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Laugh Now. You May Not When These Women Rule the World.

The best parodies start with great les. So Young Jean Lee's hysterically funny "Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven," now at the Here Arts Center, is perfect, because the show is actually about minority rage, mudfish in tofu, femininity's inner viciousness and a secret Korean plot to rule the world.

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"You may laugh now, but remember my words when you find your offspring are writhing under our yoke," says Becky Yamamoto as the young woman known only as the Korean-American.

Ms. Yamamoto is priceless, having already set the politically incorrect tone with the opening line,

"Have you ever noticed how most Asian-Americans are slightly brain-damaged from having grown up with Asian parents?" After a few more shockingly racist comments, she points out that some American men "like that retarded quality."

Ms. Yamamoto's contemporary outspokenness is nearly equaled by the behavior of the three pretty, giggling Korean dancers in brightly colored traditional dresses. They speak

"Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven" continues through Oct. 14 at Here Arts Center, 145 Avenue of the Americas, at Dominick Street, South Village; (212) 352-3101 or www.here.org.

Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven Here Arts Center

in Korean much of the time, but audiences will notice that the word "sex" comes up quite often.

In English, one of the women perkily suggests to the others, "Shall we play 'hookers and johns'?" More than once, a particularly young dancer announces with a demure smile that being a prostitute is fun. Later the three women (Jun Sky Kim, Haerry Kim and Jennifer Lim) take turns, with the potent gruesome humor of a Quentin Tarantino movie, miming horrible ways to commit suicide.

Now and then a white American couple (Juliana Francis and Briar Bickerstaff) appear, arguing about sex, alcoholism, petty theft and the relationship in general. In the middle of this Mr. Bickerstaff's character announces: "You know what's awesome? Being white."

But Ms. Lee's play, which she also directed brilliantly, is not only about that sort of supposedly ingenuous extreme. Just when the largely Caucasian audience thought it had caught up to Ms. Lee's off-and-on ironic point of view, she called our bluff again. Whites are bigoted, Asians are bigoted, everybody's bigoted, and isn't it great that it's all out in the open now, and we can laugh about it? But not really.



Carl Skutsch

A scene from "Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven."