Spectacular Cities, Speculative Storytelling:
Korean TV Dramas and the Selling of Place

By

Youjeong Oh

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Committee in charge:

Professor You-tien Hsing, Chair
Professor Richard A. Walker
Professor Barrie Thorne
Professor Paul E. Groth

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Abstract

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This dissertation examines the relationships between popular culture, cities, and gendered social discourses, with a focus on contemporary Korean television dramas. Existing studies about Korean dramas have relied upon economic and cultural analysis to, in effect, celebrate their vibrant export to overseas markets and identify why they are popular in other East Asian countries. This study expands the scope into spatial and social realms by examining cities' drama-sponsorship and drama-driven social activities. Deploying popular culture as an analytical category directly shaping and transforming material, urban and social conditions, I argue that the cultural industry of Korean television dramas not only functions as its own, dynamic economic sector, but also constitutes urban processes and social discourses of contemporary South Korea.

Drawing upon interdisciplinary methods including ethnography and content analysis, I examine Korean television dramas from the multiple vantage points of producers, audience, storytelling, and city-sponsorship, and elucidate why and how these four arenas are deeply intertwined. Their mutual entanglement, in turn, requires us to see Korean television dramas as more than just commercial entertainment; they become a medium through which we can contemplate labor conditions in the cultural industry, the political economies of development in regional cities, and gender politics in Korea.

I argue that the popularity of Korean dramas across Asia has turned the drama industry into an extremely speculative field into which numerous producers jump and gamble for the highly elusive mega-hit. Individual chapters address the ways in which the speculative nature of the industry has conditioned and shaped (1) the "last-minute, live production," a collection of practices designed to reduce labor costs by minimizing filming dates, thus leading to extreme labor exploitation of workers, (2) active interactions between production and consumption as live production allows for the revision of ongoing narratives in response to viewer reactions to previous episodes, with the effects of encouraging consumers' extensive discussions about dramas and even allowing female viewers produce their own virtual, social, and physical spaces, (3) *addictive* storytelling of dramas in order to quickly grab attention and retain viewer loyalty in the context of fierce competition for higher viewer ratings, and (4) city-sponsorship in which producers benefit from the drama-sets and funding that cities provide, while cities capitalize the affective representation of place in TV dramas that create an emotional connection between audience and place.

My dissertation makes the following theoretical contributions. First, by illuminating the ways in which the story-making in TV dramas and the place-making of cities intersect and mutually configure one another, the dissertation extends the literature on culture and space. One does not merely adopt the other; rather, both can be intertwined so that they are produced and consumed together. Second, the dissertation contributes to literature on urban development by showing that urban strategies can be tied up with the affective side of popular culture, not merely engaging in raw competitions to attract and capital and industries. Third, the dissertation bridges and elucidates the connections and interplay between production, consumption, and storytelling in television dramas—all of which are aspects that have conventionally been treated separately. Fourth, the dissertation contributes to literature on media capitalism through its examination of supply-driven, small-sized independent producers and their speculative nature as they engage in spontaneous, improvised practices of drama-making. Fifth, by demonstrating that Korean dramas have driven their female fans to initiate various drama-themed social activities beyond spaces of gendered confinement, the dissertation broadens the scope of literature on gender and popular culture. Here, my dissertation contests the notion that popular culture naturalizes and reinforces gender division, showing instead possibilities for popular culture to alter gender politics. And finally, taking into account political economic and urban/economic geographic approaches, the dissertation enriches the literature on the Korean Wave, extending textual and cultural analyses and connecting them to industrial and spatial analyses.

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Chapter 1
Introduction: Korean Television Drama Since *Hallyu*

This dissertation is about Korean television dramas and the selling of place. By combining a political-economic analysis of drama production, a socio-cultural analysis of discursive drama consumption, and a geographical examination of drama-themed urban development, this study considers the relationships among popular culture, cities, and society. Deploying popular culture as an analytical category and understanding it as interplaying with and transforming material, urban, and social conditions, I argue that the production and consumption of Korean television dramas play a role in the constitution of urban processes and cultural discourses in contemporary South Korea. By considering Korean television dramas as a medium through which to obtain insights about Korea, this study alters and extends the scholarly discussion of the Korean Wave from a purely textual and cultural discourse into industrial, spatial, and social analyses.

Rewriting the Korean Wave

The Korean Wave, or *Hallyu*, refers to the popularity of Korean entertainment products, including film, television drama, pop music (K-pop), and online games. The Korean Wave swept across East Asia in the early 2000s, and continues to enjoy international visibility in the United States, Latin America, the Middle East, and parts of Europe. The Korean Wave is not the first transnational cultural phenomenon, even in East Asia: there was a boom in Hong Kong cinema in the 1980s and the Japan Wave in the 1990s. What differentiates the Korean Wave from these earlier phenomena is that (1) it has garnered a much broader audience via both formal (dissemination through a greater number of broadcasting channels through active exporting) and informal (such as the Internet and DVD piracy) distribution routes, and (2) it has instigated massive pop culture-driven international tourism, known as "drama tourism," involving visits to shooting locations and efforts to meet Korean celebrities.

Numerous scholarly discussions and media reports have attempted to explain the phenomenon. Noting the extraordinary popularity of Korean television dramas, particularly in East and Southeast Asia, some find its causes in reliance on "cultural proximity" (Yu and Lee 2001, Heo 2002, Kim 2005). Straubhaar (2003) explains cultural proximity as "the tendency to prefer media products from one's own culture or the most similar possible culture" (p. 85). The concept has been used primarily in international contexts to explain the drawing power of foreign and domestic media. It was developed in response to notions of cultural imperialism (Schiller 1969) that predicted one-way flows of culture from richer to poorer countries based on superior production quality and large production budgets. Analyzing television audiences in Latin America, Straubhaar (1991) argues that audiences in many countries clearly express a preference both for national production and for intraregional exports, seeking great cultural proximity in both of these ways. This view explains the growth of distinct regional cultural production centers, such as Mexico, Brazil, Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan, Mumbai, Dubai, and South Africa, and their increasing capability to compete with the dominant American film and music

industries. The hypothesis of cultural proximity explains the appeal of Korean dramas to East Asian audiences with shared Confucian values and similar processes of rapid modernization and development.

Another perspective analyzes the Korean Wave through "cultural hybridity." Kraidy (2005) suggests that "the cultural logic of globalization entails that traces of other cultures exist in every culture, thus offering foreign media and marketers trans-cultural wedges for forging affective links between their commodities and local communities" (p. 148). The cultural hybridity view tries to transcend various dichotomies and emphasizes that encounters between cultures create an intermediacy, duplicity, and destabilization of identity. Within the Korean Wave, the tendency towards shifting identities is well represented by the case of BoA, a Korean singer; she was trained in South Korea, but in her early career, after launching herself in the Japanese market, BoA strategically formed a "nationless" image by perfecting her Japanese and not mentioning her nationality. By branding BoA as a hybrid, her coproduction by a Japanese entertainment firm, AVEX, and a Korean agency, SM Entertainment, has been successful since her debut in Japan in 2001. Other examples of transnational hybrid figures include Ryu Shi-won and Jang Nara, who have advanced the indigenization of the *Hallyu* in China by appearing in several Chinese television dramas. These two did not concern themselves with the domestic Korean market at all, but focused on a "second career" in the overseas market (KOFICE 2008). The cultural hybridity perspective stresses that the competitive power of Korean entertainment products lies in their ability to blend aspects of diverse cultures, thus appealing to viewers in many countries.

There is a "neoliberal" view of the Korean Wave that celebrates its business aspect. The entertainment and broadcasting industries have eagerly reoriented the export of Korean pop cultural products, and manufacturing firms have been happy about their increased sales as a result of featuring Korean Wave stars in ads for products ranging from computers to cell phones. Journalists have promoted opportunities for the industry to advance into larger markets by linking the boom in popular culture to the market distribution system and the improvement of the country's image. Advocates of this perspective have actively demanded state support, and in response, the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism has gradually increased its support for drama and animation production (KOFICE 2008).

One of the most prevalent perspectives within South Korea is "cultural nationalism," which views the phenomenon as expressing Korea's national cultural identity, and thus celebrates the triumph of Korean culture and its success as cultural exporter (Park 2001, KOCCA 2004). The cultural nationalist perspective values the "Korean sensibility" represented in popular culture, which is thought to include a less violent and sensationalistic ambiance, a focus on family and familial relationships, non-sexual love, and sophistication in personal appearance and style (Park 2001). The Korean government and the domestic media have exploited this perspective, planting the notion in the minds of citizens that the victory of Korean culture will mean that Korea has finally joined the ranks of the advanced nations. Kim (2001) relates this high expectation that nationalists have of the Korean Wave to the sense of crisis felt by Korean people during the era of high unemployment after the financial crisis of 1997.

A competing perspective to the nationalist one considers the Korean Wave as an aspect of the rise of capitalism in Asia (Kim 2001, 2005, Cho 2005). According to this view, "the media technology revolution and global capitalism have prepared the system for the manufacture of cultural products and circulation within Asia. During this process, South Korea has became an exporter nation after having been a cultural importer. . ." (Cho 2005, p. 174). Proponents of this view tend to be critical of the restriction of the production and consumption of popular culture to within the boundaries of the nation-state: "One way to understand the flows of pop culture within the Asian region is the 'coevalness' of cultural production and consumption. The various cultural exchanges within Asia are not exchanges occurring at the level of the state. Regardless of the boundaries of the nation-state, they are shared by people who have experienced the contemporaneous changes brought about by Asian modernity and who are seeking to solve its problems. . ." (Kim 2001). Shedding light on the emergence of new global consumer groups who "select" culture based on individual tastes rather than on nationality, Kim (2005) argues that the popularity of Korean television dramas stems from the "coevalness" of the desires of Asian people (particularly, women who have recently joined the middle class and who are increasingly empowered as consumers). The Korean Wave emerged, according to Kim, because of Korean popular culture's ability to satisfy emergent desires and placate anxieties in Asian countries that have experienced rapid capitalist development, and not because of its high quality and cultural uniqueness.

Against the existence of various discussions about Hallyu, the purpose of this study is not to theorize the Korean Wave or its significance. Rather, this dissertation sheds light on the ways in which it has not only transformed the production and consumption of Korean television dramas, but has also played a role in constituting certain urban processes and social activities. This dissertation redirects discussion about Korean television drama from the grand cultural discourse around the Korean Wave toward more specific questions about the industry, its sponsors, and its consumers. I argue that the popularity of Korean television dramas in East Asia has transformed the Korean drama industry into a speculative field with increased expectations, skyrocketing production costs, and vested interests in exports. I seek to illuminate the ways in which the industry's players— producers, broadcasters, consumers, and sponsors—have been configured by its speculative characteristics. This question is designed to open onto a larger question about the relationships among South Korea's culture industry, cities, and social discourses and the ways in which they have been altered by the speculative nature of the Korean drama industry.

My specific questions include what strategies industrial players have armed themselves with to succeed in this speculative environment; how the speculation has shaped the production practices of television dramas; why the drama producers need sponsors, who are their sponsors, and how the sponsors influence the production of dramas; why and how the drama production is associated with urban development in many Korean cities; how the industry defines its consumers and how the producers interact with the consumers; and how the interaction between production and consumption shapes the production practices and drama storytelling. With these questions, this dissertation illuminates certain

under-researched aspects of the drama industry, as well as the interrelations between South Korea's cultural economy, urban conditions, social discourses, and gender politics.

This study examines Korean television dramas in part from the perspectives of producers, sponsors, and audiences, as well as in terms of their narratives. By extending the cultural and textual discourses of the Korean Wave and connecting them to the industrial, social, and spatial aspects of Korean TV dramas, I use Korean television dramas as a window through which to reflect on contemporary South Korea. On the one hand, the production of television drama necessarily involves a certain use of geographical space, and Korean cities engage with drama production by providing sponsorship. There is in fact a tight connection in South Korea, which I analyze, between drama production and urban conditions. On the other hand, storytelling and the consumption of television dramas reflect and trigger social discussions about issues, views, values, tastes, styles, and many other things; I therefore explore how television dramas can be a channel for generating social discourses and activities. Using the category of popular culture and considering it as directly shaping and transforming material, urban, and social conditions, I argue that the Korean television drama industry not only functions as its own dynamic economic sector, but also plays an important role in urban processes and social discourses in contemporary South Korea.

Speculative Media Capitalism

I argue that the Korean Wave that emerged in East and Southeast Asia in the early 2000s has turned the Korean drama industry into an extremely speculative field. By "speculative" field, I mean (1) the way in which drama producers have collective illusions about the Korean Wave that seem to them to guarantee the success of Korean dramas in overseas markets, and (2) a tendency of drama producers to see uncertainty about the popularity of a drama as an opportunity for a big hit from which they can make huge profits within a short period of time. To elaborate on the speculative features of the drama industry, I build on discussions of the characteristics of cultural commodities and financial speculation.

According to Garnham (1990), a cultural commodity has special features.[1] One of its features is that its reproduction cost is relatively low.

> Because one of the use-values of culture is novelty or difference, there is a constant need to create new products which are all in a sense prototypes. This drive for novelty within cultural production means that in general the costs of reproduction are marginal in relation to the cost of production. Thus the marginal returns from each extra sale tend to grow, leading in turn to a powerful thrust towards audience maximization as the preferred profit maximization strategy (Garham 1990, p. 160).

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[1] Garham defines culture as "the production and circulation of symbolic meanings," and conceives a cultural industry as involving "a material process of production and exchange, determined by the wider economic process of society with which it shares many common features" (1990, p. 155).

In the era of digitization, "the process whereby media texts are broken down into digits, and are hence reproducible without a loss of quality" (Bolin 2009), the marginal returns from each extra sale are relatively high because the reproduction costs are very low.[2] The high ratio of fixed to variable costs means that big hits are extremely profitable. This point is critical to the Korean drama industry, which targets overseas markets as much as domestic airing. Once a drama is produced, the acquisition of additional markets means a jackpot of profit without extra production costs. The popularity of Korean pop culture overseas has planted rosy expectations about the easy acquisition of overseas markets that are more profitable than domestic markets.[3] These anticipations have caused an extraordinary number of drama producers to jump into the industry over the past decade. The proliferation of content suppliers, driven more by expectations than actual demand, has rendered the industry largely speculative.

There is another factor that has rendered independent producers and the drama industry more speculative: low entry barriers. Despite the high expectations, most independent producers jump into the industry without solid financial and production bases. Most Korean independent producers are very small-sized ventures without independent production capabilities or substantial financial resources. Their strategy is to circulate drama proposals among broadcasting networks, trying to win placement on a channel. Then, after getting a production contract, they try to get advance payments from buyers (that is, broadcasters) to cover the initial production cost. They also try to borrow the broadcasters' equipment and personnel (see Chapter 2 for details). Independent producers also try to attract investment and sponsorship in order to make up the rest of the production cost and generate extra profits. The landscape for doing business with buyers' and investors' money, instead of their own capital, further boosts the speculative atmosphere of drama production.

Furthermore, overseas markets can be accessed almost only through the domestic airing of programs on terrestrial stations,[4] which means that overseas buyers tend to be interested only in those dramas whose success has already been verified in the domestic market. Given that there are only three terrestrial stations,[5] the competition among the more than 1,000 producers to gain access to a channel is fierce.[6] Excessive competition

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[2] At the same time, digitization also means the loss of audience markets due to the development of piracy products and informal distribution routes.

[3] First of all, overseas markets are numerous; for example, *Dae Jang Geum* (2003) has been exported into sixty countries. Overseas markets also have greater audiences for the by-products of a drama, such as DVDs and celebrity merchandise, enabling extra profits.

[4] Television dramas broadcast via cable channels have only recently begun to be exported. These include: *Shut up Flower Boy Band* (tvN 2012), *I Need Romance* (tvN 2011, 2012), *Queen In-Hyun's Man* (tvN 2012), *Yellow Boots* (tvN 2012), *Vampire Prosecutor Season 1, 2* (OCN 2011, 2012), *Special Affairs Team TEN* (OCN, 2012), *God's Quiz Season 1, 2, 3* (OCN, 2010, 2011, 2012), and *Girl K* (Channel CGV, 2011).

[5] There are four terrestrial broadcasting stations in South Korea: KBS, MBC, SBS, and EBS. Since EBS (Educational Broadcasting System) focuses on educational content, the other three compete against one another for dramatic content.

[6] Because of the uncertainty of show's making it onto a TV channel and the lack of financial bases, stars have become a critical factor in attracting investment and nor merely an element of the drama. Independent producers have established a system whereby they monopolize high-profile writers and cast celebrity actors first, then win a

aggravates the speculative nature of producers, because they stake everything on a few dramas that they have the opportunity to produce. Small-sized independent production houses often fail because they do not find an on-air station and, in some cases, because their program, on which everything has been staked, is not successful. Nevertheless, the number of producers has not begun to shrink; the companies stay in business because they hope to obtain the one hit that will compensate for their losses. That is, Korean drama producers depend on the unpredictable popularity of television drama.

Garham (1990) discusses the risky nature of the cultural industry. All business is risky, but the cultural industry is particularly risky because it is centered on the production of texts to be bought and sold (Hesmondhalgh 2002). For Garnham, this risk derives from the fact that audiences use cultural commodities in highly volatile and unpredictable ways (p. 161). Garnham explains this unpredictability in terms of the use-value of the cultural commodity as a marker of social and individual difference. Bilton (1999) considers it in terms of the value of "symbolic goods," which depend upon subjective judgment at the point of consumption. The film and music industries have developed measures to deal with the unpredictable nature of their products, strategies such as the use of genres, formulaic plot devices, expensive special effects, and reliance on the star system. They also employ business strategies such as portfolio strategies, vertical integration, vertical disintegration, and networks of pseudo-independents (Bilton 1999).

The Korean drama industry has utilized these cultural strategies to manage the uncertainty its firms face. Yet, the strategies are more patchy than systematic: Korean broadcasters and producers tend to follow previously successful models by relying on conventional repertoires and the star system, rather than developing more systematic and creative measures, such as collective writing, investing in fresh themes, and producing more polished and sophisticated plotlines (see Chapter 5 for details). Although the attempt to structure drama production around consistent formulae and brands was successful at least during the 2000s, now the methods face serious limitations and criticism and more systematic measures will be required to consolidate and expand the overseas markets. What is more problematic than the conventional strategies for dealing with uncertainty is the fact that significant numbers of Korean drama producers regard the unpredictability as an opportunity, despite the risk involved. Given the success of the Korean Wave, not a few drama producers believe that once they secure airing on a channel and produce a drama, popularity will automatically follow, since previously some dramas have unexpectedly appealed to viewers. Because Korean independent producers tend to have a mindset of relying on luck, their activities are closer to speculation than investment.

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slot on a channel, and later scrape up the investment money, using the star power of the actors. Capitalizing thus on the name value of stars as *the* critical route to fund the production means relying on future success without a tangible source of security for the money. On the other hand, there exists no system for verifying whether the money invested is being used wisely; broadcasting networks, which buy the final product (TV dramas), never concern themselves with the sources and uses of the investment money. These capital flows subject the major players in the drama industry to great uncertainty, as they are gambling on the success of their shows.

In economic terms, speculation is the assumption of the risk of loss in return for the uncertain possibility of gain. It is ordinarily understood to mean the purchase of a good for later resale rather than for use, or the temporary sale of a good with the intention of later repurchase in the hope of profiting from an intervening price change. For example, asset speculation involves the buying, holding, selling, and short-selling of stocks, bonds, commodities, or other valuable financial instrument in order to profit from fluctuation in its price as opposed to buying it for use or for dividend or interest income (Robles et al. 2009). For Adam Smith, the speculator is defined by his readiness to pursue short-term opportunities for profit: his investments are fluid whereas those of the conventional businessman are more or less fixed (Chancellor 1999).

Chancellor (1999) discusses speculation by comparing it with gambling;

> While a bad investment may be a speculation, a poorly executed speculation is often described as a gamble. . . . The psychologies of speculation and gambling are almost indistinguishable: both are dangerously addictive habits which involve an appeal to fortune, are often accompanied by delusional behavior and are dependent for success on the control of emotions. . . . People resort to such measures when they are faced with uncertainty. The name given to financial uncertainty is "risk." Economists differentiate gambling and speculation on the grounds that gambling involves the deliberate creation of new risks for the sake of diversion while speculation involves the assumption of the inevitable risks of the capitalist process. . ." (pp. xi-xii).

Korean drama producers' illusions about creating the next big hit often raise their speculative tendencies to the level of gambling.

The dominant impression I got from the drama producers I interviewed is that this speculation is the rule among them. "It is not really about the production or ratings. What matters is to get a channel, and that will bring investment and sponsorship. When one is savvy enough, one will make profits even before the production, not to mention the airing"; "We need only one hit; that will compensate for the past losses and guarantee future profits"; "The industry considers that mega-hits like *Winter Sonata* or *Dae Jang Geum* are not possible any more. But, other ways to turn a drama into a business product have been developed and producers' positions vis-à-vis broadcasters have also strengthened during the 2000s. Two or three solid hits, if not a jackpot-like hit, will surely bring enough fortune." These are remarks from drama producers I interviewed.[7] The production of Korean Wave drama is filled with such illusory expectations and fantasies. To the speculative producers, drama production has become an entirely profit-seeking business that is entirely disconnected from its presumed basis in cultural creativity.

This dissertation critically reevaluates the Korean Wave. Avoiding the nationalist and commercial celebrations of *Hallyu*, I argue that the perhaps temporary overseas popularity of Korean popular culture has reconfigured Korean television dramas into vulgar commercial products. Unlike the dramas of the early 2000s that were produced for domestic audiences but unexpectedly garnered overseas popularity, recent television

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[7] The perspectives of writers and directors may be quite different; indeed, the writers and chief producers I interviewed were mainly concerned with how to improve the quality of dramas.

dramas are made to be sold in overseas markets. At the same time, the dramas have become less about presenting a meaningful story than about grabbing sponsorship; thus, the storytelling in television dramas has become a patchwork tailored to the exhibition of products. Korean television dramas since the start of the Korean Wave represent a speculative venture that has defined the industrial dynamics of drama production and consumption. In the following chapters, I will elucidate the ways in which the speculative nature of the industry has influenced the production practices, forms of sponsorship, interactions between production and consumption, and storytelling in Korean television dramas.

Building Connections between Popular Culture and Cities

This dissertation considers the production and consumption of Korean TV dramas is not only a cultural phenomenon, but also a spatial and urban one. I examine (1) how the production of Korean television dramas has become associated with cities' promotional strategies by driving drama-themed urban development, (2) how television dramas generate images of a place, give meaning to it, and circulate those images and meanings, and (3) how the consumption of television dramas leads to the consumption of place. This dissertation illuminates the interactions, associations, and trade-offs between cultural and spatial production. There are two schools of thought with regard to the relationship between popular culture and space: one tradition revolves around economic geography and discusses the ways in which cultural industries and a place interact; the other tradition stems from film studies and cultural geography and addresses how the meanings of places are constituted through popular culture.

Allen Scott's work (2005) exemplifies the first tradition of elucidating the connection between a cultural industry (film) and a place (Hollywood). Conceiving place as "not simply a passive receptacle of economic and cultural activity, but a critical source of successful system performance" (p. 1), Scott focuses on the role of the spatial agglomeration through which Hollywood producers and studios intensify their place-specific competitiveness. As Scott notes, the nature of the film industry works to promote agglomeration: "Films have a strong incentive to come together in communities or ecologies within the city because mutual proximity often greatly enhances the availability of agglomeration economies and increasing-returns effects" (p. 6). The agglomeration or clustering of firms allows them to tap into spatially concentrated labor markets and abundant information flows, leading to an enhanced competitive advantage for both industry and place (Storper 1997, Scott 2005).

The second tradition examines the representations of place and the meanings attached to place in televisual media in terms of their relationship to power and contestation (Aitken and Zonn 1994, Hopkins 1994, Bollhöfer 2007, Fletchall et al. 2012). This theory regards representation as involving a broad set of meanings that go beyond designation; thus, film and television, as a representational medium, is not a neutral space that merely mirrors the "real," but a communication practice through which meanings and power are mediated. Geographically, this tradition follows the notion of place as involving a set of ongoing processes, and as constantly being produced and reproduced, practiced, performed, and contested (Cresswell 2004, Massey 2005). Combining the two concepts—practices of

representation through which meanings are produced and place as a relational category—this body of theories examines the ways in which meanings of place are "made, legitimized contested, and obscured" in film and television.

This dissertation builds on both traditions, and significantly extends both of them. First, the case studies I have included shed light on a dispersed geography of temporary production camps for television dramas. Conditioned by the nation's development policies, which have concentrated people and resources in the Seoul metropolitan area in order to achieve rapid economic growth, the broadcasting and entertainment industries, like many other industries, have developed in and around Seoul. As a result, virtually all Korean drama production houses and broadcasters, except the regional broadcasters, are located in the Seoul metropolitan area, where they are arranged in clusters. Although the planning, editing, and broadcasting processes of the television dramas are centered in Seoul due to the place-specific agglomeration, the physical production process of television drama involves a broader geography; the actual filming of television dramas requires vast spatial resources for sets and the use of recognizable places and landscapes as backgrounds. As Korean primetime serials use more and more "actual," rather than "virtual," landscapes as their filming backgrounds, production sites became dispersed across the country and even overseas during the 2000s. Thus, the shooting locations of TV dramas are scattered among various locales, establishing another type of link between space and cultural production, different from the cultural agglomeration.

The dispersed geography also derives from the needs of small-sized Korean drama producers. Most Korean drama producers jumped into the industry with big expectations but little or no capital. They have discovered Korean cities as sponsors that provide space, place, and funding. In a condition where more than fifty drama series come and go in a year, spatial and financial sponsors are multiple and temporary. In this way, production practices have given rise to scattered and temporary drama production camps in smaller cities in South Korea. One of the objects of this study is to investigate the spatially-conditioned and supplier-driven geographies of cultural production and their temporary and shifting character.

Secondly, I connect the representation of place in television drama with the promotional strategies of Korean cities. The "underdeveloped status" of smaller Korean cities, conditioned by the uneven national development focused on Seoul, has led them to pursue various promotional efforts, while simultaneously creating opportunities to promote themselves as exotic, lyrical, and imaginary places in popular culture because they are "underdeveloped" and "less urban." As a way to promote and brand themselves, Korean cities have ridden on the international popularity of Korean television dramas. The marriage between the "speculative" drama producers and the "marginal" cities as sponsors of drama productions demonstrates one of the ways in which meanings of places are constructed. In other words, commercial sponsorship becomes a medium for the production and manipulation of the meanings of place; the commercial contract terms between producers and sponsor cities determine the ways in which a place is represented in dramas, despite of the rooms in which meaning is constructed by consumers. I also examine how Korean television dramas highlight the romantic physical qualities of a place,

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setting aside history, politics, and social issues, and effectively serve as advertisements for cities.

The Media Industry and Urban Processes

This study explores the ways in which the production and consumption of television dramas are associated with the urban processes at multiple locales within the context of the recent globalization of Korean popular culture. The exploration captures two critical transitions in South Korean urban phenomena: first, the transition from state-led urban intervention to media-driven urbanization; and secondly, the transition from mega-projects based on physical development to small-scale urban promotion strategies tied up with popular culture.

Not a few studies have examined the South Korean state's strong guiding role in economic development during the 1970s and '80s (Amsden 1989, Wade 2003). Yet, few studies have discussed the continuing and even strengthened role of the central state in urbanization in the post-developmental state era. The South Korean central government initiated and implemented two massive urban construction projects over the past two decades: the Five New Town project (1988-1992) and the Multifunctional Administrative City construction (2004-present).

The Five New Towns (*Odae sindosi*) project created five new cities around Seoul and built two million housing units during the five-year period from 1988 to 1992. In order to address rising housing prices and a lack of housing supply in the late 1980s,[8] the Roh Tae-woo administration (1988-1992) announced the ambitious "Two Million Housing Units Construction Plan" (*Jutaek ibaekmanho geonsul gyehwoek*). With this plan, the government promised to build two million housing units in five years and to strengthen the role of the public sector in housing provision. As an implementation measure, five new cities (Ilsan, Bundang, Pyungchon, Sanbon, and Jungdong) were planned around Seoul (Figure 1.1). The total area of the newly-constructed cities was 5,012 hectares and the total planned population of these five new cities was about one million.[9] The Five New Towns project brought about multifaceted political, economic, and social results; in particular, the provision of massive housing units functioned as a market corrector and market booster; and more importantly, diverging from its exclusive focus on economic growth in the past, the state began to be concerned about social distribution. Yet, the most prominent outcome of the project was that it aggravated the already-serious uneven development in South Korea. The Seoul metropolitan area has enjoyed hegemony vis-à-vis the rest of the country,

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[8] Property values quadrupled in the 1980s; in particular, in the aftermath of the 1988 Olympics in Seoul, housing prices went up sharply, by 18% in 1988 and 38% in 1990. The increase contributed to mounting workers' expenses on housing, fueling wage increases. On the contrary, housing construction remained at 100,000-150,000 units per year in the late 1980s, far short of the soaring housing demands caused by the huge rural to urban migration. The gap between the demand for housing and the limited supply resulted in skyrocketing housing prices.

[9] In 1987, before the inauguration of the Roh administration, total housing units in South Korea satisfied only 56% of the housing demand in Seoul and 69% of the nationwide demand. During the five-year period from 1988 to 1992, under the Roh administration, a grand total of 2,720,000 housing units were constructed in the five newly-built towns. Such a rapid and massive construction of homes and cities was unprecedented in South Korea.

with an extraordinary concentration of capital, population, and power. [10] By attracting people from all over the country, rather than being a simple housing project, the construction of the five new towns was, in fact, an overarching spatial strategy to further concentrate national resources and people in the Seoul metropolitan area.

[Figure 1.1. Locations of Five New Towns]

In contrast, the Multifunctional Administrative City (*Haengjeong jungsim bokhap dosi*) construction aimed to address the uneven development of Korea. The Roh Moo-hyun administration (2003-2007) actively promoted the policy of "Balanced National Development" (*Gukga gyunhyung baljeon*). Roh pointed out the excessive concentration of people, resources, and power in the Seoul metropolitan area and called for balanced national development; the idea of a "balanced" nation was an attack on the Seoul metropolitan area's privileged position. He argued that in order to achieve his goal, an active governmental role in spatial planning would be paramount. As implementation measures, the administration initiated several urban projects, including "Innovative Cities" (*Hyucksin dosi*) and "Business Cities" (*Sanoep dosi*) across the nation, calling for the movement of state corporations and private firms from the greater Seoul area to the rest of the country. The Multifunctional Administrative City, into which the central ministries would move, was a move to materialize the idea of a "balanced nation"; the administration believed that when central administrative functions were relocated outside of the Seoul metropolitan area, they would draw firms and people.[11] Construction of the City is still

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[10] See Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion of South Korea's uneven development.

[11] Originally, the project was promoted as a consequence of Roh's presidential election pledge to build a new administrative capital in Chungcheong Province. Located outside the Seoul metropolitan area as well as the major industrial axis, Chungcheong had not gained much benefit from the economic development of the nation. The new administrative capital construction plan helped Roh win an enormous proportion of the region's votes, which led him to victory in the election. The path to build this new capital, however, was never smooth. Conflicts emerged involving the opposition party and numerous protests, and finally the Constitutional Court ruled that the construction of the new administrative capital violated the Constitution. The Roh administration was then forced to halt

underway and parts of the central ministries have already moved to Sejong (the multifunctional administrative city's new name). It remains to be seen how Sejong and the Roh administration's "balanced nation" policy will counter the country's uneven development.

[Figure 1.2. Location of the Multifunctional Administrative City]

Although the two projects evolved from very different political and social conditions and have had quite different consequences, the two have strong similarities in terms of state-centered spatial intervention. During the implementation of both projects, state agencies proliferated to promote and implement the projects, strengthening state power over administration and territorial planning. Dealing with physical and territorial matters, the central state gained an even more active, direct, and strong role in the urban process than under traditional economic planning.

The case studies in this dissertation concern a completely different pattern; small-scale, drama-themed urban development in various regional cities, quite the opposite of previous, central-state urban interventions. The urban promotion cases in this study demonstrate not only a shift in the spatial mediator from the central government to local

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construction of the new administrative "capital," dismantling that which had already taken place, and to reduce the scope of the plan. The administration renamed the city the "Multifunctional Administrative City," a project fraught with expectations.

governments and drama producers, but a transition in the ways in which space is produced. The drama-themed urban strategies indicate a change in the purpose behind urban projects: from the massive provision of housing to small-scale urban branding. This indicates a transition from the direct creation of economic value in urban space to the production of symbolic value (Harvey 1989). The strategies used for producing symbolic value rely on the affective aspects of television dramas, by blending the characters and plots of a drama with representations of a place. Media spectacles quickly transform the physical spaces and confer upon them new meanings and identities. The globalization of Korean popular culture has changed the subjects, manners, and speeds of urban processes in South Korea.

The Collaborative Consumption of Popular Culture

I shall elaborate on the ways in which viewers collaboratively discuss Korean television dramas, transforming individual watching experiences into collective practices. My analysis illuminates how television dramas have become a field where people gather, talk together, and produce meanings and pleasures; how audience groups take pleasure not only from primary texts (the dramas), but also from the process of collectively and collaboratively consuming them. I build on theories of audiences' active interpretation of and diverse responses to culture (Radway 1984, Ang 1985, Lewis 1992, Morley 1992, Du Gay 1997). More specifically, I draw heavily upon the studies of audience communities by Henry Jenkins (1992a, 1992b) and John Fiske (1992).

Jenkins (1992a) describes fandom as "an institution of theory and criticism, a semi-structured space where competing interpretations and evaluations of common texts are proposed, debated, and negotiated and where readers speculate about the nature of mass media and their relationship to [them]" (p. 86). In fandom, Jenkins finds that fans view a program "faithfully" from week to week and often reread them repeatedly through various means (reruns, videotape, or the Internet). Fans also feel compelled to talk about programs with other fans, constituting an interpretive community, and they are motivated not simply to absorb the text but to translate it into other types of cultural and social activity. The detailed collaborative analysis of past episodes produced by fans becomes the fan culture's "meta-text" against which members evaluate the shows (Jenkins 1992a). Although still allowing room for enjoyable debate and difference, an individual's reading of a show becomes shaped by the collaborative reading. Thus, watching a show regularly is not the same as being a member of a fan community. Being a member of a fan community entails a knowledge of the interpretive conventions and collaborative meta-text used to read the show (Jenkins 1992a, 1992b).

According to Fiske (1989b, 1992), consumers produce their own meanings and pleasures from popular cultural texts. Fiske (1992) argues that cultural commodities circulate in two different economies: the financial and cultural economies. In the financial economy, the first commodity is a program sold to a distributor by a production studio, and the second commodity is the audience that is sold to advertisers. In the cultural economy, the commodity, what is exchanged and circulated, is the meanings, pleasures, and social identities produced by consumers (1992, p. 311). Fiske explains the relationship between

the two economies as follows: "The financial economy offers two modes of circulation for cultural commodities; in the first, the producer of a program sells it to distributors: the program is a straightforward material commodity. In the next, the program-as-commodity changes role and it becomes a producer. And the new commodity that it produces is an audience which, in its turn, is sold to advertisers or sponsors." The cultural economy involves "the audience in a role-shift which changes it also from a commodity to a producer: in this case a producer of meanings and pleasures" (p. 312). Fiske (1989b, 1992) insists on the power of audiences-as-producers in the cultural economy; he particularly stresses that the meanings and pleasures produced by consumers are ways to express and promote the interests of subordinated groups, forming channels of resistance to the social structure.

This dissertation examines online drama discussion boards, formed around individual drama series, where viewers voluntarily participate in discussions. I will analyze the ways people talk about dramas and why they often seem to get more pleasure from collaborative consumption than individual watching (Chapter 4). My contribution to the line of inquiry initiated by Jenkins and Fiske is to elucidate the ways in which audience groups' collaborative consumption of television dramas is monitored and adopted by Korean drama producers. Because of the "live production" environment in which two episodes are scripted and filmed within a week for the following (or the same) week's broadcasting, Korean drama producers actively adapt the audience opinions to the plots of on-going dramas. The secondary texts, discussions and suggestions, and meanings and pleasures that audience groups produce do not remain in the field of cultural economy, as Fiske maintains, but move into that of financial economy, where producers capitalize on the products of the cultural economy, considered for their commercial value. While audience groups may be said to be exploited as free labor employed in providing feedback and suggestions, they are rewarded and kept motivated by being presented with flexible texts that serve their desires. The live production environment enables a fine exchange between the financial and cultural economies.

Methods and Chapter Overview

This study dissects and analyzes Korean television dramas from multiple perspectives, examining how the production and consumption of television dramas are shaped by and shape urban and social processes in contemporary South Korea. The multifaceted analysis it provides hinges on a combination of methodologies developed in several disciplines: economic geography, for illuminating the relationship between cultural industries and cities; urban geography, for addressing the strategies of Korean cities that sponsor the drama production; communication studies, for exploring the cultural industry and its market; popular cultural studies, for discussing audience groups and their interactions with the drama production; gender studies, for identifying specific groups of drama audiences; and literary studies, for content analysis of television dramas. Rather than merely assembling discussions of these diverse topics, I have endeavored to link them to the production and consumption of Korean drama.

Data collection proceeded via ethnographies of multiple sites: drama producers, state agencies and research institutes, tourism agencies, Korean cities, online drama discussion boards, individual blogs, and fans of Korean dramas and celebrities in South Korea and Japan. My initial approach to these various sources aimed to explore the realms of producers, audience groups, and sponsors. The multi-sited ethnography, however, has turned out to be a comprehensive one, because people at each site told me even more about the other players than about themselves. Individual chapters introduce the interviewees within each category. I also have relied on news articles published as early as 2000. News articles about the entertainment business, viewer ratings, back-stories about dramas, and star gossip have helped me figure out matters that I could not make complete sense of from interviews alone, in particular the differences between the superficial and actual causes and outcomes within the processes of drama production and consumption. Parts of this dissertation involve content analysis of Korean television dramas; significant parts of the discussion derive from my personal watching experiences; and for some dramas that I was not able to watch, I relied on websites where recaps of Korean TV dramas are posted.

In this dissertation, "Korean television dramas" refers to Korean primetime serials, aired via terrestrial channels in the 10-11 pm slot. Analysis of these dramas and their conditions of production and consumption is critical to understanding how speculative media capitalism drives urban processes and social discourses in South Korea. The primetime serials are the main export products among the many different types of Korean dramas. Given the extremely high stakes in matters of export, primetime serials are representative of the character of the industry and demonstrate the power dynamics between broadcasters and producers, the "live production" practices, and the practices of sponsorship.

The dissertation is organized in terms of what I consider to be the principal aspects of Korean television dramas: production, city sponsorship, consumption, and storytelling. Chapter 2 explores the process of production of Korean television dramas. The chapter begins with the geography of the consumption of Korean television dramas and the market size of the Korean broadcasting industry; then, I discuss how the disparity between the broad export market and the small domestic market has led to export-oriented drama production. The chapter presents details about independent producers (their birth, origins, and industrial position), the power dynamics of broadcasters and independent drama producers, the political economy of "live production" practices, and labor conditions in the industry. The chapter reports on the realities of the production of Korean television dramas—the products at the center of the Korean Wave—and shows how this cultural phenomenon has been shaped by acute material problems.

Chapter 3 examines how the production and consumption of Korean television dramas shapes and is shaped by urban conditions in Korean regional cities. The focus of this chapter is to account for (1) the need of Korean drama producers for city sponsorship, considered in the context of small-sized media capital and the spatiality of drama production, and (2) the need of Korean cities for television dramas, and how this is a response to South Korea's uneven development and the promotional needs of small cities. I

will illuminate how the marriage between "marginal" drama producers and "marginal" cities is transforming urbanization in South Korea. This chapter discusses how city promotion via television dramas can be effective in terms of the affective representation of a place within the drama plots and advertisement to wider audience. It also discusses the contradictions between cities and popular culture having to do with television dramas' limited stability and sustainability.

In Chapter 4, I explore two types of online drama discussion boards and examine how people share their watching experiences, collaboratively interpret drama texts, suggest hopeful story and character development, exchange information about dramas, and collectively support the production teams: a process I call the "discursive consumption" of TV dramas. Given the spontaneous and live production environment, this chapter also offers details about the ways in which drama producers capitalize on collective discussions among drama fans. I describe in detail the role of audience group discussions in the making of dramas, a particular way in which production in this case is determined by consumption practices. Also, conducting an in-depth ethnography of "middle-aged female drama fans" in South Korea and Japan, I examine the ways in which television dramas have become a channel through which a particular group of people socialize, engage in collective social activities such as volunteering and donating, and reshape their social identities. I argue that in this way television dramas serve as a medium through which social discourses and social activities are produced.

Chapter 5 explores the storytelling in Korean primetime serials that have aired since the beginning of the 2000s. Building on the discussion in Chapter 2, this chapter interrogates the ways in which stories in TV dramas have been fashioned in part as a response to speculative media commercialism. First, I show how Korean television dramas, amid fierce competition for ratings, have relied on a few narrative structures that have proven to be profitable. Then, I discuss how the 2000s witnessed the development of a virtuous cycle in which commercially-driven storytelling provoked addictive enjoyment among both domestic and foreign audiences. At the same time, this chapter examines how commercial sponsorship (for instance, through product placement) and export markets (particularly, the Japanese market) have reconfigured the storytelling in primetime serials to center around the exhibition of sponsored commodities and cultures. This chapter argues that the speculative nature of the industry has increasingly turned Korean dramas into little more than commercial products of dubious aesthetic value, since aesthetic considerations have largely been eclipsed by financial ones.

In the concluding chapter, I shed light on the recent boom of K-pop music and compare the drama-driven and the music-driven Korean Waves. I discuss the spatial and social effects that television dramas, unlike music, have generated, examining how the production and consumption of television dramas are shaped by and shape the urban conditions and social discourses of contemporary South Korea. I also compare the primetime serials with the recent growth of cable TV dramas and discuss the crisis caused by what even from a financial point of view appears to be the overly profit-oriented character of primetime serials: excessive concerns about sponsorship and export have caused the popularity of primetime serials to remain stationary over the past decade, while cable television dramas

have been able to develop fresher and more compelling storytelling because they are comparatively free from the urgency of export. The chapter analyzes the speculative nature of the drama industry which, since the Korean Wave, has engendered particular practices of production, consumption, and sponsorship of television dramas.

Chapter 2
The Political Economy of Live Production

As introduced in Chapter 1, Korean television dramas have generated, since the Korean Wave, various scholarly discourses concerning the driving force of their popularity and their reception to audiences. Yet, few studies have addressed the question, "how are Korean TV dramas produced?" Although, the Korean cultural industry is briefly surveyed by some scholars (Shim 2008, Jin 2011), few studies have specifically explored in-depth the Korean drama industry, and this chapter aims to fill this critical gap. This chapter also attempts to explain the sources of regional market competitiveness of Korean television dramas, focusing on the tangible production aspect rather than abstract discourses raised by some scholars, such as shared Confucian values and cultural proximity in Asia. An even more critical reason for the investigation of the Korean drama industry lies in that it exposes the unique organization of the industry and production practices of television dramas in Korea.

The uniqueness of today's Korean drama industry arose from the unexpected regional popularity of Korean dramas in the East Asian region in the 2000s, which has prompted the mushrooming of speculative, small independent drama producers; the combination of their pettiness, speculative nature, and highly dependent and marginal status vis-à-vis broadcasters has created "live production" practices under which weekly two episodes of television dramas are produced at the last minute for the following week's broadcasting. I argue that such precarious and speedy media capitalism—that has borne improvised drama making, haphazard storylines, and excessive labor exploitation—shows a distinctive aspect of the speculative nature of the Korean drama industry.

To verify the marginal and speculative features of Korean independent producers, this chapter draws from conflicts and struggles between two major players within the industry: broadcasters and independent producers. I conducted several in-depth interviews with people working at production firms, networks, association of independent producers, and association of drama directors. Oftentimes, the interviews would end in emotionally-charged and harsh criticism of one another, pushing me to examine the contradictions of the industry in my research. The clear differences I found between the two major parties illuminate how the drama industry is organized and operated. A personal collection of media reports since 2000 also helped me to identify the development of the industry over the past decade. The analysis of labor conditions in the industry mostly comes from my personal interviews with writers, project coordinators, filming staffs, and general crews. Due to their highly inaccessible nature, personal interviews with actors are not included. Instead, actors' media interviews are drawn on to examine their industrial positions and working conditions.

This chapter begins by exploring the geographies of consumption of Korean dramas, identifying where and how much they have been exported. The following section gives an overview of how the growing overseas markets triggered the explosion of speculation-driven independent drama producers in South Korea. I then describe the contradictory

conditions where independent producers have grown in large numbers, but remain in marginal and dependent position vis-à-vis broadcasters in practice. I argue that these conditions further boost the speculative nature of independent producers and examine how that speculative nature materializes into actual production practices. I found that the commercial interests and market positions of these industrial players have resulted in live production of Korean television dramas and extreme cases of intensity and speed of media capitalism. The next part then examines the industrial mechanisms to control and maintain the live production system: excessive labor of workers and the public nature of broadcasting. I argue that the labor conditions embedded in profit-driven production also enhanced the competitiveness of Korean dramas in regional markets by lowering their prices and keeping them accessible. The flexible exploitation of workers, however, continues due to institutional and interest divides among workers.

Analytically, this chapter draws on Negus' formulation of both "production of culture" and "cultures of production" (Negus 1998, 1999). Drawing on the framework of "production of culture," this chapter analyzes the ways in which profit-making efforts have defined the length, styles, and the production practices of Korean television dramas. By highlighting TV drama production as a speculative venture in South Korea, I show how a popular cultural commodity is more improvised, rather than creatively designed, to meet commercial criteria. Inspired by the "cultures of production," however, this chapter also explores how the production of Korean TV dramas interplays with the struggles among various players within the industry and life of industry workers. Moreover, this chapter illuminates how vague speculation for "jackpot" dramas is materialized and transferred into human labor, defining the lives of industry workers. In order to vividly reveal the tensions and conflicts among the industrial players—the most marked aspect of "culture of production"—I focus on the production of prime-time television dramas around which stakes for both broadcasters and independent producers are the highest because they are major products for exports.

Geographies of the Korean Drama Consumption

Media liberalization in the 1990s made East Asian countries moved away from a defensive attitude towards importing television programming into a more active intra-regional trade of TV programs (Shim 2008). The most visible player in the intra-regional transaction has been Korean television dramas. With its strong addictiveness of melodrama[12] and decent quality for price, Korean TV dramas quickly grabbed the niche market in various countries. In Japan, when the two-hour dramas that were aired during daytime got reduced or phased out during the 2000s, Japanese broadcasters were desperate to make up for the daytime broadcasting. Japanese broadcasters found Korean dramas much less expensive than Japan-produced dramas and easier to handle copyright issues than reruns of previous Japanese dramas. These market condition brought imports and broadcasting of Korean television dramas to Japan, and later witnessed the unexpected enormous popularity of them. In Taiwan, where markets of foreign dramas from Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Hollywood were already huge, Korean melodramas garnered interests of those who were

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[12] The "addictiveness" of Korean television dramas is analyzed in detail in Chapter 5.

already hooked on Japanese trendy dramas[13]. The establishment of the cable channel GTV in 2000 particularly contributed the proliferation of Korean programs; "with the sudden popularity of such Korean programming, Videoland, which had until then specialized in Japanese dramas, began importing and broadcasting Korean dramas as well. Other Taiwanese TV stations such as FTV, CTV, Power TV, E-Phil, have also begun airing them" (Kim 2005).

It was the drama *What Is Love All About* (1991), broadcasted and received extensive popular receptions in Taiwan, Hong Kong and China in the late 1990s, that sparked the buzz about Korean popular culture.[14] The drama series established images about Korea, after the long severance of diplomatic relations between China and South Korea, and kindled popular interests about Korean culture among ethnic Chinese. After the success of this series, other Korean dramas, such as *Star in My Heart* (1997), *Sunflower* (1998), and *Goodbye My Love* (1999), were consecutively exported to China. As some Korean bands, H.O.T., NRG, SES, and BabyVox, for example, also garnered celebrity in China, a group of Korean pop music mania emerged by this time, generating the *Korean Wave* (Joo 2007).

Yet it was *Winter Sonata* that led to the explosive boom of the Korean drama fever in East Asia. *Winter Sonata* is a conventional melodrama that was originally aired in Korea in 2002 on KBS. In 2003, BS, a NHK-owned cable TV, imported and aired *Winter Sonata* and recorded staggering viewer ratings. The drama was re-broadcasted in early 2004 by popular request, and NHK broadcasted the series again on a terrestrial station later in 2004. Several of the main characters of the drama became major stars in Japan. The drama especially propelled the male main star, Bae Yong-jun, into stardom in Japan and earned him the title "Yon-sama" which means literally "God Yong." *Winter Sonata*, beyond mere television watching, was especially developed into a social phenomenon bringing enormous changes in the cultural, economic, and political arenas in both Korea and Japan. NHK reported that the network earned more than ¥4.5 million; the economic effects of the drama series in Korea exceeded $5 billion (report by The Institute for Industrial Policy Studies). The DVD sales of the series were counted more than 450,000 in Japan; and more than 60,000 of the "Winter Sonata Tourism DVDs" that collected the filming sites of the drama were sold. More than 200 hundred tourism and merchandise products theming *Winter Sonata* have been developed and sold both in Japan and Korea (KOFICE 2008).

The drama series that has had the greatest impact on the predominantly ethnic-Chinese locations in East Asia is *Dae Jang Geum*, or *Jewel in the Palace*. This drama series, originally aired in 2003 on MBC, is about the first female imperial physician in the 16th century Chosun Dynasty. GTV in Taiwan imported and showed the drama series in 2004, achieving peak 62.2% ratings, 2nd place in all-time ratings; backed by the extraordinary popularity,

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[13] For Japanese trendy dramas, see Lukacs, G. (2010). *Scripted Affects, Branded Selves: Television, Subjectivity, and Capitalism in 1990s Japan*, Duke University Press.
[14] *What Is Love All About* was firstly aired on Channel 1 of CCTV from June to December in 1997 and recorded the second place in viewer ratings (average 4.2%) among all foreign programs. Upon audience requests for rerun, the drama series was re-broadcast in 1998 on Channel 2.

Dae Jang Geum was rerun in 2005.[15] It was screened on TVB in Hong Kong in 2004 and recorded average 47% of viewer ratings, ranked in the third place in all-time ratings in Hong Kong; the total viewership exceeded 3.21 million, around half of the entire Hong Kong population. Hunan Satellite Television aired *Dae Jang Geum* in 2005 in China and later broadcasted it at the national level. Since the extraordinary hype in East Asia, *Dae Jang Geum* has made inroads into Southeast Asia, Middle East, and Latin America, exported more than sixty countries (as of 2008, the total exports reached around $11 million), and driven the Korean Wave (KOFICE 2008).
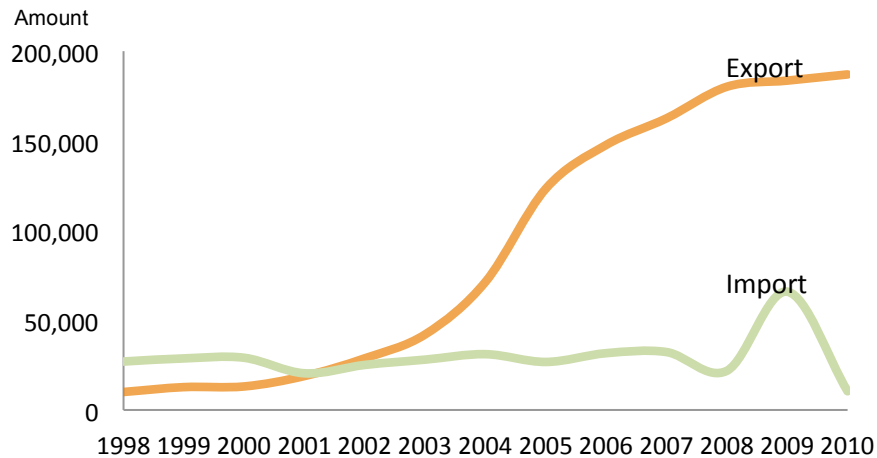
Source: Korea Creative Content Agency

[Figure 2.1. Exports and Imports of Television Programs in South Korea]

Since these two dramas' astonishing sensations, more than five hundred Korean dramas have been exported into the East Asian market, earning multi-billion dollars during the past decade. As shown in Table 2.1, the proportion of TV dramas has continuously increased and dominated Korean exports of television content. The stark disparity between the ever-skyrocketing exports and moderate imports of television content in Figure 2.1 shows the exceptional performance of Korean TV dramas overseas. The geographical coverage is also diverse from East and Southeast Asia to Europe, Middle East, and Latin America (Table 2.2). The expanding geographies of Korean drama reception have urged the South Korean government to set television dramas, and popular culture in general, as the nation's new export product. In a country having histories of export-oriented industrialization, but having long been an importer in the cultural arena, the overseas boom of Korean popular culture is sensational enough to make systemic efforts for cultural exports; diverse state institutions and organizations have been established to follow the market move, and now the state party is leading to make inroads into news markets such as Central Asia and Eastern Europe.

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[15] The popularity of *Dae Jang Geum* in Taiwan even revitalized the Seoul-Taipei flights that had been stopped since the establishment of China-Korea relations in 1992.

[Table 2.1. Exports of Korean Television Content by Genre]

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
	Amount	Amount	Amount	Amount	Amount	Amount
Total	110,335	111,566	102,713	115,694	101,276	151,398
Drama	101,620	85,891	92,685	105,369	95,845	132,677
Documentary	354	1,260	1,645	627	824	9,786
Animation	2,937	2,803	2,436	6,111	203	1,979
Show	2,328	5,581	3,640	1,864	3,203	4,043
Current Affairs	—	—	1,323	863	596	232
Others	3,096	16,031	984	834	606	2,680
	2005	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**2010**
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Drama	92.10%	77.00%	90.20%	91.10%	94.60%	87.60%
Documentary	0.30%	1.10%	1.60%	0.50%	0.80%	6.50%
Animation	2.70%	2.50%	2.40%	5.30%	0.20%	1.30%
Show	2.10%	5.00%	3.50%	1.60%	3.20%	27%
Current Affairs	—	—	1.30%	0.70%	0.60%	0.20%
Others	2.80%	14.40%	1.00%	0.70%	0.60%	2%

Source: Korea Creative Content Agency

[Table 2.2. Exports of Korean Television Content by Country]

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Japan	**60.20%**	**44.10%**	**55.20%**	**68.70%**	**63.50%**	**53.90%**
China	9.90%	6.70%	7.60%	4.80%	6.20%	8.80%
Hong Kong	3.30%	3.60%	3.30%	3.30%	4.00%	3.20%
Singapore	1.10%	1.80%	3.00%	1.30%	2.50%	1.50%
Taiwan	11.40%	18.10%	17.10%	6.70%	11.50%	13.20%
Vietnam	0.90%	0.70%	1.30%	0.80%	1.90%	1.50%
Malaysia	1.20%	2.30%	1.70%	1.00%	0.80%	1.00%
Indonesia	1.10%	0.00%	0.60%	0.30%	0.30%	0.50%
Thailand	2.10%	3.40%	2.80%	2.60%	3.30%	2.30%
Philippines	3.70%	2.90%	1.20%	1.70%	1.70%	2.70%
US	2.60%	0.50%	3.00%	4.80%	0.80%	1.30%
Europe	0.08%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.90%	0.40%
Australia	0.10%	0.00%	0.00%	—	—	—
Others	2.40%	15.70%	3.00%	3.20%	17%	9.50%

Source: Korea Creative Content Agency

Television dramas have virtually dominated the domestic broadcasting industry. It is not an exaggeration to say that South Korea is a drama kingdom. Three terrestrial stations air as many as more than 30 television dramas per week including daily morning and evening dramas, primetime dramas, weekend dramas, Friday dramas, and daily sitcoms. Among the top-ten viewer rating, five or six are usually TV drama, indicating that TV drama is the centerpiece of television watching to South Korean. In addition, more than twenty cable channels specialize in drama and air dramas all day either by buying the rebroadcasting rights of dramas that were already aired on terrestrial channels or producing their own shows. Moreover, the new operations of ten regional terrestrial television stations that serially opened in 1995, 1997, 2001 and 2002 plus the introduction of digital multimedia broadcasting (DMB) in 2005 and internet-protocol television (IPTV) in 2008 ushered South Korea into a multi-media, multi-channel broadcasting era, further contributing to extensive drama producing and airing.

The combination of growing overseas and domestic markets has reconfigured the drama industry in South Korea in the 2000s. What should be noticed is that the growing markets have boosted extraordinary speculation within and outside of the Korean drama industry, triggering more and more people to jump into the industry. I argue that such expectations have resulted in generating more independent producers than actual market-demands, transforming the Korean drama industry into a more speculative and competitive field. I will show in the following sections how the speculation-driven players have newly configured the industrial organization and even reshaped the production practices of television dramas.

Speculative Industry

1) Birth and Development of Korean Independent Producers

Under the military dictatorship in the 1980s, the broadcasting system in South Korea was monopolized by the state which controlled two broadcasting channels, KBS (Korean Broadcasting System) and MBC (Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation); until present, these two networks remain as public broadcasters. Under the state-controlled system, the two broadcasting stations produced virtually all television dramas and their in-house crews constituted the labor force in drama production (vertical integration). As South Korea became more democratized in the late 1980s, a commercial broadcasting system established and Korea's first commercial channel, SBS (Seoul Broadcasting System) launched in 1991. SBS, a relatively newcomer in the industry, was in a disadvantageous position in the market since the other two were already established networks.[16] As a measure to make up for SBS's weak self-production capabilities, the 1990 Broadcasting Act

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[16] What makes SBS a was drama *Sandglass* (*Morae Sigye*, 1995), a 24-episode series that depicts about the Gwangju Uprising of 1980 and the political oppression and other difficulties of the 1980. The modern historical epic series recorded stunning 64.5% ratings for its peak and is still in the fifth place of all time Korean TV dramas with average ratings of 46.7% (Russell 2008). *Sandglass* pushed SBS to be perceived as a competitive player in the industry and thereafter, competitions over ratings have seriously intensified especially for primetime dramas.

set a new "independent production quota system[17]," requiring the three terrestrial stations to air content produced outside the broadcasting firms at a certain ratio[18]. Dramas as a genre, in particular, is where the competition and stakes are highest among broadcasters, thus, the independent production system, which is able to attract funding from other sources (investment, sponsor, PPLs, etc.) and to cast high-profile actors with higher guarantees with the funding, is believed to be more effective than the in-house drama production system. Therefore, the new quota system had the effect of gradually shifting drama producers from broadcasting stations to independent producers.

Given the backdrop of their birth, independent drama producers in the Korean drama industry, refer to individual production firms with no access to its own broadcast channel on which to show its products. What matters in defining independent drama producers is their "independent" status from broadcasters, where they thereby need to make a contract with a broadcaster for access to channel; the size of firm and the features of the products they make are not what determines their status as independent drama producers. In the earlier stage (1991-1994), independent producers were often subsidiary companies of broadcasters such as MBC Production and Korea Broadcasting Entertainment System and Technology, and independent production was outsourced from broadcasters while their "in-house management" and "in-house prototyping" virtually controlled all aspects of independent production. It was only after the mid-90s, when the new operations of ten regional terrestrial television stations and the introduction of digital multimedia broadcasting (DMB) and internet-protocol television (IPTV) boosted demand for drama content, that "independent producers" in a real sense appeared. The expectation to sell drama content to these new channel operators caused the growth of independent producers. In addition, the increasing exports of Korean dramas to global markets in the 2000s as discussed above further triggered more emergences of drama production companies. Riding on growing markets and expectations, the number of drama production companies skyrocketed from 331 in 2000 to 1,514 in 2010 as registered under the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism.

The growing markets and added speculation attracted people from various backgrounds to become independent producers beginning in the mid 1990s. Some of the star-directors left networks and established their own production companies such as Kim Jong Hak Production[19] and Yoon's Color[20]. Some music labels entered the industry; the Pan Entertainment stably settled in the drama industry, earning more than $10 million from *Winter Sonata* only in Japan; DSP E&T produced *Three Leaf Clover* (2005), *My Girl* (2006), *Love Supersize Me* (2006), and *Yeon Gae So Mun* (2006). Entertainment agencies also became a player; Sidus HQ merged with Castle in the Sky that produced *Lovers in Paris* (2004) before, and newly produced *Spring Days* (2005), *Sad Love Story* (2005), *Only You*

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[17] The justification for the independent production quota system was to check the monopolistic power of broadcasters, foster the broadcasting industry, and enhance services for the audience.
[18] The ratio was originally set for minimum 3% of broadcasting hours and gradually raised at a rate of up to 5% annually, and as of 2010, the ratio is maintained at 30% on MBC and SBS and 24% on KBS 1 and 40% on KBS 2.
[19] Director Kim Jong-hak is a hot property that directored two stunning dramas, *Eyes of Dawn* (1991), and *Sandglass* (1995).
[20] It is the firm established my director Yoon Seok-ho, who produced *Winter Sonata* (2002).

(2005), and *Princess Lulu* (2007). Film production houses expanded their business areas to drama production such as Popcorn Film that produced *Stranger than Paradise* (2006). Daily Sports, a subsidiary of media mogul Joongang Daily, launched A Story that has produced more than twenty dramas including *Air City* (2007) and *Cinderella's Sister* (2010).[21] The newly established independent production houses also caused big shifts in in-house labor forces; high profile directors left broadcasting firms and moved to independent companies with big lump sum contract deals and many filming and lighting crews became freelancers.

The emerging drama producers have practiced largely four types of independent production—albeit in great degrees of variation according to contract terms. The first type is "complete independent production" in which broadcasters provide total production costs with which independent producers produce dramas either using their own crews and equipment or hiring freelancers. "Partial (or combined) independent production" refers to practices in which producers use broadcasters' crews, equipment, and facilities in return for reduced production cost handed over from broadcasters. Under "joint production," broadcasters and producers share expenses and divide crews, equipment, facilities, and production management. Sometimes broadcasters "purchase independently produced drama products" with certain amount of money and terms. In only the last case, independent producers have autonomy over all production procedures from development, script writing, filming, and editing. In the first three cases, broadcasters and independent producers work together in the proposal development, casting, script writing, filming, and editing. The most common form is the "combined independent production" and the primary reason for this rampant practice lies in the marginality of independent drama producers.

2) Marginal Producers

Despite their sizable numbers, the market position of independent production firms is marginal in terms of their lack of autonomy and power vis-à-vis broadcasters due to a market structure where terrestrial channels are limited to only three networks that then naturally have monopolistic power. First, Korean independent producers are not full-production studios; although the size of the firms varies considerably, most production firms only have some contracted writers and directors. With this limited human capital, they circulate drama proposals among three broadcasting stations to win a channel that can broadcast their drama. Only after a channel is guaranteed do their proposals become tangible and a substantial production team is established. Given the intense competition among miscellaneous producers, however, winning a channel is the most daunting step throughout the whole production procedures. One of the ways for independent production firms to gain access to a channel is by combining production with broadcasting firms by "renting out" their personnel (mostly film directors) and equipment; i.e., practicing combined independent production. Due to these reasons, significant numbers of independent drama producers in Korea lack and rarely develop independent production

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[21] Korea Communication Commission. (2007). *A Study on Improvement Measures of the Production System of Korean Dramas*.

capabilities. Under the established pre-contract and post-production system, there is extremely limited room for independent producers to exercise their discretion over production.

[Table 2.3. Copyrights of Broadcasters and Independent Producers]

Network	Drama Series	# of Episodes	Independent Production Company	Copy Right Holding	
				Broadcaster	Producer
KBS	Cloud Stairs	16	JS Pictures	1-12	13
	Golden Apple	16			
	The Snow Queen	13	Yoon's Color	1	13
	Spring Waltz	21			
	Mr. Good Bye	16	Olive 9	1-12	13
	Great Inheritance	17			
	Hwang Jin Yi	24			
	Thank You Life	24	The Pan Entertainment	1-12	13
	Hello, God	16	Kim Jong Hak Production	1-12	13
	Man of the Vineyard	16			
	The Invisible Man	20	HB Entertainment	1-12	13
MBC	Special of My Life	8	Kim Jong Hak Production	1, 2, 5, 6, 7	3, 4, 8-12
	What Star Did You Come From	16			
Source: Korea Creative Content Agency, *2007 Survey of Broadcasting Industry* Recited from Korea Communication Commission. (2007). *A Study on Improvement Measures of the Production System of Korean Dramas.*					
Note: 1. Domestic Broadcasting Rights (Terrestrial, Cable, Satellite channels), 2. Broadcasting Rights in North America (Terrestrial, Cable, Satellite channels), 3. Broadcasting Rights in Asia (Terrestrial, Cable, Satellite channels), 4. Broadcasting Rights in Other Foreign Countries (Terrestrial, Cable, Satellite channels), 5. Copyrights and Distribution Rights over Video in Korea, 6. Copyrights and Distribution Rights over CD-ROM, VOD, DVD in Korea, 7. Copyrights and Distribution Rights over Video in North America, 8. Copyrights and Distribution Rights over Video, CD-ROM, VOD, DVD in Other Foreign Countries, 9. Transmission Rights over the Internet, 10. Information Use Rights, 11. Rights over Secondary Property Products, 12. Performance Rights, 13. Redistribution of 50% of Profits Generated in Asia, Music Rights (KBS).					

Second, independent drama producers are in a disadvantageous position in profit redistribution. When in contract, the three big terrestrial networks usually force independent producers to surrender their rights to their dramas. Taking advantage of their monopoly on television channels, the broadcasting firms sign unfair contracts with independent producers saying that the broadcasting firm has virtually all copy rights to a drama after the first airing with only a few exceptions. Components of copy rights includes broadcasting rights in various countries, rights to sell dramas to second-round channels such as cable and Internet stations, copy rights and distribution rights over DVDs, VOD, and CD-ROM in Korea and overseas, transmission rights, information use rights, rights over secondary property products, performance rights, and music copy rights (Table 2.3). While areas of copyrights are diverse and complex, as shown in Table 2.3, networks virtually have most of the rights; and independent producers only have music rights (in case of KBS) and are re-distributed fifty percent of the profits generated only in Asia only for three years. Independent producers could have distribution rights to second-round channels and overseas markets, but such cases are very rare and limited to a few major producers who

do not need finances from networks, (i.e., those who can attract investment from other sources by exploiting their own talent; star writers, actors, and directors); and in such cases, a broadcasting firm offers usually less than 50% of the production cost.[22] The reason why independent producers surrender to unfair contracts with the broadcasters lies first in their urgent need to win channels and second in that independent drama producers must receive advance payment from a network in order to start filming. Winning a contract with a broadcasting firm that has channels and funding, however unfair it might be, is a top priority and the profit redistribution is a subsequent matter.

Independent producers' fragile position in making profits from a drama itself has shaped various features in the actual production process. One remarkable feature is the producers' heavy reliance on product placements to make up for the ever-insufficient production cost. Therefore, providers of PPLs have become one of the principle financers of drama production and their standings have affected not only storylines, but even casting and modifying the amount of appearance of actors.[23] On the other hand, independent producers' full autonomy over the music rights has propagated the prevalence of original sound tracks in Korean dramas; so much so that Korean dramas can be thought of as well-designed music dramas. Independent producers rarely appropriate existing songs for dramas; instead they create several new songs for different themes only for that particular drama as a way to gain copyrights and profits from the songs. Independent producers' every effort for profits has configured the tones and styles of Korean television dramas. Not a few independent producers have develop "content business" through which they can profit not only from drama broadcasting, but also from foreign markets, revenues from Original Sound Tracks, drama-themed performances and merchandise, and tourism to drama-filmed sites. Yet, the feasibility of such business model is not guaranteed and even in cases of surplus, profits occur long after the actual production point, thereby making it hard to fill deficits in production.

3) Pettiness and Speculative Nature of Producers

Along with their marginality, what characterizes Korean independent producers is a stark divide between major and small-sized producers. While independent production firms have grown in numbers, a few major producers have dominated the actual production. According to Lee and Park's research (2008), top eight firms produced 178 dramas, among the 315 dramas produced by independent companies during from 2000 to 2008. The top eight producers include subsidiaries of broadcasters such as SBS Production, MBC Production, and Korean Broadcasting Entertainment System and Technology, thus only five firms are independent producers in a real sense. Six production companies produced 5-10 dramas, sixteen firms produced less than five dramas, and the rest fifty independent production firms produced only one drama within the same period (Table 2.4).
In addition to market share, the financial predicament of most independent firms has made them petty. The growth of major independent producers gained momentum in early 2000s

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[22] The struggles around production cost and distribution rights are subject to the power relations between broadcasting stations and independent producers.
[23] Chapter 5 examines how sponsorship reconfigures the story-making of Korean dramas.

which witnessed the inflow of financial capital into the industry[24]; through the establishing private equity fund and practicing back door-listing, most of these major producers went public around the mid 2000s.[25] The public listing of the major production firms was groundbreaking in that, firstly, they found various financial sources to prepare mega production costs, thereby, furthering their advantage for producing quality dramas through better casting; and secondly, major producers become to generate more profits through stock market, than from creating content.

[Table 2.4. Accumulated Numbers of Dramas
Produced by Independent Producers (2000-2008)]

Number of Dramas	Total # of Dramas*	Market Share	Independent Producers
More than 10	178	56.5%	SBS Production (32), Kim Jong Hak Production (31), Samhwa Networks (25), MBC Production (25), JS Pictures (23), Olive 9 (12), Korea Broadcasting Entertainment System and Technology (19), Chorokbaem Media (10)
5-9	53	16.8%	DSP E&T (9), Group Eight (8), Logos Film (8), The Pan Entertainment (8), Lee-Kim Production (6), Sidus HQ (6), Castle in the Sky (5), HB Entertainment (5)
2-4	42	13.3%	16 producers
1	50	15.9%	50 producers
Total	315 (323)	102.5%	82 producers
* In case of co-production, it is counted that each production firm has one drama.			
Source: Recited from Lee, J. and E. Park. (2008). Changes in the Condition for Nurturing the TV Station's Producing Crew since the Introduction of the Independent Production Quota. 방송문화연구. 20(2).			

In contrast, most petty independent production firms start their business with mere connections with broadcasting firms, and therefore are short on capital to kick off the production. Only after securing a channel to air their proposed drama can independent producers start to rake in funding, mostly financed by the broadcasting firms that will air the soon-to-be-made drama. Networks, however, usually offer only around seventy percent of the total production cost, with which independent producers can begin to cast and shoot.[26] In order to cover the rest of the production cost, drama producers must attract funding in the form of investments, sponsorships from enterprise or cities, product placements or debt. As these financial flows show, most independent drama producers jump into the market with buyers' and investors' money, rather than their own investment.

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[24] One source of the financial capital was "communication capital."; the biggest telecommunication company, SK Telecom, is a heavy shareholder of Sidus HQ; the second biggest communication mogul, KT, controls a major production firm, Olive 9.

[25] Listed companies include IHQ, The Pan Entertainment, Olive 9, Chorokbaem Media, DSP E&T, JS Pictures, Yellow Entertainment, Eight Pics. Kim Jong Hak production did a back-door listing by merging with an existing listed technology firm, Pure Nanotech.

[26] Broadcasters do not calculate the total prdouction cost and pay the amoung of its 70%; rather, conventionally, the cost per episode is more or less fixed around at $100,000; independnet producers usually spend more budget to cast high-profile wirters and actors.

While the flexible way of securing a budget lowers the entry barrier to the industry, the unstable financial base contributes to the pettiness of most independent drama producers.

The pettiness of most drama production firms has been uncovered by several scandals over unpaid appearance fee. In 2010, the labor union of the nation's broadcasting industry consisting of staffers, actors and singers claimed that there were overdue appearance fees and other unpaid wages totaling $3.7 million. As a result, the union decided to boycott filming outsourced dramas at all three major broadcasting companies. The unionists stopped appearing in dramas for days and only scrapped their collective action after broadcasters promised to devise measures to prevent payment delays.[27] What is notable is that the union strikes targeted the broadcasters, rather than independent producers, saying "Although the subcontractors are the first responsible for the unpaid salaries, the broadcasting companies should also take some responsibility. The major broadcasters had abandoned their social and ethical duties." A similar incident occurred in 2011 again when Corea Entertainment Management Association disclosed a list of companies responsible for 32 dramas and films, which have failed to pay actors, saying that actors belonging to the association will not appear in dramas and movies filmed by the named production companies. A director of the association stated that, "Heads of production companies failed to pay performance fees and kept making dramas after setting up another production company or changed their names. Then the overdue payment problem gets bigger. Broadcasting companies know this, but they keep outsourcing, saying the payment issue is between producers and actors, and not their business." This time again, the union criticized broadcasters as much as those producers who failed to make payments. Those two incidents indicate the unreliable financial conditions of "petty" independent producers and the critical role of broadcasters who can control delinquent independent firms.

Why is it that those small-sized independent production firms cannot pay for workers? They frequently argue that they have negative profits after the production and airing of a drama. Multiple factors cause the generation of "negative profits." First, as discussed above, broadcasting networks buy TV dramas at a price equivalent to only around 70% of the production cost; more accurately, independent producers need (and spend) more budget to cast talent amid the ever-increasing market price (discussed below). More critical problem lies in payment practice: broadcasters conventionally pay almost all costs only after the airing (after the airing of a whole series in case of dramas, which means, four to fifteen months after an initial production stage). Therefore, independent producers should attract sponsorship to make up the actual cost spent during the filming periods; in theory, when independent producers raise more sponsorships, they could make up rest of the production cost and even make profits.

The reality is, however, different due to skyrocketing star guarantees. Amid fierce competitions among smaller producers, "hot properties" of writers, directors, and actors have become critical in winning a channel; stars are also believed to be advantageous for ratings, attracting investments and commercials, publicity, and exports. As a result, the

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[27] The Korea Times, "Entertainers' union, KBS reach agreement," 2010.09.01.
http://koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2010/09/113_72392.html

independent production system in the 2000s turned drama production into market-friendly practices that have clearly demarcated between star actors and others with monetary value, causing unfettered rise in appearance fees for talent. For example, the maximum guarantee of leading actors per episode began to rise drastically in the 2000s and broke through the $10,000 level in 2004 and continuously increased reaching around $30,000-50,000 in late 2000s[28]. In 2008, an association of drama producers created a rule to keep an actor's performance fee per episode below $15,000 to curb the ever-increasing star guarantees. Yet, the ever-increasing competitions over star-actors easily nullified the ruling in the late 2000s. Therefore, when independent producers pay $60,000-100,000 per episode for two leading roles, the (only two) stars' guarantees take up as much as 70-80% of the budget (generally $80,000-100,000 per episode) they receive from broadcasters. With the remaining 20-30% of budget, producers should pay for other supporting roles, crews, equipment, and on-location shooting. Unless a drama hits the jackpot with audience ratings and attracts more sponsorship in the course of airings, independent producers end up with the deficits.

The convergence of marginality in making profit and pettiness in market share and finances deepens the speculative nature of independent producers who inherently emerged from speculative expectations. Taking drama production as a speculative venture applies not only to petty producers but also to the major producers, which differs in the size of production coordination. In the "hopes" of exporting dramas to overseas markets and earning additional revenues from secondary products, numerous independent drama production companies have appeared; but these hopes are translated into tangible financial returns only for a few of them. In an interview, a drama producer spoke directly about the speculative nature of the industry. "It is like people stuck in a gambling rut keep hoping a big win will end their problems. Profits from one jackpot drama could offset the deficits from some 'failed' previous drama. That is why firms try to continue to attract investments and produce dramas." The uncertainty and unpredictability that rule the media industry also reinforces speculation in drama production. Because nobody can predict who will hit the jackpot, competition among the independent producers continues to be intense.

Live Production

South Korea has intensive landscapes of drama airing and watching. The fierce commercial competitions among broadcasters for advertisement revenues have put extraordinary emphasis on prime-time television dramas, creating "drama war" among the three terrestrial networks. The drama war has been materialized through increasing broadcasting time. The three broadcasters have gradually increased the prime-time running time from the previous 50 minutes to as much as 80 minutes (no commercials interrupt a show in Korea); and they finally agreed to freeze the drama show time at 70 minutes in 2008. The profit structure of broadcasters that rely on commercials has

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[28] Until the late 1990s when actors were employed by and thus belonged to broadcasting firms, their appearance fees were paid by the in-house rating system: broadcasters set 18 categories based on career and work experience and controlled the fees to $300-1,500 per episode. A few top-tier actors played as a free contract agent, but even their fees per episodes were confined to around a maximum of $3,000.

generated longer show time; given that the amount of TV commercials cannot exceed 10% of the show time, longer running time can sell more commercials. In addition, when a show time is extended 10 minutes, a program can attract viewers from other channels that just finished a show earlier; thus longer running time can also raise viewer ratings. Actually, three dramas started their first episodes on the same date recorded viewer ratings proportionate to the running times in their second episodes: *A Witch in Love* (SBS, 80 min), *Thank You* (MBC, 72 min), *The Devil* (KBS, 71min) recorded 16.3%, 14.6%, 8.7% respectively.[29]

Borrowing the analysis carried by a blogger[30], let me compare the weekly airtime between the US drama *The Good Wife* (CBS 2009) and the Korean drama *The Greatest Love* (MBC 2011). The show time of US primetime dramas is one hour. Taking commercial breaks into account, the actual show time is 43 minutes. Season 1 of *The Good Wife* is composed of 23 episodes, thus, the total seasonal airing time is 43×23= 989 minutes. The broadcasting period of a season is around 32-34 weeks with around 23-24 episodes. In average, the weekly airtime within the broadcasting period is slightly more than 30 minutes. In contrast, the actual show time of *The Greatest Love* is 70 minutes. Moreover, unique in the world, primetime drama series are broadcasted twice a week in South Korea. Therefore, the weekly airtime of primetime dramas is as much as 140 minutes. Furthermore, Korean TV dramas rarely get the virtue of pre-production, thus, drama producers, actors, and staffs produce 140-minute of dramas weekly; the weekly production amount is more than a feature-length film.

While US and Korean dramas show stark contrast in their weekly production amount, the two dramas are also distinctive in managing the production. Sixteen directors participated in the season 1 of *The Good Wife*, which means, a different director filmed every episode. Twelve writers scripted the series, but behind the writers, there are tens of sub-writers and writing teams that generate rigid storylines. In dealing with uncertainty, the US production system has developed a systematic production in which teamwork guarantee a certain level of quality regardless of the talent of directors and actors. In contrast, only two writers and two directors participated in *The Greatest Love.* While the weekly production amount of *The Greatest Love* is more than four times of that of *The Good Wife*, the former had only 10-20% of the creative production personnel of the latter. As a result, a few talents bear huge pressures to create storylines. It is not just writers and directors, but a few high-profile actors on whom the Korean drama production system relies. In handling uncertainty, the Korean TV drama production system has developed a speculative measure exploiting and betting on a handful of talent. While the development and preparation stages of a drama are highly risky relying on a few star powers, the actual shooting process of Korean TV dramas is also provisional and spontaneous.

The process of "last-minute live filming (*saengbang chawaryeong*)" is a standard practice in the Korean drama industry. Apart from the first few episodes, filming is usually done only a

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[29] Nocut News, "Ratings proportional to running time," 2007.03.23.
http://www.nocutnews.co.kr/show.asp?idx=468765
[30] Internet Stories of Estima, http://estima.wordpress.com/2-11/09/25/goodwife/

few days in advance of (or on the same day as) the airdate. Script changes are often made last-minute, while the final editing of the film is just as rushed, with little time to review the episode before it is released. The closer to the final episode, the more tense the shooting because the demands of production mount. Drawing on the industrial conventions to refer to the last-minute production, this chapter calls these whole practices "live production." Many hit dramas suffered from regretfully poor endings because of hasty scriptwriting and rushed shooting. For the last episode of *Sign* (*SSain*, 2011), the entire shooting was completed only 50 minutes before broadcasting. It is reported that four staff members raced against time to bring the video to the editing room.[31] As a result, the protagonist lost his voice (due to lack of sound) for 20 minutes during the broadcast. In the middle of episode 19 in *The Equator Man* (*Jeokdoui Namja*, 2012), the screen suddenly reproduced scenes from the beginning and then the screen went black. Subsequently, a caption was displayed on the screen stating that due to unforeseen circumstance, episode 19 has ended and the final episode will be aired on the next day. News articles informed that the edited version of a film that was shot on the airdate was not delivered to a master control room of the network in time.[32] In *Athena: Goddess of War* (*Atena*, 2010) and *Painter of the Wind* (*Brameu Hwawon*, 2008), the injuries of the lead actors led to one episode of each drama being cancelled. Both incidents were due to the tight shooting schedule.

What and who are driving these "crazy" but repeated processes? Three factors cause this practice: 1) uncertainty of channels, 2) emphasis on raising viewer ratings, and 3) cutting the production cost. First, independent producers cannot produce more than two or three episodes without the guarantee of a channel. There are more than one thousand independent production firms in South Korea, while only three terrestrial broadcasting stations exist. The disparity in numbers indicates the fierce competition among producers to win a channel and such uncertainly has established "pre-contract and post-production system." Independent producers circulate drama proposals (usually consisting of a show synopsis and a script of the first episode) among three broadcasting stations to win a channel that can broadcast their drama. Only after a channel is guaranteed do their proposals become tangible and a substantial production team is established. Broadcasters usually narrow down the possibilities to two or three drama candidates before choosing a winner only a few months before the actual airdate. Given the uncertainty of channels, the pre-production of whole drama series is extremely risky; a completely filmed drama series may not be able to find a distribution channel.

Second, "last-minute filming" is a business practice intended to realize high viewer ratings. The interest in viewer ratings is shared between broadcasting firms and drama producers; higher viewer ratings not only generate more sales of commercials, but also raise the unit price of commercials. In addition, ratings are the basis not only for whether a drama will be sold in overseas and additional markets, but also for its price in those markets. This critical commercial logic has created a system of what is called "*jjokdaebon*" (a slice of script) or

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[31] dongA.com, "Awful broadcasting accident, The last twist of *Sign*," 2011.03.11. http://news.donga.com/3/all/20110311/35481980/4.

[32] Media Today, "The aftermath of strike? Broadcasting accident of *The Equator Man*," 2012.05.24. http://www.mediatoday.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=102726.

"hasty script" in the Korean drama industry. Under this system, extremely short sections of scripts arrive on set, barely meeting the live-shoot schedule. Without having the whole plot of an episode and the time to study the script, actors shoot the short scene that the one-page script describes. The business rationale for the last-minute script writing and revisions is to listen to the voices of the audience. After airing the first few episodes and observing the viewers' response, directors and writers collaboratively rework the direction of a drama by changing plotlines, introducing new figures, or adding some provocative scenes. A drama producer remarked that, "television series have to change according to audience's reaction, thus the script must be carefully polished and a lot of time has to be invested in it. Dramas that are shot in advance cannot gauge the audience's reaction, so they are often not accepted by the audience."[33] Stories of dramas are being adjusted all the time, and the translation of scripts into actual filming is a last-minute occurrence.

Third, as a measure to cut production costs, the filming process is made as short as possible, also contributing to "last-minute" shooting. Drama production costs are two-tiered: costs for creative workers and actual production costs. Above the line is invested to pay for star actors, ace writers, and sometimes high-profile directors who are paid on a per-episode basis. Below the line, usually less than half of the budget, is paid for several supporting and extra cast members, on-the-spot crew members, camera shooting, sets and special equipment, visual effects, and on-location shooting. Given that those crews and supporting roles are paid per day, the best way to cut the actual production cost is to reduce the number of filming days.[34] In *On Air* (*Oneeo*, 2008), a drama that depicts the inside of the Korean drama industry, one dialogue between a producer and a staff at an independent production firm is particularly instructive: "Once cameras roll, the minimum cost is no less than $20,000…. Thus, we will take a day off." To produce a drama with minimum cost and maximum efficiency, most episodes should be shot only few days before (or on the same day of) the airdate.

The live production also affects the viewers. On the one hand, viewers express disappointments about veering storylines, lack of unity throughout the whole episodes, editing mistakes, and frequent drawbacks in filming. On the other hand, the spontaneous production ironically contributes to promoting viewer expectations and publicity. Due to the practice of live filming, most Korean dramas cannot air previews except for the first few episodes. As the popularity of a drama climbs over episodes, when there are no previews, not only the drama website but even online news sections are bombarded with requests of "show us previews" or "how can we wait a week without previews?" In these cases, having no previews fosters more expectations and discussions of the next episode, thus, effectively boosting publicity.

Labor Conditions

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[33] Personal interview, Spring 2011.
[34] Pressian, "모 피디의 그게 모!" 2011.08.23.
http://www.pressian.com/article/serial_article_list.asp?series_idx=460.html.

Inside the industry, the mechanisms to handle and maintain live production are twofold: excessive labor and the public nature of broadcasting. First, the intensive workloads against tight deadlines are shifted onto workers. The live production of Korean TV dramas, producing two episodes of total 140 minutes a week, entails serious excessive and intensive labor, forcing workers into a condition where they suffer from constant sleep deprivation, all-day stand-by waiting and multitasking during a three-to-six month period when a drama is being aired. Multitasking is a norm in the field. "One of the most important measures to make up the all-the-lack production cost is to squeeze out workers, including the creative workers." These are the words of a person at a drama-production firm who is responsible for marketing, location scouting, on-the-spot staffing and the promotion of celebrities in overseas markets at the same time.

What is worse than multitasking is excessive working hours. In drama production, actors and workers are contracted per-episode or per day, which means no contract terms specify how many hours compose a day. Drama producers take full advantage of such vague terms and force workers to keep working for full 24 hours a day. One big scandal that occurred last year illustrates such excessive labor. In August 2011, Han Ye-Seul, who plays the title role in KBS drama *Myung Wol the Spy*, boycotted further production of the drama by running away to LA in the middle of the drama production and airing, complaining of poor working conditions. The heated media and viewers' criticism made her to return to the spot only within 48 hours of departure. While public discourses generated at earlier stage of the scandal criticized her, saying that $30,000 guarantee per episode compensates enough for all the hard work, the event actually shed light on the reality of the drama industry. In response to this event, the Korean Actors Association released a statement saying, "We must blame the broadcaster and producer for pressuring killer filming schedules…. According to Korean labor laws, normal workers are allowed to work only 12 hours overtime per week, in addition to the regular eight-hour working days. Broadcasters, however, never felt guilty even when actors worked 100 hours overtime, reasoning they are not under legal protection of standard labor law." In fact, Park Shin-Yang, who starred in the hit drama, *Lovers in Paris* (2004), once said, "The poor working conditions where the cast and production team had to work 42 hours straight needs to be improved," while veteran actor Lee Soon-Jae even went as far to say, "Korean actors currently work in life-or-death situations." [35] In addition, Hong Su-Hyun, who acts for the drama, *The Princess' Man* (2011), returned to the filming site even after a car accident that caused a rib fracture in order to fulfill her acting responsibilities. Around those incidents, however, media and public discourses only highlight (and even anesthetize) the "fighting spirits" of workers than tell the nasty reality of the industry.

South Korea is well-known for labor-driven production and export of manufacturing goods in the 1970's and 80's. Labor exploitation through intensive and long working hours became the norm for Korean goods to have global market competitiveness.[36] Working

[35] *Newsen, "Actors pull all-nighters, Tragic reality,"* 2011.*08.25.*
http://www.newsen.com/news_view.php?uid=201108250009101001&search=title&searchstring=%B9%E3%BB%F9%20%B1%E2%B7%CF%B0%E6%C0%EF

[36] Amsden, Alice. (1989). *Asia's Next Giant: South Korea and Late Industrialization.* New York: Oxford

conditions in the creative industry in the era of the post-developmental state exactly reflect that of the manufacturing industry of the developmental state period during 70s and 80s. The cultural industry of Korean TV dramas takes advantage of vague regulations regarding working conditions that allows for the acceptability to exploit workers. I argue that today's labor-induced production of cultural products (TV dramas) created price competitiveness in overseas markets, in the same way that the made-in-Korea manufacturing goods did in the 70s and 80s.

Despite the harsh labor conditions, two types of divide—institutional and interest-based divide—make collective bargaining for actors and crews unattainable. First, workers in drama production are controlled by different institutions. While the basic filming schedule is set by independent production houses (to which writers belong), actual workers (actors and crews) are linked with other institutions; most filming crews (camera, lighting, sound technicians, art directors and staff, set construction crew members) and filming directors are "leased out" from a broadcasting station; and actors are controlled by entertainment agencies. Although crews have their own labor unions inside of broadcasting firms, because the actual filming processes occur outside the stations, controlled by independent producers, the bargaining efforts regarding labor conditions become foiled. Actors also have their own union: the Korean Broadcasting, Film, Performing Artists Union. But actors are primarily controlled by individual agencies, and independent producers regulate actual shooting processes. In a context where the industry never sets the specific maximum filming hours a day and the minimum wage rate, the bargaining power of the union becomes weak. Furthermore, as shown in several incidents around overdue payments, independent producers frequently do not pay many supporting actors[37], and workers' bargaining points are in "wages" rather than in labor conditions.

Second, the three different institutions—broadcasting stations, independent producers and entertainment agencies—have distinct interests. Because broadcasting stations make a fixed amount of down payment, they are not interested in the actual production processes; what networks concern is meeting the airdates and viewer ratings. On the other hand, independent producers have to do with cutting actual production costs; as discussed, the practice they exercise is to reduce the number of filming days, thus diminishing labor costs. As entertainment agencies care primarily about capitalizing on their contracted actors, their focus is in increasing turnover rates and thus profitability. If the filming process is prolonged regarding actors' labor conditions, it does not suit the agencies' interests of gaining faster turnover. In sum, while the three institutions have different interests, they do not much care about actual labor conditions; the deteriorated labor practices are forced onto *individual* workers: writers, directors, actors, crews and staff members. Moreover, even the workers' group is divided: while "creative workers"—high-profile writers and star

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University Press. Koo, Hagen. (2001). *Korean Workers: The Culture and Politics of Class Formation*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

[37] While *star* actors (mainly four lead characters) are paid in advance of actual filming in order to guarantee their casting, the payment for other supporting and extra actors is done after the shooting and broadcasting of a drama. When independent production firms have negative profits, those actors do not get paid.

actors—are rewarded with high fees, supporting roles and ordinary crew members are forced to turn their "passions" into intense labor.

While structural factors–institutional and interest divides–make it difficult for workers to achieve collective bargaining, excessive labor is also sustained by workers' mentality concerning the public nature of broadcasting. Scholarly discussions on labor in the television industry have concerned the "affective nature" of work; not only insecurity and precarious attributes of the work, but also how the pleasures of acclaim, rewards, self-realization, and creativity do matter and become the basis for self-exploitation in creative work (Ursell 2000, Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2008). The types of such pleasure of being a freelancer and creative worker also apply to workers in the Korean television drama industry (Kim 2008). The more critical and practical factor, however, to cope with the live filming and subsequent excessive labor resides in the public nature of TV dramas. A filming staff remarked that, "Not sleeping is required practice in this field. We are so used to it. Nevertheless, drama should be broadcasted. It is a promise with the public." Given this explicit promise with the public, there is an implicit consensus among all participants that broadcasting cancellation should be prevented.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the political economy of drama production, with a focus on the market-driven independent drama producers and their dual character: their highly speculative anticipations about export and big hits on the one hand, and their marginality with regard to financial conditions, production environment, and profit redistribution on the other. These disparities have led to live production being used as a measure to reduce labor costs and stay afloat in the industry. The live production system entails the extreme exploitation of workers, which is part of the basis of the market competitiveness of Korean television dramas. I argue that the practices of flexible labor exploitation and passion-induced intensive labor are sources of market competitiveness in a cultural industry where abstract values such as creativity and innovation are conventionally thought to rule. At the same time, the profit-driven live production system has opened spaces for audience participation in cultural production. Chapter 5 discusses the interplays between the political economy of live production and the cultural economy of the discursive consumption of television dramas.

Chapter 3
Korean Television Dramas and the Political Economy of City Promotion

Recent Korean television dramas cannot easily be imagined apart from cities. Cities act not only as backgrounds and filming venues, but as narrative drivers and sponsors of Korean television dramas. This chapter addresses the relationship between the two, offering insight into how cultural production and urban processes mutually constitute each other by demonstrating that the production of Korean television dramas is simultaneously shaped by and shapes the material and spatial conditions of Korean cities. This relationship between culture and cities is manifested by the practice of drama-sponsorship by many Korean cities. "Cities' drama-sponsorship" refers to the ways in which municipalities are directly involved in the production of TV dramas by providing space, place, and funding. The practice of drama sponsorship is categorized into two types: first, the production of TV dramas via "urban production" by constructing mega-size outdoor drama-sets that will be used as major filming venues and then further developed into tourist attractions; second, the production of TV dramas via "urban representation" by strategically revealing locales in a city in TV dramas in return for that city's cash grants, a process I call "city placement." Regardless of the format, more and more Korean cities are appearing in television dramas and, recently, some East Asian cities outside of Korea have become sponsors for Korean TV drama producers as well. On the one hand, cities have become one of the major sponsors of financially-struggling drama producers, and, on the other, Korean television dramas are one of the most effective medium to publicize cities. Given this ostensibly mutually-synergetic relationship, more than fifty Korean cities have sponsored the production of television dramas over the past decade.

This chapter sheds light on two larger ideas that, I argue, underlie the geography of South Korean cities' drama-sponsorship. The first is that drama production in various regional cities expands the literature on cultural production in cities by showing examples of dispersed, temporary production camps. As such, it extends the scope of previous research beyond the agglomeration of cultural industries in a metropolis shown in Hollywood (Scott 2005) and outsourced satellites that rely upon inexpensive labor costs such as in Vancouver (Coe 2000, Scott 2007). That place-specific agglomeration of cultural industries in a metropolis has been previously demonstrated; in that case, cultural industries can tap into spatially concentrated labor markets and abundant information flows, leading to enhanced competitive advantage for both the industries and place (Scott 2005). Yet, because the actual filming of television dramas requires vast spatial resources (building sets, the use of recognizable places and landscapes as backgrounds), South Korean drama producers are heading to regional cities where space and landscapes are available. In addition, small-sized Korean drama producers always need investment with which they can actually initiate production; and cities can be their financial sponsors. And where more than fifty dramas come and go in a year, the spatial and financial sponsors must be multiple, but temporary. In this way, industrial conditions and production practices have given rise to dispersed and temporary drama production camps in smaller cities in South Korea. From the perspective of regional cities, their "underdeveloped status" has forced

them to pursue various promotional efforts, while simultaneously creating opportunities to develop identities as exotic, lyric, imaginary places.

Second, place can be produced with popular culture and sold through its manufactured affective appeal. In late capitalism, where urban competition becomes fierce, cities have tapped into culture and cultural industries to attract capital investment, boost local economic development, improve their image, and promote themselves as tourist destinations (Harvey 1989, Paddison 1993, Hall 1998, Zukin 1995, Gottdiener 2001, Hannigan 1998). In this view, urban competition is conceived of as raw economic competition in the interest of attracting more capital/industries/tourists, and culture is more or less merely adopted in such making and selling of place. In cities' drama-sponsorship, the production and selling of place are tied up with the affective representation of television dramas in which the blending of storylines, characters and places turns the drama-depicted spaces into emotionally charged places. Therefore, culture is not merely a means to produce place; culture and place are co-produced, mutually represent each other, and promote each other's consumption through the articulation between story-making and place-making

The relation between culture and cities, however, is not always simple and synergetic, but entails conflicts and contradictions. The success of popular cultural products is highly unpredictable, and television dramas move swiftly through fads and fashion. When such instant, unpredictable, and short-lived endeavors are projected onto physical spaces, cities face issues of limited stability and time-space sustainability in their drama-touched places, and must assume many burdens and responsibilities with respect to their longer-term maintenance.

In order to illuminate how the production and consumption of television dramas are connected to the production, marketing, and consumption of cities, this chapter draws an intersectional perspective between the political economy of Korean cities and the attributes of popular culture (TV dramas). I ask, "why have Korean cities relied on Korean television dramas to promote their areas? How have the practices of cities' drama-sponsorship been processed? What types of effects and limitations have the city-marketing via TV dramas brought?" To trace the dynamics, I conducted in-depth interviews with local officials in provincial, city, and county level government. My interviewees are either directly involved in drama-sponsorship or currently responsible to manage drama-sets. Not only the data and explanations they provided but also the manner they answered or evaded my questions did help me to analyze the phenomenon. Matching and comparing the interviews of local officials with those of drama producers also guided me to identify critical points of the phenomenon. I also collected and reviewed extensive amount of newspaper reports published between 2000 and 2012. Once in late 2000s, members of the National Assembly competitively reported the budget-wasting cases of local government by pouring tax money into sponsoring of TV dramas. Official and unofficial reports released then made me to identify detailed statistics and stories that were once closed to the public.

The first part of the chapter presents background on the state-led uneven development that characterizes South Korea, in order to demonstrate why many Korean cities have

developed a strong desire and need to promote their cities, and how television drama has become an effective medium in this process. The second part of the chapter addresses the specific practices of drama-sponsorship. I analyze two different types of drama-sponsorship undertaken by regional Korean cities—the construction of outdoor drama-sets and "city placement"—illuminating the ways in which popular culture and cities are synergistic in capitalizing on each other's attributes. The third and last part of this chapter discusses the conflicts between popular culture and cities that arise from the instant and speculative nature of TV drama, wherein problems of limited stability and time-space sustainability become paramount. Analyzing these three parts will not only clarify this phenomenon but, more importantly, demonstrate that the production of Korean television dramas is deeply associated with and constitutitive of the material and spatial conditions of Korean cities.

Understanding the Promotional Desires of Korean Cities

South Korea is divided into nine provinces, six metropolitan cities, and one special city (Seoul, the national capital); the nine provinces are further subdivided into 74 smaller cities and 85 counties. The subject of drama-sponsorship could be both at the larger (provincial and metropolitan cities) and smaller (cities and counties) levels of government. Most drama-sponsorships, however, have been practiced by cities and counties (see Table 3.2 & 3.3), and I argue, it is the "marginal" status of local cities that has driven them to rely on city promotion via television dramas. The marginal status of local cities, that I define their under-developed and economically neglected conditions and lower prominence in recognition, can be explained by historical, political, and economic factors.

First, state-led uneven development conditioned the marginal position of local cities. South Korea's state-led industrialization during the 1970s and 1980s is well researched (Amsden 1989, Wade 2003). Having to start from scratch on war-torn land after the Korean War, the direction taken by the South Korean government focused on mobilizing national resources and people and then concentrating them into a few selected sectors. For example, the developmental state preferred export-targeted industries and, therefore, actively promoted labor-intensive light industries such as textiles, shoes, and wigs in the 1960s and heavy and chemical industries in the 1970s in order to realize rapid economic growth. The spatial selectivity and concentration was also evident in that industrial production sites were created mainly for export-oriented, manufacturing industries. The spatial selection favored the already industrialized regions, such as Seoul and the southeast, which were relatively less damaged by the Korean War, and thus retained some industrial facilities. As Park (2003) argues, the spatial selectivity of the state's industrial and regional policies in the 1960s conditioned the uneven development of South Korea that was further reinforced by the heavy-manufacturing policies in the 1970s and 1980s. Within such a context, the Seoul Metropolitan Region became a primary destination of resource distribution, capital investments, and population movement ever since the 1960s. As a result, the greater Seoul area has manifested hegemony with an extraordinary concentration of people, capital and

power, while the rest of the country has been demoted to be periphery status. [38] In this historical-geographical context, many Korean cities located outside of the Seoul Metropolitan Region, and those that have been excluded from the developmental axes, have suffered from economic stagnation. Even some cities and counties within the Seoul Metropolitan Region, mostly designated as Greenbelt or Nature Preservation Area, have been neglected by national development.[39]

Second, the political environment during this time period further marginalized smaller cities compared to larger metropolitan cities. Castells (1992) argues that the South Korean developmental state's leading role in economic development was buttressed by the state's highly centralized and authoritarian regulatory power during the 1970s and 1980s. According to Park (2008), the centralization of the bureaucratic structure was the basis on which state regulations were structured. Within the highly centralized internal organization, local governors were appointed by the central state in a rotational system with a four-year tenure. The centrally-appointed leaders complied with the central government's requests rather than with local demands. Within this sort of political and bureaucratic environment, local interests were muted in favor of the urgent and larger task of "national development."

Third, the weak fiscal autonomy of local cities confined them further to a marginal position. Under the centralized bureaucratic system in the 1970s and 1980s, the central state exclusively allocated the budget for local states. Even after steps towards decentralization in the 1990s[40], the central government continued to hold substantial power over the administration, finance and regulation of local states. In 2003, Roh Moo-hyun's administration passed a special bill on decentralization that bestowed more rights and responsibilities to local governments. With the passage of this bill, it was expected that the degree of decentralization of state power would further be facilitated (Park 2008). Central-local government conflicts still remain strong, however, and the level of fiscal independence of local states remains under fifty percent on average in 2011 (Table 3.1). In Table 3.1, the average figure takes into account all local units including Seoul and

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[38] More than half of the Korean population lives in the Seoul Metropolitan Region, despite the fact that the area comprises merely 11.8% of South Korean territory. As the nation's capital, Seoul is the seat of all major Korean government functions, the headquarters of leading national firms and organizations, as well as the base of all media and cultural institutions. As of 2000, the Seoul metropolitan area was said to have 46.5% of the working population and to be responsible for 48% of the total gross domestic production. More than half of the manufacturing industry, 45.3% of the service industry, and 74.2% of the software industry are based in the Seoul metropolitan area. This is also true of all twenty-seven central ministries and 87.6% of their affiliated organizations. Among the top thirty enterprises, 88% have their headquarters in the Seoul metropolitan area (Ministry of Land, Transport and Maritime Affairs).

[39] The Roh Moo-Hyun administration (2003-2007) promoted "Balanced National Development" policies by constructing a new administrative city outside of the Seoul Metropolitan Region, in hopes that the transfer of central administrative functions, including most ministries, to a new city would be followed by population movement. In addition, the administration also developed "Innovation Cities" across the country in which state corporations would be relocated (Chapter 1). Yet, even such "Balanced National Development" policies were strongly initiated and promoted by the central state. Within the environment of central state-centered developmentalism, local cities' discretion to initiate (urban) development remains extremely limited.

[40] The Local Autonomy system was introduced in 1991. Under it, local councils were established with popularly elected council members and, since 1995, local officials such as mayors and governors have begun to be elected.

metropolitan cities. When looking only at cities (cities and counties in Table 3.1) located outside of the Seoul Metropolitan Region, the level of local fiscal autonomy falls drastically to under 20 percent.

Despite the historically and politically conditioned "marginal" status of small regional cities and their limited autonomy, the newly introduced popular election system (to elect local governors and mayors), exercised since 1995, has created an environment in which local governments energetically promote projects for their areas. Compared to the previous centrally-appointed governors and mayors, the popularly elected local leaders' political interests share more local interests. While their priority is to save their areas from the "underdeveloped" status, elected local leaders are also pressured to quickly accomplish certain visible achievements within the limited tenure of four years. What should be done to "develop" local cities? In my interviews, surprisingly, many local leaders and officials equated "development" with "publicity." Local governments' focus on publicity can be understood in terms of two factors. First, given the already-fixed hegemony of uneven development and limited local autonomy, attracting industry and initiating mega-urban projects are far beyond a local state's capabilities. Urban and industrial projects on national territory have been planned and controlled by the central state. Only in 2010 was the procedure to gain approval from Minister of Land, Transport and Maritime Affairs in urban development projects over one million square meters abolished. Due to the limited capability and autonomy, regional cities are turning to "virtual" urban projects that cost less and proceed fast. Second, how well the city receives publicity is directly associated with the elected local leaders' performance. It is noteworthy to see how local leaders' political interests have made them put more weight on public image than on issues inside the communities. The combination of the weak capabilities of local governments and the political interests of local leaders has nurtured the promotional desires of local cities.

[Table 3.1. Fiscal Self-Reliance Ratio]

Unit: %

		1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
National Average		63	63.4	59.6	59.4	57.6	54.8	56.3
Metropolitan Cities		89.4	90	81.8	84.8	82.9	79.8	82.2
Provinces		42.5	42.1	38.3	37.9	35.6	34.6	39.4
Cities		53.3	54.1	52	50.6	43.4	40.2	38
Counties		21.2	22.9	23.4	22	18.1	17.4	16.3
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
National Average	57.2	56.2	54.4	53.6	53.9	53.6	52.2	51.9
Metropolitan Cities	81.4	80.3	78.5	73.9	73.8	72.7	68.3	68.6
Provinces	41.3	36.6	36.1	34.9	39.5	33.3	31.6	33
Cities	38.8	40.6	39.4	39.5	40.7	40.7	40	38
Counties	16.6	16.5	16.1	16.6	17.2	17.8	18	17.1

Source: Revenue Summary of Local Governments,
Ministry of Public Administration and Security

City Promotion via Television Dramas

As an effective measure to raise publicity, Korean cities are riding on the East Asian popularity of Korean television dramas. With the broader context of regional popularity of Korean dramas, Korean cities try to benefit from the broad and fast reach of the television medium to expose their places and sites to a wide audience. Witnessing that some pioneer regional cities became highly recognized among Koreans and East Asians after their drama-sponsorship in the early 2000s, many Korean cities came to believe that the popularity of a drama would bring extensive publicity of its background city overnight. The rapid exposure and effects that television dramas bring also parallel the four-year tenure of local leaders and their political interest to be able to "show something off" within that time period.

Beyond the broad and fast dissemination, however, a more specific reason for a city's reliance television lies in the "affective representational power" of television dramas. By "representation," scholars have discussed the ways in which "meaning" is produced through communication practices (Hall 1997, Bollhöfer,2007). Television dramas generate or add "affective meanings" to the cities' physical environment, which are displayed in dramas by blending them with storylines, characters, and their emotional flows. The operation of entertainment industries (including TV dramas) is based on their ability to manipulate affect of the audience (Massumi 2002, Hardt 1999); affect becomes a source of value by bringing emotions into the relationship between the cultural products and viewers by transforming commodities into emotionalized communication tools (Lukacs 2010). Similarly, when "affective meaning" is attached to the televised cities, they surpass mere landscapes but become places where emotions are embedded (both emotions in drama and emotional interactions between viewers and drama). The entanglement of emotions and places in dramas stimulates the audience's empathy, thereby effectively motivating them to visit the televised places (Choe 2008).

The construction of affective appeal around specific locales via TV dramas can contribute to the literature on the commodification and selling of place. Hudson (2001) addresses the conflict between "a location as socially produced place to which its inhabitants are attached and as part of a socially produced space in which capital can make profits." The latter, the commodification of space, always involves the creation of distinct images of a place through drawing historical, cultural, and local traditional elements, building the themed and spectacular built environment, or vastly applying landscape and natural elements (Hannigan 1998, Harvey 2001, Gottdiener 2001, Zukin 1995, Greenburg 2008). Gottdiener (2001), for instance, examines the political economy of making distinct images of a place as a vehicle for profit realization; themes of a place add symbolic values to the built environment, thus facilitating profit-realization.

In the context of Korean cities' drama-sponsorship, the value of a place can be exponential, first through the distinctive themes of TV drama production (as Gottdiener explains), and more importantly through the airing of television dramas. Through its interweaving with the spectacles, characters, dialogues and intense displays of emotion (e.g., tension, love, and longing) of dramas, the televised space becomes not merely a themed place, but an

emotionally-laden place that compels viewers to visit. The affective selling of a place, as well as the double-channeled advertising routes through its themes and television drama, enhance its marketability. In visiting the drama-depicted space, visitors accept the space not merely as "fantasy space" but as an "affective site" in which they continue to feel empathy toward both the drama and the place (Choe 2008).

Synchronizing Place and Drama Production

The practice of city promotion via television dramas has been carried out through two types of drama-sponsorship: the construction of outdoor drama-sets and funding through cash grants. I will analyze these two types of sponsorships by examining how the production and consumption of popular culture proceed through the production, representation, and marketing of cities.

1) Outdoor Drama Sets – Drama Production via Urban Production

The emergence of outdoor drama-sets was mainly propelled by the change in themes and production practices of historical dramas[41] in the 2000s. Distinctive from the previous "authentic historical dramas" that depicted mainly the indoor politics among kingdom and ruling male aristocracy[42], "fusion historical dramas" that emerged in the 2000s were based more on writers' imagination than historical facts. Recent fusion historical dramas have diversified themes that draw from the lives of the underrepresented classes such as women, experts, peasants and slaves. Breaking from the monotonous handling of the Chosun dynasty (1392-1910) by previous dramas, fusion historical dramas have broadened the scope of historical times into several other dynasties prior to Chosun. The new subjects and historical times required new spaces: historical and geographical settings as drama backgrounds and filming venues. In addition, the long-term production and broadcasting periods of historical dramas required building a separate drama-set designated only for the drama filming.[43] These changes in production practices all together brought the emergence and proliferation of "outdoor drama-sets": forty-two outdoor drama-sets (over 3.3 hectares) were built across South Korea; over ninety including small-sized sets (Table 3.2, Map 3.1) during the 2000s. The outdoor drama sets are composed of palaces, towns, institutional districts, markets, and streets, acting as the primary filming venue in which various scenes are played. Although each district is portrayed as a separate and distinct space in the dramas, collections of districts and buildings are usually built within the same location (Figure 3.1).

The construction of outdoor drama-sets for historical dramas raises two types of challenges to drama producers: space and money. First, the outdoor drama-sets require sizable empty spaces where modern elements are nonexistent or can be totally eliminated.

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[41] Here I refer to dramas set in pre-modern dynastic eras such as Chosun (1392-1910), Koryo (918-1392), United Silla (676-935), and Three Kingdoms Period (BC 1C-7C) in which Goguryeo, Baekje and Silla coexisted.

[42] Therefore, the shooting of those dramas was rarely carried out beyond established indoor studios; outdoor scenes were mainly filmed at Gyeongbok Palace (Royal palace of the Chosun dynasty) or Korean Folk Village.

[43] Historical dramas usually consist of more than fifty episodes that are broadcast over the period of six months to a year.

This requirement drives drama producers from Seoul, where all broadcasting firms and production houses are located but already compactly developed, out to "under-developed" or "less-urban" cities. In finding sites for the drama-sets, therefore, what matters is the availability and topography of land, not the specific "localities." With a few exceptions of historical heritage sites that could be utilized as a background for a drama,[44] the historical settings of dramas and the actual physical locations of the drama-sets are totally detached. Television dramas never make out the original localities and the artifically created historical settings are represented as virtual urban. I frame the historical drama-sets as "placeless time," because the built environment of a particular period of time shadows the peculiarties of a site.
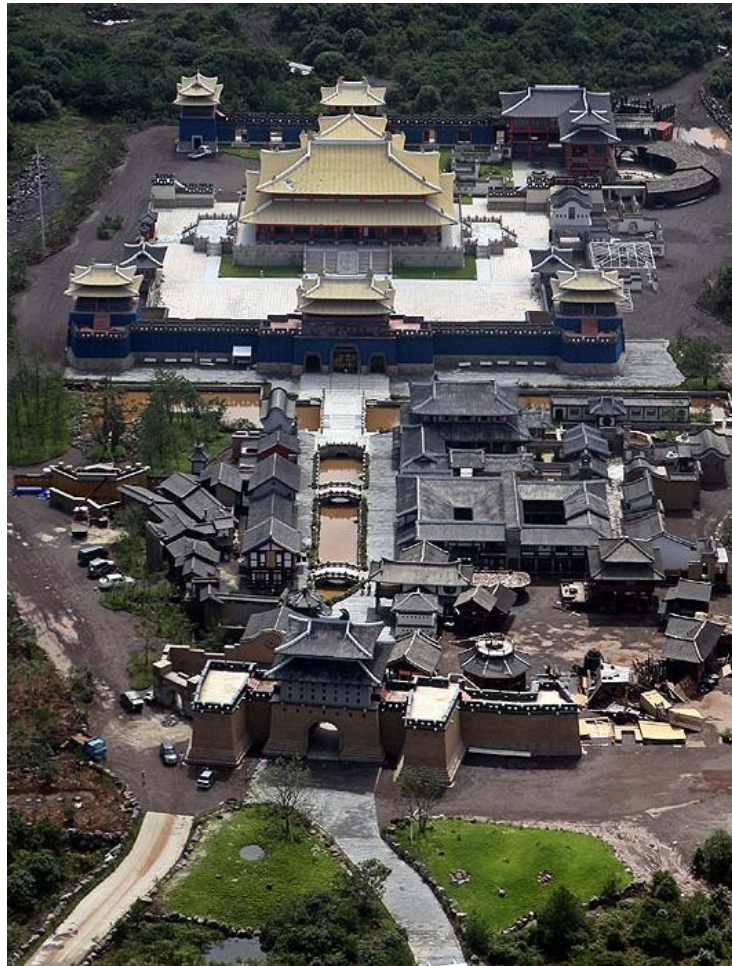
[Figure 3.1. Outdoor Set for *The Legends of Four Gods* (2007)(11 on Map 3.1)]

Second, the construction of outdoor drama-sets generally requires more than $5 million. This is far beyond the capabilities of financially-struggling drama producers. Jumping into the industry only after witnessing the rapid growth in East Asian popularity of some Korean dramas, most Korean independent drama producers lack full production

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[44] For example, *Queen Sundeok* (2009) was mainly filmed at the "Kyungju Millenium Park" in KyungJu City, the capital of the Silla dynasty; this formed the historical background of the drama.

capabilities and finances. Only after a contract is made can independent producers begin to shoot dramas with the funding disbursed from broadcasters. In their itemized budget, the cost for the outdoor-set construction is categorized as the "art production" cost, a budget separately appropriated from the production cost and delivered from broadcasters to producers. This budget, however, pays mostly for costumes and props. The responsibility to prepare the budget for a critical portion of the art production cost— constructing the built environment—usually falls on producers, thereby driving them to find sponsors.[45] Cities that provide land also become financial and administrative sponsors, thus they pay for the construction costs and deliver tax incentives; in return, the name of cities are displayed at the end of every episode as a sponsor (Figure 3.2). Although the illustrated drama-sets rarely express the localities around them in dramas, the textual notice of the financial sponsorship enables viewers to detect the physical locations of the sets.

[Figure 3.2. Subtitle Statement of a Cities' Drama-Sponsorship]
Source: Drama *Queen Seondeok* (2009, MBC)
Sponsored by Northern Kyungsang Province, KyungJu City
http://www.imbc.com/broad/tv/drama/seonduk/
Recited from http://gall.dcinside.com/seonduk

In seeking space and funding, Korean drama producers have headed to small regional cities. Given the scale of space and money needed, the drama producers' approach to spatial and financial sponsors is very strategic. A project coordinator remarked, "We usually define three to four potential candidate cities (counties) and conduct brief research about them. Arranging meetings with local leaders (it should be a mayor or a county govonor, high-ranking officials are not considered) via local contacts, we present possible 'local development plans' in association with the drama-set construction. Sometimes we capitalize on 'star-names' of directors or actors, but the presentation should be more on 'local development' than the drama itself. When our presentation grabs local leaders' interest, it does smoothe the way for a city's drama-sponsorship." This interview clearly

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[45] Sometimes, broadcasters try to find sponsors. In case of YongIn city, the city government smoothed administrative procedures in order to turn Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation-owned land into a drama filming site, and funded parts of the construction cost. In the case of *Kim Soo Ro* (2010), KimHae city contracted with a broadcaster, MBC.

indicates the mixed conditions of the local cities' underdeveloped status and promotional desires, on the one hand, and the aspirations and pressures of elected local leaders on the other. The interview also suggests the "placelessness" of drama-sets; it could be anywhere that offers space and money.

In 2000, MunKyung city (29 on Map 3.1) sponsored $300,000 for the construction of an outdoor drama-set for the drama *Taejo Wang Geon* (2000), a story of a progenitor of the Goryeo dynasty (918-1392). The drama hit the highest viewer rate of 60.2% in 2001[46] and MunKyung city enjoyed a staggering 570% increase in inward tourism from 2000 to 2001. Reshaping it from a neglected mining town, MunKyung has continued its prominence as a popular drama-filming site; more than twenty dramas and twelve films have been shot in MunKyung until 2011 and six TV dramas are supposed to be produced in 2012. After the showcase of MunKyung, other Korean cities became seriously interested in sponsoring drama production through the construction of outdoor sets. As the ownership of a drama-set belongs to local cities rather than drama producers, when well-managed and advertized, it can be a promising tourist attraction and a boost for the local economy.

How exactly have drama-sets become a tourism booster, and why have Korean cities continuously initiated the "virtual urban" project? The power of drama-sets lies in their existence as spectacle. Historical dramas not only utilize drama-sets as filming venues, but also give context to them in spectacular ways with historical costume, props, ceremonies and rituals, and war scenes. *The Legends of Four Gods* (2007), *Jumong* (2006), and *King Sejong, the Great* (2008) illustrated the spectacles of the built environment of ancient dynasties; it not only showed the architectural details and imagination of the time period, but the ways in which the ruling kingdom consolidated its power through physical entities. The splendors of the imperial palaces are visual representations of nation-building processes and political dynamics. The physical drama-sets evinces the spectacles of drama stories and images, delivering memories and lingering imageries from the dramas to the visitors, acting as a "spice" to attract tourists. In addition to the drama-conveyed spectacles, drama-sets themselves act as an attraction fulfilling visitors' curiosity about the scences of television production.

The construction boom of drama-sets demonstrates the ways that the production of television dramas produce urban spaces; while, at the same time, the consumption of television dramas facilitates the consumption of the televised space. In these cases, the relations between culture and space are beyond the mere depiction of space in culture, the creation of a distinct image and identity of space in culture, or the adoptation of cultural images and symbols in spatial (re)orgainization; culture and space are intersected to produce each other and promote each other's consumption.

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[46] Considering the fact that the average viewer rate of TV dramas in Korea is around 15 %, this number indicates the staggering popularity of the drama.

[Table 3.2. Cases of the Construction of Drama-Sets]

City / County	Sponsored Drama	Year	Area (m²)	Construction Cost ($)	Location on Map 3.1	Re-Use
UlJu County	Flames of Ambition	2011		3,000,000	30	
GimHae	Kim Soo Ro	2010	179,000	532,000,000	1	
KyungJu, Northern KyungSang Province	Queen Seondeok	2009		50,000,000	2	
AnSung	Hong Gil Dong	2008			3	
JeongSeon County	Gourmet	2008	4,000	6,500,000	4	
SuWon	The King and I	2007	21,266		5	
SokCho GangWon Province	Dae Jo Young	2006	90,000	8,000,000	31	
SunCheon	Love and Ambition	2006	39,669	6,400,000	6	Lights and Shadows (2012)
NaJu	Jumong	2006	138,842	8,000,000	7	Land of Wind (2008)
YoungDong County	Man of the Vineyard	2006	1,527	80,000	8	
DanYang County	Yeongae Somun	2006	13,720	5,000,000	9	
DanYang County	The Iron Empress	2009	3,500		9	
GuRi	The Legend of Four Gods	2006	4,900	2,200,000	10	
Jeju	The Legend of Four Gods	2006	237,151	1,500,000	11	
Jeju	Life is Beautiful	2011			11	
Seoguipo	All In	2005	5,489	2,950,000	12	
Seoguipo	Swallow the Sun	2009	300,000	4,000,000	12	
BuAn County	Immortal Admiral Yi Sun-shin	2005	148,400	7,000,000	13	Lee San (2007)
BuAn County	Immortal Admiral Yi Sun-shin	2005	17,214	4,240,000	13	
BuAn County	Immortal Admiral Yi Sun-shin	2005	40,140	1,760,000	13	
BuAn County	Lovers in Prague	2005	677,662	800,000	13	
YongIn	Shin Don	2005	29,752	11,000,000	14	
BuYeo	Seo Dong's Song (Seodongyo)	2005	17,141	6,000,000	15	The Great Seer (2012)
IkSan	Seo Dong's Song (Seodongyo)	2005	8,200	1,200,000	16	
WanDo County	HaeShin (Emperor of the Sea)	2005		15,000,000	17	
HoengSeong County	ToJi, the Land	2004	284,919	1,090,000	18	
OngJin County	Sad Love Story	2004	1,794	784,000	19	
OngJin County	Full House	2004	1,495	47,000	19	
GwangJu	Nine Tailed Fox	2004	14,612	1,634,000	20	
TaeAn County	Jang Gil San	2004	39,669	4,000,000	21	
UlJin County	Into the Storm	2004	1,883	300,000	22	
HapCheon County	Seoul 1495	2003	69,926	8,500,000	23	JeJungwon (2010)
HapCheon County	East of Eden	2008	66,116	4,000,000	23	Giant(2010) Lights and Shadows (2012)
BuCheon	Rustic Period	2002	10,535	5,900,000	24	Road No. 1 (2010)

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City / County	Sponsored Drama	Year	Area (m²)	Construction Cost ($)	Location on Map 3.1	Re-Use
GeumSan County	Business Morality (Sang Do)	2001	1,983	263,000	25	
SangJu	Business Morality (Sang Do)	2001	28,965	280,000	26	
JeCheon	Taejo Wang Geon	2000	33,606	1,464,000	27	
	Ambition (Dae Mang)	2001	24,292	2,000,000		
AnDong	Empress Myungseong	2001	39,383	8,580,000	28	Dae Jo Young (2006)
MunKyung	TaeJo Wang Geon	2000	65,755	3,000,000	29	King Gwanggaeto the Great (2011)
	YeonGaeSoMun	2006	43,955	6,000,000		King Geunchogo (2011)
	The Great King Sejong	2008	65,000	71,000,000		
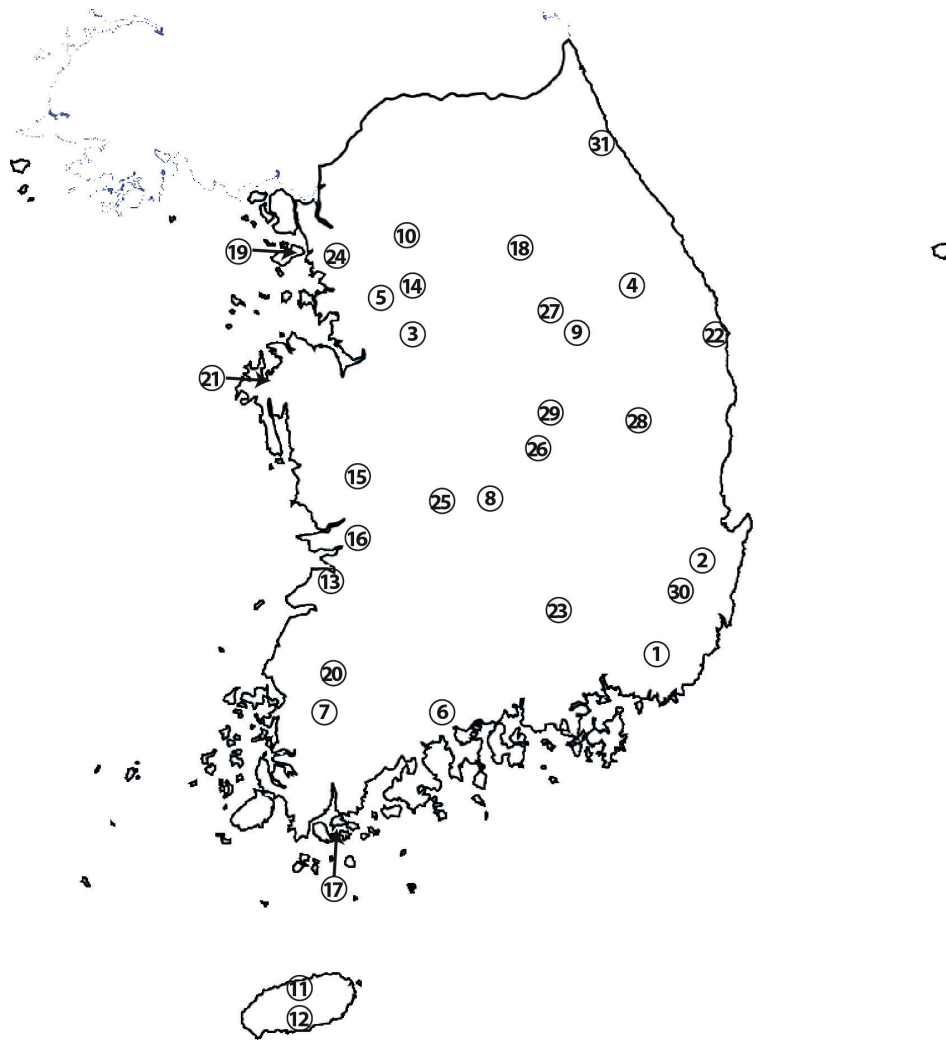
[Map 3.1. Locations of Outdoor Drama-Sets]

2) City Placement – Drama Production via Urban Representation

A growing area of drama sponsorship by cities is the strategic exposure of places and landscapes of the sponsoring city in a TV drama in exchange for funding. A theoretical framework to examine this phenomenon could be found in "destination placement." Film tourism—defined as "tourist visits to a destination or attraction as a result of the destination's being featured on television, video, or the cinema screen"—is a growing phenomenon (Hudson and Ritchie 2006, Beeton 2005). Film tourism has direct and indirect economic effects on destinations and, recently, "destination placement" in media content has become as an attractive marketing vehicle that increases awareness, enhances destination image, and results in the significant increase in tourist numbers. As Korean TV dramas eagerly use places and landscapes of cities for the development of stories, destination placement is heavily practiced by Korean and East Asian cities. I call these practices "city placement" because not only do their places and landscapes appear in dramas, but the name of sponsored city is specifically stated with subtitles at the end of every episode.

The history of "city placement" in Korean TV dramas begins from two lines of development inside and outside of the Korean drama industry. First, Korean television dramas began to use places and landscapes not merely as backgrounds but as driving forces of narrative development. Prime-time TV dramas in the 2000s became distinctive from daily and weekly dramas (that mainly dealt with relationships and conflicts within families, thus mostly filmed in indoor home-sets) in that they actively displayed domestic and overseas cities. In 2004, the drama *Lovers in Paris* popularized the phenomenon of "spatial development of stories." In this drama, the two main characters meet during the early episodes in Paris and later develop a friendship and love back in Seoul. The drama's skillful illustration of romantic and exotic places and landscapes of Paris, blended with episodes and characters, generated a national sensation. The "Paris stories," however, are confined to the first few episodes and the rest of the episodes are based in Seoul. The spatial movement of characters and story lines from Paris to Seoul was inevitable in terms of funding and filming schedule. Despite the limited display of Paris, the drama confirmed that "showing" matters as much as "telling," and places (cities) could be a subject of conspicuous consumption as well as commodities placed in dramas. After the great success of *Lovers in Paris*, the spatially-oriented story development, particularly stories with elements of back and forth between Seoul and outside Seoul, has become a trend in prime-time Korean television drama: *Only You* (2005) in Vicenza in Italy, *Lovers in Prague* (2005) in Prague, *HIT* (2007) in Hong Kong, *Que Sera, Sera* (2007) in Singapore, *On Air* (2008) in Taipei, *IRIS* (2009) in Budapest, and Akita in Japan, among many others. Under the practices of live production of Korean TV dramas, however, overseas cities are limited in offering spontaneous accessibility, and therefore drama producers have turned to domestic cities that boast distinct sceneries.

Second, Korean cities have experienced the "creation of place" driven by television dramas. In the aftermath of the unexpected popularity of the drama *Winter Sonata* (2002) (a drama that ignited the Korean Wave in Japan), the city of ChunCheon, a major filming site in the drama, became a tourist destination both to domestic and overseas viewers. The successful

dissemination of *Winter Sonata* throughout East Asia brought 267,691 foreign tourists to the city in 2004, 295,673 in 2005, and 228,869 in 2006.[47] Compared to 28,500 in 2002 and 70,809 in 2003[48], these numbers indicate a nine-fold increase. The drama created a great ripple effect on ChunCheon in terms of a vitalized local economy and heightened recognition status. The case of *Winter Sonata*, however, was not a case of city placement; the director of the drama intentionally took lyric landscapes of winter ChunCheon as the drama's controlling image. The accidental popularity of the drama and the city, however, taught both drama producers and Korean cities about the benefits of planned and refined market strategies of city placement.

The combination of these two types of development—place as a narrative drive and the drama-induced creation of place—has triggered the rampant practice of "city placement" in which cities deliver cash grants to drama producers for the opportunities to display their attractions and sceneries on television. "City placement" indicates the shifting direction from place-seeking to (spatial) sponsor-seeking; from searching for places that harmonize with drama stories to searching for sponsor cities that could cover parts of the production cost in exchange for using their places as background in the drama. Therefore, the contract terms between producers and cities define the ways a city's place is depicted in dramas. For instance, when BoRyeong city sponsored the drama *War of Money* (2007), the specific contract terms included subtitle notices of BoRyeong's production sponsorship in all sixteen episodes of the drama, the creation of minimum three episodes specifically related to BoRyeong city, shooting of main characters in BoRyeong, statement of BoRyeong's sponsorship on the official website, drama posters, and Original Sound Track, introduction of BoRyeong's filming sites in these drama promotion materials, highlighting BoRyeong local specialties and heritages in the drama, and attraction of Japanese tourists to shooting spots.[49]

As shown in Table 3.3, over the past decade more than thirty Korean cities have practiced city placement and, among them, seven cities and counties did it more than twice. The dominant presence of "counties" reflect the level of desperate promotional efforts of local areas. Because cash sponsorship (usually less than $1 million) is relatively less expensive than the construction of mega outdoor drama-sets (that can easily cost more than $3 million) and the exposure of "actual" (rather than virtual) places of a city is more advantageous for attracting tourists, the practice of "city placement" has flourished. Recently, other East Asian local governments are engaged in the promotion of their areas through Korean TV dramas, aggressively recruiting Korean drama producers and supporting drama filming in their region; Akita prefecture in Japan for *IRIS* (2009), Tottori prefecture for *Athena: Goddess of War* (2010), and Jiufen and Taipei in Taiwan for *On-Air* (2008).

Compared to the "placelessness" of outdoor drama sets, "city placement" overtly aims at making and highlighting place. The way of making place through TV dramas is facilitated by

[47] Korea Tourism Organization (2006). *2006 Overseas Hallyu and Hallyu-Tourism Trend*.
[48] http://cafe.daum.net/sjsteelhouse/GDVZ/807?docid=l3MwGDVZ80720100217160712.
[49] http://blog.naver.com/odk1956/100037040735, accessed August 10, 2012.

the flexible and spatially-organized narrative development. Dialogues, anecdotes, and even storylines are adjustable and adjusted in order to show particular places to viewers. For example, in *Brilliant Legacies* (2010) characters take trips outside of Seoul, a major venue of most modern Korean dramas, for business in several episodes of the whole series. The sudden and only temporal spatial movements of characters and backgrounds are designed to blend the plot with their sponsors, DongHae city, and through the course of those spatial deviations, the drama strategically displayed a cruise ship (DongHae city's business item) from multiple angles. More importantly, the city's two major attractions, Mukho lighthouse and *chullung dari* (rolling bridge), appeared at the drama's critical point where the main characters confirm each other's love and kiss. The thrill and romance of the two moments at the two locations make an impression on the viewers in quick and dramatic ways. The case convinces how "affective representation" of cities in dramas effectively creates a place.

"Affective representation" and "making place" are not always successful however. In many cases, sponsors (cities) and producers (mostly writers) go through conflicts and struggles. The conflicts come from different perspectives on landscape. Vanessa Mathews (2010) discusses the distinction between "landscape as space" which relates to non-specific settings and "landscape as place" which relates to site-specific settings. In the former, emphasis is on the forward interaction between characters; in the latter, filming at locations is determined by the narrative of film. Sponsor cities always expect "landscape as place" to strategically display places, while Korean television dramas that value characters' emotional flows tend to focus on interactions between characters. In the case of *Dream High* (2010) sponsored by GoYang city, the sponsor explicitly expressed complaints that the episodes based on the city focused more on the characters than the places that were supposed to be highlighted.[50] That is to say, *Dream High* did not do the job that *Brilliant Legacies* did for DongHae city.

To minimize the conflicts, "city placement" has become more strategic in the late 2000s by prearranging the place picks and tourism product development. The producer of the hit drama *Bread, Love and Dreams* (2010) worked closely with its sponsor, northern Chungchung province, and a tourism agency in Osaka in order to strategically develop drama-induced tourism products. During the planning stage of the drama, the producer, the sponsor, and the tourism agency invited a group of the Japanese women to northern Chungchung province, showed them several spots, and asked them to identify places they preferred. Hinged on this pilot-survey, the producer and the sponsor city carefully selected places and landscapes and strategically revealed them in the drama.

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[50] YonhapNews, "Did Goyang city waste one billion dollars to promote the city through *Dream High*?" 2011.02.22. http://www.yonhapnews.co.kr/bulletin/2011/02/22/0200000000AKR20110222156700060.HTML.

[Table 3.3. Cases of City Placement]

Year	Drama	Sponsored City	Cash Grant ($)	Location on Map 3.2
2012	Take Care of Us, Captain	CheongWon County		3
2012	Love Rain	DaeGu		4
2012	God of War	Northern GyungSang Province NamHae County HapCheon County ChangWon		5 (NamHae) 6 (HapCheon) 7 (ChangWon)
2012	Rooftop Prince	JinAn County		8
2011	49 Days	JinAn County		8
2012	The Moon that Embraces the Sun	YeonCheon County	110,000	9
2011	Lie To Me	Jeju Free International City Development Center		1
2011	Can You Hear My Heart	PoCheon	110,000	10
2011	Gye Baek	Southern ChungCheng Province NonSan, BuYeo County		11 (NonSan) 12 (BuYeo)
2011	The Duo	GoChang County HwaCheon County		13 (GoChang) 14 (HwaCheon)
2011	Dream High	GoYang	10,000,000	15
2011	Royal Family	InCheon		16
2011	Paradise Ranch	Jeju Province	25,000	1
2010	Will it Snow for Christmas?	SanCheong County		17
2010	Cinderella's Sister	PoCheon		10
2010	Personal Taste	ChunCheon Daam Art City	Leisure Town Promotion	18
2010	A Man Called God	ChunCheon BTB Island	Leisure Town Promotion	18
2010	Life is Beautiful	JeJu Province	300,000	1
2010	Running, Gu	KyungJu		19
2010	Dae Mul	JangHeung County		20
2010	Definitely Neighbors	SeongJu County		21
2010	Bread, Love and Dreams	Northern ChungCheong Province		22
2010	Athena: Goddess of War	Tottori Prefecture, Japan		Japan
2009	Cinderella Man	Jeju Province	15,000	1
2009	Cain & Abel	CheongJu		22
2009	IRIS	Seoul		23
2009	IRIS	GaPyung County	946,000	24
2009	IRIS	Akita Prefecture, Japan		Akita
2009	Can Anyone Love	NamYangJu		25
2009	Brilliant Legacy	DongHae		26
2009	City Hall	InCheon		16
2009	He Who Can't Marry	Wando County		27
2009	The Return of Iljimae	YoungYang County	300,000	28
2009	Swallow the Sun	JeJu, SeoGuiPo	150,000	1, 2
2009	Friend, Our Legend	BuSan		29
2009	Tamra, The Island	JeJu Province	40,000	1
2009	My Fair Lady	JangSu County		30
2009	Dream	BuSan		29
2008	Worlds Within	Singapore Tourism Board		Singapore

Year	Drama	Sponsored City	Cash Grant ($)	Location on Map 3.2
2008	Terroir	Northern GyungSang Province, CheongDo County		31
2008	General Hospital 2	Wando County	Local Specialty	27
2008	Celebrity's Sweetheart	BuSan		29
2008	Gourmet	Wando County	Local Specialty	27
2008	On Air	Taiwan		Taiwan
2007	War of Money	BoRyeong		32
2007	Time Between Dog and Wolf	Thailand		Thailand
2007	A Witch in Love	Seoul	Administrative Support	23
2007	Surgeon Bong Dal Hee	UlLeung County		33
2007	H.I.T.	Hong Kong		Hong Kong
2007	Quesera Sera	Singapore		Singapore
2007	Flowers for My Life	ChunCheon		18
2006	Princess Hours	Jeju Province		1
2006	90 Days, Time to Love	Jeju Province	40,000	1
2005	Spring Days	Jeju Province		1
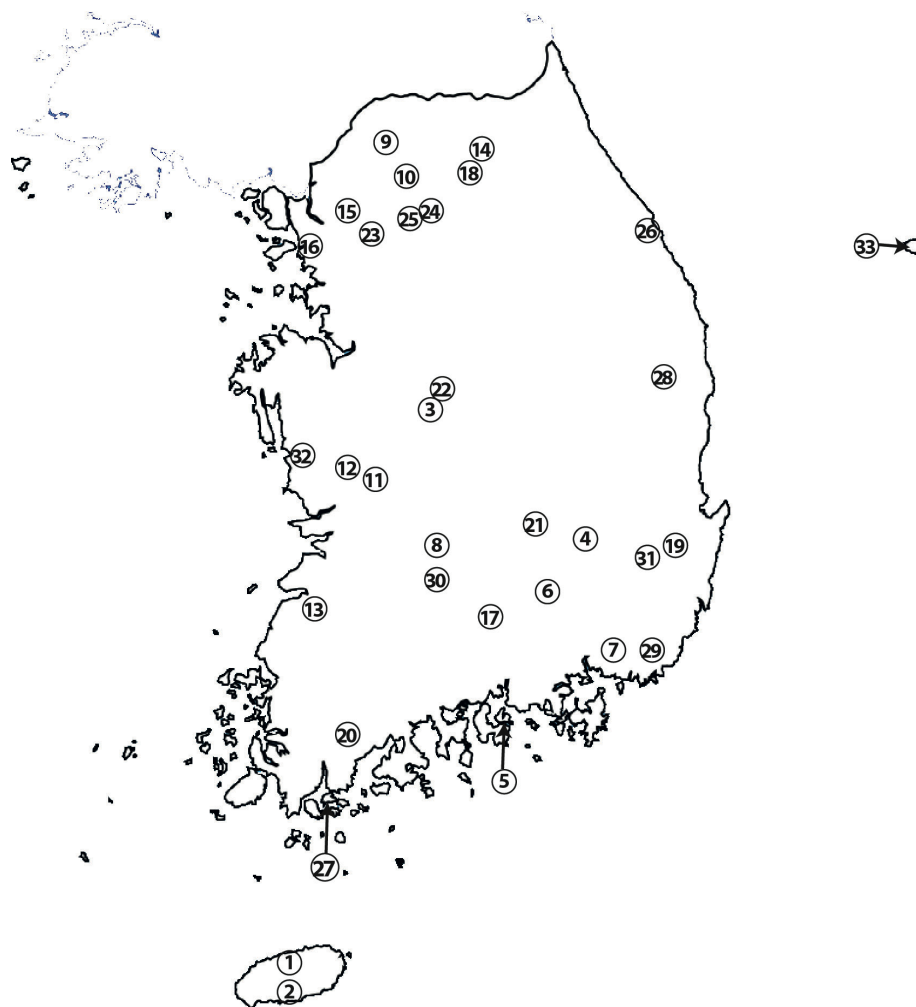
[Map 3.2. Locations of City Placement]

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Publicity and Drama Tourism

The publicity of cities' drama-sets and drama-illustrated places is carried out on multiple levels. First, television dramas are the direct and most effective medium to advertise the sponsor cities. Through "representational power," television dramas deliver the places to audience in more affective ways than mere physical spaces. Various emotions such as love, friendship, nostalgia, and sadness entangle and glamorize the places, inspiring viewers to actually visit the "affective sites." In modern dramas, sometimes characters directly mention the dramas' urban sponsors. In *Rooftop Princess* (2012), characters working in a home-shopping company discuss launching a tourism product and, in the process, they naturally mention JiAn County (sponsor) and go to JiAn as a pilot trip. In the course of the visit, JiAn's several attractions are naturally revealed and the relationship between the main couple in the drama substantially develops. Moreover, the subtitle notices at the end of every episode lists the name of sponsor-cities.

Moved by television dramas, growing numbers of voluntary tourists are visiting drama site. The Japanese audience groups who helped make the filming sites of *Winter Sonata* into popular tourism destinations mainly initiated the phenomenon seen today. Small-groups of viewers, organized mainly of individuals sharing their drama-watching experience through online fan sites, compose the majority of such of drama-tourist. After visits to filming sites, some passionate viewers and tourists go back to the web and post detailed information about the drama filming sites (photo, directions, and tips), furthering discussions about the drama and the site-visiting experience. Recognizing these groups of active fans or "scattered pioneers" and the marketability of drama-tourism, both Japanese and Korean tourism agencies have developed more organized trips to drama sites in association with "star fan-meetings." In 2006 alone, Japan boasted 250 organized tours to the filming sites of Korean dramas.[51] Most of those are 3-4 day intensive trip to filming sites based on one Korean drama.

In addition to television dramas and demand-driven products, cities exercise their own various promotional efforts, and the extensive utilization of media is one of them. Since 2000, Korean drama producers customarily hold a production press conference as a promotional effort to advertise their dramas to the public and media. The production press conferences often proceed with a roughly 15-minute premier of a drama and interviews with producers, directors, and actors. Some cities host the critical media event with the hope that the name of sponsor-cities will be revealed in media reports. An interview with a provincial official is particularly notable: "When we planned to build a drama-set, there was enormous opposition from environmental and civic groups. Promoting the drama-sponsorship was daunting against such local opposition. But a media event for a production report conference, which was held at a drama-set, totally reversed the situation overnight. Thousands of media reports poured in introducing not only the drama but also highlighting our province and our sponsorship. The one-day media event not only publicized our province but enhanced local patriotism." The other way to draw media attention is hosting

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[51] Tokyo 175, Osaka 25, Nagoya 23, Sendai 15, and Fukuoka 11. Korea Tourism Organization (2006). *2006 Overseas Hallyu and Hallyu-Tourism Trend*.

a fan meeting with a *Hallyu* star (who is popular in Japan) in association with Korean entertainment agencies and Japanese tourism agencies. Bae Yong-Jun had his fan-meeting before the shooting of *The Legends of Four Gods* (2007) in a drama-set located in Jeju; Song Seung-Heon, starring *East of Eden* (2008), had a fan-meeting in Hapcheon Movie Themepark, a major filming venue in the drama. In *Hallyu*-star fan-meetings, in particular, the presence of hundreds of Japanese fans grabs more media attention. In sum, because the promotion media is television drama that a mass audience is interested in, promotion via media is also effective and sensational.

Cities also rely heavily on local tourism agencies, lobbying them to include the drama-depicted places into major tour-routes. An interview with an on-site manager of a drama-set says that, "Our major job is lobbying to tour-bus and tour-taxi companies that virtually dominate the tourism industry in this area. Because tourists that those tour-companies carry daily outnumber voluntary visitors, our stakes lie in forging connections with those agencies." When I did field research in various drama-shooting places, I found most visitors are group-tourists whose destinations are guided by tourism agencies. A Chinese tourist at the Jeju filming site of *All-In* (2002) remarked that, "Korean dramas have raised my general interests about South Korea. But the visit to this place is guided by an agency like many others." Although television dramas advertise Korean cities to broad viewers both inside and outside of Korea, in practice, local players do matter in actually bringing them to the drama-illustrated places.

When the Tale Fades Away

Both cases of outdoor drama-sets and city placement have demonstrated that the production and consumption of popular culutre are closely connected to the production, marketing, and consumption of cities. The linkage between popular culture and space, however, crosses distinctive lines in the stages of production, distribution, and consumption. In the production, distribution, and short-term consumption stages, culture (TV dramas) and space (cities) can be synergistic by capitalizing on each other's attributes: the production of television dramas taps space, place, and funding that the cities provide during which the drama-production and urban-production takes place together; and the television dramas extend, expedite, and dramatizes the marketing of cities; thereby, culure and cities can promote the each other's consumption at short-term level.

At the long-term consumption level, however, culture (TV dramas) and space (cities) experience different manners, cycles, and ripple effects. Television dramas move swiftly through fads and fashions, so the consumption of television dramas is inherently short-lived. Producers of TV dramas try to extract maximum profits from short-term, peak popularities. Conflicts arise when such instant features of popular culture are transmitted into physical space, because the urban environment and local communities do not work like volatile television dramas. Revealing the conflicting natures of popular culture and space, the drama-sponsorship that manifests the instant and speculative attributes of television dramas have brought significant challenges to cities. In sum, city promotion via TV dramas capitalize on the broad and fast reach of popular culture, but also imposes limited stability and time-space sustainability to the cities that participate.

Relying on the fast and broad reach of television dramas, the drama-sponsorship of cities has strikingly short-term effects of the realizing quick economic returns. Wando County, a small and remote fishing village (17 in Map 3.1), invested $8 million[52] in 2004 to build an outdoor-set for the drama *Haeshin* (or *Emperor of the Sea*, 2004), a story of a historical figure, Jang Bogo who virtually dominated the sea trade from Tang China to Japan during the ninth century. As the drama's viewer ratings exceeded 30% in average, the so-called "*Haeshin set*" and Wando county became well-known among Korean audiences. Wando enjoyed increases of 20 million people in tourist numbers and earned around $10 million from admission fees to the set in 2005 alone. According to data Wando country released in 2008, the total number of tourists reached 50 million and the direct and indirect economic impacts of the drama sets exceeded $160 million.[53] The county governor, first elected in 2002, was easily re-elected in 2006 and 2010 thanks to the tourism boom the drama sponsorship brought. A local official said in an interview that, "In Wando, it is said that no election is needed since the governor is virtually fixed." The political assets the county governor achieved through the drama sponsorship have been extended into the county level where Wando county received several "local autonomy awards." The local autonomy awards symbolize the extent to which the county has risen to be a prominent player among many other local governments.

The city promotion via television drama can, however, have limited stability; for the fortunes of cities rely on the unpredictable popularity of television dramas. When the viewer ratings of a drama remain low, the promotional efforts of a sponsor city are muted. YoungYang county sponsored and funded $300,000 for the drama *The Return of Iljimae* (2008), but the drama finished early due to low viewer ratings and, the county never enjoyed the publicity effects.[54] PoCheon city and GoYang city invested $100,000 and $1 million respectively, but did not earn the expected publicity effects and tourism revenues. Not a few local officials have remarked, "Sponsoring drama-production is like gambling. Although drama producers stake their fate on promising directors, writers, and star actors, those big names do not guarantee the publicity effects. It is a risky venture."[55] This unpredictability, however, appears to boost more speculative expectation among sponsor cities, is evidenced by the growing cases of drama-sponsorship (Table 3.3).

Even successful dramas and sponsoring cities have limited time-space sustainability.With the limited sustainability of time, the popularity of TV dramas and associated places (cities) rarely last long, only having a few years of boom and bust. Except for a few drama-sets that are continuously re-used for the production of several dramas, most drama-sets witnessed

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[52] Wando County offered four million dollars and the provincial government gave a grant of the same amount. In addition, the private sector in the area contributed ten million dollars.

[53] Hankooki, "New Tourism Brand, Wando." 2008.09.22.
http://economy.hankooki.com/ArticleView/ArticleView.php?url=estate/200809/e2008092218085469550.htm&ver=v002.

[54] J-news, "Youngyang county wasted tax payer's money to sponsor drama production." 2010.08.09.
http://www.j-news.co.kr/news/view.html?section=1&category=7&page=131&style=title&no=919.

[55] Kyeonin.com, "Municipalities gamble for drama sponsorship." 2012.02.29.
http://www.kyeongin.com/news/articleView2.html?idxno=637602.

dramatic drops in tourism and effects on the local economy. "Seodongyo set" in which BuYeo county invested $6 million for the drama *Seodongyo* (2005), received 200,000 visitors within the first year of opening in 2006, but had 87,0000 in 2007, 49,0000 in 2008 and 27,000 in 2009. Within just three years, the number of tourists was reduced by 90%. Considering the management cost is more than $200,000 annually, the deficit has been continuously growing.[56] NaJu city's "Samhanji Themepark," in which the mega-hit drama *Jumong* (2006) was filmed, once boasted 510,000 tourists in 2006, but has been operating at a deficit since 2007, due to mounting management costs and dramatically dropping numbers of tourists. Television dramas enjoy the benefits of instant popularity that sell advertisements well; yet, the short-lived nature of television dramas leaves behind lingering impacts on physical spaces (drama-sets and sponsored cities).

With the limited sustainability of space, the drama-sets and drama-illustrated places are encapsulated, broken from the historical, spatial, and social contexts of cities. Due to their pre-modern settings, the physical separation and isolation of the outdoor drama-sets from surrounding contexts are self evident. Even in the cases of "city placement," the drama-illustrated places are bubbled, not representing the historical, geographical, and social contexts of cities. Dramas display an assemblage of fragmented images of a place. As I discussed earlier, the selection of places and the ways of representation are conditioned by the material interests of producers, sponsored cities, and the tourism industry. The dramatic representation generates "produced images" of places whose abiding meanings can always be contested. Not a few foreign tourists I interviewed were confused by the discord between the dramatic images and actual contexts of the drama-depicted places. A Japanese tourist remarked, "I have possesed only lyrical and tranquil images of ChunCheon that *Winter Sonata* portrayed. But we found the US military base around the romantic sites and are wondering about it."

Nevertheless, many mucipalities still practice the drama-sponsorship and the cases are actually growing in recent years (Table 3.3). Why, then, do Korean cities continue the pracice even witnessing the several cases of failure? Ironically, we should go back to the instant and speculative nature of television dama to answer the question. Literally all city and county officials I interviewed stated that their municipalities achieved enough publicity through the sponsorship of TV drama; "While media criticizes that our drama-set has become useless, we absoultuely reaped the publicity effects more than we invetested. Even the short-term pulicity is better than nothing." As menitoned earlier, the limited capabilities of small regional cities, in addition to legal restrictions, drive them to build the "virtual urban" than initiate the urban projects. Underlying political economy is that drama-sponsorship costs definitely less than building infrastructure. Moreover, when the sponsored drama hits, gains by investment become exponentail. The cheap, quick, and

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[56] After having five-years of deficit, the set attracted the production of a new drama (*The Great Seer*) in 2012.

potentially profitable venture cannot be unattractive to elected, and longing for reelcted, local leaders.

Conclusion

This chapter attempts to answer the following three questions. Why have Korean cities become a major sponsor of Korean television dramas? How is the drama-sponsorship of cities processed? What kinds of consequences have the intersections between television dramas and cities brought? I have argued that the motivational force of the rising practice of drama-sponsorship by Korean cities resides in their historical contexts of political economy where uneven development created "marginal" cities having desperate promotional desires. The drama-sponsorship can also be understood as a city's economic development to heighten their status and boost their local economy by relying on the representational power of television dramas. I categorize this drama-sponsorship into two types: first, the construction of outdoor drama-sets that manifest both placelessness and spectacles and, second, "city placement" that requires the adjustment of the drama's story in order to make place. Both types of drama sponsorship hinge on the "representational power" of television dramas that present fast, broad, and affective reach in exposing drama-illustrated sites among audience groups. Despite the positive response cities receive for short-term popularity, I assert that the attributes of what make television dramas successful onto physical space has limited stability and sustainability. In city-promotion via drama-sponsorship, the speculative and instant nature of TV dramas is directly projected onto space that puts Korean local cities to the test in dealing with the instability and unsustainability of their investment. These three threads of analyses have demonstrated the ways in which Korean television dramas, the country's most successful cultural product for export, are deeply associated with constructing the material and spatial conditions of the country.

Chapter 4
The Power of Collaborative, Discursive Consumption

This chapter examines the element of consumption in Korean television dramas. I conduct in-depth exploration of two different online communities, *DC Inside* and *Internet Fan Cafés*. Drawing from the virtual ethnography of bulletin boards in *DC Inside*, I illuminate the ways in which guaranteeing anonymity and undermining authority and hierarchical relationships among members activate collective and collaborative practices of the discursive consumption of television dramas. Combining virtual (via various *Internet Fan Cafés*) and physical ethnography of the middle-aged women (aged 30 or older) in Korea and Japan, I elucidate the ways in which drama fans build emotional and social connections and initiate collective social activities.

The theoretical and analytical angles of this chapter are the following. First, I examine the *discursive consumption* of television dramas in which viewers actively share the experiences of drama watching, discuss stories and characters, collaboratively create parody texts for amusement, collectively provide meals and presents to the production staff, and suggest hoped-for plots and endings. These practices of discursive consumption provide empirical evidence of viewers' use of the media text (Jenkins 1992). Audience groups engage in production, not merely reception (Lewis 1992) and the production of secondary texts enables audience groups to produce their own meanings and pleasures (Fiske 1989a, de Certeau 1984, du Gay 1997). Drawing on this tradition, the front section explores how audience groups collectively appropriate Korean drama texts to produce their own images, movies, novels, and manga, and speculates about the types of pleasures and meanings generated in the process.

Second, I examine how interactions between production and consumption take place, focusing on the ways in which producers capitalize on the discursive consumption of audience groups. Due to the unique practices of *live production* in which two episodes are produced weekly for the following week's broadcasting, Korean drama producers actually change ongoing narratives in response to viewer ratings and reactions to previous episodes. Interactive production capitalizes on the nature of the *serial*–defined by Allen as "a form of narrative organized around institutionally-imposed gaps in the text.…These gaps leave plenty of time for viewers to discuss with each other both the possible meanings of what has happened thus far as well as what might happen next." (1995). Taking advantage of live filming, the gaps between texts not only allow for viewers to reflect and discuss among themselves, but provide producers time to listen to viewers and take action. In the context of this production environment, this chapter explores the ways in which production and consumption interact with each other. In the second section, I show how producers represent and carry out their willingness to listen to viewers' voices; identify what types of consumer responses producers reflect in drama narratives; describe how producers capitalize on audience participation as a form of free labor; and note what types of impacts the interactive production and consumption have on the narratives of Korean dramas.

Third, I examine the ways in which the consumption of television dramas become channels through which fan groups socialize, build networks, and engage in collective projects. Focusing on a group of middle-aged female fans in Korea and Japan, I explore the ways in which: 1) community members not only share pleasures, but also gain comfort from the collective and discursive consumption of TV dramas, and 2) audiences engage in participatory acts such as self-development, voluntary works and donations. Against conventional gender roles in the development of those countries, I point out how drama-based social gatherings and fan-activities allow female fans to 1) transcend the spatial confinement of home and produce their own virtual, social and physical spaces, and 2) renegotiate their mandated social roles as mothers and wives while reframing their identities as women. The third part contests the notion that popular culture naturalizes and reinforces normative gender roles (Modleski 1982, Radway 1984, Ang 1985, Nochimson 1993, Brunsdon 2000)[57], showing instead the possibilities for popular culture to alter gender politics.

Weaving together these three threads of analysis, I argue that television drama, more than being a mere commercial entertainment, works as a medium to constitute various social discourses, gatherings, and activities. The collective and collaborative practices of drama consumption, through which viewers enhance entertainment, augment pleasures, gain comfort and a sense of belonging, organize gatherings, engage self-development, and broaden the meanings of their lives, transforms individual drama watching into a social activity.

Spectacular Reception in *DC Inside*

Reception of television drama refers to much more than passive watching; reception includes talking about viewing experiences, recapping plots and discussing them, admiring characters and actors, capturing and modifying images, generating one's own movies, suggesting future plot lines, advertising dramas to acquaintances, creating review books (described below), producing drama-themed souvenirs, and supporting the production. Because all these activities take place in the course of *talking* about dramas among anonymous public, I call them the "discursive consumption" of television dramas. The extensive discussions, the enormous amount of reproduced drama images, and the wide circulation of them indicate how spectacular the consumption of television dramas has become.

The development of Web 2.0 has particularly enabled the collective and collaborative discursive consumption of television dramas. As audience groups virtually gather and create, share, and exchange ideas and pleasures from talking about television dramas, the

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[57] Challenging the male-dominated 'great' art, those feminist cultural critics have offered ways to think about why female-targeted genres such as soap operas or romance novels are meaningful to so many women. Their answers mainly lie in fantasies: fantasies of romance, fantasies of reversing patriarchal relationships, or fantasies of absolute beauty. Importantly, however, even while they shed new light on the women's genre, these critics also maintained a critique of the ways in which popular culture produces gender and gendered binary oppositions; fantasies of reversing gendered hierarchy are never realized, rather gender division is naturalized and reinforced through popular culture.

online drama discussion boards become a form of social media (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). There are many online venues to facilitate the collective discursive consumption of television dramas in Korea: official drama websites, discussion boards of Portal Sites[58], and *DC Inside* (www.dcinside.com). Although any form of online public space may serve as a medium of the socialization of television drama, *DC Inside*, due to its unique operation system and culture of users, has contributed enormously to the spectacular reception of TV dramas and popular culture in general.

DC Inside[59] is the biggest online community in South Korea. Started in 1999 as an online venue in which early adopters of electronic devices shared information about digital cameras and other gadgets, *DC Inside* has now developed into a mega community that is influential across all arenas of popular culture and social discourse. The main category of the site is known as *gallery*, consisting of bulletin boards designated for specific topics such as "Domestic Baseball," "Overseas Baseball," "Girls' Generation," and "Star Craft." The only rule is that users should post something (texts, images or movies) related to a designated topic: for example, in the CSI gallery, postings should be relevant to the drama CSI. Apart from this rule, nothing defines the DC galleries so they exhibit many of the attributes of the public sphere: open admission and discussion of topics of general communal interest (Andrejevic 2008). As of January 2013, there were about 1450 individual galleries covering diverse topics from politics, society, military, games, shopping, foods, sports, entertainment, social gatherings, academics, universities, music, hobbies, travel, and others; and, even at this moment, a new gallery is being created.[60] Users of *DC Inside* are called *gallers*.[61] Gallers may gravitate toward several different galleries, but usually have a main gallery in which they mostly reside and with which they identify. For example, when one's main daily destination is "Star Craft Gallery," one is called a Star Craft "galler." (Hereafter, I will casually use the term *gallery* to refer to bulletin boards in DC Inside and *gallers* to refer to users of galleries.)

With its extraordinary numbers of gallers, *DC Inside* boasts a massive number of users and postings. As of January 2013, the average daily visitors to the site exceeded two million and the daily page-view forty million.[62] *DC Inside* has not only pioneered internet culture in Korea, but has developed its social and political influences.[63] Becoming a form of

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[58] There are three large-scale locally-grown portal sites in South Korea: *Naver* (www.naver.com), *Daum* (www.daum.net), and *NATE* (www.nate.com).

[59] *DC Inside* is a huge online community that requires further in-depth discussion. To explore the web space from an sociocultural anthropological perspective, please see Lee, Gil-ho. (2012). *Woorineun Dissi: DC, Ingyeo, geurigo Saibeospeiseui Inryu* (We, the DC: DC Inside, Surplus, and Humans in Cyberspace). Imagine. This book examines *DC Inside* from the perspectives of gift, war, and power.

[60] The site administrator creates new galleries based on users' request. In order that a new gallery is created, there must be more than 70,000 requests.

[61] While some gallers have *fixed nicknames* (*gonic*), which are subject to frequent change and thus reveal nothing about their identity, most gallers post or comment with *floating nicknames* (yudongnic). From their representational meanings, either could denote users' cultural or political traits, but rarely imply anything about their demographic or socioeconomic identities.

[62] http://www.dcnews.in/etc_list.php?code=you&id=25941.

[63] During 2002-2003, users of *DC Inside* proactively led spontaneous and sequential massive street protests and candlelight vigils protesting the killing of two middle-school girls by a U.S. armored vehicle in June 2002 and the

entertainment itself, the cultural power of DC galleries is enormous, as images created on the site are quickly spread without limit to other websites and marked in news articles. What lies behind the massive growth of the site is its operational practices. These practices are particularly significant because they constitute the consumption and reproduction practices of television drama, as well as the interactions between consumption and production. I will explain the operational practices of *DC Inside* in terms of three characteristic traits.

First, DC users deny exercises of authority among them. One of the practices is erasure of administrative body. The site offers full admission and rights to write and read any content without membership to anybody. [64] Yet, site operators are thoroughly separated from gallers: the only role of operators in galleries is to announce the following instruction, "please post images and texts relevant to a topic of a gallery," and operators never engage with what occurs within galleries. Such thorough separation of operators from gallers functions to block any possibilities that vertical or hierarchical relations are formed. In addition, DC gallers have long developed unique practices to realize their egalitarian system: the rejection and dismantling of formation of intimacy. From many years experience, DC gallers have realized that the maintenance of virtual groups in cyberspace depends on the influx of *newbies*; any groups that prevent the influx of newbies will rapidly collapse. When a gallery allows the existing *oldbies* to form social bonds such as friendship, these groups also build and exercise power, thus newbies are reluctant to join and find it hard to mingle with them. The most important issue for the members of each gallery, therefore, is the rejection of intimacy and the building of social ties in these spaces. To prevent forming intimacy among users, DC gallers have gradually adopted the practices of using everyday language (*banmal* 반말) over time, as opposed to honorifics (*jondaenmal* 존대말).[65] The erasure of honorifics in DC galleries has had a tremendous impact in

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fraudulent military trial in which the two assailant soldiers were acquitted. Since then, users of *DC Inside* have driven Net activism by participating in various sociopolitical campaigns, such as the movement against the impeachment of South Korean president Roh Moo-Hyun in 2004 and the massive protests triggered by the South Korean government's reversal of a ban on the importation of US beef in 2008.

[64] In comparison, Internet Café, an online community interlocked with a portal site requires double memberships, first of a portal site and second of individual Cafés. While the double memberships firstly build barriers between the Café members and the anonymous public, fixed nicknames and portal site IDs secondly strip individual identity by connecting them to individual blogs and email addresses. Even if registered as a café member, individuals must follow several more steps to achieve guest membership, associate membership, and finally full membership. Operators, those who create a café and some elected or voluntary assistant members, intervene in the processes of membership approval, and in the process, exercise power by requesting applicants to indicate their interests about the café and their personal information. After acquiring a full membership, members are actively involved in internal discussions about communal interests as in *DC Inside*. But, as Cafés are operated along exclusive membership, members are inclined to build closer relationships between one another. In contrast to *DC Inside*, Internet Cafés are based on the practices of disclosing individual identity, some forms of vertical organization, and the formation of intimacy among members. Although those features do not contribute to higher levels of innovation as shown in *DC Inside*, intimacy and friendship are also a critical feature in bringing the online discussions about TV dramas offline, forming social gatherings. I will discuss this in the following section.

[65] The relationship between a speaker or writer and his or her subject and audience is paramount in Korean, and the grammar reflects this both in written and spoken Korean. When talking about or addressing someone of superior status, a speaker or writer usually uses special nouns and verb endings. Speaking/writing to the general public such as to an online community also involves honorifics to show respect towards the audience and to indicate the level of formality of a situation. In the early 2000s, DC gallers also used honorifics, but gradually changed their habits to use

leveling the socioeconomic and generational backgrounds of users, dismantling any forms of authority.

Second, DC gallers have developed what they call *image communication. DC Inside* began during the early 2000s, when digital cameras became massively popular. Camera users flocked to the site to boast about "cool" and "funny" images they had photographed. Gallers also produce *captured images* from scenes of TV programs and films. The inundation of images kindles users' voluntary modification of the posted images in innovative ways by drawing on other technologies such as Photoshop. In addition, short movies are created from collections of posted images. In such ways, images are continuously produced, consumed, circulated, and reproduced. What is notable is users' creativity in making the images strong enough to be delivered as messages without (long) texts. Images have become a powerful and instant communication medium, especially among younger generations who are more familiar with images than texts. With image communication, DC galleries constitutes a web environment in which boundaries between production and reproduction become blurred, as well as serving a form of entertainment.

Third, despite image-dominant communication, DC gallers are famous for their creative *language games*. They deconstruct and reconstruct the Korean language in the following ways. They grant unconventional meanings to words; transform nouns into verbs and adjectives; play pronunciation games; and create totally new words. One tacit agreement among users is that they avoid using banal, dry, and ordinary direct expression, preferring to adopt fresh, creative, and humorous metaphoric terms. Due to their surprising twists and reversals, the DC language is unfamiliar to novice visitors, often making them puzzled about what is happening in the site. When new visitors ask about the meaning and use of the DC languages, other skillful users explain them, but invariably mock the newcomer at the same time. Eventually the operators added the "DC Dictionary" section to facilitate users' mutual understanding. Language games happen in unexpected and spontaneous ways; one user accidentally or intentionally attempts a new language form, and when it is fresh and humorous enough to entertain other gallers, they voluntarily use the new term, spreading it across other galleries and eventually listing the new language form in the "DC Dictionary." Similarly to image communications, language games constitute a significant part of entertainment in *DC Inside*.

The distinct operational, cultural, and verbal practices found within DC galleries have brought about innovative and proactive user participation that has nurtured the spectacular consumption practices of popular cultural content.[66] As the number of galleres

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everyday language, and these days none of the gallers use honorifics. If someone happens to use honorifics, she/he would become an object of ridicule because it would indicate that she/he is a novice to the DC culture.

[66] On the other hand, there are unresolved issues such as copyright infringement and cyber vigilantism. The latter refers to practices known as *singsang teogi* (personal information theft), discovering and publicizing personal information online. Please see Jung, S. (2012). "Fan Activism, Cyber vigilantism, and Othering Mechanisms in K-pop Fandom."

(240 as of January 2013) about Korea drama indicates,[67] television dramas, and TV programs in general, are excellent sources for DC users to consume and reproduce content. Yet, DC galleries exercise their critical influences not only in consumption, but in production as well. A remark of a manager of the news team in *DC Inside* is indicative: "We have had many requests from drama producers and entertainment agencies to create a drama gallery, which is an indication of the influences of and stakes in a DC gallery. But, the creation and operation of a gallery totally depend on users, there must be bottom-up booms and requests."[68] I conducted in-depth explorations of DC drama galleries, observing how the unique DC cultures have boosted the collaborative discursive consumption of serial dramas and stimulated the interactions between consumption and prouction.

Discursive Consumption of Television Dramas

When people talk about a product, consumption becomes discursive. At a time when people voluntarily leave reviews open to public, discursive consumption becomes a powerful channel to affect a product's value. The discursive consumption of entertainment texts is distinct because it enhances pleasure. The development of the Internet has prepared a field in which individual drama watching is developed in a social space that enables anonymous public talk about television dramas. When the individual consumption of television drama is collected and shared with others, the pleasure of users becomes augmented. That is to say, not only the quality of source texts, but the forms of consumption of them determine the values of consuming experiences. Collective and collaborative discursive consumption demonstrates that people are now concerned more with *how* to watch than *what* television dramas to watch.

The history of the discursive consumption of Korean TV dramas began in the late 1990s when the dramas, *Lie* (1998) and *Did We Really Love?* (1999),[69] attracted fans to drama-discussion venues via PC communications. In these voluntarily created virtual spaces, active viewers exchanged their insightful responses to human lives projected in the dramas. *Damo* (2003), categorized as a *fusion historical drama*, garnered extensive praise both from viewers and critics thanks to its stunning camerawork and spectacular images, generating more than one million viewer comments on the official drama website alone during the period in which the fourteen episodes were aired. The discursive consumption of *Damo* has continued. More than three million viewer responses have been posted on the drama's website.

In this section, I do an in-depth exploration of how active viewers participate in the discursive consumption of the drama series in the DC Inside gallery. I have chosen *Sungkyunkwan Scandal* because it is *the* drama series that has garnered the most extensive

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[67] There are 15 US, 6 Japanese, and 3 UK drama galleries as well. The number of drama galleries continues to increase as new drama series come out. Yet, not all newly launched dramas are honored by a DC gallery. As mentioned above, there must more than 70,000 user requests to generate a new gallery.

[68] The Kyunghyang Sinmun, "DC galleries control television dramas." 2010.05.03.
http://news.khan.co.kr/kh_news/khan_art_view.html?artid=201005021734275&code=960801.

[69] Both dramas were written by the same writer, Noh Hee-Kyung.

and heated audience appreciation and discussion. *Sungkyunkwan Scandal* is a drama series broadcast in 2010 on KBS. It is often called a *campus historical romance*, as the drama centers on Sungkyunkwan, the nation's highest academic institution, set in the time of the Chosun dynasty (1392-1897) when it was attended by the sons of noblemen. Here, one young woman (Kim Yun-hee, played by Park Min-young), disguised as a male, sneaks into the institution (virtually closed to women) posing as her brother and subsequently finds herself in romantic entanglements with her fellow students. Throughout several episodes, the drama series depicts four lead characters' experiences of friendship, competition, love and inner growth, as well as dealing with the issues of gender, class and party politics.[70] Although *Sungkyunkwan Scandal* did not receive high ratings, because it competed with *Dong Yi* and *Giants,* which began earlier and had already established high ratings, it triggered a national sensation and received extensive and enthusiastic viewer comments. So far, the official drama website (http://www.kbs.co.kr/drama/scandal/index.html) has received more than half-a-million viewer postings; and in the *DC Inside* Sungkyunkwan Scandal Gallery, more than 280,000 postings have accumulated (given that the drama series has 20 episodes, more than 14,000 postings per episode). Taking account of viewer responses posted on other online forums and discussion boards as well, the number of drama-inspired online activities dramatically increases.[71]

I conducted in-depth research into the drama series' DC gallery because the gallery is the site where the most vibrant discussions have been generated. On the surface, the official website seems to have more postings (500,000), but the figure includes every individual posting and reply. In contrast, the *DC Inside* gallery has more than 280,000 postings and each individual posting carries its own replies that are not counted; on average, tens of replies are added to each posting and some postings have as many as 1,500 replies. As discussed above, the anonymous operation of *DC Inside* boosts more active discussions. In addition, mostly simple text-version comments are put in the official website, the DC gallery hosts a variety of visual and entertaining materials such as images, music videos, swf files, and sometimes the uploading of a whole drama file. In sum, not only in numbers, but also in diversity and quality, the discussions in the DC gallery outperform those in the official drama website. In addition, I watched every episode of the drama, to better understand the discussions, such as humor points, appreciation points, and drama history. I will examine the discursive consumption practice from the following three perspectives: appreciation/suggestion, entertainment, and information sharing/support.

1) Appreciation / Suggestion

Audience groups engage with what Nancy Baym (2000) calls *interpretive practice,* leaving multiple forms of appreciation/suggestion about television dramas; character analyses, reviews/critiques about episodes, analyses of plot development, and description of

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[70] The four lead characters are Sun-jun (played by Park Yoo-chun), Jae-shin (played by Yoo Ah-in), Yong-ha (played by Song Joong-ki), and Yun-sik (also Yun-hee, played by Park Min-young).
[71] Daum TV Zone (http://telzone.daum.net) and the drama space on Bestiz (http://www.bestiz.net) are other public bulletin boards. Some overseas websites such as http://www.missyusa.com and http://www.dramabeans.com also held active discussions about the drama series both in Korean and English.

memorable scenes, and parody images or short movies. Interpretive practices involve personalization: viewers make the shows personally meaningful, revealing vantage points and telling personal experiences in collaborative interpretation. As TV dramas try to grab audience's empathy, the consumption of them also embodies showing and sharing personal emotions such as romance, love, joy, excitement, longing, yearning, disappointment, and frustration. Disclosing personal emotions is most apparent when people appreciate drama characters: "Isn't Sun-jun cute and sexy? He is not only handsome, but has an appearance with which he can perform various characters."[72] "Geol-o (Jae-shin) looks so masculine. I am amused by his wild sexy looks." "I am jealous about Park Min-young who works together with three beautiful men." One galler made a short movie made up of captured images of Sun-jun, saying "Sun-jun, Yu-chun, you were the best. I hope to see you in other dramas" with plaintive piano music in the background. Within these postings, other gallers added replies about how they feel tender, warm, or doleful thinking about Sun-jun.[73] Many gallers wrote about Jae-shin, who carries torch for Yun-hee; employing delicate personal emotions as if they experience one-sided love, they express in detail how painful the unrequited love is and how they feel sorry about the situation.[74] The appreciation practices of Korean TV drama involve publicly talking about such extremely personal and private emotions as love, heart flutter, and heartbreak.

Collaborative interpretation practices are also historical. As mentioned, around 14,000 reviews per episode are posted in the Sungkyunkwan Scandal gallery. What is surprising is not the total number of postings, but the format, style, length and depth of individual reviews, which indicate viewers' degree of affection and passion about the drama series. Thus, even extremely passionate fans cannot virtually check every single posting. The *DC Inside* drama galleries have developed two unique measures to help others quickly check and catch what is going on in a gallery: "concept postings" and "review collections." When a posting receives more than ten recommendations, it is showen in the "concept postings" section, which therefore means a collection of recommended postings. Thus, in a situation when hundreds of comments are poured out hourly in a drama gallery, in order to quickly review the "history" of a gallery, one does not need to check all postings; instead one can go to the "concept postings," thoroughly review them, and catch the *essences* of the gallery. Concept postings, therefore, are a condensed history of a gallery shaped by users' voluntary recommendations. Some good comments, however, are unfortunately not listed in the *concept postings*, because they are too long or posted in the early morning and not viewed enough. In such cases, some gallers post a review collection that contains direct links to readable reviews. For example, this review collection (http://gall.dcinside.com/list.php?id =scandal&no=247434) has as many as 259 readable reviews. Usually, the review collections garner enough recommendations to be moved into concept postings that can be easily accessed by more people.

The diverse appreciation practices naturally lead to active suggestion. Comments and suggestions are very specific, covering story lines, character development, amount of

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[72] http://gall.dcinside.com/list.php?id=scandal&no=209341&page=24&recommend=1&recommend=1&bbs=

[73] http://gall.dcinside.com/list.php?id=scandal&no=232068&page=23&recommend=1&recommend=1&bbs=

[74] http://gall.dcinside.com/list.php?id=scandal&no=302018&page=10&recommend=1&recommend=1&bbs=

appearances of characters, love lines, background music, filming techniques, and styles of actors. When the story development seems to "go to *Andromeda*,"[75] i.e., stories are unfolded in highly improbable ways, active users generate a series of comments and suggestions to the production team. In the case of *Sungkyunkwan Scandal*, suggestions about music dominated the gallery. KBS allows copyright of original sound tracks by drama producers (also see Table in Chapter 1); thus, KBS dramas are well known for their employment of sound tracks. *Sungkyunkwan Scandal* is particularly notorious for its excessive use of background music. Among the drama gallers, episode 12 is called a *BGM crisis* because background music is played out during 67 minutes of a 70-minute show.[76] After the broadcast, hundreds of gallers complained that they could not concentrate on the drama due to the overused music. Later episodes used less background music, especially less music with lyrics, leading gallers to believe that the production team must listen to their complaints and suggestions. Due to the live production environment and producers' active willingness to act on audience responses, dominant suggestions are actively adopted in production, thus making changes in the on-going dramas (discussed below.)

2) Entertainment

Entertainment is the most vibrant part of discursive consumption, generating additional pleasures beside the original television shows among users who inhabit the drama galleries. I categorize the entertainment practices of drama galleries into three types: producing secondary texts, *roaster* (explained below), and watching together. All three forms of entertainment practices are based on their *social* traits; pleasure is generated because something is shared with others through a medium of online discussion boards.

The production of secondary texts includes playing with simple humor, producing funny parody images and comic personal drawings, creating short movie collages of political and social satire using images and characters from dramas, making fan-fictions by drawing drama characters, and making fun of them by modifying their photos in playful ways. These activities become a form of entertainment because they are shared with other gallers and get immediate responses. When entertaining texts are creative enough to shock gallers, there follows a *Reply Game*, a voluntary game to add endless replies to a posting in rhythmic (via rhyme schemes) and innovative ways that generate new stories. Like the reply games, the entertainment practices through image communication are collective and incremental production processes, as all images and movies posted are subject to further development by others. Fiske (1989a) claims that audience groups produce their own meanings and pleasures through the production of secondary texts, thereby the subordinated audience can resist the dominant power. In the case of the drama galleries in *DC Inside*, it is not evident that the production of secondary content via television dramas works as a means of resistance; but it is certain that such practices generate increased pleasures among users.

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[75] This is also a part of the language games DC users enjoy.
[76] http://gall.dcinside.com/list.php?id=scandal&no=111042

Second, surprisingly, *roaster* is a significant part of entertainment not only for drama gallers but for the entire community of DC gallers. Roaster begins with a galler's spontaneous call of "Let's do roaster! Who is in the gallery now?" Then, other gallers voluntarily reply "I am!" and dozens of replies constitute the roaster in each instance. After the spontaneous roaster, the initiator usually makes an image in which the names of users who replied (either fixed or temporary nick names) are collected and posts the image in the gallery, with words to the effect that "this is the roaster at 7pm." Roaster in *DC Inside* is not designed to identify individuals; rather gallers want to check with each other to establish that they have accessed the same space (gallery) at the same time. Roaster generates sense of belonging, establishing a sense of similarity and simultaneity among users, and creates a sense of attachment to each other. Therefore, the spontaneous roaster temporarily forms *community*, a group of people who are dedicated to a similar interest at the same time.

Third, "watching together" is another form of entertainment. Even waiting for a broadcasting time together is a form of excitement for drama gallers. When the airing time approaches, gallers circulate messages such as "One hour away," "Thirty minutes left!," "On-air discussion room will be open, please join," and "Now, it starts!!" During the on-air broadcast of a drama, many gallers watch and talk together, not with their family members in their living room, but with anonymous others in drama galleries. "Did you see it?" "What do you guys think about the last scene?" "OMG, it's awesome, I can't believe it." As the broadcast approaches its end, the traffic in discussion boards becomes busy and reaches a peak right after the airing. Not only gallers who have been in the gallery during the airing, but others who enjoyed watching on their own flock to the gallery and begin heated discussions. It reminds one of watching a popular sports game such as soccer and baseball; people form a group, either big or small, and watch the final game of a World Cup or World Series together. Sharing the experience with others exponentially increases the sense of excitement and pleasure derived from spectatorship. Similar things happen during drama-viewing.

3) Information Sharing and Support

Active audience groups engage in extensive information sharing about their favorite dramas. Here, information refers to any material, other than the original drama text, related to a drama series or its actors, such as press articles or online messages. Specific examples of these texts and the ways of sharing them include: "The Original Sound Track has been released! Let's download it, let's do streaming" (downloading and streaming statistics determines a song's chart rank). Active viewers' affection for a drama pushes the drama music to the front of a chart as well; "Preview of the next episode is now up on the drama official site! For your convenience, I put a direct link to it (Or I uploaded the preview here!); "News articles are out today! Let's go 'recommend' it!"[77];"New images or messages from the production team are now released on the office site. Go and check them out!"; "A

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[77] On portal sites that host numerous daily news articles, the number of user recommendations push articles to the front so that more people can read it. Fans of certain dramas are actively involved in promoting news articles about their favorite drama to the public.

new message from a director is on the *Sungkyunkwan Scandal* Twitter, saying 'we just finished the final editing of episode 2. Look forward to today's broadcasting.' Wow, did they JUST finish? I wonder if they're already in the 'live production' stage of episode 2 and worry about the quality of future episodes."

Information sharing practices reveal the viewers' affection about a drama series; affective fans do not stop at appreciating the original drama texts, but voluntarily search any information relevant to dramas and spread that information to the public. Such affection also generates support activities. When the commercial standard of television drama is viewer ratings, fans of a drama do their part to promote their favorite dramas by introducing the drama to their acquaintances or leaving complimentary comments on drama-related news articles. Yet, drama fans carry out more specific material and emotional forms of support. Types of support can be as creative as providing flu-shots to the entire production team of *Beethoven Virus* (2008), but generally include the following two types: 1) delivering snacks and presents to the production team and 2) producing *Review Books.*

The most pervasive form of support is snack delivery. Usually, one person spontaneously opens a discussion about the snack support, saying "How about offering some snacks and presents in the name of our gallery (or fan cafés)? I will open a bank account right now, if any of you would like to join, please transfer money to the account." Then, hundreds of replies are listed, such as "Great idea! I wanna join"; discussion about what types of food and presents to deliver ensues. Because participants do not have any idea about the initiators' personal information, other than a name on the bank account, it is required to make everything from money-raising to delivery transparent; volunteers post all nicknames of those who transferred money, the screenshot of the bank account, the total amount of money raised, several photos of presents and snacks they bought and packed, all receipts, and images that confirm delivery of the gifts (Figure 4.1).[78] For the preparation and delivery of foods and presents, the initial volunteer recruits other volunteers to help. What is notable is participants' voluntary devotion to preparing snacks and putting drama images on every single item (Figure 4.2).[79] Usually, the *snack support* event ends with verification postings by actors and staff members; they usually post images in which they are actually eating the snacks in the gallery, often saying, "We really enjoyed them. Thank you. We will present a better-quality drama to return your favor" (for more details, please see the *verification* section below).

Drama gallery users also voluntarily produce *Review Books* or *Photo Books*. They collect self-produced images and impressive reviews from the postings in a gallery and collate them into a book with additional professional editing (Figure 4.3).[80] Those books are professional in terms of design and editing, supported by voluntary workers who are specialized in magazine design and photography. Review books represent affection for a drama itself, rather than toward a few celebrities, and are thereby delivered to all actors

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[78] http://gall.dcinside.com/list.php?id=scandal&no=70352, http://gall.dcinside.com/list.php?id=scandal&no=126634
[79] http://gall.dcinside.com/list.php?id=scandal&no=126644
[80] http://gall.dcinside.com/list.php?id=scandal&no=126640

and staff members of the production team. Besides signifying support, review books entail broader implications; they are a printed form of television drama, published forms of the discursive consumption of television dramas, and a history of drama galleries.

Interactions between Production and Consumption

While the discursive consumption itself enhances audience enjoyment, it also prepares a field in which the interaction between production and consumption become tangible, all the more so given the live production practices of the Korean drama industry. Benefiting from practices of live filming, drama producers immediately reflect audience responses and improvise the storylines. A scriptwriter of the drama, *How to Meet a Perfect Neighbor* (2007), made public his intention to reflect audience responses in the storylines of the drama: "I do appreciate all viewer comments posted in this bulletin board. I read every comment including very short ones…. I am not an arbiter of this drama; I will listen to your love for and attentions to this drama…."[81] Although Fiske (1989a) claims that meanings and pleasures produced by consumers are not engaged in exchange for material profits, Korean drama producers tap the discursive consumption to create dramas more suited to consumer tastes and thereby earn better profits. On the other hand, active audience groups are happy to see their discursive consumption is commodified in the hopes that it might alter the storylines, enhancing their entertainment. I analyze the interaction between production and the discursive consumption with respect to the following three modes: verification, revaluation, and plot change.

1) **Verification**

Verification refers to the practices that production teams and actors post as writings or photos in online discussion boards to express their gratitude about fan support. Verification practices are an indirect form of interaction between producers and viewers, a message from the production side to confirm "We are 'listening to' what you are saying." Reversing the conventional reactions from the consumption side, audience groups also receive responses to verification postings from the producers.

In the Sungkyunkwan Scandal gallery, eleven actors of the drama and two actors' managers left as many as thirty-one verification postings with photos of gifts they received from the gallery participants and thank you notices.[82] Actor Cho Sung-ha, who performed the role of King JeongJo in the drama, delivered gratitude to the gallers: "… I am particularly grateful for the review book in which hundreds of gallery postings and images were collected. Every single page of the book moves me. All of the contents of the book and your encouraging words have given enormous energy to the producers, writers, actors, and crew members…"[83] The general producer of the drama, Lee Hyun-wook at the production firm Raemongrain posted three messages, and one of them contained the following: "… Can I

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[81] http://tv.sbs.co.kr/neighbor/
[82] You can see a collection of verification postings here:
http://gall.dcinside.com/list.php?id=scandal&no=65500
[83] http://gall.dcinside.com/list.php?id=scandal&no=136503

participate in the gallery as a drama producer? I have visited this site each time our drama begins, when our drama is being aired on Mondays and Tuesdays, when the broadcast is almost finished, and when I want to know about viewer responses to our drama. Reading the ever-increasing postings in the gallery, we have monitored what we missed, what we lacked, what we did well, and what we should modify in the production...."[84]

Sungkyunkwan Scandal is not an exception in having verification postings from the production side. The gallery of *Prosecutor Princess* (2010) also boasts many writings and photos from director and actors.[85] Actress Choe Song-hyun, who played the role of Jin Jung-sun, is an active galler, posting more than 90 messages and photos using the slang and distinct style of DC Inside. The director of the drama, Jin Hyuk, posted two messages, one of them including answers to the 85 questions the gallers raised. What is more surprising is the detail and sincerity of his answers; excerpted below.[86]

Q: Who filmed the scenes in which prosecutor Jin went to the cherry blossoms alone, had a snack on a street, and was shown walking holding a camera? Actually, I could not concentrate on the scenes because her camera had photos that she took even though she went alone. How could she take pictures of herself from multiple distances and angles? It was the fly in the ointment of the drama.

A: That is true. The original setting was that Jin asked others to take pictures of her. But we really rushed to shoot the scenes and didn't have enough time to film the asking scenes, thus we made up pictures in the editing room. The scenes were a byproduct of the live filming. I do apologize about it.

Q: The general images of the drama are excellent. We heard that the film and projection formats are 24 frames a second. What types of technology did you use in producing the images of the drama?

A: Prosecutor Princess *might be the first drama filmed with single lens cameras only, while zoom lens cameras are generally used in drama filming. Single lens cameras can generate rich and deep colors, but it takes longer to change lenses. Yet, since our production team has worked together on many dramas, the coordination between crews made it possible to change the single lenses at the speed of zoom lenses. We focused on the gold color and backlights in images. We intentionally allowed the sunlight to come into the cameras, thus creating gold tones. For more dynamic images, we used steadicam and zimmy zip. The harmony between colors and movement, I think, set the general image tone of* Prosecutor Princess*."*

2) Revaluation

Active discursive consumption has created so-called *mania dramas* and shed new light on them. *Mania dramas* refer to those that recorded lower viewer ratings, and are thus not successful by commercial criteria, but which garner extensive audience support due to their perceived good quality. Not all dramas with lower viewer ratings are evaluated as mania drama; they should touch the subcultural sensibilities of viewers with newly

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[84] http://gall.dcinside.com/list.php?id=scandal&no=39633
[85] You can see a collection of verification postings here:
  http://gall.dcinside.com/list.php?id=princess&no=9160&page=1&bbs=
[86] http://gall.dcinside.com/list.php?id=princess&no=48922

attempted subject matter, unconventional story development, and well-rounded characters. Although they did not achieve commercial success because of their experimental status, and lack of appeal to a broader audience, *mania fans* are enthusiastic about those dramas' freshness and innovation. As mentioned above, two dramas written by scriptwriter Noh Hee-kyung in the 1990s, *Lie* (1998) and *Did We Really Love?* (1999), produced so-called *mania fans* who repeatedly watched those dramas and extensively interpreted and appreciated them, virtually initiating the history of discursive consumption of television dramas via PC communications. Since then, *Ruler of Your Own World* (2002), *Damo* (2003), *Mary Daegu Battle* (2007), and *The Devil* (2007) have also been called mania dramas, continuing the tradition. If not at the mania level, *You're Beautiful* (2008) and *Sungkyunkwan Scandal* (2010) received extensive and spectacular audience discussions and support despite their lower viewer ratings. A director of *You're Beautiful* remarked, "Active fans are distinctive from the general audience in that they voluntarily promote our drama, driven by their affection for it. Although our drama did not record higher ratings, because it competed with popular drama *IRIS*, thanks to those fans' support, we are proud to have produced a well-loved drama."[87]

Revaluation is an indirect form of interaction between production and consumption. Although it does not contribute to making changes in the actual production process, revaluation enormously affects the sale of VODs (video on demand) via the official drama website. Due to extensive discussion and praise by active fans, mania dramas go viral belatedly among the public and earn subsequent repeats through the Internet. Although such dramas do not achieve commercial success presented in viewer ratings, the sale of VODs brings profits to broadcasters, which turns out to be unexpectedly lucrative. By raising popularity, revaluation enhances credits for actors, writers, and directors of a drama series, influencing future production.

3) Plot Change

Plot changes occur mainly in two types. The first type involves modifying the planned endings of dramas. More than a few dramas revised their proposed endings because of viewers' requests. Scriptwriters of *Love Story in Harvard* (2004) originally intended to include the death of a female protagonist. Replying to frantic viewer requests, however, the drama concluded with a happy ending. Active audience groups also changed the direction of the drama, *Wonderful Life* (2005), which initially intended to feature the death of a girl, Shin-Bi, who failed to get a bone-marrow transplant. Active viewers reacted to the original storyline, saying, "how could the drama be a 'wonderful life' if it ends with the death of Shin-Bi?" Writers accepted viewer requests and, eventually, the conclusion of the drama was converted to a happy ending.[88] Recently, active viewers overwhelmed the website of the drama *Secret Garden*, calling for a happy ending without anybody's death. The drama website was virtually paralyzed by floods of viewer comments. Responsive to these

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[87] The Kyunghyang Sinmun, "DC galleries control television dramas." 2010.05.03.
http://news.khan.co.kr/kh_news/khan_art_view.html?artid=201005021734275&code=960801.
[88] Sports Hankook, "Viewers control the ending of television dramas." 2010.01.10.
http://sports.hankooki.com/lpage/entv/201101/sp2011011006033394350.htm.

requests, a writer of the drama posted a message on her Twitter account, assuring adoring fans that both couples in the drama will have happy endings.

The second type of reflection of viewer comments in the production occurs when adjusting the appearances of characters. Korean TV dramas have developed stereotyped character relations in that four main characters (two male and two female) form a love rectangle. Here, top male and female protagonists make a lead couple and the other pair acts as sub-characters. "Sometimes totally unexpected character couples emerge into the spotlight, receiving surprising amounts of support from audience groups. In such cases, we have to modify the love lines."[89] In *Giant* (2010), the Min-Woo and Mi-Joo couple garnered enormous support from viewers who called for their more frequent appearances. In *How to Meet a Good Neighbor* (2007), the appearances of I-Man, originally a supporting role, grew significantly in the later episodes backed by the character's popularity. Sometimes groups of fans have heated online discussions about the acting and quantity of screen time of their favored actors. In *Dream High* (2011), fans of Sam-Dong and Jin-Kuk competitively requested writers to describe their stars as fabulously as possible and to allocate more screen time to them. Because the burning discussions of fans may ignite the popularity of a drama, drama producers including writers and directors stay alert for such fan responses.

Allen (1985) illustrates how US soap opera producers utilized fan-letters sent to actors to re-direct future storylines. Under the US production system in which all episodes of a whole season are shot before airing, however, applying of audience voices in storytelling is limited and merely belated. Riding on the unique practices of live filming and the benefits of the Internet, in recent Korean TV dramas the commercial utilization of an audience's discursive consumption takes place every week, almost in real time. Interactive production mediates the interplays between the political economy of live production and the cultural production of discursive consumption; by bringing consumers to serve as a free labor force for feedback and who contribute to production, while audience are rewarded with more consumer-tasted products. Although Korean television dramas have become flexible and interactive open to accept audience opinions, they also have controversies between unifying narrative structures and conforming to viewer responses; similar to interactive television that has widely condoned the practice, but signaled its limitations in abandoning narrative structure in favor of interactive freedom (Hand and Varan 2007). Moreover, in improvising storylines for Korean TV dramas, the level of consumer participation is limited, only affecting the endings or subplots of dramas at best.

So far, I have discussed the discursive consumption practices and their impacts on the production of television drama based on the ethnography of *DC Inside*, in which forming intimacy among users is agreeably prohibited so that they concentrate their discussions on television dramas. The next part will move to *Internet Cafés* (online communities formed around certain topics), which DC gallers usually criticize and ridicule for their hierarchy-based operation systems. While *DC Inside* has aspects that are open to the public sphere that facilitate innovation among users, *Internet Cafés* show features of a more-or-less

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[89] Interview with a scrip writer.

closed community. Yet, this closed quality fuels active socialization among members and their social activities as a group.

Intimacy, Socialization, and Building Communities

Because television drama watching is a social activity, television dramas not only boost collaborative discussions online, but drive actual social gatherings. Because of its distinct culture in which building intimacy among users is thoroughly prohibited, *DC Inside* has specifically guided audience groups to promote impersonal drama-focused discussions and entertainment. In this section, I will explore another form of online community, the *Internet Fan Café*, which values socialization and community building among members in a different way. This section explores the actual and frequent face-to-face meetings among members, as well as their ongoing online discussions. By combining the virtual and physical ethnographies of audience groups, I have found an exceptional group both in Korea and Japan: middle-aged woman fans aged 30 or older. Once socially and culturally neglected, this group has recently emerged as powerful cultural participants, driving the growth of drama fandom in both countries.

When the drama *Hallyu* was in its peak in the mid-2000s, the entertainment and tourism industries in both Korea and Japan identified a group of active viewers who become passionate fans of Korean television drama: Japanese middle-aged women in their forties to sixties. Japanese private broadcasters, who are heavily dependent on advertising revenue, have been pressured to focus on *F1*, short for the *Female 1* group, aged twenty to thirty-four. Obscured by the F1 group, older women, who are generally called *middle-aged women*, had been shunned by the broadcasting industry, and thus lacked fulfilling content. Korean television dramas have now focused on this group, appealing to Japanese middle-aged women's nostalgia and longing for a past in which family relations were more intimate,. The identification of a middle-aged female audience group has led to higher viewer ratings of Korean dramas and to boosting related industries. Long-lasting loyalty and the material power of Japanese female fans willing to pay for cable channels, DVDs, fan meetings, drama merchandise, and drama-themed travel are now taken seriously.

The Korean media have particularly highlighted this group because, first, they spread the popularity of Korean popular culture in Japan and, second, they have enriched industries in Korea such as tourism, cosmetics and cuisine[90] with their massive and frequent visits to Korea. Hirata Yukiye (2004) explains the phenomenon of Korean drama tourism as Japanese middle-aged women indulging in Korea, a different form of gendered travel from the previous male-oriented sex tour. Kim Hyun Mee (2005) provides explanations about the phenomenon in terms of desires of middle-class Asian women who have experienced "gender instability," a term to refer conflicted situations of women who has become to have

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[90] Tour courses of the Japanese female fans are more or less fixed: visits to drama film sites include Korean food and extensive shopping harnessing Japan's strong currency. In my filed research, I realized that Japanese tourists are already informed enough about their tour courses from Japanese magazines that provide detailed information about the must-go places in Korea. Cosmetics, especially due to their high quality for inexpensive prices, are the hottest Korean products Japanese woman tourists buy in mass quantities. Employees at cosmetic stores in Myungdong, a central business and tourism district in Seoul, welcome their customers in Japanese.

economic power, but are still under suppressive gendered relations. The consumption of Korean pop culture acts as a channel through which such desires are expressed and realized.

Overshadowed by this lucrative Japanese group, only recently have Korean middle-aged female fans been discovered as *aunty fans.* The Korean social atmosphere had considered that fandom was an exclusive property of teenagers; passionate fan activities of middle-aged and married women were previously unimaginable. Until the mid 2000s, when online fan clubs that limited admission to those 30 or above began to emerge, being a fan as a married woman was considered to be socially deviant. It is only recently that the entertainment industry and Korean media started to actively identify Korean middle-aged women fans due to their strong purchasing power. As of 2009, the entertainment industry estimates that there are more than 100,000 women aged 30 or older who actively participate in fan clubs,[91] and there are likely to be a greater number of them now. Like their Japanese counterparts, Korean aunty fans have strong loyalties and do not hesitate to spend money to buy albums, attend performances, and deliver gifts to stars.

The purpose of this section is to combine the Korean and Japanese middle-aged fans of Korean dramas and identify their similarities in terms of reshaping gendered identity from domestic reproduction into agents of cultural and social practices. By examining how drama-inspired activities (such as fan clubs and drama-tourism) have transformed the lives of those female fans in energetic and positive ways, I will show how groups of women try to dismantle or alter their gendered spatial confinement through their engagement with television drama. The case of this group shows the ways in which online communities break the wall of anonymity, acting as a medium to build networks among members and collectively carry out social works.

1) Drama Characters, Stars, and Fandom

Television dramas eventually come to an end. Despite a few exceptions, such as *Damo* and *Winter Sonata* that were celebrated by fans for several years, popularity, discussions and memories of television dramas eventually fade away. The phenomenon is evident in the *DC Inside* drama galleries. Stars, however, do remain in the public memory by starting up new dramas. There *are* fans that appreciate a drama itself and want to memorialize the drama for a long time, as I discussed in regard to mania dramas. Yet, more people develop affection toward a character and the star who performed the character. Significant parts of fan activities involve enthusiastic viewing and discussion of new dramas in which their favorite stars perform, thus continuing the discursive consumption of television dramas. From psychological research, Zillmann (1994) points out that the most critical thing to grab audience attention is character.[92] My personal interviews reaffirm the fact: "However good a drama might be, it is an actor who directly interacts with viewers. When people like a certain character in a drama, most of them come to like the actor. Hooked by Gu Jun-pyo (in

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[91] KBS News, "In the Age of Aunty Fandom, 'Age Does Not Matter.'" 2009.07.29.
[92] Zillmann argues that emotional involvement with drama happens through the development of affective dispositions about characters, either in a positive or in a negative way.

Boys over Flowers), I came to love Lee Min-ho who played the character."(Korean woman in her 40s); "Until I finished *Full House* and started to surf for information about the actor, Jung Ji-hoon, I had no idea that the male lead actor is actually a singer. I started from *Full House*, now I am a big fan of Rain (Jung Ji-hoon) and attending his concert was my biggest joy" (Japanese woman in her late 50s).

There have been clear empirical cases showing that the popularity of a drama eventually produces fame for its stars; Lee Young-ae in *Jewel in the Palace* and Song Hae-gyo in *Full House* have become hot celebrities in ethnic-Chinese countries; Bae Yong-jun in *Winter Sonata* drew a huge fan base mainly among Japanese middle-aged women in the 2000s.[93] Yet, during my fieldwork in 2011 in Shin Okubo in Japan, a mecca of Korean popular culture with numerous stores that sell K-pop merchandises and Korean food, I was not able to find a single photo of Bae. Instead, the most recent and hottest star in Japan is Jang Keun-suk in *Hwang Jin Yi* (2006), *You're Beautiful* (2008), *Mary, Marry Me* (2010), and *Love Rain* (2012). Since his early 20s, Jang has attracted affection and support of both Japanese and Korean middle-aged women. Beside Jang, Park Yoo-chun (age 25) starring in *Sungkyunkwan Scandal* (2010), *Miss Ripley* (2011), *Rooftop Prince* (2012), and *I Miss You* (2012) has also garnered a huge fan base in which many of the members are married women. Two heroes in *Boys over Flowers* (2009), Lee Min-ho (age 25) and Kim Hyun-jung (age 25) also became enormously popular; and thanks to this popularity, Lee has appeared in several other dramas, such as *Personal Taste* (2010), *City Hunter* (2011), and *Faith* (2012); Kim for *Playful Kiss* (2010). Lee Seung-ki (also age 25) in *Brilliant Legacy* (2009) and *The King 2 Hearts* (2012) is another big star among both Japanese and Korean middle-aged women.

These stars have broad followings in all age brackets, especially female teenagers, but what is intriguing is the strong representation of middle-aged women fans and their remarkable activities. How have these young male adults grabbed the hearts and minds of middle-aged women in both Korea and Japan? Here, the power of characters shows up again. Three out of the five young stars mentioned above (Park, Lee, and Kim) are originally singers. As singers, they did not appeal very much to the middle-aged women despite their enormous fandom among teenagers. Only through the television drama characters have those young male stars made strong impressions on middle-aged fans.

" I came to like Lee Seung-ki after watching Brilliant Legacies*. In the drama, Hwan (played by Lee Seung-ki) kindly takes care of Eun-sung's brother who has autism. I thought that the man acting such a warm role must be nice, and later when I actually met him at a fan-meeting, I realized that Lee is really good-hearted."* - Korean woman, 45

" Jang Keun-suk played the first love of Hwang Jin-yi in Hwang Jin Yi*. In the drama, their love was noble and pure, it reminds me of my first love. Since then, I've become a big fan of Jang."* - Japanese woman in her mid 40s

"The character, steadfast Sun-jun in Sungkyunkwan Scandal*, blew my mind. I was moved by the way he keeps the straight and narrow and the way he treats Yun-hee (his girlfriend). Sun-*

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[93] About the phenomenon, please see Chua, B. and Koichi Iwabuchi eds. (2008). East Asian Pop Culture: Analysing the Korean Wave. Hong Kong University Press.

jun shows us how to 'shine' in the days of young adult life, touching my sensibilities and memories about that period." - Korean woman, 44

Excited by drama characters, many viewers finally come to love stars that played the characters, becoming their fans as well. While drama-focused discussion sites such as DC drama galleries becomes inactive after the end of broadcasting, Internet Fan Cafés (online communities) are continuously formed around (mainly male) stars, and thus feature endless discussions about the characters, stars, and dramas. What is notable is that there are hundreds of online fan communities that exclusively allow membership only to those who are aged 30 or more.[94] Most representatively, Lee Seung-ki has a fan-café, IREN (http://cafe.daum.net/leeseungki/) having more than 130,000 members and PearlMint (http://cafe.naver.com/leeseunggi48/) consisting of more than 70,000 members. DAVE (http://cafe.daum.net/LEEMINHO/), Lee Min-ho's fan club boasts more than 67,000 members; in addition to this site, there are two more online communities having more than 3,000 members. *Blessing Yu-chun* (www.blessingyc.com), an aunty fan-club of Park Yoo-chun consisting of only those who are aged 30 or more, has more than 9,000 members. Official fan-club of Jang Keun-suk, *Cri-J* (www.princejks.com), has more than 80,000 members who pay annual fees; taking general members in Korea and other East Asians into account, the total number easily exceeds 200,000.

In online fan cafés, middle-aged female members open the morning with greetings such as "Seung Morning (Seung-ki good morning)" or "Mic Morning (Micky Yoo-chun good morning)." When their stars are currently involved in a drama project, discussions about dramas and the image-capturing of stars become more heated. Hinged on the affection toward stars, television watching becomes a very special event, rather than an everyday practice, to those adoring fans who willingly spend several hours or stay up all-night to watch dramas and discuss them. Members collectively clip news articles about their stars, leave favorable replies to the articles in the Portal Sites so that the public can see them, and report critical or nasty replies to the site operators so that they can delete them. Fans collaboratively and voluntarily perform the image-making roles for their favorite stars in public media spaces. Attending concerts and fan-meetings is a norm rather than an exception. Exercising their strong purchasing power, the middle-aged women fans take very active roles in buying music albums that stars perform and products that they advertise. Lee Seung-gi has been fronting Samsung's refrigerator for three years and Samsung Electronics said that "Lee Seung-gi has captured the hearts of 20- to 40-year-old females who make up much of the consumer market and even served as a driving force behind making Zipel refrigerators the No. 1 brand sold in the market for three consecutive years."[95] A local store of Samsung appliance held a lottery event to pick twenty consumers to have four minutes to talk with Lee in person in 2011; more than 2000 housewives applied for the event and the winners did not hesitate to buy a fridge and pay the shipping costs in order to meet their favorite star in person.

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[94] Most Korean websites require a Korean social security number, which has information about gender and age. Thus, the exclusive membership in accordance with age could be automatically issued with the social number.
[95] AsiaOne, "Female fans jolted by Lee Seung Gi's presence." 2012.08.01.
http://news.asiaone.com/News/Latest%2BNews/Showbiz/Story/A1Story20120730-362209.html

2) Emotions

What is driving these middle-aged female fans to put so much enthusiasm and passion into fan-activities? Why are middle-aged fans crazy about their son-like stars? Beside the power of drama characters, a more critical reason for these middle-aged women fans is that "fandom is nonetheless a flight from the reality principle" (Lie 2012). How reading popular culture, especially female genres such as soap opera, could be an escape from everyday reality is well discussed with literature on popular culture and gender. In *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination*, Ang (1985) suggests a concept of "tragic structure of feeling" that "modern" women viewers are too aware that their lives are limited in patriarchy, suffering from a dearth of feeling and intensity. What causes pleasure to arise in the female viewers of *Dallas*, according to Ang, is "melodramatic imagination," an expression of a refusal, or inability, to accept insignificant everyday life as banal and meaningless. By making that ordinariness something special and meaningful in the imagination, in watching *Dallas*, the sense of loss (the tragic structure of feeling) can be removed. *Dallas* is pleasurable because it make the melodramatic imagination present and palpable. Radway (1991) also points out that romance novels allow women readers to disengage themselves from their everyday chores and enter a realm of fantasy. What I observed in my research is that not only watching television dramas, but more proactive fan-activities do similar work to mitigate, mask, or transform everyday realities.

What is the reality of middle-aged women? To answer this question requires the examination of the gender construction processes in the course of modernization and economic development in Korea and Japan. The spatial categorization of gender has been critical for the developmental states' economic development strategies in both countries, in that women have been mobilized as reproductive resources. The spatial confinement of women in the domestic space, as wives, mothers, and caregivers to the elderly, worked as a basis upon which the developmental states mobilized male labor in their development. Moon (2005) discusses the ways in which the domestication of women functions in nation building, stating "the modernizing state mobilized them as biological and domestic reproducers (93)."[96] The forced domestication of women has continued even into the 1990s and 2000s due to the lack of social support system for child care; although "the daughters' generation," equipped with pervasive college education, succeeded in landing a job and establishing a career, they have been forced to be housewives mainly because of child rearing (Cho 2002).

Within the context of state-constructed, spatially-categorized genders, the social identities of middle-aged married women have been categorized as *wives and mothers* and the universal way to call them is *obasan* in Japan and *ajumma* in Korea. Both terms have negative connotations not associated with professional women with social standing and

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[96] The role of women in the industrialization of South Korea was also critical; the extraction and exploitation of young women workers, usually called *Gongsuni* (a demeaning expression referring to female factory workers), played a significant role in nurturing and boosting export-oriented light industries such as textiles and wigs. Yet, despite their crucial contribution, the state and market marginalized women workers and rarely transformed them into a permanent workforce; it was a norm that women workers quit their job and become stay-home wives and mothers right after their marriage (Moon 2005).

cultural prestige,[97] and therefore carry the implications of being an ordinary housewife (Hikaru 2011). What is critical in the social treatment of the middle-aged women as obassan or ajumma is the erasure of *self.* The identities of this group are given only through their husbands or children as somebody's wife and mom, and women's individual identity is forgotten only being one of the obassan or ajumma group. In addition, there are never-ending quotidian responsibilities that make housewives critical of their everyday lives. The following interviews support the point.

"I have lived as a mom and wife for twenty years. After my kid went to Japan to study, I realized that I didn't have anything to do. My husband urged me to do something to prevent depression. Now I have Lee Min-ho and all walls of my room are filled with his photos." – Korean woman in her early 50's

"Since my baby was born, I became confined at home, enduring several years that I spent alone with the baby. One day I found that the cosmetics on my dressing table were the ones that I had bought seven years before. During the seven years that I raised my kid, there was no 'me.'" – Korean woman in her 40s

"Picking up children every day and following them all the time for afterschool activities makes me exhausted. Many times I am tired of juggling between work and the roles as a mom and wife." – Korean woman in her late 40s

"House work is never ending and I feel pressures for which I can rarely identify causes. Just a heavy feeling."- Korean woman in her 30s

" In their fifties, most of my friends have started caring for the elderly, mostly parents or parents in law. While it is socially conceived of as women's work, caregivers actually bear huge emotional and physical pressures. Many times I think: why I should do this after devoting myself to childrearing for twenty years?" – Japanese woman in her 50s

Meeting with elegant television characters can produce bursts of emotions for those who suffer from the repetitive routine of being reduced to somebody's mother and wife. Drama stories and characters stand opposed to the middle-aged women's reality: 1) glorious young days when romantic love is valued versus lives as obassan or ajumma with the physical and mental stresses of inescapable daily routine, and 2) gentle, effeminate (usually called *pretty young adult*), and economically stable drama versus their work-devoted, patriarchal husbands.[98] The drama fantasy, which is diametrically opposed to reality, I argue, makes sudden and revolutionary emotional changes possible, working as a vent through which daily grudges, delighted flutters, and longings surge. The reignited emotions, I found, are mainly about yearning for the women's younger days and first love; and such longings remind them that they are still women, the identity that has been veiled by the roles of wife and mom.

"Emotions do not age. My age does not necessarily mean that my emotions are also old. I'm a woman, and not just a mom. Why should I hide such emotions? Looking at my fan-activities as

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[97] Korean middle-aged women fans are called "aunty fans" rather than "ajumma fans," with the intention of avoiding depicting the group through negatively valued unprofessional and ordinary images while maintaining a posture of respect toward the group's age and experiences.

[98] For a review of the construction of gender through state policies and enterprise programs, see Gordon. (2001). *The Wages of Affluence: Labor and Management in Postwar Japan*. Harvard University Press.

more appropriate to teenagers, some would say that I'm not acting my age. But I never mind what others say." - Korean woman in her mid 40s

"As a forty-year old stay-at-home woman, it is unusual to be rapt with excitement just by looking at somebody. Living as somebody's wife and somebody's mom, my interests and passion have withered away. Meeting with a shining young adult, Sun-jun (played by Park Yoo-chun), I realized that I had had one of those days of being young and passionate. Yu-chun has brought something back to my life and now I am *happy to have something I can do for him."* – Korean woman in her early 40s

" One day in a drama, I saw a drama character put his hand on his chest and feel his heart beating. Before I knew it, I was doing the same thing. Putting behind my crazy life, I thought it is a time to take a break and relax. I am very fortunate to have opportunities to listen to me and make changes in my life."- Korean woman in her 40s

"He (Jang Keun-suk) is the one who made me find my true self that I had lost. I was a mere ordinary mom and wife, but he made me realize the fact that I myself am a woman. Since I started to do the fan-activities, I feel that I have reencountered the lost days of my youth.." - Japanese women in her 50s

Because the fundamental source of their affection toward young stars and fan activities of this group lies in oppressive everyday lives, these women's fantasies are a means to contemplate forgotten identities. Despite the clear limitation that emotional suppressions are only temporarily resolved while the structural problems in reality remain and continue, there are pacifying functions that only fantasy can deliver.

"There are sorts of comfort, small pleasures and joy that only stars can give me; that family members and other sorts of hobbies can never deliver. Family members live in conflict and unintentionally hurt each other in their daily lives. When I love a star, I can enjoy it as much as I like because I have my own fantasy." – Korean woman in her late 30s

"When you bet everything on your family, do your family members do the same? Do they fully recognize your efforts and help you? In most cases, only the role as a mother is valued and the aspect of being a woman is rarely acknowledged. Sometime I say, 'Mom is a person as well. Mom (also) feels pain and mom (also) feels joy.'" – Korean woman in her 40s

I argue that fan-activities are forms of expression and realization of desires for the middle-aged female fans to reshape their identities as women. As fandom is more about finding oneself than adoration for stars, what are conventionally considered time-wasting habits have actually brought happiness and enormous life energy to middle-aged woman fans in Korea and Japan. These revived lives also attract family support; looking at how their wives' lives are changed, even husbands who considered wives' fan activities pathetic have turned to actively supporting them. One of the critical changes is that family members come to recognize that she (a mom and wife) has personal interests. Fandom actually turns out to empower the middle-aged women by rekindling their life energies and by repositioning their status in the family.

"I am elated by watching Lee Seung-ki. I've come to frequently laugh in my daily life. In the beginning, my husband and son scolded me to stop making a fool of myself. Noticing that I am getting happier and smiling more, they've changed their minds and now they are the biggest supporters of my fan-activities." - Korean woman in her 40s

"My mother-in-law and sister-in-law finally came to know about my fan activities. While my sister-in-law is still critical about them, saying 'she would attend Yoo-chun's concerts in Japan,' surprisingly, my mom-in-law responded that 'I would pay all the plane ticket for the concerts.' She said she's happy to see my smiling face all the time. With her emotional and material support, I am truly enjoying my fandom life these days." – Korean woman in her 40s
 "Since I have found a channel to relieve stress, my relationship with my family has surprisingly improved." - Japanese woman in her 50s

The newfound enthusiasm manifests itself in everything from being more youthful and lively to engaging in self-development. All the following interviews indicate that the rekindled passion encouraged the middle-aged female fans to be immersed in learning and realizing one's long-cherished dream.
"My own time has been 'created.' This time was previously for a child and until now, when I had any free time I didn't know how to use it. As I found myself focused on watching dramas for several straight hours, I realized that I could invest 2-3 hours a day for myself." - Korean woman in her 50s
"I do part-time work (cleaning service at a hotel) like many friends around me. I'm also taking care of my old mother-in-law. After I watched the drama Full House*, I have become a super-fan of Rain (Jung Ji-Hoon). I slept only two or three hours for several months in order to watch Korean dramas and the movies of Rain. In order to get more information on Rain, I started to search the Internet. I, once a mere ordinary middle-aged woman, became a sort of expert on the computer and the Internet. Now I can record the scenes of Rain's concerts by myself and post the movie online. I have also visited Korea sixteen times with my daughter to attend Rain's concerts and travelled to Seoul. I do enjoy the mother-daughter travels overseas."* - Japanese woman in her 50s
"I came to try to achieve my long-nurtured dream of becoming a writer. The driving force behind this is the vitality and optimism that has been generated from fan-activities." - Korean woman in her late 30s

Language learning is a significant part of this self-development. I met significant numbers of my Japanese interviewees at Korean language schools located in Tokyo; the numbers of language schools, mainly targeting the middle-aged fans of Korean dramas, and the sizes of classes were surprising enough. Although most of the students began Korean in order to better enjoy Korean television dramas, not a few of the interview participants remarked that the newly earned language skill had expanded their lives. Conversely, there are many Korean middle-aged fans who began to learn Japanese in order to understand JYJ's (to which Park Yoo-chun belongs) concerts in Japan.
"I have started to attend Korean language school. When I attended Jang Keun-Seok's fan-meeting, I was really frustrated by having to wait for an interpreter's translation. Some people who are good at Korean told us later that many of his remarks were actually lost in translation. My goal is to watch Korean TV drama without subtitles and to understand Jang Keun-Seok's talks at fan-meetings without translation." - Japanese woman in her 50s
"Hooked on Park Yoo-chun, I came to surf concert movies of JYJ, most of them held in Japan. But, soon I realized many of the movies did not have Korean subtitles. In order to better understand what Yoo-chun says in Japanese, I began to learn Japanese. Despite the beginning

for the purely entertainment purposes, recently I achieved the advanced Japanese language certificate with which, I think, I can start a new career." - Korean woman in her late 30s

3) Meeting Friends, Building Communities

One of the critical problems those middle-aged female fans face in starting fan activities is that they are treated as lunatics by the family, friends, neighbors, and society at large. The most common reaction when their fan-activities are revealed to families and friends is, "You must not have any challenges in your everyday life that you might indulge in this and waste your time and energy for such a ridiculous thing." When the fact that the objects of their adoration are those who are ten to twenty years younger than themselves is disclosed, these middle-aged fans become seen as absurd creatures. Against such criticism and ridicule from people around them, the woman fans find their friends online, friends who can truly understand one another and share their unusual, but excited feelings. Given the domestic and social treatment of the group as pathetic, however, the foremost function of Internet Cafés is to share the unusual experiences of the middle-aged women becoming infatuated with young TV stars.

" I was not alone. Inside the small square of the Internet, there was a totally different world in which people who are connected through a TV star not only share similar feelings, emotions and empathy but also expand horizons of their lives together." - Korean woman in her late 30s)

One middle-aged woman left a long poem about her adoration for Sun-jun in *Sungkyunkwan Scandal* and many others replied that they have same "symptoms."

…
faltering mind,
ardent and strangely gloomy
…
I should not have watched the drama
How could I be immersed in a drama character at age forty?
I am roaming somewhere between reality and fantasy
When he smiles, I smile
When he cries, I cry
But he has something I can never have, youth
I must miss those days of being young
….
" I have exactly the same symptoms as yours. These days, I don't really know why I have such strange feelings. As a forty-year old woman, I'm not definitely in an age to be crazy about TV stars. But, I am very excited and 'happy,' thanks to Yoo-chun. But on the other hand, I am strangely blue, because I miss my younger days."[99]

According to Jenkins (1992b), "what fandom offers is a community not defined in traditional terms of race, religion, gender, region, politics, or profession, but rather a

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[99] The original posting at www.missyusal.com is deleted. The texts are recited from
http://gall.dcinside.com/list.php?id=scandal&no=129523&page=31&recommend=1&recommend=1&bbs=.

community of consumers defined through their own common relationship with shared texts." Thus, entering into fandom means abandoning preexisting social status and seeking acceptance and recognition less in terms of who your are than in terms of what you contribute to this new community. Yet, the middle-aged female fan groups in Korea and Japan are based as much on their members' apparent social identity (obassan or ajumma) as on their shared interests. Unlike *DC Inside*, members of *Internet Fan Cafés*, especially the middle-aged women groups, do not hesitate to disclose details about their personal lives. When confessing their strange affective emotions toward young stars, the revelations about age and changes in ordinary lives become natural. The middle-aged female fan groups develop the cohesive power of the community through sharing everyday grudges and sufferings as well as talking about similar pleasures.[100] The middle-aged women's fandom works as a space from which members enhance their entertainment and gain comfort by developing and sharing empathy toward each others' life situations. I argue that *sharing* and *comfort* are the most distinctive characteristics of middle-aged female fandom's communities.

"The other thing he made for me: friends. I need an outlet to vent my sorrows and grudges. I need somebody to hear 'me.' At first, we saw 'him,' later relationships have been created through the fan activities and the fan community. The members of the fan community not only pay attention to the news of the celebrity we all love, but also truly listen to my (every single) story. That is the actual driving force that leads me to continue my fan activities. " – Korean woman in her early 40s
"Relationships based in reality are not always comfortable. Many of them are made up of obligations to children, a husband and neighbors; there I am a mother, wife, or just Ajumma; within groups of friends and neighbors, the topics of conversation are all about children's education, husbands, money, and others' affairs; and there IS *competition and peer pressure that sometimes I cannot stand up to. But in the fan community, I become just 'me,' not someone's mother. We share light talk about the star we all love or about anything, talk that can never be shared with my friends and neighbors in reality because they know about me too much. There are people who listen to my sincere feelings and life stories. They even leave kind comments on my posting. We met because of the star, but now through these relationships, I feel unable to live without the star."* – Korean woman in her 40s

The emotional connections are often extended into social connections. Within the online communities, members exchange life information and build friendship. Moreover, the community is often developed into physical social gatherings, often in forms of fan-meetings, group drama-tourism, and fan-gatherings. *"More than sixty fan-community members gathered one day to celebrate our star's (Kim Hyun-joon) birthday. Although the birthday heroine didn't attend, we fully enjoyed the party watching the star's movies and talking about them. At first I felt little bit awkward because people there met each other online, but now it is totally fine since we do have the same interest. And you know what? It IS addictive! Although my son sometimes laughs at me that I'm not acting my age, I am so happy with these fan activities.* (Korean woman in her late 30s)*."* Previously, Japanese and Korean

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[100] Radway (1991) claims that women find consolation by communicating with similar groups who are suppressed by patriarchy or male hegemony, thus consolidating female subjectivity.

women's social gatherings were mainly formed through their family members and local society, such as parents' meetings and neighborhood meetings (Gordon 2001, Cho 2002). The fan communities are voluntarily built based on the middle-aged women's *shared personal interests*. The social networks arranged via fan-communities are meaningful in that the middle-aged women's group expands their social life via their own individual identity and interest.

4) Social Activities

Fandom does not stop at sharing pleasures and building communities. It could be extended to social acts such as fund raising, donating to charity, and volunteering on social works. Such participatory fan activism is the norm rather than the exception in the landscape of fandom in South Korea; the fans, not stars, initiate fund-raising and charity events where fans donate the money (or rice sack called *Dreame*, literally "dream rice") raised under the name of their chosen stars (Jung 2012). For the middle-aged women fans, however, the participatory fan activism is not merely a means to celebrate their favorite stars; rather, it is a channel to make their lives meaningful. *"Fan activities are worthwhile. The fan-club to which I belong collectively offered free-lunches for homeless people, donated to the Global Hope Network International and raised money for charity. Voluntary services are sometimes hard to do alone partly because people don't know where to do. The voluntary works we did as a group are greatly rewarding and it generates positive energy in my ordinary life.* (Korean woman in her 40s).*"

"Blessing Yoochun," an aunty fan community of Park Yoo-chun, started their donation works by delivering $10,000 to a child with burn injuries in 2010. They donated $50,000 in 2012 to help small children with cancer, to aid those people in Korean School in Japan suffering from the tsunami, and to support a study room for the low-income children who are suffering from water damage.[101] The donation works do not remain a solitary event and the community has maintained continuous relationships with those they have helped. Since 2009, Lee Seung-ki has been working with the KBS charity program
"On-Site Report Going Together." He even provided his voice to the narration in the New Year's special. According to the program, Lee Seung-ki has been helping out 201 families that have appeared on the show by donating $100,000 in 2010 and some items he received from his commercial appearances. Following the star's move, on Lee Seung-ki's birthday in 2011, his aunty fan-club members delivered $24,000 to the program.[102]

Korean television dramas have turned the Korean and Japanese middle-aged women into active cultural agents marking their presence and exercising their power in the drama industry and other related industries. The collective and collaborative consumption of television dramas in fan-communities has even led female drama fans to engage in participatory actions such as learning and self-improvement, donations, and voluntary

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[101] Star Today, "Fan-club members of Park Yoo-chun donated $10,000 to build study rooms for low-income households." 2011.09.18. http://star.mk.co.kr/new/view.php?mc=ST&no=604034&year=2011.
[102] Paek, Seung-ah. (2012). "Proactive Aunty Fans" *Monthly Joongang* 2012 Volume 1. The article can be accessed on http://magazine.joinsmsn.com/monthly/article_view.asp?aid=291379.

works. Motivated by the collective nature of drama-driven fan-communities, middle-aged female fans have overcome historically institutionalized domestication to assert themselves and initiate interest-oriented (rather than family-oriented) social activities, empowering them and reconstituting gender politics.

Conclusion

The cultural nationalistic discourses about the Korean Wave has called attention the foreign audience groups of Korean television dramas, as a measure to demonstrate the saturation of Korean pop culture in other territories. Redirecting the focus onto domestic viewers, this chapter has illuminated the spectacular practices of the discursive consumption of television dramas. The collective and collaborative practices of drama consumption not only allow audience groups to enhance their entertainment and amplify their viewing pleasures, but mediate the interactions between production and consumption take place. This chapter also sheds new lights on the ways in which television dramas open channels for the expression of the gendered desires of middle-aged women. I argue that the consumption practices of Korean television dramas are shaped by and shape the gendered modernity in South Korea and Japan. In sum, this chapter demonstrates the ways in which Korean television dramas functions as a medium through which diverse social discourse and social activities have emerged and are configured.
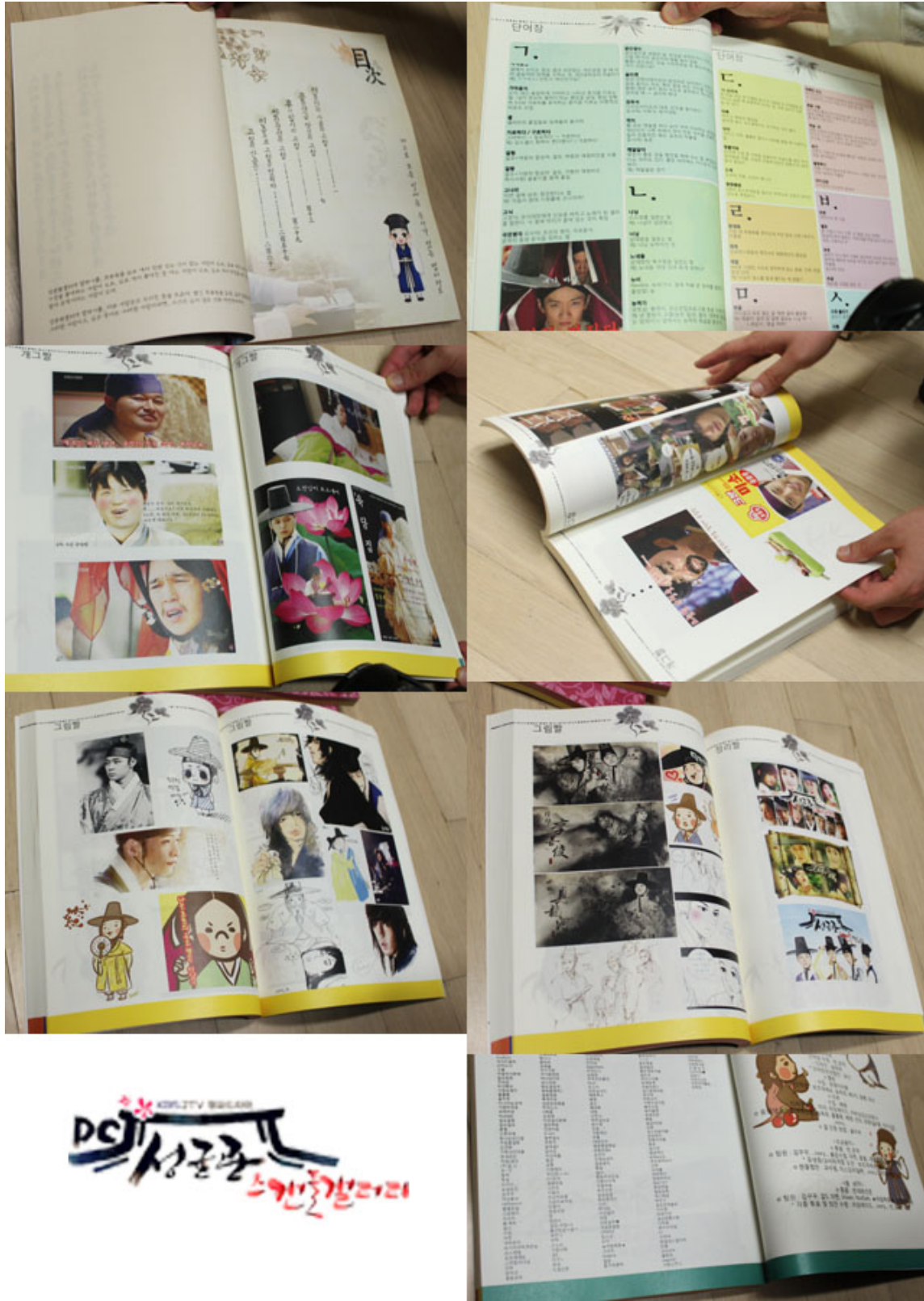

[Figure 4.1. Preparation of Snack Support]

[Figure 4.2. Support Items with Drama Images]

[Figure 4.3. Sample Photos of Review Books]
Source: http://gall.dcinside.com/list.php?id=scandal&no=126640

Chapter 5
Addictive and Speculative Storytelling

This chapter analyzes storytelling in Korean prime-time television serials. The method I use differs from conventional content analysis in that this chapter does not illuminate the social structures and realities represented in television dramas; rather, this chapter responds to Chapter 2 in which I analyze how the regional popularity of Korean dramas in the early 2000s has shaped the industrial conditions and production practices of the Korean TV drama industry. Combining industrial investigation and content analysis, this chapter presents empirical cases that describe some of the ways in which industrial conditions define storytelling in prime-time serials. Specifically, I analyze: (1) how cut-throat competition for domestic ratings has led to storytelling in Korean dramas being refined in ways that are both more sensual and more formulaic; (2) how the desperate need to export these dramas to overseas markets has rendered their narratives both "culturally deodorized" and "Japanized"; and (3) how the difficult financial conditions of producers has resulted in an extensive reliance on product placement, with the consequence that the stories take on aspects of commercials.

In the wake of the "Korean Wave," textual analyses of Korean TV dramas have discussed why and how they appeal to audiences in East Asia (Lee 2005, 2012, Lin 2011, Shon 2011). According to Lee Soo-yeon (2005, 2012), the appeal of the Korean Wave serials lies in a psychological mechanism whereby drama provides both fantasy and a sense of lack. By "fantasy," Lee means wishful thinking regarding pleasant situations that are unlikely to occur in reality. She analyzes the role of fantasy in Korean serials as involving: (1) idealized love (extremely pure, loyal, and immutable), (2) idealized human relationships that conform to a belief in the goodness of human nature, and (3) idealized notions of masculinity and femininity.[103] The sense of lack essentially affects the representation of the male protagonist. Despite his powerful outward appearance, he typically possesses some critical wound, commonly inflicted by an illegitimate birth and/or the absence of parents (or the presence of only one parent). Lee argues that Korean television serials arouse "symbolic pleasure" in the audience by presenting fantasies in which "all the difficulties of life that adults must face in reality (relationships, love, career, and more) are miraculously reconciled within the most cherished institutions: love and family." She argues that global fans of Korean serials partake in and share these fantasies and dreams.

The scope of Lee's analysis is limited to Korean Wave serials that are popular among overseas fans. This chapter broadens the perspective to include historical dramas, which account for a significant portion of primetime serials and have lately emerged as a "salable" genre for export, as well as a broader range of modern dramas. The subject of my analysis includes most primetime serials broadcast since 2000. More critically, this chapter elucidates the ways in which the Korean TV drama was born out of the industrial conditions of its production, taking into account in particular the speculative nature of the industry since the beginning of the *Hallyu*, in order to explain how and why particular types

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[103] She explains that male characters possess economic, intellectual, and physical competence and power, along with psychological determination, while female protagonists are good, faithful, kind, patient, and cheerful.

of stories are chosen for Korean TV dramas. I find that the choice of stories has largely determined the pursuit of ratings, opportunities for export, and sponsorship. Consequently, Korean television dramas tend to draw on repeated, formulaic narrative elements, avoiding risky experimentation in theme and style, and the stories are often revised to cater to importers and sponsors.

Two narrative models predominate in Korean TV drama: what I call addictive storytelling and speculative storytelling. By addictive storytelling, I mean the ways in which the fierce competition for ratings has driven primetime serials to employ extremely formulaic and sensational narrative elements and styles. In discussing the most repeated narrative formulas in historical and modern dramas, I argue that Korean serials since the beginning of the *Hallyu* have depended on a few storytelling modes that have proven profitable. These industrially and commercially conditioned storytelling styles have kindled addictive Korean drama watching among not only domestic, but also overseas, viewers. By "speculative storytelling," I refer to the ways in which the narratives, dialogues, and visual illustrations in Korean television dramas are thoroughly tailored to cater to commercial sponsors and major importers. Storytelling in Korean serials is directly and promptly shaped by the speculative nature of the industry and the shaky financial bases of the producers, drawing heavily on Japanese-influenced styles and scenes for product placements.

Features of Korean Primetime Serials

This section briefly explores some of the features of Korean primetime serials. South Korean primetime dramas are usually categorized into two distinct genres: historical and modern dramas. Historical dramas are set in pre-modern dynasties,[104] while modern dramas depict the contemporary period.[105] The historical/modern division involves differences not only in visual settings (the built environment, costumes, and props) and dialogic styles, but also in broadcasting planning processes, broadcasting span, funding resources, and preparation of sets (see Chapter 3). Within this grand categorization, other sub-categorizations are less critical; there is an increasing use of "genre dramas," such as

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[104] Pre-modern dynasties include Chosun (1392-1910), Koryo (918-1392), United Silla (676-935), and the Three Kingdoms period (BC 1C-7C), in which the kingdoms of Goguryeo, Baekje and Silla coexisted on the Korean peninsula.

[105] There are two exceptions that deviate from the conventional categorization. First, modern historical dramas set between the early twentieth century and the 1980s are usually placed in a third category, called 시대극 *sidaegeuk*; like all modern historical dramas, they are treated as historical dramas in that they entail a long-term broadcasting period and the preparation of a separate stage set is required. Secondly, "time-slip" dramas, in which characters move between different historical periods, are a recent innovation designed to generate more dramatic tension from the social barriers provided by historical settings (such as a status system) and to attract commercial sponsors by presenting the contemporary period at the same time. In this case, the genre division corresponds to the temporal setting; for example, *Faith* (2012), which depicts the love between a warrior from the Koryo period and a female doctor from the present day, counts as an historical drama since the series mostly takes place in a pre-modern setting; on the other hand, *Rooftop Prince* (2012), which is about a Chosun crown prince who, after his wife dies mysteriously, time travels to the future where he encounters familiar faces, modern-day devices, and corporate intrigue, is called a modern drama because most of the episodes are situated in the contemporary period.

cop, doctor, legal, sci-fi, and spy dramas; but, when their stories are based in the contemporary period, they are classified as modern dramas. Looking at the dramas aired in the 2000s, one of the critical distinctions between historical and modern dramas seems to be the broadcasting span: generally, historical dramas are broadcast for several months, and consist of 50 to 100 episodes, while modern dramas are aired for two to three months. I argue that Korean historical and modern dramas have developed dominant narrative styles affected by the differences in broadcasting duration (this is analyzed in detail in the next section).

Almost without exception, both historical and modern Korean primetime dramas have a serial format. While shows in the episodic format raise all the narrative problems at the beginning of an episode and show the solution of them by the end, so that there are no questions that dangle week after week, "serials tend to focus on ensembles, with each episode interweaving several strands of narrative" (Newman 2006). While recent US primetime serials employ complex formats that are a hybrid of the episodic and the serial (Newman 2006), Korean primetime dramas tend to stick to a serial format. Robert Allen (1995) defines the serial as "a form of narrative organized around institutionally-imposed gaps in the text. . . . These gaps leave plenty of time for viewers to discuss with each other both the possible meanings of what has happened thus far as well as what might happen next." Allen further categorizes the serial format into open and closed serials: open serials have a changing community of interrelated characters who move in and out of the viewer's attention and interest; thus, in open serials, there is no ultimate moment of resolution and there is no central, indispensable character. Korean primetime dramas are "closed serials," in which a few strong central figures interact to develop one major storyline.[106] Within the closed serial format, historical and modern dramas have cultivated distinct narrative skills about "how to" form and deliver the one storyline.

Despite the obvious dominance of the serial format, Korean primetime dramas rarely follow the season system used in the US system, in which dramas run from September to the following spring. Korean TV dramas are on the air year-round without a break; when one drama series is finished, the next one follows immediately the next week. Broadcasting planning operates with an extremely tight schedule, and programs are typically finalized only a few months before the actual airing. Given that dramas unceasingly come out, rearranging to employ the same producer, broadcaster, and actors for the entirety of a season is usually impossible.[107] Moreover, the introduction of the season system is also made unlikely by under the "live production" environment that ruins the perfection of storytelling and production quality (Chapter 2).

Korean television dramas heavily employ background music, to such an extent that most can be called "musical dramas"; even historical dramas actively feature music. Drawing upon the concept of the original soundtrack (OST) in film, TV drama music is generally called "drama OST." In their earlier stages, drama OSTs were used for dramatic effects;

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[106] The features of "open serials" are similar to those of daily sitcoms in South Korea.
[107] KBS and Taewon Entertainment produced and broadcast *IRIS* in 2009 and *IRIS 2* in 2013. The two drama series starred different actors but had similar synopses; thus strictly speaking, it is hard to call them season dramas.

since the independent production system was introduced, however, drama OSTs have become one of the few areas of profit generation for drama producers, as music rights are the only rights, among various components of a drama, over which independent producers have full autonomy (Chapter 2). Therefore, the prevalence of original sound tracks in recent Korean dramas is due more to the producers' search for profits than to a need for dramatic effects. From one episode to another, dramas introduce new songs that are also individually sold via digital distribution; during the final episodes or after a drama series is finished, drama producers launch an OST album that collects all the show's songs. Some drama OST albums are so popular as to threaten "real" musicians in the music market. At the same time, the drama music is often popular with viewers. Many viewers memorize drama scenes with the attendant melodies and lyrics, which facilitate emotional immersion and empathy for the characters. Due to the popularity of dramas, some of the songs have won prestigious music awards. For instance, Ryu won the Japanese Golden Disk Award for Original Soundtrack in 2004 for the song "My Memory" from the TV drama *Winter Sonata*.

Addictive Storytelling

In my ethnographic study of viewers (both in the physical and virtual spaces), interviewees often mention addictiveness as their primary impression of Korean serials. "It is addictive!" was the most frequent remark I heard during my interviews with both domestic and overseas fans of Korean TV dramas. "I have to admit, I am a K-drama addict. *Emperor of the Sea* is my first K-drama and I am hooked. . . . I am in awe of the storylines, the dialogue, the acting . . . all first rate. The actors are so good in that you feel their anger, their pain, their joy, their sorrow. . . . Even the songs are wonderful. I've been listening to the soundtrack for EOTS and even though I don't understand what is being sung, I can feel the emotions from the songs."[108] Addicted, viewers of Korean TV dramas come home early to watch primetime dramas and often pass sleepless nights, discussing online what they have just watched (Chapter 4). One viewer confessed on the online bulletin board, "I glanced at my watch several times during the broadcasting, afraid of the end of the drama show. During the show, I hoped 11pm [the ending time] would never come." Japanese K-drama fans are particularly well-known for their collection of K-drama DVDs, habitually replaying the same dramas.

What explains the "addictiveness" of Korean dramas? The concept of addiction emerges as a way of understanding the failure of alcoholics or drug users to behave rationally and the mystery of them to continue to use what is seen as harm (Room 1996). In a connected world of DVDs, video on demand, and web-streaming, drama watching can take place apart from the regular airing time, and as a result addiction to drama-watching can interfere with daily routines. By "addictiveness," however, both viewers and producers indicate the grabbing power of TV dramas to secure audience loyalty; the addictiveness of television dramas can be more about their stimulant, than harm, to make audience immersed in them. Addiction has the function of ensuring that viewers return for the following episodes (or keep watching them via the Internet or DVDs), and is, to some extent, triggered by the

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[108] "Discussion Boards on Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Dramas."
 http://bcjkdramasincalifornia.runboard.com/t167921,offset=30.

nature of serials. According to Robert Allen, the unresolved and indefinite patterns of plot lines in which characters are shown across different episodes facilitate audience immersion (Allen 1985, 1995). John Fiske (1989a) also proposes that the pleasure of watching serials lies in their openness: they are "ongoing and cyclical rather than climatic and final." In keeping and intensifying audience engagement, Korean dramas are especially apt to play with cliffhanger endings, tantalizing viewers by arousing their curiosity with heightened tensions and unsettled endings. Yet, the nature of a serial only cannot make Korean TV dramas a killer content; there must be gripping elements in the *stories* themselves that captivate both domestic and overseas viewers.

A review of all primetime series aired since the 2000s shows that they typically involve pervasive, repetitive, and overtly exploited narrative elements, which serve as formulas. Such formulas are pervasive in popular cultural production. Cawelti (1969) claims that all cultural products contain a mixture of two kinds of elements: conventions and inventions. While inventions are the product of a creator's imagination, both a creator and the audience are familiar with conventions, consisting of typical plots, stereotyped characters, and accepted ideas. A formula is a conventional system for structuring cultural products. Thanks to their familiarity, conventions help to maintain a culture's stability. A formula tailors the cultural products to the tastes of a mass audience, thereby efficiently commodifying them for sale to advertisers (Fiske 1989a, Allen 1985). Mass culture is inseparable from formulas. Korean primetime serials are particularly dependent on formulaic storytelling. It is not surprising that highly competitive industrial conditions have pushed drama producers to avoid taking risks (such as the use of experimental themes and imagery), and to rely on more or less fixed, proven-to-be-profitable narrative elements.

Korean primetime serials have exploited a couple of similar story formats with only a few variations. Such formulaic storytelling has enabled Korean dramas to sell broadly to both domestic and overseas viewers. At least during the 2000s, Korean TV dramas formed a virtous cycle between formulas and their addictiveness; the industrial conventions were easily transformed into K-drama's marketability for a while.[109] The following sections describe the most pervasive and dominant narrative elements in the historical and modern dramas of the 2000s; this in part explains why and how Korean primetime serials have been so successful in overseas markets, stimulating the addiction of many foreign viewers. At the same time, their use of formulaic productions has fostered a certain complacency in the Korean drama industry that has led it recently to stagnate.

1) "Mission" Historical Dramas

Among primetime series aired between 2000 and 2011, more than thirty percent are historical dramas. Despite their long running periods, historical dramas have gained stable and solid viewer ratings that indicate their strong market competitiveness. The popularity of historical dramas is not confined to the domestic market. *Dae Jang Geum* (2003) has

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[109] Recently, many domestic as well as overseas viewers have begun to have enough of similar storylines, and, as a result, there is growing criticism of the formulaic storytelling.

been exported to more than sixty countries across the world,[110] with record-breaking ratings in several national markets. The broadcasting rights for *Jumong* (2006) have been sold to ten countries.[111] This series garnered wide support among male audiences in Japan, which was a shift from the previously mostly middle-aged female composition of audiences for Korean series. What is hardest to explain is the overseas popularity of Korean historical dramas that require basic historical knowledge about pre-modern Korea. The shared Confucian tradition and "cultural proximity" may have facilitated viewers' understanding in East Asia (Yu and Lee 2001, Heo 2002, Kim 2005). Given that many Asian countries have long-standing and ongoing historical grudges with each other, however, stories about historical heroes are also sensitive.[112] In the analysis in this chapter, I find that the cause of the popularity of the historical dramas in both domestic and foreign markets lies more in their ways of storytelling than in an appreciation of their cultural values.

The historical dramas that have emerged since the 2000s are mostly what are called "fusion historical dramas" because they are based more on the writer's imagination than on historical facts. Distinct from the previous "authentic historical dramas," which mainly delineated the interior politics of the Korean kingdom and its ruling aristocracy, recent fusion historical dramas have diversified themes that draw from the lives of the under-represented, such as women, intellectuals, peasants, and slaves. These dramas present contemporary desires in historical settings: the desires for success and self-realization, struggles against social restrictions, reflections on money, and questions of leadership and cooperation. While the freshness of themes has expanded the horizon of Korean historical dramas, what is more notable is innovations in storytelling.

Historical dramas typically consist of 50 to 100 episodes, running six to twelve months.[113] Due to the long-term airing period, historical dramas require longer pre-planning steps to prepare drama-sets and historical costumes and props, and to cast large groups of actors and extras. The long broadcasting period not only affects the physical preparation, but also defines the narrative structure of the historical dramas. Given the fierce competition over viewer ratings, producing a historical drama can be risky: if the ratings are low, it can mean a long-term slump, and thus a loss of investment and revenue from commercials. Thus, the stories are designed to grab the audience's attention and continually intensify it throughout the series. Based on my analysis of historical dramas in the 2000s, I will next discuss how recent Korean historical dramas have devised a "mission" narrative format to secure long-term viewer ratings.

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[110] Specific information about the export of Korean TV dramas to various countries can be found at: http://cafe442.daum.net/_c21_/bbs_search_read?grpid=5sb4&fldid=Is4o&contentval=0000lzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz zzz&nenc=&fenc=&q=&nil_profile=cafetop&nil_menu=sch_updw.

[111] Japan, Iran, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, and the Philippines.

[112] For example, one of my interviewees said that the staff members who produced *The Legend of Four Gods* (2007), a series portraying the life of a nineteenth King of Goguryeo, who expanded the nation's territory into Manchuria, were actually banned from entering China for a while, coincident with Chinese government censorship.

[113] Recently, there have been increasing cases of mini-series historical dramas consisting of 20 to 24 episodes, such as *Sungkyunkwan Scandal* (2009), *A Tree with Deep Roots* (2011), and *The Moon that Embraces the Sun* (2012).

"Mission historical dramas" are those that present the transformational journey of a protagonist from an ordinary person into a hero. The heroic transformation is achieved through performing several missions. Scriptwriters publicly admit that their use of adventure is borrowed from the format of role-playing games (RPGs).[114] A role-playing game is a game in which players develop characters in a fictional setting based on certain rules and are responsible for deciding what those characters do over the course of the game. In many RPGs, characters start as fairly weak and untrained. After obtaining a sufficient amount of experience, the character "levels up," achieving the next stage of character development. Similarly, protagonists in Korean historical dramas progress by dealing with missions and level up by overcoming obstacles and opponents one-by-one. At least five recent mega-hit Korean historical dramas have used a character-progression based on role-playing games: *Hur Jun* (1999), *Dae Jang Geum* (*Jewel in the Palace*, 2003), *Jumong* (2006), *Dong Yi* (2010), and *Seondeok Yeowang* (*Queen Seondeok*, 2009).

As these dramas are called "mission historical dramas," the main narrative structure revolves around several stages of missions. *Jumong* (2006) is a grand historical epic about the founding of Goguryeo (37 BCE-CE 68), the northernmost of the Three Kingdoms of Korea. The series centers on the efforts of Jumong, Goguryeo's founder, to liberate the suffering migrants of Ancient Chosun who were under the oppressive rule of the Han Chinese, drive out the Han from the territory, and restore the kingdom of Ancient Chosun. The main source of this series' appeal lies in Jumong's heroic quest and transformative journey in pursuit of the "great mission" of nation-building. At the start of the series, Jumong is far from being a hero and, in fact, he is pathetic and incompetent, given to harassing palace maids and utterly incapable of protecting himself. In terms of the role-playing game, Jumong is at the "level one" stage in the earlier episodes of the series. However, Jumong upgrades himself by handling various missions such as finding a mythical arrow, finding sources of salt, and competing with other princes for a successor to the throne. While carrying out the missions, he expands his leadership capacity, develops powerful bonds with his helpers and wins over would-be enemies. Promoting non-violence as an essential component of national unification, in the end, Jumong successfully accomplishes the great mission of nation-founding.

Frequently, the protagonist's adventure is shaped through a confrontational structure: competition between a protagonist (and her/his helpers, who represent the good) and an antagonist (and her/his coterie, representing the bad). For example, *Queen Seondeok* (2009), a series about Deokman's pathways for the ascension of a queen, has a structure of confrontation between the protagonist Deokman, an abandoned princess of Silla who is destined to establish a new royal line, and the antagonist Misil, an influential female political strategist who is something of a heavyweight. Within this framework of rivalry, Deokman is set up to play the role of Misil's rival. Yet, born as a twin, and for that reason

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[114] Star News, "Deokman laughs last in the role-playing game." 2009.07.06.
http://star.mt.co.kr/stview.php?no=2009070608584983734.

abandoned by the royal family,[115] Deokman needs to survive and upgrade herself in order to become able to challenge the mighty Misil. Various missions serve as both crises and opportunities for Deokman to make a progression. When the Gaya tribes arrest Deokman and her twin sister Cheonmyung, Deokman offers to conduct a rain-invoking ritual in return for their sparing her life. As a gender-bending member of *Hwarang* (Flower Night), she enters several battles and develops relationships of trust with her major collaborators, Yushin and Alcheon.[116] In order to discover her true identity, of which she is unaware, Deokman investigates the origin of the knife, *Soyeopdo*, that the king placed on a chain around her neck when he expelled her as a baby. To find out where the power of Misil comes from, she explores the truth of "the apricot flowers of *Sadaham*," an astronomical calendar from which Misil calculates solar and lunar eclipses and takes advantage of the phenomena as her sacred power. By acquiring a more accurate calendar, finding someone who can calculate the dates of eclipses, and appropriating and inverting Misil's tactic, Deokman wages a surprising attack on Misil and regains the status of princess.

The confrontational structure is often visualized as involving a series of competitions between the protagonist and her/his enemies in distinctive settings; for instance, *Jewel in the Palace* (2006), *Painter of the Wind* (2006), *Queen Seondeok* (2006)*, Hwang Jin Yi* (2006), and *Sungkyunkwan Scandal* (2010) feature in detail several rounds of contests over cooking, painting, martial arts, traditional dance, and sports. Delineating competitions as sport games, the confrontational structure presents another game setting. In *Painter of the Wind*, the scenes in which the Minister of Rites (*Yejo panseo*) announces, "This coming contest is about . . ." resemble the declarations at the openings of modern sports games. In *Dae Jang Geum*, Jang-geum and Geum-young enter cooking competitions as runners and have their own coaches, Court Lady Han and Choe, respectively. The king serves as a referee by commenting on the foods each side submits. *Queen Seondeok* describes the ways in which various factions of *Hwarangdo* (the Flower Knighthood), wearing differently colored images of gears and other symbols, participate in martial arts competitions like modern sports teams. In *Sungkyunkwan Scandal*, spectators flock to a (traditional) sports competition among students of Sungkyunkwan (the national university of the Chosun Dynasty) and bet on each side.

The mission historical dramas have successfully engaged with audiences in two different ways. First, mission historical dramas effectively arouse immediate audience interests and secure their engagement for the long term by developing a repetitive crisis-resolution structure. Cawelti (1977) notes that this structure is "what centers our attention on moments of crisis, because it is such episodes that can most powerfully excite our emotions." By presenting clear, ongoing stories about characters who face difficult obstacles, the mission format presents a great variety of plausible crises and has

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[115] An old prophecy, which had been conveyed by the founder of Silla, stated that the birth of twins into the royal family would signal that the seeds from which male heirs are produced had dried up. In order to secure a stable succession of royal authority, the king secretly drew one of the twins out of the palace with a palace maid.
[116] In character development in role-playing games, characters need "items" or "tools" to deal with the given missions, and these items are offered as a reward for accomplishing the prior missions. In dramas, the "items" are represented as "helpers" of protagonists and these collaborators provide intellectual and physical assistance upon the basis of which the main characters solve missions and achieve their progression.

successfully engages viewers' appreciation. The way even bigger missions are added after the protagonist completes one intensifies the audience's engagement. The continual addition of increasingly challenging missions is the main engine propelling the storylines of series with more than fifty episodes, in order to continually absorb the audience for as much as six months or more while a drama is being aired.

Korean mission historical dramas utilize a distinctive narrative form using the unique weekly two episodes system. The two weekly episodes generally have a mission-challenge-completion-new mission structure; the first episode of the week portrays a mission in which the protagonist is usually endangered and a process by which the protagonist and the other main characters who assist him or her try to find clues to carry out the mission. The second episode depicts the ways in which the protagonist carries out the mission through her/his wits and the help of collaborators. With the resolution of the mission, the lead character achieves self-realization and strength, acquiring the foundation for moving on to the next stage. The end of the second episode hints at another mission, triggering another crisis for the protagonist, thereby creating a new source of tension for the television viewers, for the purpose of enticing them to return the following week. The two-tiered cliff-hanger endings trigger the addictiveness of drama watching.

Secondly, missions draw viewers into a game setting not only as spectators, but also as participants. Theories of melodrama explain that it provokes the audience to develop an identification with a sympathetic protagonist with the audience's privileged knowledge of the protagonist's situation (Williams 1998, Gledhill 1987).[117] In Korean mission historical dramas, however, what viewers know about a protagonist that the protagonist is ignorant of is based on historical knowledge, according to which the protagonist's eventual transformation into a hero is an already established fact. At each stage of a mission or crisis, viewers lack privileged knowledge; the critical point of watching is to see how the protagonist solves seeming impossible problems. The same principle applies to the competition settings; viewers know that it is a "safe" competition in that the protagonists' side obviously will win; the focus of the viewer's pleasure in watching the competition concerns the manner in which the protagonist will defeat a formidable antagonist. The "how questions" drive the mission and competition formats into a more interesting game mode. In serialized mission historical dramas, the protagonist and the viewers play the same "game" every week; thus viewers are already in a dialogue with the characters and the drama series.

2) Modern Dramas

For modern dramas, I agree with Lee's view that "[t]he genre of the Korean Wave serials can generally be considered melodrama and they tend to faithfully follow generic conventions in those aspects such as plot, characterization, ideology, etc." (Lee 2012). The term "melodrama" refers to "a complex of theatrical, literary, and cinematic conventions

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[117] Gledhill argues that, according to Linda Williams, "if a melodramatic character appeals to our sympathy, it is because pathos involves us in assessing suffering in terms our privileged knowledge of its nature and causes" (Williams 1998:49).

characterized by *excess*—of affect (the overdrawn, over-marked) and of plot (strange, almost unbelievable twists, coincidence, connections, and chance meetings)."[118] Melodrama is "about *excess*, about a mode of *heightened dramatization.*"[119] The term is used to describe "a dramatic work that *exaggerates* plot and characters in order to appeal to the emotions."[120] Modern Korean serials are melodramatic in these terms because they deploy excessive dramatic features and characters. A chief producer for a public network remarked, "Korean dramas are well-sold in the regional market, because they are *Korean* dramas. The most distinctive feature of Korean television dramas is strong dramatic features or intense expression of emotions."[121] Another veteran in the industry mentioned the use of strong emotions in Korean serials: "Direct and wild expressions of emotions may have provoked cathartic experiences for Japanese women, releasing them from lukewarm realities."[122] Matt Nix, the popular scriptwriter and producer who created the *Burn Notice* series, explained his impression of Korean dramas thus: "It is interesting the way Korean television dramas use emotion. They seem not to be afraid of using strong emotions."[123]

Why are Korean modern dramas melodramatic? Why do modern primetime serials tend to use excessive emotions featuring implausible life-altering situations such as incurable cancer or sudden car accidents? It can be seen that the melodramatic features are conditioned by the industrial strategy behind the dramas' production. Modern dramas usually unfold stories through 16-24 episodes. Considering that two episodes are aired in a week, the total broadcasting period spans eight to twelve weeks. While historical dramas are concerned with how to continue stories without losing tension for six to twelve months, modern dramas bet on "how to quickly grab the audience's interests." The short duration lends itself to using melodramatic narrative structures. A writer said that one lesson from her education in a drama scriptwriting academy is: "The ratings are determined and almost fixed by the first four episodes. Thus, the bottom line is to clearly show the tension structure (bigger and more acute tensions preferable) and firmly deliver the direction of the series in the first two episodes."[124]

What are the melodramatic qualities of modern Korean serials? Analyzing primetime series aired during the past decade, I found that most modern dramas rely on one prominent element to create dramatic tension: a Cinderella story. Although there are of course variations, such as birth secrets that connect lovers as blood siblings, conveniently-timed car accidents that lead to temporary amnesia, or incurable diseases that separate the main couple, it is not an exaggeration to say that *the* most common plot in modern Korean

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[118] Abelmann, N. (2005). "Melodramatic Texts and Contexts: Women's Lives, Movies, and Men." In *South Korean Golden Age Melodrama: Gender, Genre, and National Cinema*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press. Italics mine.

[119] Brooks, P. (1976). *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Italics mine.

[120] Wikipedia. "Melodrama." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melodrama. Italics mine.

[121] Personal interview, Spring 2011.

[122] "Drama Hallyu: The Second Leap beyond Asia to the World." http://www.koreabrand.net/kr/know/know_view.do?CATE _CD=0009&SEQ=2087.

[123] Yeonhap News. "Korean television dramas specialize in strong expressions of emotions." 2012.12.04. http://www.yonhapnews.co.kr/entertainment/2012/12/04/1101000000AKR20121204113500005.HTML.

[124] Personal interview, Spring 2011.

television dramas is a love story between a rich man and a poor woman. The inter-class love story is so frequently exploited in modern dramas that it has been ridiculed as "Korean dramas skillfully turn the genre dramas into melodramas; all characters fall in love in hospitals (doctor shows), police stations (cop shows), and courts (courtroom drama), and their complicated love stories are all melodramatic."

Based on the Cinderella story, one basic formula is a love rectangle formed by the two lead characters and two other sub-characters (one male and one female). The love-rectangle formula in Korean melodramas was borrowed from Japanese "trendy dramas." Lukács (2010) compares "story-driven" dramas in which "the plot lines tracked relationships between individual and society or between individuals" (and in which individuals are situated in their social context) to "trendy" dramas where characters become plot functions (p. 40). Trendy dramas "pursue certain themes such as friendship and love," and "characters develop through conflicts with other characters" (p.41). More importantly, trendy dramas display the latest lifestyles of young people wearing "stylish outfits and hanging out in trendy places," which strongly appeal to the desires of many young viewers. For this reason, programs' visual and sonic arrangements are as critical as their stories for entertaining audiences. While Japanese trendy dramas tend to offer information on the latest lifestyle trends, however, their Korean counterparts have emphasized the complicated amorous liaisons among the four lead characters and the dense emotions they express and invoke.

Jealousy (1992), Korea's first "trendy drama," which recorded an average 40.1% of the viewing audience, is rumored to be an imitation of the Japanese series *Tokyo Love Story*. Since *Jealousy*, love triangles and love rectangles in which the relationships among the male and female characters are complicated, have become a basic formula. Except for a few dramas where love stories are never depicted, such as *Behind the White Tower* (2007), *Golden Time* (2012), and *Ghost* (2012), almost all modern dramas are built on love rectangles, with a cast including four lead characters (two male and two female). Expanding the love triangle, the love rectangle divides into several love triangles among the four characters, which enable them move from one relationship to another. Thus, all four characters are treated as subjects of love, and the love rectangle typically involves seduction and attraction, indifference and jealousy, possession and obsession. The interlocking relationships among the four characters and the accompanying emotional vicissitudes offer intense pleasure for viewers; although the formula has been criticized for repeating the same scenarios, it has dominated modern Korean TV drama for more than a decade.

The Cinderella stories manifest the articulation of gender and class in that mainly female protagonists represent the lower class in terms of material, social, educational, and cultural capital. The gendered class relationship leads to the stereotypical character development: male protagonists are presented as educated professionals or business owners, while the female characters often barely manage to land a job, or work as service workers, or low-level, part-time employees. Some examples include: a female pastry chef who was dumped by her ex-boyfriend and struggles to get a job meets a male restaurant owner in *My Lovely Kim Sam Soon* (2005); a female singer who is past her peak meets a

male pop star, and tries to avoid a relationship with him in order to maintain her job in *The Greatest Love* (2011); and a poor stunt woman who lives from hand to mouth meets a *Chaebol*[125] man who owns a department store in *Secret Garden* (2010).

But why do so-called "perfect" men love these humble girls? According to Lee (2012), often in Korean TV serials, "male protagonists, despite their powerful outward appearance, possess some critical wound, commonly inflicted by an illegitimate birth and/or absence of parents," and this constitutes a "lack" that motivates a compensatory "fantasy of love."[126] The "lack" experienced by the male protagonist has been presented in more diverse ways in recent serials. In *Secrete Garden* (2010), the male protagonist Kim Joo-won, an arrogant and eccentric Chaebol who maintains an image of seeming perfection, suffers from a case of claustrophobia that is cured through his relationship with a poor but feisty stunt woman, Ra-im. *You're Beautiful* (2008) depicts the ways in which Tae-gyung, a singing idol, who was abandoned by his mother, herself a pop music star, and who as a consequence has deep emotional scars that are represented as character flaws, is healed by a relationship with Koh Mi-nyeo, who was raised at an orphanage, and is warm and optimistic by nature. In *The Greatest Love* (2012), scripted by the same writers as *You're Beautiful*, the male lead character, Dok Ko-jin, discovers true love, overcoming heart disease and chronic loneliness, with Goo Ae-jung, a third-rate singer with a warm personality. The lack suffered by the male protagonists, who are rich but suffer from psychological trauma, serves as both a dramatic rationale for such ostensibly impossible relationships and a melodramatic device driving plot development.

The Cinderella story is a powerful means for creating interest among the audience though the use of fantasy elements. Love stories between different classes enable women viewers to dive into fantasies of Cinderella and Prince Charming. As many women in South Korea are barely able to land a job and work as irregular, part-time, low-level workers (Moon 2005), the Cinderella fantasy convincingly appeals to the "F1" audience (women between 25 to 35). Most modern Korean dramas feature an idealized masculinity by presenting a male lead character who is economically and intellectually powerful, and gentle and sensitive at the same time (Lee 2012). The economically potent and emotionally tender male protagonists are able to grab the hearts of middle-aged women viewers, as discussed in Chapter 4. The Cinderella story is a sort of "safe" narrative element for securing a certain portion of stable women viewers.

The inter-class love story is effective in generating strong and lingering dramatic tensions due to the class barrier. Opposition from family members, mostly the parents of the rich man, always threatens to frustrate the love between men and women of different class backgrounds. While melodrama involves a dialectic of pathos and action, the presence of obstacles generates the audience's sympathy and support for the lovers in their difficulties, keeping them in front of the TV screen. More importantly, the existence of family opposition involves a skillful twisting of the class division into patriarchal oppression. With

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[125] Chaebol refers to a South Korean business conglomerate.
[126] Lee, S. (2012). "The Structure of the Appeal of Korean Wave Texts." *Korea Observer*. Vol. 43, No. 3. pp. 447-469.

the presence of the rich man's mother, who condemns the female protagonist on account of her low social background, a patriarchal hierarchy overshadows the class division as the cause of conflict. Thus in Korean TV serials, it is patriarchy and not class division that typically frustrates the love between the two main characters. Referring to a traditional patriarchal hierarchy may be politically safer than bluntly revealing the social structure, and generates stronger emotions from the mostly female viewers, giving it a greater capacity to engage them and raise ratings.

In many Korean TV dramas, class divisions are presented as overcome by the love between the characters. The endings of these dramas, after many twists and turns, present harmony and reconciliation between different classes. The propeller of such development lies in the fact that the upper-class man associated with the lower-class woman, with whom female audience members tend to identify, is "good." Although the two main characters experience conflicts due to their personal differences, as the narrative proceeds, the "good personality" of the rich man is disclosed, gaining favor with both the heroine and viewers. On the other hand, the "bad" characters, both the lower class ones who are desperate for better social status and the upper class ones who behave badly in their own interest, are set to be ruined finally. The politics of class in modern Korean television dramas is represented as the attainment of a harmonious relationship between the "good" upper class and the "good" lower class and the downfall of the "bad" characters.

Speculative Storytelling

While the use of conventional formulas indicate the risk-avoiding nature of the industry, the industry's speculative nature is represented in another type of storytelling; narratives, dialogues, and visual illustrations of Korean television dramas have become thoroughly tailored to cater to commercial sponsors and potential importers. This speculative storytelling can be explained in terms of two phenomena: export to Japan and product placement. As Japan has become the major destination for exported Korean television dramas, various devices have been adopted in Korean dramas' storytelling to lower the national and cultural barriers and facilitate export to the country. At the same time, the financial predicaments of independent drama producers have forced them to rely heavily on commercial sponsorship. As a result of the concerns of potential importers and commercial sponsors, Korean primetime serials have often tended to become a collage of "scenes for sponsorship," without a solid storyline.

1) Japan as a Potential Sponsor

Japan is the biggest overseas buyer of Korean television dramas, with its lucrative and robust markets in broadcasting and secondary drama-related goods such as DVDs, drama-themed tourism, and celebrity merchandise.[127] More than sixty percent of Korean

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[127] Taking into account the audience groups enjoying Korean dramas via informal routes such as Tudou and Yuku, the ethnic Chinese locations, including China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, could serve as broader destinations. Yet, what matters to sellers (broadcasters and producers) is a quasi-official export market and Japan maintains the dominant position in this regard.

drama exports go to the Japanese market and the unit-price of television dramas is particularly high in Japan.[128] An interviewee in the marketing team of a broadcasting station remarked, "Even adding up all other Asian markets, profits from exports to them remain far short of the share from Japan. It is the Japanese market that played a significant role in instigating the proliferation of independent drama producers, and that absorbs the oversupply of television drama content in South Korea." To serve this profitable market, Korean drama producers engage in a variety of often desperate tactics for fabricating drama stories.

The most obvious way in which Korean drama producers attempt to garner sponsorships is through casting so-called "Hallyu Stars," actors who are already popular in Japan. In the aftermath of the mega-scale popularity of Bae Yong-jun in *Winter Sonata* (2002), several Korean celebrities have garnered recognition and celebrity in Japan: Lee Byung-hun in *All In* (2003) and *IRIS* (2009); Song Seung-heon in *Autumn in My Heart* (2000), *Summer Scent* (2003), *East of Eden* (2008), *My Princess* (2011), and *Dr. Jin* (2012); Kwon Sang-woo in *Stairway to Heaven* (2003), *Sad Love Story* (2005), *Bad Love* (2007), *Cinderella Man* (2009), and *Bing Thing* (2010); Jang Keun-suk in *Hwang Jin Yi* (2006), *You're Beautiful* (2008), *Mary, Marry Me* (2010), and *Love Rain* (2012); Park Yoo-chun from JYJ in *Sungkyunkwan Scandal* (2010), *Miss Ripley* (2011), *Rooftop Prince* (2012), and *I Miss You* (2012); and Lee Min-ho in *Boys over Flowers* (2009), *Personal Taste* (2010), *City Hunter* (2011), and *Faith* (2012). During the 2000s, these Korean Wave celebrities were wildly popular in Japan and commanded extraordinary appearance fees. Because of the enormous fandom these celebrities built and cemented in Japan, a critical success factor in exports has been who appears in a drama, which is much more important than what the drama is about. A chief producer at a broadcasting station stated, "In most cases, if not always, the casting of *Hallyu* Stars works." Recently, the drama *Marry Me, Mary!* (2010) was sold on good terms to Japan despite its low domestic viewer rates merely because of the exceptional popularity of the male hero, Jang Keun-suk (who had also been in the mega-hit drama *You're Beautiful*), in Japan.

With the rise of K-pop music in Japan, one recent phenomenon has been to cast "idol singers" in Korean dramas. "Idol singers" refers to members of so-called "idol groups," boy and girl bands trained under a "factory-like" system; Korean idol groups are well-known for their young age, good-looks, and precision dance performances.[129] Among many cases of "idol acting stars," the successful cases include: Park Yoo-chun, who starred in *Sungkyunkwan Scandal* (2010), *Miss Ripley* (2011), *Rooftop Prince* (2012), and *I Miss You* (2012); Jung Yong-hwa from CNBLUE, who appeared in *You're Beautiful* (2008) and *Heartstrings* (2011); Yoona from Girls' Generation, who starred in *Cinderella Man* (2009) and *Love Rain* (2012); Suji from Miss A, who acted in *Big* (2012) and *Gu Family Book* (2013). The casting of idol singers as lead characters in dramas provides both producers and broadcasters with lots of advantages. First of all, dramas starring idol singers can enjoy publicity effects not only in Korea but also in various foreign countries because of the singers' popularity; "Idol singers can do issue-making. A drama can attract a lot of attention

[128] Korea Creative Content Agency. See Table 2.2.
[129] Seabrook, J. (2012). "Cultural technology and the making of K-pop." *The New Yorker*. October 2012.

even on short notice if the idol singers mention about the drama on SNS."[130] On the other hand, it is said that the appearance fees of idol singers are relatively cheap given their name values. When paying for the top four lead actors comprises more than 60% of the total production cost of a TV drama, having both a popular and an inexpensive actor is always preferable for producers. In addition, the loyalty of passionate fan groups tends to raise viewer ratings as well.

Most of all, the appearance of idol stars has paved the road for exports to Japan because idol groups have acquired a fair level of recognition there.[131] Given that 30-50% of profits come from the drama copyrights sold in the Japanese market, a cast of idol singers has become the conventional practice, rather than a one-time publicity event, in the drama industry. When one drama production firm cast a super-idol star who is big in Japan as a hero, the company accepted unfavorable terms with a broadcasting firm, receiving only half of the normal production costs in the hope of gaining the export rights to sell the show at a higher price in Japan. This case speaks for the importance of casting that targets the Japanese market. In another case, a writer whom I interviewed revealed that when one idol singer was cast in a drama, the production company pressed the writer to expand his appearances in the drama, despite his having only a minor supporting role, in order to facilitate exporting the program to Japan.

Employing idol singers, however, has raised a number of issues. Viewers have pointed out their lack of acting skills, saying, "I cannot concentrate on the drama because of their awkward acting. Why don't producers cast new actors who are really trained in acting?" Trained as singers and dancers, acting is not idol celebrities' primary area of expertise. Naturally, the lack of acting ability of some singers diminishes the overall quality of a drama. Not a few veteran actors have raised issues about singer-actors; for example, an actor who is a veteran of more than twenty years remarked, "Acting requires emotions. Idol singers are only technically trained for acting, and even that is absolutely insufficient due to their crazy schedules (for performing in various venues as singers). Dramas that cast idol singers are advantageous in attracting investment and product placements. However, their poor acting turns the drama into vulgar commercial content."[132] Drama producers' responses to such opinions are usually based on economic considerations rather than concern about the quality of the drama; they tend to avoid the risk of employing newcomers who haven't been exposed to the public. One producer commented, "In reality, there are few new actors who are good enough to be cast. Idol singers are at least familiar with cameras. Some new actors are even far short of being adjusted to camera shooting."[133]

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[130] News Tomato, "Why do dramas prefer idol singers?" 2013.05.09.
http://www.newstomato.com/ReadNews.aspx?no=361976.
[131] Called *New Hallyu* (Sinhallyu) or *K-pop Hallyu*, K-pop music has been driving the popularity of Korean entertainment overseas since the late 2000s. Many "idol groups" lie at the center of the boom, appearing on TV shows as well as selling albums and holding concerts. Idol groups such as Kara, TVXQ, JYJ, Girls' Generation, Big Bang, CNBLUE, and 2PM have acquired massive fandom in Japan. While the drama Hallyu appeals to middle-aged Japanese, the K-pop Hallyu has broadened its fan base to include teenagers and youth in their 20s.
[132] Herald Economy, "The world of idols in drama." 2013.05.07.
http://isplus.live.joinsmsn.com/news/article/article.asp?total_id=11442093
[133] " News Tomato, Why do dramas prefer idol singers?" 2013.05.09.
http://www.newstomato.com/ReadNews.aspx?no=361976.

Moreover, acting matters less overseas because most dramas are dubbed in the local languages; the idol singers' appearance itself and their good looks tend to mean more to foreign viewers. The separation between casting and acting is an indication of how Korean primetime dramas have tended to "display" people and products more than delivering stories.

Secondly, lowering the international barrier is critical in achieving sponsored production. In *Bread, Love, and Dreams* (*Jeppangwang kimtakgu* 2010), as an interview with a staff member at a production firms of the drama reveals, "The title role's name Kim Tak-goo, was intentionally created to target export to Japan. Kim Tak-goo (*Kimu Tagoo* in Japanese) is one of the easiest Korean names for Japanese to identify and pronounce. The pronunciation is also very similar to that of the Japanese superstar, Kimura Takuya. An easy name significantly lowers the cultural barriers in the overseas market." On the other hand, recently more and more dramas have featured anecdotes taking place in Japan. *IRIS* (2009), a spy drama involving North and South Korea, includes several episodes set in Japan (sponsored by Akita Prefecture). *The Innocent Man* (2012) shows anecdotes happening in Aomori Prefecture in Japan, depicting the exotic landscapes of the area. In *Miss Reply* (2011), one of the main male characters grew up in Japan and goes to Korea; as he travels back and forth between Korea and Japan, Japan plays an important role in the story.[134] Such an intentionally orchestrated role for Japan in a drama serves to facilitate the appreciation of Japanese audiences .

A third way of catering to the Japanese market is by assimilating Japanese culture. There are an increasing number of cases in Korean TV dramas of the adaptation of Japanese manga, dramas, or novels: these include *Behind the White Tower* (2007), *Naughty Kiss* (2010), *Royal Family* (2011), *Dr. Jin* (2012), *That Winter the Wind Blows* (2013), *The Queen of the Office* (2013), and *The Queen's Classroom* (2013). The remaking of Japanese originals holds more than a few advantages for both broadcasters and producers. Amid hundreds of drama proposals in a year, remake dramas most easily find distribution, because the originals are already known and supported by the public. "Remake dramas at least get us back our money's worth. With already-proven fresh and solid stories, they always guarantee stable, if not very high, ratings"; "The strongest points of Japanese dramas are character and topic, while most Korean dramas unfold stories around class relations and secrets of birth."[135] The potential of Japanese dramas to communicate with Korean audiences also buttresses ratings: "It is hard to guarantee success in remaking US, UK, or Chinese dramas because of different systems and topics. When a solo writer creates a whole drama series, it is impossible to capture the depth of the US and UK dramas. But, Japan is different. Japan and South Korea have similar social issues, such as those concerning irregular workers addressed in *The Queen of the Office* (2013; a remake of *Haken No Hinkaku*, ハケンの品格, 2007), and education as in *The Queen's Classroom* (2013; a

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[134] See Chapter 3 for spatially organized story development.
[135] Sports Kyung Hyang, "'Low-cost, high-efficiency' . . . Nothing can match remaking," 2012.06.06, http://sports.khan.co.kr/news/sk_index.html?cat=view&art_id=201306062035196&sec_id=540201.

remake of 女王の教室, 2005). The shared experiences and sensibilities ease the transnational barrier."[136]

On the other hand, producers do not need to deliver to the broadcaster all the rights to a drama, because they have acquired the rights to the original; holding the rights, independent producers have the upper hand in negotiating with broadcasters over export rights. Remaking also curtails fees for writers, as adaptations do not require the producer to hire a star writer as with an original teleplay, and indeed the trend lately has been for production firms to contract with a writer to pay a certain percentage of the proceeds for the adaptation instead of hiring the writer for a predetermined fee. Such economic factors lay behind the boom in Japanese drama remakes in the industry.[137] What is most notable is that Japanese dramas and films are remade as Korean TV dramas in order to facilitate their re-export to Japan through enhancing the familiarity of the Japanese audience; the adaptation of Japanese serials functions to ease the double barrier of the Korean and Japanese markets.

The appropriation of Japanese styles is not limited to stories. Japanese fashion, music, and food are actively represented in TV dramas through scenes and characters. Historically, the history of Japanese colonial rule of Korea prevented cultural exchanges between the two countries until 1998, when the then-president of South Korea agreed to phase in Japanese cultural products. Despite the official opening-up of cultural markets, South Korea continues to be hesitant in accepting Japanese cultural contents. While Japan is proactive in airing Korean television dramas, Korean terrestrial broadcasting stations do not show Japanese dramas.[138] However, despite South Korean cultural protectionism, Japanese styles are overtly and heavily represented in Korean television dramas as facilitators of exports to the Japanese market. Discussing the global popularity of Japanese pop culture, Iwabuchi (2002) suggests that "culturally odorless" products in which "a country's bodily, racial, and ethnic characteristics are erased or softened" (p. 28) have been critical in making inroads into international markets; for example, "the characters of Japanese animation and computer games . . . do not look 'Japanese'" (p. 28). This facilitates the comfortable acceptance of the content by international consumers. Since the Korean Wave in the early 2000s, the cultural "odor" of Korean dramas has certainly become suppressed; yet, scenes in Korean serials are being increasingly "Japanized" in order to tailor them to the Japanese market.

2) **Product Placement**

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[136] Ibid.

[137] Criticisms have also arisen over the industry's lack of long-term creative development; when writers only process existing stories, the scope of their creativity is bound to be narrowed.

[138] The historical grudges originated from the Japanese colonial rule of Korea. There were no cultural exchanges between the two countries until 1998, when South Korea lifted its ban on Japanese pop culture. Since then South Korea has phased in Japanese cultural products; however, this has so far not included an opening of terrestrial channels to Japanese broadcasting programs. Yet, Japanese television dramas enjoy a broad Korean audience, which mainly experiences them via cable TV, online, or DVDs (Koreanfilm.org).

The finale for *Elegant Revenge* is airing tonight. But the filming is not finished yet and the scenes in the last ten minutes should be filmed and edited within less than ten hours. Moreover, a managing director has been trying to insert a ten-second orange juice PPL scene (worth roughly $300,000), while a scriptwriter is refusing to change the script; the writer has explained coarsely to the director that there is no place for orange juice when the main character is supposed to die "elegantly" after completing his revenge. The director has moved to plan B and has let an assistant writer edit the script and put the orange juice scene in it, appealing to the assistant writer's dream of stardom (i.e. debuting as a main writer). Filming with revised scripts was done less than an hour before the airing time and a driver was hired to rush the tape to the broadcasting station.

This is a summary of the first episode of *The King of Dramas* (2012), whose director publicly remarked that the drama series dared to depict the "100% actual" features of the industry.[139] The first episode tells how the stories in Korean dramas are modified to take advantage of product placement.

Product placement "involves incorporating brands in movies in return for money or for some promotional or other consideration" (Gupta and Gould 1997, p. 7). Russell (1998) considers that there are three types of product placement: visual placement, placing the brand in the background of the set a show; auditory or verbal placement, in which the brand is mentioned in a dialogue; and plot placement, in which the product becomes part of the plot. Other scholars have categorized product placement into "simple arrangement" and "integrated placement." In simple arrangement, brands are featured in three primary ways: first, the product itself can be seen either in the background or, more desirably, as actually being used; secondly, a corporate logo, insignia, trademark, or other identifying feature may be shown; thirdly, an advertisement, such as a billboard or television commercial, may be placed in a scene as "ambiance" in the background (Smith 1985). "Integrated placement" or "product integration" refers to the ways in which product placement becomes a key feature of the show's plotline, and thus becomes part of the script (Wenner 2004). "Integral placement" requires planning at various stages from the basic concept to the themes and plot developments. Product placement differs from traditional advertising, which provides consumers information about the product, in that it relies on affective processes by making symbolic associations to the product (Hirschman 1988, Russell 1998).

In the Korean drama industry, product placement (PPL) conventionally covers three things: indirect advertisement, product placement proper, and sponsoring. Conceptually, there is no difference between indirect advertisement and product placement in that both refer to ways products or services are presented in media content in exchange for payment by a company selling the products.[140] Sponsoring is a type of barter arrangement where goods are supplied for use on- or off-screen, in return for being placed in the entertainment vehicle (Crisafulli 1995). Sponsoring has been used in Korean TV drama production since regulations on sponsoring were first established in 2000 by the Integrated Broadcasting Act, according to which "any broadcasting business operator may *announce* his commercial

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[139] Entertainment Today News, "The Production Processes in *The King of Dramas* Synchronized 100% with Reality." 2012.12.24, http://www.tvj.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=2359.
[140] *Korean Broadcasting Act*, Article 7.

sponsor, who provides costs, gifts, a location, costumes, vignettes, information, etc." (italics mine). The "announcement" of sponsorship is mostly carried through subtitled reference to sponsors at the end of the drama episode (Figure 5.1). Although the actual publicity effects of the subtitled acknowledgement of corporate names that is displayed for only few seconds are clearly limited, independent producers try to attract investment through sponsorship. In return, while the direct revelation of brand names or corporate logos in the middle of a show is thoroughly prohibited, most dramas try to suggest the exhibited brand names through characters who mention particular functions of a product, displays of similar logos or unique interiors of, for example, a coffee franchise.

[Figure 5.1. Subtitle Notice of Sponsorship, *Giant*(2010)]

A sea change came about in January 2010 when the Korea Communications Commission, the nation's broadcasting regulator, eased regulations concerning product placement in television programs on national networks. Under the new law, all television programs except news, documentaries, and editorial and debate shows are allowed to display brand names and corporate logos. Since this law came into effect, there has been a fundamental transformation in the channels of production funding and, more importantly, in storytelling, in Korean television dramas. There has also been a major change in the commodification of the narrative: while the conventional method for securing better advertisement effects consists in presenting better stories in order to attract more viewers, product placement turns the drama story itself into a host of advertisements, using anecdotes and dialogues to display brands and products, not to tell stories. Next, I analyze the detailed ways in which Korean television dramas insert product placement through the

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case of *Secret Garden* (2010), a drama series that is successful example of "how to attract and feature" PPLs.[141]

Secret Garden (2010) presents an inter-class love story between Gil Ra-im (played by Ha Ji-won), a poor but proud stuntwoman, and Kim Ju-won (played by Hyun Bin), an arrogant and eccentric CEO who maintains an image of seeming perfection. Unlike conventional Cinderella stories, the drama series also depicts several cases of body swapping between the two characters, who by falling in love come to understand each other's class backgrounds. Recording the highest rating, 35.2% of the audience share, *Secret Garden* sparked a trend among audiences in their 20's and 30's, and it has been exported to more than thirteen countries. I started my fieldwork when the drama series was about to end; and in my interviews with people at drama production firms, *Secret Garden* was on everyone's lips not because of its high rating and explosive popularity, but because of the series' integration of product placement into its stories. The production company, Hwa and Dam Pictures, publicly admitted that its storylines are thoroughly designed from the synopsis stage to consider product placement; the firm cooperated with a marketing firm to strategically position characters and their occupations and residential spaces with respect to the products being promoted.[142] In addition, one of my interviewees informed me that the writer of the drama maintains an extremely close relationship with the drama production firm, and that she was extremely cooperative in including product placements in her scripts; given writers' customary tendency to avoid advertisements that would hamper the narrative logic of their story, this is an unusual case of a writer sacrificing her creativity to commercial considerations.

[Figure 5.2. Mont-bell Presented in *Secret Garden*]

Thus *Secret Garden* made extensive use of product placements intertwined with the storytelling. The drama series used various techniques of product placement. One example of a simple placement was for Mont-bell, a manufacturer of outdoor gear. Mont-bell paid $300,000 to sponsor the drama series, which is an exceptional amount for a clothing firm, and enjoyed publicity effects through characters, backgrounds, and products. The female protagonist, Ra-im, is a stunt woman and in the series she often wears Mont-bell gear.

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[141] Parts of this analysis draw on the report, "Product Placement in TV Dramas and Storytelling: An Analysis of the Case of *Secret Garden*." *KOCCA Focus*. 2011/04, Issue 32.

[142] Weekly Donga, "A well-made drama, *Secret Garden*, laid golden egg of $30 million + α." 2011.01.17. http://weekly.donga.com/docs/magazine/weekly/2011/01/17/201101170500023/201101170500023_1.html.

Moreover, in one scene, a group of men, colleagues or Ra-im, go to a Mont-bell store to pick up winter jackets and the clothing store's logo is prominently displayed right behind the actors. In another scene, Oscar, one of the male lead characters who is a Hallyu star, holds a fan meeting at a Mont-bell store which enables a direct presentation of the brand's logo and store displays (Figure 5.2). After the series began to be aired, the brand quickly sold out of the products worn by the three main characters.

The Maiim Corporation, which sells cosmetics and health food products, promoted awareness of its brand through an impressive use of background settings in *Secret Garden*. Maiim offered the corporation's human resource training site, Maiim Vision Village, as a major filming site for the drama series. Maiim Vision Village was used as a suburban house that is the residence of the protagonist, Ju-won, and his cousin, Oscar. With its luxurious interior, the house served to display the upper-class lives of Ju-won and Oscar. Its spaciousness and high celling effectively symbolized the protagonists' claustrophobia and loneliness, and the house's spacious garden and lake evoked the drama's title, *Secret Garden* (Figure 5.3). When public interest in the house and its actual location were aroused, the Maiim Corporation issued a press release introducing Maiim Vision Village. By rendering the corporation's headquarters publicly recognizable, Maiim successfully planted its brand images in the minds of viewers.

[Figure 5.3. Maiim Vision Village Presented in *Secret Garden*]

There are many notable examples in *Secret Garden* of the integration of product advertisements with stories. The 2009 model BMW Z4, a luxurious sports car, appears throughout the drama series as the protagonist's car. The convertible car plays a critical role in building the character of the protagonist, who because he suffers from

claustrophobia drives an open car even in the winter. More critically, the Z4 was highlighted in the drama's climax. After Ra-im gets into an accident in a stunt action and suffers brain-death, Ju-won wants to swap bodies with her, so that Ra-im (in Ju-won's body) can continue with her life while he takes her place in Ra-im's unconscious body. Knowing that their bodies can be switched in the rain, Ju-won takes Ra-im from her hospital bed and drives off in his convertible to await the coming storm. As he sits in the car, he tells her, "I'm going to miss you a lot. I love you," and then he drives into the storm (Figure 5.4). This scene is the climax of the narrative and was conceived to be one of the key scenes of the mega-hit drama. Suitably inserted, the scene in which the convertible carrying the two lead characters rushes into the storm is an example of the integration of product placement (the Z4) with a drama narrative.
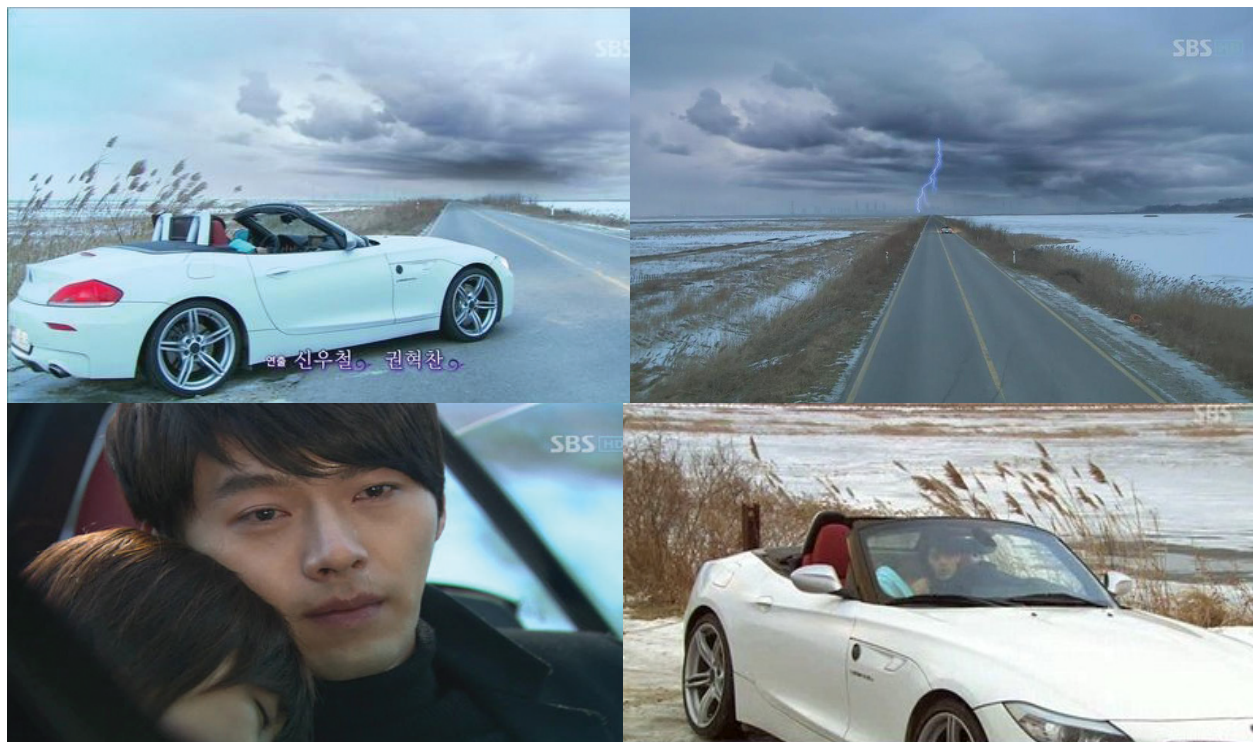
[Figure 5.4. BMW Presented in *Secret Garden*]

The "cappuccino foam kiss" scene is one of the most parodied product placements. In *Secret Garden*, all the characters are denizens of one café: Café Bene. Sponsored by the newly emerging local coffeehouse chain, the drama series use its locales as venues for the characters' daily conversations. One day, Ju-won and Ra-Im meet at the café; Ra-Im drinks a cappuccino. Noticing the foam left on her upper lip, Ju-Won kisses her to wipe off the foam. This kiss scene caused a sensation across the country and not a few celebrities parodied the scene by posting photos of themselves with foam on their lips (Figure 5.5). Photos showing people sitting in a café with a cup of cappuccino also became a phenomenon on many Korean blogs. One blogger wrote, "After watching *Secret Garden*, I have become a fan of doing sit-ups and drinking cappuccino. . . . I hope a prince charming will approach me and leave a sweet kiss". Merging product placement into an interesting drama anecdote, the "cappuccino kiss scene" is indicative of a well-designed integrated placement strategy.

[Figure 5.5. Café Bene Presented in *Secret Garden*]

After the huge success of *Secret Garden*, scenes with product placement have become a necessity in Korean television dramas; the use of advertisements is so excessive that product placement seems to have become the main purpose of drama storytelling.[143] Moreover, the invasion of commercial sponsorship has narrowed the genre, characters, and storylines of modern dramas in ways that easily enable the insertion of product placements. "Trendy dramas" that are typically based on modern Cinderella stories seem to be the most attractive stories for commercial sponsors, and often display luxury cars and designer brands; here, the display of commodities as well as the storyline targets viewers' vanity.[144] Characters are written with attributes that are designed to accommodate more product placement; for example, upper-class characters are often presented because they facilitate the display of more brand products. Thanks to live production, the stories of Korean dramas are extremely flexible, so producers are always able to add scenes of product

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[143] Responding to the heightened commercialism, audience complaints and media criticism have mounted. Blatant product placements have caused some viewers to grumble that this can ruin the experience of watching a show. Complained one viewer, "*Secret Garden* has strong production values with a creative story and meaty performances, but frequent product placements detract from its overall quality. . . . .I'm sick and tired of these advertisements." The drama *Style* (2009) has also been criticized for its extensive product placements and characters' suggestive dialogues as constituting indirect advertisements, leading one viewer to comment, "I feel like I'm watching one long commercial."

[144] Recently, more and more historical dramas have been using the technique of "time slip," in which characters travel through different time periods, as a measure to attract product placements. Due to the restrictions the pre-modern time setting entails, the time-slip historical dramas present some episodes set in the contemporary period, and these also have scenes involving product placements. *Dr. Jin* (2012), *Faith* (2012), and *Rooftop Prince* (2012) are examples of shows featuring the narrative technique of time-slip.

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placement even in the middle of a series. Of course, this heightened commercialism diminishes the diversity and creativity of the stories in Korean dramas.

In Chapter 2, I discussed the speculative activities of Korean dramas producers and their financial difficulties. The heavy dependence of Korean prime time serials on product placement well reflects the industrial conditions of their production. Television dramas are a form of commercial entertainment designed to sell products for advertisers (Fiske 1989a). Prime-time serials are especially commercial, as they bring in a significant portion of the network's revenue through advertisements. Yet, the conventional means of securing more viewers, and thus more profits, lies in storytelling, through the creation of exciting, gripping, and melodramatic stories, conventional or unconventional. Product placement, however, is eroding the basis of the shows and redefining the means of storytelling, as the stories, particularly those of modern dramas, become a patchwork of commercial advertisements.

Conclusion

On the basis of a content analysis, this chapter discusses a pair of trends in Korean prime-time television serials in the 2000s: on the one hand, a quest for better ratings has led producers of Korean dramas to deliver extremely formulaic, narrowed, fixed, and stereotyped storytelling; on the other, and a desperate need for investment and sponsorship have led them to rely on extremely flexible, improvised, and elastic texts that can be spontaneously modified to cater to sponsors. The formulaic storytelling enabled Korean serials to sell quite well during the 2000s, stimulating the "addiction" of both domestic and foreign viewers. Korean drama producers have found ways to insert scenes designed strictly for product placement for sponsors without sacrificing the overall quality of the drama. This chapter suggests that what is shown on the screen and what reflects and determines the audiences' tastes are thoroughly subject to the dynamics of capital.

Chapter 6
Conclusion: Korean Dramas, Beyond the Cultural Phenomenon

Since I conducted the research and writing for this dissertation, two significant changes have occurred in the Korean entertainment industry: the globalization of K-pop and the rise of cable television dramas. Both of these recent developments speak to the nature and current status of Korean primetime serials. While K-pop is as much an international phenomenon as the drama-driven *Hallyu*, the growing music industry has had more of an effect within the cultural arena and has fewer implications for space and society. Yet, as I discuss in previous chapters, the overseas popularity of Korean dramas has significantly transformed Korean cities and the cultural practices of middle-aged women. Secondly, the boom in cable TV dramas, which has particularly made "genre" dramas successful, is evidence that primetime serials have become too melodramatic, sponsorship-tailored, and export-oriented.

The Globalization of K-Pop Music and the Spatial Implications of Drama *Hallyu*

The current popularity of K-pop music and singers extends to East and Southeast Asia, the US, Latin America, and parts of Europe. Korean pop music began to garner foreign recognition in the late 1990s in China. The first generation of young teenage idol groups, such as H.O.T., NRG, S.E.S., Baby V.O.X., and Shinhwa, which were all produced within the training system used by major entertainment companies[145] almost accidently found their fans not only in Korea, but in East Asia broadly, mainly in Chinese-speaking regions. A more planned and systematic promotion of K-pop stars in foreign countries started with BoA, whose "Listen to My Heart" was ranked in first place on the Oricon chart in 2002, a first for Korean singers. BoA was followed by TVXQ (*Dongbang Singi* in Korean and *Tōhō Shinki* in Japanese), which debuted in 2005 in Japan and topped the weekly Oricon chart twelve times. As both BoA and TVXQ sing in Japanese and speak fluent Japanese on TV programs, most Japanese fans regarded them as Japanese and part of J-pop.[146] Following these groups, Super Junior, which like them was produced by SM Entertainment, received the adoration of fans from China and Southeast Asia.

More K-pop groups have washed ashore in Japan in earnest since 2010: Big Bang, Girls' Generation, KARA, SHINee, CNBLUE, and 2PM. Following TVXQ, these idol groups have a basic formula: a group format, combining music and dance, an emphasis on visual style, and a multimedia presence.[147] KARA and Girls' Generation particularly fueled sensations in

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[145] By implementing the typical Japanese idol production system, SM Entertainment was the first to systemize the procedure of manufacturing boy bands and girl groups for both local and foreign markets. Other music leaders, such as YG Entertainment and JYP Entertainment, soon followed in search of broader markets. These companies systematically train young wannabes, who are mostly selected via companies' exclusive audition processes, for three to seven years before their debut.

[146] About K-pop in Japan, please see Lie, John. (2012). "What Is the K in K-pop?" *Korea Observer* 43:339-363.

[147] Jung Eun-Young. "New Wave Formations: K-Pop Idols, Social Media, and the Remaking of the Korean Wave" in *Hallyu 2.0: Korean Wave in the Age of Social Media*, edited by Sangjoon Lee and Abe Markus Nornes (University of Michigan Press, forthcoming).

Japan: Girls' Generation got its Japanese debut album, "Girls' Generation," certified "One Million" by the Recording Industry Association of Japan, which made them the second Korean artist group to earn such an achievement in Japan since BoA. KARA also sold over one million singles within two years, making them one of the fastest-selling South Korean acts in Japan. While Korean music agencies have produced more idol bands, the domestic market is too small to absorb the brimming supply; thus, more and more companies now head to overseas markets. As with television dramas, the Korean music industry has found in Japan its primary target because there are still strong sales in Japan of physical music albums, in addition to digital music sales. In addition, Japan boasts a vibrant concert culture, which enables music stars to generate stunning profits.

Recent *Hallyu* K-pop idol bands have been reaching different shores, including North America, Latin America, and Europe. One incident that speaks to the intense popularity of K-pop in Europe is the "Louvre Protest." SM Entertainment announced in April in 2011 that the "SM Town Live" concert would be held for the first time in Paris, on June 10th at Le Zenith de Paris. The concert tickets were sold out 15 minutes after they were released to the public, leaving a large number of fans ticketless and disappointed. As a result, fans in France began to protest and demanded that SM Entertainment add another date for "SM Town Live in Paris." The protest, attracting hundreds of fans who danced and sang at the Louvre, caught the attention of both the local and Korean media. As a result, SM Entertainment announced that it would add another concert date.[148]

The development of social media, such as YouTube, Facebook, Myspace, and Twitter, has contributed critically to the dissemination of K-pop into broader geographies, despite the fact that most K-pop groups and songs are thoroughly targeted to either the Korean or the Japanese market. Global fans encounter Korean pop music mostly via the Internet, and participate in fandom activities through social media in the form of K-pop flash-mob contests, K-pop cover-dance contests, and music festivals.[149] Thus, K-pop idol bands such as Big Bang 2AM, 2PM, 2NE1, Girls' Generation, SHINee, JYJ, and Super Junior have "accidentally" found global fans. The formation of a global fandom has led to the increased use of YouTube channels by Korean entertainment agencies on the one hand, and to holding physical concerts in various locations across the world, including Los Angeles, New York, Paris, Sao Paolo, and Santiago on the other. The most recent and representative case of acquiring accidental celebrity via social media is Psy's "Gangnam Style." Racking up more than six hundred million hits on YouTube, the song became an instant sensation. A music producer in New York said, "It's always been the Korean media hyping up the success of Korean singers in the US. Honestly, there was never any success, but Psy might serve as a turning point for K-pop to get good exposure to the masses."[150]

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[148] Newsen, "SM Entertainment adds one more date to 'SM Town Live in Paris' concert." 2011.05.11. http://news.newsen.com/news_view.php?uid=201105111027071002&code=100200.

[149] Lee, Sangjoon and Abe Markus Nornes. (Forthcoming). *Hallyu 2.0: The Korean Wave in the Age of Social Media*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

[150] Korea Times, "Americans dance to 'Gangnam Style'." 2012.08.12. http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/special/2012/08/182_117239.html.

K-pop music has certainly built broader geographies of reception than Korean television dramas. There is a conventional distinction whereby the international popularity of Korean dramas is called the first Korean Wave and the recent global sensation of K-pop music the second Korean Wave; and not a few consider the K-pop phenomenon a bigger and more sensational one. Despite the convention of delegating the drama *Hallyu* to outdated and more regional, rather than global, phenomena, this study has argued that the drama-driven Korean Wave has shaped urbanization and cultural practices that lend themselves to insights about contemporary Korea. While the K-pop phenomenon still seems confined to the cultural arena, the drama *Hallyu* has had a spill-over effect of shaping urban phenomena. The combination of three factors—the financial predicaments of small-sized independent producers, the spatiality of drama production (on-location filming and spatially-oriented plot development), and the promotional interests of particular cities in the context of the nation's uneven development—has led to the production and consumption of Korean dramas being deeply intertwined with local urban development strategies. By addressing the ways in which cultural and urban phenomena are integrated , this study argues that the international popularity of Korean dramas has had extensive and lingering physical effects that seem likely to endure.

The Growth of Cable TV Dramas and the Reality of Primetime Serials

The recent growth and performance of cable television dramas speaks to the significance of Korean primetime serials. Cable channels, such as tvN, ch CGV, and OCN, started to produce low-budget dramas in the mid-2000s. In an effort to garner immediate attention, early period cable dramas, such as *Medical Gibang Theater* (2007),[151] *Saxy Mong* (2008), and *Kyungsung Gibang Theater* (2008), highlighted only sexual scenes. However, as more production costs were invested and some "star" directors scouted,[152] the barriers between terrestrial and cable dramas have increasingly been lowered. Shedding the stigma of "cheap" and "sensual" dramas, cable TV dramas are now reforming themselves as presenting competitive cultural content and two factors have contributed critically to their development.

Cable television dramas have established their identity as "genre" dramas, while terrestrial primetime dramas still depend on repertoires of love stories. *Byul Soon Geom* (also known as *Chosun Police*, 2007, 2008, 2010) revolves around criminal investigation and forensic procedures in the late Chosun era; *Vampire Prosecutor* (2011, 2012), a criminal procedure drama, tells the story of a prosecutor who hides his identity as a vampire and solves crimes with his special powers; *Rude Miss Young-ae* (2007-2013), the first real documentary drama filmed with 6mm cameras, describes the fat single woman Young-ae and the stress and prejudice she goes through while working overtime. Some dramas target specific audience groups: depicting friendship and fan culture in the 1990s, *Reply 1997* (also known

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[151] Here, "gibang" literally refers to a brothel.
[152] These include Yeon Jung-hoon, who starred as the lead character in *East of Eden* (2008) and *Je Jung Won* (2010), appeared in *Vampire Prosecutor* (2011, 2012); and the star director, Pyo Min-soo, who directed *Full House* (2004) and *Worlds within* (2008) and acted as creative director for *Flower Boy Ramyun Shop* (2011), starring Jung Il-woo of *My Fair Lady* (2009) and *49 Days* (2011).

as *Answer Me*, 1997, 2012) captured audiences' memories of the recent past; *Queen In-hyun's Man* (2012) and *Nine: Time Travel Nine Times* (2013) successfully utilized fantasies of "time travel" which in the two series were associated with romance and suspense. Backed by enormous audience praise and enthusiasm, these drama series have been extended several seasons, which is a rare practice for primetime serials aired through terrestrial channels.

Unlike terrestrial dramas produced via live production, cable dramas are produced in a more "reasonable" environment with ample planning and filming periods. Because there are fewer independent producers competing for access to cable channels, and because cable channels mostly produce dramas primarily for exhibition on their channel, there are no last-minute decisions regarding the finalization of a program as with terrestrial channels, and this has the consequence that there is a substantial amount of time to develop the synopsis and script of a drama series. While primetime serials are expected to air, and thus preparing for, two full seventy-minute episodes per week, cable dramas are usually shorter (around forty minutes) and have a total of only 12-16 episodes; thus, the filming and editing schedules are less tight than for their terrestrial counterparts. In the case of *Nine: Time Travel Nine Times* (2013), the advance preparation period spanned about three years and the writing of 15 out of the 20 episodes was completed well before airing; *Monstar* (2013) had more than half of its episodes shot before the first airing.[153] The long planning periods and thorough preparations mostly result in solid storylines that lend themselves to a well-made drama that does not require the appearance of "star" actors.

Cable television dramas have grown in both quantity and quality. Terrestrial primetime dramas are driven by the pursuit of high ratings and sponsorship, and of export as part of the Korean Wave. To receive high ratings, stories should be "general" rather than genre-specific, in order to attract wider audience groups; on the other hand, stories should be adjustable so that they can be adapted to and echo audience opinions. For sponsorship, stories need to be kept flexible to allow the insertion of scenes with product placements. For foreign export, stories should be ordinary enough to highlight "Hallyu stars." Certain types of historical dramas and trendy melodramas have lent themselves to a situation in which script finalization and filming take place on the same day as the air date, but they still sell. This is facilitated by the fact that there is no need to experiment with new themes when repeated, similar stories sell.[154] Such business conditions make it harder to develop for presentation as primetime serials "genre" dramas that require a seamless and tight narrative organization.

Korean Television Dramas: Going Beyond the Cultural Phenomenon

Korean television dramas have been viewed in three major ways: as (1) newly emerging cultural products in the export-driven economy, (2) an opportunity for the expression of nationalistic rhetoric, and (3) a component of a series of discourses that promote East Asia

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[153] Daily Munhwa, "'Stories', not 'provocativeness', make 'hot' cable TV dramas." 2013.06.10. http://www.munhwa.com/news/view.html?no=2013061001032630021002.
[154] Hur Ji-woong. *PD Journal*. http://ozzyz.egloos.com/4796278.

for its role in the production of popular culture. Transcending the cultural discourses and economic standards, this study has inquired into how the Korean Wave has shaped Korean television dramas in such a way as to impact urbanization and cultural practices in contemporary South Korea. Drawing on television dramas as a medium through which to address the relationships among culture, space, and society, this dissertation has argued that the production and consumption of Korean television dramas are intertwined with urban transformation and gendered socio-cultural practices. Korean television dramas have significant geographical, spatial, social, and cultural implications for contemporary South Korea.

The outstanding performance of Korean television dramas in overseas markets has transformed the drama industry in various ways. Discovering the new growing overseas demands, the most obvious phenomenon is the increase in independent producers entering the industry, often with great expectations. While major producers and media conglomerates conventionally dominate entertainment production in many parts of the world, it is interesting to see the emergence and proliferation of small-sized producers driven by the overseas boom. The 2000s may mark a transition period toward a few major production companies that will survive and reorganize the industry; yet, so far the small and medium-sized firms have persisted. Beyond the mere increase in the number of interested parties, however, the Korean Wave has reconfigured the production practices and storytelling of Korean television dramas. Production has increasingly become spontaneous and improvised in order to compete for better ratings on the one hand, while relying more upon extensive and intensive labor on the other. It is noteworthy that the outstanding performance of Korean television dramas overseas is actually driven by highly exploitative "cheap" production, mirroring the labor-intensive manufacturing exports of the 70s and 80s. The stories used in the dramas strategically target overseas audiences on the one hand, and are always flexibly changing to accept more sponsorship on the other (Chapters 2 and 5). Instead of merely celebrating the rise of Korean television dramas as a new national export product, I suggest looking inside their production system and analyzing the ways in which what is shown on the screen, the imperatives that drive the labor conditions, and what reflects and determines the audiences' tastes are thoroughly subject to the dynamics of capital.

An interesting twist is provided by the profit-driven live production, which allows for audience participation in the making of television dramas. The spontaneous production environment has nurtured an atmosphere in which producers listen to the voices of viewers and take account of them during production. By employing audience's consumption in cultural production, Korean television dramas demonstrate the interaction between production and consumption. This argues against "cultural determinism" (Adorno and Horkeimer 1979), and extend the notion of "individual agency" in mere consumption (Fiske 1989a, de Certeau 1984, du Gay 1997); despite the limitations of moderate reflection of audience opinions only for material profits, viewers certainly participate in the production of popular cultural products.

The phenomenon of the Korean Wave has also configured urban processes, as Korean cities try to benefit from the international popularity of Korean television dramas by employing

them as promotional media, and thus actively sponsoring their production. After a long history of underdevelopment, drama-themed urban development has helped Korean local states develop and promote their region. Pressured by limited tenure, local leaders have capitalized on the fast and affective dissemination of television dramas. The development of television dramas and urban places, however, has entailed different styles and cycles of consumption of popular culture and space, making Korean regional cities a testing ground for dealing with the limited stability and sustainability of drama-associated urban promotions (Chapter 3).

Korean television dramas have extended the cultural practices of both domestic and foreign female viewers. The course of economic development in Japan and South Korea has relied heavily upon the utilization of women to perform reproductive labor, aligning them with domestic space. It is intriguing to see that Korean television dramas have become a medium through which the desires of middle-aged women have become more prominently represented and cultivated in the post-development era. The consumption practices of Korean TV serials not only involve the pursuit of entertainment but also channels through which audience members can socialize, build networks, and engage in collective social projects. The cultural consumption of television dramas has accompanied the reframing of gendered social identities and the expansion and rebuilding of gendered social spaces (Chapter 4).

Although some claim that the drama-driven Korean Wave has subsided, it is more accurate to say that the international consumption of Korean television dramas has become settled and more systematically established. At the same time, drama Hallyu has pervaded contemporary South Korea in such a way as to divert the flows of media capital, transform urban landscapes, alter gender dynamics, and diversify social discourses. While the early-stage drama Hallyu presented issues surrounding the local production and transnational reception of popular culture, in its current stabilized stage it is perhaps most interesting for the ways it manifests the impact of transnational consumption on local society and urbanization.

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