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*Hearts of Pine: Songs in the Lives of Three Korean Survivors of the Japanese "Comfort Women"* by Joshua D. Pilzer (Review)

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*Hearts of Pine: Songs in the Lives of Three Korean Survivors of the Japanese "Comfort Women"* by Joshua D. Pilzer (Review)

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Asia (Levin 1999; Harris and Dawut 2002), it attends to the use of sound as a conduit to the spirit world (cf. Rancier 2009 and Adams 2013 on the use of the Kazakh *qobyz* for inducing trance in healing), and it resonates with the recently renewed interest in Inner Asian shamanism (Balzer 1995; Vitebsky 2001; Reid 2003; Levin 2006; Pedersen 2011). Koen's multidimensional approach to music, prayer, and healing represents an important step in the emerging methodologies of medical ethnomusicology, and will hopefully encourage others to undertake similarly varied analyses of this complicated phenomenon, so widespread and deeply rooted in Central and Inner Asia.

Margarethe Adams

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**Hearts of Pine: Songs in the Lives of Three Korean Survivors of the Japanese "Comfort Women."** Joshua D. Pilzer. 2012. New York: Oxford University Press. xix, 191 pp., black and white photographs, illustrations, appendix, bibliography, discography, index, companion website (pronunciation guide, songs, and color illustrations). Cloth, \$99.00; Kindle, \$10.50; paper, \$25.00.

While research and activism associated with the "comfort women" have prompted more awareness of the Japanese system of military sexual slavery that took place during the Asia-Pacific War (1931–45), this does not erase the fact that most Korean survivors of this system had to endure four decades of silence with little public acknowledgment or support. In *Hearts of Pine: Songs in the Lives of Three Korean Survivors of the Japanese "Comfort Women,"* Joshua D.

Pilzer responds to this legacy of silence by simply asking us to listen. Through a rich combination of ethnography, intimate field recordings (on a companion website), and photos/illustrations, Pilzer enables us to experience the voices, stories, artwork, and songs of several survivors of the “comfort women” system. As the title and chapter organization suggest, Pilzer hones in specifically on the experiences of three women who each in their own way love to sing: Pak Duri, Mun Pilgi, and Bae Chunhui.

Critical of the ways in which South Korean ideology and iconography have tended to frame the “comfort women” as either young innocent victims or surviving grandmothers, Pilzer addresses this temporal gap by highlighting their individual stories of survival following the trauma of military sexual slavery and beyond. In this way, Pilzer’s project is in line with recent trends in research that, in Timothy Rice’s words, focus on “ethnomusicology in times of trouble” (Rice 2013). Indeed, for scholars interested in the role of music and trauma, Pilzer’s study is a significant contribution. Importantly, given that the primary locus of trauma is now four decades removed, Pilzer focuses on the long process of recovery and does not dwell on the immediacy of music’s role in trauma. As such, *Hearts of Pine* distinguishes itself from the work and interests of most Korean music specialists, who still tend to focus on genres, new musical practices, cultural policies, and important musical figures or groups. While Pilzer demonstrates an intimate knowledge, probing analysis, and playful mastery of many of the Korean song styles performed by these women—namely Korean *minyo* (folksong) and *teuroteu* (a nostalgic popular song form derived from a similar Japanese genre called *enka*)—this is not a book that I would recommend to specifically learn more about these genres. Furthermore, given the transnational experiences of these women, a good portion of the songs mentioned in this book and included as audio samples on the companion website are not Korean at all but Japanese, Chinese, and even Russian in origin.

As a book that is less about genre and more about the process of shaping subjectivity through song in the wake of trauma, Pilzer offers many carefully considered methods and approaches to ethnography, analysis, and theoretical interpretation. Most striking is his decision to place the women in the foreground by not only organizing the book around them, but also by paring away lengthy sections of musical analysis or discussions of critical theory. According to the author, the intention was to make the book “more readable for people who are not music specialists, social scientists, or area specialists of Korea or East Asia” (xii). While the author is certainly engaged with a range of theoretical issues, including music in everyday life, practice theory, gender and subjectivity formation, cultural intimacy, public secrecy, and trauma studies, Pilzer prefers to let the women lead as opposed to theoretical paradigms. This is an admirable and bold choice given the academy’s expectation that ethnomusicologists engage directly

with interdisciplinary theory; given the theoretical inclinations of the author in previous work (Pilzer 2003), it also must have demanded significant restraint.

The resulting semi-biographical narrative barely exceeds 200 pages including all front and back matter. The three central chapters are appropriately titled by the name of the woman each addresses, beginning with Pak Duri, followed by Mun Pilgi, and ending with Bae Chunhui. The front matter includes a refreshingly candid and sensitive preface. The introductory chapter effectively brings us into the world of the three women by offering colorful anecdotes with accompanying audio samples so that we can hear their actual voices in context. It also provides necessary historical background on the “comfort women,” offers a good critical discussion on listening, and considers what it means for these women to speak and sing about their experiences. The following chapter is titled “Beginnings” and chronicles Pilzer’s journey in discovering the importance of song in the lives of “comfort women” survivors. This then leads him to become better acquainted with these women, first at a regularly held political demonstration in support of the “comfort women” in front of Seoul’s Japanese embassy by the Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan, and later at the House of Sharing, where several of the survivors whom he interviewed live.

As self-reflexive ethnographic narratives go, Pilzer admits to some trepidation in terms of how his outsider subject position might impact the way he is received by the elderly female survivor community. In his portrayal of his initially negative encounter with Pak Duri in the following chapter, Pilzer does succumb to the ethnographic narrative convention of depicting himself as someone who is initially harshly rebuffed and then eventually embraced after undergoing a series of trials. Even so, I do not think that this is a gratuitous move on Pilzer’s part; rather, he uses it to frame how self-protective some members of the survivor community can be, especially as they face a constant stream of visitors, many of whom they may never see again. In this way, we are introduced to the spitfire personality of Pak Duri. In Pilzer’s contextual and interpretive analysis of her singing, he examines several of Pak’s renditions of the “Ballad of the Traveling Entertainer” (“Changbu Taryeong”), which is a popular, well-known folksong that she has adapted as “the song [she] sing[s] every day” (41). In a very skillful and detailed comparative analysis, Pilzer demonstrates how Pak has changed and crafted the song to entertain others and sometimes express her brazen sexuality, which he interprets as a critical mode of recovery from sexual violence. In his exploration of its multiple variants, he turns somewhat unconventionally to several documentaries that include their own versions of Pak Duri singing this song. Even as he is somewhat dependent on earlier documentation of Pak (given her advanced age and state of hearing loss during Pilzer’s fieldwork), he is also critical of the ways in which some of the documentaries frame and try to contain

her sexuality and strong personality. Most intriguing about Pilzer's analysis here is the way he explores the terrain between speech, song, and daily life. In one example, he looks at how the expressive conventions of song bleed into Pak's speech. Perhaps most movingly, he also discovers rare, intimate moments when song seems to be the only mode capable of disciplining Pak's pent-up emotions of despair, suffering, and regret.

While Pak Duri's mode of singing is modeled more on folksongs from Korea's central region, the next chapter reveals that Mun Pilgi's repertoire consists mainly of popular songs, namely from the Japanese-influenced *teuroteu* genre. While there are some similarities in how Pak Duri and Mun Pilgi adapt lyrics and songs to suit their own needs, the ways in which the songs figure into their respective processes of subjectivity formation diverge remarkably. Many of the dynamics underlying this process are not readily apparent at the surface level and really only emerge through Pilzer's close, comparative analysis. I am reluctant to say more for fear of giving too much away, but suffice it to say that Mun's highly empathetic voice and pure-hearted mode of self-recovery really shine through here.

In the following chapter, Pilzer portrays Bae Chunhui as an enigma who often deliberately distances herself from the other survivors at the House of Sharing. In contrast to Pak and Mun, Bae distinguishes herself as a cosmopolitan, multi-lingual performer who has mastered folk and popular songs from multiple countries, including Japan, Korea, China, Russia, France, and the United States. Interestingly, Bae presents a unique challenge for Pilzer; while many recommended her because of her skill and breadth as a singer, she is also much less transparent about her emotional motivations for choosing particular songs and performs with little personalization or deviation from canonical or recorded versions. Pilzer even acknowledges that we may never understand "the relationship between Bae Chunhui's world of song and her traumatic experiences" (138). Instead, he takes a broader view and interprets the scope of her cosmopolitan repertoire, grounds it against the backdrop of contemporary ethnography as well as previously neglected details of her biography, and examines how she skillfully selects songs to suit specific circumstances or social configurations of guests. Pilzer also creatively suggests that Bae cultivates the "magical real," transforming herself and the everyday, "not by repressing history and memory but by extracting art from them" (129). While the chapter ends somewhat abruptly, it is clear that Pilzer concludes his extended investigations with Bae Chunhui because her cosmopolitan presence and sung subjectivity most vividly destabilize the South Korean "comfort women" discourse that he feels is too confining.

In a brief epilogue, Pilzer provides some tantalizing details of time spent with another extraordinary member of the House of Sharing, Pak Ongnyeon. In sharing her favorite verse about a dead tree coming back to life, Pilzer reflects



that as tempting as it is to focus on stories of renewal, there is much “more to a person than suffering, more than victimization, more than survival and flourishing” (142). In this manner, Pilzer succeeds in painting a fuller picture of these women. I only wish the book conveyed more about Pak Ongnyeon and other survivors, or at the very least, gave more of an accounting of the many who do not reside at the House of Sharing. Even so, this is a richly satisfying and evocatively written narrative for non-specialists as well as an original contribution to ethnomusicological research. As is evident with the sad passing of both Pak Duri and Mun Pilgi in recent years, the value of this type of research is undeniable given that the window of direct engagement is rapidly closing. Pilzer’s modeling of what it means to really listen is applicable to anyone, not just to those looking at music and trauma. Even if the women did not always speak for themselves on every critical issue, Pilzer succeeds in letting the women lead through their songs, for which I, as a scholar and reader, am very grateful.

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**Romani Routes: Cultural Politics and Balkan Music in Diaspora.** Carol Silverman. 2012. New York: Oxford University Press. vii, 398 pp., interactive multimedia website, audio and video examples, photographs, figures and charts, endnotes, glossary, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$55.00.

Carol Silverman’s *Romani Routes* is a highly anticipated contribution to the field of Romani studies and especially to the investigation of Romani music in the Balkans and in diaspora. It is the culmination of more than three decades of writing and research, offering a synthesis of work with which anthropologists, ethnomusicologists, and Romani studies scholars have become intimately familiar over Silverman’s long and illustrious career. The book is not an end, however, but rather lays the groundwork for future projects in Silverman’s research dossier, including the role of technology and social media in contemporary musics marketed as “Gypsy.”

The book is divided into four sections, each using a different theoretical framework to explore recurring themes of transnational exchanges among Ro-