

**CHUYUN OH**

The University of Texas at Austin

# Queering spectatorship in K-pop: The androgynous male dancing body and western female fandom

## ABSTRACT

*Employing performance studies and queer studies, this article explores the subversive nature of western female fandom's consumption of male dancing bodies in Korean pop (K-pop) culture. By offering close readings of fan-made compilation videos and analysing fans' comments on YouTube, this article analyses how K-pop male idols' androgynous gender fluidity provides a space for queering female desire against normative white masculinity. Through video editing, fans 'choreograph' their desire by fetishizing K-pop male dancers' specific body parts and movements and transform themselves from displayed objects to subjects of the gaze. Moreover, through active engagement online, fans transcend their status from spectators to performers who actively enact alternative sexualities and gender roles in a public space. K-pop male singers' gender performativity is significant, as it challenges rigid gender binaries in western culture – homosexuality/heterosexuality, masculine/feminine body and behaviour, and masculinized gaze/feminized object – as embodiments of hybridized male femininity, which this article calls liminal masculinity.*

## KEYWORDS

K-pop  
dance  
masculinity  
androgyny  
queerness  
vids/vidding  
fandom

With romantic background music, a male dancer rips his shirt open. Inside of the shirt, he wears a white cropped, strappy vest that barely covers his nipples. This feminine, decorative vest is in stark contrast to his tanned muscular body. Opening his thighs widely, he gradually bends his knees. As he descends to the floor, he continues circling his waist delicately with his arms akimbo. His glossy and muscular shirtless chest undulates, as if hula-hooping in a sensual way, until his knees reach the floor. His facial muscles create a grimace, as he looks down to the side. In an instant, he submerges himself in waves of silky, fragile textiles and exposes a sense of intimacy, excessiveness and vulnerability. Such flexible and rich movements of his bare chest evoke sensual tension and position his body as a sexual object.

This scene comes from a K-pop fan-made compilation video entitled *Kpop – Sexy Male Dances Compilation*. It is drawn, in part, from a live performance of *Love Song* by K-pop male singer Rain. As the video consists of sensual dance moves of K-pop male singers, fans' comments on the video thread contain sexual connotations: 'I was watching this with my friend and she said I looked creepy/perverted.... It's true' (ID: crystal han\*\*\*) and 'Wow ... Goodbye ovaries ... O.O' (ID: Bella\*\*\*). The fans not only enjoy the sensual male dancing bodies, but they also support each other and build close rapport with other fans: 'I can't stop watching this. You did an excellent job coordinating the moves with the song. I am literally smiling ear to ear thru the whole thing. Thank you!' (ID: Dejah\*\*\*). How and why do female fans splice and edit original materials and purposely include blatant sensual moves of K-pop male idols? Why do these fans enthusiastically communicate with each other, feeling elated and overjoyed and leaving supportive comments on one another's posts? What does fans' attachment to K-pop male sexuality mean for female agency? This article attempts to answer these questions by queering female desire, fantasy and spectatorship that is often limited to the hetero and homosexual binary.

Previous studies on K-pop include K-pop fandom and fans' identity formation in Asia. This scholarship addresses how fans reshape their gendered identities in online fan culture through active consumption of K-pop music, styles and performances, such as homosexual communities' engagement in K-pop cover dance (Käng 2013; Khiun 2013; Jung 2011b). These studies, however, fail to examine the significance of physicality in motion, and pay less attention to western female fandom. Even though existing scholarship deals with the body types and movements of K-pop performers (Epstein and Joo 2012; Kim 2005; Jung 2011a, 2011b; Leung 2012; Willoughby 2006), it fails to closely read the quality of the dance movements that embody the complex layers of gender performativity.

Performance analysis provides a key mode of enquiry not only because of the dance-driven nature of K-pop, but also because of the ontological significance of the moving body. Certain kinds of ideologies are reinforced or challenged by a dancer's embodiment or rejection of sociocultural norms. Dance movements can reinforce dominant discourse and transgress hegemony, which Ann Cooper Albright calls a 'double moment representation' (1997: 27). Like many other identity markers, fixed notions of gender and sexual identities are also performed, represented and often destabilized in motion (Albright 1997; Banes 1998; Kolb 2011). As Jane C. Desmond argues, movements reveal the specificity of sexuality, which she identifies as the 'cultural politics of movements' (2001: 5). A K-pop singer is not an object on display but a human being whose lived body movements inform the meaning

of performance. Close reading of these bodily signs allows us to interrogate how theoretical meanings of gender and sexual identities are exemplified and appreciated through the embodiment of the dancers' corporeality. As Judith Butler describes, gender is 'stylized repetition of acts' (1988: 519) built upon physicality. Hence, this article attempts to open up a dialogue between the realms of K-pop fandom and K-pop dance. It interrogates the ways in which K-pop male performers' gender fluidity embodied in motion influences western female fans' perspectives on gender and sexuality.

This research draws on six fan-made compilation videos released from 2011 to 2013.<sup>1</sup> All but one of the creators is female.<sup>2</sup> The title of each video explicitly implies sexual connotations, such as *Sexy Kpop Boys* and *Kpop Boys Kill Us with Their Sexy Bodies*. The videos consist of short video clips and pictures of K-pop male performers. A scene or a picture generally does not run more than three or five seconds, and an entire video generally runs from three to six minutes. They include various dancing and acting materials, drawing from K-pop music videos, concerts, entertainment shows, TV dramas, paparazzi photos, advertisements, magazines, etc. These videos feature mainstream K-pop male groups, such as EXO, SHINee, Super Junior, Big Bang, 2PM, BEAST and U-KISS, as well as solo singers such as Rain.

K-pop fans' engagement in making compilation videos resembles vidding. According to Francesca Coppa (2008), the term 'vidding' refers to 'a form of grassroots film-making in which clips from television shows and movies are set to music'. The outcome is called a 'vid'. The creators of such materials are called 'vidders', and identify as 'fans of the [original] visual source[s]'. Vidders take some material from original sources and voluntarily remix and edit it, employing various audio-visual effects to create a new narrative that is different from the original clips. According to Coppa, *Star Trek* fandom creates vidding in which female fans edit footage and create new narratives surrounding the main character Spock. The creators of K-pop compilation videos do not call their practices and videos vidding or vids. Yet, the ways in which the fans engage in editing and creating a particular type of video resonate with vidding, as one of the main purposes of their activity is to create a new meaning and narrative by modifying original sources that they love. This research thus uses the terms vidding, vidders and vids to describe K-pop fans' active involvement in video editing.

To explore this phenomenon, this article employs an interdisciplinary methodological approach, combining theories from dance studies, performance studies, media studies, gender studies and queer studies, in addition to thick descriptions of each video. I provide close readings of singers' physicality and their bodily signs, including facial expressions, gaze, movement styles and qualities, and body types. This article also employs online ethnography. From September 2013 to January 2014, I regularly visited the YouTube pages where the videos are uploaded. I observed fans' comments and examined the ways in which they interacted and communicated with the performers in online communities.

In this article, K-pop fans primarily refers to western female fans. Fans' linguistic and geographical associations as well as sexual orientation inform the definition. In other words, this research identifies western K-pop female fans as viewers who (1) tend to have heterosexual orientation at least in a public space, (2) use English as one of the languages they are most comfortable speaking, (3) and likely live in countries in the West, or in a society under the influence of western culture. I collected data and information about the

1. For more information, see 'KPOP Abs, Thrust&Lip Action' [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=znylSA\\_OwK0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=znylSA_OwK0); 'Sexy Kpop Boys' (2012) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxf7kl1ssKU>; 'Kpop - sexy male dances compilation (1 & 2)' (2013), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07joEYq10JQ>, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Da11DMHs9ow>; 'Kpop boys kill us with their sexy bodies' (2012), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xp1V4E8LwU>; 'Perving On K-Pop Part 2' (2012), [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_kmC2seHzpQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_kmC2seHzpQ).
2. These are some of the most-watched videos among other K-pop compilation videos made by western female fans. But among them, one video is created by a male fan who seemingly has a different sexual orientation from a heterosexual perspective. This research intentionally includes his video because: it presents a feminized perspective that similarly sexualizes the K-pop boys as the female vidders do; the creator has released similar fan-made compilation videos on K-pop male singers, and actively engages in K-pop fandom that is mostly driven by female fans; and in the comments thread on his video, most of the commenters are female, and the female fans' engagement resembles the practice in the K-pop female fan community. By including his work, this article aims to open up a question to homosexual fans in K-pop for future research.

fans by looking at each individual's pages and comments they had made. This includes fans' profiles, pictures, names (or ID) and languages they use. For additional information, I also looked at their recent activity posts on YouTube, such as videos they have created, posted and liked, which implied their sexual orientations or personal preferences/tastes. Visual confirmation of identity was difficult, as the majority of the commenters used K-pop boys' portraits as their profile pictures. Whereas this affirms their status as K-pop fans, it limits access to fans' physical traits that could provide indirect information about their personal identities, including race, ethnicity or sexual orientation. Thus, the term western K-pop female fans is loosely defined due to the ambiguity of information gathered online. English speakers in this context encompass diverse racial and ethnic groups and populations. Fans' sexual orientation cannot be confirmed, as some may not be out, or openly homosexual.

### **K-POP AND THE EMERGENCE OF NEW MASCULINITY**

Since the early 2000s, K-pop and its style have been well recognized by global fans through their hybridized form. K-pop liberally incorporates a wide range of music and dance genres and cultural markers, drawing sources from hip hop, R&B, techno, electronic, ballad, salsa, modern dance, musical dance, classical ballet and even traditional Asian folk dance. K-pop performers create a new transgressive Asian identity across borders in the twenty-first century, exhibiting an imagery of 'multicultural mutant Koreanness' (Oh 2014) on the global stage. As the Korean rapper PSY's viral music video *Gangnam Style* has shown, the popularity of K-pop now goes beyond nation state boundaries, circulated by social media in a space without borders (Kim 2011). K-pop is a dance-driven performance that often emphasizes performers' physical attractiveness and virtuosity. It is a 'visual consumption' (Leung 2012: 77) that sells overall images and performances, not necessarily music per se. As a means to innovating and enriching their performances, K-pop singers and music agents have made international collaborations. For example, S.M. Entertainment, one of the largest music labels in Korea, collaborated with American musicians and choreographers such as Teddy Riley and Tony Testa for SHINee and Girls' Generation's music videos, among many others.

K-pop fandom plays an important role in maintaining the global success and popularity of K-pop. While two terms have been used to refer to K-pop fans (K-pop Fangirl and K-pop Fanboy), it is widely known that K-pop fans around the world are predominantly female (Americankpoplove 2013). K-pop female fans' engagement is more visible and active than that of male fans. Urban Dictionary, a US-based web dictionary, gives a humorous definition of these terms. It notes:

Kpop Fangirls are little creatures who scream like animals at concerts for their biases/male idols that they love and are too blinded to consider lusting about anything else. They constantly dream about this dream man and being their wife, and write extremely interesting fanfictions.

In contrast, Urban Dictionary simply defines K-pop Fanboys as those who are 'going through stages of puberty who enjoy kpop for the hot girls'. Whereas male fans tend to remain average boys who simply enjoy watching a 'sexy' female celebrity without a strong emotional attachment, female fans are more enthusiastically immersed in their fan activities, especially for K-pop boy

bands and singers. The female fans build personal and fictional narratives with their male idols, e.g. calling them “my husband” or “oppa.”<sup>3</sup>

K-pop female fandom is unique in terms of the fans’ wholehearted engagement with the stars thorough online and offline activities. They are avid consumers who not only listen to K-pop music and buy K-pop albums, but also willingly travel overseas to see K-pop concerts, devoting themselves to all possible fan activities. These include watching programmes in which the stars appear (such as talk shows, TV dramas and films), providing free English subtitles for the shows for the sake of western viewers, organizing K-pop flash mobs in their home countries, participating in K-pop dance competitions overseas, posting reaction videos to newly released K-pop music videos, and even getting tattoos of K-pop stars who they love (Choephel 2013).

In conjunction with the hyper-visibility of female fans, K-pop male singers have gained more attention than K-pop girl groups. K-pop girl groups are often criticized for portraying patriarchal, limited female images, such as the seductive femme fatale or innocent virgin, and remaining typical idols under the control of male-centred agency (Oh 2014; Puzar 2011). In contrast, K-pop male performers exhibit a wider range of artistry and performance virtuosity. K-pop boy idols’ artistic talents are not limited to their musical performances. In her book *Korean Masculinities and Transcultural Consumption: Yonsama, Rain, Oldboy, K-Pop Idols*, Sun Jung argues that K-pop boy bands present ‘manufactured versatile masculinity’ (2010: 165), as they are good at dancing, singing and composition and execute a wide variety of skills. Indeed, K-pop male singers play major roles in the Korean entertainment industry, appearing on talk shows and TV dramas, comedy, film and even musicals. For instance, Hyunseung Jang, a member of K-pop boy band BEAST (also known as B2ST), recently performed main roles in the musicals *Mozart!* and *Bonnie and Clyde*, and Jo Kwon, a member of the group 2AM, played the role of a drag queen in the musical *Priscilla*.

In addition to their performance virtuosity, K-pop boy bands present a wide range of gender images. ‘Flower boys’ and ‘beast idols’ are commonly used terms among K-pop fans to describe predominant male prototypes in K-pop (Xiaolong 2013). While ‘beast idols’ refers to men whose bodies and characters are masculine and tough like a ‘beast’, ‘flower boys’ refers to males who have pretty facial features and slim and attractive body shapes. Simply put, ‘flower boys’ literally implies that the boys are graceful and pretty like a flower. K-pop boy bands, such as SHINee, are often called ‘flower boys’ because of their well-groomed, androgynous and polished looks. In contrast, other K-pop boy bands, such as 2PM and BEAST, are called ‘beast idols’ because of their manly behaviour and brawny bodies. Their public personae are promoted through macho choreography and music styles, and their well-trained muscular bodies onstage.

The boundary between ‘flower boys’ and ‘beast idols’ is tenuous, however. Although the bodies of ‘beast idols’ are more muscular than those of ‘flower boys’, ‘beast idols’ are also expected to have exceptionally good-looking faces and polished skin. According to a recent report on BBC News, Korea has one of the longest work days among developed countries. In such a competitive society, lookism is prevalent, and putting on make-up has become common among Korean men because ‘grooming yourself is a reflection of your competency’ (Klug 2012; Williamson 2012). In addition to this rampant lookism, becoming a K-pop star is highly competitive. As a means of increasing their competitiveness, male trainees often get plastic surgery before they debut.

3. ‘Oppa’ is a respectful Korean term, and females use the term when they call older men, including their own brothers. But as implied by PSY’s *Gangnam Style* music video in which the song’s signature lyrics are ‘Oppan Gangnam Style’, the term oppa also contains a sexual connotation in a male and female relationship, because older age often signifies authority, power and thus sexual dominance.

Once they debut, their agent grooms them extensively. When performing onstage, they put on glossy make-up and lavish costumes. Due to the high expectation of such bodily disciplines, male idols' appearances are highly metrosexual and often homogenized. Above all, they should be pretty in all ways, even the 'beast idols'.

In addition to their metrosexual looks, both 'flower boys' and 'beast idols' are expected to show cute attitudes, called *aegyo* in Korean. Urban Dictionary defines *aegyo* as an expression that resembles 'winsome' in English, in that *aegyo* is characterized by a childlike, innocent and appealing attitude. Yoseob Yang, a member of BEAST, is famous for his *aegyo*, although his group is categorized as 'beast idols'. In a fan-made video titled *Yoseob Being Extra CUTE: D*, a fan shows a clip from an entertainment show in which Yoseob was asked to show *aegyo*. In the video, he puckers his lips and with innocent eyes and mumbles, which looks like a baby babbling. All K-pop male performers are supposed to display some degree of *aegyo* regardless of their physical traits, performance personae or style.

Moreover, the effeminate appearance of 'flower boys' does not mean the stars have feminine personalities or identities that match their appearance. Such androgyny evoked by feminine behaviour or effeminate appearance is not linked to homosexuality, as it would be in the West. 'Flower boys' also refers to 'someone who still retains his physical masculine appeal and characteristics despite his pretty appearance', and such ambiguity makes 'flower boys' different from the image of a gay subject in the West, 'who is not necessarily good looking, but feminine in his actions' (The Yale Globalist 2007). Both 'flower boys' and 'beast idols' can be masculine or androgynous in any given circumstance. Therefore, this research does not strictly divide the male prototype into flower- or beast-like. Rather, it attempts to articulate how the androgynous traits of K-pop male performers open room for queering female desire and spectatorship.

## **SEXUALIZING THE MALE DANCING BODY**

In western culture, the notion of 'white, middle class, heterosexual men' (Dolan 1991: 73) haunts ideal masculinity. The construction of normative white masculinity can be traced to the colonial era when white males playing the roles of slave masters represented standard masculinity (hooks 1992: 89). Today this hegemonic notion of white masculinity permeates not only daily life, but also mainstream media culture supported by 'white-supremacist-capitalist-patriarchy' (hooks 1981). In media, heterosexual white men are depicted as the ideal symbols of assertive power and male dominance, signifying the societal standard of masculinity that includes the family breadwinner (Trujillo 1991; Orelus 2010). Some cultural practices represent masculinities that do not fall into the category of normative white masculinity. These include male images in heavy metal, grunge, hippie fashion and culture, and drag shows. Such androgynous masculinities, however, are considered deviant compared to the typical image of straight white masculinity, which Raewyn Connell identifies as 'hegemonic masculinity' (1995: xviii). In this structure, women's choices are necessarily limited when viewing and consuming masculinity represented in the mainstream media content.

In US mainstream media, men barely dance, as this would be associated with homosexuality based on the assumption that 'real men do not dance' (Craig 2013: 213). Male bodies in motion should reflect a modality of

erectness, rigidity or stubbornness, for flexibility, softness and curviness are easily connected to femininity. According to David Gere, it is inappropriate for men 'if you talk too much, if you feel too much, if you enjoy the aesthetics of too much' (2001: 356). Exaggerated movements characterized by 'effulgent, rich, creamy, [and] excessive' (Gere 2001: 356) qualities and gestures, such as the flick of a wrist, are signs of effeminacy. Due to the stigmatization of the excessiveness of the male body in motion, male dancers have often been 'accused' of homosexuality due to the rich emotionality and physicality inherently associated with dance movements (Burt 1995). Hegemonic white masculinity is secured by heterosexuality or through acts of homophobia (Connell 2000; Kimmel 2006). Accordingly, it does not allow for heterosexual masculinity that is effeminate (Hatfield 2010).

Despite the increasing visibility of LGBTQ communities and ongoing efforts to diminish discrimination against sexual orientation, homosexual identity in media is stereotyped. For example, effeminate characters such as actors in *RuPaul's Drag Race* would not be considered heterosexual, even if the actors were not homosexual. Exaggerated motions, costumes, voices and make-up are already marked by homosexuality, and thus cannot be compatible with the subject of normative heterosexual masculinity.

Whereas men's excessive movements are associated with homosexuality, dance has been regarded as a feminized art form in western culture (Banes 1998). The female dancing body is differently stigmatized. Female dancers' bodily excellence and virtuosity have been associated with sexual expertise, and thus promiscuity (McRobbie 1997: 211–12). Their bodies are also marginalized, as they are displayed in a public space (Case 2008; Dolan 1991), compared to women, such as housewives, whose bodies remain in the domestic arena. The dancing body in western culture is doubly marginalized: for women, it is a sign of promiscuity; for men, it is a symbol of emasculation or homosexuality.

K-pop performers, however, engender a new meaning for the male dancing body. The compilation video titled *Sexy Kpop Boys* consists of sensual dance moves by K-pop male performers. A K-pop male singer appears on the screen. He is clad in skinny black pants and a black tank top, a black headscarf with jewels on it tied around his head. He does a seductive pole dance. He swiftly slides on the floor moving towards the pole. He swings his legs in a circular motion next to the pole, and grasps the pole by curling his legs. Lying on his back with the pole between his bended knees, he holds it using one hand and hangs from the pole precariously. He then lifts his pelvis while pushing against the floor using his other arm. Pushing his pelvis up, he grasps the pole between his knees and tilts his head backward, as if he is indulging in erotic pleasure. He then stands up hanging from the pole at a 45-degree angle, fully extends his other arm outward, and spins and smoothly twirls his body lightly so that he appears off-balance. Moving away from the pole, he rips off his tank top and exposes his muscular chest. This virile gesture at the end seems to be a recovery of his masculinity. His sensual pole dancing is not a feminine act but an outcome of his masculine sexual impulse.

In this compilation video, the K-pop male singers challenge the notion that real men do not dance. The performers offer richly textured and expressive movement quality. As they are highly trained dancers, their bodies and motions are remarkably skilled: strong, energetic, brawny, taut, but simultaneously expressive, elastic, flexible, lithe and delicate. Their bodies are muscular and, at the same time, slim, tiny and young looking, and they have innocent

faces. Whereas the former characteristics are associated with conventional masculinity, the latter is often connected to femininity or homosexuality. Their androgynous appearance and sophisticated movement quality could be associated with homosexuality given the stigmatization of the male dancing body in western culture.

K-pop female fans, however, actively embrace such male dancing bodies and destigmatize the notion of men dancing. The female fans create a new narrative by juxtaposing male dancers' bodily artistry with sexual superiority. K-pop fan vids predominately contain pelvic thrusting, crotch grabbing and bare-chested body waving that are explicitly sexual. While two of the former are associated with a male's sexual organ, the latter is also connected to an emblematic body part of male sexuality. In the video titled *Kpop – Sexy Male Dances Compilation* clips predominantly consist of scenes of K-pop boys' pelvic thrust movements. The background music is from K-pop boy group U\_KISS's 'Te Amo', a dance song with a seductive beat. The camera moves from the keyhole through which a girl peeps at the K-pop boy idols. A man smoothly caresses his body from the nape of his neck to the erogenous zone around his pelvis, pointing his fingertips downward and positioning his hand on top of his crotch. While touching himself, his upper body undulates while he gazes inwardly, as if somebody is caressing his body, or as if he were stimulating himself. Because his inward gaze does not register the presence of the audience, the scene reveals a private moment of sexual arousal. Then, a member of the K-pop boy band Boyfriend lies on the floor. He bends his knees and pushes up his pelvis rapidly with spinal undulations. He appears to wiggle like a worm on his back, and the pelvic thrusting drives his entire body and the momentum he achieves. In the next scene, Jang Woo Young, a member of the boy band 2PM, faces frontwards and kneels down. Revealing his bare chest, he libidiously thrusts his crotch forward while aggressively pushing down his elbows, bouncing his whole body.

The female fans not only fetishize the male pelvis but also other body parts. The vidders idealize K-pop performers' torsos, making a seemingly incompatible juxtaposition with the stars' innocent-looking faces. Another compilation video entitled *Kpop Boys Kill Us with Their Sexy Bodies* starts with an eye-catching image of an innocent-looking K-pop boy whose face is extremely white and polished, staring at the audience deeply. In the background there is upbeat dance pop music. The photographs in the video predominantly depict shirtless K-pop male dancers. The boys often look vulnerable to some degree because of their young-looking and androgynous faces. Their feminine facial features contrast with their taut muscular bodies that are generally more tanned than their white faces. A series of spliced video clips continue and display the body waves of various K-pop male dancers who bare their chests. All the clips consistently portray performers who effortlessly ripple and roll their upper bodies. Some of them pull up their tank tops while dancing, revealing their taut, oily, sweaty chests and abdomens.

Some vids display a male body part that is rarely sexualized in mainstream culture – male lips. In the compilation video titled *KPOP Abs, Thrust & Lip Action*, the creator collects clips and pictures from K-pop male singers' lip movements. With seductive pop music in the background, it begins with a couple of short clips in which boys lick their lips. Some K-pop boys pass their tongues over a fork, and others lick a piece of ice or ice cream. One scene comes from a Baskin Robbins advertisement; a K-pop singer looks at the camera with a sweet smile on his face and then smoothly licks the ice cream. Some pictures include males who bite their lips during an interview or when making a mistake.



For the female fans, the male dancing body in K-pop is no longer a sign of effeminacy or emasculation. Pelvic thrusting, which emblemizes conventional phallogocentric masculinity, is the predominant movement the fans include in their videos. The fans also include scenes that exclusively display specific male body parts, such as a torso, pelvis and lips, and sensual motions associated with them. The female fans' comments also demonstrate how they perceive the K-pop male dancing bodies as sexually appealing. On the comment threads, the fans often say that they want to go to Korea to see the men. In the comment thread of the *KPOP Abs, Thrust & Lip* video, female fans note, 'Girls, go to korea and find a bf with sexy abs =)' (grozz\*\*\*), 'I just want a Korean to love me. Specifically anyone from Bigbang, Super Junior, SHINee, [...] or any of the bands I obsess over' (Daena Richard\*\*\*). Through vidding, female fans legitimize the notion of men dancing and frame the male dancing bodies as sensually and even aesthetically desirable.

## EXPOSING VULNERABLE MASCULINITY

In western patriarchy, there has been a long-standing dichotomy between female as sexually displayed object and male as spectator (Case 2008; Dolan 1991). While men take the position of the spectator, women and their bodies have been objectified, sexualized and racialized as a source of male desire (Case 2008; hooks 1992). The gaze reflects an unequal power dynamic in gender relations (Berger 1972; Fredrickson and Tomi-Ann 1997). In media representations, a male actor uses a direct gaze to the audience, whereas a heroine often adopts an indirect gaze, positioning herself as a displayed object by internalizing the status of 'being-at-look-at-ness' (Mulvey 1975: 11).

However, the way that K-pop dancers display their bodies deviates from this conventional power dynamic. The video *Kpop – Sexy Male Dances Compilation* starts with a girl who peeps through a keyhole, which implies that the viddler assumes that females are the primary spectators, thereby valuing a female gaze that could be voyeuristic. In the next scene, members of the boy group Double A bend one knee and slide, sweeping their right shins on the floor. As the other folded knee remains slightly opened to the left, their bodies lean to the opposite side supported by their right hands against the floor. Opening both of their knees to the sides on the floor, they bounce and thrust their pelvises upward repeatedly, looking down and never at the camera. The next clip contains a music video of K-pop boy band U-KISS. The members tilt their heads diagonally and stand at an angle facing away from the spectator. The members are clad in tight red police-influenced uniforms with glistening gold braids. They slightly lean their torsos backward, over their closely held legs and feet. They tilt their heads and stick out their pelvises with their hands on their crotches and sensually thrust their crotches toward their hands. Their faces are turned towards the audience, but their gaze is directed down while they move.

In addition to the indirect gaze, the dancers also disrupt conventional power dynamics in gender relations by displaying a sense of male vulnerability. In the compilation video entitled *Perving On K-Pop Part 2*, Hyunseung, from the boy group BEAST, appears. He is clad in black leather-like pants with his wet chest bare. His body is so slim that it resembles that of an immature adolescent boy. Despite his skinny body, his dance movements are richly sensual. After taking off his shirt, he bends his elbows, putting them together in front of his face. He then throws back both arms, extending his chest.

Lifting his arms up with supple and soft gestures, his upper body delicately undulates in an elastic way, while he looks down to the side. Under dim blue light, his body is sweaty, and he almost closes his eyes during the move. His astonishingly flexible, sensitive and erotic dance movements, along with his self-indulgent facial expression, evoke a sense of vulnerability and sensuality. In the next scene, a member of Super Junior holds a microphone stand. His bare chest is hyper-visible and, at the same time, looks vulnerable, for the rest of his body parts are covered. He puts on skinny black pants with shiny belt accessories and sparkling white leather gloves. While he is singing, female backup dancers clad in sensual black leather costumes caress his body. He reacts passively. Without touching the female dancers' bodies, he stares at their faces, while their hands glide over his body. Once the dancers disappear, he circles his hips, rolling his buttocks backward in a curvaceous manner. One hand holds the microphone stand, and the other arm is loosely draped to the side. While sensually rotating his hips, he also turns his head and looks away.

The indirect gaze of the male performers and the vulnerability presented by intimate emotional exposures in motion allow female viewers to switch their role from sexualized objects to the subject of gaze. In these videos, the performers persistently use indirect gaze when executing sensual movements. When making sexual movements, such as the body wave or hip circling, they do not directly look at the audience. When executing sensuous movements, such as crotch grabs, rippling their chest muscles and caressing their bodies, many of the performers' eyes are often half-closed. The dancers also look down to the side, avoiding direct eye contact with the camera. They also bite their lips or knit their brows, as if they are feeling 'too much' in these movements. Their inward gaze, coupled with sweaty dancing bodies and visceral moves, titillate the audience, for their bodily expressions implicitly resonate with an intimate moment of sexual excitement. The male dancers fully expose their bodies as objects being watched and exhibit masculinity vulnerable to the female gaze. The more excessively the performers engage in motion, the more their bodies become vulnerable. They willingly display their intimate sensual arousal in motion, inviting female audiences to reposition themselves as spectators of the male dancing bodies.

### **VIDDING: RE-CHOREOGRAPHING DESIRE**

In western culture, a female's indulgence in her own sexual pleasure in a public space is a subject of controversy due to the historically rooted patriarchal sociopolitical structure. Coppa (2008) argues that vidders are predominantly females whose perspectives have often been underrepresented. Fan-made videos and vidding offer women a site where they create a product that fits their personal taste. As vidding allows women to separate nuances of original narratives and themes, vidders reflect their own agency in relation to the male-dominated mainstream culture through their vids. This method is particularly used to create alternative perspectives on gender and sexuality, especially for those women whose perspectives have been marginalized in the mainstream media.

K-pop female vidders create new narratives by editing and splicing original sources. In compilation videos, the female creators insert new background music, most of which is upbeat catchy dance music or seductive sounds. For vidders, 'music is used as an interpretive lens to help the viewer to see the

source text differently' (Coppa). By including seductive sounds, the vidders add romantic or sensual nuances and subtexts in the scenes, some of which do not exist in the original contexts. They also edit the camera angle so that it can 'move' on the male body and provide 'liveness' to the mediatized corporeality. The camera angle closes in and sweeps over the dancers' naked torsos from their lower abdomens to their faces, stops and zooms in on specific parts of the male bodies, such as a torso, pelvis and lips. The creators also slow down the speed when they zoom in on specific body parts so that it further intensifies the corporeality or even sensuality of the male bodies. Moreover, the users create new narratives of performers' facial expressions by modifying speed. The vidders slow down images, such as when the performers eyes are half-closed looking down at the camera or when they look at an object they are eating, while lifting their chins. Their mouths are half-opened, and their tongues slightly stick out from between their teeth. Since some male celebrities wear eye shadow, when the scene becomes slower, the performers' downward gaze and eyes are intensified and look more seductive and feminine. The fans also repeat particular scenes. Although pelvic moves do not run more than a few seconds in the original choreography or music video, the vidders extend the scenes by repeating the movements multiple times. By collecting pelvic thrusting moves from different performances and putting them together in one video, the fans re-choreograph the dance pieces. They create a new action sequence with a series of clips and images that resonates with sexual behaviour. By doing so, the vidders remake performance sources for their own pleasure. Their enactment is not just about video editing; it is about re-choreographing their desire in a mediatized, fictional space to reclaim their voices.

Such vidding often creates an entirely different atmosphere from its original source. In the compilation video *KPOP Abs, Thrust & Lip Action*, a K-pop singer is asked to eat a banana. One of the show hosts feeds him, and he gently sucks the banana. The clip was taken from an episode of a Korean health television show titled *Mysteries of the Stomach*. There are also Korean subtitles, such as 'How does food look like in the human body?' or 'Let's do some experiments with a banana that is easy to digest' (Korean subtitles are translated by the author of this article). Despite the original source that is hardly sexualized, the vidder creates a new narrative by eliminating the original context. The creator slows down the scene when he eats the banana and adds a seductive sound. With the modified speed and the new background music, the scene transforms his pedestrian action into something that evokes sexual tension. Indeed, a female fan sighs humorously, 'Those bananas ...' (Kida R\*\*\*). It is quite obvious that the majority of western audiences would be unable to read the Korean subtitles unless the creator had provided English subtitles for the show. For female fans, vidding is a way of expressing their desire. A female eating a banana likely drives male sexual fantasies, and it is unusual to see a depiction that sexualizes men's lip movements. By excluding the context of the show and resituating it, the vidder provides a space where female fans create new narratives surrounding the performers' physicality.

## **MALE FEMININITY: PERFORMING LIMINAL MASCULINITY**

In her book *Female Masculinity* (1998), Judith Halberstam eloquently argues that masculine traits represented by women are neither a bad imitation of nor an attempt to be a man. Tracing diverse gender expressions among masculine

4. 'Puing puing' does not have a specific meaning; it is a sound Koreans use when making cute expressions.

women throughout 'her' story, Halberstam suggests the notion of female masculinity, which advocates hybridized and fluid gender roles and masculine traits that can be constructed without men. Her idea of female masculinity is useful to the analysis of gender performativity in K-pop, for it allows us to examine more nuanced understandings of gender categories. K-pop male performers exhibit gender images that evade categorization. Like women who enact female masculinity, K-pop performers embody male femininity through their hybridized nuanced gender expressions.

K-pop male performers present femininity maintained without women, one that neither masquerades nor imitates women. As exemplified by stunningly rich and flexible body rolls, waves, hip circles and spinal undulations, K-pop male dancers' motions echo a highly feminized movement style and quality. In addition to choreographic choices marked by conventional femininity, K-pop male performers' facial expressions, such as grimaces, expose rich emotional indulgence while dancing, resonating excessiveness associated with traditional female sexuality. K-pop male dancers' lip movements, such as biting, licking, touching their lips and sucking an object, are also associated with female sexuality, given that female oral movements have been sexualized and evoke sensual themes. The dancers' indirect gaze further reaffirms how the dancers position themselves as objects, repositioning female viewers as spectators of the male bodies on display. Despite their feminine motions, they neither imitate femininity nor exaggerate feminine gestures.

In conjunction with feminine characteristics in motion, K-pop male singers exhibit girlish behaviour as well. K-pop male idols are often asked to show *aegyo* to amuse fans. In the fan-made video titled *SHINee Minho Aegyo – Puing Puing*, Minho, a member of SHINee, is asked to show *aegyo*. Without hesitation, he makes a cute expression. He clenches and flicks his fists a couple of times around his cheek like a cat. With a bright smile, he tilts his head slightly, saying 'puing puing'<sup>4</sup> in a squeaky baby voice, winking and blinking his eyes to be cute. Yet, because of his inherently adorable, androgynous and youthful face, his acting looks neither presentational nor artificially rehearsed. In the compilation video entitled *Kpop Boys Kill Us With Their Sexy Bodies*, Key, a member of SHINee, wears a pink top with a fringe and does a cover dance of a song by a K-pop girl group. He coquettishly flicks, jiggles and shimmies his shoulders with a flirtatious and charming smile, winking and tilting his head slightly backwards, while one of his arms is akimbo and the other hand is on his chin. Since his bodily motion is endearing and engrossing in a conventional sense, his cross-gender performance looks organic and barely creates a visual discrepancy. They do not pretend to be women or homosexual. Such representations of male femininity aim to amuse and please female fans by embodying feminine, girlish, and child-like attitudes and movements. Such enactments of femininity are not necessarily perceived as presentational acting, as this feminine behaviour creates harmony with their natural androgynous physicality.

K-pop dancers are simply too youthful and pretty and too good at moving their bodies to be 'normal'. They excessively enjoy the sensations of their moving bodies and expose their vulnerability through dance. K-pop singers' gender fluidity disrupts conventional representations of effeminacy stigmatized as homosexuality. Their wide range of emotional as well as physical expressions can be subversive, as it challenges the hegemonic notion of heterosexual white masculinity as well as stereotypical imagery of the gay subject in western culture. Androgynous K-pop male dancing bodies cross gender

lines by performing both unconventional and conventional heterosexuality/homosexuality and femininity/masculinity, which this article calls 'liminal masculinity'.

### **'PERVERING' ON K-POP, QUEERING DESIRE**

Queer desire is not limited to a person whose sexual orientation is homosexual. As Alexander Doty describes, the act of 'queering' lies in the process of interpretation. For Doty, queer desire is 'everywhere' (1993: xii). The audience 'reads and enjoys queerly, whether they would call it this [queer] or not' (44), and the audience can find queer pleasure even in a heterosexual narrative. The meaning of text is not intrinsic, but exists in a viewer's reading process depending on how he or she decodes the text.

The liminal masculinity of K-pop performers provides an alternative experience for western female audiences. Such a narrative would not be possible within the structure of normative white masculinity. The ideology of hegemonic white masculinity relegates women's status to either the 'ideal' white womanhood that serves such hegemonic masculinity (Case 2008: 97–98) or a racialized exotic Other (hooks 1992; Wong 2010: 18). Through their compilation videos, female fans create new images of masculinity and fully enjoy 'perverted' guilty pleasures in the fictional space they create, queering their desire. Fans note that these videos are 'deviant' and make the viewers 'pervy'. A female viewer writes, '[...] Seriously ... some of them would have made fine strippers ... =P I'm such a perv ... oh god ... K-Pop what have you done to me ...' (ID: Merisa Chan\*\*\*). Their use of 'pervert' is particularly interesting, for the word is often used to describe a man who possesses inappropriate sexual desire. Given the negative connotation of the term, this signifies that the fans are aware that they are not supposed to enjoy these 'pervy' performances by young-looking dancers.

K-pop female fans neither criticize the 'deviant' gender representation of K-pop male performers nor censor their 'pervy' feelings. Using smile emoticons and exclamation points and capitalizing their words, the fans rather reveal that they are entertained by such 'perverted' masculinity and enjoy non-normative male images in K-pop. The female fans also destigmatize the term and recontextualize it in playful ways. On the comment thread of *Kpop Boys Kill Us with Their Sexy Bodies*, fans write, 'Oh my god..... im feeling so pervert [sic] watching tha[t]!!^o^' (ID: plamoo\*\*\*), 'Omg this is great~! So perverted i like it xD [...] \*perverted mind\*' (ID: Chloe Yo\*\*\*) and 'Pervert things in my mind' (ID: luzarang\*\*\*).

Age reflects gendered power dynamics, and age and gender are intricately connected. It is not unusual to see a media production that portrays a mature, older man with a younger, child-like woman as an ideal partner. Young age also implies sexual chasteness. Given patriarchal ideology that dichotomizes women as whores or virgins, the dynamic represented by an older man with a younger woman can be legitimized. Thus, age not only represents a gendered topic but also justifies male dominance. By consuming youthful K-pop boys, female fans reverse the power dynamic. In the compilation videos, the dancers' half-naked bodies are often very slim, tiny and non-muscular. They often look vulnerable due to their adolescent body types and innocent looks accompanied by an indirect gaze. Not all K-pop idols are teenagers, but their bodies and faces look much younger than those of an average western man. The young-looking bodies with their sensual motions

offer a non-normative masculinity compared to the image of the mature breadwinner type of normative white masculinity. The androgynous, young-looking male body in K-pop gives female audiences visual satisfaction. A fan comments, 'I so love Korean men [*sic*] bodies, no hair, smooth ... beautiful sexy, awesome ... oh yea, they are all fine as hell. I'm moving my black butt to Korea and open [*sic*] up a baby oil, chap stick business ... just for men ...' (ID: gwenpoo\*\*\*). This reversed power dynamic explains how women might feel consuming the image of pretty K-pop boys. The female fans are empowered, overjoyed and visually satisfied by watching pretty boys who willingly dance and exhibit their youthful bodies for the audience.

K-pop fans show mixed reactions to such 'perverted' boys. In a reaction video, titled *SHINee HELLO Music Video Review, Gender Stereotypes and Perceived Gayness*, a female fan (ID: Linzer Din\*\*\*) cynically asks why western viewers, especially men, often confuse K-pop boy bands' childish expressions and androgynous appearance with gayness. Shrugging her shoulder and speaking in a high-pitched girlish voice, she giggles and says that she likes Taemin, the youngest member of the boy band SHINee, because he looks like a boy who would do whatever she wants. Then, she acts as if she is speaking with Taemin. Grimacing, she commands with a low aggressive voice like a man, 'Go young Taemin! Journey for the kitchen [...] when you return come with beer'. Taemin's 'flower boy' appearance – slim and tiny body, a young-looking face with polished skin and innocent smile – creates a soft persona. His androgyny opens a space in which a woman can imagine a different relationship with a man. The fan, for instance, acts and speaks with a deep masculine voice when she commands him to bring the beer. The prettiness and youthfulness of Taemin creates emotional intimacy and suggests that he would be more sensitive, friendly and understanding than an 'ordinary' man, or promotes a fantasy where he would serve the woman, who is normally consigned to a subordinated position. Nevertheless, Taemin is heterosexual according to his public persona and is thus available as a male partner in a fictional narrative.

Female fans' attitudes to K-pop male stars' sexual orientation is not necessarily geared towards heterosexuality. In K-pop fandom, the point is not whether fans want their stars to be homosexual or heterosexual. Even if fans want their stars to remain heterosexual, this does not mean that they have a scenario in their fictional world where the conventional male and female relationship is built upon male dominance. Rather, the fans' desire is likely driven by the fact that they do not frame or limit their stars within the stereotypes of gayness or homosexuality simply because the stars are androgynous. Moreover, while some fans defend stars 'accused' of being homosexual by western viewers, other fans enthusiastically create gay fanfictions and stories about K-pop male idols. The female fans who consume liminal K-pop masculinity and their desire are also liminal. They want their stars to be heterosexual, homosexual, masculine and/or feminine, so that they can reposition their roles across various types of pre-existing personae, including bossy, macho, butch, femme, tomboy, gay or sissy, and 'perform' multiple spectatorships that evade categorization.

## **CREATING DIALOGUE, BUILDING COMMUNITY, DOING ALTERNATIVE SEXUALITY**

Through their fan vids, K-pop fans not only create alternative narratives but also openly, actively and playfully express desire and engage in their own ways of finding sexual pleasure in a public space. Sharing their experiences, the

fans reposition themselves and challenge normative masculinity and gender construction, which Coppa might call 'collaborative critical thinking' through vidding.

The creators build a supportive community with avid fans. In the video description of *Kpop – Sexy Male Dances Compilation*, the creator posted:

Okay, i [sic] wanted to make this video since a long time ago ... Who wouldn't like to do it? haha Anyway, I wasn't able to put all videos I had. So, some singers aren't here as well ... That means i'm [sic] going to make part 2 [...]

On the comment thread, many viewers express how they appreciate her editing and sharing the video. They write, 'Wow this is soo [sic] hot <3 thank you so much for making this, you did an incredibly good job!' (ID: DSAelfc\*\*\*), 'Excellent job x3' (ID: Alel\*\*\*), 'Bless your heart for making this' (ID:alexiscas\*\*\*) and 'Thanks again for the eye-candy. :-)' (ID: Dejah Kingston-Har\*\*\*). Other comments more directly express how much the fans enjoy the video, and some of the comments are written in humorous ways: 'I think my ovaries just exploded ...' (ID: roy\*\*\*) and 'I actually got a nose bleed [sic] while watching this .... thank you' (Tatjana L\*\*\*). Responding to such enthusiastic fan support, the creator responds on the thread that she will make the next version of the sexy K-pop males dance compilation. The viddier participates in a creative dialogue with other fans, freely conveying their opinions without censorship.

These female fans are not afraid to express their sexual desire through their comments, which explicitly state their sexual attraction to K-pop singers. Under the video *KPOP Abs, Thrust & Lip Action*, female fans write:

Hot damn, these Kpop men are walking, talking, singing porn!!!! Just looking at this video makes me wanna have some naughty fantasies of them!

(ID: Jana Clevel\*\*\*)

Damn, videos like this makes [sic] it really hard for me to claim I like kpop for the music ... Now excuse me while I go and take a long cold shower

(ID: Gund\*\*\*)

It should be illegal for them to wear shirts!!! XD

(ID: 516pop\*\*\*)

Their comments reveal that female fans are sexually aroused by K-pop dancers and their bodies. Some fans claim that they want to see these kinds of boys more, mentioning that they are aesthetically and visually pleasing. Extreme word choice is also found.

Is It [sic] wrong of me to want to rape them? I can't control my urges because of all the "KPOP Abs, Thrust & Lip Action". >///<

(ID: Sandra Or\*\*\*)

Although the expression per se is inappropriate, it is interesting to see how these women 'feel' differently and redefine their sexuality vis-à-vis pretty K-pop boys. These female fans experience new roles in gender power dynamics.

5. Such androgynous appearance, however, does not always contribute to changing the unequal gender relations. According to Seungsook Moon (2005), South Korea is a patriarchal society coloured by militarized masculinity. For instance, despite the global popularity of K-pop 'flower boys', 'Korea's Glass Ceiling Index score was the lowest among 26 OECD countries' according to *The Economist*. Korea also ranked 111th out of 136 countries in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report in 2013. See more at <http://forumblog.org/2014/03/koreas-government-tackling-gender-gap>.

With liminal masculinity in K-pop, female fans might feel that they no longer need to perform patriarchal female imagery that has chronically subordinated women.<sup>5</sup> Rather, a female-dominant relationship would be possible. They do not have to be heterosexual either. The body is a political site in which a certain type of ideology is negotiated and challenged. The flower-like beauty and youth of K-pop boys' bodies allow females to feel more dominant, have more power and have more authority in their hetero- or homosexual relationships. Female fans no longer remain spectators of the male dancing bodies. They actively engage in a dialogue and perform new gender roles, imagining and dreaming alternative sexualities.

The K-pop female vidders put the male body at the service of their desire. The ways the female fans represent K-pop male performers are transgressive, for they challenge the binary of masculinized gaze versus feminized object and reposition their sexuality in an uncategorizable realm. A K-pop female fan projects herself through the fan-made videos. Being such an active subject of desire, she is able to possess her gaze, and perform a role that she has dreamt, thereby reclaiming her body and subjectivity. In the process, she empowers herself by granting herself the agency of her desire.

## CONCLUSION

K-pop male dancers' male femininity is neither fully homosexual/heterosexual nor feminine/masculine. Rather, they express a liminal masculinity. For female audiences, such fluid, hybridized gender performativity opens up a new way of defining gender roles. The androgynous and ambiguous masculinities of K-pop male dancing bodies allow western female fans to re-imagine, dream and create a wide range of sexual orientations, fantasy and relationships with alternative masculinity that would not be possible within the structure of heteronormative white masculinity. Through vidding, female fans re-choreograph K-pop dancers' body movements, and simultaneously choreograph their desire. For fans, vidding is not a video editing but an enactment of physicalizing and visualizing desire in a fictional space and reclaiming their voices. The fans' aspiration to consume liminal K-pop masculinity is also transgressive. Like the K-pop male dancing bodies that evade categorization, female fans' spectatorship hovers over diverse gender roles and sexualities. The female fans adore youthful male dancing bodies and the beauty they emanate. Indeed, on the comment thread of *Kpop Boys Kill Us with Their Sexy Bodies*, a female fan cynically writes, 'AMERICA!!!! why dont [sic] we have men like this????!!' (ID: Xiao D\*\*\*). These female fans seek a masculinity other than the typical masculinity available in the West.

Future research on K-pop and its fandom could focus on the racial dynamics in K-pop fandom. Given that a gendered body is racialized, and vice versa (Wolf 2007: 173), it is necessary to discuss how racial imagery of Asian men impact western audiences' appreciation of K-pop. One female fan writes:

I seriously want to see more of this kind. Thank you for making this and sharing. You are awesome! I love the editing with repeating and cutting to next after not repeating fully the last one. Is this understandable in any way...? Anyway, I love this video [...].

(ID: MinnaK\*\*\*)



K-pop fandom, perhaps, is not about young pretty Korean boys. Instead, it is about female desire. The K-pop male dancing body is a site where women create their own dialogues, narratives and agency to re-imagine and queer gender roles and to see what they have dreamt by themselves, for themselves.

## REFERENCES

- Albright, A. C. (1997), *Choreographing Difference: The Body and Identity in Contemporary Dance*, Hanover: Wesleyan University Press.
- Americankpoplove (2013), 'Why aren't male K-Pop fans focused on?', [http://www.allkpop.com/forums\\_post/allkpop/K-POP/why-arent-male-k-pop-fans-focused-on#axzz2qmvnLtct](http://www.allkpop.com/forums_post/allkpop/K-POP/why-arent-male-k-pop-fans-focused-on#axzz2qmvnLtct). Accessed 12 January 2014.
- Banes, S. (1998), *Dancing Women: Female Bodies on Stage*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Berger, J. (1972), *Ways of Seeing: Based on the BBC Television Series*, London: British Broadcasting Corporation.
- Burt, R. (1995), *The Male Dancer: Bodies, Spectacle, Sexualities*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1988), 'Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory', *Theatre Journal*, 40: 4, pp. 519–31.
- Case, S. (2008), *Feminism and Theatre*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cho, Y. (2014), 'How Korea's Government is tackling the gender gap', The World Economic Forum, <http://forumblog.org/2014/03/koreas-government-tackling-gender-gap>. Accessed 3 October 2014.
- CMLDanger (2013), 'Kpop – sexy male dances compilation [1/3]', <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O7JoEyqLOJQ>. Accessed 27 January 2014.
- (2013), 'Kpop – sexy male dances compilation [2/3]', <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DaT1DMhs9ow>. Accessed 27 January 2014.
- Connell, R. (1995), *Masculinities*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- (2000), 'Understanding men: Gender sociology and the new international research on masculinities', Clark Lecture at the Department of Sociology, University of Kansas, Kansas, 19 September.
- Coppa, F. (2008), 'Women, "Star Trek," and the early development of Fannish Vidding', *Transformative Works and Cultures*, 1, <http://journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/article/viewArticle/44>. Accessed 27 January 2014.
- Craig, M. L. (2013), *Sorry I Don't Dance: Why Men Refuse to Move*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dae Chan (2012), 'Sexy Kpop Boys', <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxf7kl1ssKU>. Accessed 27 January 2014.
- Desmond, J. C. (2001), 'Introduction. Making the invisible visible: Staging sexualities through dance', in J. C. Desmond (ed.), *Dancing Desires: Choreographing Sexualities on and Off the Stage*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, pp. 3–32.
- Dolan, J. (1991), *The Feminist Spectator as Critic*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Doty, A. (1993), *Making Things Perfectly Queer: Interpreting Mass Culture*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Eleni Choephel (2013), '8 Reasons K-Pop fans are the most passionate of all fans: You think Beliebers and Directioners are passionate? Have you met a Shawol? A B2uty? Or a VIP?', <http://www.buzzfeed.com/>

- etchoeph/8-reasons-why-k-pop-fans-are-the-most-passionate-cdjj. Accessed 2 January 2014.
- Epstein, S. and Joo, R. M. (2012), 'Multiple exposures: Korean bodies and the transnational imagination', *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, 10: 33, 1, pp. 1–17.
- Fredrickson, B. L. and Roberts, T. (1997), 'Objectification theory', *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 21: 2, pp. 173–206.
- Gere, D. (2001), '29 Effeminate Gesture: Choreographer Joe Goode and the heroism of effeminacy', in J. C. Desmond (ed.), *Dancing Desires: Choreographing Sexualities on and Off the Stage*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, pp. 349–84.
- Halberstam, J. (1998), *Female Masculinity*, Duke University Press.
- Hatfield, E. F. (2010), "'What it Means to Be a Man": Examining hegemonic masculinity in two and a half men', *Communication, Culture & Critique*, 3: 4, pp. 526–48.
- hooks, b. (1981), *Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, Boston, MA: South End Press.
- (1992), *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, Boston, MA: South End Press.
- Jung, E. (2010), 'Playing the race and sexuality cards in the transnational pop game: Korean music videos for the us market', *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, 22: 2, pp. 219–36.
- Jung, S. (2010), *Korean Masculinities and Transcultural Consumption: Yonsama, Rain, Oldboy, K-Pop Idols (TransAsia Screen Cultures Series)*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- (2011a), '3. K-Pop beyond asia-performing trans-nationality, trans-industriality, and trans-textuality', *Korean Society for Journalism and Communication Studies*, 8, pp. 99–129.
- (2011b), 'K-pop, Indonesian fandom, and social media', *Transformative Works and Cultures*, 8, <http://journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/article/view/289/219>. Accessed 20 January 2014.
- Käng, D. B. (2013), 'Being fabulous, becoming spectacular: Embodied mimesis, delayed authenticity, and transnational transgender personification in Thai K-Pop Cover dance', paper presented at *The 1st World Congress for Hallyu*, Seoul, Korea, 18–19 October.
- Khiun, L. (2013), 'K-pop dance trackers and cover dancers', in Y. Kim (ed.), *The Korean Wave: Korean Media Go Global*, Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 165–82.
- Kim, H. (2005), 'Korean music videos, postmodernism, and gender politics', in J. Oh (ed.), *Feminist Cultural Politics in Korea*, Seoul: Prunsasang Publishing Company, pp. 195–227.
- Kim, Y. (2011), 'Globalization of Korean media: Meanings and significance', in D. Kim and M. Kim (eds), *Hallyu: Influence of Korean Popular Culture in Asia and Beyond*, Seoul: Seoul National University Press, pp. 35–62.
- Kimmel, M. (2006), *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Klug, F. (2012), 'For S. Korean Men, makeup a foundation for success', <http://www.businessweek.com/ap/2012-09-17/for-s-dot-korean-men-makeup-a-foundation-for-success>. Accessed 12 November 2013.
- Kolb, A. (ed.) (2011), *Dance and Politics*, Oxford and New York: Peter Lang.
- Leung, S. (2012), 'Catching the K-Pop wave: Globality in the production, distribution, and consumption of South Korean popular music', Senior Capstone Projects, [http://digitalwindow.vassar.edu/senior\\_capstone](http://digitalwindow.vassar.edu/senior_capstone). Accessed 27 January 2014.

- Linda Love (2011), 'KPOP Abs,Thrust&Lip Action', [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=znylSA\\_OwKo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=znylSA_OwKo). Accessed 27 January 2014.
- Linzer Dinzer (2010), 'SHINee hellow music video review, gender stereotypes and perceived gayness', <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XZD290OmOXk>. Accessed 27 January 2014.
- McRobbie, A. (1997), 'Dance narratives and fantasies of achievement', in J. Desmond (ed), *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance*, Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 207–31.
- Moon, S. (2005), *Militarized Modernity and Gendered Citizenship in South Korea*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- MrDarkerthenblack (2012), 'Kpop boys kill us with their sexy bodies', <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xp1V4E8ILwU>. Accessed 27 January 2014.
- Mulvey, L. (1975), 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema', *Screen*, 16: 3, pp. 6–18.
- Oh, C. (2014), 'The politics of the dancing body: Racialized and gendered femininity in K-pop', in Y. Kuwahara (ed.), *The Korean Wave: Korean Popular Culture in Global Context*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 53–81.
- Orelus, P. W. (2010), *The Agony of Masculinity: Race, Gender, and Education in the Age of New Racism and Patriarchy*, New York: Peter Lang.
- Oazish (2010), 'Yoseob Being Extra CUTE :D', <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gu04NVwbL04>. Accessed 27 January 2014.
- Puzar, A. (2011), 'Asian dolls and the western gaze: Notes on the female dollification in South Korea', *Asian Women*, 27: 2, pp. 81–111.
- RainfallMint (2012), 'Perving on K-Pop Part 2', [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_kmC2seHzpQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_kmC2seHzpQ). Accessed 27 January 2014.
- Stephenson, W. (2012), 'Who works the longest hours?', *BBC News Magazine*, <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-18144319>. Accessed 10 January 2014.
- The Yale Globalist* (2007), 'The androgyny revolution', <http://tyglobalist.org/front-page/theme/the-androgyny-revolution/>. Accessed 27 January 2014.
- Trujillo, N. (1991), 'Hegemonic masculinity on the mound: Media representations of Nolan Ryan and American Sports Culture', *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 8: 3, pp. 290–308.
- Urban Dictionary (2013), 'K-pop fan', <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=kpop%20fans>. Accessed 12 January 2014.
- Williamson, L. (2012), 'South Korean men get the make-up habit', *BBC News Magazine*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-20522028>. Accessed 27 January 2014.
- Willoughby, H. (2006), 'Image is everything: The marketing of femininity in Korean pop music', in K. Howard (ed.), *Korean Pop Music: Riding the Wave*, Folkestone, Kent: Global Oriental, pp. 99–108.
- Wolf, S. (2007), 'On the gender continuum', in Ann Elizabeth Armstrong and Kathleen Juhl (eds), *Radical Acts: Theatre and Feminist Pedagogies of Change*, San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, pp. 171–80.
- Wong, Y. (2010), *Choreographing Asian America*, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
- Xiaolong (2013), 'Drastic change in Korean male prototypes: The "Flower Boys"', <http://www.hellokpop.com/2013/03/10/drastic-change-in-korean-male-prototypes-the-flower-boys/>. Accessed 27 January 2014.
- Yahel Benjamin (2012), 'SHINee Minho Aegyo – Puing Puing', [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r\\_Y9PRsZyH4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r_Y9PRsZyH4). Accessed 27 January 2014.

## **SUGGESTED CITATION**

Oh, C. (2015), 'Queering spectatorship in K-pop: The androgynous male dancing body and western female fandom', *Journal of Fandom Studies* 3: 1, pp. 59–78, doi: [10.1386/jfs.3.1.59\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/jfs.3.1.59_1)

## **CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS**

Chuyun Oh is a Ph.D. candidate in the Performance as Public Practice Program at the University of Texas at Austin. Her research focuses on performance as a site of (re)constructing racial, gender and sexual identities in a transnational context. She is also a Fulbright Scholar and an award-winning international performance artist.

E-mail: [chuyun.oh@utexas.edu](mailto:chuyun.oh@utexas.edu)

Chuyun Oh has asserted her right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as the author of this work in the format that was submitted to Intellect Ltd.

---