

Commodification and Communication: Theatrical Strategy of the Nonverbal Performance *Nanta**

YonHee Chun**

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〈ABSTRACT〉

This paper analyzes the theatrical strategy in the nonverbal performance, *Nanta*. *Nanta* exemplifies Korean theatre in terms of global communication between performer and spectator and inventing the methodology of reconceptualizing tradition. It demonstrates the new patterns of communication in the postmodern era without clinging to ethnic tradition which has stood for Korean theatre since modernization.

Nanta focuses on two main theatrical strategies: communication and commodification. Firstly, *Nanta* eliminates verbal text and adopts a non-verbal

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** Assistant professor, Sungshin Women's University

strategy to enhance the interaction between performer and spectator. It also employs the traditional communal energy of *shinmyung* acculturated from *Samul Nori* and *madang-geuk*. *Nanta* succeeds in replacing the communal engaging theme of *han*/suffering with the bright, positive communal energy of *shinmyung*, which provides an alternative to redefining or re-characterizing Korean cultural identity. Successful foregrounding of *shinmyung* combined with the universal theme of cooking in the performance led to the deconstruction of the boundary between high and low culture and provided alternative perspectives to Korean theatre by displacing the dominant hegemony of traditional performance.

Secondly, *Nanta* with its innovative strategy of communication represents a prototype of the function of productive and collective consumption combined with Korean tradition. *Nanta* as a cultural industry in which market and commercial products are replaced by culture commands successful strategies to sell its product to the world market and expands its consumerism strategy. Driven by its prior experience of failing in the global market, *Nanta* has now achieved commercial success and has succeeded in presenting a new paradigm of Korean culture on the world stage in terms of global communication.

Key Words: globalization, *madang-geuk*, postmodernism, *Samul Nori*, shamanism, *shinmyung*, spectator

1. Post-1990: Globalization of Korean Theater

Following the end of its ideological era, Korea in the 1990s faced two huge transformations in terms of politics, economics and culture. Korea's first *munminjeoungbu*, democratically elected government, brought political stability, and two democratic leaders were elected as presidents in two presidential

terms. However, the peacefully elected democratic governments of Young-Sam Kim and Dae-Jung Kim faced huge economic problems under the so-called International Monetary Fund (IMF) Crisis, in which the IMF stepped in to lend aid at their request. The IMF Crisis is considered not just as an economic crisis but also as a kind of cultural crisis, a turning point for Koreans in their deconstruction and re-construction of their traditional values, bringing a cultural shock that Korea had never experienced during its modernization. While the cultural flux and opening of the door brought about by the 1988 Seoul Olympics can be said to have been from Koreans' spontaneous willingness, the pressure to globalize in the aftermath of the IMF Crisis has built steadily, culminating in a society that has become driven by a limitless competitive market.

As globalization has inevitably placed urgent demands on every aspect of Korean society, Korean theaters have responded by recognizing the necessity of global exchanges in terms of intercultural, transcultural or international contexts. With this influx of global mobility, the blurring of boundaries has occurred in territories as well as networks of relationships, and it has also spread into the fields of politics, economics, and culture, making indeterminacy a powerful metaphor in the arts (Schechner 44). South Korean theaters have also accelerated intercultural exchanges and unlocked their doors to the Theater of Nation and the ITI (International Theatre Institute) Conference. International theater festivals sponsored by Korean local government have influenced the cultural exchanges between global theater companies and local theater groups. Following governmental decentralization, many cities have actively breathed life into their local industry, hosting international festivals which have tremendously enhanced cultural consciousness as well as pride, and brought economic growth.

Theaters have begun to communicate globally and have invested their



Picture 1. *Woyzeck* by Icelandic Vesturport Theater and Film Company in 2008.

Uijoengbu International Theatre Festival which began in 2002 has transformed its image from a city of military bases to a new cultural nucleus in the northern part of Gyoung-gui province.

energies into appearing on the global stage. With this global trend in culture, Korean theaters in particular have tried to perform on the global stage in New York as well as in Europe. Although it failed to enjoy a long stage life, the musical *Myungseong Hwangboo*, or *The Last Empress*, put tremendous effort into presenting a very Korean, visual spectacle to international spectators on Broadway. The musical, which deals with the tragic life of Empress Myungseong during the early years of Japanese colonialism in Korea, marched ambitiously on to the world stage armored with remarkable traditional royal costumes to attract the spectator. In spite of its spectacular stage settings and costumes, a *New York Times* theater review criticized the production for being too audacious in its attempts to communicate with international spectators. The language barrier was deemed too large and as a result the musical failed to impress. Like *Myungseong Hwangboo*, *Nanta's* premiere in London also failed

to get a positive reception from European spectators due to the language barrier. In response to this issue, *Nanta* researched new innovative theatrical ways of connecting with a global audience. With the “resurgence of fidelity” (Pavis 119) to text, *Nanta* has succeeded in communicating with spectators inside Korea as well as outside. In his talks with university students, *Nanta*'s director, Seung-Hwan Song, who has devoted more than forty years to theater as an actor as well as a producer, confessed that when planning *Nanta*, the primary aim was to communicate with international spectators and pursue commercial interests in order to continue his theatrical production. He also emphasized that as the deconstruction of “theater as a text” has brought more energetic creativity to the performance, so text is “a necessary product of the work of staging and is continually being altered” (Pavis 118).

The influence and success of *Nanta* has resulted in the staging of other similar performances such as *Miso* (smile) and *Bibab* (a rice dish with mixed vegetables), which have targeted the tourist market in Korea as a result of *Hallyu* (the Korean wave), the phenomenal growth of interest in Korean pop culture. As Frederic Jameson insists, the most distinguishing traits of postmodern culture are commodification and consumerism. *Nanta*, as an attempt at the globalization of Korean theater, has achieved commercial success and succeeded in presenting a new paradigm of Korean culture on the world stage in terms of global communication. This paper will examine *Nanta*'s theatrical strategy which has successfully communicated with the global spectator in a decontextualized global economy, foregrounding its way of representing Korean cultural identity and consolidating both ethnicity and globalization, and will also consider its distinctive postmodern strategy of commodification in a global market.

2. Postmodern Strategy for Global Communication

(1) Representation of Tradition and Its Acculturation

As Parker puts it, performativity has enabled a powerful appreciation of the ways that identities are constructed iteratively through complex citational processes, and fluid identities are constructed through the cultural reproduction in post-structured society (Parker and Sedgwick 2). The most distinctive performativity in *Nanta* centers on the endeavors for cultural reproduction: Consistent and magnificent efforts to reimagine Korean tradition into a western format and original “acculturation” (Jameson x) of tradition. As Lyotard emphasizes, this reflects the influence of postmodern culture, which is a crisis in categorization, and results in equivalence. The effect of equivalence is a lack of hegemony in perspective, which consequently has inspired theaters and culture to deconstruct hegemonies on stage (Chin 83). From these standpoints, *Nanta*'s innovative attempt to represent Koreanness with its acculturation of traditional culture has been successfully achieved in accordance with the postmodern assumption that reproduction and simulation have become central to contemporary art instead of nostalgic and centric artistic endeavors.

Nanta challenges what is broadly construed as “the return of an act” (Reinelt and Roach 457) as a series of authorized reproductions of dramatic performances because it contains a mode of production not within a discourse of cultural textual authority, but within a cultural reproduction of Korean traditional text with creativity and universality to reach the global market. After its communication failures during its international premiere, *Nanta* urgently sought to find an alternative medium of communication. Director Song pinpointed the problematic aspects which proved difficult for foreigners to understand and decided to eliminate the verbal exchanges with spectators. As an alternative to traditional dialogued text, *Nanta* adopted Korean

shinmyung, “the feeling of communal joy” (Gwak 2) or the spirit of enthusiasm, and applied the energy comprising the kinetic movements to the adapted versions of the traditional instruments of *Samul Nori*¹). This “restoration of behavior” has been constructed through workshops and rehearsals, elaborating a “stage-centered” vision of *mise-en-scene* which is “unforeseeable from the perspective of the text” (Pavis 205). Through repeated workshops, the company continued to find ways to weave Korean culture into the performance in order to communicate with international spectators from diverse backgrounds. The rehearsals and collective workshops enabled the director and actors to write a ‘meta text’ to create a *mise-en-scene* which envisages the release of *shinmyung* energy. Refusing to be on a text-centered stage and instead creating a stage-centered position, they were now unfettered by the pre-*mise-en-scene* already inscribed in the dramatic text (Pavis 206). A non-verbal strategy, which deconstructs the limits of communication awakened by language, has expanded the spectrum of both the spectator and the spatial territories of the performance and has influenced subsequent performances like *Bibab* and *Miso*. Produced by one of the producers of *Nanta*, the nonverbal act *Bibab* shares the recipe of the traditional Korean dish, *bibimbab*, with a storyline that follows a cooking competition. The most distinguishing feature of *Bibab* is its harmonious mixture of traditional rhythms and pop culture which reflect postmodern culture by blurring the boundaries of the cultural maps of performance and expanding territories of performance. Produced by the

1) *Sa* (four), *mul* (things), *noru* (play) is translated to “four things at play”. The player of the small ensemble, initializing the sequence of rhythmic *pattong* (*kkwaenggwari*) functions as the musical leader of *erns* (*changdan*) which structure the music; the large gong (*ching*) articulates the meter reinforced by the barrel drum (*puk*) and the hourglass drum (*changgo*) plays the most complex versions of the rhythms. Each instrument is associated with elements in nature and bring to life the harmony of the cosmos by linking nature and human beings in accordance with the rule of Yin and Yang’s change (Dilling 373).

government-funded Jung Dong Theater Company and following an adaptation of a folk tale *Chun Hyang Jeon*, *Miso* represents a different style of nonverbal performance which incorporates traditional dance, *pungmul* (Korean folk dance) and *pansori* (epic song performance). It has attracted more than 720,000 tourists and has expanded to commercial tours on international stages, which has subsequently expanded the number of creative repertory stages which hunt for storylines from traditional Korean folk tales.

The energy of *shinmyung* has been the core essence of Korean traditional performances, encouraging the spectator to enjoy themselves by giving them chances to communicate with the actors during the show. Compared to the feeling of *han*, which encompasses sorrow, tears, or feelings of oppression that have descended upon most Koreans who have undergone historical tragedies or personal difficulties, *shinmyung* is a blissful energy. Nevertheless, some critics insist that emotional regret like *han* or the release of repressed anger should be a main theme when representing the identity of Korean theater and that the survival and restoration of ethnic traditions are the only way to step forward towards globalization. They additionally criticize the effects of Confucian traditions on Korean society and emphasize the importance of representing *han* or the shaman tradition as the core essence of Korean theatrical tradition (Y. Kim 97). However, when *shinmyung* energy was restored, all the negative traits and stereotypes of tradition which had been repeatedly performed in most of the theaters have been gradually replaced by positive energy. The success of the '88 Seoul Olympics also strengthened the national *shinmyung* spirit with the influx of postmodernism and deconstruction of dichotomy. The communal feeling or energy conflict around the necessity for preserving *han* or the shaman in the globalized age has ceased and merged into one, accelerating towards the renovation of globalization, post-nationalism and post-localism. *Nanta* accepts this as an opportunity to employ the latent

force of *shinmyung*, which is the core essence of its attraction to a world spectator. Parallel to Bakhtinian festivity, *shinmyung* in *Nanta* encourages an eruption of inner pleasure aroused by a combination of a distinctly Korean rhythm with the active participation of the crowd, ultimately inducing subconscious human vitality (Dentith 86).

Nanta has espoused the *shinmyung* rhythm and spirit which is the core essence of *Samul Nori*, and fused it within a cooking context from a western kitchen to create a universal theme. This synthesis creates the originality of the inter-dependence of the performance and tradition, "accepting 'inter' which opposes the establishment of any single system of knowledge" (Schechner 22) and expands the effect of synergy through the crucial role of the physically trained actors' performances. The four components of *Samul Nori*, the gong (*kkwaenggwari*), the large gong (*ching*), the barrel drum (*puk*), and the hourglass drum (*changgo*), are all substituted with kitchen utensils such as knives, a cutting board, a pot, a frying pan and a dish and sustain *Samul Nori's* original rhythms which originated from the shamanic ritual *gut* as an ensemble performance. It also succeeded in producing musical gaiety from this perfect combination of tradition and western format by highlighting the repeated tightening and releasing of the rhythmic cycle of *Samul Nori* at 10-minute intervals as well as the concentrated time span, which has been considered an effective way to give the spectator a chance to experience the aesthetic effects of Korean musical traditions. Some critics have been concerned about the negative effects of *Samul Nori* because they think it discards Korean internal philosophy and instead adheres to and imitates the external beauty of tradition as they worry about the phenomenon in theater that appeared during the age of the blurring of boundaries between modernization and the succession of traditional arts. The Korean theater critic Min-Young Yu emphasized the expression of external beauty which has been underscored since



Picture 2. Energetic drumming scene in *Nanta* which reminds the spectator of similar rhythms, beats and sounds by *Samul Nori*.

modernization and insisted that this has become more vital than ever to communicate with diverse audiences in the globalized era (486).

By the productive employment of the rejuvenating communal energy of *shinmyung* combined with other traditional cultural assets, *Nanta* as a non-verbal piece of theater has begun its progression toward the global stage. It succeeds in defamiliarizing *madang-geuk*²⁾ and its acculturation of *Samul Nori* by foregrounding *shinmyung* philosophy in cultural context and stimulating spectators to participate in the performance. This theatrical strategy resonates

2) *Madang-geuk* provided structural change in theatre administration when different viewpoints in playwriting and reinterpretation in dramaturgy emerged. Oppressed voices were liberated and alternative points of view came to the surface to deconstruct the authoritative center of culture and politics in society. Such a general deconstructivist process exerted an immediate influence on the Korean theatre circle (Park 122).

with playwright Yun-Taek Lee, who has pledged “to rejuvenate and contemporize the Korean traditional theater” (Hwang 40). *Nanta*'s most iconic scenes are those energetic drumming ones with various cooking utensils preparing ingredients for Korean dishes. These remind the spectator of the drumming scene with the four musical instruments of *Samul Nori* because it produces similar rhythms, beats and sounds. This serves as a “nodal point between the traditional and the contemporary” (Hwang 40) to appeal on the global stage. *Nanta* reproduces the sound effects of *Samul Nori* with various mixtures of modern instruments and drumming and tapping sounds using kitchen utensils. The combination of sound effects based on the traditional rhythmic patterns of *Samul Nori* simultaneously produces the harmonized effects of Yin and Yang with the texture of repeated tension and release.

The drumming to produce sounds in the performance is called *dudrim*, which symbolizes a resistance to authority and attacks the imperialism of unifying conceptual schemes embodied in master's narratives. This reflects the Bakhtinian perversion in traditional outdoor theater *madang-geuk* where oppression from the master narrative is substituted for liberation and emancipation. The sound effects of *dudrim* (drumming) foreground the fluid ambiguities and uncertainties of tentative local stories and transform partial, fragmentary, and inescapably local sounds with contextualized integrity into a new globalized culture (Carlson 156) and deconstruct the durable stereotype of Korean theater which has been confined to shamanic tradition or *han* until recently. As Young-Su Kim indicates, there has been a stereotypical rule to use the shaman as a symbol of Korean theater's identity to penetrate the adaptation of tradition in the realm of Korean theater. He criticizes this repeated emphasis on shaman ritual which has made it an orthodox element of Korean theater and suggests the necessity of creativity and innovation to bring about the restoration of tradition as well as the emancipation of

stereotypical mannerisms (75). This is a contradiction of the viewpoint that prevails in most westerner's mindsets where the shaman tradition is regarded as "integrative dynamics" (Schechner 199) in Asian theatre. *Nanta* emancipates itself from the stereotypical Korean theater and creates "the technique of reproduction from the domain of tradition" (Schechner 132). It is evident that *Nanta* accommodates traditional performativity with flexibility, adopts restoration of behavior which is one of the key concepts of Schechner's performance theory, and constructs social reality.

Blurring the boundaries of the performance genre as a postmodern cultural strategy becomes apparent as we deconstruct the metanarrative in *Nanta*. It deconstructs the boundaries between theater and performance and takes the performance genre out of the constraints that "text oriented academia accord" (Chin 84) by practicing non-verbal theater, fusing tradition with the western theatrical format, and embracing spectators from various cultural backgrounds. This has enabled *Nanta* to sustain prolonged performance records on Broadway while most of the other attempts to enter the world stage have failed to achieve such a success. It has also facilitated the public to access the performance while reflecting on one of the most important traits of Korean traditional theater, and spread its influence to performances with no metanarratives or no authentic knowledge and provides only a play of energies, practicing the twilight of postmodern cultural theory (Carlson 154).

(2) Aesthetics of Reality as Interactive Communication

Nanta reconceptualizes theater performance in two ways. First, it transforms cooking as a habitual, normal everyday routine into an art or performance. *Nanta* deploys cooking as the main theme of the performance which proves that all human behavior can be portrayed in theater just as Irving Goffman

sees that all activities in everyday life can be a part of performance (Carlson 33). Worthen cites Parker and Sedgwick to define performance as that “which move[s] well beyond the classical ontology of the black box model to embrace a myriad of performance practices, ranging from stage to festival and everything in between, for example cooking” (15). All these perspectives on performance reflects the close relationship between life and art and also designates the social/cultural meaning of performance, which embraces a much wider range of human behavior and everyday routines. In this sense *Nanta* accomplishes an important function of performance as an aesthetic expression of everyday life. It depicts one theme of universal routine and succeeds in linking it with an “aesthetic practice”, which structures individual and group identities and stylistically marks the expression of otherness, lifting the level of habitual behavior to create a new order of these things. Instead of the dramatic text of a playwright, *Nanta* adopts a “daily life” text and chooses cooking as theater material to create communicative scenes. It allows the spectator to understand the differences between habitual practices and heightened performances, which emphasize the restoration and sublimation of everyday life. *Nanta*'s strategy to combine cooking, a basic need of all humans, with corporally trained kinetic art produces a dynamic energy onstage which cannot easily be found in text-oriented academia. Cooking as a theme is an excellent choice because “it is something that can enhance creativity, since there are no strict rules on how you cook. It is a way of expressing yourself just like expressing yourself in art.” (Kepka, interview). It also encourages active metaphysics from the spectators, lets them participate in the performance, and effectively delivers a renewal of cultural forms: Transformation of experience and the vitality of kinetic awareness (Parker and Sedgwick 46). This also reflects the traits of postmodern culture in which the performance puts more emphasis on the response of the spectators as one of

its main components of the performance. Unlike traditional western realistic drama, the actor as a creative and active subject recognizes a reality which requires active participation by the spectator. Bauman states that performance as a mode consists of responsibility to the spectator for a display of communicative competence. This competence rests on the knowledge and ability to speak in socially appropriate ways, limits the spectator to a largely intellectual role, and depicts the spectator versus performer interaction as a procession predominantly in one direction (Sawin 35).

Secondly, *Nanta* successfully reconceptualizes the traditional performer-spectator relationship by focusing on new roles for spectators as they are encouraged to become more involved in the performance. Performers invite spectators to the stage and give them the opportunity to experience the performance firsthand. It requires the spectator to recognize the culturally specific genre being enacted and to evaluate the quality of the performance by comparing it with other local performances. It is this negotiation and ordering that is recognized and maintained by both spectators and performers. With the influence of *Nanta*, active communication between spectator and performer has become prevalent in many Korean performances and this reflects the modernization of Korean theater in which “experimentation of Brechtian epic theatre was welcomed by many theatre directors who intended to amplify the spectators’ active role and participation in theatre experience” (Park 122).

The spectators, especially younger generations, have enthusiastically welcomed this phenomenon in Korean theater, and active communication in performances now plays a vital role in enticing young spectators to the theater. This trend reflects the abundant energy of *madang-geuk* which ripples with the pleasant participation of the spectator. In addition, it exemplifies the most distinctive characteristics of Greek theater by producing active communication between the performer and spectator, inducing spectatorial participation which



Picture 3. Interaction between performers and spectators who are participating in cooking.

places the spectator not as a passive respondent but at the centre of a lively and interactive experience (Parker and Sedgwick 46). This interactional focus permits exploration of joking and laughter in exchanges occurring between the performer and spectator. It values the spontaneity of the stage and highlights the transformation rather than fixed behaviors constrained by text and the context of the performance (Pavis 61). Boal declared, “Spectator is a bad word!” when criticizing Aristotle’s poetics as poetics of oppression. He criticized the spectator as less than a man and felt it necessary to humanize him, to restore to him his capacity of action in all its fullness, and insisted that he too must be a subject, an actor on an equal plane with those generally accepted as actors (Boal 44). The emotion which is born of pure knowledge, or “emotional orgies” (Boal 103) in Boal’s re-translation of Brecht, enlightens the

spectator of *Nanta* to the globalization of Korea. *Nanta* encourages active metaphysics from the audience and gives them an opportunity to participate in the performance, which proves that the feeling of being at a carnival is not brought about by location but by the responses of the spectators. By blurring the performer-spectator dichotomy through conceiving spectators as 'subjects', *Nanta* has revitalized and liberated theaters.

3. Commodification: *Nanta* as a Commodity of Culture

Frederic Jameson explains that the consumption of sheer commodification as a process is the demarcation pointer to distinguish between modernism and postmodernism in terms of culture. He also defines postmodern society as a commodity rush as our representation of things tends to arouse enthusiasm (Jameson x). With the successful application of the postmodern strategy of "hybridity, compromise, distortion and ambiguity" (Jameson x), *Nanta* has deconstructed the elitism of theater and has succeeded in representing itself as a "commodity" (Jameson x). Furthermore, it has attracted spectators who are accustomed to popular culture, and messy, unpredictable, spontaneous performances in an open field presented in a western style. While staging the mode of behavior in everyday life, *Nanta* focuses on the commodification of the theater so that the spectator can see "many devices of supporting the transmission of a complex and nuanced body practice and belief" (Parker and Sedgwick 45) with the physically well-trained actors who display the spectacle of skillfully handling kitchen utensils.

Nanta as a cultural industry in which market and commercial products are replaced by culture commands several strategies to sell its product to the world market for the enjoyment of consumerists. To begin with, *Nanta* employs the

traditional art heritage of the '*shinmyung* spirit' as an important dynamic feature in Korean culture to communicate with the spectator in the world market. It has not only adapted this energy from *madang-genk*, but has created a hybrid energy from its appropriation as a postmodern strategy of commodification. *Shinmyung* spirit provides the spectator/consumer the opportunity to experience communal happiness and enjoyment during the performance. Secondly, *Nanta*'s promotion team has submitted itself to many global stages for confirmation of the possibility of selling their product to the world market. They participated in the Edinburgh Festival where they gained confidence to communicate with the world spectator, which consequently led to a long 'off-Broadway' run in New York. Thirdly, *Nanta* owes its commercial success to its strategy of blurring country boundaries, which is attracting an increasing number of tourists from all around the world and is expanding its influence in subsequent productions of similar nonverbal productions like *Bibab* and *Miso*. By combining Korean tradition with a universal theatrical format, it has achieved "cultural inclusiveness" (Chin 86) and has deconstructed the demarcation between elite and pop culture. *Nanta* fashioned an international cultural product by combining the *shinmyung* energy from *Samul Nori* with cooking scenes from a western kitchen. With the mixture of dissimilar cultural attributes, they earned a valuable communicative competence which rests on the knowledge and ability to speak in socially appropriate ways (Sawin 31). For more activated communication beyond cultural understanding, they decided to remove the dialogues in the performance. This process has been elaborated through the numerous workshops which "may be used to dig up materials from personal, historical, or other sources and then find ways to express these in action and interactions" (Schechner 233). During the process the performance does not cite text anymore and the resolute decision to eliminate the dialogue has brought great commercial success. *Nanta* exactly

reflects the culture which has been delineated by consumerism and the market's value, represents "a consumption of sheer commodification" (Jameson 407) in the postmodern era, and deconstructs elitism which disregards consumerism or commodity by instead focusing on the representation of marginalized others.

Nanta represents a successful example of the "commodification of difference" (Adam 156) which enables the global spectator to celebrate cultural differences. The commercial success of *Nanta* emphasizes the importance of consumption in contemporary culture and reaffirms the idea that consumer needs and satisfaction are economically and culturally determined. As consumption constitutes a core component of the reproduction of the capitalist system of production (Smart 67), *Nanta* proves the postmodern strategy of consumption in the context of tourism and distorts the boundaries of territory. *Nanta* has broken records in the domestic theater market, culminating in 10,000 performances in 2009. Under the name of *Cookin*, *Nanta* succeeded in gaining positive reviews from critics in New York. After its premiere in New Victoria Theater on Broadway in 2003, *Nanta* moved to Mineta Lane Theater off Broadway in 2004 and continued performances for more than one and half years as one of the first Asian performances to do so. It has been expanding its territory by performing in four repertory theaters, reportedly with impressively more than 380,000 people visiting the four repertory theaters annually, and it is expected to increase its high value as a cultural commodity by setting up a repertory theater building in Bangkok. De Certeau points out that the efficiency of production implies the inertia of consumption, and it produces the ideology of consumption as a receptacle (De Certeau 167). Clearly *Nanta* has constructed a creative win-win strategy for the producer as well as the consumer, and continuously delivers productive benefits for both. *Nanta's* avant-garde sense of transformation may prove Korean theater to be an innovative, provocative commodity targeting global cultural markets.

Nanta's success is interlinked with the modernization of Korean tradition which has been criticized by the protectionists of ethnic studies who have insisted on the importance of keeping originality and preservation of tradition as an alternative to compete in the global market. Despite this criticism, *Nanta* recognizes that every culture has been developed by an influx and fusion with exterior forces, sells 'the product' in the global market with the distinctive strategy of transforming Korean tradition and fusing it in the performance, and makes it appealing as a global cultural commodity. In the midst of the recent cultural phenomenon of *Hallyu* (the Korean Wave) and with the rapid growth of the economy and increasing influx of tourists, *Nanta*, as a representative cultural product of Korea, has contributed to raising the awareness of brand value.

4. Conclusion

Tradition as an intimate and personal transmission between individuals and generations in the performance plays a role to constitute a network of substantive obligations and social competence (Edgar and Sedgwick 109). The aesthetics of *Nanta* do not just deploy tradition, but serve the very reproduction of tradition and its restoration, and this combination enables it to produce a positive synergy. Korean performances which have attempted theatrical originality with the restoration of behavior have been moving from the sidelines to center stage. Since they have struggled to foreground the re-translation of tradition on the world stage through the restoration of behavior, *Nanta* provides a good example of an alternative to global communication, reinventing the methodology of representing tradition. It does not insist on clinging to ethnic tradition or shamanic rituals and demonstrates itself to be an example of the "new patterns of global communication" while

also emphasizing the realization of traditional anthropological concerns with continuous tradition. *Nanta* has helped to replace the stereotypical, singular concept of identity and culture with a concept of identity as “constructed, relational, and in constant flux” (Carlson 206).

While *Myungseong Hwangboo* failed to communicate with western spectators, *Nanta* has succeeded due to the cultural texts in which Korean tradition has been merged with global standards. It has shown that the inclusive “function of communication in cultural communication is to maintain a healthy balance between the forces of individualism and community, to provide a sense of shared identity” (Gudykunst 6). With the success of *Nanta*, comparable performances like *Miso*, *Bibab* and *Jump* have attracted a growing number of tourists in Korea with “various strategies to bring about an occurrence uncontaminated by this derivative, secondary quality” (Carlson 149). To adapt this new Koreanness and render it communicable to the world spectator, it deletes written or oral text, and chooses to take cultural, “synthetic” and “constructed” (Schechner 227) text and enhance the participation of the audience. It entertains spectators with energetic Korean rhythms and *shimmyung* based on a comic western storyline which deconstructs elitism. Also, it reproduces traditional sounds in non-traditional/modern settings, revamps cultural tradition with global values, and appreciates the aesthetic values breaking away from an indicative Koreanness in certain aspects of Korean culture like *gut* or shaman tradition. The recognition of the direction needing to be taken by Korean theater in order to move onto the global stage is significant.

As Baudrillard puts it, what we consume are signs, messages, or images rather than commodities. Consumers or spectators need to be able to ‘read’ the system of consumption in order to know what to consume. Commodities are no longer defined by their use, but rather by what they signify; what they

signify is defined not by what they do but by their relationship to the entire system of commodities and signs (Baudrillard 7). *Nanta* represents a prototype of the function of productive and collective consumption combined with Korean tradition. With the inspired strategy of creating an internationally acknowledged performance from Korean tradition, *Nanta* simultaneously succeeded in globalization and commercialization and is expanding its territory. Now it continues to break historical records in repertory theaters and is building a new theater in an 'inter' region, Thailand, bridging east and west, and is anticipating broader communication between the two regions. The increasing number of travelers to Korea has also contributed to the demand for the expansion of cultural commodities. *Nanta* succeeds in replacing *han*/suffering as a communal engaging theme with the bright and positive *shinmyung* energy as an alternative to redefining or re-characterizing Korean cultural identity in the post-colonial era which demands the norms to deal with the question of changing society. It magnifies the post-IMF integration of egalitarianism into an elitist social structure and reflects a post-IMF combination of old and new values in Korea while also allowing us to take part in the creation of new territories and to observe that boundaries are constructive when they remain porous. As a part of postmodern culture, *Nanta* as "extreme dynamism, liability and volatility" (Chin 309) successfully achieves global communication 'here and now'.

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상업화와 소통

- 비 언어극 <난타>의 극적 전략

전 연 희
(성신여자대학교)

이 논문은 비 언어극 <난타>에 나타난 극적 전략을 분석한 글이다. 공연 <난타>는 1990년대 이후의 한국문화의 세계화적 특성을 반영한 극으로 세계와 소통하기 위한 포스트모던적 전략을 구사한다. <난타>는 근대화 이후의 한국연극과 차별화되는 극적 전략으로 관객과의 소통과 상업화라는 두 가지 전략에 초점을 맞춘다. 먼저 텍스트 중심의 극에서 과감히 언어를 제외한 비 언어극을 선보임으로 언어의 소통으로 발생하는 교감의 장애물을 과감하게 제거한다. 이는 한국연극의 세계화의 가장 걸림돌이 되었던 언어의 소통의 문제를 해결할 수 있는 획기적인 극적 장치라고 할 수 있다. 두 번째로 <난타>는 마당극과 사물놀이 등 한국의 전통문화에서 이끌어 낸 ‘신명’에너지를 현대적으로 변용/확장하여 세계의 관객들과의 공감을 이끌어 낸다. 한국연극이 현대화 과정 이후 해외 관객들에게 우리문화의 고유성을 드러내기 위해 ‘샤머니즘’ 혹은 ‘한’을 전달하기 위해 심혈을 기울였다면 <난타>는 한국 고유의 ‘신명’을 전경화 함으로서 에너지와 활력이 넘치는 한국성의 또 다른 면을 관객들에게 전달하는 성공한다. 또한 관객과의 교감을 이루어가기 위한 노력의 일환으로 ‘음식 만들기’를 공연의 소재로 택하면서 고급문화와 대중문화의 경계를 해체한다. 이를 통해 <난타>는 관객과의 상호교감 이루어 가게 되며 공연 중에 관객들을 무대로 초대하는 배우와 관객간의 상호적 퍼포먼스를 보여준다. 마지막으로 <난타>는 포스트모더니즘 문화의 특징인 문화의 ‘상업화’ 전략을 통해 관객들의 영역을 국내뿐 아니라 해외로 까

지 확대해 나가며 세계무대의 진출에도 성공하게 된다. 실패의 교훈을 바탕으로 과감한 극적 전략의 수정을 통해 세계의 관객과의 소통에 성공하게 되었으며 한국연극의 세계화를 향한 훌륭한 방향성을 제공한다.

주제어 : 관객, 마당극, 사물놀이, 샤머니즘, 세계화, 신명, 포스트모더니즘

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