

Master's thesis

NTNU
Norwegian University of
Science and Technology
Faculty of Humanities
Department of Music

Brian Christer Nebb Rånes

Chocolate, Mustard and a Fox

Norwegian K-Pop, Its Production and
Performance

Master's thesis in Musicology

Trondheim, autumn 2014



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CONTENTS

Contents	iii
Abstract	v
Acknowledgements	vii
Introduction	xi
Chapter One: A Deliberate Globalization Strategy	1
Cultural Technology, Hybridization and the Creation of a “World Culture”	1
Chapter Two: Catering to the Global Market	23
Globalization of Content in Crayon Pop’s “Bar Bar Bar”	23
“The Fox Say ‘Bar Bar Bar’”	28
Chapter Three: Aspects of Outsourced K-Pop Production	35
The Push and Pull on Norwegian Producers	35
Outsourced Production and a Thirdspatial Negotiation of Otherness	39
Balancing the “Korean Flavor” in the Productions of Boys Republic’s “Twilight” and F(x)’s “Rock Your Body”	47
Developing “Déjà Vu” for Girls’ Generation	53
The Process of Top-lining “Déjà Vu”	58
Top-Line Spectrograms of “The Boys” and “Break Down”	67
The Import and Revival of “Perfect Tragedy” as “Hi Ya Ya Summer Day,” and the Use of Language in Its Top-Line	74
Music, Visual Images and the Sexualization of Girls’ Generation and Miss A.....	80
Conclusion	91
Bibliography	97
Appendices	117
Appendix A: Interview with Leiv Aspén.....	119
Appendix B: Interview with Leiv Aspén and Tomas Smågesjø.....	129
Appendix C: Interview with Jin Seok Choi	149
Appendix D: Girls’ Generation, “The Boys”	157
Appendix D1: First Half of the Intro	157

Appendix D2: Second Half of the Intro	158
Appendix D3: “T.R.X.” and “Bring the Boys Out”	159
Appendix D4: “Girls’ Generation Make You Feel the Heat”	160
Appendix D5: Melodic and Rhythmic Discrepancies I.....	161
Appendix D6: Melodic and Rhythmic Discrepancies II	162
Appendix E: Super Junior-M, “Break Down”	163
Appendix E1: “So Baby Let’s Go”	163
Appendix E2: Dark Chasms Formed by Cutouts vs. Chasms Formed by Copy- and-Paste	164
Appendix E3: Transition From Modest Towards Hard Use of Auto-Tune	165

ABSTRACT

The presence of K-pop production in Norway is not coincidental. Norwegian producers have identified economic and artistic market opportunities in Korea, while the Korean music industry has encouraged non-domestic producers to export pop songs to the Korean market and to collaborate with Korean producers. This model of production is a part of corporate globalization strategies such as S.M. Entertainment's "cultural technology." Yet, literature is scarce on the music in K-pop and its production. This thesis explores the musical content and production practices in transnationally produced K-pop tracks, and further investigates how international and transnational collaborations work in the production of K-pop. It attempts to bridge the gap between the most occurring themes of Hallyu research – culture, fandom, cultural geography, economics, ethnography or an interdisciplinary amalgam of these – and K-pop's musical content.

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For a number of years, I have had an interest in popular music but it was not until I was able to travel to South Korea in January 2013 that K-pop caught my attention. The NTNU Office for International Relations and Pukyong University in Busan funded the trip, and I owe these institutions my humble gratitude. At one point during the stay, my friends Young Min Cho and Hyeon-Soo Jeon performed – with the greatest ease and self-irony – a *nooraebang*-version (Korean-style karaoke) of Girls' Generation's "Gee." Through their performance, I discovered the theme for my thesis:

Kamsahamnida.

Later – and quite coincidentally – I discovered that K-pop was being produced on a large scale in my hometown Trondheim. From this family of producers, I need to thank Leiv Aspén, Tomas Smågesjø, and Jin Seok Choi for generously offering their time for the interviews that have made this thesis possible. I also need to thank Renate Skogtrø Eggan and Bård Ivar Basmo for conducting interviews on my behalf while I was travelling and for allowing me to reproduce that material here. And, of course, I also extend my deep thanks to Nermin Harambašić, Lloyd Lorenz Lawrence, and Camilla Norderud for allowing my attendance during the production of the top-line of "Déjà Vu."

In May 2014, the World Association of Hallyu Studies held a conference on Hallyu in Jerusalem. WAHS must be thanked for allowing me to attend their conference, and I am very thankful for NTNU Department of Music's funding that allowed me to travel to Israel so I could join the conference and see the country before the devastating escalation of the Gaza-conflict that followed a few months later. In Jerusalem, I met with the renowned Hallyu-scholar, Keith Howard, whom I hereby thank for inspirational words and advice on K-pop research.

Above all, I must thank my supervisor, John Howland, for advice, close-reads, and inspiration, and my sister, Ina Victoria Nebb Rånes, for additional close-reads.

American pop is more drone-based, more repetitive, adheres to a recipe, and has a formula, while in Korea it's ... mustard and chocolate and everything in one song.

–Leiv Aspén

They were yellow. I mean, their clothes. Their clothes were yellow.

–Vegard Ylvisåker

INTRODUCTION

Norway has for the past few years been more than adequately represented in the world of K-pop. By and large, production companies such as Dsign Music have carried out an extensive production of K-pop songs. In particular, Dsign Music – whose representatives have occasionally linked the characteristics of K-pop songs’ form to certain edibles – is most prominently discussed in this thesis in terms of their approach to production, while other producers will sporadically be referenced when appropriate. This project attempts to highlight the cultural negotiation between Norway and Korea. Such negotiations can be seen, for example through my discussion of the transnational medley, “The Fox Say ‘Bar Bar Bar.’” More significantly, however, such cultural negotiations are addressed through the extensive body of music that Norwegian producers have participated in the creation of, and by way of the theoretical and political issues of globalization, cultural hybridization, soft power and Otherness.

Hallyu studies have mostly been concerned with culture, fandom, cultural geography, economics, ethnography or an interdisciplinary fusion of these. Musical content has been underrepresented in Hallyu studies and is ripe for discussion.

I

The term “K-pop” has been used in the East and South East Asian region for decades to describe South Korean popular music.¹ Yet this term and music has not attained an especially public position in Norway, despite a very well-established local K-pop production environment. The term did not appear in any Norwegian media until 9 May 2011 (Castello 2011), where

¹ Hereafter, “Korea” will refer to South Korea, unless the text specifically denotes North Korea.

it surfaced in a news article that described the intercultural relationship between Korea and Norway, and K-pop as a phenomenon in Korean culture. On 7 November 2011 the term reappeared, this time on the magazine SMUG's websites through a report from MTV Europe Music Awards, where the K-pop boy band, BIG BANG, had just won the award Best Worldwide Act. The report gave a prediction of what was and is to come: "K-pop will be something big. It is not just a wave, it is the future" (D. Choi 2011).

The "Korean Wave" – or "Hallyu," as it is also called – is used to describe the cultural and economical flux that emanates from Korea and surges over other countries. In particular, the wave has had a strong impact on Japan, China, South East Asia, and countries in the surrounding region. It has also reached the Middle East, Europe, USA, and other regions, where K-pop fandom has developed, and K-pop concerts are hosted on a regular basis. Thus, Hallyu has become a global phenomenon that impacts cultures regardless of national borders. Its impact on Norway has since the rise of the wave been noticeable with the emergence of Korean themed restaurants in Oslo during the 1990s, where, for example, the restaurant Nam Kang Sushi (Korean and Japanese food) was established in 1994. In music-related articles, the phenomenon has gone unnoticed until the media began to regularly use the term K-pop in November 2011. Yet, Norwegian-Korean relations through K-pop production were initiated in the early 2000s.

In 2002, Håvid Engmark, Alf Gunnar Nilsen, and Bjørnar Løberg, wrote and produced the track "Perfect Tragedy" for Don Ramage and the national finals of Eurovision Song Contest (D. Ramage 2003).² Unknowingly, these songwriters became three of the first Norwegians to ever produce a K-pop hit. "Perfect Tragedy" ended eleventh out of twelve contestants and disappeared as is typical for ESC flops. Two years later, the song emerged in Korea with the title "Hi Ya Ya Summer Day." It had been

² For consecutive references, "Eurovision Song Contest" is abbreviated as "ESC."

translated and rewritten, rerecorded, reproduced, and released with the prominent K-pop boy band, TVXQ. It became a hit.

A few years later, Ingrid Margrethe Skretting was already intentionally writing for the Korean pop market.³ Her track “Honey (Perfect for You),” appeared on Girls’ Generation’s self-titled debut album *Girls’ Generation* together with her track “Complete,” which she had co-written with producer Jan Lysdahl. Since its release on 1 November 2007, the nine girls of this act have established themselves as being of the most authoritative figures in K-pop.

Outsourced music production has also been fundamental for the collaboration between Dsign Music and the Korean music industry.⁴ Dsign Music was founded in 2004, and this development marked the arrival of the currently most prominent K-pop production company in Norway. During its first years, local musicians and bands such as Johndoe, Gåte, Aleksander With, Vivian Sørmland and Dina Misund were regular clients alongside occasional national and international artists, such as Tone Damli Aaberge, Venke Knutson, and the British boy band Blue. After a few years, Dsign Music turned their attention towards the Asian music markets, and in 2009 their production “Fast Car” for Namie Amuro was released on the Japanese music market. This was their first Asian hit, and the song “Tell Me Your Wish (Genie),” performed by Girls’ Generation, followed later that year.

Unlike Dsign Music, who after a few years expanded their offices to include Los Angeles and Seoul, the production company DeepFrost swore to keep its headquarters in Trondheim, from where they have produced hits for both the Asian and American market. DeepFrost was founded in 2004, and worked at that time from a basement home studio. The company had its first international success with the Dutch teenage band Ch!pz early in their

³ Ingrid Margrethe Skretting has subsequently taken the name Helgor. She has also used the stage name “Ingrid Marguerite.”

⁴ Throughout this thesis, outsourced music production is used to exemplify cultural technology’s third stage.

career, and later, the producers moved to professional studios and created songs for the two K-pop girl groups Miss A and Wonder Girls. The album *Touch*, coproduced by DeepFrost and performed by Miss A, was released on 20 February 2011, while *Wonder World*, coproduced by DeepFrost and performed by Wonder Girls, was released on 7 November 2011. *Touch* peaked second on the Gaon Weekly album chart, and *Wonder World* peaked first.

After their tenth song on top of the sales charts, Dsign Music was characterized by the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation as “experts on Asian superhits,”⁵ and this was the first attention Dsign Music received from national media (Bergmo and Nordenborg 2011). The second national news coverage was made by VG in August 2012 after the Dsign Music and Song:Expo produced song “Run This Club” made it to the top of the Taiwanese iTunes sales charts with the singer Jolin Tsai (Ighanian 2012). Dsign Music is currently responsible for the production of 27 K-pop tracks, many of which have had great success.⁶ Their track “I Got a Boy,” was in 2013 voted Video of the Year at YouTube Awards, and “Tell Me Your Wish (Genie),” also performed by Girls’ Generation, was awarded Best Group Video and Best Karaoke Song at the MTV Music Awards in Japan 2011. The same song also won Record of the Year at the Golden Disc Awards in 2011, and the Girls’ Generation albums *Oh!* and *Tell Me Your Wish* were both awarded platinum awards for their sales achievements.

In December 2011, journalists followed up on earlier prognostics of K-pop’s impact on Norway and K-pop’s future, despite the fact that K-pop at the time had been produced in Norway for several years. The teenage magazine, TOPP published a K-pop entry on the development of K-pop in Norway, focusing on the music of BIG BANG (Christiansen 2011a). The

⁵ From this appearance and on, the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation is referenced to as NRK, which is the abbreviation of Norsk Rikskringkasting AS, the corporation’s name in Norwegian. It is a government-owned, non-commercial broadcasting corporation. NRK provides an online news resource as well, which is referenced in italics as *NRK*.

⁶ As of October 2014.

magazine was the first in Norway to publish an article exclusively on K-pop, and did so the day before the article on BIG BANG. The article set out to explain the K-pop phenomena, including musical characteristics and the formation of a new, rapidly expanding teenage subculture (Christiansen 2011b). By 16 December, K-pop had reached the NRK youth radio channel P3's blog. In a posting, Philip Aas gave a presentation of some of the K-pop idols that were big in Korea at the moment, while he asked if this Asian trend was bound for Norway (Aas 2011). As K-pop is often linked with youth subcultures, it is logical that magazines and blogs directed towards younger audiences were among the first media to present K-pop to the Norwegian public.

After the period of predictions settled, and after a period of K-pop silence between March and July 2012, the Korean rapper Psy's massive hit "Gangnam Style" reached Norway in late September (Psy Official 2012). It received press coverage throughout the rest of the year, and during the four months from September to December, Norwegian media referred to "Gangnam Style" in 769 articles, including charts. That is an average of 6.3 citations per day. As "Gangnam Style" gained popularity its appearance almost exponentially increased. In September, it was mentioned in 31 articles, while it was cited in 75 articles in October, peaking at 349 references in November, with a slight decline in citations through December, which witnessed 314 articles on "Gangnam Style." In January 2013, the numbers dropped to 85, and the public's interest in Psy appeared to decline.

In addition to Psy's immediate success, "Gangnam Style's" extreme number of views on YouTube and worldwide recognition, the scoop from late September to mid October 2013 was usually his characteristic dance. *Dagbladet* wrote of Psy's use of dance as a factor of success (Grönskar 2012). *Bergensavisen* described the dance as catchy (Fagerbakke 2012). At the end of September and beginning of October, Norwegian media began

characterizing “Gangnam Style” as “horse rap” (Singsaas 2012), where Psy was ostensibly “riding on a horse” (Mellingén 2012) or comically “dancing on an invisible horse” (Graff 2012). Newspapers eventually began addressing the outbreaks of “Gangnam Style” flash mobs (Chaffey 2012), and organized dance events such as the one at Festplassen in Bergen (Nyland 2012).

After the music video went viral, parodies, tributes and remakes began to surge the Internet. This phenomenon became a hot topic for Norwegian media. *Bergens Tidende* published an article on four Norwegian Mayors participating in an awkward “Gangnam Style” dance parody (Stølås 2012). Its re-written lyrics were concerned with the opening of a new road, while the dance borrowed elements from the original such as the characteristic hand gestures reminiscent of some horse related activity (Stølås 2012). A few days later NRK P3 published an article compiling eleven “Gangnam Style” covers and parodies (Gjersøe 2012). The accumulated pile of parodies resulted in Psy nominating Ohio State University as having the world’s greatest parody, which of course was also covered (Heldal 2012).

Parodies continued to sporadically appear in Norwegian news coverage. In particular, the Mitt Romney parody received a great deal of attention in Norway. An article by NTB referred to a parody remake of “Gangnam Style” with new lyrics that criticized the politics and character of U.S. presidential candidate Mitt Romney (Skoglund 2012).⁷ Bodø Kommune made another successful parody. On 11 November, *TV2*, *Avisa Nordland*, *Nordlys* and *Bladet Vesterålen* wrote on Bodø’s communal promotion and recruitment video. Bodø Kommune’s aim was to recruit tenants for a nursing home. The creative director of the project, Caroline Meier, explained the choice of track to *Bladet Vesterålen*: “We were just so impressed by the ambitions of Bodø Kommune to be at the front of healthcare, and the employees were so enthusiastic and full of joy. There was no doubt, it had to

⁷ The article was reproduced in *iTromsø*, *Dagens Næringsliv*, *Nettavisen*, *VG Nett*, *Adresseavisen*, *Avisa Nordhordaland*, *NRK*, *Vårt land*, *Tidens krav*, *Stavanger aftenblad*, and *Klassekampen*.

be Gangnam Style and dance” (Wedding 2012). In Krakow, a group of Norwegian medicine students filmed a parody for the Copernicam Film Festival. Their video received media coverage in *Side 2*, *Adresseavisen*, and *Fædrelandsvennen* around mid-November.

From mid-October, Psy’s level of international recognition caused highly profiled figures to use “Gangnam Style” as a means of gaining political influence. The Secretary-General of UN, Ban Ki-moon invited Psy over to New York for a discussion on global warming, which of course culminated in dance. Both *NRK* (Granbo 2012) and *Dagbladet* (Hoff 2012) addressed this, yet they wittily disagreed on who initiated the dance sequence. Ai Weiwei, a politically controversial contemporary artist, is another profiled figure that has performed “Gangnam Style.” He made an alternative version utilizing handcuffs as props, a move that has been considered a protest against the Chinese Government and its censorship (Eriksen 2012).

Four articles released on 2 November 2012 asserted that Psy was to perform in Stavanger at the concert location Hall Toll. *Aftenbladet* (Aarre and Næsheim 2012), *Rogalands avis* (Sæbø 2012), *VG* (Østby 2012), and *P5* (Strander 2012a) announced the ticket release to an event that could only house 500 people if it ever were to be carried through. When interviewed, the event management said they only *hoped* to sell out this event. The booking turned out to be a hoax, which was a debated topic from 12 November and forward. Stavanger Promo announced through *Rogalands Avis* that the concert was cancelled due to contract issues (Fossmo 2012), and *P4* published two sentences claiming to have a direct confirmation from Psy that there would be no concert in Stavanger (Strander 2012b).⁸ It is

⁸ A K-pop concert has yet to be held in Norway. Fan groups attempt to bring K-pop idols to Norway through collaborations with serious interest organizations like KPIN (Korean Pop Culture in Norway). Unfortunately, their work has not yet proven to be successful.

strangely ironic that the only K-pop concert on Norwegian soil never happened.

On 24 November 2012, Psy broke Justin Bieber's record for all-time most viewed YouTube video. At that point, Bieber had approximately 800 million views, which Psy surpassed at the rate of over 10 million views a day (Stavrum, 2012). The same day the record was broken, NTB wrote of it in a notice that was republished in 52 Norwegian newspapers and magazines.

The number of articles mentioning "Gangnam Style" decreased through February 2013, and was to stay low until April, when Psy released his second single "Gentleman," which once again made "Gangnam Style" relevant. After a decrease in media references, the hit once again became the center of focus around September, when the media began to compare Psy's hit with Ylvis's "The Fox," which was released on 3 September.

In November 2013, the Ylvis-brothers announced their collaboration with the K-pop act, Crayon Pop, and a joint performance with the girl group on Mnet Asian Music Awards (MAMA). It was the first – and so far only – international artist collaboration between a Norwegian pop group and a K-pop act. It was extensively written of both before and after the collaboration. Jonas Pettersen anticipated the act in *Dagbladet*, where he described Crayon Pop as one of the hottest K-pop groups of the year (Pettersen 2013b), while Camilla Norli and Silje Ensrud provided a review of the show, which highlighted that Ylvis won the prestigious prize Best International Artist (Norli and Ensrud 2013).

While "Gangnam Style" has – by far – received the most attention, K-pop and its culture is present in Norway through online fan communities and the international work of Norwegian music production companies. A list compiled by common effort on the Kpop Norge page (sic.) reveals that there are currently at least 69 Norwegian K-pop fan pages on Facebook (Antonsen 2012). Some groups have focused on a band (such as Norske F(x) fans),

while others have focused on bringing K-pop to Norway (Bring SHINee to Norway), or K-pop in general (Kpop Østfold). Kpop Norge, which was founded on 22 May 2011, is the largest of these groups, as it currently has 1630 members. The other fan pages typically have 50–100 members, and are less active.

In 2014, Girls' Generation released Skretting's track "Back Hug" on the album *Mr. Mr.*⁹ The song was moderately well received in Korea, and has scarcely received any attention by Norwegian media. Six months after the release of "Back Hug," P3 published the insofar only media article on Skretting's work for Girls' Generation (Danielsen 2014).

The attention K-pop has received from Norwegian media is not impressive. By far, the most prominent topic has been "Gangnam Style" and the parody remakes of its video. Otherwise, articles have only marginally and sporadically been concerned with other artists than Psy. Articles have also been concerned with the achievements made by Norwegian producers, but not to any significant extent. And some articles have been preoccupied with prophecies of K-pop as a potential "next big thing," but it seems that the Norwegian market is currently reluctant to include K-pop. Since these first claims, there has been little K-pop activity in Norway besides occasional public pop culture events as the annual OMONA, and music production.¹⁰

II

Korea is located within a region of heterogeneous cultures. The diversity of these cultures has influenced Korea for centuries through trade, occupation and war. Both Mandsjuria (North East China) and Japan have

⁹ Skretting coproduced "Back Hug" track with Norwegian producer and programmer, Jesper Borgen, and Korean lyricist Cho Yun Kyoung.

¹⁰ OMONA held its third annual Korean popular culture conference on 4 October 2014. It featured Korean language courses, K-pop dance competitions, and K-drama presentations. It is governed by the Organization for Korean Popular Culture in Norway (KPIN).

momentarily attained the strategic location of the peninsula in the seventeenth and twentieth centuries respectively. After the Korean War of 1950–1953, the influence from the West, and in particular from American popular culture, increased. Stuart A Kallen credited the U.S. presence during and after the Korean War with most of the influence on Korean musical ideals (Kallen 2014). The presence of American soldiers, and the song competitions they hosted led to the formation of Korean pop groups. One of these was the Pearl Sisters who had great domestic success with the song “A Cup of Coffee.” The influence from the U.S. can also be seen in the way the Korean guitarist and “Godfather of Rock,” Jackie Shin was inspired by the musical innovations of Jimi Hendrix (ibid.). These musical and cultural mixings are early examples of the cultural hybridization that currently are intrinsic in K-pop.

K-pop is an ambiguous term. While it is an abbreviation of Korean popular music, it comprises an extensive body of music in heterogeneous genres. Some K-pop songs, for example Girls’ Generations’ “I Got a Boy,” are characterized by their progressive forms, which may be longer, more complex, and include more heterogeneous sections than “conventional” pop song formulas in American and European pop music. Other songs, for example Miss A’s “Over U,” have simplistic and repetitive form constructs. The form structure is partially influenced by the need for several vocal parts. A typical K-pop group may have four to nine vocalists, and in the extreme case have as many as 21 members. DoubleB21 had 21 members, but decreased the number to 15 for their comeback as APeace.¹¹ A high number of vocalists require songs that are composed to highlight varying timbres, while allowing enough room for all members to sing. Lyrics almost always occur in two languages. Most lyrics have both English and Korean words and phrases. An English word may occur once in a song, or several

¹¹ Within K-pop jargon, a “comeback” refers to a bands every new release of a single, album, or their reappearance as as a new constellation.

may comprise an entire verse or chorus. English is rarely in majority in bilingual K-pop lyrics, yet all-English lyrics are common, as songs are regularly translated to cater to non-domestic markets.

A purely musical definition for K-pop will not suffice, as K-pop is the product of a highly globalized music industry. The phenomenon K-pop began to become prominent in Korea in the 1980s and 1990s, and grew steadily to become a large-scale music industry with global ambitions in the 2000s. Currently, the K-pop industry contributes extensively to the Korean economy, alongside multinational conglomerate *chaebol* corporations such as LG and Samsung.¹² The globalized industry behind the manufacturing of music and its idols is a typical K-pop feature, and raises the question of whether *Korean* can properly describe either geographical location of production or any particular characteristics of the music. The industry, and its role, is highly important in the development of these cultural products. S.M. Entertainment's development of "cultural technology" is merely one of the many deliberate approaches to globalize the K-pop business.¹³

III

Ingyu Oh (2013) addressed transnational processes in K-pop production, but no study has yet investigated the collaboration between Norwegian, International and Korean producers and artists in the production of K-pop. Oh's study has found that the Korean music industry locates already common and popular music content in Europe, which is later adapted and modified to become Korean content, after which it is marketed globally (ibid.). This was not the case with, for example, Ramage's "Perfect Tragedy."¹⁴ It was a flop in the Norwegian ESC finals and disappeared completely after the competition. The song was reproduced and rereleased by TVXQ, and received far more appraisal in Korea than it ever did in

¹² *Chaebol* is a type of a family driven business conglomerate.

¹³ See chapter one.

¹⁴ See chapter three.

Norway. The track was perhaps “common” in a European sense, but it was never “popular.” In addition, Oh’s globalization–localization–globalization process model cannot account for the fact that Norwegian producers produce K-pop songs based on style markers they assume belong to current Korean popular music. These producers create tracks on the basis of briefs provided by Entertainment companies, analysis of contemporary K-pop music videos, and their own artistic sensibility. It is indeed a globalized production process. The modification and negotiation of Korean content starts, unlike what Oh has argued, in Europe, but also in the tentative and material thirdspace that contains the negotiation of musical content, the latter of which is not restricted to a physical geographical location. The initial stages of production do not occur in a restricted global or local area, but as a constant exchange of knowledge, creativity and assumptions. Instead of restricting the location of production to a geographical dichotomy of global and local, perhaps it is best viewed as a bilateral negotiation, within which negotiations of both global and local occur.

David Kaplan, James Wheeler, and Steven Holloway’s generalized precursors for globalization reflect the characteristics of K-pop industry well (Kaplan et al. 2009). Among these, the establishment of markets on non-domestic territories and outsourced production is especially relevant for K-pop production, as both production of music and sales occur worldwide through S.M. Entertainment’s globalization strategy, “cultural technology” (Allkpop 2011).¹⁵ David Bevan has added to this argument that the Korean music industry depends on this strategy, as Korea cannot successfully provide a market for all its homegrown artists (Bevan 2013).

Ingrid Monson has criticized post-structuralism in ethnography for its essentialist approach to cultures (Monson 1994), and essentialism is also evident in Jung Eun-Young’s study of American culture’s influence on Korean youth sub-cultures (Jung 2006). Generalizations of cultures should

¹⁵ See chapter one.

not in all cases be avoided, and this caution is particularly relevant as producers and artists alike tend to generalize musical content in K-pop and Korean cultural idioms based on what they perceive as cultural markers of these locations. The mix of these markers creates “cultural hybrids,” which articulated by Diana Taylor is “a botanical term that refers to the engineered (asexual) grafting of two dissimilar entities” (D. Taylor 2003, 94). Woongjae Ryoo has argued that hybridization is the key to understand global processes, as through globalization, corporations tend to market an internationally produced product as a “local product”, which in turn has the ability to influence local (Korean) concepts of cultural ideals (Ryoo 2009). Homi Bhabha has also articulated hybridity, but as the effect of colonial, dominant power (Bhabha 1994; in D. Taylor 2003, 103). He argues, unlike Christopher Small (1987), that subordinate cultures tend to mimic dominant cultures. Taylor adds that subordinate cultures never acquire all of the characteristics of a dominant culture (D. Taylor 2003, 103). Once an artist and a team of producers have dominance over their respective local cultural hegemonies – i.e., they have notable reputations in the international market – transnational collaborations can occur within Hallyu (Y.-J. Choi 2011).

Bhabha, Edward W. Soja, and Ray Oldenburg have contributed to the theorization of thirdspace. It is a tentative (Bhabha 1994), material (Oldenburg 1989), or tentative and material (Soja 1996) location where negotiation of meaning and knowledge occurs. According to Soja, and Bhabha, the notion of a thirdspace may avoid unfortunate instances of categorization. It is a key to understand the processes that occur within cultures in their convergence, and in particular the processes that occur when producers and entertainment companies negotiate style markers to produce a product that is highly international in every aspect of its production and dissemination, through visual images, transnational artist collaboration, and transnational music production.

There is a gap in the knowledge of K-pop music production. To claim lack of literature is always audacious, yet intensive search on keywords like “K-pop,” “Korean Pop,” “Hallyu,” etc., through databases such as JSTOR¹⁶ and Répertoire International de Littérature Musicale,¹⁷ and organizations like International Association for the Study of Popular Music,¹⁸ has yet to prove otherwise. Most literature concerned with the phenomenon of Hallyu tends to focus on culture, fandom, cultural geography, economics, ethnography or an interdisciplinary amalgam of these. In the study of Hallyu, context, rather than music, has been prioritized. For example, Gil-Sung Park has addressed the dissemination of K-pop as a three-step process that includes global outsourcing, local manufacturing, and global distribution (Park 2013), while researchers such as Tobias Hübinette have focused on reception of Hallyu in Sweden (Hübinette 2012). These studies are valuable for context, although few address the content of the cultural product. Park comes close, as he through interviews with Chris Lee from S.M. Entertainment charts the process of product development and dissemination. So does Matt Goodacre, with his narrowed focus on the global success of “Gangnam Style” (Goodacre), while Yun-Jung Choi (2011) and John Lie (2012) have questioned the presence of traditional “Korean-ness” in K-pop’s musical characteristics. Yet, the latter two articles have only superficially been concerned with, for example, tonality comparisons between “traditional” pentatonic tonality and K-pop’s diatonic tonality.

As the Norwegian–Korean relation through the production of K-pop has received minuscule attention from scholars, it is despite the fact that University of Oslo has its own Korea-department run by the reputable

¹⁶ JSTOR is an acronym for the academic article distribution company Journal Storage.

¹⁷ Répertoire International de Littérature Musicale is commonly abbreviated as RILM.

¹⁸ International Association for the Study of Popular Music is henceforth abbreviated as IASPM.

Korea scholar Vladimir Tikhonov.¹⁹ The department has a focus on Korean history, rather than Korea's contemporary popular culture. In Norway, the latter has been mediated through news coverage, magazine articles and fan web pages.

In 2013, The World Association of Hallyu Studies initiated an annual conference to be held on Korean culture-related topics.²⁰ For the first edition in Seoul, papers were called to address topics that ranged from the introduction of Hallyu in the Middle East, through governmental reactions to Hallyu, to the role of Hallyu in the propagation of images of Korea (Otmzagin and Lyan 2013). The final panel concluded that future Korean culture studies must acknowledge the importance of regional contexts and earlier historical and cultural encounters. Also, the panel concluded that an analysis of the transnational cultural phenomenon needs inter-disciplinary approaches (ibid.). For the second annual conference, papers were called to address cultural geographies of the Korean Wave, including: “Remapping Hallyu in regional and global contexts”; (2) “Mapping K-pop audiences”; (3) “The Location of Self and Otherness”; (4) and “Global Perceptions of Korea through Hallyu” (Lyan 2014). Just as the first WAHS conference, the second also concluded that studies of Hallyu need interdisciplinary approaches. Yet, while WAHS explicitly stated that it welcomes contributions on K-pop-related topics, the music has been overlooked in the two conferences, as is also musicology with a few exceptions.²¹

Although a musical focus is more prominent in Western popular music studies, musical analysis remains a controversial discourse theme. Musicology scholars like Stan Hawkins (2002), Robert Walser (2003) and

¹⁹ Tikhonov's area of expertise is history, with a focus on Social Darwinism and nationalism in Korea (Tikhonov 2010), as well as Korean-Chinese history of Buddhism (Tikhonov and Brekke 2013).

²⁰ Hereafter referred to as WAHS.

²¹ For the 2014 conference, Keith Howard provided the presentation “Why K-pop Fans Do Not Like ‘Gangnam Style.’” It had a focus on fandom, and the study's data was collected from fans' online forum posts. These fans' observations – as well as Howard's conclusion – were that “Gangnam Style” does not share many musical features with other K-pop songs.

Susan McClary (1991) have advocated the use of musical analysis, however in context with cultural and sociological issues, which in McClary's work was predominantly that of feminism. Others, like Simon Frith (1996), has adopted a preference for meaning and value designated popular music by fans and critics, while Richard Middleton (1993) has regarded meaning as the preferable subject in popular music scholarship but has nonetheless suggested such scholarship should highlight musical analysis. McClary has commented: "The study of popular music should also include the study of popular music" (McClary 1994, 38). It still is an appropriate critique of the scholarship on the subject. It is symptomatic that "music" tends to come second to "popular" in "popular music."

Western popular music studies have a larger body of literature on its music than Hallyu literature have on K-pop. It is not unproblematic to directly use Western music literature for discussions of K-pop, since this body of scholarship, especially older scholarship, has a reputation of being biased, attuned to elevate the West and create an Other of the rest (Said 1978). Its sets of theoretical tools are not directly applicable to K-pop analysis either, by the mere fact that K-pop's production process is unique, the scale of the K-pop industry's education of idols is unprecedented, and its music's form and lyrics are highly idiomatic of the category. Yet, a study of Norwegian K-pop requires a compromise through the use of literature from both the East and the West.

K-pop and its relation to Norway has not yet been properly documented by academics, and therefore the dominant sources on K-pop in Norway are news coverage and magazine articles. Media sources are by nature limited in detail, theoretical understanding, and discussion. Yet, they purposefully convey the fact that K-pop is and has been given public attention, and in some cases such articles provide interviews with producers, and artists, that enable the scrutiny of how K-pop and its music is referenced in the media.

IV

Data for this thesis has been collected through interviews with Leiv Aspén, Leiv Aspén and Tomas Smågesjø, and Jin Seok Choi. The interviews were conducted in Dsign Music's locales in Fjordgata 1, Trondheim on 10 February, 7 April, and 28 June, respectively. The interview with Choi was conducted during the international stage of Song:Expo by Renate Skogtrø Eggan, and Bård Ivar Basmo, with a pre-provided questionnaire, although several of the best follow-up questions were asked on their own initiatives. All interviews were recorded and later transcribed, and all appearances of interview citations in the body matter are the author's own translations. Likewise, the author has translated all citations of other Norwegian language works.

Song:Expo also allowed the study of a top-lining process. At Song:Expo's national stage, producer Nermin Harambašić, and the songwriters Lloyd Lawrence and Camilla Norderud top-lined a track titled "Déjà Vu", which later was pitched to Girls' Generation and S.M. Entertainment. I attended the ten-hour process, which is retold in chapter three on the basis on twelve pages of densely and adeptly written notes.

For musical analyses of Girls' Generation's "The Boys" and Super Junior-M's "Break Down," spectrogram analyses are used to show how the top-line works, and highlight some production techniques used to achieve the characteristics of these top-lines.²² Spectrograms create visual images of a track's frequencies by an enhancement of the frequencies' relative strength.²³ When a K-pop song is released, the labels will on rare occasions co-release an instrumental – which is the track without its top-line – and it

²² For examples of spectrograms used in musical analyses, see Walker and Don (2013) and their visualizations of Igor Stravinsky's *Firebird Suite* and Aaron Copland's "Simple Gifts" from *Appalachian Spring*.

²³ For a thorough explanation of how a spectrogram works, and in particular the spectrograms of Sonic Visualizer, see Cook and Leech-Wilkinson (2009).

allows the separation of the top-line from the parallel track. For the analysis, a three-step process was used in order to execute the separation. The removal of the song's instrumental track was enabled by a simple 180-degree phase inversion of the instrumental track, superimposed onto the song with vocals. After mixing and rendering the two, only vocals remained. The vocals mix was then imported to Sonic Visualizer, where a melodic range spectrogram was added to create a visualization of the melody, with frequencies plotted on the y-axis, and time on the x-axis. The last step was to apply the transcribed lyrics to the spectrogram where necessary, investigate production techniques (for example the addition of Auto-Tune),²⁴ or decipher melodic contours or rhythms and compare top-lines that have been translated and re-recorded in different languages.

The use of a spectrogram to analyze top-lines in popular music allows a more precise overview of how vocals and melodies work, and it also provides insights to how the vocal has been treated in postproduction. It defeats the use of transcription to sheet music notation by a milestone, as it displays fundamental frequencies along with formants. It reveals the use of Auto-Tune, trim of sections between words or phrases, and the copy-and-paste of sections, while it is more rhythmically and melodically precise than any notational system may display. In addition, spectrograms are straightforward, easy to apply and read.

The spectrograms analyses applied here compare and attempt to illuminate how two versions of "The Boys" and "Break Down" relate. The X-axis shows duration, while the Y-axis shows a logarithmic representation of frequencies (i.e., the visually represented distance between octaves is constant), in the range 70 Hz to 15 kHz.

Spectrograms have their limitations. Most of them are not concerned with the spectrogram itself, but the input it receives. In order to display a

²⁴ In this thesis, Auto-Tune will refer to generic software plugins that enable pitch corrections. When it appears as "Autotune," it is a reference to the specific VST-plugin, Antares Autotune Evo.

descent overview of fundamental frequencies and formants, noise and other disturbances must be reduced to a minimum. The selection of “The Boys” and “Break Down” for analyses was guided by the fact that spectrograms work best with individual tracks or instruments that are low on disturbances, and as such it is easier to read with the vocals isolated from the instrumental track. Although K-pop labels release instrumental versions that allow vocal extractions, the amount of instrumentals tend not to overflow album releases. The supply of required material is therefore scarce, and the availability of instrumental tracks has guided the selection of “Break Down” and “The Boys.”

In terms of geographical limitation, a thesis that investigates the globalized production of K-pop, cannot be limited to one certain nationality, region or hemisphere. Indeed, the focus here is on Norwegian producers and their involvement in K-pop production, and K-pop has, as the term signifies, an undisputable Korean connection. But this thesis raises – as many scholars before – the question of where such production truly occurs. The international transfer of knowledge, experience, demands and economy is, as the thesis argues, reflected upon, negotiated and negated in a space that has few physical boundaries, and is not bound to any physical location. Therefore, Bhaba’s term thirdspace acts as a rough tentative spatial limitation for the thesis. It is combined with globalization, hybridization and “world culture” theories in order to create a proper framework for the discussion of international K-pop production.

With a focus on transnational processes, language is an issue. The globalized production processes of K-pop require effective communication between the producers and personnel involved, and it is often achieved through the use of International English variances. IE is a diverse branch of the English language, with grammatical structures and a vocabulary that are not commonly agreed upon, and it varies with cultural influences and origins. This has posed an issue in the transcription of the interview with

Choi. To adapt his IE to American English may convey a loss of the intended meaning. In particular, the use of past tense is an issue, for his IE's grammar does not correspond to the grammar of AE. Nonetheless, I have made this adaptation after an interpretation of meaning based on the theme of the conversation, and the crosschecking of statements with those of Dsign Music. I have not made major alterations. The interpretations are mostly concerned with corrections of grammar.

Language is also a barrier in analyses of K-pop lyrics. I do not speak Korean, but I have made use of translated lyrics. To overcome this barrier in the brief analysis of the lyrics in "The Boys" and the divergence between the English and Korean versions, the translation has been collected from the Infotaip lyrics cite (Infotaip 2014) and crosschecked with that of Lucy (2011). The two versions are not identical, and this shows that the lyrics have been translated separately. Both translations agree upon the theme in each section, and are similarly structured, which suggest that these translations are sufficient for the analysis made in this thesis.

The selected music referenced in this thesis are K-pop tracks that are produced in Norway, where Norwegian producers and top-liners cooperate with international producers and domestic producers, or tracks that in some manner have a connection to Norway or Norwegian producers. A few exceptions are made where suitable. The Girls' Generation track "The Boys," which is devoted some attention, was produced without the direct influence of Norwegian producers or top-liners. The track is nonetheless relevant, since it is a track produced in an international production environment, where several nationalities participate – in the same manners as Norwegians cooperate with Korean and international producers.

V

The first chapter outlines the broad theoretical framing for this thesis. It is primarily concerned with literature on globalization with subthemes

such as hybridization, cultural technology, soft power, and notions of world culture and thirdspace. Some of these themes have already been briefly introduced earlier. Chapter-specific literature is introduced in the relevant chapters.

Chapter two is concerned with K-pop industry's globalization strategy as evident in Crayon Pop's versions of "Bar Bar Bar" (Crayon Pop 2013a, 2013b) and the resulting transnational artist collaboration that is an example of cultural technology's second stage. "Bar Bar Bar" was released in a Korean and a Global version as an attempt to cater to two divergent cultural locations. The global version differed from the Korean, as it had a new video, which highlighted dance, and its guitar-track was significantly altered in terms of harmonic progressions and placement in the mix. The successes of Crayon Pop's "Bar Bar Bar" and Ylvis's "The Fox" (TV Norge 2013; Ylvis 2013) laid the foundation for their transnational collaboration. Ylvis and Crayon Pop's medley performance at Mnet Asian Music Awards brought a cultural thirdspatial negotiation between two divergent cultural locations, locations that fans recognized.

As Norwegian producers play a prominent role in the K-pop industry's outsourced song production, the third chapter of this thesis explores some aspects of this production process. The chapter is initiated with an investigation of Dsign Music's motivation for partaking in K-pop production and how the outsourced production of culture invites the creation of Otherness. Otherness, as theorized by Simone de Beauvoir (2009), Edward W. Said (1978), and Michel Foucault (1990), is especially apparent in music production, as it is suggested in the discussion of a "Korean flavor." The section shows how producers, in order to create products for a foreign market, assume cultural idioms, and attempt to reproduce this as a distinctive "flavor". It was apparent in the top-line production process in the case of Girls' Generation's "Déjà Vu" as well. This section addresses how its top-liners used their knowledge of K-pop and briefs to produce a K-pop track

and its top-line. It was an arbitrary production process, guided more by ideas of what it should exclude, rather than include. The antecedent section attempts – through spectrogram analyses of the top-lines of Girls’ Generation’s “The Boys” and Super Junior-M’s “Break Down” – to reveal the differences between versions created for Korean and global markets, on the one hand, and Korean and Chinese markets, on the other.

The penultimate chapter of this thesis addresses how the Eurovision Song Contest participant Don Ramage’s “Perfect Tragedy” was exported to Korea and rereleased as a TVXQ song, and it examines the musical transformation it underwent in order to become a K-pop hit.

The last chapter discusses how the music in international K-pop is able to amplify or reduce sexual connotations in the visual displays of female bodies in Girls’ Generation’s “I Got a Boy” and “The Boys,” and Miss A’s “Over U.”

CHAPTER ONE

A DELIBERATE GLOBALIZATION STRATEGY

The three buzzwords culture, globalization and hybridization have on several occasions been at the tip of the tongue of scholars, the media, and the industry in their attempts to describe K-pop's character and to understand the music's boom on the global market in the last decade or so. The presence of these factors – combined with the music industry's quest for globalization – allows us to question if the ultimate outcome is a “world culture.” As critical discourse terms, culture, globalization and hybridization can describe processes within the K-pop industry and music production, and these intertwined concepts have become idiomatic for describing K-pop as a cultural product. A primary feature of K-pop as a cultural phenomenon is the industry's attempt to create a culture relevant for audiences across cultures on a global scale; hence the genre has the potential to develop into a “world culture.” This potential can be seen in a range of international collaborations between K-pop artists and producers, on the one hand, and European and North American artists, on the other. Such exchanges are the focus of this thesis, and while there is special emphasis placed on specific Norwegian-Korean collaborations, other international examples are referenced where songwriters, producers and artists from various countries have made European-American cultural contributions to K-pop.

Cultural Technology, Hybridization and the Creation of a “World Culture”

“World culture” is generally understood as an amalgam of widespread commercial cultures that exist regardless of geographical location. The

hybrid of two or more geographically unrelated dominant cultures is a prerequisite, whereas the cultures acquire a reflexive relationship through the export and import of arts, music, language, etc. This two-way influence need not be mutual in order for one to be dominant. A culture's relative position within their domestic and regional markets in terms of economics, and possible influence on audience are features of dominance. The oscillation between European–American and Korean cultures is central to this notion, but is by no means the only culture-constructing precursor. Ethnomusicologist Christopher Small has articulated one useful concept of dominant cultures.²⁵ He suggests a hierarchy constituted of one “high,” dominant culture, and a “low,” subordinate culture (Small 1987). The group with political and economic power is expected to impose its culture onto groups with subordinate levels of power – a notion thus distinguishable from ideas of “traditional” and internal class hierarchies. Whereas the dominant has the ability to impose its contents on the subordinate, this process is not invertible. Small's claim that hybrid formations can only occur between dominant cultures – an assertion this chapter will challenge later on – would imply that inter-cultural equality is a precondition of denominating K-pop as a cultural hybrid between Western and Eastern aesthetics. For a few decades, areas of global economy have operated in this fashion, and in turn the incredible economic growth of the Asian Tigers (one of which is Korea) has created a Korean nation able to compete with USA in terms of market share in areas such as electronics, car manufacture, engineering, and in recent decades, culture.²⁶

²⁵ Small (1987, 119–120) has defined culture as “a set of attitudes, assumptions and values by means of which a person or a group of people is able to find meaning in, or give meaning to, not only to the objects and events of the environment but also inner experiences, and to construct from them a consistent and usable picture of the world and of relationships within it.”

²⁶ In geography and on the common tongue, the Asian Tigers, or Asian Dragons, refer to four countries and regions in East and South East Asia that have experienced an extreme economic growth. These are Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and Korea.

The idea of a world culture has been adapted to several fields of study. Within education, world culture describes the increasingly convergent nature of educational systems and the global expansion of mass schooling (Carney et al. 2012). Within anti-racist discourse, the term surfaces as the ultimate symbol for a utopian world of equity among contrasting social groups and classes (M. Hawkins 1934). Within law, a world culture is apparent through creation of international laws (Mazrui 1972). Culture is also part of this trend, but this has been paired with various protectionist concerns. For example, Ali A. Mazrui has advocated the development of a world culture, but on the conditions that the West does not become dominant in the creation of a culture as it historically has with the spread of the English language and popular culture (ibid.).

Conceptions of world culture have also entered international politics and economics. As John Boli and George M. Thomas wrote about world culture and its participants in international nongovernmental organizations:

Contemporary world culture defines actors of all sorts as rational, self-interested and capable of initiative. These actors (especially corporations and states) are to find meaning and purpose through the pursuit of economic expansion and political power; through high-status consumption and self-development (individuals); through proper care and feeding of their populations (states); through technical progress (corporations, professions); and so on. Because the definitions, principles, purposes and modes of action that constitute and motivate actors have come to comprise a global level of social reality, far-reaching isomorphism across actors is increasingly likely and observable. For the same reason, forms of conflict and modes for asserting distinctiveness are ever more stylized and standardized, though they may not be any less bloody or conflictual for that. (Boli and Thomas 1999, 4)

Inherent in Boli and Thomas's explanation is the notion that all actors are rational. The assumption of a *homo economicus*, a rational economic man, is widely debated in economics, yet the idea of such a "persona" is able to produce a description of corporation dynamics. It is applicable to the three grand entertainment companies in Korea, which are S.M. Entertainment, Y.G. Entertainment, and JYP Entertainment. These companies foster several of the world culture characteristics that Boli and Thomas have identified: they expand their business globally; gain political and economical power through reputation build-up, the fostering of home-grown celebrities, and revenue generation; they feed their audiences what they crave; and by standardization of musical and visual content, as well as appropriations of European–American aesthetics, they create an output that is – if we are critical in the manners of Theodor W. Adorno – homogenous.

The globalization of cultural content is an employment of "soft power." Joseph S. Nye, Jr., has defined the term as the ability to affect and influence others in order to obtain a desired outcome. It diverges from coercion and use of hard power (militia, trade blockage, etc.) as soft power appropriates the attraction of cultural content, values, and policies in order to gain influence (Nye 2008, 94). With Hallyu, Korea has seen soft power in operation through the spread of highly attractive TV dramas and popular music, but the popularity of K-dramas and K-pop is also engendered by the national pride Koreans tend to express (Lie and Park 2006, 61).²⁷ Moreover, Korea has been subjected to a decrease in authoritarian cultural politics since 1998 (new policies after the 1997 Asian financial crisis), and a continuous de-traditionalization for the last decade or so (ibid.).

Korean Pop culture's expansion is in part the result of the Korean Government's policies that advocate cultural exportation. Chua Beng Huat

²⁷ The K in K-drama denotes "Korean." It refers to Korean language TV dramas, such as the esteemed *Winter Sonata*, that are often set in Korea. It is also – just as with K-pop – highly subjected to exportation, and as such early K-dramas were intrinsic to the initial spread of Hallyu.

has stated that these policies have been an economical success as the culture exports increased from a nominal income of \$12.7 million U.S. in 1999, to \$1.5 billion U.S. in 2007 (Chua 2012, 19). Already in 1991, the Korean Government imposed a compulsory outsourcing quota on television companies. These companies were obliged to buy a fixed number of television dramas from independent producers, which in turn led to an increase in quality and quantity of K-dramas, a development that ultimately led to the Korean Wave (ibid., 127).

Korea's increase in soft power resources is concurrent with the decline of America's soft power. The U.S. has, through relentless foreign policies and application of hard power – as well as through the reluctance to acknowledge soft power's importance – exported an image of the U.S. to the world that has made America's popularity drop. In particular, Washington's hindrances of efforts to fight poverty, maintain peace, and protect the environment are factors Europeans tend to dislike (Nye 2004). Korea has antagonistically initiated and signed a peace treaty with its long-term archrival, North Korea, and had an intense economic growth that has generally improved the living conditions for its citizens. Korea's focus on the development of its soft power might stem from the fact that the country does not have competitive resources of hard power as, for example, the U.S. has (Chua 2012, 127).

The soft power of Korean culture has resulted in a transformation of other nations' images of Korea. In 1992, Korea broke off its diplomatic relationship with Taiwan, which made Taiwanese people have a negative image of Korea. Sang-Yeon Sung has argued that after the surge of Hallyu, this image changed towards the positive (Sung 2010). Hallyu has also informed the identity construction of Asian immigrants in Austria, where the easy accessibility of Hallyu has enabled the immigrants to choose cultural content that evokes Asian values and sentiments (Sung 2012).

Eun Mee Kim and Jiwon Ryoo (2007) have listed several factors for Hallyu's growth that have been discussed in academics: (1) cultural proximity to other countries in the region; (2) common historical and cultural legacy with countries such as Japan and China; (3) common twentieth century experience of rapid regional industrialization; (4) increased intra-regional trade, monetary flow, and tourism; and (5) the development of IT industry. To compliment this list, they have argued that the expansive nature of Hallyu is a revision of U.S.-centered cultural globalization and the result of a power struggle between China and Japan, which have led Korea to become a cultural hegemon. At the same time, Hallyu has the ability to create a sense of pride in the Korean population (ibid.). These approaches are symptomatic of Hallyu studies in the attempt to explain the rapid expansion of culture.

Kim and Ryoo have also found that there has been a diversification of South East Asian cultures in the most recent decades, and that the fight for supremacy with Korea's neighbors Japan and China has led to a need for distancing, and hence the need for a new regional culture (E.M. Kim and Ryoo 2007). Furthermore, they have suggested a peculiar prospect: "the future of Hallyu will rest on whether it can become identified as a new world culture with traits of its own and enrich the world's cultural scene" (ibid.). Whether this foresight holds true remains to be seen. However, the notion that a world culture possesses identifiable idioms is notably tied to an understanding of the typical forces of globalization.

In their 2009 book, *Urban Geography*, David Kaplan, James Wheeler, and Steven Holloway suggested that the movement of capital, commodities, services and information between nations – regardless of boundaries and increasingly less dependent on nations' geographical locations – is usually the process referenced to in globalization of economy contexts (Kaplan et al. 2009, 88). The authors outlined five precursors for globalization, which require: (1) the geographic reorganization of production; (2) the movement of

headquarters and production sites across national borders; (3) the deliberate creation of international markets with homogenous commodities; (4) the intranational migration towards large cities; and (5) the worldwide preference for democracy (ibid.). In its adherence to these practices, the K-pop industry is globalized, particularly as it both outsources song production and establishes exo-Korean markets where their commodity is labeled (or understood) as K-pop.

Lee Soo Man and S.M. Entertainment have developed a business practice they call “cultural technology.”²⁸ It is a strategy for the globalization of S.M. Entertainment’s business (Allkpop 2011), and it is manifested in a manual S.M. Entertainment has written for internal use (Park 2013, 25). The manual was written in 2013 to conserve Lee’s knowledge of production, so it could be disseminated and used by S.M. Entertainment’s staff. Yet, in an interview with journalist John Seabrook, Lee stated that he invented cultural technology already around 1989, which was the year when S.M. Entertainment was founded (Seabrook 2012). Cultural technology was a response to Lee’s need to have control over artists, as he had observed that even minor drug or sex scandals would often devour a career and set back much of the company’s work (ibid.). Therefore cultural technology was created to develop and educate pop idols in order to become a part of the Korean Wave:

CT [cultural technology] is the driving force behind the development of SM’s pop culture into global Hallyu. One of the elements of CT is our training system. Through auditions, we discover hidden talent and put them through three to seven years of music, dance, and acting training in order to create a star that’s close to perfection. It’s through this unique system that the Hallyu wave was created. (Allkpop 2011)

²⁸ Throughout literature, the term cultural technology has been used interchangeably with “culture technology.” For example, Gil-Sung Park (2013), John Seabrook (2012), and Wikipedia (2014a) use cultural technology, whereas KAIST (2014) and Allkpop (2011) use culture technology.

In Korea, the notion of cultural technology has reached education. In 2009, Korea Advanced Institute for Science and Technology (KAIST) established the Graduate School of Culture Technology in order to strengthen Korea's culture industry and national competitiveness. At the institute, cultural technology refers to a fusion of science and technology, on the one hand, and culture and arts, on the other. (KAIST 2014).

The cultural technology model is reminiscent of Motown's music production in the late 1950s and 1960s. Motown's founder Berry Gordy incorporated an "assembly line" production approach to develop hits in "Hitsville USA," the first headquarters of Motown. Experts on various fields – studio engineers, choreographers, arrangers, producers, and stylists – were brought in to develop tracks and perform quality control. To advise the aspiring artists on stage performance and visual image, Gordy recruited the etiquette instructor Maxine Powell. She had previously founded Maxine Powell Finishing School, where she tutored young African-American women in social manners and sophistication (Cohassey 2006). Hired to work as a "finishing instructor," she aided artists like Diana Ross in the development of their stage persona. This approach to artist development is fundamental in cultural technology and K-pop, albeit with some differences: the duration of training is longer in cultural technology; and the goal of cultural technology is to globalize K-pop, which at the time of Motown's finishing school was lesser relevant, as Motown prospered in the domestic music market. The K-pop industry also prospers domestically, but cannot rely on this market for sufficient income.

Cultural technology occurs as a three-step process towards globalization: (1) a cultural product should be exported to establish initial contacts with the market, audiences, and the industry; (2) collaborations with internationally renowned artists should be established; and (3) song production should be outsourced, which meant that S.M. Entertainment

sought to hire the expertise of internationally renowned producers and top-liners.

The first step was to export a cultural product to the international market (Allkpop 2011), where one of the most significant territories was Japan. Ryoo has suggested that the Korean TV series *Winter Sonata* created an international awareness of Korean culture only after it had spellbound the Japanese audiences in the 2000s (Ryoo 2009). This awakened Japanese interest might have been the result of a relative regional decline in the influence of the Japanese music industry – which had once dominated the geographical neighborhood and after its demise left a fortunate gap in the nation’s domestic music market (ibid.). An additional factor is that Japan’s strong economy makes music business in the area a profitable industry, as audiences have money to spend on entertainment. The country’s economic development has undoubtedly been rapid and extensive. Currently, Japan ranks highest of all states in East and South East Asia in terms of GDP per capita, and it marginally trumps Korea (Central Intelligence Agency 2013).²⁹ A third factor is that the Korean domestic market is too small to contain and sustain a high number of successful artist careers.

Paradoxically, this is also the explanation used by Dsign Music when they describe why they prioritize the Korean music market before the Norwegian domestic market. David Bevan has argued that while the domestic markets of America and Japan are of sustainable size for the housing of homegrown artist careers, this does not apply to the Korean market (Bevan 2013). K-pop’s ability to create greater successes abroad than domestically, is a trait that makes K-pop unique in a global context (ibid.).

The historical relation between Korea and Japan has been tense, and the transnational flow of cultural products has been restricted by policies such as Korea’s ban of the import of Japanese culture products. After the

²⁹ In this list of states, the Special Administrative Regions of China, Brunei, and Taiwan are excluded.

ban was lifted in 1998, Japanese artists began to appear in Korea, and Korean artists started to approach the Japanese market. For example, the Korean singer BoA initiated her collaboration with the Japanese music industry in the early 2000s to produce J-pop (Shin 2009). At the time, boundaries between K-pop and J-pop were transparent, since K-pop no longer necessarily was an exported genre with a strong national origin, but rather the product of transnational collaboration.

The term “transnational” refers to collaborative activities that transcend national borders, as opposed to “transnationalism,” which is a discourse that advocates the distinction of a nation’s borders from its tentative boundaries. Hastings Donnan and Thomas Wilson have stated that

The concept of transnationalism, which has become central to many interpretations of post-modernity, has as one of its principal referents international borders, which mark off one state from another and which sometimes, but not as often as many people seem to suppose, set off one nation from another. (Hastings and Wilson 1999, 4)

As it does not set off one nation from another, transnationalism is an ideal term to use in the description of the transnational production processes that occur in Hallyu. National borders do no longer restrict the flow of cultural products, and it seems like the cultural boundaries of Hallyu tend to diminish with time.

Alejandro Portes has explained that transnational processes are either initiated from “above” – i.e., from large corporations and governments, or “below” – from individuals and small-scale corporations (Portes 2010, 195). However, in the production of K-pop, a separation into categories of above and below is problematic, as these initiatives occur simultaneously. Small production companies strive to have their songs cut by large-scale entertainment companies, while the entertainment companies continuously

search for smaller production companies to whom they can outsource song production. Moreover, the Korean Government has introduced policies to enable such collaborations. The Norwegian Government has also introduced policies that authorized the funding of collaborative events, however on a much smaller scale.³⁰

The second stage of cultural technology is characterized by transnational artist collaboration (Allkpop 2011). Such associations can be seen, for example, in the collaboration between the Korean girl group Crayon Pop and the Norwegian comedy or novelty song performers Ylvis (An 2013). Their performance together on Mnet Asian Music Awards was broadcast to 94 countries with the potential spectator count of 2.4 billion (Pettersen 2013a). The strategy of artist collaboration provides each artist access to the other artist's audience. In the case of Ylvis and Crayon Pop's concert, Ylvis was able to connect to a South East Asian fan base after their performance in Korea, while the same performance exposed Crayon Pop to the North European followers of Ylvis (ibid.). While there is obviously an economic motive for such collaboration, collaborations of this kind also have cultural consequences. Here, as a representative for the European–American popular music culture, Ylvis was able to blend its unique cultural background with that of Crayon Pop. Whether this mixture becomes an international success or not remains to be seen. However, it is at least a contribution to the K-pop industry's attempt to form a world culture through its search for a multicultural appeal.

The third stage of cultural technology is concerned with the outsourcing of song production. This stage is characterized by transnational collaboration in music production processes. Yun-Jung Choi has written that this can only happen after the group in question has gained an international reputation for themselves, that is when their level of global

³⁰ See chapter two for details on subsidies granted by the Norwegian and Korean government to enable the growth of the culture industry.

recognition is comparable to that of their song-production partners (Y.-J. Choi 2011). In November 2013, JYP Entertainment's girl group Miss A released the album *Hush*. One of the tracks, "Over U" (Little Princess 2012; So 2012), was written by the Norwegian producers of DeepFrost together with the American songwriter Ursula Yancy (Kristiansen 2013). Currently, Dsign Music, another Norwegian production company and label, has produced 27 tracks for K-pop artists and Korean entertainment companies, which includes the six tracks from the highly successful group Girls' Generations' repertoire, "Tell Me Your Wish (Genie)," "Beep Beep," "Girls and Peace," "I Got a Boy," "Find your Soul," and "Soul." The coupling of Dsign Music and Girls' Generation, as well as the pairing of DeepFrost and Miss A, implies that both pairs have internally comparable stature on the international pop market. The notion of equality links peculiarly well to Small's theorization of the convergence of dominant cultures. Each culture needs to be equally represented in order to successfully form a cultural blend. This does not necessarily suggest that the production team is either its own culture or an adequate representative for a higher-level European-American culture. Nor is this a statement that regards the artists as representatives of a particular culture. But it does imply that equality and high cultural stature are necessary ingredients in the mix of elements from two rather dissimilar cultural locations.

Music producers themselves tend to be attentive the cultural locations of idioms, and to attempt to create music thereafter. In an interview, Dsign Music's team of producers commented on their approach to production and revealed deliberate attempts to compose for specific cultural locations:

We always try to have an artist or territory in mind when we write a new song. This helps to define both the melody and lyrics that we choose to use. There are several inequalities between Western and Asian music, the most common ones are how many parts a song is divided into, type of hook lines, and the amount of syllables in the lyrics. When it comes to melody the

Asian market is a mix of Europe and U.S. K-pop is very unique in its style!
We try to keep it playful, colorful, and most importantly catchy and singalong
friendly. (Moon Soshi 2013)

The producers from a European–American popular music culture identify Korean cultural idioms and use this information to produce “Korean-flavored” music, which has become a characteristic of the European–American–Korean intercultural connection’s capability to create a world culture.

Research on culture has traditionally belonged to ethnography. Ingrid Monson has criticized the post-structuralism discourse within ethnomusicological research for its assumptions that cultures: (1) are internally homologous; (2) can properly be described in academic discourses; (3) is generalized based on research, despite scarcity of evidence; and (4) that they are easily distinguished from each other by clearly drawn boundaries (Monson 1994). Although the majority of more modern ethnomusicological research has parted from these notions, Monson’s critique is still relevant since K-pop is a product of cultural convergence, and hence an approach need to be wary of making assumptions of cultural characteristics.

Some of Monson’s arguments are visible in Eun-Young Jung’s take on American popular culture’s influence on Korean youth cultures, where it was apparent that a total distancing from the post-structuralism discourse might be both useless and unfeasible (Jung 2006). Jung wrote that in the initial phase of Korea’s intense economic growth, new Korean youth cultures emerged, “whose values, customs, life-styles and mind-set were different from the older generation” (ibid.). These values, as she describes them, were highly influenced by American culture, where popular music, fast food and TV habits all contributed in the formation of the mid-1970s Seoul based youths of the *shinsedae* generation. While Jung has identified a

set of idioms of these cultures, she arguably polarized this new culture against the culture of the older participants of the *kisūngsedae* generation. As such, it corresponds to Monson's fourth point. However, culture as a social phenomenon cannot be properly described without having to turn to generalizations. Cultures themselves have according to recent sociology always constructed their identity based on the construction of boundaries between their culture and the "Otherness" of another.³¹ Therefore, in some cases making assumptions of boundaries is useful. Even as Korean and American popular music culture overlap, there are idiomatic cultural features such as bilingualism that continue to recreate the dichotomy.

Assumed cultural boundaries need to encapsulate the homologous traits of a particular culture, but there are always common features that are shared. These identity markers reside within the core of a group's sense of coherence. Such an approach blurs out a culture's periphery, and cannot account for the cultural properties of the outskirts. Moreover, the periphery as a transition towards another culture is part of what makes creation of borders enigmatic. A possible solution is to treat each individual cultural idiom as unique and central in the particular culture. As K-pop possesses multiple cultural markers that stem from other cultures, it is not *one* culture, but rather a mix of cultures, and it is thus a *hybrid*.

Diana Taylor has defined hybridity as "a botanical term that refers to the engineered (asexual) grafting of two dissimilar entities" (D. Taylor 2003, 94). She explained that the term was put into use in the Napoleonic era by Spanish intellectuals – *afrancesados* – to advance their societal modernization project. Previously, the term *mestizo* – the sexual crossbreeding of races where one dominated the other (and was occasionally violent) – was used to denominate the cultural fusion. At the time, *mestizo* connoted colonialism, which led to its substitution for the more modern non-

³¹ See chapter three for a discussion of "Otherness" and the notion of Self and Other, which were important concepts for, among others, Simone de Beauvoir (2009), Homi Bhabha (1994), and Edward W. Said (1978).

sexual equivalent hybridity. When hybridity was used in the nineteenth century, it described processes of social (discriminable) categorization to prevent unwanted biological consequences (ibid., 102–103). Later, Homi Bhabha described hybridity as the effect of colonial power, and how colonial authority was produced, performed and sustained (Bhabha 1994; in D. Taylor 2003, 103). In Bhabha’s work, subordinate cultures tend to emulate and mimic authoritative dominant cultures. While Taylor has agreed with this notion, she has argued that a subordinate culture never acquires all of the traits of a dominant culture (D. Taylor 2003, 103). This stands in stark contrast to Small’s argument of hybridization between equally dominant cultures (Small 1987).

Woongjae Ryoo used the term hybridization as a response to the globalization discourse in ethnography (Ryoo 2009). He argued that while globalization often lacks a focus on local particularities, hybridization investigates the local norms and traditions in order to understand global processes. The global forces make use of the concept of local as a part of the marketing of a particular identity construct. In turn, the output commodity has the power to influence the local. Ingyu Oh has found that the Korean music industry locates already common and popular music content in Europe, and it is later adapted and modified to become Korean content, after which it is marketed globally (Oh 2013). It is subject to a globalization-localization-globalization process, unlike the globalization-localization process suggested by hybridity and Pop-Asianism (ibid.).³²

Adam Krims wrote of the notion of music’s ability to shape listeners’ identities and argued that music “form[s] a complex subjective unity with the spaces that societies build in their continuous self production” (Krims 2007). The idea is shared by Simon Frith who argued that “[m]usic constructs our sense of identity through the experiences it offers of the body,

³² “Pop-Asianism” refers to the dissemination of cultural products from developed Asian countries to the global market. See Oh (2013).

time and sociability, experiences that enable us to place ourselves in imaginative cultural narratives” (Frith 1996). When companies such as S.M. Entertainment create their culture commodities, they scout for local talents to train and export (Bevan 2013). Thereafter, their presence influence local cultures, and patterns that are ostensibly circular are created. This is alluring. Rather than exporting a local – and locally educated – idol, the industry exports a product molded after the standards of the global market’s expectations or the companies’ interpretations of those. The output is not a circular pattern, but one of a top-down character where the industry is in charge, and thus an inaccurate concept of the local is constructed. What the companies market as local is, put in other terms, a creation that does not easily fit the global-local, or *glocal*, circularity of hybridization. The illusion of the local is imposed on other cultures in the development of global appeal. Therefore, the portrayal of K-pop as the product of a local culture is deceptive. It is more appropriate to regard the K-pop phenomenon as a global cultural hegemonic hybrid and thus as a “world culture.”

Hybridization as a term needs to be applied with caution. As Timothy D. Taylor observed, there is a tendency of its appropriation by Western cultures to describe and justify the notion of Otherness, while the same Western cultures resist the term’s application to themselves (T. Taylor 1997a, 1997b). The consequence has been the development of a West-and-the-rest dichotomy, where the dominant culture is presupposed to be the one of the Western hemisphere. Taylor’s observations came after a thorough discussion of “world music,” which Taylor takes a clear stand against as it is too broadly defined and do not provide universal genre rules. Instead, it becomes an identity construct where one culture defines itself by distancing from what it is not. As Nina G. Berg and Britt Dale noted, the idea of Otherness is common in sociology and geography where it refers to a personal identity construct rather than entire cultures (Berg and Dale 2004, 50). As humans are the perceivers and mediators of culture, the term adapts

well to the transition from personality to generality. Although world music and K-pop are the products of industries rather than original constructs organically made by cultures, they still have significant social and cultural meanings for those who experience their imposition. And the industry's ability to construct culture, and thus also identity, is highly present. The ability to construct identity, or at least partake in audiences' identity construction for a global audience, is crucial in the attempted conquest of the global market. At the time of Taylor's work in the mid-1990s, South East and East Asian appearances on *Billboard Magazine's* World Music list were rare. This, he argued, was due to the large cultural gap that separated the East from the West (T. Taylor 1997a).

A couple of decades later, the *Billboard Magazine* discarded its sales chart category, "World Music" and instead substituted "International." There are presently seven categories within "International": "Canadian Hot 100"; "Canadian albums"; "France songs"; "Germany Albums"; "Germany songs"; "Japan Hot 100"; and "K-Pop Hot 100" (Billboard 2013).³³ While the chart has progressed by the renouncement of world music as a classifier and the successive categorization based on geographical location, it also includes two East Asian categories. In other words, East Asian music has gone from unrepresented to present, a critical confirmation of the Korean music industry's level of globalization. Another possible interpretation is that the Asian music industry and its cultures gain acceptance from European–American popular music audiences. At a minimum, K-pop's presence on *Billboard Magazine's* chart could advance the cultural flow between geographical and cultural locations, and could upset the tendency that popular culture flows from the West towards the East, and sustain the production and negotiation of hybrid cultures.

Bhabha developed the term "thirdspace" in the 1990s to describe the intermediary space that contains the negotiation of cultures (Bhabha 1994).

³³ *Billboard Magazine's* K-Pop Hot 100 chart was sadly discontinued on 17 May 2014.

The negotiation occurs in the interaction of a “firstspace” and a “secondspace.” The firstspace refers to the familiar cultural grounds, such as home or immediate surroundings, where culture is negotiated on a day-to-day basis, and meaning is produced in the interaction between close relations. Bhabha’s notion of secondspace is defined as one culture’s imposition of its structures onto another culture, and from postcolonial point of view, colonial governance become these structures (ibid.). When an individual is disallowed expressions of self-identity in the secondspace, a thirdspace is generated, which in turn forms the breeding grounds for hybrid identities. These identities are the negotiated result of the interaction of firstspace and secondspace. It is imperative to Bhabha that identities change after interactions between a dominant and a submissive culture, from which hybrid cultures are formed. Thus, the idea of thirdspace offers a tentative location where colonial culture and home culture are understood to negotiate identities. As both firstspace and secondspace are flexible cultural locations, they have moved away from fixed boundaries. This is at the core of concepts of thirdspace as it has provided new ideas of culture that emphasizes the transition between dichotomies and avoids essentialism.³⁴

Thirdspace’s ability to be a conceptual location and partake in the process of cultural negotiation itself has made it an ideal point of departure for investigations of K-pop’s internationalized production model and the market. Bhabha’s concepts are useful, but for the ideas to shed light on the culture of K-pop, they are best seen juxtaposed with the ideas of the cultural geographer Edward W. Soja (1996). He has suggested that the thirdspace is a conceptual, but also a *material* location, where identity, politics and economics are performed. To him as well as Bhabha, thirdspace has

³⁴ Essentialism refers to a controversial belief that cultures have inherent characteristics that is fundamental for that culture, while it separates that culture from other cultures. For example, this ideology led to the development of scientific racism, a discipline that attempted to justify racism by the use of scientific methods (Gould 1981).

enlightened issues of cultural categorization and the creation of Self and Other.

Historical and social aspects determine how people interact in the space and thus negotiate identity in a location not constricted by artificially drawn cultural boundaries. For the sociologist Ray Oldenburg (1989), thirdspace, or “third place,” is a material location where interaction is performed. It is any locale people voluntarily approach for social interaction, like a bar or a coffeehouse. His thirdspace differs from the commonly approached locations of home and workplace, as it is a place of leisure. It should not involve involuntary costs, nor should it be geographically dislocated. It needs to provide easy access in order to host unstrained social interaction (*ibid.*).

Oldenburg, Soja and Bhabha’s thirdspaces differ from each other in the identification of who it is that negotiates identity, and where they interact in order to do so. In praxis, the cultural negotiation occurs both in Oldenburg’s material and Soja’s conceptual locations, and it occurs between Bhabha’s dominant and submissive cultures.

For the studies of K-pop, cultural negotiation occurs on multiple levels: it is present in the production of music, fandom, and the performance of it. It occurs, as Bhabha suggests, through the interaction between hegemonic powers, which in more recent times can appropriately be described as the corporate structures behind the production of K-pop, versus the music’s fan base, which can be found in widely varied cultural locations all over the world.

As have been the tendency of the recent decades, the music industry in Korea has become more and more dominated by K-pop, and it dominates the Korean market to such an extent it suppresses music produced by anyone else than the great labels S.M. Entertainment, JYP Entertainment, and Y.G. Entertainment, which in turn impart distinct parallels to commercial structures in the European colonial period (for example in the history of

colonial Great Britain). The popular music industry's power relations in East Asia have changed to allow greater dominance by K-pop in the region. When such musical hegemony structures are in consideration, Bhabha's ideas of thirdspace offer an extremely useful frame for increased insight into the commercial world of K-pop. The ideas of thirdspace can be adapted to describe the cultural negotiation on voluntary terms as well as imposed, and it is thus an ideal theoretical framework for the investigations of global cultural interaction in K-pop, which significantly diverges from interaction in traditional Korean culture.

John Lie argued that the K in K-pop does not signify the traditional Korean society (Lie 2012). Unlike traditional music – which was pentatonic and melismatic, and in which the singers had no room for gestures during the performance – K-pop is diatonic and always performed with intricately choreographed dance moves. Also, in the Confucian society, prestige was not a virtue, which it currently is among many Korean youths. Even beauty ideals have changed. Traditionally, round and chubby figures were valued. In contemporary Korean society, slim, skinny and tall bodies are the ideal, and plastic surgery is the norm (ibid.). Yet, K-pop is symptomatic of the transformation Korean culture has been subjected to.

Choi has asked if K-pop is losing its “Korean-ness” due to the high level of globalization, and if there ever was a Korean element in K-pop in the first place. For the group Wonder Girls the presence of its “oriental charm” is a factor of Korean-ness (Y.-J. Choi 2011). Some of the charm arguably lies in the music and some in appearance. For the sake of charm in the music, a bright, almost childish vocal sound is a contributor. With regards to appearance, the obvious charm constituents are phenotype, choreography, color palette, and outfits.

Despite the unique charm, artists have had difficulties attracting audiences from remote cultural locations. The most desirable market is arguably the U.S. music market, and while success stories exist,

globalization of cultural content has not yet been able to conquer this location. Jung has stated that several prominent artists has yet to succeed in the U.S. market:

Even the biggest musical stars from Asia, such as BoA and Rain, have encountered many difficulties trying to break into the U.S. pop music market, in spite of their high-profile collaborations with leading U.S. music companies and producers and their decisions to sing in English and produce music videos intended to play to American tastes. Ingrained stereotypes have proven to be remarkably resistant to change and an Asian presence in the U.S. pop music market remains extremely limited. (Jung 2010)

The image K-pop exports does not necessarily sit well with American audiences. Language might be one barrier, although style is often regarded more important, and music comes second to image when a cultural product attempts to break into the U.S. market (ibid.).

Although the U.S. market has proven its resistance towards K-pop, the K-pop industry does not cease the attempt to break down the cultural barrier, and it succeeds in some cases. When it does, it is through the extreme drive towards globalization, through cultural hybridization, and importantly through cultural technology and its transnational collaborations. Norwegian producers and artists have been subjected to cultural technology's second and third stages. The third stage collaborations between producers have been most prominent, although the unique second stage collaboration between the artists Ylvis and Crayon Pop opened up for an artistic and cultural exchange across two divergent cultural locations.

CHAPTER TWO

CATERING TO THE GLOBAL MARKET

Korean labels continuously seek to expand their cultural field of impact and broaden their demographic outreach. This is achieved through globalization policies such as cultural technology. Whereas the latter part of this chapter focuses on cultural technology's second stage in the transnational artist collaboration between the novelty or comedy performers Ylvis and the K-pop act Crayon Pop, the following section examines the phenomenon of the marketing of Crayon Pop's "Bar Bar Bar" as "global" and how its musical contents thereby differ across the Korean and global versions.

Globalization of Content in Crayon Pop's "Bar Bar Bar"

On 20 June 2013, Chrome Entertainment and the K-pop act Crayon Pop released the single "Bar Bar Bar" produced by Kim Yoo Min and Lee Da Kyeong (Crayon Pop 2013a). After "Bar Bar Bar" had topped the charts in Korea, a global version of the track was produced for Crayon Pop's international fans (Crayon Pop 2013b). The global version's video was released online 8 September 2013 with the title "Bar Bar Bar (Global Version)" (Crayon Pop VEVO 2013), and both singles were included on the album *The Streets Go Disco* released 26 September 2013. On the album, "Bar Bar Bar (Global Version)" attained the suffix "2.0," and the differences between the 2.0 single and the track to the Korean music video are present in video, form and content. The existence of two dissimilar versions suggests that producers and directors have intentionally attempted to cater to

divergent cultural locations through their perceptions of those locations' musical preferences.

The globalization of Crayon Pop's "Bar Bar Bar" is a part of the intraregional and international cultural and economical flux of Hallyu. As noted previously, Kim and Ryoo have speculated that the future of Hallyu depends on whether it can become a world culture (E.M. Kim and Ryoo 2007), and therefore the implication of the term "global" to a track suggests that such a transition towards a world culture – characterized by global ambitions – is already aptly initiated, but transitions of this sort are by nature governed by monetary flow, prospects of revenue, and ambitions of artistic greatness. The versions of "Bar Bar Bar" are therefore undisputable cases of globalization's third factor as outlined by David Kaplan, James Wheeler, and Steven Holloway (2009), who have stated that the deliberate creation of international markets with homogenous commodities is an intrinsic part of globalization. The economic motivation is perspicuous; both versions 1.0 and 2.0 have been either packaged or repackaged and thereafter marketed as "Korean" or "global" in order to improve revenue prospects and to spread Hallyu to global markets. New and modified versions are marketed to cater to new locations, as well as these versions have the proficiency to expand the interest among the domestic audience and their demographic profile – which is especially important since many K-pop fans are "traditional" (i.e., they buy physical albums and worship their K-pop idols). Whereas the industry has set its aims towards the global market, the Korean market is nonetheless a highly lucrative location for the industry to obtain. The economic motives do have consequences in terms of cultural hybridization, and may moreover lead to a reduction of the cultural gap between the West and the East. It is a matter of politics whether this is acceptable or not. Liberals may argue for cultural free-flow, while socialists may argue for the conservation of the cultural *status quo*. What is certain is that the political initiatives in Korea, advocate – of course – the spread of

Hallyu. In 2013, the Export-Import Bank of Korea financed entertainment companies and other culture-related businesses with 917 million Won (\$878.500 U.S.) (Na 2013). And, knowingly or not, the Norwegian Government supports the spread of Hallyu through the funding of production companies such as Dsign Music. Annually, Trondheim Kommune and Sør-Trøndelag Fylkeskommune support Dsign Music with 90.000 NOK (\$14.100 U.S.) to fund Song:Expo (Jenssen 2012).³⁵

Ultimately, policies and the drive towards a globalization of the K-pop industry must be evident in K-pop's music. It is common to release several versions of K-pop singles – each performed in its own language – in order to cater to multiple regional and global markets. For example, the track “The Boys” was released in Japanese (Girls' Generation 2011b), English (Girls' Generation 2011a) and Korean (Girls' Generation 2011c), while “Break Down” was released in Korean (Super Junior–M 2013a) and Mandarin (Super Junior–M 2013b).³⁶ In short, K-pop tracks are in general deliberately produced to suit a specific market.

Global and national “contents” in “Bar Bar Bar 1.0” and “2.0” are perhaps only traceable to the personal choices of the tracks' producers, yet it exemplifies the philosophy of production for multiple separate cultural locations. Of course, the global version caters to the Korean followers of Crayon Pop as well, and the track is as such an attempt to prolong the “Bar Bar Bar's” domestic success in addition to the attempt to disseminate it internationally. However, when the tracks are marked as intended for either the Korean market – or all the other non-domestic markets – there is a latent notion of an occurrent and prosperous global location, and likewise a notion of a distinguishable national location. Whether it is factual or

³⁵ After the 2013 Norwegian parliamentary election and the consequent incumbency of a right-wing two-party cabinet that advocates liberal cultural politics, the funding of Song:Expo is likely to decrease.

³⁶ See chapter three.

produced by perception, cultural compatibility has been questioned, reflected and acted upon, and thirdspatially negotiated.

The global version's music video is set in the urban environment of Seoul (Crayon Pop VEVO 2013). Crayon Pop initiated the performance of their "pogo stick" jump dance in a playground, which was edited to interchange with the performance of the dance in a hallway and the rendition of the dance across the cityscape. The Korean version started in a white-painted photography studio, which directed all focus towards the dance and the colors of Crayon Pop's attire. The dance was also performed outside in a theme park, where the girls either danced or mocked around in their characteristic helmets, pants and skirts. The five girls mimicked the motion of a pogo stick jump – every other girl jumped up while the rest crouched. In a sense, the global version signifies – to a greater extent than the Korean version – a more urban and hectic environment, and its video also includes additional dance. The dance that was at the center of attention in the global version is arguably as idiosyncratic as Los del Río's "Macarena," from 1994 (Music STSPb 2011), Las Ketchup's "The Ketchup Song (Aserejé)," from 2002 (Altra Moda Music 2013), or Psy's "Gangnam Style" from 2012 (Psy Official 2012).

The primary purpose of the global version's music video was to spread this dance to the global market, as Sony Music Entertainment has commented: "We filmed this one not to be different from the first version but to spread the dance to the international market. We focused more on the dance this time than in the first music video" (Cove 2013).

Although the dance was more prominent in version 2.0, the video also contained clever references to Psy's "Gangnam Style" (Psy Official 2012). At 2:08, Crayon Pop's Ellin is pictured while she peeps at the butt of a person performing yoga, similar to Psy's behavior at a point in his video. The workout scene is revisited at 2:38, although in a less explicit fashion. References such as these participate in the amplification of the music's

novelty character, but also create a communicative shortcut. As K-pop has yet to become the internationally preferred choice of music, the reference diminishes the cultural gap between domestic and global audiences and Crayon Pop by appropriation of Psy's yoga session. Psy has already paved the way for Korean artists into the global market, and as such the inclusion of these references may reduce unfamiliarity and increase accessibility.

Despite the magnitude in differences between the global version and the Korean version's video in terms of dance and semiotics, the song's musical form was altered. In "Bar Bar Bar 2.0" the intro has been cut short to only comprise the count-in "ready, go," which was enunciated over the course of one bar. Version 1.0 has an eight-bar intro with a heavy, distorted guitar that plays rhythmic accentuated power chords (open-fifth-based chords). Whereas the global version continued with a chorus after the intro, the Korean version proceeded with a verse. The first intro and chorus of version 2.0 has thus been replaced by the eight-bar intro of version 1.0. After both versions reached the first verse, they remained synchronized in form structure for the remainder of the song. Here, the producers have chosen two approaches to initiate the tracks. As the global version began abruptly with the count-in intro that delved directly into a chorus, its hooks were enabled to catch the listener earlier than in the Korean version – which used the rhythmically characteristic enunciation of the title line as the initial hook.

While the guitar dominated version 1.0, its volume was decreased dramatically for 2.0, with the choruses as the only exception. In the choruses, the power-chord progressions the guitar played have changed from a D⁵, Bb⁵, A⁵, G⁵ sequence to a D⁵, Bb⁵, C⁵, Bb⁵ progression, the latter of which has in some ears been extensively overused in Western popular music. The global version incorporated fewer chords, and covered two directions of movement rather than one. The A⁵ and C⁵, and likewise G⁵ and Bb⁵ are relative in their relations with each other, and the chords

implied to be minor chords have been exchanged for chords that express a major tonality. By an increase in the number of major chords, the tonal characteristics have become more joyous, which perhaps suits the concept's playfulness better.

The changes for the global version may stem from an acknowledgement of differences across markets, for example may the replacement of chord progressions better suit Western audiences. But this is a drastic conclusion, for the substitution might also have been implemented in order to create variance. After all, version 2.0 and 1.0 appear – in that order – consecutively on the album *The Streets Go Disco*. And as Sony Music has claimed, the intention behind the creation of a second version was to spread its *dance* to an international market rather than to intentionally Westernize its music (ibid.).

“The Fox Say ‘Bar Bar Bar’”

“Bar Bar Bar” was a success in Korea with a peak position of number three on the Gaon Singles chart, and an international success with a peak position of number one on *Billboard Magazine's* K-Pop Hot 100. These merits earned the girl group a nomination on the Mnet Asian Music Awards (MAMA) in 2013, an annual event held to celebrate the previous year's most distinguished K-pop artists. At the show, Crayon Pop performed a medley together with the Norwegian novelty or comedy performers Ylvis. The stage became the location for a cultural negotiation, perhaps best symbolized by the large inflatable fox idiomatic to Ylvis that suddenly possessed itself of a helmet idiomatic to Crayon Pop.

As discussed earlier, S.M. Entertainment's deliberate strategy to globalize K-pop is referred to as cultural technology, of which its second stage is the act of transnational artist collaboration. Such collaborations are motivated by the potential to access other markets through the

implementation of a local artist's fan base and reputation. It is carried out to develop a new fan base at a new cultural location and to market the act, which enables its consecutive commercialization on new market grounds to become comparatively straightforward. It has been done extensively outside S.M. Entertainment as well. For example, Y.G. Entertainment, School Boy, and Republic released Psy and Snoop Dogg's collaborative track "Hangover" in 2014. 2NE1 and will.i.am have had an even lengthier collaboration, which dates back to 2010 and continued through the release of the collaborative track "Take the World On," released by Y.G. Entertainment and will.i.am Music Group in 2013.

Such collaborations negotiate cultural identities in a thirdspace – the conceptual and material locations for negotiations of identities. Here, negation is most prominently that of visual idioms within the performance, but the music has played an important role since it was the music and its success that initially legitimized the collaboration. As the notion of thirdspace might avoid the problematic categorization of Self and Other, this is not necessarily the case here. The concept of Korean-ness is ever important, for it is the negotiation of Korean-ness and European-ness, and the contrast between these that has shaped the performance of "The Fox Say 'Bar Bar Bar.'"

In 2013, Ylvis and their massive hit "The Fox" (TV Norge 2013; Ylvis 2013) became a global phenomenon practically overnight. Stargate's Mikkel Storleer Eriksen and Tor Erik Hermansen produced the super-hit from their current studios in New York, although Stargate as a label and entertainment company was founded in Trondheim. The worldwide enthusiastic reception of "The Fox" culminated in an award for Best International Artist at MAMA and the affiliated collaborative medley performance with Crayon Pop. MAMA's 2013 edition was held on 22 November, and on this date the show was broadcast live to sixteen countries in Asia and 94 countries globally with a possible view count of

approximately 2.4 billion (Gjestad 2013). MAMA was also made available online through streaming, which made it easily accessible regardless of the shows geographical location and concurrent restrictions of distribution rights. Reruns of the show were broadcast on the Norwegian TV channel NRK3 in Norway on 12–14 April 2014, and the show remains viewable on NRK's streaming service.

Ylvis's "The Fox" and Crayon Pop's "Bar Bar Bar" were performed as the collaborative medley "The Fox Say Bar Bar Bar" (Ylvis and Crayon Pop 2013). Ylvis initiated the performance with "The Fox" and after a transition that incorporated elements of both acts Crayon Pop performed "Bar Bar Bar." The combination of acts resulted in a compromise, where Crayon Pop ultimately had to perform in front of a huge inflatable fox, while Ylvis and the fox appropriated Crayon Pop's helmets. The joint act showed the contrast between Crayon Pop and Chrome entertainment's K-pop, on the one hand, and Norwegian–American-style novelty pop, on the other. Such contrasts tend to separate cultural locations, and it is through contrasts of this sort that the performance became a cultural negotiation onstage and in the online K-pop community.

Ylvis initiated the collaborative act in dim lights. The scenography was made up of a large, shed-like structure, while caterwauls and cries for help constituted the transition from the previous act. "Don't touch, don't touch me," was shouted, accompanied by a "shady forest" scenography, a synthesizer motif, "moonlight," and artificial smoke. For the verse, Bård Ylvisåker jumped out from the shed door dressed in a dark dyed coat – which neatly covered the fur of his fox costume. Female Korean dancers appeared dressed in white shirts, black ties and trousers.

For the second verse, the shed broke in half and revealed Vegard Ylvisåker in his fox costume in the lap of the enormous inflatable fox. The backing track was identical to the released version, while the vocals were performed live. The disappearance of Ylvis, a few loud explosions, and a

fanfare that sounded from the speakers as the track ended, marked the transition to Crayon Pop's act.

After the fanfare, the five girls of Crayon Pop appeared onstage in their characteristic white helmets with two dark pinstripes from front to back, and a white dress with white trousers. Both the trousers and the dress had the same, lengthwise stripes as the helmet. Crayon Pop's performance took place in front of the humongous inflatable fox, and they used the same dancers as Ylvis, dressed in exactly the same attire as they had in the performance's first segment. In addition to the set of dancers, two men wore stilts on their feet to symbolize the use of pogo sticks. On "get, set, ready" a few minutes into the act, Ylvis ran onstage and placed themselves alongside Crayon Pop, wearing the same sort of helmets as Crayon Pop but together with the fox costumes. For the final refrains, Ylvis participated in "Bar Bar Bar's" dance.

Ylvis and Crayon Pop's performance and exchange of idioms was an example of a cultural negotiation, since Ylvis partook in the creation of Korean popular culture with their mere presence onstage at the world's largest K-pop show. Here, the live performance became a negotiation between the artists and the audiences, which thus created a sphere of common presence in AsiaWorld–Arena. In addition, the dancers were Korean, and these thus represented Korea and its culture, and every possible association with Korea audiences made, their nationality was, however, discrete. The fox masks that covered their faces blurred the dancers' identity. Combined with a properly dressed-up body, they merely lingered in the background. Also, the helmet Crayon Pop used as one of their strongest visual hooks was used as a part of Ylvis's costumes. Even the Brobdingnagian inflatable fox got a helmet for the last one-and-a-half minute of the act. The exchange served as a transition device, bound the acts together to create a fluid and logical transition from one to the other, and amplified the novelty character of both acts.

Also, the negotiation occurred outside the performance itself. The show took place in Hong Kong, which held the locale of the performance, but audience perception and the concurrent negotiation of meanings occurred in a global thirdspace. The performed commodity was consumed in American, European and Asian locations, produced by Norwegian and Korean songwriters, and the artists themselves were Norwegian and Korean. Also, it is likely that everyone of the act's participants adhered to a doctrine, or ideas of what comprise factors for success on a specific location. The geographical location of performance should perhaps not be considered as of great importance here. Audiences who physically attended the show were assumedly primarily from Hong Kong or relatively adjacent countries such as Korea and Japan, but the number of audiences at the live show was far lower than the total number of viewers. Most viewers are likely to have followed the broadcast from locations in Korea and Japan primarily, but also from the rest of South East and East Asia. Some global viewers also tuned in.

As a result, the production of meaning among audiences was diverse. When MAMA was broadcast on NRK3, Norwegian K-pop fans responded on a post on the Kpop Norge Facebook page (Olsen 2013). The respondent Jessica wrote "me and my boyfriend had a good time with MAMA :) And he is not a K-pop fan," while Victoria wrote that she watched it with her friends and although most of them did not listen to K-pop, "they thought it was fun." Sam watched it with his mom, and told the online community "it was sooooo good!!" A post that advertised the NRK broadcast made Therese watch the show for the fourth time: "As it finally is broadcast on Norwegian TV I will watch it hoping they will broadcast it this year as well" (Busch 2013). Previously, MAMA had been broadcast in Norway on the appropriately named TV channel FOX on 14, 28, and 31 December 2013. When the news hit Kpop Norge, Silje replied, "Finally, I'll make use of FOX!

(And the TV in general).” Marthe looked forward to it even if she previously saw the entire show on Youtube (Antonsen 2013).

A post that stated to be the official MAMA thread was published on Kpop Norge while the show was broadcast. In total, 170 responses were written and the thread saw a new post approximately every minute. When Ylvis and Crayon Pop came on, the frequency of LOL, OMG, and WTF’s skyrocketed. In general, the response was characterized by laughter, disbelief, capital letters and XD-smileys, and many were preoccupied with the reactions of the K-pop idols in the audience (ibid.). Elena wrote: “Hahaha, looks like everybody digs them.” Joakim knotted down “it was too funny. Omg. What happened!? And many of the idols went crazy. Omg xD. Dying of laughter XD,” while Vivian wanted to see 2NE1 and Exo: “Oh my god I cant stop laughing hahah it was AWESOME!!! But why didn’t they film EXO or 2NE1 in the audience? Would love to see their reactions xD.” After Ylvis and Crayon Pop’s performance, Ylvis was awarded International Favorite artist, upon which Ezsa encouraged Korea to export K-pop to Norway: “NOOOOORWAAAAAAAAAAAAAY. PLEASE KOREA—>Take a hint->SEND K-POP TO NORWAY NOOOOOW” (Antonsen 2013).

For these fans of K-pop, the online community of Kpop Norge became the locale for expressions of excitement and thus a location for cultural negotiation. All of the respondents responded to the joint performance of Ylvis and Crayon Pop in a similar manner. Humor and laughter were prominent in these descriptions, which affirms the novelty character of “The Fox.” It is unclear whether they would react similarly to Crayon Pop’s performance. Crayon Pop was definitely overshadowed in this matter, while Ylvis received the majority of attention from Norwegian K-pop fans. As a Norwegian respondent suggested, Ylvis is of closer cultural proximity to Norwegian K-pop fans than Crayon Pop (ibid.). The novelty level of the performance was high, as the comments implied, while the reactions of the K-pop idols in the audience was of greater importance to the respondents

than Crayon Pop, who actually performed onstage. Exo, 2NE1, A Pink, Sistar and even Miley Cyrus (through a “Wrecking Ball” reference) were given attention, while Crayon Pop was mentioned only once. This suggests that even devoted fans turned their attention towards the more familiar cultural surroundings in the Norwegian act. The oversight of Crayon Pop’s performance and the preference for Ylvis imply that Norwegian fans negated one of the two cultural locations that were performed onstage. This transnational collaboration provided one act with the opportunity to access the other act’s fan base, and was thus a part of cultural technology’s second stage.

CHAPTER THREE

ASPECTS OF OUTSOURCED K-POP PRODUCTION

In addition to the highly humorous transnational artist collaboration between Ylvis and Crayon Pop, the relations between Norway and Korea have been most prominent as a part of cultural technology's third stage. As noted, it incorporates the outsourcing of K-pop production, a globalization process that Norwegian producers have been extensively involved in. Six aspects of this method of production are discussed here, including: (1) producers' motivation for such participation; (2) the "Korean flavor" as a means to describe Korean-ness in the music of Boys Republic's "Twilight" and F(x)'s "Rock Your Body"; (3) the top-lining process behind Girls' Generation's "Déjà Vu"; (4) top-line analyses of Girls' Generation's "The Boys" and Super Junior-M's "Break Down"; (5) the alteration of Don Ramage's "Perfect Tragedy" for its release as "Hi Ya Ya Summer Day" by TVXQ; and (6) the music and imagery of Girls' Generation's "I Got a Boy" and "The Boys," as well as in Miss A's "Over U."

The Push and Pull on Norwegian Producers

The establishment of a Korean–Norwegian K-pop collaboration is inevitably tied to a combination of push-and-pull factors. Within migration theories, forces that drive migrants away from one location are described as push factors, while forces that attract migrants are pull factors (E. Lee 1966).³⁷ In this context, "push factors" refers to processes that prevent Norwegian producers to establish themselves in their own domestic market. As is highlighted, such factors include the lack of profit opportunities in the

³⁷ For a contesting, yet fundamental work on migration "laws," see Ravenstein (1885).

domestic market. On the other hand, “pull factors” refer to attractive features of a non-domestic location, such as the prospect of higher revenues and artistic achieves.

Dsign Music’s process of building their opportunities in the Asian market started in 2008 (Bergmo and Nordenborg 2011). Over the next few years, the team’s appearance in both regional and national media became more frequent, as did their Asian hits. Artists and musical success with a relation to the Trondheim area are usually celebrated in local and regional media, but it was not before their hit “Tell Me Your Wish (Genie)” (S.M. Entertainment 2010a), performed by Girls’ Generation, that Norwegian local interest in Dsign Music emerged.³⁸ By 2012, Dsign Music had both a strong international foundation, and a foot inside the Korean music market.

Despite the current decline in physical album sales in the U.S. and Europe, the Korean music market is lucrative for international producers, as K-pop idols have “traditional” – and financially lucrative fans – who still buy physical albums. Dsign Music’s Robin Jenssen commented to Trondheim’s *Byavisa* that the Asian market is a key to the production team’s financial success:

If you are going to sell music, Asia is the most important market in the world. In USA, the record sales have plummeted to three million sold units per month. On the other continents, the sales are also crashing. That is why “everyone” turns his or her heads towards Asia ... it is the place to be. Asian artists still have hordes of traditional fans.³⁹⁴⁰ (Myhr 2010)

³⁸ This song was not written specifically for Girls’ Generation. Instead, it was developed for Universal Music, which selected the song for sale to S.M. Entertainment (Enlid 2009).

³⁹ As noted in the introduction, all Norwegian language sources quoted here are translated by the author.

⁴⁰ Original quotation from Myhr (2010): “Skal du selge musikk, er Asia det viktigste markedet i verden. Platesalget i USA har nå sunket til tre millioner solgte enheter, pr måned. Også på de andre kontinentene faller salget som en stein. Det er årsaken til at ‘alle’ dreier øynene mot Asia ... Det er plassen å være. Asiatiske artister har fortsatt horder av tradisjonelle fans.”

The business attractiveness and pull factors of this prosperous Asian market has led these Norwegian producers to abandon the small domestic market in favor of attaining market territories in East Asia. As Jenssen implied, this makes their business viable. In Norway, push factors such as low physical sales make the domestic market less profitable for high-end producers such as Dsign Music to expand their business. The Norwegian domestic music market is also not sufficiently large to build and maintain such corporate structured music production. Leiv Aspén elaborated: “the reason we find [Asia] interesting is the crazy number of people, and they are a financially strong audience.”⁴¹ Jenssen agrees:

Making it in Japan may very well give access to the truly fat gold ore – China’s entertainment-starved population of 1.4 billion people. Up until now, China has been untouched and shut off. Almost no records have been sold in that enormous, potential market. We have got a head start, as we have already been active and successful in Asia the last two years.⁴² (Ibid.)

Dsign Music regards China as an ideal location for revenue generation. But access to this location requires their establishment in another music market. While Dsign Music argues that Japan is a possible pathway, their production is currently more focused towards K-pop than Japan’s J-pop. K-pop might ultimately be an intermediary step through which the team may access Japan and China, but currently – due to Internet censorship and restrictions in China – the Chinese online music market is less accessible than the Korean market. Nevertheless, the Korean market provides a comparatively easy access for international producers:

⁴¹ Original quotation from Aspén in Appendix B: “Grunnen til at vi synes det er interessant er at det er så sykt mange folk der, og de er et kjøpsterkt publikum.”

⁴² Original quotation from Myhr (2010): “Å gjøre det stort i Japan kan fort vise seg å bli inngangsporten til den virkelig feite gullåra – nemlig Kinas underholdningssultne befolkning på 1,4 milliarder. Frem til nå har Kina vært uberørt og stengt. Nå begynner det åpne seg opp. Men fremdeles er det ikke solgt en døyt plater i det enorme, potensielle markedet. Vi har et lite forsprang, siden vi allerede har vært aktive og suksessfulle i Asia de to siste årene.”

Acts will have the opportunity to enter the Korean marketplace through Internet sales and mobile device downloads. Both of these options give the act direct access to the consumer as well as [allowing them to] bypass the waning demand for CDs and hard copies of music. (Jenssen 2006, 1)

Internet sales are dominant in the U.S. as well, and as Anne Judith Wik expressed, Dsign Music hope for inroads into the American music market (Bjerkan 2013). But the U.S. market is also less penetrable than the Asian. The American market is often difficult for foreign artists and producers to penetrate because of the dominance of domestic artists and producers in this market place. Additionally, songwriter fees are notably higher in Asia than in the USA (Enlid 2009), a fact that often makes the American market less of a priority for production teams like Dsign Music.

More than a few Norwegian media articles have been concerned with the motivation for Dsign Music to establish success in a foreign market. But this press coverage often suggests that profit has not been the team's sole motivation. For example, Wik explained that a central interest was to create an environment and an economical foundation for Norwegian artists to succeed so that these artists' success stories will – by means of a ripple effect – promote other Norwegian artists. Eventually, Trondheim could become a center of expertise in popular music production (Smevold 2005).

By drawing on Homi Bhabha's colonial space theory, the Korean music market can be described as a secondspace. As suggested, secondspace is a tentative location where a colonial power imposes its own culture and laws upon the indigenous firstspatial culture. The result of the negotiation that occurs between these two spaces is the formation of cultural hybrids where a firstspace operates on a secondspace's terms.

The same processes are involved when Norwegian music production companies need to establish themselves in foreign markets in order to generate revenue high enough to sustain their business. The international

market is not imposed onto these producers, but on some level there is a lack of choice involved in such business practices within a smaller music regional or national market, such as those found in Norway. It would be awkward to claim that it is in any way involuntary to become a record producer who composes music for the Asian market, but music production for this particular market provides one of the *best* opportunities for economic profit in the international pop marketplace. From an economic standpoint, Asian markets have a greater potential for revenue than American and European music markets. Thus, in terms of economic rationality, this cross-cultural approach can be viewed as a highly practical business choice. As has been emphasized, Norwegian production companies create K-pop on the terms of the Korean entertainment companies. There is thus a strong economic incentive to adhere to the laws and norms of the K-pop industry and a need to adapt their music production in order to profit. The music is negotiated on the terms of a secondspace, but in this case it is on the terms of the market; and the hybrid is formed by the demands of the secondspace and not the familiar “colonial” musical and cultural grounds.

Outsourced Production and a Thirdspatial Negotiation of Otherness

In the K-pop music industry and its production of music, there is a cultural hierarchy that governs music production. In the attempt to make the cut, international producers are faced with the hierarchal structures already steadily established in Korean corporate culture. When their cultural products are created, it is not solely on the producers’ own terms. Songs are either commissioned or composed for a specific artist or label, and it follows a top-down structure that allows the ideas of the label to control the content of the cultural product. If a song is deemed unsatisfactory, it is buried deep in the producers’ catalogue of unpublished tracks, where it

likely will stay permanently hidden for the public ear. According to Aspén, a medium sized company's catalog may contain close to 1,000 songs,⁴³ few of which will ever see the inside of a jewel case or appear on streaming services. If a song meets the label's demands, makes the cut, and survives the time on hold, it is released as the product of a discipline conglomeration that includes music, dance, and video. Multiple nationalities and representatives from various cultures collaborate to create the final product. For example, the credits for the highly successful girl group Girls' Generation's album *I Got a Boy* list 74 individuals: 36 are credited as songwriters, and 15 are credited as producers (Girls' Generation 2013). These contributors are from Korea, USA, the Netherlands, Ireland, Wales, England, Denmark, Morocco, Sweden, and Norway. Such an extreme case of "collaborative" creativity might suggest another notion of "world music" (i.e., beyond the folk-derived marketing category of World Music). *I Got a Boy* and Girls' Generation is, with its K-pop label, distinctly marked as Korean. This concurs with Yun-Jung Choi's critique of the level of Korean-ness in K-pop and the concurrent concern of whether the expansion of the K-pop industry might undermine K-pop's Korean-ness (Y.-J. Choi 2011). Groups like Girls' Generation and Wonder Girls have reached levels of international recognition that allows them to collaborate with non-domestic producers, and Choi has used Dsign Music's "Tell Me Your Wish (Genie)" (S.M. Entertainment 2010a), DEEKAY's "Hoot" (S.M. Entertainment 2010b), and Teddy Riley's "The Boys" as specific examples of international collaboration (ibid.).⁴⁴ Labels such as Y.G. Entertainment and S.M. Entertainment use foreign producers, stylists, and choreographers, but the "Korean" element is ambiguous:

⁴³ Aspén gave two approximations. In the first interview, he said that the catalog contained "several thousand" tracks, while in the latter he modified this number to 700.

⁴⁴ As noted, "The Boys" has been released in multiple versions. Here, Choi references it as a generic track, which is likely to be the English version (Girls' Generation 2011a) or the Korean version (Girls' Generation 2011c), since these tracks were simultaneously released. Also, it is a reference to the track and not its lyrics.

Employing foreign talents in so many aspects of music production imitates the process of importing pop from abroad, repackaging it in Korea and exporting it as K-pop. If that is the case, what is the Korean-ness in contemporary K-pop?⁴⁵ (Y.-J. Choi 2011, 72)

The company model that governs – e.g., S.M. Entertainment – is unique for the production of K-pop, and as such the music is seasoned with Korean-ness through the extensive division of labor and the outsourcing of creative processes. Gil-Sung Park suggested that the success of S.M. Entertainment derives from the company’s ability to acquire “samples of universal musical content from Europe and the United States and then modify them into a unique S.M. Entertainment composition that is not yet globally universal, but has the potential to become the next global norm” (Park 2013, 24).

The amount of international participation in production suggests that K-pop is culturally located somewhere other than Korea. On the other hand, the dominance of Korean contributors and decision-makers, suggest that there is an unbalance of power present in the production process, and is thus relatable to Bhabha and his idea of cultural negotiation between a superior and inferior power (Bhabha 1994). Even if the hierarchal structures claim platonic ownership of the cultural products, the products themselves are of multiple cultural origins.

As was noted previously, these cultures negotiate the product in a thirdspace. Bhabha (1994), Edward S. Soja (1996), and Ray Oldenburg (1989) have all participated greatly to the idea of spatial negotiation, yet the concept of thirdspace has potential beyond colonialism or locale, and it operates in several layers within the realm of K-pop: (1) the production of a

⁴⁵ In some cases, the process of importation is not merely imitated. The song “Perfect Tragedy” was imported to Korea, repackaged and eventually exported as “Hi Ya Ya Summer Day,” a process addressed later in this chapter.

track is made from the convergence of multiple cultural origins, and this process occurs in thirdspace; (2) the music market is the location of cultural negotiation between audiences and producers through principles of supply and demand, and is both a physical and virtual secondspace; (3) a thirdspace is created when two artists of dissimilar cultural origins perform together; and (4) a thirdspace is found in both the physical and virtual locale of performance.

Trondheim is the geographical location and cultural core of the two production companies Dsign Music and DeepFrost. In recent years, the attentions of these companies have been turned toward the international music markets, concurrent with the recession in their production for the local markets. Their international affiliations mean that music is produced for multiple cultural locations outside their own. In most cases, the cultural commodities are consumed elsewhere than in the vicinity of the production locales. Although there is an apparent gap between locations in this case, the production process occurs in the intermediary space between these locations. “It is the ‘inter’ – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture” (Bhabha 1994, 38-39).

With Dsign Music’s strong local ties, but with production for culturally and geographically distant markets, the relations between the cultures become characterized by the development of a sense of Otherness. Generally described, Otherness occurs in the identity construction process, whereby the construction of the Self relies on a comparison with what the Self is not. More specifically, Otherness occurs when producers identify K-pop style markers and K-pop audiences as different than European and American pop characteristics. It is throughout based on intercultural comparisons that create distances between the cultural Self and a cultural Other.

The great feminist Simone de Beauvoir wrote in her extremely important work *The Second Sex*, that “no group ever defines itself as One

without setting up the Other opposite itself” (De Beauvoir 2009, 6).

De Beauvoir suggests that this does not only apply to primitive societies or ancient mythologies, but is an ever relevant and self re-produced dichotomy that applies to any man-woman relation in terms of domination and submission. Otherness is a reciprocal idea, since what the Self may regard as Other, necessarily creates an Other of the Self (ibid., 7), but the Other is also a threat to the Self, for example when men create a subordinate Other of women it is because he senses that she endangers him and his position, especially in patriarchal and religious communities (De Beauvoir 2009, 88). Of course, the notion of Otherness is not only relevant for man–woman relations, but for every relation where the power balance is skewed, such as the economic and creative authority the Korean market has over Norwegian producers.

Bhabha suggested that thirdspace is a valuable approach when the goal is to give less power to the Self/Other-distinction: “by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves” (Bhabha 1994, 39). Both the Self and the Other have the ability to change with time, and these relationships are not static. Michel Foucault addressed the idea of Otherness’ development, and suggested that social modifications, and development of juridical rights may in the case of marriage reduce the woman’s position as Other. A social modification in terms of global public acceptance is currently a prime accelerator of Hallyu’s spread, but juridical rights in terms of economy and copyright of music (e.g., the Norwegian advocacy of TONO fees) are governed and upheld by the authorities of the respective countries. As such, inequality between each nation’s policies influences power balance, which may in turn compromise a future redundancy of Otherness. In Foucault’s case of the emperors in the Hellenistic period, political changes that led to democratization created a distance between the Self and the Other since it then became a personal choice to run for election (Foucault 1990). Whereas soft power policies that

advocate the spread of Hallyu have already been established in Korea, there are currently no agreements between Korea and Norway on the use and development of this soft power, in which Norwegian producers significantly contribute. Contrary to Foucault's findings, such policies may reduce the production of Otherness between the two nations.

Of course, the creation of Otherness is also apparent in the process of cultural negotiation.⁴⁶ When this negotiation occurs it is between the Self and something familiar, something perceived as Other and something in-between, and it escapes neither producers nor artists. In an interview, Dsign Music's team of producers comment on their approach to production, showing deliberate attempts to compose for specific cultural locations, which is perceived as something or somewhere Other in relation to themselves:

We always try to have an artist or territory in mind when we write a new song. This helps to define both the melody and lyrics that we choose to use. There are several inequalities between Western and Asian music, the most common ones are how many parts a song is divided into, type of hook lines, and the amount of syllables in the lyrics. When it comes to melody the Asian market is a mix of Europe and U.S. K-pop is very unique in its style! We try to keep it playful, colorful, and most importantly catchy and singalong friendly. (Moon Soshi 2013)

Dsign Music's idea is that Korean music culture differs from American and European music cultures. The Korean music culture has numerous formal and lyrical idioms that are not immediately recognizable as American or European. However, Dsign Music's enunciation polarizes geographical and cultural locations and participates in the recreation of an East–West dichotomy. The divide between knowledge of musical idioms and assertion of musical-political and economical power is a fine line.

⁴⁶ See also T. Taylor (1997a, 1997b).

Edward W. Said found in his discourse-leading work *Orientalism* that knowledge provides authority, an authority that in turn may deny or manipulate autonomy (Said 1978). The perspective of a European who studies the Orient is first and foremost that of a European, not the individual itself. Said used the former prime minister of the United Kingdom (1902–1905), Arthur James Balfour, as an example of how knowledge is created and used from a certain politicized perspective when he defended Great Britain’s (colonial) presence in Egypt (ibid., 31). Similarly, when Dsign Music partake in production for Korea, their take on the music is informed (and perhaps manipulated) by knowledge Europeans have attained from the point of view of a European (and in this case also from the point of view of an American). Yet, the processes Said described are not readily transferred, as knowledge in the K-pop industry flows between “equal” parties such as A&R departments and producers. It is equal in the sense that information tend to flow both ways, but it is nonetheless a superficial equality, since the authority to make decisions (as well as attain economic advantages) increase with hierarchal status, and in this matter A&R departments are superior to producers. Such cross-cultural relations hold consequences for production and performance, as producers compose or develop what they assume to be hits among a peripheral culture. For Dsign Music, a solution to decrease this cultural gap is the collaboration with Korean producers and managements, who tweak songs towards a more “Korean” character.

When a song is produced to fit an artist, “briefs” that express the management’s wishes for the new track are often exchanged, and these are at times a central part in the formation of the cultural product.⁴⁷ Briefs serve as examples of written cultural negotiation. They vary in detail; sometimes they contain an artist’s name to give an impression of genre and style, they may contain a list of genres or YouTube links. In general,

⁴⁷ “Briefs” are interchangeable with “leads,” which discussed later.

managements or A&R representatives send briefs via e-mail when they look for a new track for a specific artist. When a song's demo is produced, it is sent back to the management in order to receive feedback. This feedback allows for adjustments according to the management's wishes, so that it is suitable for the artist and the market.

In addition to the briefs, in order to maintain contact and make sure managements and other producers are on the same page musically, international producers visit Norway for camps such as Song:Expo at Trondheim Calling. Conversely, Dsign Music visits Korea regularly and participate on composition camps such as Seoul Calling. Song:Expo is an annual camp in Trondheim where young talents meet with seasoned international producers to create the next big hit, whereas Seoul Calling has the same scope, but was initiated after Song:Expo's influence. Camps of these formats may last one to three weeks, and were established in order to build a synergy between international, regional, and local producers, and to develop music catalogues. At these events, producers present tracks upon which other top-liners create the vocal melody, rhythmic accentuation, and lyrics. At times, representatives from an artist's A&R department are present, and these may provide direct feedback to the track. It might need adjustments or it may instantly make the cut.

One example of successful camp-collaborations is the Exo song "Wolf" (Exo 2013). It has, according to producer Nermin Harambašić, created gross revenue of 140 million NOK (\$20.7 million U.S.); peaked as number ten on the Gaon Singles chart and 25 on *Billboard Magazine's* "K-Pop Hot 100" list. The initial demo of "Wolf" was conceived in Seoul on one of Dsign Music's visits to Korea. The American producer Will Simms met with Dsign Music's Harambašić and Kenzie, a producer under the S.M. Entertainment label, and recorded the "Wolf" demo for S.M. Entertainment through the course of the visit. Due to the meticulous process S.M. Entertainment promulgates for the production of a new track, it took four months to produce and make the

final adjustments (Amy 2013). At the time of release, the track had become the expression of the collaborative effort made by producers of multiple cultural origins. It became a transnational production, with Norwegian, American, and Korean nationalities represented. According to producer and Dsign Music's Head of Asia, Jin Seok Choi, the K-pop industry has changed after Korean entertainment companies began to collaborate with Scandinavian producers. He argued that Scandinavian songwriters provide their own "pop-flavor," unique "emotional chord progressions," a new approach to top-line production, and propose subjects that "local [Korean] producers and local writers would not think of."

Balancing the "Korean Flavor" in the Productions of Boys Republic's "Twilight" and F(x)'s "Rock Your Body"

J.S. Choi identified a "Scandinavian pop-flavor" in the music created and developed by Scandinavian producers. On the other hand, Dsign Music's producers – among others – have identified a "Korean flavor" in K-pop. Scholars such as John Lie (2012) and Y.-J. Choi (2011) have questioned what it is that comprises the K in K-pop. This section suggests that the notion of a Korean flavor might alleviate this issue of the ambiguous K.

In this context, Korean flavor refers to the idioms and sound that producers argue are unique for Korean music productions and international K-pop in particular, and the sound that develops in the interaction between international producers in the formation of K-pop. It is a manifestation of Otherness, but it is an Otherness that has undergone a thirdspatial negotiation between producers, A&R departments, and demands of the market. Between the producers Tomas Smågesjø and K.T. Park, such negotiations led to an attempt to balance the Korean flavor in Boys Republic's "Twilight." Between Smågesjø and Charite Viken, the

accumulated knowledge through thirdspatial negotiation balanced the Korean flavor in F(x)'s "Rock Your Body."

Smågesjø, a producer from the Dsign Music family, met the Korean producer Park at Song:Expo, where they in 2013 recorded and produced most of the track "Twilight." It was pitched to Boys Republic and the track made the cut, although it is not yet released. "Twilight's" entire concept, lyrics, top-line, and track were created in Trondheim.

Smågesjø and K.T. Park played around with the tonality of the track in order to make it fit the tessitura of Boys Republic. They found that B minor sounded the best, but that was after they had tested every key within the interval of a minor sixth up to G minor. At one point, Park pointed out they had reached the limits of Boys Republic's tessitura, upon which they returned and settled for B minor. The adaptation was made so that every single note was tailored to fit the artists' voices. When the responses from all cowriters were in, the demo track was shipped to the record company in Korea. With the approval of the cowriters, Boys Republic put down scratch vocals to get a realistic impression of what the final product would sound like. Typically, scratch vocals contain a track's melody and rhythmic motives, and sometimes lyrics. Where there is a lack of lyrics, the vocalists would record improvised gibberish syllables on top of the instrumental track to check the track's compatibility with the vocals of the artists. Despite K.T. Park's considerations of tessitura-limits, Boys Republic had no say in the matter of melody, tonality or lyrical content, a division of labor that is generally commonplace in K-pop.

After Smågesjø finished his part of the work, the track was shipped to Korea and Park for additional adjustments. An extra, unnamed Korean producer was also brought in to add Korean flavor. Smågesjø recalled his early track as American. He described it as similar to the EDM "trap" subgenre, which he then exemplified with the producer Diplo's sound; and he compared it in particular to the sonic image of Bauuer's "Harlem Shake"

(Baauer 2012). At this point, the sound was too “U.S.,” too exotic, for the Korean market, and that was when Smågesjø and K.T. Park involved the third producer. However, Smågesjø stated that K.T. Park’s beat was too exotic and too “crazy” for the Western markets as well. Such thirdspatial negotiation of Otherness suggests that the track attempted to find a balance between the exotic content of the West and its appeal to the Korean market, to balance cultural tastes and appeal.

The majority of Korean producers have historically been occupied with domestic and regional music production. As J.S. Choi suggested, early K-pop was more classically oriented and the most popular tracks were usually ballads. There was a dance music scene, but it was dominated by techno and house music in the 1990s. Producers in Korea would normally operate from a relatively enclosed cultural location, and cater to highly domestic and regional markets. Yet, what these producers brought to the table can very well be in cultural proximity of another location, perhaps it even resembles that tentative location more than the location of Korean culture. Thus, there is an issue of limitations latent in the discussion of a Korean flavor. Although producers of Korean descent have dominated the domestic and regional markets, their creativity does not equate the creation of a Korean flavor. Nor does the body of music in K-pop necessarily include this Korean flavor, for as Choi suggested, K-pop itself is hard to come to terms with as it is not a genre of music:

We don’t consider [K-pop] a genre of music. Someone just called it K-pop ... What is the definition of K-pop? I don’t know what it is. It is just there. For me it was a most difficult question ... even though I’m Korean. But there is something in my blood, something that I understand ... I probably know it, but I can’t define it.

Smågesjø – as well as the other producers of the Dsign Music family – agreed that there *is* a Korean flavor and as such the Korean flavor definitely

exists. To restrain the ambivalence of Korean flavor, and production of Otherness, it is probably best to view it as the meaning and knowledge produced in the intermediary space between international producers, top-liners, the industry and the body of released music and videos. It is in this thirdspace that K-pop style markers are recognized, evaluated and appropriated. In turn, this knowledge would further influence production of K-pop. The strength of a Korean flavor is negotiated in the production process, perhaps even negated, and depends on which style the producers and managements aim for. Thirdspace is a valuable tool for a depiction of the location for negotiation and negation of style markers and Korean flavor. The negotiation of the thirdspace itself takes place in the in-between space that lures geographical boundaries into a perceptual non-existence.

The Korean flavor is thus also present in K-pop that is produced solely outside Korea. In the case of Smågesjø and Viken's "Rock Your Body" – currently on hold for the girl group F(x) – its first stages of production was located in Trondheim. Their stated intentions were to create a girl group hit that was "sugar sweet" and "full of pink fluffy clouds." It is a pretext that would appall De Beauvoir. As a statement, it produces an Other of the women in question in relation to men, and it devalues their maturity through their display as pubescent preteens. In a dangerous turn, such images uphold many women's deference to men. This exaggeration is elaborate, but it nonetheless exemplifies that minute and innocent statements at the initial phases of production – Smågesjø had no intentions of female suppression with his statement – can develop into cultural products with no apparent support of gender equality or the revocation of Otherness. The main phrase of the chorus, "rock your body," does not decrease movie directors, A&R departments and managements' opportunities to sexualize the female body either, as it encourages the display of the body. Sadly, such displays are imperative if K-pop is to have success in the global market.

Whereas the Korean flavor is evident in the track's unfavorable concept, it is also evident in the track's music. "Rock your body" is sung – both as an intro, and an alteration of it functions as a dance drop later on – by synthetic female voices where one voice enters at a time, and each consecutive voice enters a third above the previous. The verse continues in the manners of a recitative, as the melody here is also linear and contains few embellishments. The only melodic alteration is a tonal major third sequence at the end of the verse. The track is also drone-based, but the chorus – which is in the "normal" place of a pre-chorus and functions as a build-up towards the dance drop – breaks with the tension build-up in this section, as the ascending synthesizer motif creates a slight release. The song's form corresponds with the progressive nature of K-pop. It could be described as ABCD E AFCD GC, where A is the first verse, B is a verse with a new melody, C is the chorus, and D is the dance drop – which was intentionally created as a European/American twist. This ABCD form is so far familiar, and can also be heard in the track "Perfect Tragedy" (D. Ramage 2003), discussed later. After a short intermission E, a similar sequence is initiated, however B is replaced with F, which consists sung repetitions of the "rock your body" phrase with new melodic motifs. G refers to the track's bridge, which culminates in the last chorus.

"Rock Your Body" consists, perhaps contrary to a hypothetical, generalized "American" model, of numerous parts with little repetition of vocal lines, although it does also incorporate drones and pitched spoken speech lines. Aspén added the descriptive label "progressive pop" to Dsign Music's overall K-pop production, which suggests an inherent complexity of form. For example, the top-line of "I Got a Boy" continuously changes with respect to text, rhythmic, and melodic progression, while the track's foundations consist of two chords and are more static (Girls' Generation 2013). Smågesjø struggled to find the chorus in this track, as every part is a chorus in its own right. The theoretical chorus, he argued, is where the

song's title is sung. But when the chorus ends, the track remains more or less identical, while the top-line changes. More text is produced after the chorus, which makes the part resemble a verse. The progressive nature of K-pop is a stark contrast to American pop, Aspén explains. While American pop follows a recipe, is repetitive and drone based, K-pop is “mustard and chocolate and everything in one song.”⁴⁸

The catchphrase “rock your body” was intentionally produced to create a strong dance concept. Aspén commented that the preference for concepts, as with the caterwauls and the darkness of “Wolf” (Exo 2013), is typical for K-pop. For “Rock Your Body,” its ability to neatly fit a music video was important in the song's idea phase. Indeed, a track is often composed to fit a predetermined concept, upon which the choice of synths and lyrics are dependent. Even though someone outside the East Asian region produced the track, it still contains a Korean flavor, which in a musical sense for “Rock Your Body” is predominantly its progressive form that allows multiple vocal parts with variations for several vocalists, and its “pink fluffy clouds.” But Smågesjø and Viken also added features they believe belong to the European/American body of contemporary pop. Their production is thus both a utilization of knowledge of what creates a Korean flavor, but also an attempt to crossbreed it with what they perceive are American and European style markers. As such the music becomes a hybrid with Korean flavor, on one side, and a “European/American flavor” on the other. The acknowledgement of a presence of Korean and American flavors in this track suggests it is formed by a negotiation of knowledge. In this case, the track was formed by presuppositions and accumulated knowledge from a thirdspace of what would be factors of success in the Korean market. This was also the case when “Déjà Vu” was produced for Girls' Generation.

⁴⁸ Original quotation from Aspén in Appendix A: “For meg er K-pop prog-pop. Amerikansk pop er mer sånn dronete, det går repetitivt og veldig oppskriftsmessig og har en formel, mens i Korea så er det ... det er sennep og sjokolade og alt i ei låt.”

Although briefs were presented to aid the production process, intuition and musical experience played a vital part when its top-line was produced.

Developing “Déjà Vu” for Girls’ Generation

At Dsign Music’s studios in Fjordgata 1, the morning of 20 June 2014, 24 participants together with two of the camp’s arrangers were present at the national stage of Song:Expo. Here, Harambašić, Lloyd Lorenz Lawrence, and Camilla Norderud were grouped together with the task to produce K-pop hits. Dsign Music organized the event and was responsible for the assembly of groups. Groups were set on the basis of previously sent in demo tapes by aspiring songwriters from all across Norway. Of the team-members, only Harambašić has had significant international success. He has co-produced tracks for the 2011 album *Girls’ Generation* including “Love & Girls,” “Soul,” and “Tell Me Your Wish (Genie),”⁴⁹ as well as two tracks for Lee Hyori, and the hit single “Wolf” for Exo. Lawrence and Norderud have both attained the public’s interest. In Norway, Lawrence is best known through his participation in the Norwegian TV-show competition, *Farmen*, and his music video with *Paradise Hotel* contestants. His musicianship has received a great deal of attention in Spain through his cooperation with artists like Marsal Ventura, Charly Rodriguez, Jose AM, Marcos Rodriguez and Enric Font, himself under the pseudonym “Love Daddy.” Norderud, under the stage name Camilla North, was the first Norwegian to complete a Master of Arts in songwriting (Læg Reid 2008), and was one of the final 15 contestants of the English national songwriting competition, *Live and Unsigned*.

In the successive case of “Déjà Vu,” Harambašić had pre-produced the track, which thus justifies the application of the title “producer.” However,

⁴⁹ The album *Girls’ Generation* (2011) was the girl group’s first album release in Japan, and should not be confused with the album *Girls’ Generation* (2007), which was released in Korea as the girl group’s debut album. The two releases have utterly different track-lists.

the terms composer and songwriter do not properly denominate division of tasks. Norderud and Lawrence were formally engaged as songwriters for this edition of Song:Expo, but this categorization is insufficient, since neither brought pre-written material. They were faced with a track able to “guide the top-line,” a pre-developed track mix, and pre-composed chord-progressions. This logic repudiates the term “songwriter” in descriptions of their work on this track – or similar production situations in general. In a production process of this sort, songwriter is often an improper term, as no one seems to have such a clearly defined role. Instead, “top-liner” is used, to describe one who creates and develops melody and lyrics (i.e., the top-line of a track). It should not be confused with phrases like an “appearance on the top-line,” which means that someone is of significant professional reputation, and/or receives top billing credits. Instead, in this production tradition, a producer is the developer of the instrumental track, the one who directs the top-lining process, and the person who conducts the recording. He also suggests top-line-material, and has the most labor-intensive role.

Dsign Music promotes a democratic production environment, which means all contributors are credited, and thus paid, equally. This does not imply that all participants contribute equally. For “Déjà Vu,” Harambašić produced the instrumental track single-handedly, while he also developed the majority of the top-line. This is not to devaluate Lawrence and Norderud’s efforts, since many of the ideas that made the final track either stems directly from them, or indirectly as they shouted out phrases that Harambašić would spin off on. There is still a hierarchy within the studio walls despite juridical equality, and the producer is in charge.

The terms “briefs” and “leads” are used here to describe a set of musical guidelines that works as a rough blueprint of the sought-after sound, image, form, melodic content, concept, etc. They materialize as a link to a YouTube video or other media that intend to give an impression of the artist’s sound. The terms are interchangeable in their meanings, whereas

the only difference, and thus the use of two terms rather than one, is that “briefs” is the term preferred by Aspén, while Jenssen use “leads.” Sonic leads do guide the composition process, but experienced producers like Harambašić do not necessarily craft their work based solely on leads, and instead rely upon professional experience and their own artistic sensibility.

In this case, the overarching goal was to create a song in the manner of the groups Super Junior, Girls’ Generation, and HotShot. Before Jenssen presented the leads, he gave some general guidelines for hit production for the Asian market. A track only has to be good enough to make the cut. It need not be superb. It does need to have several sections and a variety of melodic lines, and it is important that the song’s second verse differs from the first, however the song’s individual parts need not cohere with the song’s other parts. It is desirable that the form is experienced as “free,” which in turn allows the producer’s creative touch and imagination more room to shine. Jenssen further elaborated that there have been cases where three vastly different tracks, even with variances in tempos have been edited together to create one song, although he did not present an example of this. In addition to the musical guidelines, Jenssen emphasized how a strong concept and a catchy title would make a track stand out, and that it is important that the song’s concept easily inspires the creation of a music video.

Media, and most often videos, are generally fundamental in presentations of leads. This brief was no different: the videos for Super Junior’s “Sorry Sorry” (S.M. Entertainment 2009a) and “Rockstar” (Girin BB 2013) were played back from YouTube, while Jenssen commented on which musical and conceptual traits the Asian market would be on the look-out for, which in the case of “Rockstar” was the “slightly cheesy Euro-thing,” particularly in the vocal phrase “I’m a rock star.” Harambašić replied that these clips do not necessarily represent current standards of K-pop production and might be out of date, upon which Jenssen agreed. To further

suggest which musical direction the songwriters ought to navigate, Jenssen put on Girls' Generation's "Tell Me Your Wish (Genie)" (S.M. Entertainment 2010a). He presented it as one of Dsign Music's greatest hits, and used it as an example to show that K-pop groups might have as many as nine vocalists, some even more, all of whom need tailor fitted sections that enhance their individual vocal abilities. This adaption requires a multitude of sections, which in turn creates complex forms. Harambašić argued that although this track might seem unfamiliar in terms of form, it is actually one of the more normal musical forms in K-pop.

After "Tell Me Your Wish (Genie)," the Girls' track "Hoot" was presented (S.M. Entertainment 2010b). Jenssen highlighted the conceptual and thematic James Bond-reference, in which the sound that resembles Monty Norman's composition for the gun-barrel opening title sequence of most of the James Bond movies, already has content for a music video inherent through the power of signification. In particular, the surf-guitar sound together with a protrusive brass section creates this effect in both Norman's theme and "Hoot." This appropriation has in "Hoot" both incorporated simplicity and smartness, two traits Jenssen believed to be significant in any K-pop production. The concept needs to be *audible*, and thus have the ability to predetermine the content of the video.

The last lead presented was HotShot, an up-and-coming Korean boyband with rough looks that at the time of presentation had not yet released its debut single.⁵⁰⁵¹ The band consists of teenagers in the age span of 15–18, all members with their own specialty: sexiness, dance skills, rap skills, and vocal skills. HotShot's management CJ E&M's intention was to release the group world wide, and their sound was intended to share traits from European, American and Korean idioms. Upon this description,

⁵⁰ The capitalization and contraction of HotShot is here written as presented, and should not be confused with the similarly named Taiwanese drama. However, when the band ultimately debuted, their band name read HOTSHOT.

⁵¹ HotShot's debut single, "Take a Shot," was released 28 October 2014 (CJENM Music 2014). It was produced by Joombas Music Group.

Jenssen played back a demo tape still with scratch vocals, which at that time awaited translation and rerecording.

These leads were not necessarily intentionally followed. The producer chose a track that was crafted before the presentation of the leads, and no one referred to the leads in the discussion of which track to choose. This is evident in the manner Harambašić and the group selected their track from Harambašić's catalogue. The catalogue comprised pop sub-genres that were inspired by jazz, heavy metal, 1990s ballads, dub-step, etc., and was a broad selection of music suited for a variety of K-pop artists as well as international artists. The selection of a track was based on what the group thought would fit Girls' Generation. However, there was little discussion of the musical properties of the track. It seemed to be a choice based on intuition rather than reason; on sensibility rather than lead-based knowledge. As such, Keith Negus's idea of arbitrary production suits the selection process. His work has summed up the notion of arbitrarily produced music properly:

In describing [the production process] I want to highlight the way in which the sounds and images are often composed in an arbitrary and adhoc-manner, rather than according to some well thought out plan. (Negus 1992, 80)

Although arbitrary composition occurs, Michael Zager's (2012) wrote in his comprehensive book on music production – which outlined some processes that occur in the studio in the production of contemporary music – that sound often is pre-planned. Zager argued that, "Record producers outline a creative and sonic image (concept) before recording an album" (ibid., 15). This is the case in some K-pop production. However, instead of the focus on albums and album concepts K-pop producers produce autonomous tracks with a greater attention to concept. A concept is fundamental to a new track, as it guides its composition and sonic image.

Although Zager argues for an outline of a sonic image, such considerations are, in the case of “Déjà Vu,” of an arbitrary nature as its leads were not necessarily followed.

The Process of Top-lining “Déjà Vu”

Little of the leads were ever mentioned after Harambašić, Lawrence, and Norderud entered Lager Studio. The studio’s name could be translated to Storage Room Studio, a name it was given due to its former function. It was the size of a medium home studio, and was decorated as if it still was a storage room: the doorknob had been placed fittingly on a table opposite an old LIFE safe; the wall supported a Girls’ Generation gold record; and in the corner stood an old barbershop chair, a relic from Harambašić’s previous occupation as a hair dresser. Four shelves of CDs hinted of a broad collection of music, which included artists like ZZ Top, Iron Maiden, Smokie, Alan Holdsworth, Shakira, Wig-Wam, Eric Clapton and Avril Lavigne. Lager Studio is not Harambašić’s main studio. His primary studio is in Los Angeles, however this is the one he would use when he works from Dsign Music’s offices in Trondheim.

Once settled in the studio around 11:30 AM, Harambašić suggested that the group should use a pre-produced track without top-line from Harambašić’s track catalogue. Both Norderud and Lawrence agreed. The start was delayed due to technical issues, and an external technician had to be brought in. It took only fifteen minutes until the issue was resolved, and the listening session could continue. In the course of the next 30 minutes, the team listened through 19 tracks, some reminiscent of dubstep, heavy metal, others more jazz-inspired, and some tracks were perhaps best suited to hip-hop. With this diversity, Harambašić added some postulates of his own to help the selection process:

- (1) Tracks that fit girl groups are easier to sell.

- (2) Simplicity is key, as a track needs to be understood by a fifteen-year-old.
- (3) The track needs four or five catchy sections.
- (4) Too “open” soundscapes will not cater to Asian audiences.⁵²

After a consideration of both Harambašić’s first postulate and the leads given by Jenssen, the group chose Girls’ Generation as their model band. However, to decide on a track proved difficult. After all the tracks had been played once, the group revisited the fifth track played, titled “Waterfall.” Lawrence said he imagined the color pink, candy and lollipops, but he also claimed to sense a party vibe. Norderud suggested that the group should avoid the Girl Power *cliché*, however Harambašić argued that rap, a significant Girl Power trait, is compulsory in this setting. While the track was put on repeat, the group improvised melodies and gibberish words. At one point, Lawrence began to sing the children’s song “If You’re Happy and You Know It, Clap Your Hands,” which only barely fit the harmonic progression of the track. After dwelling on this track for almost an hour, and after the intensive exchange of improvised melodies and phrases, Harambašić concluded that the track was too difficult to work with. He argued that a proper track would have some giveaways that made the act of top-lining intuitive, and that an hour’s struggle without the development of one single usable idea should be a sign that urges the composers to stop.

“Waterfall” was thereby discarded, and the group revisited another track, entitled “Shakedown.” Harambašić set a new house rule: an idea is to be developed within 20 minutes – otherwise the track would be binned. The new guideline was initiated at 1:15 PM, and already by 1:30 PM an idea for the chorus had developed. The chorus had been put on repeat while Harambašić and Norderud played around with a descending major diatonic line from the flat–seventh to the fifth, which preceded a drop down to the

⁵² Here, “soundscape” refers to the track’s mix, including the stereophonic placement of instruments, number of elements in the mix, and the apparent density of sounds (i.e., the simultaneous and intense activity in multiple frequency bands). “Too open soundscapes” are thus mixes that incorporate few and less dense elements.

tonic and the lyrics “cos everytime I’m freaking about you.” Harambašić complimented the phrase, and especially the use of “freaking,” as it breaks with conventional English, is something exquisite and thus grasps for attention. Lawrence opposed the phrase due to the irregularities, but Harambašić replied, “It does not matter. It is wrong, but it is *right*, you know?” Appropriately, Harambašić continued the top-lining process by humming “Mas Que Nada” by Jorge Ben (1963). He attempted to fit it in as a hook that would antecede the chorus, yet that melodic line would never make the finished demo. At that point, Norderud suggested that they could introduce elements of explicit content. Lawrence followed up with the sentences “come and take a jump on my lap,” and “take a ride.” Harambašić did not approve of this approach, but presented instead a first draft of lyrics for the chorus while he simultaneously stated that lyrics are of little to no importance:

- (a) I been lost trying to find you⁵³
My heart goes bam bam boo
Freakin’ me out

After the lyrics were written down in a Word document on Norderud’s Macbook Pro, the team continued to improvise around the text’s theme. The chorus was put on repeat, and Harambašić came up with new suggestions:

- (b) Even this freaking song is about you
- (c) Every time I’m thinking about you
I just wanna stay in my bed
This freaking song is about you
I can’t get you outta’ my head
- (d) You are stuck in my head

⁵³ The word “have” has been left out in this phrase, as the line was originally performed without the verb. All subsequent lyrics are exact renderings of the lyrics authored in the studio.

Lawrence instantly responded on this this improvisation with “you give me déjà vu,” a phrase that would eventually inspire the song’s main hook. Harambašić replied to Lawrence’s suggestion that it would also make a great title for the tune, and further experimented:

- (e) Don’t now what to do
Feels like a déjà vu
- (f) Every time I look at you
It’s like a déjà vu
- (g) Boy it feels so good
You got me acting bad

The latter two lines were composed after Harambašić commented that the lyrics needed a twist, and that contradictions in general are good. With these lines down the lyrics were edited together and the chorus took shape:

- (h) Everytime I’m thinking about you
I can’t get you outta my head
Even this freaking song is about you
Boy, it feels so good
When you’re being bad

At 2:30 PM, vocal recording commenced. Norderud sang the chorus. Harambašić corrected her rhythmic interpretation of “even”: from a fluid interpretation towards a more staccato performance; and instructed Norderud to perform “good” and “bad” as falling glissandos, the latter with double length. Otherwise, many of the dubs were one-takes, and every phrase was recorded full-length and quadruple dubbed. Immediately after recording, Harambašić requested five minutes to temporarily edit the vocals together. He added the pitch correction tool and VST-plug-in Antares

Autotune Evo and moderately tuned Norderud's voice. He also used the Renaissance Compressor to narrow the vocal tracks' amplitude extremities, AIR Distortion for a crisp crunch, and boosted the three-kilohertz range. Delay and reverb were added last in the chain of effects and processors. In total, recording and editing chorus vocals took 30 minutes.

With primary vocals done, Harambašić experimented with sharp, shortened K-sounds that had their envelopes cut off early. He moved eight-note, staccato Ks around to create three rhythmic patterns by the use of two, three and four Ks in a sequence. The decision ultimately fell on the use of three Ks and pitch sweep filters were added, which created a drop from the recorded pitch that landed an augmented octave below. A second voice was added to the chorus for richness, a technique Harambašić regarded as compulsory. It started on the third, revolved on the fourth and back, before it leaped to the fifth, from which it descended diatonically towards the third. In addition, the phrase "boy it feels so good, when you're being bad" was dubbed an octave above the primary vocal line.

By comparison to the composing of the chorus, top-lining the verse was a smooth and speedy process. Once Lawrence had set the standard with the first line, Harambašić followed up with lines two, three and four immediately. All of these lines were kept as they were in the first draft, without the exception of line four, which was given extra syllables to increase rhythmic subdivisions, but this was a musical consideration and not based on conceptions of the Korean language. The lyrics for the entire verse was composed in few minutes, as these four lines were the only four ever suggested:

- (i) Baby you're the one that I want
You're my obsession
I do what I got to do
For your attention

The experimentation with syncopated repetitions of “I know” was a more meticulous effort. As the idea was developed, the syncopations were removed in favor of a strongly marked meter. The line was eventually cut all together, as the team sensed it did not contribute to the track’s improvement.

With first verse lyrics ready at 4:30 PM, Norderud again recorded vocals, and after a correction from Harambašić, she recorded them with an articulated rhythm instead of the fluidity she initially applied to the top-line. However, the original melody did not suit Norderud’s tessitura. The solution was to initiate the melody from the fifth, instead of the original initiation from the third. An alteration of the melody in this manner has consequences for the notion that the top-line is constructed to best fit the K-pop idols in question. Here it is clear that it is also adapted to fit the vocal abilities and limitations of the recording top-liner. Later, Norderud would also struggle with a flat–seventh. Through multiple recordings she always landed on the root instead of the flat–seventh, which resulted in some frustration and eventually another alteration of the melody. Harambašić noted that it could be pitched down later, however that never got done. Revisions of the original melody suggest that vocal performance in scratch vocals is more important than individual notes or short melodic sequences. Simply pitching vocals up or down was not a real choice here. Another possible explanation is that the two alternatives were equal in the first place: the alterations did not have any consequences for the verse’s hook-ability or quality. With the new melodies digitalized together with two compulsory dubs, Harambašić quick-edited the recent recordings. He added “Telephone 7-Band,” a seven–band, pre-dialed equalizer setting in the shape of a bell, with cut below 300 Hertz and above 4 kilohertz, and had a peak at 1.5 kilohertz, in order to replicate the low fidelity of an old radio or telephone.

For the pre-chorus, Harambašić explained he wanted an aggressive phrase from Norderud. He demonstrated by singing “you drive me crazy” with a technique reminiscent of overdrive and belting. Norderud’s approach was kinder, and did not give Harambašić the correct sensation. Therefore, this section was put aside for a moment, and the team commenced with the production of a rap section, which would ultimately be placed as a pre-chorus. By coincidence, Kine Hanssen, a former *Idol* contestant who is now a recording artist, was in the area and stopped by at that moment. Harambašić argued that multiple voices in a track sound better, and said he would normally use two or three females to record vocals for a scratch track. Thus, Hanssen’s voice was recorded for the rap section. Lawrence came up with the phrase “every time I look at you, you give me déjà vu,” after which Harambašić responded, “every time you look at me, I look at you, it’s like a déjà vu,” and continued with “maybe you’re like ecstasy,” which he corrected to “baby, you’re like ecstasy.” The exchange of lines continued rapidly between the two and they spun on each other’s ideas. Lawrence suggested, “if this love’s not meant to be,” which Harambašić developed into, “tell me if it’s meant to be,” while he wanted to include “fantasy.” Thus, the rap lyrics became the following, which Harambašić required Hanssen to perform with a bouncy rhythm, but without precise pitches:

(j) Baby, you’re like ecstasy
 My sweetest fantasy
 Every time you look at me
 I look at you
 It’s like déjà vu

At 5:30 PM, the group began recording the chorus’s tale. Harambašić regarded its simple, repetitive melody as so easy to sing, that he became irritated when Norderud did not get it right at the first few attempts. He proclaimed that the melody was so elementary, children in a kindergarten

could sing it, and that he had lost his patience. The murky atmosphere soon resolved, however, and Harambašić began editing the recent recordings. First, he added a harder Autotune than previously, both to compensate for Norderud's imprecisions and to create texture.⁵⁴ Second, he added distortion, which he crudely tuned in his headset before finer adjustments were made with the track on his monitor speakers.

A discussion arose when the work on the next sections commenced. Harambašić argued that the second verse absolutely had to be different than the first. Lawrence presented the idea of an anapest rhythm to be foundational in this new verse, but Harambašić did not approve. Instead he referred to the rhythm as "too nineteen-nineties," and suggested that it would be best suited in a middle-eight instead of in a verse. Harambašić wanted to create hip-hip out of the second verse, while he urged the group to be "crazy," to think that each section of the remaining track should be an entirely new song. He exemplified by his removal of the beat all-together for the next pre-chorus. At this point, Harambašić visited YouTube to check if the track matched music videos by Girls' Generation and Lee Hyori, a technique he said he would often apply through the course of a track's production. It was unanimously agreed that the track was a good match, if not a great one.

As the eighth hour of top-line production commenced, the group was one verse short. Despite Harambašić's preference for variations, the second verse ended up with the same lyrics and melody as the first, with an end-hook as the only difference. End-hook variations are typical for K-pop, Harambašić argued, and with the second verse labor-effectively produced, the team began recording *ad-lib* phrases. While *ad-lib* usually refers to improvised, non-preplanned phrases that occur in real time, the idea behind Harambašić application of the term was to create a sensation of a free and

⁵⁴ As noted earlier, "Autotune" refers to the specific Antares Autotune Evo plug-in, whereas "Auto-Tune," refers to pitch correction tools in general.

casual expression. Although the phrases for this track were developed through improvisation, once the recording commenced they had become refined, crafted lines.

Fill-ins and responses such as “ah,” and “yeah,” were recorded in addition to a drone-like, eight-note phrase that enunciated “what you’re waiting, what you’re waiting, what you’re waiting for.” The majority of time was used on experimentation with production techniques and the application of those to the latter line. Harambašić modified the melody to create a descending pitch sweep at the end, added a chorus effect, tweaked a compressor, and corrected the vocal track’s rhythm. Ultimately, he added the VST plug-in Waves Doubler 4, which quadrupled the vocal track, panned and minutely modulated the outputted tracks to create a broader and richer vocal sound. Once finished, a choir of five voices – which included the team, Hanssen and myself – sang the hook “oh, oh, o-o-oh, feels like a déjà vu,” in unison to add texture and to create the sensation of a larger crowd, before Hanssen recorded a rhythmically and melodically altered version of “feels like a déjà vu,” upon Harambašić’s request. Harambašić then continued to edit the end section of the track, through the copy-and-paste of the rap section and the addition of a break before the track’s coda that consisted of the track’s instrumental beat. Ultimately, he created a fade-out to end the track, and by 9:21 PM, the top-line was finished.

With regards to the selection of a pre-produced track, this production of “Déjà Vu” suggests that Negus’s idea of arbitrary composition is valid for K-pop production, despite his work’s coming of age. Although the composition of sounds is created *ad hoc*, that does not necessarily imply that a plan is absent. On the contrary, leads and ideas of what K-pop and specific K-pop groups should sound like serve as a plan that does not as much map out a direction, as it excludes musical opportunities. Formal restrictions do not appear in the manner of regulations that state which specific form constructs sell. Instead, experimentation and originality is encouraged.

Thus it is preplanned, but by the means of exclusion. Alterations were also made due to vocal limitations, which are concurrent with Negus's idea of arbitrary composition, however this notion would benefit from the idea that restrictions also guide the production process.

Top-Line Spectrograms of “The Boys” and “Break Down”

While the previous section described the composition process and the recording of scratch vocals on the track “Déjà Vu,” the finished top-lines of two versions of “The Boys” (Girls' Generation 2011a, 2011c) and two versions of “Break Down” (Super Junior–M 2013a, 2013b) are discussed here.

Girls' Generation's “The Boys” was released in Korea on 19 October 2011 in a Korean version on their album *The Boys* (Girls' Generation 2011c). Later, the track appeared on the albums *Mr. Taxi*, and on the international version of *The Boys*. Both an English and a Korean version of the track was included on *Mr. Taxi*, while in total six versions of the track – four of which were remixes and features – appeared on the album intended for the international market. On 28 December, a Japanese version of “The Boys” was released as a single in Japan and on the album *Re:package Album “Girls' Generation” ~The Boys~* (ibid.). DOM, Richard Garcia, Taesung Kim, and Riley produced the track and its top-line, and Yoo Young-jin wrote its lyrics.

The subsequent comparative top-line analysis of the Korean and the English versions of “The Boys” shows that: (1) the Korean version has a higher number of syllables in the intro than the English, which affects the vocals' rhythm. Due to this, there are rhythmic variations in the two versions; (2) the English content in the Korean and the English versions are identical, which suggests that only certain parts have been rerecorded; (3) there are melodic variances in the two versions, although these are lesser

prominent than rhythmic variances; (4) there are phrases that are more spoken than sung, and these have downwards-sliding lines; (5) the “souling” section is unique for each version; and (6) there is an extensive use of Auto-Tune in both tracks.

Both versions start out with an eight-note rhythmically precise phrase that consists of a total of 22 syllables (see Appendix D1). They are also clearly Auto-Tuned, which is derivable from the unnaturally stable long-notes. In this section, the Korean version has a higher number of “s” and “sj” formants than the English, and its long-notes are more stable, which means that the notes’ formants do not fluctuate over time in the same manner as in the English version. The contour of the highest formants in the Korean version does not correlate with the contour of formants in the English version. Quite contrary, where the Korean version’s formants are high, the English version’s formants appear in the mid-range. This affects the sonic qualities of the vocal track. While the Korean language makes this particular section brighter in character where the English language appear to have its highest frequencies rolled off, the phenomenon is reversed for the part two of the intro (see Appendix D2). Here, the highest formants are more frequent in the English version than in the Korean – which has 23 syllables.

When producers and top-liners develop English lyrics, it is with close attention to the number of syllables in a phrase:

They are very cutting edge, very modern, particularly in South Korea. In addition, they have a lot more consonants than we have. So we attempt to include additional syllables. Otherwise, we attempt to create as good music as possible.⁵⁵ (Svendsen in Bergmo and Nordenborg 2011)

⁵⁵ Original quotation in Bergmo and Nordenborg (2011): “De er veldig cutting edge, veldig moderne. Spesielt i Sør-Korea. I tillegg har de langt flere konsonanter i språket sitt enn det vi har. Derfor må vi prøve å få inn flere stavelser. Ellers prøver vi å lage så god musikk som overhodet mulig.”

While Ronny Svendsen argues that Dsign Music's top-liners attempt to include as many syllables as the Korean language requires, the observations made in the "Déjà Vu" case study suggest that syllables are applied unconsciously, or they are at least unaddressed within the studio walls. It may very well be the case that extra syllables are added in some productions, although it appears as if the intention to create "good music" trumps a conscious attention to syllables. When "Déjà Vu" had its top-line recorded, the top-line was based on eight-notes, while syncopations and sixteenth notes were common features. These rhythmic patterns have the ability to contain a high number of syllables, but were nonetheless composed based on sonic image and intuition rather than a formal requirement. No one ever mentioned syllables, and on the only occasion rhythm was addressed, Harambašić countered Lawrence's suggestion to include an anapest rhythm, as it was "too nineties." Nonetheless, Aspén and Smågesjø have both invoked the particularities of Korean phonetics as an important element to be attentive to in K-pop production:

Aspén: Of course, the producer studies what goes on in the music market ... Does it include guitar, electro or dub-step? The point is, when you are top-lining you need to consider [that] phonetics are completely different in Korean than in Norwegian, or in English pop for that matter.

Smågesjø: It's all about how their language is constructed, and which words they are able to pronounce. They cannot say long, "round" words, but small and short rhythmic things. That's the way of the language, right? Korean and Japanese languages are quite staccato, so it's natural that everything cannot be pronounced.

A: The fun thing is, that from the original English top-line, they have kept “I got a boy,” and made a video out of it. It was the same thing with “Wolf.” They have kept “I am the wolf.”

S: They rewrite everything, except for the cool English words, which they are able to pronounce and are cool to give voice to.⁵⁶

The conversation is quoted at length, since as a whole it gives insight into Smågesjø and Aspén’s thoughts on linguistic characteristics. Smågesjø highlights the rhythmic characteristics of the Korean language, and comments that Korean sentences are staccato by nature. Such observations consciously and subconsciously form Dsign Music’s approach to top-lining, and the results are vocal parts that have intense rhythmic subdivisions and strong rhythmic identities. The latter statement by Smågesjø is a valuable testimony as he states that English words may be kept, if they have a large enough appeal and are simple enough to pronounce.

While each language’s lyrics have their own unique rhythmic emphasis, the same does not apply for the Korean version’s use of English. The English phrases that are used in both versions, for example “T.R.X.” and “Girls’ Generation make you feel the heat,” are identical in their duration, and structure of fundamental frequencies and formants (see Appendix D3). The entire 21 seconds of intermission in the section that runs from 0:15–0:36 is identical across versions. This is solid evidence for the recycling of English phrases. Also, when hooks like “b-bring the boys out” occur throughout the versions, they are in the same manner identical (see Appendix D3), which suggests that these sections are copy-and-pasted. Some critics might argue that this is “inauthentic” and akin to something like a conveyor-belt pop processing. Copy-pasting does save time and effort, but it also creates sonic coherence, both internally and across the versions. It upholds the electronic sound of the song, while the method’s efficiency

⁵⁶ This lengthy translation occurs in its original language in Appendix B.

encourages the creation of a larger number of tracks. Although copy-and-paste is used, there is also evidence for concurrent similar formants that contribute to converge the two versions sonically. For example, the “s”-formants of both versions occur simultaneously at 0:35–0:36. These occurrences are, however, minute compared to the differences in formants, and thus the soundscapes of the two versions’ vocal sounds diverge.

One section of the English version has severe melodic and rhythmical displacements, compared to the Korean version (see Appendix D5). At 2:47–3:04, the melody in the English version is displaced, so that it falls on off-beats, while the Korean version’s melody resembles that of previous pre-choruses. This pre-chorus have characteristic vocal phrases reminiscent of ad-lib souling, as the vocal’s rhythm differs. Yet, it does follow a melodic outline. The English version has a greater extent of variation and development, while the Korean version maintains the melody from previous pre-choruses. Another example of variances is in the melody at 0:44–0:50 (see Appendix D6). Where the Korean version’s melody also here follows the previous melodic contour upwards at 0:48, the English melody descends. Here, both versions end their phrases on the vocal “e.”

On 7 January 2013, S.M. Entertainment and the Super Junior sub-group, Super Junior-M released two albums titled *Break Down*.⁵⁷⁵⁸ One of the albums was released in China and consisted of twelve tracks (Super Junior–M 2013b). Ten of these songs had Mandarin lyrics and two were instrumental versions of “Break Down” and “Goodbye My Love.” The other album was released in Korea and had 14 tracks (Super Junior–M 2013a). On this album, ten of the songs were sung in Korean, two were instrumental

⁵⁷ Currently, Super Junior has four official subgroups: (1) Super Junior T, which specializes in Korean trot, and hence the T; (2) Super Junior-K.R.Y., which has annexed the initials of its band members Kyuhyun, Ryewook, and Yesung; (3) Super Junior H, in which the H stands for Happy; and (4) Super Junior–M, in which the M stands for the language Mandarin.

⁵⁸ Mandarin is this sub-group’s primary language. It has the same members as Super Junior, with the addition of the Canadian singer Henry Lau and the Chinese singer Zhou Mi.

versions as in the Chinese album, and two tracks were the Mandarin versions of “Break Down” and “Goodbye My Love.” In total, 15 producers and production teams, together with eleven lyricists created the tracks and top-lines for these albums. For the title track “Break Down,” Nick Audino and Lewis Hughes from Australia, Martin Mulholland and Harambašić from Norway produced the music, and Zhou Weijie from China wrote the lyrics.

As “Break Down,” exists in Korean, English and Mandarin versions, this tripartite share several of the characteristics of “The Boys”: (1) The use of English in the non-English versions are identical (i.e., phrases are copy-and-pasted and recycled across versions); (2) the high formants do not coincide when the versions are juxtaposed; (3) “Break Down” uses Auto-Tune both as an effect and as a vocal long-note stabilizer; (4) sections of the audio track are cut out to create a sound reminiscent of the audio dispersed by square-shaped waveforms; and (5) the Korean language encourages fluidity in the track’s melodic lines, perhaps contrary to producers’ statements.

The visual display of the formants at 1:43–1:46 shows how the line “so baby let’s go, go, go, go, go, go” is identical in both versions (see Appendix E1). Comparisons between both versions’ first “go” at 1:43–1:44, suggest that the strongest formants are of same duration, amplitude and relative frequency, and their curves follow the same outline. This also applies to the second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth formants, as well as the upbeat “so baby let’s.” The minor discrepancies shown in the spectrogram are the result of variances in leakage from the instrument track, which has been more successfully removed in the Mandarin version of “Break Down” (Super Junior–M 2013b).

Between the enunciations of “go” is a dark empty space where there is no sound except for the instrumental leakage (see Appendix E1). With the recording of a spoken or sung “go” in any natural environment, the expected

envelope of the track would show an abrupt, yet downwards-slanting curve. In this case, the envelope is altered: Both the start and end of each “go” is instantaneous, which suggest that these black in-between spaces are the empty spaces that have occurred after cutouts of the vocal track. The technique is indeed common to use in popular music production, as it reduces noise and disturbances and thus also creates a clearer sound with more headroom. In this track, it is also applied to create a staccato effect – comparable to the sound we would hear from a pulsatory square-shaped audio waveform. The effect is even more prominent at 1:29–1:31, where there is no gradual attack or roll off at the release (see Appendix E2). Here, the silence forms an immediate dark chasm. These chasms separate three instances of the vowel “a” that have identically structured formants. Moreover, in the Mandarin version, this appears not to be the case. Instead, each staccato vowel “y” are unique, and have not been copy-and-pasted as the one occurrence of “a” has been in the Korean version. Noise and leakage from the track could be an issue in the identification of small discrepancies, yet that is unlikely to be the case here, since the leakage – which would cause dissimilarities – is more prominent in the Korean version where every instance of the vowel is identical.

From 1:24–1:28 in both the Korean and the Mandarin version, the spectrogram shows the transition between modest uses of Auto-Tune, to a harder Auto-Tune that sounds distinctly electronic (see Appendix E3). This transition occurs at 1:25 where the waving curves of the melodic lines develop into static horizontal bars. As a result, the leaps between notes become unnatural, and it sounds as if the vocal line “click” onto the desired note. Few electronic modifications to an audio track are as discredited or prized among audiences as the use of Auto-Tune. Regardless of fandom and journalism’s advocacy against Auto-Tune with claims of hoodwink and lack of vocal talent, the effect has factual sonic disadvantages. When a sung note is recorded, it is comprised of multiple formants that relates to each other

through natural harmonics. If it is shifted, or “pitched” up and down, the relationship between the formants remains constant. If the notes were recorded at the desired pitch, the harmonics would have an all-together different structure. Hence, an Auto-Tuned voice does have an electronic (i.e., artificial) flavor – beyond its ability to level natural vibrato and efface pitch discrepancies – that either sits well with audiences or not. In the case of *Break Down*, Auto-Tune is used throughout, although at sections, it is used intensively to emphasize the electronic flavor. When it occurs at 1:25 it is visible due to the flat horizontal bars and the abrupt transitions that occur between them (see Appendix E3). The bars themselves are difficult, if possible, to replicate with the human voice. The electronic sound that is the result of altered harmonics cannot be naturally produced.

Here, some of the sonic consequences of the alteration and rerecording of lyrics and top-lines have been given attention. A more extreme case of alteration follows in the section on how a Norwegian ESC failure became a K-pop hit.

The Import and Revival of “Perfect Tragedy” as “Hi Ya Ya Summer Day,” and the Use of Language in Its Top-Line

Previously released tracks from exo-Korean music markets are in some cases rewritten and released as K-pop tracks. This was the case of Don Ramage’s “Perfect Tragedy” (D. Ramage 2003), which after its release disappeared only to reappear as “Hi Ya Ya Summer Day,” performed by TVXQ (TVXQ 2005). Out of twelve contestants in the Norwegian ESC finals, “Perfect Tragedy” finished eleventh, and both the track and the artist would disappear from the public eye. After 31 May 2003 there was no mention of the track or Ramage in any Scandinavian newspaper online or in print, until one of the songwriters, Bjørnar Løberg was featured in an online article where he posed as the blogger “Tommylife Enge” (Norheim 2011).

Here, Løberg briefly mentioned that “Perfect Tragedy” ended up as a boy band tune in Korea. The track has rarely been spoken of online, with the exception of a few forum threads that has sought to find the original tracks behind K-pop hits. The user “Sparkeh” on Soompi’s forum correctly observed that TVXQ used a track previously released by Ramage as a fundament for “Hi Ya Ya Summer Day” (Sparkeh 2008). But credits are not given Ramage, nor any of the songwriters, on the “List of songs recorded by TVXQ” Wikipedia page (Wikipedia 2014b), despite the fact that the track is on the list. After the song’s release and relative failure, the artist himself was not interested in additional promotion of the track and thus it never appeared on any of the available online music services, including YouTube, Spotify and iTunes (K. Ramage 2014). To get a hold of the track one would need to have a hard copy of the MGP compilation album released in 2003 (D. Ramage 2003), which seems to be difficult as annual albums tend to go out of production a short period after their release. An option is to download it illegally, however few peer-to-peer sites offer the track.

On 20 June 2005, “Hi Ya Ya Summer Day” was released on TVXQ’s mini-album *Hi Ya Ya Summer Day*, as a rerecorded, translated and reproduced version of “Perfect Tragedy” (TVXQ 2005). Currently, the title-track has approximately 500,000 views on YouTube (Dead Angel 2007), and 340,000 on S.M. Entertainment’s YouTube Channel (S.M. Entertainment 2009b), which are fair numbers of views. After all, the track had its heydays only a few years after the launch of YouTube. The TVXQ album peaked at number 45 on the Gaon Albums Chart in 2010 – five years after its release (Gaon 2010).

For “Perfect Tragedy’s” transformation into “Hi Ya Ya Summer Day,” severe changes were made. The track itself was reproduced, its lyrics were translated and rewritten, vocals were rerecorded, and additional sections were brought in. The new track also acquired an additional 1:25 minutes of music. “Perfect Tragedy” clocked in at 3:00, a duration restricted by ESC’s

three-minutes rule. “Hi Ya Ya Summer Day” is 4:25. The additional length stems from the addition of a rap section at the introduction and the addition of a chorus towards the end. Otherwise, the two tracks follow similar formal outlines: “Perfect Tragedy” has a ABCD ABCD ECD form, where A represents the verse, B the prechorus, C the chorus, D the post-chorus, and E the bridge. By comparison, “Hi Ya Ya Summer Day’s” form can be denoted as F ABCD ABCD ECCD. Here, F represents the rap section. The additions to the song’s form comply with the arguments of form presented by both Harambašić and Aspén, who argue that K-pop forms tend to be more progressive.

The new track has been significantly restructured in terms of instrumentation and arrangement. “Perfect Tragedy’s” drum-beat resembles the sound of a drum-set, whereas a drum machine plays “Hi Ya Ya Summer Day’s” beat. While the drum-set’s sonic image is ostensibly natural – i.e., cymbals are played dynamically and the snare and kick’s sonic qualities are enhanced rather than altered – the drum machine appears to have a fatter kick, a sound-replaced snare, and a high-hat of which the dynamic range is miniscule. The beat of the TVXQ track does not correspond with the original Ramage track either. In turn, this suggests that the strongest percussive similarities are in the use of a tambourine of which its sixteenth-note pattern is a feature shared by both editions of the song.

In “Perfect Tragedy,” strings, brass and an energetic bass guitar dominate the arrangement. One guitar is mildly distorted and plays after-beats, while the other uses a wah-wah to continuously move a frequency peak up and down the middle ranges of the frequency spectrum. With the exception of the after-beat guitar, the song’s arrangements have been completely revised. The strings are placed further back in the mix, distorted guitar-riffs now dominate the song’s introduction, and a synthesizer invokes

electronic textures. In the process of re-recording, the song has lost its organic character, which was substituted by an electronic sonic image.

Several of the most significant alterations have occurred through the reproduction and translation of the song's lyrics. Unlike Ramage's ESC song, which was written in English and was monolingual throughout, "Hi Ya Ya Summer Day" includes both Korean and English phrases. Bilingual lyrics stem from international cultural flows that have been persistent in the East and South East Asian region for the best part of the last millennium. In Japan, English has been used in popular music since the 1930s, and in Hong Kong as well as Indonesia, English has been used in popular music since the 1950s (Benson 2013, 25). Some might argue that the appropriation of English language in Korean popular music: (1) has its roots in the presence of American soldiers in Korea during and after the Korean War in 1950–1953; (2) has been upheld by the rapid economic growth that spawned multinational companies and thus linguistic exchange through global trade of goods; and (3) has been manifested in the increase of airtime American pop has received in Korea. English was not used in Korean lyrics until after the 1970s and 1980s, where its few occurrences were in band names (J. Lee 2004, 429). This changed in the 1990s, when artists began to appropriate the "modern," English language (ibid.). In the majority of K-pop tracks recently released, English is a common feature.

Phil Benson (2013) has argued that the English language adaptation that has occurred throughout East Asian popular music can be explained by the language's ability to communicate with a global audience and overcome linguistic barriers. Its use is not only motivated by the desire to cater to international markets, although that is sometimes the case (ibid.). Here, Benson has sought to counter commercialist critiques with his idea that the use of the English language is a means of communication with global audiences. It does reduce language barriers between the Korean-vernacular artist and an English-speaking listener, to whom Korean is ostensibly a

lingua franca. However, the use of English can also be attributed to: (1) the desire to reach domestic audiences specifically, as young audiences who grow up in a modernized and globalized Korea sometimes make use of the “modernity” of English as a freedom of expression (J. Lee 2004, 436); (2) English’s historical presence, which has made English lyrics a style-specific idiom in K-pop; and (3) the translation process, where catchy phrases from the original English scratch lyrics were kept as tasty linguistic leftovers.

Few original lyrical phrases from “Perfect Tragedy” were kept for the TVXQ edition. These are “see my smile,” which is a subtle choral response, and “till the end of time,” which has distortion added to it to distance the phrase from the main vocals. The phrase “dancing in summer paradise” opens the choruses and “forever come with me” closes the post-choruses. Of these two phrases – both of which are significant in terms of their placements at the starting point and at the end – not one exists in the original edition. Neither does the added rap section, which is written in English throughout:

Beautiful ocean bright
Just you and I
In your eyes
I can feel heavenly paradise
Don't be afraid of what you feel inside
That's OK, you don't have to cry yourself
I'll give you my word
Only one love, you know
No one can make me happy as the way you do
Baby, that's the true love
As always, I'm here
Baby, this is our world

By first glance, the rap section appears to have been directly translated through – to put it nicely – “unfinished” translation software. While that was obviously not the case, the grammar in this section is admittedly improper in terms of written and oral English language conventions. Lyricist Jennifer Kim of JYP Entertainment, known for her collaborations with Miss A, Wonder Girls and 2PM, implied in an interview that lack of English skills have shaped the English content of K-pop lyrics (Beyond Hallyu 2013). The phenomenon used to be more dominant a decade ago than by the time of the interview, since increased levels of international collaboration continuously elevates the quality of English phrases and lyrics (ibid.). Yet, “I can feel heavenly paradise” and “that’s OK you don’t have to cry yourself” illustrates the notable presence of poor English in K-pop lyrics. As noted earlier, Harambašić argued that lyrics must not necessarily adhere to English language conventions. Instead, songs may benefit commercially from grammatical errors, as an alternative use of the language can make certain words or phrases stand out and thus become easier to remember for the listener.

English is often included in Korean versions of tracks, however Korean is seldom included in English versions. In the rewrite of “Hi Ya Ya Summer Day,” English words and phrases were included, but negligible few of these were derived from the original song “Perfect Tragedy,” and while “Hi Ya Ya Summer Day” preserved some of “Perfect Tragedy’s” original form and instrumentation, the TVXQ version was a significantly altered rendition of the original.

Lyrics and form are limited in their report of content. The performance of lyrics can contribute to a production of meaning that transcends the mere lyrical representations of it. As the following section will address, a

performance – developed by a song’s producers – may diminish or amplify the “catering to the male gaze.”⁵⁹

Music, Visual Images and the Sexualization of Girls’ Generation and Miss A

Heather A. Willoughby (2006) and Eun-Young Jung (2010) have both argued that music is subordinate of style and image in the Korean pop scene. Willoughby stated that femininity in style – to a greater extent than the music itself – influences personal identity formations in K-pop as well as it helps to form a collective national identity. This section stresses the importance of the elucidation of musical content – in particular in vocals and top-lines – in the performance of femininity and the concurrent sexualization of female bodies in K-pop. Sexualization of K-pop idols’ bodies occurs, not merely as an appropriation of Western femininity aesthetics, but through the carefully crafted sensual or sexual top-lines that both non-Korean and Korean producers create.⁶⁰ It is not necessarily just a matter of lyrical or visual content; it is also a matter of music production and performance. The account of the production process earlier in this thesis showed that producers have significant control over a track’s top-line, an observation that is also backed up by Aspén and Smågesjø’s statements. Such control suggests that producers may impart an amplification or denudation of sexualization on female bodies of K-pop idols. This is the case with Miss A’s “Over U” (Little Princess 2012; So 2012) and Girls’ Generation’s “I Got a Boy” (Girls’ Generation 2013; S.M. Town 2012). However, in some cases, such as with Girls’ Generations’ “The Boys,” top-lines are ambiguous and does not invoke a sexualized meaning as much as its lyrics do – or do not as in the Korean version of the song.

⁵⁹ “Pandering,” or “catering to the male gaze” is a derivative of Nicola Dibben’s prose on representations of femininity in pop (Dibben 1999).

⁶⁰ Of course, the rhetoric “carefully crafted” does not seek to exclude improvisation as a composition method.

The display of K-pop idols has societal effects. Willoughby studied Korean teenage girls' choice of apparel, and found that their wardrobes were modeled after the wardrobes of K-pop idols. She conducted two surveys eight years apart (1996 and 2003), which showed no significant change in attitudes towards image adaptation, and concluded that the mass mediated imagery is more than fashion, that it is a sexual freedom (Willoughby 2006). This notion is also apparent in the changes of the "ideal" girl. Traditionally, the ideal Korean was in pursuit of a university degree and a career (Y. Kim 2011). The educational system was, and still is, extremely competitive and students adapt to this. Some acquire an image as intellectuals, which could be observed in the recent Korean fad where youths wore eyeglasses without the actual lenses. Yeran Kim wrote that commercial forces exploited such imagery, which they use to fashion their idols. Although it is a prevalent process, the force the entertainment industry currently exerts gradually escalates the industry's imposition of sexualized images onto female audiences (ibid.). On the change of the ideal in terms of sexiness, Willoughby wrote:

What was considered "sexy" seemed to have changed. In 1996, sex appeal was engendered with a look of demure sophistication, while in 2003 it was far more blatant ... any subtleness and sophistication was gone, replaced by the denudation of many female singers. (Willoughby 2006, 103–104)

The change in sexiness in K-pop, as it was described here, was a phenomenon internal to Korean youth cultures. As the scene and production of K-pop has become global, the industry's ability to change the tastes and attitudes of Korean and global audiences needs to be acknowledged. This also means that non-Korean producers contribute to attitudes and identity formations on a global scale. Media's coverage of K-pop is one of the factors that reduces the threshold for women to dress in "sexy" apparel, however the mediation of this imagery cannot carry the full responsibility detached

from all other contexts. Producers and the industry alike play a significant role in the production of femininity and the display of female bodies in K-pop.

Kim has stated that an analytical approach to girl bodies in the Korean popular music industry requires an alternative foundation than that of Western feminist studies (Y. Kim 2011, 334). She has identified two positions in feminism. The first is occupied with the effects a phallogentric capitalist society has on the construction of young femininity. The second investigates how mass media produces young femininity. Kim explained that these approaches are hardly applicable to the K-pop industry, as they, due to their Western orientation, do not allow for an investigation of local peculiarities of culture, society and history. She argued that while Western-oriented feminism tends to focus on the sexualization of girl bodies, the entertainment industry in Korea resolves to use a wider palette of imagery in order to appeal to a broader (and hence more complex) audience (ibid.). When Nicola Dibben observed that the performance of Gina G's "Ooh, Aah ... Just a Little Bit" (Buffy 2011) "is typical of the patriarchal construction of femininity that abounds in pop: an image where women are portrayed as simultaneous submissive, innocent and childlike, yet sexually available" (Dibben 1999), she represented the Western feminist perspective. "Ooh, Aah ... Just a Little Bit" and "I Got a Boy" share features of female depiction, as both have a presence of sexualized images (e.g., short skirts, and choreography) and cute, childish scenes (e.g., the bedroom scene). Both Gina G and Girls' Generation cater to the male gaze, but Kim provided a key to understand the success of Korean girl groups, as she additionally recognized the "childish-ness" appeal to girl subculture groups.

The femininity ideal varies across time and cultures. It is dangerous to presume that what Western audiences perceive as sexy correlates to Korean ideals of femininity. A Western approach can still be useful in the context of globalization. The existence of transnational collaborative production in

Korean music is so prominent that the Western perspective cannot be discarded the way it seems Kim suggests. Due to K-pop's drive for globalization, investigations of femininity need an intermediary approach. It should start – which Dibben did – with the exploration of visual images in context with music. Whereas K-pop lyrics have been analyzed to highlight *what* the protagonist says (J. Lee 2004), analyses of vocals and vocal lines are crucial to understand *how* it is said – and this performance is largely created by music producers.

Words have the ability to influence societies. The linguist James Stanlaw found that Japanese women incorporated English words into the Japanese language and thus developed a “second *voice*,” where the English language provided rhetorical power and liberty of expression (Stanlaw 2000, 99). As a result of that, the sociolinguistic limitation of Japanese diminished. Stanlaw's concept of a liberating second voice also explains bilingualism in K-pop texts. His finds correlate with Jamie S. Lee's, who through comprehensive analyses of K-pop lyrics, found that the use of English in K-pop lyrics has the ability to empower young Korean artists (J. Lee 2004). He argued that English allows explicit content through censorship avoidance, asserts struggle with unsettled identities, and asserts resistance (ibid.).

Lee's focus on lyrics and its explicit content is valuable, but mere lyrical analyses cannot account for the presence of explicit content in the performance of phrases that when read would seem non-explicit. Such an approach can account for the content of lyrics, but not the full content of their meanings, which also lie in vocal timbres, attitudes and the performance's significations.

It is a particularly important intervention since words alone can create an illusion of content. “I Got a Boy” has the *femme fatale* introduced in English with the phrase “hey, let me introduce myself!” Without the consideration of the vocal performance here, the sentence would convey a

range of meanings. It may suggest that the protagonist introduces herself to someone she has not yet met, perhaps in the most humble manner typical of Korean social interaction. Or perhaps the protagonist introduces herself in a most extrovert fashion. Neither of these suggestions are the case. “Hey, let me introduce myself!” is performed with a flirtatious, vaguely pitched linear melody, and ends with a glissando drop. It is shouted, rather than sung, while vocalist Tiffany slides her hand along the stem of an obvious phallic symbol of the streetlight. The female protagonist is ostensibly a *femme fatale*, which is further amplified by the unison choir response, “Here comes trouble.” Later in the lyrics, the word “sexy” is used to describe her appearance. It occurs in English in the middle of a verse that is otherwise all Korean.

While Tiffany is one *femme fatale* in “I Got a Boy,” none of the eight other Girls acquire this persona. In general, they are presented as more *aegyo* – cuter – than Tiffany. The intro sequence highlights the childish and innocent image persistent in K-pop. It is set in what appears to be a young girl’s bedroom, where the dominant color is pink and the other colors are bright pastelles. It is reminiscent of U.S.-style sleepover parties hosted by preteen girls. The U.S.-setting is substantiated by the use of Disney effects, such as the Mickey Mouse ears one of the girls wears. The room is fairly untidy and the Girls’ activities range from having a tea party to pillow fights and grooming, until a boy rings the doorbell and becomes the center of attention. No one answers, and he is left outside while the text “is anybody here?” levitates in a speech bubble. With Willoughby’s description of the ideal female Korean pop star in mind, the entire opening scene that undoubtedly suggest a childish, cute and innocent image (Willoughby 2006), do present a staged performance of Korean femininity ideals.

The scene changes abruptly as the verse starts. The lyrics narrate how the female protagonist all of the sudden has become very attractive, dressed up and perfected by makeup. At the song’s start, audiences are introduced

with the skeptical thoughts, gossip and speculations of the immediate community, perhaps a friends' circle, which have noticed the changes. They ask if the changes in the girl's appearance are a result of her wish to dress neatly for Him. At this point, the girls are divided: one group has formed the gossip girls' gang, while the singular female protagonist stands by herself with pride and attitude. The group sings for the most part collectively. The exceptions are the call and response techniques in the verses, the first of which wherein Tiffany introduces herself and the group responds.

For this part, the use of colors is more modest and the tone is darker. The Girls have left the bedroom for a stage or a film studio, where the Girls hang out and do not partake in any activities other than their choreography, which focuses on the individual Girl at the moment. Their clothes are rough: they wear boots, nails, chains, army jackets, sunglasses and some stomachs are bare – which could be regarded as an appeal to a more adolescent audience (read: urban, edgy and sexualized teenager). In the third scene audiences are taken to the “streets,” recreated in a film musical set, which is obviously set in a fantasy space. At this point their image has become more denim-based, as they wear jeans and denim jackets. They keep their crude image, with a slight alteration, while they via dance attracts attention to their faces, chests, stomachs, pelvic areas, and hips: the feminine areas, moves that engages primarily a male audience.

At the chorus of “I Got a Boy”, the entire group sings the lines of the hook “I got a boy” in unison. The group has switched roles and has become sympathizers for Tiffany's protagonist. While the narrative suggests that Tiffany has got the Boy, the entire group of Girls claims ownership to Him through the chorus. It is not merely a sympathetic gesture, or a collective agreement on that the Boy is acknowledged. It is a musical trick that allows dynamic progression, and the desired vocal timbre, which empowers the female protagonist.

Exploitations of sexuality and appropriations of Western femininity aesthetics was regarded by Jung to be crucial in order to compete on the global market:

In examining the music and visual styles of these Korean pop musicians [BoA and Rain] created for the U.S. market, it is clear that a focus on race, sex, and power is exploited not only by American artists and producers, but by Asian artists and producers as well. (Jung 2010, 234)

While it is obvious that sex sells in Western markets, Jung does not address the role of non-Korean producers in the creation of sexualized content. For “I Got a Boy,” the producers have created a dance drop – a vocal-free section that enables the Girls to show off their dance skills. As it is unhindered by vocals, it is the perfect spot for the display of the female body. It is over-reading to suggest that a dance drop itself sexualizes the female body, but it does draw attention to the body, and it does open up a space for choreographers to potentially create a highly sexualized performance. In “I Got a Boy,” this sexualization is moderate, as the dance “only” draws attention towards the hips, and consequently the Girls’ posteriors, and as such it is not the most severe instance of sexualized dance.

In Miss A’s live performance of “Over U” on the television show *Inkigayo* (Little Princess 2012) there are immediate similarities to the image of K-pop idols Kim (2011) portrayed, and the sexuality Jung identified as compulsory (Jung 2010). The members of Miss A wear black waist-high short pants, boots, and white untidy shirts with spikes. Two of the members of the four-member strong girl group wear red bowties, while the other two wear black leather jackets. When they performed the same song at Music Bank a month later (So 2012), the outfits had the same color palette, however at this performance the black leather jackets were swapped for black undershirts, while they wore their white shirts open.

Here, Miss A addressed an adolescent audience through an industry-inflicted tag as edgy and in opposition to the antagonist of the song.

The edgy attitude their apparel provides is, in terms of semiotics, borrowed from heavy metal aesthetics. Signifiers from metal music are present, and Miss A, who undoubtedly trains, resides, and performs within a patriarchal culture, may by appliance of these signifiers contribute to level the gendered playing field. By the appropriation of male power they position themselves higher within the cultural hierarchy (Walser 1993, 110). Metal aesthetics are commonly applied in popular music in order to create an image that reaches a broader audience. Dibben's view on masculine signifiers is that it constitutes a sense of the female as an autonomous "hard girl," a *femme fatale* (Dibben 1999, 344). She argued that this coin has two sides: it constructs a notion of "Girl Power," while it at the same time reaffirms patriarchal constructions of femininity. "Girl Power" is a derivative of Spice Girls' slogan, and Dibben used it to describe female artists' expression of confidence and its consequences: "'Girl Power' offers an empowering image of female identity, on the other hand it sustains patriarchal constructions of femininity by pandering to the male gaze" (ibid.). Girl power is in this context a display of sexual freedom, where the female is independent and in charge of her own body. However, as it also displays the female body for the male gaze while it appropriates masculinity signifiers, it upholds the continuous reconstruction of patriarchal images of the female body (Dibben 1999, 343–345). In terms of visual images, Miss A appropriates the Western ideal of "Girl Power."

The music in "Over U" tells another story. The song is playful and light, which does not correlate with the sincerity, or anger, "over you" and metal aesthetics often signify. The entire top-line of the chorus is composed of a pentatonic descending three-tone motive performed in shuffle rhythm. It is repeated in similar fashion four times, with the electronically produced vocal pitch sweeps as the only alteration. It is an almost ironic performance

– and undoubtedly childish – in which the music plays a significant role in the production of its meaning.

Whereas “Over U” and “I Got a Boy” were able to amplify or reduce levels of sexualization, Two versions of “The Boys” (Girls’ Generation 2011a, 2011c) achieve similar goals through alterations in lyrics across the versions. The English version of “The Boys” uses self-assertion as a *femme fatale* signifier, but in the Korean version, the protagonist asserts a more humble persona. The Korean version’s narrative deviates from the English version’s story, since the English version’s protagonist acquires self-assertion:

“The Boys,” English Version:	“The Boys,” Korean Version, Translated⁶¹
I can tell you’re looking at me	If you haven’t even started yet because
I know what you see	you’re scared
Any closer and you’ll feel the heat	Then stop complaining!
You don’t have to pretend that	If you hesitate, opportunities will pass
you didn’t notice me	you by
Every look will make it hard to	So open your heart and come out!
breathe	B-Bring the boys out
B-Bring the boys out	

As the “I” flirts with “you,” it provides the male gazer with a glimpse of the female protagonist’s sexual liberation, expressed through high self-esteem and self-assertion. Communication between the “I” and the “You” differs in the Korean version, in part due to the diminished focus on the first-person. It is an encouragement to the recipient to abate her dissatisfaction and rise to counteract the downsides of life. It is more

⁶¹ This is the compilation of two translations, from Infotaip (2014) and Lucy (2011). For translation issues of Hangul lyrics and how they were overcome, see the introduction.

altruistic than the self-orientation of the English text. The lack of self-assertion agrees with the age-old Korean culture and the societal role of the woman, as Willoughby explains: “The ideal woman ... was youthful, spry, cute and innocent, while at the same time mature, sensuous and alluring” (Willoughby 2006, 105).

Later, when the lyrics in both versions read that history is due for revision, there are differences in the authority given to “I” and “You” that also suggest that the Korean language requires a more humbly expressed content, instead of the self-assertion that prevails in the English version:

I know life is a mystery	Show me your tenacity
I'm gonna make history	Shake the earth
I'm taking it from the start	So that everyone can see you
Call all emergency	History will be written anew
I'm watching the phone ring	The main character is you – you!
I'm feeling this in my heart, my heart	B-bring the boys out
B-bring the boys out	

The English version introduces a protagonist that makes the audacious claim to create history, while the Korean listener hears his or her own story narrated. The lyrics actually state that the one addressed is the main character. “The Boys” shows that the variance in lyrical content is also a change in perspective. The voice of the protagonist is altered, and it is due to cultural norms.

While the above lyrics may function as sub-textual voice that portray current and historical female roles, they also reveal cultural idioms in production and authorship, and how lyricists incorporate societal norms in order to cater to two specific cultural locations. In Korean patriarchy, the suppression of female voices is subtle. Women and men have equal juridical rights, however in the traditional family, the woman is supposed to be quiet

and modest. The man's main obligation is to be the head of the family, and provide sufficient income. Thus, an appropriation of Western content, expressed in English prose, and sung by Korean women might contribute in the formation of a Korean culture that supports stronger feminine characters, but also have the opposite effect.

Miss A's relation to a patriarchal society should be treated with slightly more caution than Dibben did in her analysis of Spice Girls. In Korea, the patriarchal culture has been more prominent than in America and Europe in the recent decades. What Dibben suggested in her article was that the male gazer, whom by his economic and patriarchal power, is responsible for the sexualization of the female pop idol (Dibben 1999). This notion is not directly compatible with Korean pop culture, as the images of Korean stars are not as sexualized as those of the West, and she does not account for the fact that songs like "I Got a Boy" have female top-liners that have participated in a fairly democratic production process. Dibben's ideas of the female idol as a construct of male power need to be reconsidered and nuanced. The unique way the female body is displayed in these K-pop performances is the result of a hybridization of European-American concepts of sexual liberation, on the one hand, and with the conservative patriarchal culture of Korea, on the other. Few Korean artists show off the upper part of their bodies, although girl groups usually have bare legs. This femininity ideal is a sexualized one, and it borrows from Western cultures in order to cater to specific genders or cultural locations. One goal for this display is to reach the broadest possible demographic. But the male gaze is necessarily represented in these audiences, which the visual appropriation of the *femme fatale* makes apparent. To have accurate observations of femininity displays, musical observations need to be made, since the top-line is able to emphasize the *femme fatale* of Tiffany's protagonist in "I Got a Boy," and it is able to emasculate the visual contents in "Over U."

CONCLUSION

Norwegian producers and artists have played an intrinsic role in the K-pop industry's drive towards global dissemination of K-pop and related cultural products. Through such transnational collaborations, K-pop has become a cultural hybrid that is able to initiate global cultural homogenization processes, and as such form a "world culture." It has been – and still is – conceived through soft power policies inaugurated by the Korean Government and the initiation of the globalization principle of cultural technology. Cultural technology incorporates a three-step process, of which the two latter stages have been the meta-theme for this thesis.

One of cultural technology's transnational artist collaborations occurred in Crayon Pop and Ylvis's medley act "The Fox Say Bar Bar Bar," performed at Mnet Asian Music Awards in 2013. Crayon Pop's superhit "Bar Bar Bar" – one of the tracks that enabled such collaboration, was released in both a global and a Korean version with the intention to cater to international and Korean music markets. These versions differed in form, video content, and harmonic progressions. Such variances raise concerns of whether there exists a cultural location (i.e., beyond producers' perceptions of market idioms) where, for example, one chord progression caters better to audiences than another.

For the medley act "The Fox Say Bar Bar Bar," several cultural locations were juxtaposed and negotiated in the performance, but also online. It created a real-time commotion on the Kpop Norge Facebook page. It was evident that while fans eagerly responded to the performances of their K-pop idols their responses to Ylvis's part of the medley act was unprecedented. This suggests that even devoted fans negate their idols in a cultural thirdspatial negotiation when familiar cultural representatives take the stage.

The thirdspace has exemplified the space where the production of K-pop and negotiation of its idioms occur, as these processes are unique because of their boundaries' geographical and cultural offset. The encouragement by executives of the K-pop industry to abolish geographical delimitation and protrude with transnational production is one factor that governs Norwegian producers' creation of music for Korea. Another factor is the lack of a financially lucrative Norwegian domestic market, and as such producers must turn their attention towards non-domestic markets. Since the U.S. music market is more or less enclosed for foreign producers, and the Chinese market is inaccessible because of substantial censorship, the attention of Norwegian producers is drawn towards Korea. But production of music for foreign markets is as a result not characterized by equitability in terms of power.

With an asymmetrical division of power and cultural differences, the knowledge negotiated by producers and A&R departments across geographical and cultural locations become characterized by creations of a Self and an Other. This obviously influences the ultimate musical output, and that was the case when Tomas Smågesjø and Charite Viken produced "Rock Your Body." However, when Smågesjø and K.T. Park produced "Twilight" for Boys Republic, their recognition of a "Korean flavor" directed the diminution of an "American flavor," which was advanced by the revisions made by an external Korean producer.

Perceptions of success factors also directed the production of the pending Girls' Generation track "Déjà Vu." The "Déjà Vu" production process has revealed seven ideas and principles that may or may not be applicable to a wide range of K-pop productions: (1) The track should be produced in a manner that allows it to guide a top-line. The top-lining process should therefore be intuitive and must quickly spawn ideas to melody and content; (2) contradictions in lyrics are good, which could be exemplified with the phrase "boy it feels so good, when you're being bad"; (3)

the top-liner's tessitura guides melody and restricts the vocal part's ambitus. On three occasions, Camilla Norderud did not reach the desired note, which eventually led to alterations in melody; (4) multiple singers should be used to create variance. This makes the track easier to pitch to A&R departments, as the demo version would have a sound similar to the final version; (5) the use of session musicians might be purely coincidental. The rap section would not have had the same sonic qualities if Kine Hanssen decided to stay at home on 20 June 2014. She did not participate at the camp formally – rather she merely stopped by for a chat; (6) a track is enhanced by the use of urban signifiers (i.e., by the incorporation of rap sections); (7) a second verse should be different from the first, and although Nermin Harambašić did not follow up on this idea in his own production, it is a strategy that was encouraged at Song:Expo. Also, the team used improvisation as a principle composition technique – a notion often disputed by scholars. Furthermore, an hour of the session was devoted to the recording of short phrases that mimic improvisation, which suggests that such elements are imperative to K-pop production.

Comparative spectrogram analyses of two versions of the tracks “The Boys,” performed by Girls’ Generation and “Break Down,” performed by Super Junior–M, also allowed the deduction of production practices. For both tracks, the occurrences of English words and phrases were identical, which suggests that these sections never were rerecorded for the alternate language version. Both tracks also show signs of application of Auto-Tune. Specifically for “The Boys,” rhythmic variances occur across versions, as well as discrepancies in the number of syllables. Also, the souling recorded for each version is unique. For “Break Down,” it became apparent that the vocal line's formants in the Korean version do not correlate with the formants of the vocal lines in the Mandarin version, and that these discrepancies have distinct rhythmic and melodic effects.

Changes were more severe when the Norwegian Eurovision Song Contest track “Perfect Tragedy,” performed by Don Ramage, was altered and rereleased in Korea as the TVXQ track “Hi Ya Ya Summer Day.” Significant changes were made in terms of form, arrangement, and lyrics, but its melody and harmonic progressions were retained. It is perhaps more impressive that the song could be transferred to a new cultural location and become a hit – with some adjustments – especially after a consideration of the fact that the track was originally an ESC failure.

It is clear that cultural locations pertain to certain musical idioms, but such locations also possess certain standards for the visualization of female bodies in music videos. K-pop literature has been concerned with this theme, however it has by and large excluded musical analyses – analyses that can highlight or diminish the apparent sexualization imagery of female bodies in music videos. In the case of “I Got a Boy,” the phrase “hey, let me introduce myself” was sung in such a manner that it amplified sexual connotations, and in “Over U,” the playful – perhaps cheerful – character of the music diminished the sexual connotations inherent in its video. “The Boys,” which was released in both Korean and English, made it clear that the content of sexualization in its lyrics are definitely altered in order to cater to certain markets. The English version contained female self-assertion, while in the Korean version the woman protagonist was portrayed as humble and submissive.

As such, musical content should be addressed in studies of Hallyu and K-pop. Currently, that is not the case and the trend does not appear to cease. Research on music in K-pop is very limited from an international point of view, and musicology as a discipline is rarely represented. From a national point of view, research on K-pop’s music has yet to be conducted. With extensive and established K-pop production, and the presence of fandom communities in Norway, there are plenty of opportunities for

original research in fields like the music industry, fandom, reception, and music productions.

It is essential to include musical analyses as transnational processes are initiated because of specific musical contents – Dsign Music, DeepFrost and Ingrid Margrethe Skretting would not have produced K-pop if the K-pop industry did not find potential in their music. Such processes are also initiated by pull factors such as producers' identification of market opportunities. Thus transnational processes are not merely initiated from above.

By an examination of the music itself, it is also possible to find new explanations for the K in K-pop and to reveal K-pop's "Korean-ness." It might reside in the music's Korean flavor, which is comprised of the musical idioms and sound that producers find are unique for Korean music productions and K-pop in particular (i.e., beyond mere musical characteristics), and the sound that develops in the interaction between international producers in the formation of K-pop. It is a thirdspatial negotiation that indeed produces Otherness, but it is through this constitution of an Other that the Korean flavor is developed.

In addition to the inclusion of music in Hallyu studies, researchers need to look into the implications and effects of Korea's soft power policies on Norway, and raise questions that concern the possibility of a "brain drain." K-pop provides lucrative economic opportunities for Norwegian producers and artists, who regard the Norwegian music market as financially uninteresting. Without a strong local market, producers do not produce music for it, and look elsewhere for economic and cultural opportunities.

Detrimental prospects aside, Norwegian K-pop producers may potentially create a ripple effect that enables other local producers to establish themselves on non-domestic markets. In particular, the Song:Expo initiative abounds with potential of this sort. Dsign Music is so well established in the Korean music market, and Song:Expo so influential, that

local talented songwriters have a relatively easy access to these markets if their cultural output is of high enough quality.

Otherwise, the producers of Dsign Music have an incredible amount of information on topics such as the K-pop industry – for example on how most of a track’s revenue is paid to Entertainment companies rather than as fees to its producers. They also have valuable information on production practice. Girls’ Generation’s “Tell Me Your Wish (Genie),” deserves further inquiry as it was allegedly produced as the result of a “very rocky and peculiar process.” The Exo track “Wolf” also deserves attention, due to the use of highly arbitrary production methods.

Norwegian K-pop comprises an extensive body of music that is marketed as a part of the Korean Wave – a wave that shows no sign of retreat. On the contrary, Hallyu continues to spread to divergent geographical and cultural locations, and the wave sustains its substantial foothold in Norway. Therefore, additional studies of this phenomenon and its music are imperative if we are to understand the culturally forceful Wave that already has breached Norway’s cultural periphery.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview with Leiv Aspén

This interview with Dsign Music's Head of Europe, Leiv Aspén, was conducted at Dsign Music's locales in Fjordgata 1, Trondheim at 11:00 AM, 10 February 2014.

The interview starts immediately in the recording.⁶²

Brian Christer Nebb Rånes: Det jeg gjerne vil høre om er hvordan dere kom dere inn i K-pop-bransjen.

Leiv Aspén: Nå har ikke jeg vært ansatt før august i Dsign. Jeg var jo ikke med i starten, men har hørt historien. Det handler om at man så jo at ... det har aldri vært interessant for Dsign å skrive for norske artister. Ikke på grunn av nivået eller musikken, men på grunn av at det ikke er nok marked for å leve av det. I Norge er det ikke så vanlig å betale for en produksjon, for eksempel. Det vil si at hvis man som produsent er med på å skrive ei låt og artisten velger å gi ut låta med den produksjonen du har laga, bare bytta vokalen, så skal du som regel ha en produksjons-fee, i tillegg til royalties. Det får man sjelden i Norge, samtidig som man selger lite skiver i Norge. Det er ikke nok enheter, så man får ikke noen inntekt her. I USA selger man mye, det samme i England, men desto mer da i Asia og Japan, og Korea spesielt, men også Thailand og Indonesia. Så ... og det var jo litt gjennom Universal, for Dsign har publishing gjennom Universal og Pelle Lidell, og Universal-systemet snakker jo sammen. Universal Korea og Universal Sverige prater jo sammen. Så begynte man å prøve seg gjennom de og fikk på en måte fotfeste med lablene der som vi har lyst til å bruke, og det er spesielt Anne Judith som er en veldig dyktig top-liner som begynte, og S.M. Entertainment og Anne har veldig stor forståelse for hverandre og

⁶² The recording of the interview is available upon request.

musikken de ønsker, så hvis Anne Judith skriver noe for S.M. Entertainment, som er Girls' Generation, Boys Republic, så er det nesten en sikker cut da, har blitt. Og så har jo Dsign utvida, og nå er det ikke bare de fire låtskriverne ... nå har vi danna et management, så nå er jeg manager for låtskrivere her og i England, og da har vi åpna opp den Korea-veien da. Så det er mye enklere å få de til å høre på, og få en cut nå enn det var i starten.

R: Er det Universal som har kommet til dere da, eller er det dere som har gått til Universal og så har de tatt med dere til Korea?

A: Nei, det er jo en gjensidig greie, men det var vi som tok kontakt med Universal i starten og spurte: "Har dere lyst til å signe oss for en publishing-avtale?" "Ja," og sammen arbeidet mot det markedet da, det er jo rett og slett ... men det er litt enklere for oss i Korea enn i USA for eksempel, for artistene er mer trofaste mot den lille [amerikanske] produsentgruppa, så hvis vi sender en låt som for eksempel Lady Gaga ville ha hatt, så er det ikke sikkert de catcher på den likevel, siden de heller vil bruke egne produsenter.

R: Og i Sør-Korea er det jo, de ønsker jo gjerne å plukke litt produsenter fra hele verden, kanskje for å utvide markedet, eller?

A: De lablene har jo egne produsenter, men de merker at de ikke er ... det er ikke det at de ikke er gode nok, men på en måte, det blir litt for likt, kanskje. Når du får nordiske og europeiske produsenter så blir de, de tenker litt annerledes, de bor ikke i Sør-Korea og hører ikke den samme musikken hele tiden, sant, så man tenker litt annerledes. Så er det jo det som er kult da, at i Korea, de synger ikke på engelsk, men på koreansk, men hvis du skriver en kul setning eller noe så tar de med den. Vi hadde for eksempel en

cut som heter Wolf. Hele låta er “tsjonbakabakabob,” så plutselig er det “Wolf” og det bygde de et helt konsept rundt, som bare var en helt tilfeldig greie som ... i Dsign, de som er i studio, sa rop “Wolf og så hyler du.” Og det har blitt et kjempe ... konseptalbum og sceneshowet er ulver og liksom, hele pakka, da. Men likevel så skal de holde på, de ønsker ikke å være vesten, men de bruker vesten som et innslag, om du skjønner. De er veldig sånn nasjonal, eller tro mot sin opprinnelse.

R: Vil du si at det er unikt for det dere produserer eller er det generelt for alt som kommer av K-pop akkurat det?

A: Tror det er litt for K-pop generelt, ja. Det er deres valg det, ikke vårt. Vi har nesten droppet å lage engelske lyrics, ikke sant. Vi kan bare synge “tsjongbakabakabong,” for det handler om at de har en helt annen flere konsonanter og aksent enn det vi har. Hvis vi skal perfekttere engelskuttalen, må de uansett skrive om det. Og det er ikke alltid at teksten samkjøres med den engelske teksten heller.

R: Får dere noen retningslinjer å følge?

A: Ja, vi spør jo, eller det er både og da, noen ganger så liksom bare “fuck det,” dette var ei kul låt, vi sender den. Den høres ut som en Boys Republic-låt, vi sender den dit. Noen ganger er det at man får briefs, som det heter, da. Da får man gjerne en mail med det og det artisten er på utkikk etter. Ei låt som er sånn og sånn og sånn, litt soul, litt som den her av Frank Ocean, med litt som den linken her fra noe annet, ikke sant. Så man får litt bestillinger, men det handler om at det er ei jækla bra låt. Det er ikke en regel med det ene eller andre på en måte, begge tingene funker. Men det er ofte at vi får briefs, og da får man av flere artister som leter etter låter med noen stikkord bak.

R: Hvor detaljerte er de, slike briefs?

A: Noen ganger er det bare “kolon, sjanger, sjanger, sjanger,” noen ganger er det et par-tre sjangere og noen YouTube-videoer, andre ganger er det litt mer detaljert. Men det blir ofte sånn at man får en brief og så sender man ei låt og så, “kult, men hva om du gjør sånn og sånn og sånn?” og så endrer man på låta, da, fra bestilling ifra A&R-en fra labellet for eksempel.

R: Hvor lang tid tar en slik prosess fra du får begynt med låta?

A: Det kan gå veldig fort og det kan gå litt seint, fordi at når du sender inn ei låt, først så skal man prøvesynge og så at artisten legger vokal oppå, også når de har samla, hvis det skal være på et album, får samla alle låtene og så har A&R-en møter om hvilke låter som blir med, så da er den på hold på en måte, altså de vil ikke at vi skal cutte den til andre, de vil ha enerett på den inntil de har bestemt seg eller ikke. Så det kan ta alt fra én uke til tre-fire måneder, i verste fall. Men vi har jo en back-katalog på låter ti år tilbake, og plutselig blir en av de låtene cutta liksom.

R: Hvor stor er den katalogen?

A: Det vet jeg ikke, men det er flere tusen låter.

R: Som er produsert herifra?

A: Ja

R: Over hvor lang tid da?

A: Det er vel ti-tolv år. Men i starten så var det ikke slik at du skriver hundre låter de første årene, liksom. Kanskje tjue-tretti, og så har det liksom blitt mer og mer og mer, da. Så nå har vi jo flere låtskrivere også, så det blir jo flere låter da.

R: Hvor mange er det dere har? Dere har i Los Angeles, her og i Seoul.

A: Vi har sånn halvveis i Seoul. De vil at vi skal bygge opp slik at vi har, jeg er Europa-sjef, Robin [Jenssen] er USA-sjef, også har de Asia-sjef, da. Så det er liksom tre fotfester, da. I L.A. har vi et hus hvor det er en kjerne på fire, også kommer låtskriverne litt innom alltid, også inviterer vi artistene dit. Det er litt lettere å skrive for en artist om artisten faktisk kommer dit, og så får man cutta nesten der og da.

R: Men dere har ikke hatt noen på besøk her?

A: Jo, vi har hatt flere her. Alex Carlson fra L.A., og Sverige har vært her, ei fra Iran var her tidlig i januar. Hun er kjæresten til den iranske prinsen. Vasser i penger, vet du.

R: Celebert selskap.

A: Jaja, de i L.A. henger jo bare på, de var jo på den musikkprisen som var nettopp.

R: Grammy?

A: Ja, de henger jo med dem, vi er jo der, liksom. Det er ikke så mange som reiser hit og rundt omkring, i og med at man har internett. Så man kan lett

sende over ei låt og så få tilbakemeldinga som kommer. Men selvfølgelig er det jo kjempekult når det først kommer folk.

R: Tar dere med dere produsentene derifra [L.A.] og herifra og reiser til Sør-Korea, for eksempel?

A: Jaja, det er jo ganske ofte. Det er jo på camper, gjerne. Eller man drar dit ei uke, to uker i slengen. Og det handler jo litt om “nettverking” også. Å bli bedre kjent med markedet og klientene dine. Det gir jo en helt annen vibb å sitte i studio og skrive låter sammen enn å bare få en track, men man trenger ikke gjøre det hele tida, men det er viktig å holde den kontakten varm, tror jeg. Og også at man er på bølgelengde musikalsk. Mental Audio skal til Korea i mars eller april, så skal Charite [Viken] og Tomas [Smågesjø] til L.A. i cirka samme periode og skrive litt der, og Charite får prøvd seg litt som artist og sånne ting.

R: Det er ganske ofte at dere...

A: Det er i hvert fall et par ganger i året at hver enkelt på en måte rører på seg.

R: Har dere med dere mye i bagasjen da?

A: Da sitter jo produsentene i mellom og skriver tracks som de kan ha med seg. Råskisser uten vokal, som man kan bare, om man skal starte helt fra scratch i studio så bruker man veldig mye lenger tid enn om en skal ... om en har med seg en tjue-tretti tracks, så kan man spille opp, og hvis top-lineren kikker på ei låt da så, “okey, da jobber vi med den.”

R: Det er om å få noen låter cutta når man er der?

A: Nei, men da, hvis man reiser ... når man reiser til Sverige så skriver man med andre top-linere, som også sikter seg inn på Asia, så da sikter ... da er målet å skrive ei god låt som man senere sender – pitcher. Men hvis vi reiser til Korea, til et label, da er det litt andre forutsetninger for...

[Tape recorder turned off and back on]

A: Da sitter man jo med A&R-en til en artist, så da kan A&R-en si ja eller nei, eller han kan gi deg direkte feedback så ei låt kan bli cutta, men hvis du skriver bare med andre låtskrivere som ikke har noe med en artist eller label å gjøre, så skriver man bare for å lage ei god låt igjen.

R: Er det lenge siden dere begynte å eksportere, herifra og dit?

A: Fem-seks år, kanskje, har ikke de tallene.

R: Det er så lenge siden? Det har jo ikke vært noe mye skriving om K-pop i Norge i det hele tatt før slutten av 2011 og det er veldig marginalt.

A: Vi synes jo at i hvert fall Adressa kunne ha skrevet mer. Vi hadde jo tolv nummer én på *Billboard* World-lista i 2013. Altså, verdenslista. Tolv låter! Vi skrev jo vinnerlåta til YouTube Awards. Men det er ikke så mange av [låtene] som kommer til Amerika, og det er jo dit vi kikker. Pressen i Norge driter jo i hva som skjer i Asia. Det er Amerika som er spennende, ikke sant, og Europa. Men det har blitt mer, da. Har sett DeepFrost har hatt noen hits, og de skriver om det og det er jo bra, så. Men ja, det er mye større enn hva media velger å skrive om.

R: Tror du det er for at det foregår mest i utlandet?

A: Jeg tror det har mest å gjøre med at de rett og slett ikke får det med seg og at de ikke følger med på den radaren. Så er det jo litt vår egen feil, at vi ikke sier i fra. Det handler jo gjerne om at man må, om man skal finne en skatt må man gjerne ha et skattekart, og noen hint på veien.

R: Har det stor betydning for dere om dere får kommet ut i media her i Norge, eller er det viktigst å fokusere på noe annet?

A: For vår del er jo ikke medieomtale [viktig], vi er jo ikke artister, vi skal ikke selge ei låt til et publikum. Vi skal jo selge låter til A&Rs og slikt. Men det handler jo litt om anerkjennelse. Hvis man, hvis vi skulle ha søkt på ei støtteordning eller noe sånt, så hjelper det at media har vært med og støtte opp om og dokumentert fakta da, selvfølgelig. Det har jo egentlig ikke noe å si sånn sett. Men vi vil jo ... alle her er jo musikere, de har det jo i seg. Vil jo litt i rampelyset.

R: Må jo litt fram. Hva tenker dere gjør deres musikk unik, det dere produserer her?

A: Sånn fra et personlig perspektiv, så er det jævlig dyktige musikere. Og man sender ikke fra seg ting man ikke synes er fett selv. Har på en måte det shit-filteret selv først. Det er ikke alle sammen som er skrudd sammen slik, de tenker bare, "penger er penger, cut er cut." Men her er det veldig mange vanvittig dyktige musikere da, som på en måte velger å lage musikk for andre. Og det tror jeg skinner litt gjennom at det er *god* kommersiell popmusikk. Det er ikke lett kommersiell popmusikk på en måte. Tror ikke vi har noen sånn, det er jo selvfølgelig slik at, du hører jo på hooks og sånn, jeg kan høre at det er Anne Judith [Wik] som har laga den, men det er ikke slik at andre hører det. På produksjoner hører jeg forskjell på Ronny

[Svendsen] og Eirik [Johansen] for eksempel. Jeg kan høre det. Man har jo distinkte features der. Jeg tror ikke det sånn ... man kan si at man har en liten signatur, men det har kanskje mest med produksjonsstil å gjøre enn med noe annet. Vanskelig å si, det er ikke slik at det er mer gitar eller noe.

R: Er det slik at enkelte produsenter her selger til enkelte grupper?

A: Ja, altså, det teamet i L.A. skriver jo, ble leid inn for å skrive fem låter til en amerikansk artist, og da gjør man jo bare det. Mens her så kan man jo ... det er forskjellige måter. Noen ganger får man en cut med en artist eller så får man jo ei bestilling på ei låt, og så liker de det så godt at, "okey, kan dere lage fire til det neste albumet?" Så det er forskjellig sånn sett.

R: For å ta det forrige spørsmålet videre. Hva tenker du gjør K-popen unik? Hvilke musikalske stiltrekk er det som du ville ha dratt fram?

A: For meg er K-pop prog-pop. Amerikansk pop er mer sånn dronete, det går repetitivt og veldig oppskriftsmessig og har en formel, mens i Korea så er det ... det er sennep og sjokolade og alt i ei låt. Du tror du skjønner låta, så kommer et parti som ikke stemmer hverken med toneart eller taktart, og fucker opp alt. Og det er liksom veldig sånn progressiv pop, og det synes jeg er litt artig. Og den Psy-låta, "Gangnam Style," er jo ganske dronete, til forskjell fra øvrig K-pop, da. Selv om den er ganske koko og crazy. Men den er på en måte veldig beskjeden kontra annen K-pop, da. Og så har du J-pop igjen da, Japansk pop, som er veldig jazzy, hvor det er mye fokus på vokalen. En lyricist, en som skriver tekst, er i Japan på en måte veldig sett opp til. De har en høyere ... de er veldig anerkjente, da. Det er jo ikke så veldig vanlig egentlig.

R: Så det er litt mer poetisk?

A: Ja. Mye mer fokus på tekst. Også er det jo crazy musikkvideoer og helt tullete. De er jo tullete, men det er jo fordi det er så mange folk. Girls' Generation og Boys Republic opplever jo Beatles-tilstander og de har solgt mer enn Beatles, liksom. Det er helt crazy, vi skjønner det ikke her. Men det er jo for at det er så mye folk der at du blir lært opp til ... du får det inn med morsmelka at du ikke kommer til å bli noe stort, på en måte. Det er så mange der [Sør-Korea] at du må være glad du får deg en jobb. Når du først klarer å bli en artist, da, så er det så, de er jo guder, liksom.

R: Det blir så høytsevendende?

A: Ja, du blir jo fotfulgt, liksom. Så hvis du har vært på et hotell, så kommer de ei uke etterpå og tar bilder av hotellet og forteller at "her var det bandet," liksom. Det er helt crazy.

R: Har dere opplevd å være borti slike tilstander?

A: Nei, ikke som jeg vet, nei. Nei låtskriverne blir sjeldent ... eller sånn som Twitter da, hvis fansen finner ut at du har jobbet med det bandet så følger de deg. Og finner ut ting om deg. De er jo liksom sånne nerds, da. Ei som jobbet i Universal Publishing i Korea måtte slette Twitter-kontoen fordi de begynte å forfølge henne.

Appendix B: Interview with Leiv Aspén and Tomas Smågesjø

The following interview was conducted at 12:30 PM on 7 April 2014, at Dsign Music's locales in Fjordgata 1, Trondheim. The interviewees were Leiv Aspén and one of the producers from the Dsign Music family, Tomas Smågesjø.

The interview starts at 1:20 in the recording.⁶³

Brian Christer Nebb Rånes: Kan du se litt over rapportene og forklare hvilken betydning de har for dere?⁶⁴ Hva dere bruker de til, for eksempel.

Leiv Aspén: Vi hadde bare et oppdrag fra Music Norway, vi. Om å lage en rapport. Eller et veikart som de kaller det. De har jo veikart til Tyskland, England, USA, bare slik at folk som ikke er i Korea eller Japan kan lese dette og ha litt mer forståelse om hvordan markedet fungerer. Så da er det jo kort litt om hva det er som er forskjellen mellom K-pop og J-pop, og hva de musikalske begrepene er, litt om salgstall, og det er jo liksom, sammenliknet med "U.K., Germany and France," i hvert fall U.K. og Germany som ganske store navn i musikkhistorien, eller musikkbransjen i Europa. Ser du her, for eksempel, er det bare CD-er. Japan, det er liksom crazy mye da. Så er det litt om hvordan medielandskapet fungerer, hvilke TV-stasjoner som er viktige. Skal du prøve deg i Asia er det å ha et slikt dokument ganske greit. Nettsider hvor en kan orientere seg, radiostasjoner. Aviser. Det er jo en slags orientering da, et veikart. Som de som ikke har så mye peiling på musikk og på musikkbransjen der borte kjapt kan lese seg opp på. Så om en skal dra noen linjer er det på en måte det at, grunnen til

⁶³ The recording of the interview is available upon request.

⁶⁴ The reports referred to here are reports written by Dsign Music for Music Norway. It is a report in three sections, and it is obtainable from Innovasjon Norge. Its parts are titled "Veikart til asiatisk marked," "MUSIC MARKET in South Korea," and "J-pop and K-pop."

at vi synes det er interessant er at det er så sykt mange folk der, og de er et kjøpesterkt publikum. Bortsett fra Skandinavia, da, som er bortskjemt på...

[Tomas Smågesjø walks in, and Leiv introduces us to each other]

A: Denne står jo på engelsk [the report “MUSIC MARKET in South Korea”], og det er noe vi fikk i oppgave fra Music Norway, om å lage et veikart for å orientere seg i musikkbransjen.

R: Er det i forbindelse med en sponsoravtale dere har med de?

A: Tror ikke det var noe spons, men vi fikk vel dekt noe reising, for å reise dit, og det ble jo sikkert kombinert med noe arbeid.

R: Dere har jo noen generelle salgstall i dokumentene her, har dere noen salgstall for dere, eller de låtene dere har produsert for Korea?

A: Robin [Jenssen] har det. Han har for Dsign Core Team, da. Vi har vel noe, men det er ikke noe som vil gi noe bilde på noe. Du kan jo sende på en mail til Robin, på [e-mail address] så kan de sende deg noen dokumenter. Han som er den nerden.

R: Også hadde det vært fint med ei liste over alle låtene dere har produsert. Ikke *alle* såklart, men de for Sør-Korea.

A: På de ti årene de har holdt på har de produsert over 700 låter, men aller er jo ikke *cutta* selvfølgelig.

R: Først og fremst de som er *cutta* og gitt ut.

A: Hvis du går på Wikipedia-sida så skal det jo være ei halvveis grei oversikt.

Tomas Smågesjø: Joda, den er oppdatert den.

A: Det tror jeg er den nettsida Robin er mest glad i. Der andre går på YouPorn, går Robin på Wikipedia.

S: Når folk skal kose seg, på en måte, ja. Rødvin og Wikipedia.

R: Fredag og lørdagskveld.

S: Ja. Scroll nederst da, Exo comeback song Wolf, ja det stemmer det.

A: Dette er jo ikke vår? Å, ja, det er sikkert på, den bør være på engelsk, vet du. Vil ikke ha det på norsk. Den engelske er vesentlig mye bedre. Her står det veldig mye informasjon, og det er jo på engelsk da. Production Highlights [points to links to the individual albums], så kan du gå innpå der så kan du få salgstallene til den skiva.

R: Men det finnes vel ikke for alle låtene som er der? Hvis dere har en oversikt hadde det vært konge.

A: Det vet jeg ikke, det må du høre med Robin om.

S: Det gjør det, det ligger på, det gjør det på nesten alt. Gå på en helt annen sang.

A: Her går vi innpå hvert album.

S: Men nå går du på samme linken, prøv en.

A: Men det gjør det jo på alle, men ikke på enkeltsingler, på sanger gjør det ikke det.

S: Der står det faktisk bare...

A: Du får et greit bilde, men hvis du vil ha det totale så bare send en epost til Robin og hør om han har det.

[Producer Nermin Harambašić walks in]

H: Det er varmt her inne.

A: Du går nå med jakke inne, da!

S: Har så tynne fingre.

A: Se her, leddene mine er større enn fingeren. Er de det på deg?

S: Jeg er litt feitere enn deg akkurat rundt fingrene.

R: Mine er ganske tynne, altså.

A: Du har sånne som meg, pianofingre. Mer som...

S: Pølse!

A: Taster så mye du. Skulle ha skrevet på skrivemaskin. Du [Rånes] kan vel utnytte deg av [nods towards Smågesjø].

R: Det var det jeg tenkte å gjøre. Kunne vi ha gått gjennom et par av låtene dere har produsert for Sør-Korea, om du har tid til det?

S: Jeg lurer på om Nermin er bedre akkurat der. Jeg har ikke jobbet så mye i Sør-Korea. Har jo jobbet mest her og andre steder.

A: Men du har mye mer peiling enn meg.

S: Ja, det har jeg. Men jeg kan ikke gå på noen spesifikke låter.

A: Du kan jo forklare ganske greit.

S: Ja, det kan jeg. Men jeg kan ikke gi deg informasjon om en låt jeg har jobbet på, for jeg har ikke jobbet på låter i Korea ennå. Men det har Nermin, så hvis du vil ha det...

A: Jeg tenkte mer vi kunne høre på ei låt Dsign har skrevet, så kunne du ha forklart, så langt du får det til da. Hvis du har tid.

S: Jeg har et par minutter, det går bra. Men som sagt, jeg har ikke vært med og skrevet noen av de sangene da. Så hvis det er det du er interessert i så er det han [Harambašić] du snakker med.

R: Jeg tar gjerne alt jeg kan få.

S: Ja.

A: Er det noen spesiell låt du vil...

R: "I Got a Boy," eller "Wolf," for eksempel, men hvis dere har noen hjertebarn, så...

S: De er gode eksempler de.

A: Hvilken ville du [Smågesjø] ha tatt?

S: Det er vel egentlig "I Got a Boy" som ble størst da. Fikk YouTube Award og den greia der så.

[Leiv connects a TV-monitor to his computer]

S: Du er der, ja. Skal vi på TV-en?

[Aspén puts on the music video to Girls' Generation's "I Got a Boy," which continues to play during the interview]

R: Er det dere som har produsert introen her også?

S: Det er noe de har gjort selv.

A: Tror de har lagt den på for videoen sin del.

S: Den er ikke på plata en gang.

A: De er jo helt crazy der borte da, når det gjelder videoer og film. De er jo kortfilmer.

R: Hvis dere har noen tanker om beaten, for eksempel eller synth-bruken dere synes er enten typisk for dere eller K-pop, så bare kom med det.

S: Selve beaten her er ikke så veldig typisk K-pop, egentlig. Den er mer en sånn “vestlig” – om jeg kan kalle det det – beat. Mye hippere enn den kanskje har vært der da. Tror kanskje det handler litt om at låtmaterialet i Korea har vært mye mer sånn streit, men litt sånn “out of control” i form av at de bare peiser på, med temaskifter og litt sånne ting, da. Men her skifter den tema på en veldig kul måte, her skifter tempo og tematikken. Og det er jo egentlig ingen, nesten alt er jo bare refreng. Alt er liksom ... Her skifter den tempo [2:03 in the YouTube video].

R: Hva vil du kalle den delen her?

S: Jeg ville ha sagt refrenget, men det er jo aldri sånn ... for nå kommer jo låttittelen, så da er det jo teoretisk et refreng. De synger låttittelen der. Men hvordan du legger det opp er alltid basert på hvordan du klarer å formidle sangen, sånn at folk forstår hva sangen handler om, eller hvilken sang det er. Så hvor refrenget er hen, det er ikke så farlig, for nå er det jo samme temaet [2:40 into the video] og refrenget er jo ferdig for lenge siden. De har begynt med tekst igjen. Det var et refreng, men nå er det over. Nå er vi tilbake til refrenget igjen, da [3:00 into the video].

[Tape recorder turned off and back on]

S: Eller en slags refrenghale. Så tror jeg kanskje vi har et mellomspill [3:10 into the video], eller en middle-eight som man kaller det.

R: Er det dette du [Aspén] ville ha kalt prog-pop?

A: Jeg kaller det det ja, men det er fordi det er så mange variasjoner over det samme ref ... her kommer det en gang til også er det en ny...

S: Det som varierer mest er jo det de synger. Det er jo tusen deler i vokalen. Det er mye blunking [om musikkvideoen].

A: "Blunk-pop".

S: Det er mye blunking. Det funker jo alltid. Hvis du blunker litt så blir det god stemning uansett.

A: Men selvfølgelig, altså, produsenten studerer jo hva som skjer i musikkmarkedet, hva er det andre [gjør], er det gitar eller er det electro eller er det dubstep, men poenget er, i top-lining må du tenke på at det skal være ... det er jo en helt annen type fonetikk i Korea enn i Norge, eller i engelsk pop, da.

S: Det handler jo bare om hvordan språket deres er da, hvilke ord de får til å si. De sier ikke slike lange, runde ord. Det er jo små korte rytmiske ting. Slik er jo språket også, sant. Koreansk og japansk er jo ganske staccato, og da er det naturlig at det ikke er ... da er det ikke alt du får til å si.

A: Det artige her er jo at i top-linen som ble skrevet på engelsk, har det kanskje blitt sånn. De har jo tatt vare på "I got a Boy." Og laget en video ut av det. Det samme er det med "Wolf" også. De har jo tatt med "I am the Wolf," er det ikke det?

S: De skriver om alt, bortsett fra de kule engelske ordene, som de får til å si, som er kule å si.

R: Litt som hooks.

S: Ja. “Wolf” er jo veldig ... Styrken til Wolf er jo “Aoooouuu” [the howl], det er den folk husker. Resten av sangen er det ingenting du husker av den sangen der, men når du kommer til refrenget og de synger “aouuu,” så er det, hvis du hører det fra starten så er det slik at, “hæ, dette har jeg aldri hørt før.” For det er bare sånn “bababababa” [eight note rhythm in approximately 150 bpm], det er liksom ingenting å ta tak i. Men det viktigste med den sangen er den parten der, “Wolf,” og det hylet. Og det tror jeg kjennetegner mye av Korea-popen, at det er...

A: Konsept. De er veldig flinke til å...

S: Sterke konsept. Alle sammen bare ... Sånn er det jo i hele verden egentlig, bare at vi gjør det ikke ofte, altså uten sammenlikning for øvrig, men “Macarena” hadde jo dans og det er et konsept å ta videre, det er populært. Det er mange slike greier. Grusom sang, men de hadde liksom salg og en dans. Det er jo det de gjør på hver eneste singel – prøver å gjøre på hver eneste singel – at det er et konsept.

R: I hvor stor grad er dere med på å utvikle selve konseptet?

S: Det utvikles i studio, sammen med låtskriver og produsent og hele greia.

A: Låta ja, men etterpå, det er jo hvis de, altså først hører de låta, også tenker folk at: “dette kan vi gjøre noe ut av.” Det er jo det at produsent og top-liner tenker litt når de skriver låta, på en måte.

S: Ikke bare litt, man tenker på det. Man tenker konsept når man vet de vil ha det. Så nå lager vi ferdig et konsept, “Wolf” er jo da ... Jeg har jo jobbet og jobbet med én [låt] for en produsent som heter K.T. Park. Jeg jobbet med han i fjor. Og jeg vet ikke hvordan den sangen ligger an. Den er vel under

bearbeiding, de skulle skrive litt mer på den. Men den er jo, den hadde jo konseptet helt fra starten. Fra jeg presenterte låtidé til ... Så begynte vi å jobbe med det rundt et konsept da. Han hadde liksom en idé om et konsept, så bare "ok, vi kjører det." Og da bygges hele låta rundt det. Tekst og lydvalg og alt, da.

R: Er det gjennom S.M. [Entertainment] det også?

S: Nei, K.T. Park er vel ikke gjennom S.M. Han er vel selvstendig, tror jeg. Uavhengig. Både uavhengig og selvstendig. Han er en såkalt selvstendig uavhengig. Den sangen er ikke sluppet ennå, men jeg tror det blir da. "Twilight," altså. "Twilight" heter den. Men den er ikke noen referanse ennå, i og med at den ikke er gitt ut.

R: Når den kommer, er det plukket artist?

S: Ja, det er også tenkt på i starten. "Nå skal vi prøve å skrive en låt til den eller han eller hun." Det har vi gjort her også.

R: Er det konfidensielt?

S: Nei, nei, nei. Men som sagt, den er bare ikke gitt ut enda, så det er ingen som vet. Det er ikke hundre prosent sikkert at det blir. Men de har jobbet såpass mye på den nå, at det ser sånn ut, da. Hva heter de, da? Herregud, hva heter de? Boys Republic. Det er liksom de som er ... så de har holdt på å tveake den sangen sånn at den skal passe med de. Den passer jo i utgangspunktet til de, men sånn at den blir spot on. Men som sagt, det er jo ingenting der før den er gitt ut. Sangen tror jeg er ferdig. Og da er det som sagt, alt er konstruert til ... for vi begynte helt fra starten, da han var i studioet han som har lyst til å gjøre noen greier med de, så.

R: Hvordan tenkte dere ut konseptet? Hva tok dere hensyn til med tanke på artisten?

S: Når du tar hensyn til artisten må du legge deg i et fornuftig toneleie, sånn at artisten når toppene og kan synge så og så dypt. Da har vi holdt på og herjet med å transponere alt fra Am til G. Hm til G. Et langt sprang, men tar du det helt opp er det liksom ... for de som synger som de gjør, synger lyst, kan synge veldig lyst, så han ville bare flytte ting litt opp og ned, og han som var i studio den dagen, han som var den som synger inn alt sammen for dagen, han synger jo i sitt spekter, sant. Så vi måtte bare få testet det opp og ned to ganger og så tilbake til Hm igjen. For det var liksom der det lå best. Men han, vi prøvde det i G, i Gm, for han ville høre "kan det her funke?" Også kjenner han de, så han vet liksom hvordan de synger, og han har vært mye i studio med de. Og han sa bare, "OK, sorry, we have to go back," og det er jo greit. Du må bare gjøre det noen ganger. Det er litt mye arbeid å drive og transponere, du skal liksom holde på å flytte hele prosjektet opp og ned og det blir mye styr. Men det må gjøres. Da vet vi liksom, "nå har vi testa det, det er Hm som er." Og det er helt sånn hundre prosent tilrettelegging til de. Og det tror jeg det er ganske mange som gjør. Hvis du liksom skriver låter til noen, hører du liksom på artisten. Hører liksom hvordan de synger, og da legger du deg jo litt der, da.

A: De sjekker jo alltid ut hva den artisten har gjort tidligere, og de sjekker ut hvor artisten er på vei hen musikalsk. Hva er det neste naturlige skrittet å ta videre for artisten, sjanger, altså musikalsk. Det er ikke noen vits i å synge "lalala" [sings with a high pitch] hvis artisten ikke kommer seg over "aaahh" [sings with a medium pitch]. Og om du har noen særegenhet du kan spille videre på. Hører på stemmen, liksom.

S: Så det er veldig mye tilrettelagt, da.

A: Jeg er imponert over vokalen min, kjenner jeg. “Aaææhk!”

S: Veldig bra eksempel.

A: “Aaaeeiiaa”

R: Er det kun dere tre som jobber i studio, altså produsent, du og vokalisten?

S: Det kommer an på hvor mange som er involvert, men ja, med produsent og vokalist. Noen ganger kan det være tekstforfatter og, nei en som er veldig flink til ett eller annet alltid. Du har jo Mari, som er en veldig bra tekstforfatter, god til å skrive tekst. Skriver kule tekster og kommer fort opp med assosiasjoner. Også har du da for eksempel Anne Judith [Wik] som er enormt flink til å synge, og melodigreia er liksom styrken. Også slår du bare sammen så mange som mulig for å få til det optimale. Og Nermin er jo kjempeflink til å høre om dette er bra eller ikke, om dette er en hit. Alle har ører og spesifikasjoner. Per session tenker man litt på hva skal vi gjøre, hvem er det vi skal jobbe til, og hvem er det det passer best å jobbe med da. La oss si at hvis jeg skulle ha fulgt opp “I Got a Boy,” så ville jeg ha tenkt nøye gjennom hvem jeg kan blande inn for å få den greia. Skal ha en sånn oppfølger, rett og slett. Nå gjør de ikke det, men sett at de skulle ha gjort det. Så ville jeg ha tenkt det nøye igjennom og ringt spesifikke mennesker som jeg tenker “de ville ha vært bra.”

R: Headhunter litt.

S: Ja, det tror jeg de gjør hver gang. Ellers så er det slik at, du skriver jo generelt sammen med faste folk. Men er det noen som er spesielt bra til noe så trekker du de inn. Så man kan drive litt headhunting, helt klart.

R: Hvordan etablerte dere samarbeidet, du og Park?

S: Det var gjennom Song:Expo. Trondheim Song:Expo.

A: In the summer. Du kan jo komme en tur om du vil, sikkert.

R: Det hadde vært kjempekult.

A: Så skjønner du litt mer av det vi prater om.

S: Der ble vi spleisa. "Dere to burde jobbe sammen," så gjorde vi det. Det gikk jo veldig bra. Han snakker forferdelig dårlig engelsk, men vi klarte det. Hvis vi sto fast sprang vi bare ut i gangen og hentet inn en koreaner som snakket engelsk, så kom han inn og oversatte. Også var vi liksom tilbake igjen.

R: Hvordan tok dere det fra Song:Expo og videre?

S: Der er det jeg som står som produsent som gjør ferdig hele låta, gjør ferdig produksjonen. Vi gjorde ferdig alt vi trengte. Jeg hadde alle elementene jeg trengte, jeg hadde vokal, jeg hadde alt det jeg må ha, så når det var ferdig så satte jeg meg altså ned og jobba ferdig produksjonen. Hvis det er noe, rydde opp i vokalen, gjøre alt det praktiske som man trenger i en studiosammenheng. Også når den er ferdig sender jeg den ut på mail til alle som har vært med, får tilbakemelding, "godkjenner dere dette her?" også sender jeg den til plateselskapet. Da er den fortsatt i demo-tilstand, det er

lydmessig mye bedre, det er saftig. Hvis du som plateselskap får tilsendt en slik sang, så vet du at det er en demo, men den er sterk nok til å gi deg et bra inntrykk av hva slags idé det er, konseptet og hele greia. Så da mikset jeg den ferdig og så sendte jeg den til han [K.T. Park], og så svarte han, “OK, dette er fett, da tar jeg med meg den videre.” Og da gikk han direkte inn og sa til Boys Republic “her har vi noe nytt på gang.” Så har de spilt inn vokalen. De har spilt in en slags dummyvokal på beaten.

B: Boys Republic?

T: Ja, den er litt sånn det de synger, for at plateselskapet kan få høre hvordan de fungerer oppå instrumentalen. Så da synger de ikke hele teksten, bare “dabada,” bare tullball, men de synger melodien, bare en sånn kjapp greie. Også tar de det videre derifra. Trenger ikke være så nøye, de må bare høre at det passer. Det er jo for så vidt forståelig i form av at du bare, de har liksom ikke vært i studio en gang, da den ble skrevet. Så da er det klart at da må man prøve de først på sporet for å høre etter om det funker.

B: Får de da stor frihet til å top-line, eller er alt ferdig på forhånd?

T: Ja, de har ingen frihet. De må bare synge det, rett og slett.

R: Slik er det vel gjerne ofte.

S: Det er jo gjerne det. Det er noen mennesker da, noen artister som er involvert, men jeg tror ikke det er ... kanskje G-Dragon. G-Dragon tror jeg skriver en del selv. Jeg tror det. Men det er ikke noe jeg vet noe om. Det er bare noe jeg tror basert på hvordan det høres ut. Han er jo rapper og hele den greia der. Med BIG BANG vet jeg ikke om det er noe, jeg tror BIG

BANG får skrevet ting. G-Dragon tror jeg er litt som Eminem. Men som sagt, det vet jeg ikke. Det er bare en teori. I utgangspunktet gjør de fleste som de får beskjed om.

R: Hvordan tenker du arbeidet med denne låta blir videre fremover?

S: For meg? Jeg er vel for så vidt ferdig. Jeg tror ikke jeg skal gjøre mer, for vi endte opp med å involvere en produsent til fra Korea, som har tatt en runde til på produksjonen, da, bare sånn at det passer mer for Korea. For min del var den veldig U.S., litt mer sånn trap, hva skal jeg si, Diplo, hvis du kjenner Diplo. Må bare komme på et godt eksempel. Den “Harlem Shake”-sangen. Min original er mye mer der. Så den er for U.S. for Korea, men han K.T. Park syntes beaten var dritfrekk, så han ville gjerne ha den. Så involverte vi da altså en produsent som er koreansk, som gjorde – vi endte opp med å gjøre produksjonen fifty-fifty nå – så han gjorde den mer “in” i Korea. Bare litt mer inn i riktig bane.

R: Han tweaker den litt i Koreansk retning?

S: Ja, rett og slett. For mitt sound er egentlig mer amerikansk. Nå var det som sagt, “dette er kult” men han ville ha den litt mer inn i Korea. Naturlig nok. Det betyr jo bare at sangen her kommer til å ha litt eksotisk sound for Korea, men jeg tror det var det de ville ha. De likte akkurat den greia.

R: Vil det soundet være eksotisk for vesten også?

S: For vesten vil det være helt crazy. Så jeg tror ikke den ville ha kommet ut i USA eller ... da tror jeg folk hadde rynket på nesa. Det er mye som foregår. De vil ha det når det er tøffe boyband som står og danser og gjør

mye kule moves og sånt, ikke sant? Da skal liksom musikken være på samme måte. Jeg tror ikke det går her. Det blir for masete.

A: De er ikke vant til det. I Tokyo og Seoul og sånne ting, det går jo så fort, det er så mye farger og så mye spill og “blablabla” [sings at a high pitch]. Jeg så en jævlig interessant dokumentar om Tokyo, faktisk. Det er så mye folk, og det er så mange menn som ikke finner damer, så det er sykt vanlig at de bytter ut det å ha kjæreste med å ha det samme forholdet til spill, eller en figur. De leser jo tegneserier til de er langt oppe i sekstiårene. De har en helt annen kultur, da. Nå kommer de til å slite, for før så var det en pyramide med unge arbeidere [points at a hypothetical pyramid's base], og nå er den pyramiden snudd på hodet. Økonomien i Japan klarer ikke å bære den eldreomsorgen. Så jeg vet ikke hva de skal gjøre. Men det er sykt artig at femtiåringer leser, og er genuint opptatte av, tegneserier og skolepiker. Og det er ikke nødvendigvis seksuelt, men de husker den tida de var i barndommen og på skolen. Den gode tiden. “Happy times.” Det er snedig. De har sånn eget fengsel for eldre. Midt i gangen hadde de en sånn du kan holde i for å ikke falle. Det bare rabler for de.

S: Sikkert et veldig rolig og bedagelig fengsel.

A: Med backgammon. Det var veldig koselige greier, da.

S: Det er dit man skal når man må i fengsel. Det går veldig rolig for seg.

A: Det var ikke så mange riots, nei.

R: Det hadde vært kjempefint å få høre litt, hvis dere har noen demoer, tidlige skisser...

S: Ja, nå tok Eirik [Johansen] med seg den lap-topen i dag. Jeg må tenke litt. Jeg flytta jo alt over til en sånn back-up-disk, for å ha det direkte bucket til drop box hele tida. Jeg har kanskje noe her, demoer som jeg har sendt litt sånn fram og tilbake på mail.

[Non-related talk until 35:55, while Aspén leaves]

S: Okey, skal vi se. Drop Box. Der ja. Det er den Twilight-sangen [36:35 into the interview recording].

R: Er det den nyeste versjonen?

S: Dette er den første. Som vi startet med. Og dette er min produksjon. Der var det faktisk ... der var ikke vokalsporet på. OK, da skal jeg se om jeg finner den. Men der hørte du liksom soundet. Knallhardt, elektronisk og tunge beats. Det har de beholdt, eller “beholdt,” da. Den tunge beaten på den greia der er jo med, men så har du også det som han. Det de har gjort er å kjøre på med flere instrumenter, flere synther, mere støt, staccato ting. Mer energi da, i versene og over alt. For jeg holder det jo nede. Når det kommer refreng, da skal du “opp dit” på en måte [describes a dynamic development] men i den sammenhengen her så gjør de det sånn at du fyrer på med energi på versene, også kjører du på *enda* mer energi på refrenget, der jeg liksom ville ha holdt det tilbake på et vers, og heller gitt det på refrenget, sant. Det bare peises på ... Det var ei Zip-fil ... Det var litt dumt det da. Du kan få høre noe annet vi har gjort, da. Som er en litt sånn konkret K-pop pitch. Denne er laget for at, eller vi mener den kommer til å gå rett inn da. Den heter “Rock Your Body” og den er det jeg og ei som jobber her borte som heter Charite [Viken] som har skrevet. Laget den i fjor.

[“Rock Your Body” starts at 39:20].

S: Her tenker vi liksom “girl group.” Helt spesifikt. Alle er med og synger på den parten her, sant. Og så er det én og én artist. I Girls’ Generation er det ni stykker da. Og så kommer det sukkersøte. Her kommer det rosa skyer. Men på denne har vi gjort en europeisk eller amerikansk tvist. Her kjører vi bare et dropp. Det du hørte i stad var refrenget, men refrenget er plassert der det er et pre-chorus. Så har du den sterke melodien der, også har du dette droppet til slutt. Og det er det noen som har gjort på ... jeg lurer på om det er F(x), er det ikke det tro? Er det ikke damegruppa F(x)? Det er en sang der de har massevis av hooky ting. Der du naturlig ville ha tenkt refreng kommer det bare et dansedropp. Denne heter jo “Rock Your Body,” så her har du liksom en dansesang. Så da kjører vi det på toppen [the phrase “rock your body”]. Det er så lenge siden jeg har hørt på den at jeg har glemt den helt. Så du skjønner det er mange tema.

R: Det er stort sett forskjellige deler til nå?

S: Ja, det er det. Det er ganske mange forskjellige deler, og i vokalen er det ikke så mye som går igjen. Det er bare refrenget. Der har vi en dansepart igjen [42:28 into the recording]. Der tenkte vi rett og slett at der [lager] vi en dansepart. “Rock your body” sier denne syntetiske stemmen og det gjelder å ha en musikkvideo med moves. Også er det tilbake til middle-eight da, mellomspillet. Så er det tilbake til refrenget igjen [43:00 into the recording], og derfra og ut så går det bare til refrenget igjen. Så den strukturen der er litt sånn, jeg vet ikke hvor mye plateselskapene og artistene i Korea takler eller aksepterer eller liker en så eksperimentell produksjon. Det vi har jobbet hardt med her er å ha den feelingen “rock your body,” og det får de til å si, sånn rent praktisk. Også er det et bra konsept å lage en musikkvideo til. Også har du, som du hørte på versene sånne parter hvor jentene på en måte svarer. Det er en vokalist og så et svar, vokalist og svar. Også liksom

“R.O.C.K.” Konseptet her er i hvert fall veldig klart og tydelig. Da har vi plassert det bedre, og det var med helt fra starten.

R: Har dere sendt inn den her?

S: Den er sendt. Lurer på om det var til F(x). Leiv har oversikten over dette. Glemmer litt når det blir veldig mange sanger. Den er sendt ja. Den ble sendt før jul. Vi avslutta den og prøvde å plassere den til noen artister da. Jeg tror det var F(x). Er ikke helt skråsikker.

R: Når forventer du å få tilbakemelding på den?

S: Der forventer jeg faktisk ingenting, fordi at det er helt håpløst å gå rundt og vente på slike ting. Det er bare å sende fra deg sangen, snakke med Leiv, og si “her har vi en sang, og den har vi tenkt å pitche til den og den artisten, hva tror du?” “Bra,” også får vi tilbakemelding fra gjengen i USA, om at “ja, den burde helt klart til den artisten.” Også gjør vi det. Og etter det så må du bare komme deg videre og begynne på neste sang. For det kan gå to år. Plutselig er det noen som har kjøpt den. Det kan gå et halvt år, det kan gå ... Jeg tenker ikke på det en gang når jeg er ferdig. Når vi liksom har sendt den slutter jeg å tenke på det. Da må jeg begynne med neste. Ellers blir jeg bare sittende og vente, og lure på hva som skjer. Det er ikke noen vits i. Jeg har ingen forventninger.

Appendix C: Interview with Jin Seok Choi

This interview was conducted on 28 June 2014, at Fjordgata 1 during the international leg of Song:Expo. Renate Eggan and Bård Ivar Basmo conducted it on the basis of a pre-provided questionnaire, although most of the great follow-up questions here are their work. The interviewee was Jin Seok Choi, who is a producer and a former professor in music technology. He is now Head of Asia (CEO) and Creative Manager at Dsign.

The interview starts immediately in the recording.⁶⁵

Renate Skogtrø Eggan: What is your perspective on the K-pop music industry? How is it organized at your level?

Jin Seok Choi: Oh, it is a really big question. The K-pop industry has evolved since the Scandinavian songwriters brought their perspectives to the production. It started with S.M. Entertainment. When they release singles especially produced by Scandinavian songwriters, they bring a lot of different perspectives, like pop-flavor, and emotional chord progressions, and [new] top-lines. Also, they add some subjects or some themes that the local producers and local writers would not think of. So it has really changed. Now, labels and publishers are eager to collaborate with songwriters from multiple countries, so that's why they keep contacting Universal, Sony, or Warner. It's to get the roaster, the available writer or producer, so that they can have their own camp. There have been many cases where international songwriters have come to Seoul in order to have sessions with the artist and the band. Sometimes they have literally had songwriting sessions with the artists themselves, which ended up in cuts during the session. That has happened for the last two-three years. It has

⁶⁵ The recording exists in multiple files, which are available upon request.

become more connected, and that probably is the reason I just try out a lot, and why I am involved with a lot of K-pop projects. I bring these projects to different countries because, let's say, they have an urban project and I know who is good with urban. I would bring this project to the urban songwriter or producer. Or let's say, I have a dance project. Then I would go to other people. So, everything is just naturally connecting with each other now. K-pop seems to be exploded somehow. It was only for the local market to be amazed by how K-pop can develop sonically, and now because of that sound the market and the fan base has really evolved and broadened. Boy bands go to America and Europe in order to have performances. And they get a stronger sensation from the stadium crowds in Chile, which is strange, and also awesome to witness as a Korean producer. We never knew that K-pop could expand like that. I mean we, as Koreans, felt that it might be just a bubble, because people categorize this kind of music as K-pop. We don't consider it as a genre of music. Someone just called it K-pop. Right now, if they hear something they go "woo, that's K-pop." If they hear material from the U.S. they feel that something is different. So for me it has all changed. I feel very proud to be a Korean writer, travelling all over the world to meet respectable producers, however when songwriters want to work for a K-pop band, it means something. So in a way, I think K-pop could be something different from now on, because a lot of writers with different backgrounds bring a lot of different styles to K-pop. This is one thing interesting: People ask me "What is K-pop?" and I say, "I don't know." What is the definition of K-pop? I don't know what it is. It is just there. For me it was a most difficult question, seriously, the most difficult one, even though I'm Korean. But I know that there is something in my blood, something that I understand, when it comes to K-pop. I probably know it, but I can't define it. I know that it is going to be more diversified, more different.

Bård Ivar Basmo: You mentioned earlier that Norwegians like Robin [Jenssen] and those guys brought a different way of producing songs, or different kinds of sessions. Elaborate on what these differences are.

C: I mean in terms of using cooperation. Typical Korean pop music has seen more ballads, obviously, that are quieter and more classically oriented. Of course there was dance music, but in the nineties it was more of a techno, house kind of thing. For example, let's say "Tell Me Your Wish (Genie)," produced by Dsign. It has a different texture in the synthesizer, and a different approach to the production when it comes to the beat. It really has a simplicity that Scandinavian producers are good at. But still it has the dynamics when it comes to top-lines, starting with the verse, and then the chorus becomes bigger, and then another verse. It is like a journey. But I think it is still pop, it is still dance music, and it is still simple. But you get to have this kind of a journey with it. That kind of approach affects a lot of the local producers in Korea. They try to understand what it is. Is it the synth, or is it the topline, or is it the theme, or is it the production or engineering? But it is actually the mixture of everything. They try to understand what it is, and they try to incorporate all these elements into their productions. So now local [Korean] producers mimic what Scandinavian producers do. I think [the music] is getting really similar, so we need a different one. Sometimes, when you look at the charts now, there is a lot of R&B, there is a lot of nineties, there is a lot of retro, and there are a lot of classically oriented ballads, big ballads. So I think we are at a point where producers need to think differently, because there have been a lot of dance songs, but a different vibe is coming in now. I guess everyone knows about it now.

B: Was there also a difference in, not the production of each single song, but also the system like with labels, publishers and artists? Was that similar or

has it changed in Korea? Does Dsign do the overall thing differently or is it the same as it were, like two-three, to five years ago?

C: Three to five years ago, local publishers had contact with international publishers. Labels did not have connections with international publishers, so they would contact local publishers to contact international publishers to be able to invite international songwriters to Seoul. So that was the route they had to take. Now they have direct connections with songwriters or with the publishers. They know the right songwriters, they can just call them, and then we can provide accommodation, flight, we can secure these dates so they can come over to Korea to have a session. [The communication] between songwriters and producers is more direct now. S.M. [Entertainment] was the pioneer to make this bridge with the international songwriters. Korean labels think this is only restricted to S.M., because S.M. started with it, but it wasn't like an explicit deal. Also, a lot of international songwriters want to collaborate with other labels. So that's why different labels are starting their own camps and their own projects with international writers. Communications have become more direct and [relations] have become very close.

E: Could you describe your involvement with Dsign?

C: We have a lot of projects apart from the songwriting. You will all witness what Dsign is preparing. I think, because I used to be a professor in a university teaching music technology, I was able to foresee the industry in different ways, because I got to analyze the dynamics and the different roots, the business structure and everything, in an academic way. Now, as a Korean producer, I see how we can develop some of the structures in a really beneficial way. In that way, me and Robin [Jenssen] and others at Dsign have been preparing these kinds of systems and approaches to the music

business. Now I get to meet a lot of local labels, because they know I am a part of Dsign, and they [the labels] want to have their own exclusive camp with Dsign. For example, with “Hush,” K.T. Park gave me a call two or three months ago, and said they were developing a project and only wanted to work with Dsign. So we brought this project to Los Angeles and we finished three songs, some of which are already cut. Of course they need other catalogues, and that’s the reason why they came here, and that’s the reason why I made a presentation this morning. We are very close and we share a lot of stuff and a lot of projects. They are now my family. We know all about each other, and do everything together. I have been travelling a lot, and this is a funny story. I don’t make jokes, normally. I am pretty much a serious guy. At a point it was too much travelling for me, and one day Robin asked me, “oh Jin, you have to come to L.A.” – because they are in L.A. – “you have to come to L.A. in August.” So I said with a serious face, “Why?” “Because we have a project.” And I said, “No. I don’t want to.” Then Robin got really scared, because there was a possibility of me being absent. And I’m like, “No. I don’t want. It has been too much. You want to make me travel all the way” and he was like, “oh no!” We joke a lot like that, and it is a blessing to be ... I mean we didn’t know each other at all. We spent like thirty, forty years in different countries within different systems, and now we are a part of everything like a family. It is great!

[Tape recorder turned off and back on]⁶⁶

C: Making these international songwriting camps started two years ago. After that a lot of publishers and a lot of governments, a branch of the [Korean] Government, started to establish these kinds of events to invite over international writers and local writers so they could build some sort of

⁶⁶ Recording issues led to the recorder being turned off and back on several times. It has left out some of the interview material.

synergy. With Trondheim's Song:Expo, there was a Seoul Calling as well after that, because one of my previous publishers who was working in Universal, she actually initiated the establishment of songwriting camps in Seoul called Seoul Calling, a successful co-venture with the government branch. Two years have passed and I witness publishers doing the same thing. They bring these international writers to have a session with the local writers, and try to build catalogues and labels directly so that they can create strong relationships. I think Trondheim Song:Expo is kind of a pioneer that influences everyone in the industry.

[Tape recorder turned off and back on]

C: I think songwriting in itself affects a lot of personal levels of understanding in the chemistry between writers in a session. The first time for me I was a little overwhelmed, because you have to understand the other writers' preferences, abilities, or specialties. You also have to finish all of the production and foresee everything, every possibility. But after that I also got to be a part of several songwriting camps and I also got to be involved with a lot of projects as a producer. So understanding dynamics and the different chemistries just comes naturally. For me it is not a matter of having worked with him or her beforehand, it is just a matter of understanding him or her as a person and as a writer on a personal level. If I understand her or him it doesn't matter whether ... I mean, if I suggest something, they don't get offended. It could be considered as a teamwork, rather than [someone] suggesting something and then attempt to force it to make something happen. Now I feel more natural. I think everyone feels like it, or maybe it is just I? Because of this environment – just being here and trying to understand and socialize with people – this kind of friendly environment makes people feel comfortable, really safe, and stable within the session so that they relax and thus achieve better results.

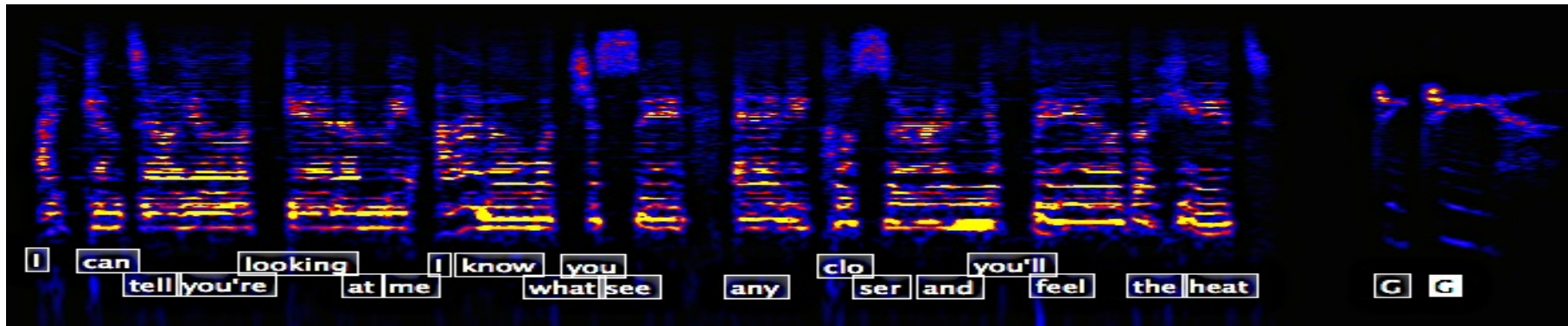
[Tape recorder turned off and back on]

Thankfully, successful and established songwriters and producers in Universal Korea could not have time to visit here, so I was sort of a last choice. I said, “Yes, I would love to go,” and then everything started. It was magical for me. So whenever I come here, it reminds me of the experience I had three years ago. It is still fresh, even my iPhone – I will show you – it has the picture from two years ago when I go across the lake.⁶⁷

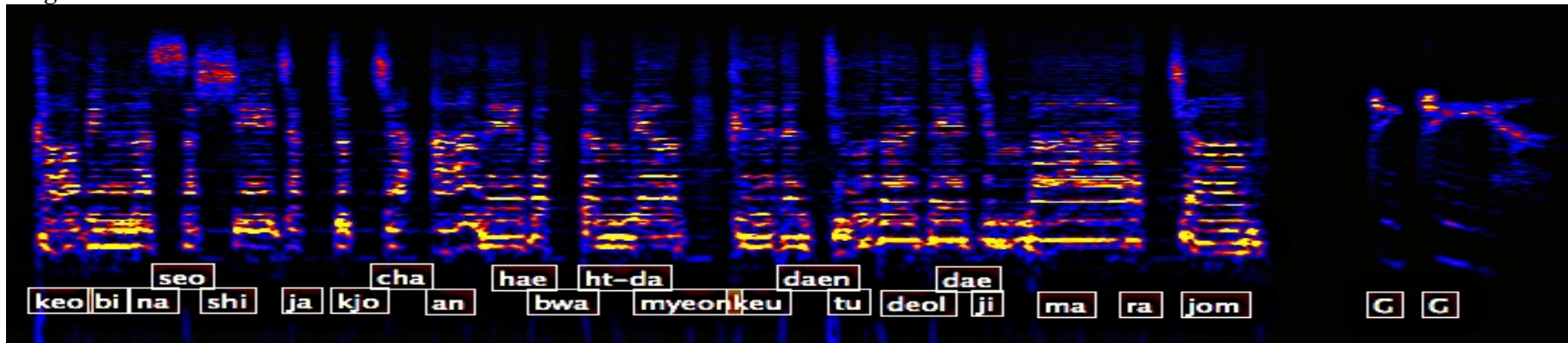
⁶⁷ The “lake” Choi refers to here, is the river Nidelven.

APPENDIX D: GIRLS' GENERATION, "THE BOYS"

Appendix D1: First Half of the Intro

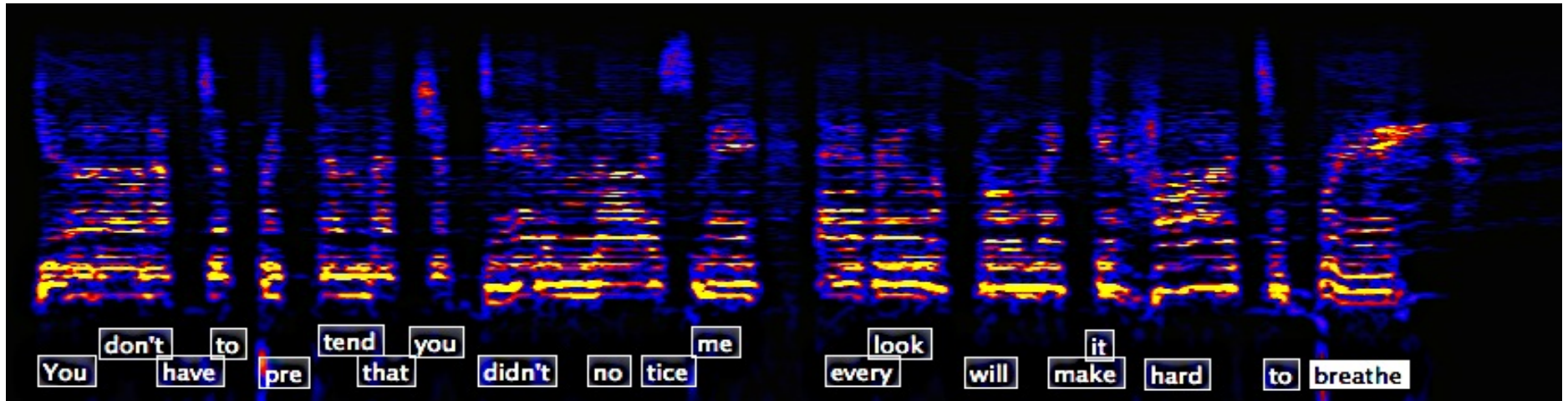


English version.

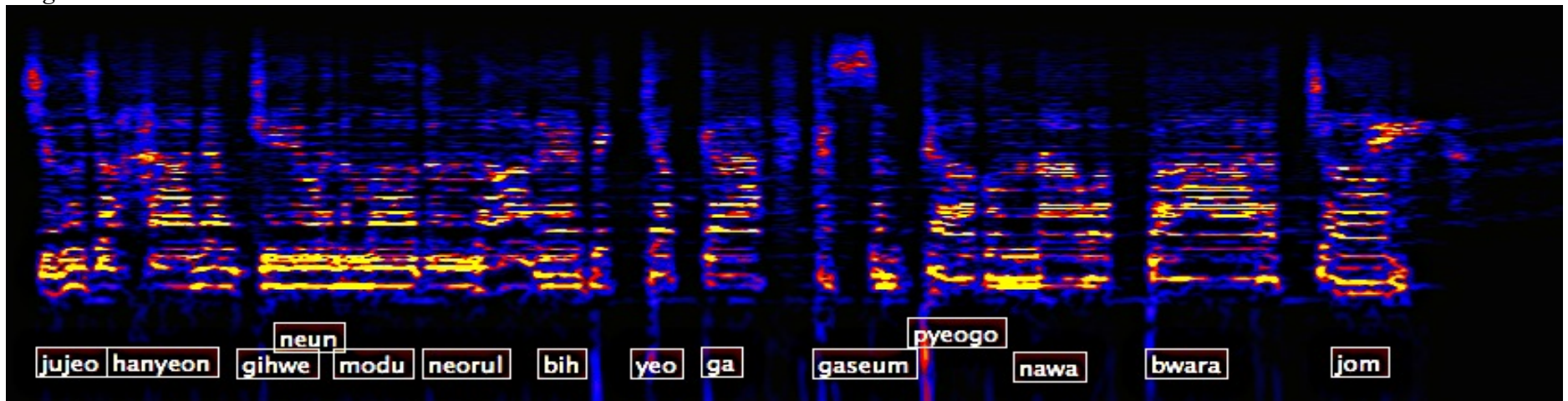


Korean version.

Appendix D2: Second Half of the Intro.

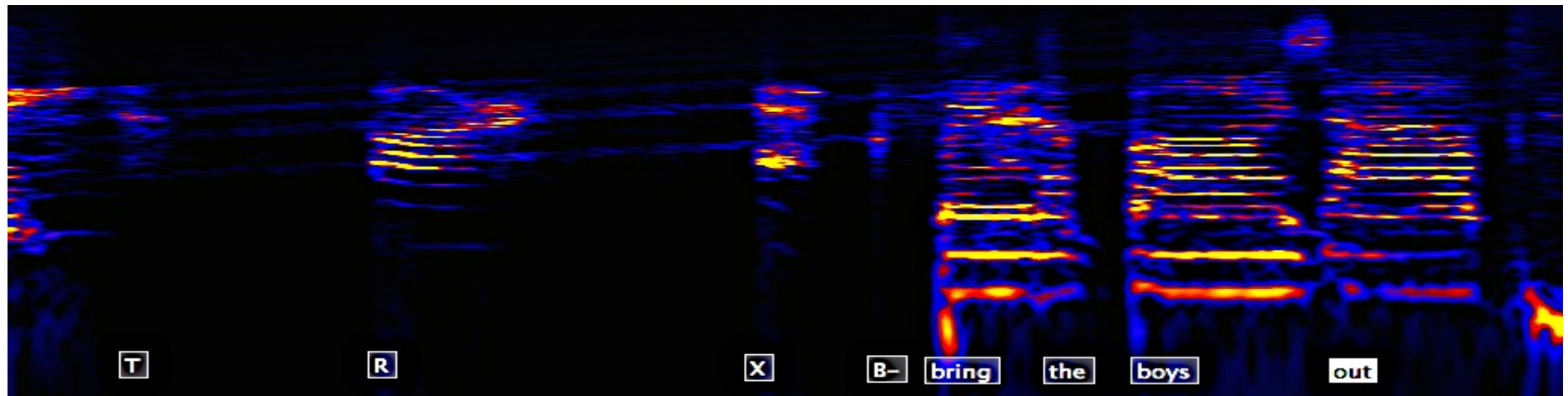


English version.

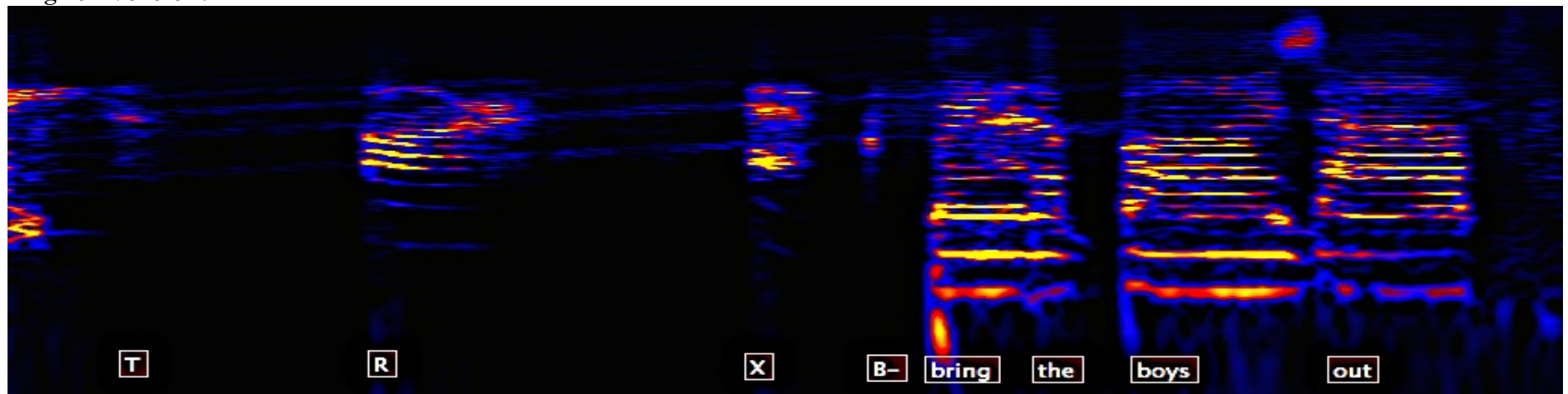


Korean version.

Appendix D3: “T.R.X.” and “Bring the Boys Out”

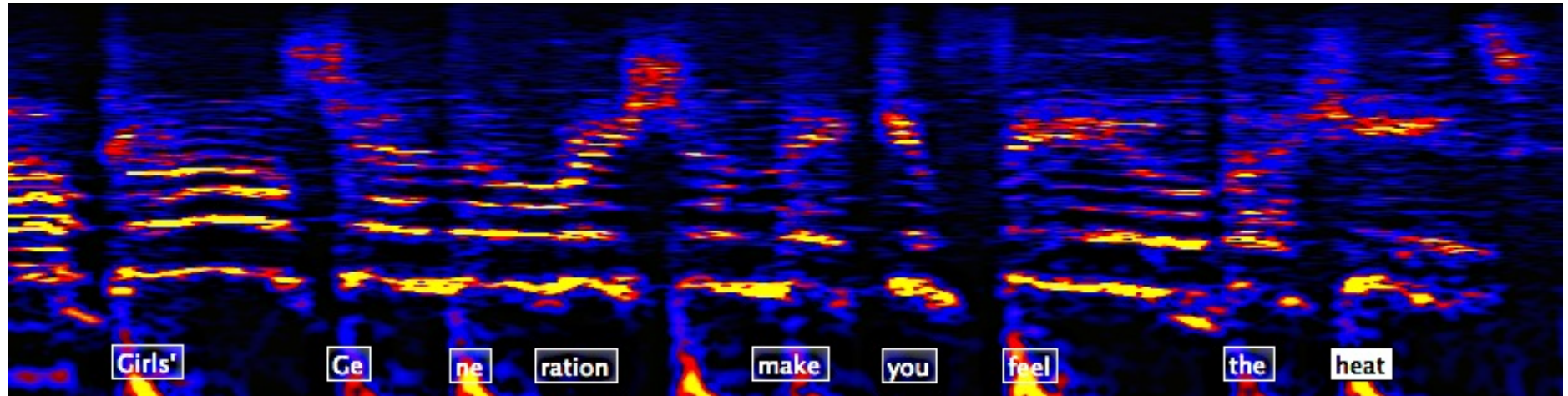


English version.

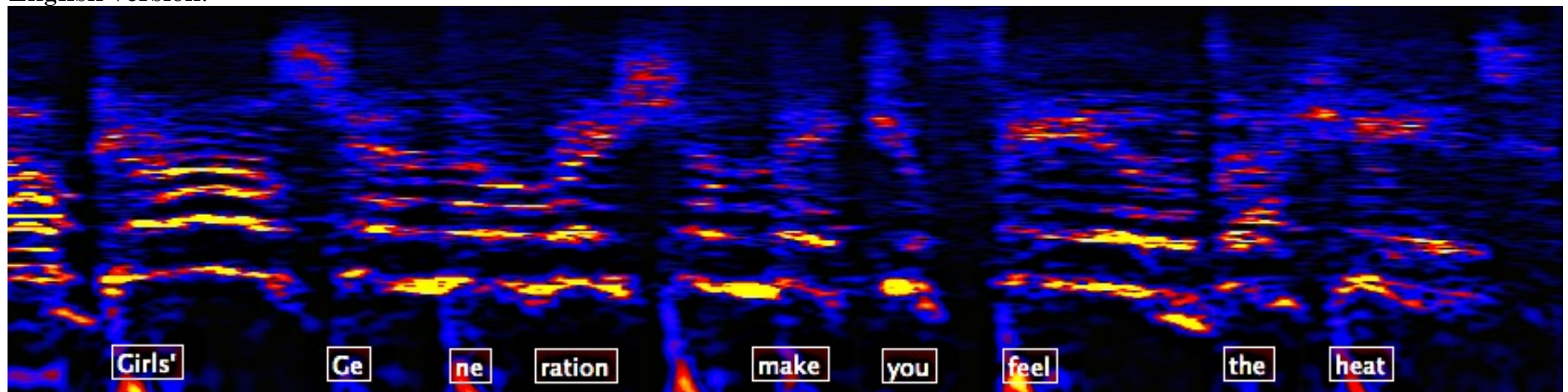


Korean version.

Appendix D4: “Girls’ Generation Make You Feel the Heat”

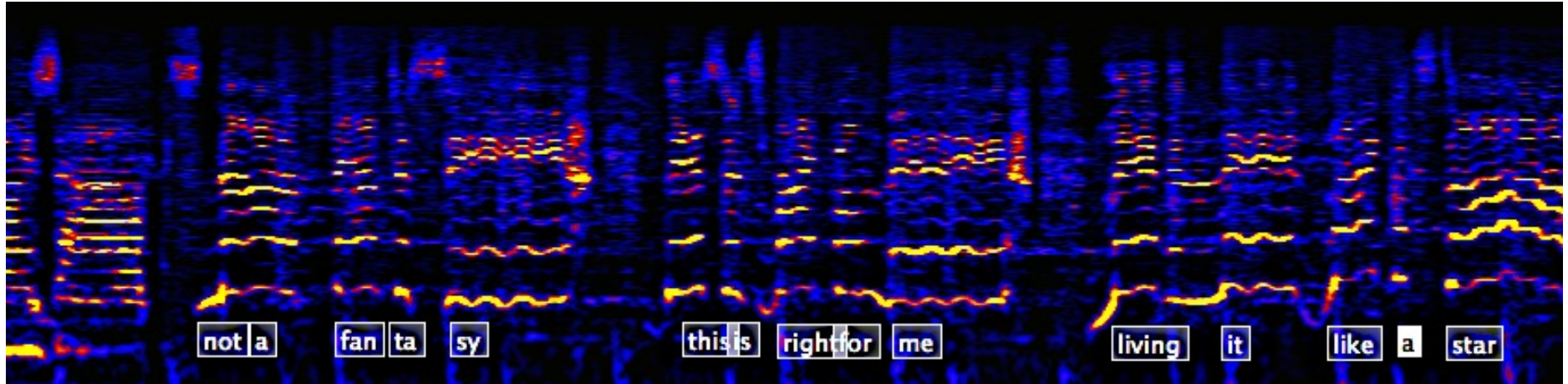


English version.

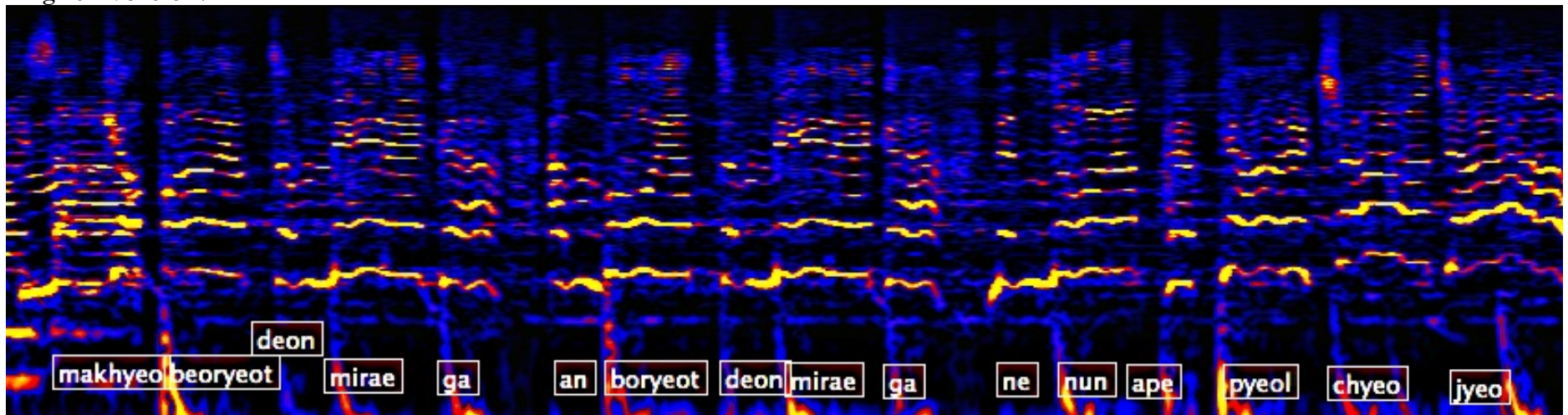


Korean version.

Appendix D5: Melodic and Rhythmic Discrepancies I

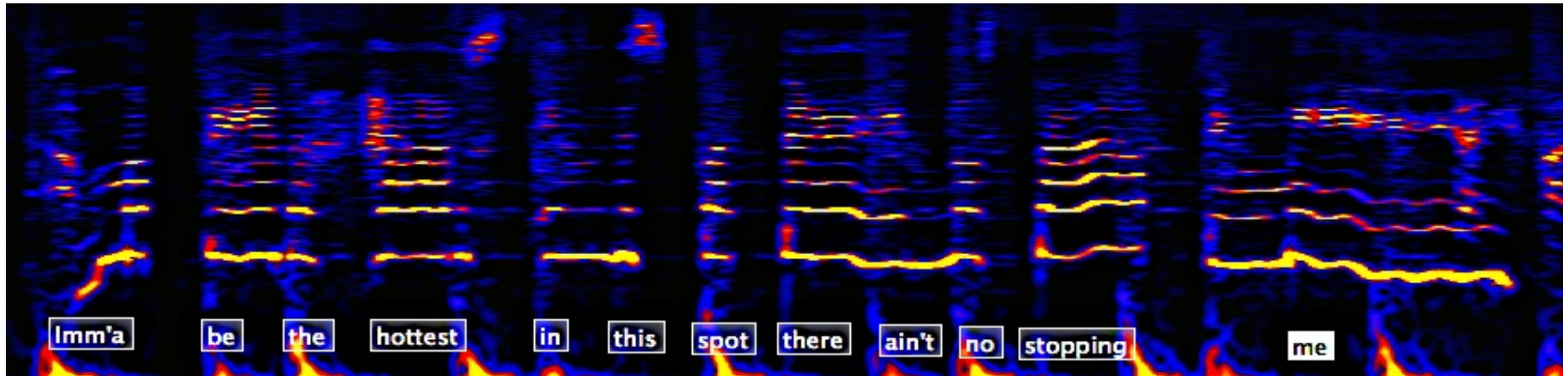


English version.

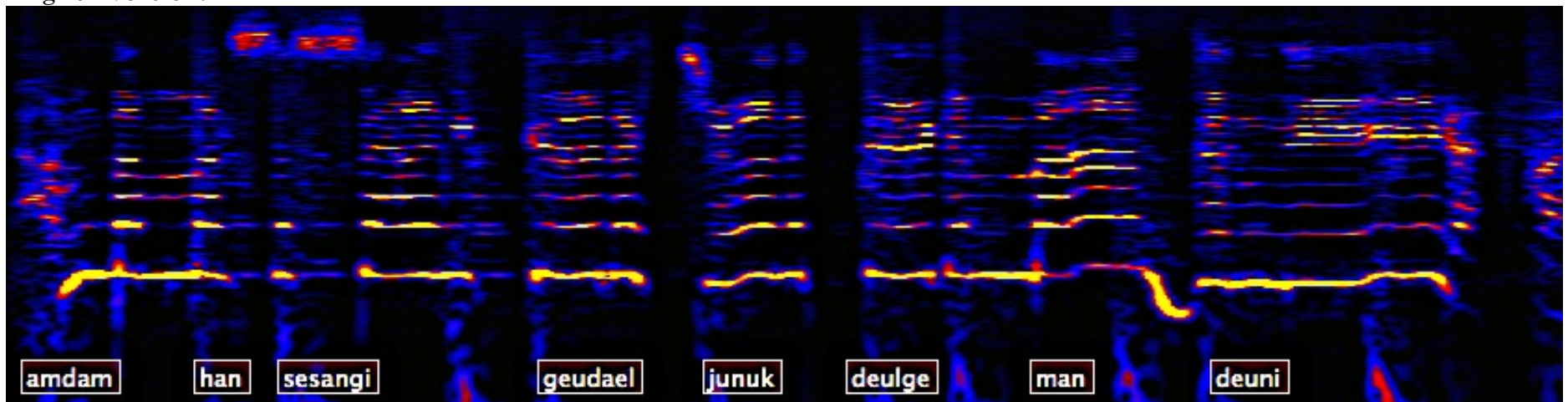


Korean version.

Appendix D6: Melodic and Rhythmic Discrepancies II



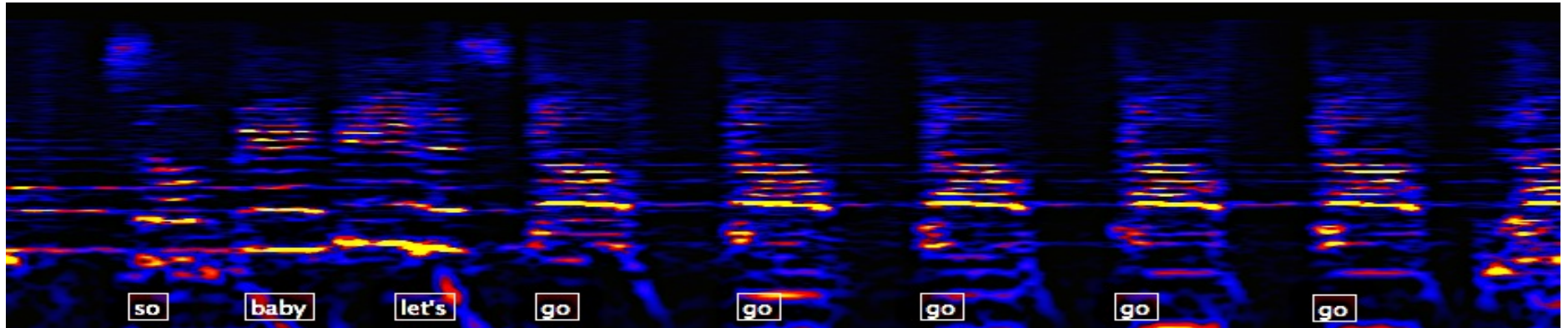
English version.



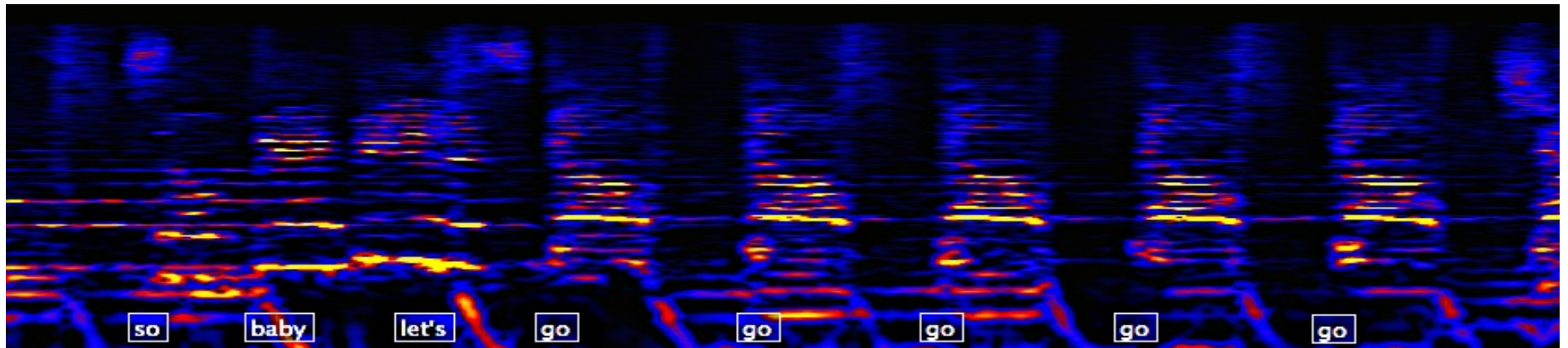
Korean version.

APPENDIX E: SUPER JUNIOR-M, “BREAK DOWN”

Appendix E1: “So Baby Let’s Go”

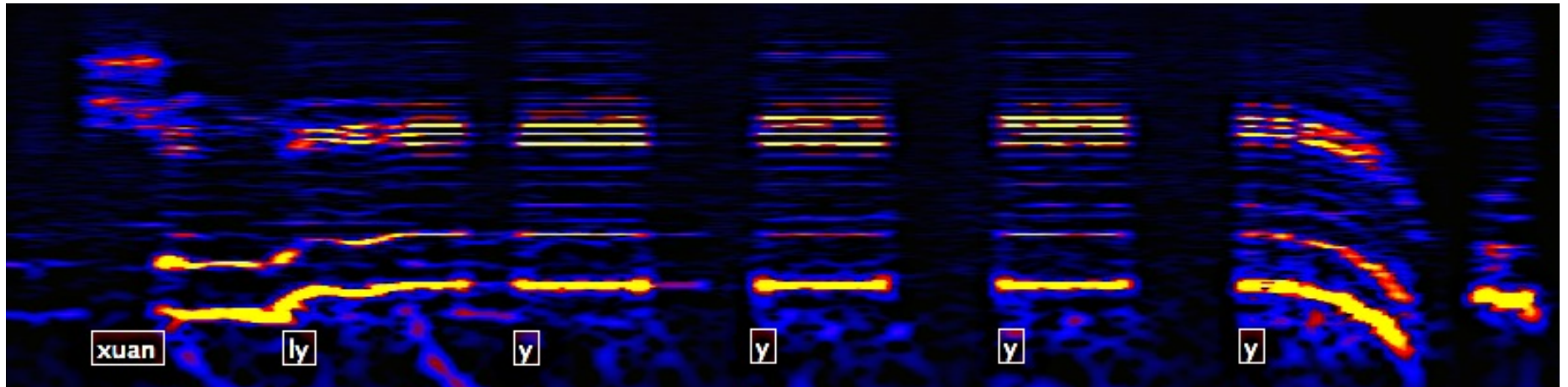


Mandarin version.

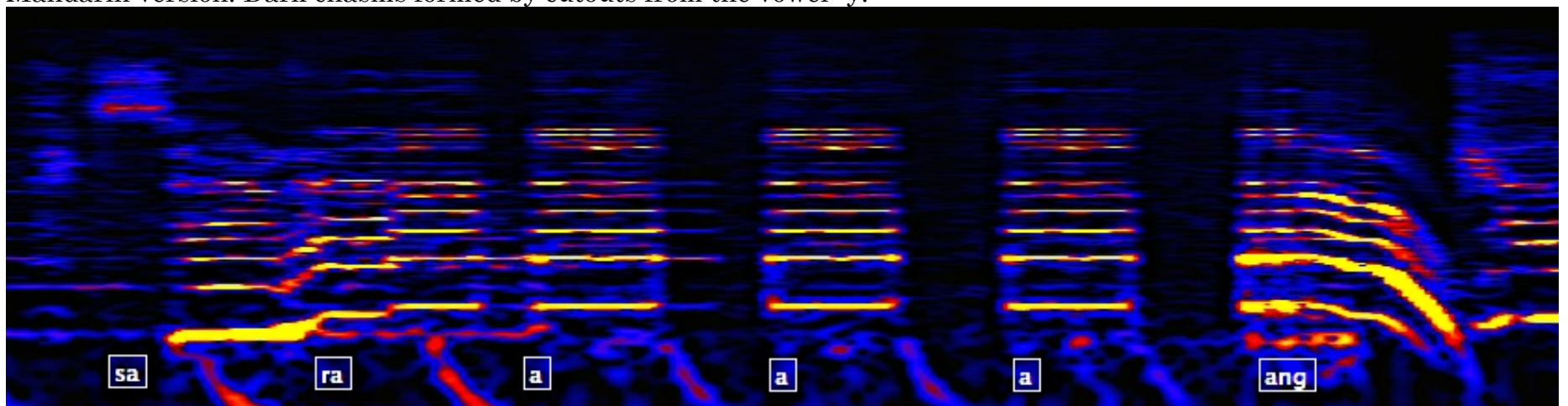


Korean version.

Appendix E2: Dark Chasms Formed by Cutouts vs. Chasms Formed by Copy-and-Paste

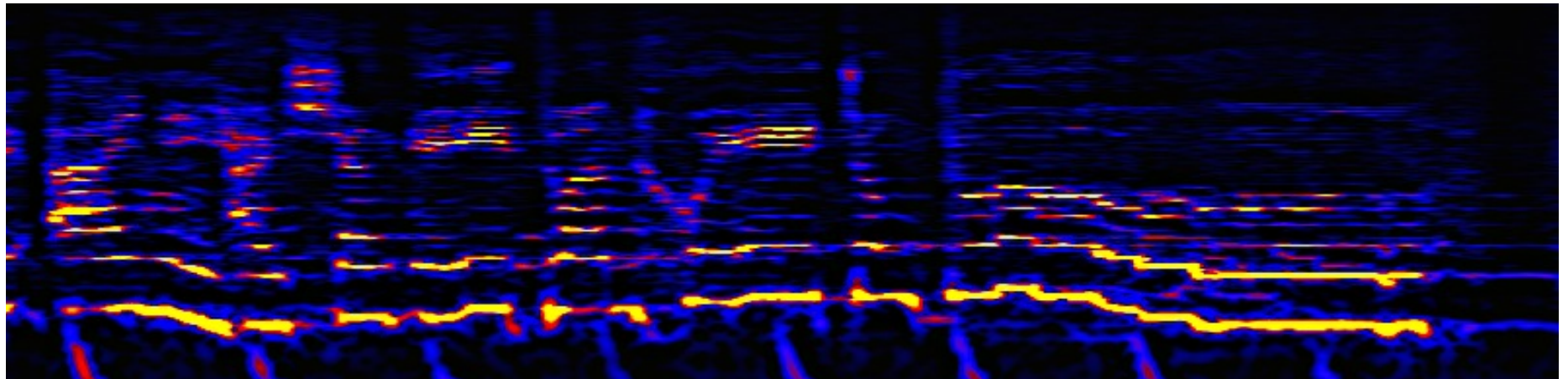


Mandarin version: Dark chasms formed by cutouts from the vowel “y.”

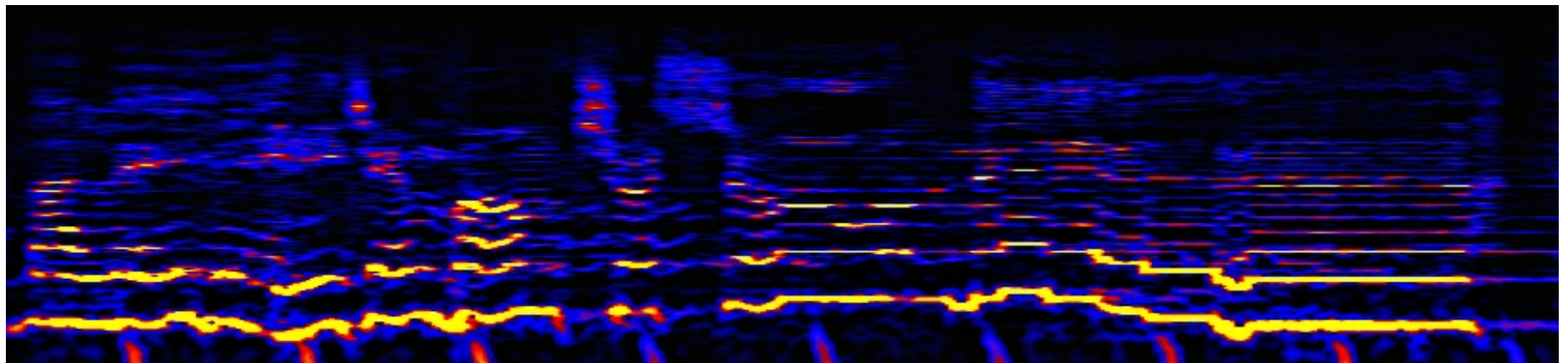


Korean version: Dark chasms formed by copy-and-paste of the vowel “a.”

Appendix E3: Transition From Modest Towards Hard Use of Auto-Tune



Mandarin version.



Korean version.