reflecting *Charlie’s Angels’* broadcast schedule with Orlando skating to school “wearing see-through Dove shorts, red Danskins, and red-and-white knee and elbow pads” soon after the episode featuring

Jill Monroe posing as a roller-derby player airs on TV (24). The novel resists explicitly signaling Orlando's gender identity or sexuality, yet his embodiment of Farrah Fawcett is read as queer by adults including the school's football coaches who worry that the athletes will "catch this madness and start huddling in skirts and pom-poms" (24), invoking fears of "queerness" as a threat to heteronormativity. Furthermore, the coaches ask Principal Shim to either suspend or expel Orlando if Shim wants "the team to bring home the OIA title" (25).

While Orlando may not be intentionally disrupting heteronormativity at his school, Orlando as Farrah Fawcett causes anxiety to the point that school authorities consider utilizing disciplinary actions to dissuade students from expressing queerness. The coaches liken Orlando's queerness to a contagious disease that could cause student athletes to reject their heteronormative, masculine roles and take up more feminine activities like cheerleading instead. As such, Orlando adopting the Farrah Fawcett script may inspire students to adopt scripts other than the ones assigned to them. The coaches heighten the need for disciplinary action by arguing that the football's team success and the school's reputation are at risk if athletes were to stray from their roles. The high school would then be perceived as "queer" as opposed to heteronormative.

However, the principal finds himself unable to punish Orlando due to Orlando's various academic achievements and admittance to Brown University, which suggests how queer subjects could still fill "accepted" societal roles like the Asian model minority. On file, Orlando fits the model minority stereotype that "homogenizes widely disparate Asian and Asian American racial and ethnic groups by generalizing them all as economically or academically successful" (Eng and Han 674). Orlando, an immigrant from the Philippines, has earned (to name a few of his accomplishments) the title of Valedictorian, scored "1500 out of 1600" for the SAT, and "Voted

Most Industrious and Most Likely to Succeed four years in a row” (Linmark 25). According to Eng and Han, Asian Americans “are forced to mimic the model minority stereotype in order to be recognized by mainstream society—in order *to be* at all” (677). For diasporic Asian Americans like Orlando, mimicking the model minority stereotype would help him adopt an identity as the recognizable and ideal Asian American, following the logic of colonial mimicry shaping the reformed and recognizable Other. Principal Shim is caught in a bind where punishing Orlando with suspension or expulsion would make Orlando lose his status as model minority while not punishing him would continue the disruption of heteronormativity. Ultimately because of “the school’s institutional mission to produce model citizens,” Shim decides to not expel Orlando in order to uphold Orlando’s image as an otherwise “ideal citizen” representing the high school (Reyes 128). Because of his successful mimicry of the model minority stereotype, Orlando contributes positively to the high school’s goal of producing ideal citizens, and thus he receives little to no punishment for mimicking Farrah Fawcett. Additionally, if Orlando were to receive suspension or expulsion for his queer behavior, his queerness would be recorded on file, and the high school’s reputation would suffer anyway.

Arguably, Orlando’s mimicry of the Farrah Fawcett script may not truly subvert normative structures. Because the model minority stereotype seems to aid Orlando, one may deduce from Linmark’s text that Asian Americans would benefit and gain privileges by becoming model minorities. Such privileges may include avoiding negative consequences like Orlando avoiding heavy disciplinary actions. Furthermore, according to Eric Estuar Reyes in his article, “American Developmentalism and Hierarchies of Difference in R. Zamora Linmark’s *Rolling the R’s*,” Farrah Fawcett “is the embodiment of ‘America,’ and to desire Farrah/America is strive for the social and cultural power that is normative and dominant regardless of gender or

sexuality” (129). Reyes posits Fawcett as an American icon and idolizing her signals an underlying desire for social power found in normative and dominant American structures. Mimicking Fawcett could then be interpreted as an attempt to gain that social power, and in order to gain that power, the mimicker would have to fully assimilate into American culture and forsake their differences.

The idea that becoming a model minority will enable one to gain social power is, however, a myth. This myth suggests that Asian-Americans as “model minorities” do not face racism or enjoy privileges that other racial minorities lack. In reality, the model minority stereotype makes those who do not fall into that stereotype invisible and trivializes anti-Asian sentiments. The stereotype also “masks [Asian Americans’] lack of political and cultural representation” because the model or ideal minority is not supposed to “draw attention to themselves” or their “legitimate political, economic, or social needs” (Eng and Han 678). Being the model minority includes not disrupting or criticizing existing structures even if those structures reinforce racist and colonial practices. Consequently, the model minority stereotype appears to be an acceptable role to occupy because ideally the model minority would not challenge norms. At the same time, ambivalence accompanies the model minority due to the stereotype’s “nearly successful imitation” of the “unmarked (white) student body” in which the model minority lacks the white student’s “well-roundedness” (678). The model minority’s academic success becomes exaggerated and reduces Asian Americans to only their academic achievements, similar to how Orlando’s file characterizes him as only an exceptional student. As with colonial mimicry, ambivalence signals a melancholic embracement of alterity as opposed to complete assimilation.

Meanwhile, Reyes' equating Farrah Fawcett with "America" overlooks the ways Orlando revamps Farrah Fawcett into Filipino/Filipino-American icon. As an explanation for how he could style his hair like Farrah's, Orlando would claim that "Once a Farrah Flip, always a Farrah Flip" (Linmark 24). The term "Flip" on the surface refers to a hairstyle, but "Flip" is also "used as a term referring to Filipinos... from being a derogatory to an endearing characterization" (Diaz 214). Orlando plays on the word "Flip" to communicate that he could achieve the "Farrah Flip" hairstyle because he is a "Farrah Flip" or Filipino Farrah Fawcett. "Flip" also has been used to modify "queens" or homosexuals when the text describes how "Farrah wanna-be's and Flip queens" envy Orlando's hair (Linmark 24). Reading "Flip" as "Filipino" takes in consideration the prominent Filipino population in Hawaii—the setting of *Rolling the R's*—for the Filipino community would more likely recognize the double-meaning of "Flip." The emergence of Orlando's Filipino identity through the play on "Flip" not only reveals colonial mimicry's slippage but also the possibility of racialized, diasporic communities co-opting white icons. The object of envy for Filipino Americans is not reducible to "America" or the social power of normative cultures as Reyes would suggest; instead it is the "Farrah Flip," encompassing anything from hair to Filipino subjectivity.

While co-opting white icons in pop culture through mimicry could subvert norms, whiteness could also be displaced in scripts by featuring non-white pop stars instead. For example, a scene in *Rolling the R's* presents a situation where neither the mimicker nor the mimicked are white. Vicente, a closeted young Filipino-American, role-plays the Queen of Disco Donna Summer as he sings her part in "No More Tears (Enough is Enough)," a song involving a male lover (Linmark 36-40). Given that Donna Summer is a black woman, Vicente does not engage with white normativity to the extent Audrey and Orlando had. Instead, Vicente engages

with the heterosexual script “No More Tears (Enough is Enough)” seemingly provides in its lyrics and love object. *Rolling the R's* challenges heterosexual script's unyielding qualities here by demonstrating how actors of a script may not fit certain norms like whiteness. The mimicker therefore could expend less effort in reworking the script and experience less anxiety over maintaining racial difference in the presence of whiteness.

As opposed to identifying with the script's actors as in the cases of Audrey and Orlando, Vicente appears to just share an attraction to men with the (presumably) female narrator in “No More Tears (Enough is Enough).” With this shared attraction, Vicente's performance demonstrates how homosexual desires could be expressed under the guise of acting out the heterosexual script's female role. As he sings Donna Summer's lines, Vicente “imagines strong hands kneading his neck, his shoulders” and “stretches his neck... [like] the way one does when massaged by someone like Richard Hatch or Jan-Michael Vincent” (39). For the most part, Vicente's homosexuality is expressed internally where he replaces the role of Donna Summer as the receiver of another's affections. The text indicates that Vicente's imagined lover is male with the comparisons to Disco-era actors Richard Hatch and Jan-Michael Vincent and the masculine implications of “strong hands.” Additionally, Vicente's fantasy bleeds into his performance as his neck moves in response to the imagined massage. While Vicente's impassioned body movements could have outed him as queer, Vicente could (theoretically) “safely act out his desires by performing cross-gender identities in the context of the theater group” (Nubla 210). The context of Vicente's performance as part of a role-play might obscure the external evidence of his inner desires; his movements could be simply attributed to his dedication in playing the role of Donna Summer. Because of this theatrical context, the heterosexual script could be used to both express and mask same-sex desires in other closeted individuals.

Vicente's mimicry of Donna Summer could be seen as problematic because Vicente's performance recalls the appropriation of black female vocalists' work in the disco scene. On one hand, disco originated from "Manhattan clubs whose clientele were African American and Latino, and gay" (Hubbs 233), but popular, whitewashed films like *Saturday Night Fever* (1977) are responsible for "repressing [disco's] black and homosexual origins" (Maitra 376). Perhaps Vicente's expression of same-sex desires through Donna Summer is a way of reclaiming disco's queer and multiracial roots. On the other hand, disco also has a history of nonblack people appropriating black divas' work for personal gain. According to Ani Maitra, the "commoditization of the black voice" in disco has been a subject of critique with some scholars perceiving "the use of black female vocalists by (mainly white, male) producers" as "the use of black female sexuality in the service of capitalism" (383). While Vicente is not profiting from his performance of Donna Summer, he still uses Donna Summer as a means to simultaneously display and hide his queer desires. Perhaps displacing white celebrities from scripts is not enough to undermine whiteness if queer racial minorities, especially nonblack individuals, can mimic practices like appropriation.

While there are implications that mimicry is a possible form of appropriation, some scholars would argue that mimicry between disparate groups goes beyond appropriation and instead suggest that these groups may have a less exploitive and more cooperative relationship with each other. For Maitra, the mimicry by nonblack gay males of black female vocalists in disco may present a Deleuzian "becoming-black woman" in which "blackness' is not appropriated by the consumer but rather overpowers the consumer" (389). This "overpowering" complicates the idea that nonblack gay men are simply taking advantage of black divas because disco enthusiasts supposedly do not have total control of the content they consume. Furthermore,

Maitra claims that “‘becoming-black woman... does not mean an attempt to ‘occupy the position of’ or turn into a ‘psychic equal’ of a black woman” (389). In other words, gay males like Vicente are not trying to transform into black divas but are influenced by black divas. The “overpowering” of the disco consumer could explain why Vicente communicates his inner desires through his neck movements despite being closeted (Linmark 39); perhaps Vicente cannot contain his queer desires as he sings Donna Summer’s work. Of course, black female vocalists and their work could still be appropriated or monetized, but this model of “becoming-black woman” resists reading Vicente’s mimicry simply as an exploitation of Donna Summer and her work. Instead, this mimicry presents the possibility of harmonious interactions between bodies and scripts centered on minorities.

In examining the ways *For Today I Am a Boy* and *Rolling the R’s* engage with colonial mimicry and white heterosexual scripts, we have observed how moldable heterosexual scripts in pop culture could be and how the Other could mimic literal scripts without forfeiting their alterity. First, Audrey from *For Today I Am a Boy* demonstrates the affective forces and objects involved in mimicking white heterosexual scripts such as the Cinderella or Audrey Hepburn script; her mimicry results in acknowledging both her Chinese heritage and trans identity as “slippage” highlighted her differences. Meanwhile, Orlando from *Rolling the R’s* manages to co-opt Farrah Fawcett into a Filipino icon and disrupt heteronormative structures such as schools. Finally, Vicente’s role-play of Donna Summer presents a nuanced way to express same-sex desires through gender play while also displacing white actors from heterosexual scripts and reclaiming disco’s minoritarian origins.

While scripts are useful in explaining social behaviors and how norms reinforce themselves, current scholarship on scripts tends to place extra responsibility on individuals to

rework the scripts from their surroundings under the assumption that scripts are unchanging. For the racialized, queer Other, the constant and possibly strenuous reworking of scripts indicates that the Other must continually fight or resist their surroundings in order to for their existence to be recognized despite not conforming to norms. Mimicry presents a flexible alternative to fighting in which the Other works with and uses scripts as means to express oneself. Of course, this overview presents a simplified version of this chapter's discussions, and thus these observations should be read as general impressions of larger topics that could be expanded upon. To displace whiteness and heteronormativity, future research could focus more on mimicry between racial and queer minorities and further incorporate theoretical frameworks like the Deleuzian "becoming black woman." Perhaps scholarship could go beyond analyzing existing, normative scripts and instead find alternative scripts or even create new scripts that would embrace alterity.

## Conclusion

At first, scripts, especially those found in film and television, seem to be unlikely tools for depicting minoritarian subjectivity. In theoretical frameworks, scripts have been used to model how norms reinforce themselves by shaping bodies to live certain ideals like whiteness and heterosexuality. Meanwhile, literal film and television scripts may reflect those norms by featuring white, heterosexual characters. Yet, Kim's *The Good, The Bad, The Weird*, Fu's *For Today I Am a Boy*, and Linmark's *Rolling the R's*, all works depicting Asian diasporas and characters' ambivalence towards surrounding hegemonic forces, demonstrate how minoritarian subjectivity could be retained and portrayed in narratives as these texts closely engage with literal existing scripts.

As a film remake, *The Good, The Bad, The Weird*'s ambivalence manifests through its overall fidelity to Leone's *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* and the Manchurian and spaghetti western genres. That ambivalence in combination with the film's fixation on colonized Korea signals melancholia related to the Korean diaspora. While still being faithful to the narrative of Leone's film, *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* alters the semantic elements of *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*'s script to shift away from the original film's American Civil War backdrop and to instead establish Manchuria as a setting for the Korean exiles. Each of the protagonists embodies some semantic element change corresponding with their different melancholic attitudes. For Do-won, he becomes "The Man with No Country" as opposed to "The Man with No Name" and shows how neither name nor country matters as much as material wealth. For Chang-yi, he inherits both the Bad role and the one-armed bounty hunter's backstory, this combination creating a vengeful character whose loss is inscribed in his body. For Tae-goo, his "weirdness" is

shown through class difference as opposed to his Leone counterpart's ethnic difference, and his past as a peasant explains his ambivalence towards Korea under *yangban* rule.

While *The Good, The Bad, The Weird* engages with existing scripts through the remaking process, *For Today I Am a Boy* and *Rolling the R's* have their characters rework and undermine white heterosexual scripts from television and film through mimicry. In Fu's novel, Audrey/Peter shows how mimicry of scripts like the homemaker persona can involve repeating dialogue as well as incorporating props like dresses to amplify that mimicry. Her mimicry of Audrey Hepburn and the Cinderella script allows her to embrace her trans identity while also holding onto her Chinese heritage under the logic of colonial mimicry producing "slippage" between racialized Other trying to imitate the white colonizer. As for *Rolling the R's*, this novel's queer Filipino youths and their mimicry of pop culture figures illustrate not only the partial failure of white heterosexual scripts but also mimicry's various applications. Through Orlando's embodiment of Farrah Fawcett, he disrupts heteronormative structures like his own high school and co-opts white celebrities into becoming Filipino icons. And while Vicente does not necessarily identify with Donna Summer, his role-play of the disco diva permits him to express same-sex desire as a closeted gay boy. Linmark's novel also presents the possibility of decentering whiteness from scripts by having neither the mimicker nor the mimicked be white.

These observations would not have been possible without Ahmed's work on affect and scripts, Eng and Han's exploration of melancholia, Bhabha's model of colonial mimicry, and Verevis' definitions of film remake categories. Together, these theoretical works combined with *The Good, The Bad, The Weird*, *For Today I Am a Boy*, and *Rolling the R's* transform scripts from something vague and restricting for minorities to something more tangible, flexible, and even empowering to use.

As stated before, this thesis only presents some works and their use of scripts as well as some possible theories to pair with for analysis. Additionally, this project's current scope encompasses melancholia, select Asian diasporas, and mainly white heterosexual scripts in film and television. I can imagine future scholarship engaging with other kinds of diasporas, other kinds of scripts, and going beyond melancholia's ambivalence. As I consider the many ways this project could have been improved and could have expanded on, I look for new ways and perhaps new scripts to frame and express alterity, for while there is no one correct way to interact with our surroundings, there are many ways to exist as a minoritarian subject.

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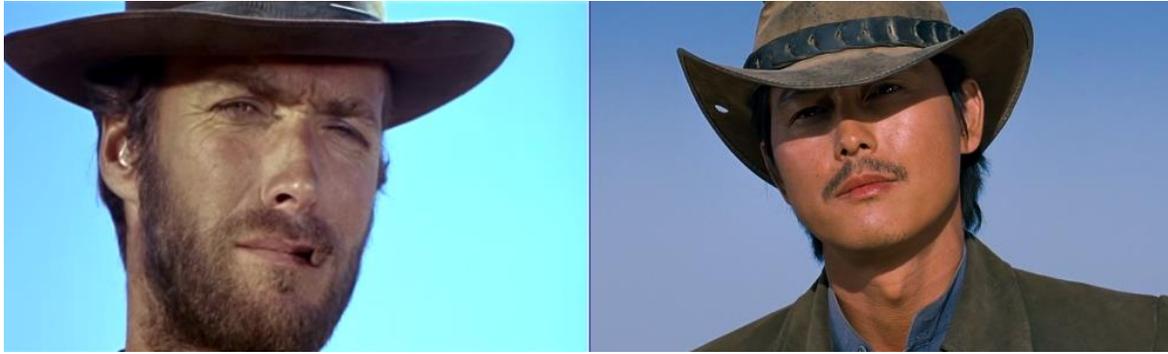
## Appendix



**Figure 1.** Chang-yi reveals his mutilated finger and asks Tae-goo if he can “hear that?”



**Figure 2.** Tae-goo (right) reveals his dream to Do-won (left) if the treasure map were real.



**Figure 3.** Similar close-ups of Blondie/"The Man with No Name" (left) and Do-won (right) as they force the Ugly/Weird to dig for treasure.