

## For virtual participation:

**April 11** : Click [here](#) to join the K-Drama Literary Reading (via Zoom) with Matt Salesses and the virtual panel, “Feminist & Queer Interventions in Korean Film and Drama.”

**April 14-15** : Click [here](#) to virtually join the symposium.

# Genre, Gender, and Language in Korean Film & Drama

April 11, 13 - 15 2023

## Inaugural Annual University at Buffalo Korean Studies Symposium

The inaugural Korean Studies symposium at UB will feature scholars from the United States, Asia, and Europe examining a wide range of topics in Korean film and television, including sexuality, LGBTQ representation, translation, violence, and popular productions like *Squid Game* and *Parasite*.

### April 11 - 8 PM via Zoom

Reading of *The Sense of Wonder* by  
Matthew Salesses

9:15 - 10:30 PM,

Virtual Panel with Participants from Seoul

### Matthew Salesses

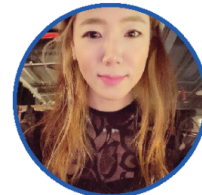
Columbia  
University



### April 13 - 6 PM Squeaky Wheel Film Center

Tri-Main Center, 2495 Main Street, Suite 310  
Film Screening and lecture on Korean Cinema  
by Molly Kim

### Molly Kim Hanyang University



### April 14 - Full Symposium Capen 10, North Campus

Keynote Address  
by Joseph Jeon

### Joseph Jeon University of California Irvine



### April 15 - Full Symposium Capen 240, North Campus

Keynote Address  
by Nam Lee

### Nam Lee Chapman University



## Program for Symposium Local

Break  
  Closing Session  
  Keynote Session  
  Meet and Greet  
  Opening Remarks  
  Panel  
 Screening  
  Special Event

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### APRIL 11 • TUESDAY

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8:00pm – 9:00pm      **K** **Keynote I: K-Drama Literary Reading with Matt Salesses and conversation with Kelly Rich** Zoom  
 K-Drama Literary Reading with Matt Salesses and conversation with Kelly Rich  
 Introduction by Margaret Rhee  
 Opening Remarks by Nojin Kwak

**Biography:** Matthew Salesses is Assistant Professor of Writing at Columbia University. He earned a Ph.D. in literature and creative writing from the University of Houston and an M.F.A. in fiction from Emerson College. He is the author of eight books, including *The Sense of Wonder*, *Craft in the Real World* (a Best Book of 2021 at NPR, Esquire, Library Journal, Independent Book Review, Chicago Tribune, Electric Literature, and others), and the PEN/Faulkner Finalist and Dublin Literary Award longlisted novel *Disappear Doppelgänger Disappear*.

9:15pm – 10:15pm      **P** **Session I: Queer and Feminist Reinterpretations in Korean Film and Drama (Seoul Participants)** Zoom  
**Dayeon Jung**

"Miss, how could such an innocent... You must be a natural." Three Sex Scenes in *The Handmaiden* and Erotic Cinema in South Korea"

**Jeongon Choi**

"Tune the Korean Television to Working Girls: Revisiting Kim Su-hyŏn's Melodramas on Television"

**Jeferson Martins**

"The Invisible Korean Queer Films of Park Chung-hee's era: Between Censorship, Resistance, and Dictatorship"

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### APRIL 13 • THURSDAY

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6:00pm – 8:00pm      **S** **Screening: Waikiki Brothers** Squeaky Wheel Film & Media Art Center  
 Squeaky Wheel Film & Media Art Center

Screening: *Waikiki Brothers* (2001)  
 Directed by Yim Soon-rye

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4/7/23, 9:21 PM

Program for Symposium Local: Print Schedule

8:00pm – 9:00pm

**K Keynote II: Molly Hyo Kim, "Korean Cinema and The Single Woman: Korean Women Filmmakers through Yim Soon-rye"**

Squeaky Wheel Film & Media Art Center

"Korean Cinema and The Single Woman: Korean Women Filmmakers through Yim Soon-rye"

Opening Remarks: Provost Nojin Kwak

Keynote II: Molly Hyo Kim, Ph.D. "Korean Cinema and The Single Woman: Korean Women Filmmakers through Yim Soon-rye"

Q/A with Margaret Rhee and Ekrem Sedar

Molly Hyo Kim is Adjunct Professor of the College of Humanities at Hanyang University. She earned a Ph.D. in Communications from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, an M.A. in Cinema Studies from New York University, and a B.A. in Communication and Culture from Indiana University at Bloomington. She has published her works in Acta Koreana, the Journal of Cultural Studies, the International Journal of Korean History, and more.

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**APRIL 14 · FRIDAY**

10:00am – 10:15am

**O Opening Remarks**

Capen 10

10:15am – 11:30am

**P Session II: North Korea and Netflix  
Moderator: Joseph Jeon**

Capen 10

**Stephen Epstein**

North Korea and Netflix: Gender, Genre and Language

**Gongju Cha**

Creating A Third Space: Transnational Korean Television Shows in the Digital Streaming Era (A Critical Reading of Sweet Home and Squid Game)

**Yeojin Kim**

Media Identity in the Era of Pandemic: K-drama on Netflix

**Amanda Wright**

North Korean Defectors in South Korean Media: Defectors' Thoughts on their Misrepresentation  
Virtual

11:30am – 11:45am

**B Break**

Capen 10

11:45am – 1:00pm P **Session III: History, Korean Film, and Popular Culture** Capen 10  
**Moderator: Nam Lee**

**Michael Ormsbee**

"My heart and my blood are in this record": Contesting History in Hanjungrok, The Throne, and Secret Door"

**Jing Peng**

"Shaping South Korea and its Ties with Hong Kong in Film Co-productions during Height of Cold War, 1950s-1970s"

**Andy Lee**

"Korea's Film Movement in the 1980s and Its Limited Praxis"

**Tanushri Banerjee**

"The art of doing nothing: a study of 'healing' genre in Korean Popular Culture" (Virtual)

2:15pm – 3:00pm L **Special Talk: Kwang Woo Noh** Capen 10

3:00pm – 3:15pm B **Break** Capen 10

3:15pm – 4:30pm P **Session IV: Romance, Gender, and K-Drama** Capen 10  
**Moderator: R.L. Cagle**

**David Oh**

Co-Production and the Ambivalent Korean Fantasy Romance in "Ultimate Oppa"

**Gunjan Gupta**

Representing Idyllic Country Life in select Korean Romance Dramas: An Escape or Reality? (Virtual)

**Millie Creighton**

"Gender, Genre, Genesis: Ideals of Masculinities and Society in Recent Korean Dramas"

**Jamie Hartford**

"Romanticization of Female Doctors' Role in Medical Dramas: An Analysis of Dr. Romantic"

4:30pm – 4:45pm B **Break** Capen 10

4:45pm – 5:45pm K **Keynote III: Joseph Jeon: "Lines Left to Cross: Deglobalization and the Domestic Western in Bong Joon-ho's Parasite"** Capen 10

Joseph Jonghyun Jeon is Professor of English and Director of Graduate Studies, English Department at the University of California, Irvine. He earned a Ph.D. in English from the University of California, Berkeley and B.A. in English from Johns Hopkins University. He is the author of Vicious Circuits: Korea's IMF Cinema and the End of the American Century (2019).

In conversation with Provost Nojin Kwak

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**APRIL 15 • SATURDAY**


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10:30am – 10:45am O **Opening Remarks** Capen 240

10:45am – 12:00pm	P	<p><b>Session V: Queer and Feminist Film Reinterpretations II.</b>  <b>Moderator: Molly Hyo Kim</b></p> <p><b>Narae Lee</b>  "Escaping Western Gaze in Understanding Korean Queer Film - Park Chan Wook's 'The Handmaiden'"</p> <p><b>Christina Klein</b>  "Restoring the History of Korea's Female Directors: Shin Su-won's Hommage (2021)"</p> <p><b>Nilesh Kumar</b>  "Anal Terror: Queering South Korean Heteronormative Patriarchal Confucianism through Gay Sex" (Virtual)</p> <p><b>Oriana Virone</b>  No catfightbutstfight: Lee Ji-won's Miss Baek's representation of female-to-female physical violence</p>	Capen 240
12:00pm – 12:15pm	M	<b>Break</b>	Capen 240
12:15pm – 1:15pm	P	<p><b>Session VI: Korean Film, Language, Music, and Form</b>  <b>Moderator: Stephanie Choi</b></p> <p><b>Gui Hwan Lee</b>  "Music as Decolonizing Agency in Bong Joon Ho's Urban-Fantasy Films: Case Studies from Host (2006) and Parasite (2019)"</p> <p><b>Nemo Kim</b>  "Creating "the 1-inch-tall barrier": Politics of Subtitling in South Korean Cinema"</p> <p><b>Franchesca Ulloa</b>  "Calligraphy of Aegyo: Captioning Culture in Korean Television Entertainment"</p>	Capen 240
2:30pm – 3:30pm	K	<p><b>Keynote IV: Nam Lee: "The Emergence of Science Fiction in South Korean Cinema: From Bong Joon Ho's The Host (2006) to Space Sweepers (2021) and Beyond"</b></p> <p>Nam Lee is Associate Professor of Film and Media Studies at Chapman University. She earned an M.A. and a Ph.D. in Critical Studies from the University of Southern California and an M.A. in Communication and Media Studies from Sogang University. She is the author of <i>The Films of Bong Joon Ho (2020)</i>.</p> <p>In conversation with Donte Mcfadden, Ph.D.</p>	Capen 240
3:30pm – 3:45pm	B	<b>Break</b>	Capen 240
3:45pm – 4:45pm	C	<b>Roundtable and Closing Discussion</b>	Capen 240

# Keynote Speakers

## K-Drama Literary Reading

### Matt Salesses

Matthew Salesses is Assistant Professor of Writing at Columbia University. He earned a Ph.D. in literature and creative writing from the University of Houston and an M.F.A. in fiction from Emerson College. He is the author of eight books, including *The Sense of Wonder*, *Craft in the Real World* (a Best Book of 2021 at NPR, *Esquire*, *Library Journal*, *Independent Book Review*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Electric Literature*, and others), and the PEN/Faulkner Finalist and Dublin Literary Award longlisted novel *Disappear* *Doppelgänger Disappear*. More information can be found [here](#).

## Korean Cinema and The Single Woman: Korean Women Filmmakers through Yim Soon-rye”

### Molly Hyo Kim

Molly Hyo Kim is Adjunct Professor of the College of Humanities at Hanyang University. She earned a Ph.D. in Communications from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, an M.A. in Cinema Studies from New York University, and a B.A. in Communication and Culture from Indiana University at Bloomington. She has published her works in *Acta Koreana*, the *Journal of Cultural Studies*, the *International Journal of Korean History*, and more.

## Lines Left to Cross: Deglobalization and the Domestic Western in Bong Joon-ho’s Parasite

### Joseph Jeon

Joseph Jonghyun Jeon is Professor of English and Director of Graduate Studies, English Department at the University of California, Irvine. He earned a Ph.D. in English from the University of California, Berkeley and B.A. in English from Johns Hopkins University. He is the author of *Vicious Circuits: Korea’s IMF Cinema and the End of the American Century* (2019).

## The Emergence of Science Fiction in South Korean Cinema: From Bong Joon Ho’s *The Host* (2006) to *Space Sweepers* (2021) and Beyond

### Nam Lee

Nam Lee is Associate Professor of Film and Media Studies at Chapman University. She earned an M.A. and a Ph.D. in Critical Studies from the University of Southern California and an M.A. in Communication and Media Studies from Sogang University. She is the author of *The Films of Bong Joon Ho* (2020).

# Abstracts

## **Creating A Third Space: Transnational Korean Television Shows in the Digital Streaming Era (A Critical Reading of *Sweet Home* and *Squid Game*)**

**Cha, Gongju**

**PhD student, Cultural Studies, Claremont Graduate University**

This research addresses Korean-serialized television shows in the digital streaming era through a transnational genre studies analysis of *Sweet Home* (2020) and *Squid Game* (2021). The research focuses on themes of multicultural minority narration, polarized class issues, and apocalyptic capitalism of the shows and how such themes open a third space that can incorporate national and international spectators. With the question of what the appropriate way of developing transnationalism in the international film and television landscape is, and how Korean television contents perform in accordance with this notion, the research argues that while the *Squid Game* narrates the multicultural minorities, *Sweet Home* expresses economically polarized class issues through its monster narratives in the viewpoints of apocalyptic capitalism. Both shows are tinted with a dystopian sense of capitalism that can draw global sympathy, and class conflicts which are more directly connected to national issues through their genre conventions and narrative structures. In this transnational combination, the research will argue that Korean serialized shows on digital platforms create a new/third space that can simultaneously reflect national and international culture through their genre hybridity and content distribution such as multiple language accessibility. Methodologically, the research applies a close textual analysis of the contents, and examination of different receptions of national and international audiences to inquire in what ways, Korean serialized shows originally made for the international audience can provide a vision for the transnational film and television culture. With the growing prosperity of transnationalism, Korean cinema has evolved as one of the major transnational cinemas in the last two decades. However, while scholars' attention has been focused on transnational Korean films of internationally well-recognized directors, studies about Korean television shows on digital streaming services are relatively underdeveloped despite their increasing popularity around the globe. This research aims to broaden the limited interpretation of Korean serialized shows that are highly understood in the manner of entertainment to a critical discourse of Korean transnational television culture.

## **Tune the Korean Television to Working Girls: Revisiting Kim Su-hyŏn's Melodramas on Television**

**Choi, Jeongon**

**PhD candidate, East Asian Languages and Literatures, University of Oregon**

This project explores the historical transition of Korean television in the early eighties, during which young female audiences target melodramas appeared. Stimulated by the increasing purchasing power of female audiences, the target audience of prime-time television shifted from general audiences to gendered audiences, in consequence, the interests of women, which often conflicted with the patriarchal order of Korean society, were represented in television shows. I notice the drama writer Kim Su-hyŏn's television dramas due to her contribution to the construction of female-centered dramas in Korean television during the transitional period. Kim, who was the writer of the most popular soap operas during the seventies, moved her focus to the melodrama genre in the early eighties. In this process, Kim transformed the genre conventions of Korean film melodramas in the seventies, which can be characterized as *hostess-melo* genre. The misogynic tropes of *hostess-melo* films, which represented the women's urban migration as sexual degradation, are reappropriated in Kim Su-hyŏn's television melodramas, and thereby, reformulated Korean film melodrama genre into female-oriented narratives. As a case study to discuss Kim Su-hyŏn's female-centered melodramas, I analyze *Love and Truth* in 1984, in which two working-class sisters choose the opposite direction between a working woman and a housewife. Contrary to the previous tropes of Korean popular culture which presumed working women as low-class laborers, *Love and Truth* offers new images of female professionals crossing the boundaries of class, education and national border. In the analysis of this drama, I attempt to revisit the viewing of women as a cultural practice to rethink a notion of women and women's genre.

## **Gender, Genre, Genesis: Ideals of Masculinities and Society in Recent Korean Dramas** **Creighton, Millie**

**Associate Professor, Anthropology, University of British Columbia**

This paper explores gender, genre, and Korean modernities via recent Korean Dramas, with particular focus on emerging masculinities. Since masculinities are constructed in relationship to feminities, juxtapositions of maleness and femaleness are also discussed. The paper moves from research and publications I did on earlier K-Dramas (such as *Winter Love Song*) showing shifting values of maleness, to two more recently produced Korean dramas in a similar genre (a long-running series of episodes), *Hotel del Luna* and *The Extraordinary Attorney Woo*. The paper suggests that in each of these K-Dramas, male characters again play dominant roles, representing shifting, modern imaging of desirable maleness. Additionally, while they may have a central male character, the two newer series present a broader panoply of multiple male characters through which a variety of admired forms of maleness are projected. These include, the sympathetic boyfriend, dedicated father, defamed scholar eventually restored to justice, peace-oriented youthful soldier, seemingly cutthroat businessperson who begins to show a 'nicer' side, and hard-working corporate employee who comes to question his dedication to his company over his estranged wife. Just as with K-Dramas helping to generate the Korean Wave at the turn of this century, the newer dramas present a cast of characters via which viewers can contemplate their lives and multiple relationships with family members, work colleagues, dating partners. However, the newer K-Dramas also address societal attitudes towards people with disabilities, as well as recognizing and challenging hierarchies of class, and region—such as the rural vs. urban power divide, to deal with other aspects of social injustice. The paper suggests an emphasis on greater gender equality tends to co-occur in society with greater emphasis on equality for other groupings such as people with non-heteroexpected gender identities, the disabled, and those with lower economic or political clout, which is consistent with recent K-dramas dealing with multiple human rights issues. The paper also suggests these newer K-Dramas, as with some previous ones, not only reflect changes in society but help create or prompt them. Thus genre merges with genesis in terms of projections and constructions of Korean (and Asian more generally) modernities.

## **North Korea and Netflix: Gender, Genre and Language** **Epstein, Stephen J.**

**Associate Professor, Asian Studies, Victoria University (Wellington)**

As Hallyu's cultural products come to occupy an ever-growing portion of the global mainstream, new audiences are increasingly exposed to South Korean domestic imaginations of North Korea, which can readily differ from international understandings. Since the beginning of the 2020s, several successful Netflix dramas such as the rom-com *Crash Landing on You* (사랑의 불시착), the dystopian social commentary *Squid Game* (오징어 게임), and the speculative fiction crime thriller *Money Heist: Korea--Joint Economic Area* (종이의 집: 공동경제구역) have made North Korean characters central to their stories. While all three shows draw upon fantastic plotlines, they also attempt to offer more nuanced views of North Koreans, and *Crash Landing on You* in particular drew praise for its use of *talbukja* informants to construct more accurate pictures of life across the border. To what extent, then, are these shows reshaping broader perceptions of a country that is often seen through singularly pejorative and often Orientalist lenses? In this talk, I will interrogate strategies of representation of North Korea and North Koreans in these three significant cultural texts to help illuminate the symposium's concern with intersections of gender, genre and language. How well is South Korea's access to new distribution platforms and global streaming services able to convey distinctions that will be more familiar and almost intuitive to domestic audiences? Is reception conditioned in part by expectations of genre? In setting up oppositions and alliances of North and South, all three shows also inevitably invoke and call into question other tenacious binary oppositions such as male vs. female, young vs. old, and elite vs. underclass. I will attempt to highlight and distinguish strategies of characterisation via speech (e.g. lexical choice, intonation, accent, verbal endings and register) that target speakers of Korean familiar with the local context as well as cues that may be observed in subtitling practices. What different tactics for conveying meaning are put into play and how are they understood by different audiences? What evidence can we glean from the now extensive fan discussions that occur at a global level?



## **Representing Idyllic Country life in select Korean romance dramas: An Escape or Reality?**

**Gupta, Gunjan**

**PhD student, English, Christ University (Bangalore)**

After the craze for South Korean pop culture in 1990s, Korean dramas have now gained immense global popularity in the last few years. K-dramas offer a wide variety of genres within the shows from romances to historical dramas to thrillers to slice of life shows; they pick narratives to suit every taste and emotion. To reflect on our busy rapid modernizing world, K-dramas very subtly portrays the negotiation between city and countryside. The warmth that the local spaces in the countryside espouse surely provides a strong sense of familiarity/desire for the idyll. This particular emotion is found in Korean romances which do not just deal with love life of characters but other overarching issues as well. The serene countryside adds to the beautiful romance brewing up; the contrast of the city and country represented by the two lovers. However, every show displays this with a certain gush of freshness. The paper would study four romances- *Hometown Cha-Cha-Cha* (2021), *When the Weather is Nice* (2020), *Warm and Cozy* (2015) and *Do do sol sol la la sol* (2020) –that bring out the characters moving from city to countryside to get closer to their roots and discovering a whole new self. Focusing on these, the paper would explore the nature of this depiction within romances, and examine if it is merely an escape or if it renders agency to the characters. These questions would also enable a better insight and nuanced understanding of the genre of romance within k-dramas. These dramas are not necessarily restricted to the emotions of love but explores grief, anger, loss etc. It would traverse through an interesting space, a Third Space, created within these romances which seems to achieve an equilibrium between the binary of these spaces. The paper would analyze these shows through –the lead characters, cinematography, lighting and sound used –and how they engage with the complexity between modern and tradition within the genre of romance.

## **Romanticization of Female Doctors' Role in Medical Dramas: An Analysis of *Dr. Romantic***

**Hartford, Jamie**

**MA (completed), Korean, University of Hawaii**

The Gangnam Station Restroom Murder Case in 2016, where a woman was randomly killed by a man who was often disdained by women at work, sparked a strong feminist movement in public. Journalists coined the term “feminist reboot” to refer to the increase in feminist awareness in reaction to this incident. The social phenomenon includes various platforms shedding light on gender inequality. For example, TV screenwriters created a wide range of stronger female characters who engage in unconventional roles, such as woman athletes succeeding in male-dominant sports as in *Weightlifting Fairy Kim Bok Joo* (MBC 2016), or workaholic women leading tech companies as in *WWW* (tvN 2019), or women desiring for power as in *Kill Heels* (tvN 2022). However, how many of these TV dramas truly empower female characters in their profession? Existing research consists of quantitative studies that focus on the overall representation of female characters throughout history and suggest that female characters' role has developed tremendously over the years. Limited scholarship, however, has focused solely on female characters' degree of engagement with their career. This paper scrutinizes the romanticization of female doctors' role in medical dramas by examining the characters of Dr. Yun Sōjōng from season 1 (2016) and Dr. Ch'aūnjæe from season 2 (2019) of *Dr. Romantic* (Nangmandakt'ō Kim sabu, directed by Yu Insik). *Dr. Romantic* is chosen for this study because it gained massive popularity during the first two seasons and because the distinctive degree of career engagement between male and female doctors is rather noticeable. This study takes two approaches. First, it will utilize Julia T. Wood's (1994) argument that the female profession is an empty descriptor, which suggests female characters are rarely seen engaging with their professional agenda. Secondly, it will utilize sociolinguistics to analyze the two doctors' conversations with their co-workers, especially her superiors. I argue that we see a positive shift in these two female doctors' communication with their superiors, they stand up for themselves. Although the screenwriter should aim to empower real-world women with fictional empowered female characters, they fail to do so, and conversely, unconsciously romanticizes these two female doctors' roles, whose seldom involvement with their profession is clearly manifested in the drama.

## **“Miss, How Could Such an Innocent... You Must Be a Natural”: Three Sex Scenes in *The Handmaiden* and Erotic Cinema in South Korea**

**Jung, Dayeon**

**MA (completed), Comparative Literature, Seoul National University**

This paper aims to examine how Park Chan-wook's *The Handmaiden* (2016) parodies pornographic “lesbian sex number” conventions in its repeating sex scenes to ridicule and criticize the male centered genre. Placing *The Handmaiden* in softcore erotic genre, which has been largely ignored by critics, this paper tries to focus on the three sex scenes repeated through the part three structure of the film. Although the sex scenes of *The Handmaiden* have been usually criticized as redundant, the reviews have seldom analyzed the sex scenes respectively. I argue that the sex scenes of *The Handmaiden* are excessive yet not superfluous, because it stands in the softcore erotic film tradition with the “sex numbers.” The three sex scenes changes their implication through the film. In the part two sex scene, Sookhee exclaims to Hideko, who is an pornography literary expert, that “You must be a natural” to perform sex without knowing anything. *The Handmaiden* is like Hideko who knows well about the generic conventions yet acts as if it knows nothing. The audiences are easily fooled to think that the film is not about the erotic genre. However, I argue the film functions as a critic of erotic genre while it is a part of it. As the pornographic knowledge that oppressed Hideko sexually becomes her strength to coax Sookhee to have sexual intercourse, the film turns the male centered genre convention of “lesbian sex number” into a mere artificial and superficial symbol that serves to conceal but also reveal Sookhee and Hideko's genuine love. By citing, appropriating, and finally eradicating the “original,” *The Handmaiden* dreams a utopia, a place that cannot exist, that expressions are liberated from the reference floating freely on the ocean of pleasure.

## **Creating “The 1-inch-Tall Barrier”: Politics of Subtitling in South Korean Cinema**

**Kim, Nemo**

**Journalist**

I am interested in researching how and why the target language in the subtitling of Korean films to English from the late 1990s to 2019 (prior to the success of “Parasite”) continuously faltered between the nondescript “Europe-friendly” British English and its North American counterpart. My argument is that this was due mainly to three factors: South Korea's historical alliance with the U.S. conflicting with the industry's desire to do well at European film festivals, the South Korean film industry focusing on achieving award-related success at European film festivals rather than seeking box office and/or critical acclaim in North America and, lastly, the role played by European film critics and festival programmers who started introducing and showcasing Korean cinema in Europe towards in the 1990s. Drawing from my experience of subtitling several Hong Sang-soo films and translating scripts by director Lee Chang-dong as well as referring to the subtitling theory and methodology of Jorge Diaz Cintas and others, I will explore how the relationship between the two versions of English reflect the changing desire and ambition of the South Korean film industry from the Korean New Wave of the 1990s to the 2019 edition of Cannes at which Parasite won Palme d'Or.

## **Media Identity in the Era of Pandemic: K-drama on Netflix**

**Kim, Yeojin**

**PhD candidate, English, Binghamton University**

The emergence of the OTT platform has swept over the global media landscape, allowing borderless media content consumption and distribution, under unexpected circumstances shaped simultaneously by neoliberalism and the pandemic. While this development seems unstoppable, the nation-states have attempted to tighten their border controls, leading to the intensive categorization of (un)identifiable bodies and subsequent forms of isolation and detachments. These paradoxical cultural flows render Asian content visibility especially notable in the global mediascape, but this visibility ironically makes Asian content distinguishable, positing it as exotic, different, and abnormal. For instance, *Minari* (2020) directed by Korean American director Lee Isaac Chung obtained significant attention from the cinematic marketplace, but it was categorized as a ‘Foreign’ language film in the Golden Globes. Similarly, even with its tremendous popularity and intersectional collaboration with transnational pop singers and producers,

K-Pop is regarded as a “crappy virus” (Iasimone) or “deformed aesthetic” (Cheng et al) in the western pop market. In the meantime, South Korean content, so-called K-content, tactically adopts this marked biopolitics in mediascape during the Pandemic era to penetrate the global OTT market. During the Pandemic, K-content TV series such as *Kingdom* (2019-), *Sweet Home* (2020), *Squid Game* (2021), *Hellbound* (2021), and *All of Us Are Dead* (2022) use deformed, monstrous, and expelled others to construct the new Korean Uncanny genre that meets the unconscious and conscious expectations of the global audience for Asian media. However, by portraying how neoliberalism catalyzes the deformation of postcolonial South Korean subjects, the Korean uncanny TV series reveals how the global OTT series works as an agent of Neoliberalism, promising an equal free market but categorizing contents through biopolitics and labeling K-content as other. In this paper, by examining Netflix’s TV series *Squid Game*, I will discuss how postcolonial subjects decide to deform their identity to enter the neoliberal market that holds out the fantasy of equal opportunity, and later debunk the false promises of neoliberalism, which constructs a no-winner game based on inequality. Juxtaposing the neoliberal games happening in *Squid Game* with the global OTT market system, this paper will analyze how biopolitics operates in the neoliberal free market, promising never-achievable goals of equality, and how the Korean Uncanny intentionally deforms its identity, platform, and genre to penetrate the global OTT market and to debunk the dark promise of neoliberal capitalism.

### **Restoring the History of Korea’s Female Directors: Shin Su-won’s *Hommage* (2021)**

**Klein, Christina**

**Professor, English, Boston College**

I’ve been teaching Korean cinema for many years and routinely focus on issues of gender, but not until this past semester did I teach a film directed by a woman. With so many great films directed by men, I couldn’t seem to find space in my syllabi for the smaller films directed by women. This is, of course, appalling. Shin Su-won explores precisely this state of affairs in her masterful *Hommage* (2021), a low-key independent film that delves deeply into the difficulties faced by female filmmakers today and shows how little has changed since the days of Park Nam-ok, Korea’s first female director. *Hommage*’s multi-layered narrative tells the fictional story of a struggling female director who is hired to restore *A Woman Judge* (1962), an actual film directed by Korea’s second female director, Hong Eun-won, which told a fictionalized, happy-ending story about Korea’s first female judge, Hwan Yun-suk, who was in reality murdered by her husband and/or in-laws. Through interweaving story strands, *Hommage* illuminates the long-standing obstacles faced by professional and creative women, the routine contempt directed at them by men, and the impossibility of satisfying unyielding domestic demands. With this paper I hope to introduce *Hommage* into the critical conversations of Korean film studies and thereby render it conceptually available to students and scholars who, like myself, have undervalued the work of female filmmakers. My analysis has two parts. First, it will focus on the film’s overtly self-referential *mille-feuille* structure, showing how Shin uses visual and narrative repetitions to think historically about women’s role in Korean cinema. Second, it will show how Shin’s engagement with Hong’s film is part of a larger trend among cultural producers, including Bong Joon-ho and RM of BTS, who are increasingly entering into conversation with creative works from the 1960s and 1970s. By delving into Korean cultural history, these artists are educating the world (and many Koreans) about a body of cultural production with which many people are unfamiliar and thereby extending the branches of *hallyu* back into the Korean past.

### **Anal Terror: Queering South Korean Heteronormative Patriarchal Confucianism through Gay Sex**

**Kumar, Nilesh**

**Film Programmer and Curator, Film Studies**

Spanish philosopher, writer, and curator Paul B. Preciado wrote his essay titled *Anal Terror* in 2009. The main premise of this essay is about Anal Castration; the idea that everyone has an anus, which can be penetrated, however, in European history men have closed off their anus to allow them to retain more power over the ‘second sex’ - women. Men are the penetrators, women are the penetrated. Men colonise, women are colonised. A textual analysis of *Faceless Things* (2005) by Kim Kyung-mook serves as the

main basis to test this idea. *Faceless Things* contains three short stories. The main one features an older married bisexual/gay man who is courting a younger man (a high school student). The film is revealing in its depiction of men who have sex with men (MSM), living under the radar due to negative notions in the culture of homosexuality and strong expectations of marriage to the opposite sex in South Korean culture. *Faceless Things* accepts and exhibits homosexuality, plus disobeys anal castration. The married man is conservative, patriarchal, and displays clear signs of 'anal castration' in his belief system. The high school student represents the younger generation - a more open homosexual who is willing to question the patriarchal system. In this paper, I focus on the concept of Anal Castration and how it can be transposed to South Korean culture. Statistics from 2018 state that men conducted sexual harassment in 98% of cases, with women being the victims 86% of the time. More than 50% of all homicide victims are women; one of the highest rates of female murder in the world. On the topic of the global gender gap, in 2020, South Korea was 127 out of 153 countries in economic participation and opportunity, confirming the country as having the largest gap within advanced economies. The aforementioned statistics provide a brief insight into some of the hardships that women face in this male-dominant militarised culture. If women were not the only ones being penetrated in sexual relationships with men, and instead, they also penetrated men using their finger(s) and/or sex toys such as a strap-on, would this help to create more balance between the two sexes? Even without actual penetration, would discourse about men having a g-spot inside their anus change perceptions of heterosexual sexuality?

### **Korea's Film Movement in the 1980s and Its Limited Praxis**

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In the 1980s, South Korea's film culture started to take a new turn. There was a trend in which many Korean films were being recognized and winning awards at international film festivals. As a part of the New Wave movement, Korean cinema was gaining worldwide attention and began to be seen as an artwork worthy of global recognition. Therefore, during this period, the local market stopped using film to advance a nation-centered ideology of Korea and instead increasingly promoted Korean film as a part of world cinema. The question "What is Korean cinema?" is one that filmmakers, academics, and film critics have asked ever since then. As the country entered the 1990s, there was a growing understanding of what Korean film is and should be, which corresponded with globalization. This occurred at a time when independent filmmaking was on the rise and club activities at universities were no longer prohibited by the 1984 University Autonomy Law. As the law went into effect, young cinema aficionados started to gather around the schools, and from there on, the theorization and praxis of the so-called "film movement" [*yŏnghwaundong*] developed around these clubs. Such a movement basically denounced existing mainstream Korean cinema, particularly commercial Korean films that were heavily influenced by Hollywood, sharing the spirit of "Third Cinema." Members of several groups pondered what progressive and alternative film should entail. This film movement was basically aligned with various democratic movements at the time, and it had a distinctly anti-American stance. This paper will explore the history of the film movement and evaluate a few films created by young filmmakers involved with the movement, who confront their limitations by depicting problematic gender representation in order to accomplish the movement's democratic purpose.

### **Music as Decolonizing Agency in Bong Joon Ho's Urban-Fantasy Films: Case Studies from *Host* (2006) and *Parasite* (2019)**

**Lee, Gui Hwan**

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Since the global emergence of South Korean cinema during the 2000s, critics have praised Bong Joon Ho's films as entertaining but provocative urban fantasies. Shown in Claudia Gorman (2018) and Gui Hwan Lee (forthcoming), his films have also inspired film music scholars through a diversity of topics. This paper focuses on one of such topics, namely the decolonizing agency demonstrated by Bong's musical partners. I argue that these musicians, especially Lee Byung Woo and Jung Jae Il, not only contributed to the eccentric power of Bong's urban fantasies, but also explored the decolonizing agencies that play with colonial legacies as well as Western dominance in domestic music culture. These agencies are observed in

the following three types of soundtracks: 1) soundtracks that celebrate low-brow and stigmatized genres in Korean popular music, especially the genres originated from the colonial past; 2) soundtracks that quote Western classical music in satire of the high-brow cultural habitus established during the rapid westernization; and 3) soundtracks that recreate classical music traditions in intentionally kitschy manners. In illustration of the decolonizing agencies in practice, I consider a few representative examples selected from *Host* (2006) and *Parasite* (2019). Both films are set in contemporary Seoul, associated with dark fantasies recalling Edgar Allen Poe, and filled with the soundtracks exemplary about decolonizing agencies. If Lee Byung Woo's soundtrack for *Host* shows a celebration of "trot" as a stigmatized low-brow music in Korea, Jung Jae Il's score for *Parasite* shows a cynical quotation- and a mock recreation of Baroque music, thus responding to the film's satire of South Korean upper-class habitus. In conclusion, this paper summarizes the reasons why Bong's musical partners and soundtracks deserve further research and pedagogical use as follows: first, discussing Bong's musical partners facilitates a deeper understanding of the director's urban fantasies; second, the same discussion also enables a proper appreciation of the contributions made by Bong's- and other musicians to the global success of Korean cinema; third and last, Bong's musical partners and their works can stimulate scholarly or classroom discussions to reconsider the colonial legacies persisting in the postcolonial societies.

### **Escaping Western Gaze in Understanding Korean Queer Film - Park Chan Wook's 'The Handmaiden'**

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As Korean cinema gains prominence in the west, it is inevitably subjected to interpretation through the lens of the Western gaze. In many cases, it leads to misinterpreting the film by forcing its social context to fit Western concepts. Korean queer films are not an exception. Korean, and more broadly East Asian society, has historically harbored a deep-rooted homophobia that often leads the audience to ignore homosexuality in society and in film. On the other hand, the progressive values of LGBTQI+ community in the USA has been studied and observed often in the Western media, independent of how homosexuality is viewed in larger society. The Korean and American queer communities have been developing in dissimilar contexts, and so did their respective queer film scenes. Recognizing the disparity between the two communities, this talk discusses the danger of interpreting Korean queer films through the lens of the West. Focusing on Park Chan Wook's 'The Handmaiden', some of the themes in the film have been criticized on the internet mostly from Western audiences for failing to capture a liberating story for women, instead shaping it to suit men's taste. The controversial sex scene, especially, has been criticized for its performative and curated setting for the audience. The talk will discuss the reason it has to be understood considering the social, cultural and political context of Korea rather than reduce it to mere 'male-gaze in lesbian film'. In this talk, I will look into the tendency of the Korean audience's refusal to perceive homosexuality in queer film as it is, but rather approach it as individuals falling in love with each other. Further, I will elucidate how subverting the power between male and female protagonists was employed as the first step for the Korean commercial queer film scene as the Korean audience remains hesitant to acknowledge its LGBTQI+ community. Because the bar to be accepted as a lesbian film is so high, 'The Handmaiden' needed to be explicit in establishing the certain scenes and characters.

### **The Invisible Korean Queer Films of Park Chung-hee's Era: Between Censorship, Resistance and Dictatorship**

**Martins, Jeferson**

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The rise of the queer debate in the mid-1990s sparked an expansion of non-normative sexuality and gender representation in the South Korean film industry. Still, little is known about queer movies in the past. While the Korean Film Archive (KOFA) tends to overlook the queer subject in the earliest decades of Korean cinema, research about this topic is still in an embryonic stage. This paper addresses the challenges of queer cinema during an age when homosexuality was too invisible to the public eye. Tracing back to Park Chung-hee's regime, censorship and film control contributed to the strangulation of queer texts in cinema. Filmmakers who attempted to bring homosexuality to the forefront of the screen had to

put the theme down discretely – inconspicuous to heterosexual eyes. As a historical and political object, film here is highlighted as a media that undercovers the existence of queer subject in Korean history. By relying on queer readings that deconstruct normative ways of film analysis, the research investigates censorship documents provided by KOFA in order to reveal the suppressed content of queer movies. This data is used as a source to reconstruct the memory of Korean film history and to understand the logic behind the queer repression during Park Chung-hee's regime. When combined with film readings, these documents serve as a counter-archiving practice that promotes the queerization of the heterosexual film archive. To this extent, two queer films from the 1960s and 1970s are analyzed. First, *The Pollen of Flowers* (*Hwabun*, Ha Gil-jong, 1972) is used to discuss political opposition, the state of art films, and gay representation. Secondly, *Ascetic* (*Geumyok*, Kim Su-hyeong, 1976) serves to deliberate about the lesbian portrayal and the intensified censorship during the Yushin Motion Picture Law. Furthermore, the paper turns towards a closer look to recover the lost memories of Korean queer cinema during Park's dictatorship and recall a refurbished archive that produces new historical views of the past. The findings demonstrate that although censorship reinforced the suppression of queer texts, societal pressures and medical discourses about homosexuality also shaped the queer discourse in these movies.

### **Co-Production and the Ambivalent Korean Fantasy Romance in the “Ultimate Oppa” Oh, David C.**

**Associate Professor, Communication Arts, Ramapo College of New Jersey**

*Abstract:* Foregrounding the Korean Wave in storylines, there have been notable co-productions that have cinematically addressed the Southeast Asian fan of “K-Dramas” and her travels to South Korea (hereafter, Korea). Notably, in 2022, *Ultimate Oppa*, a Filipino-South Korean co-production, and *Ajoomma*, a Singapore- South Korean, co-production, were released. Because *Ajoomma* is not yet widely available in the U.S., this essay focuses attention on *Ultimate Oppa* to understand the ideological meanings produced through co- production. In most studies of East Asian co-productions, the interest is between a Western and Asian nation. Although this produces important insights, such as Peng's (2016) observation that co-productions have the possibility of counter-hegemonic meanings because co-productions, it unintentionally centers the West in the literature. As Chen (2010) argues in *Asia as Method*, it is equally important to understand inter- Asian relationships that do not reference the West in order to move toward a decolonial knowledge formation. The purpose of this paper, then, is to follow a decolonial impulse to understand the meanings produced in an all Asian co-production. Yet, it would be naïve to assume that the exclusion of the West produces flattened hierarchies and ideological symmetries. With *Ultimate Oppa*, the relationship between the Philippines and Korea is set against the macro-level influences of unequal “soft power” between Korean and Philippine media and Korea's more influential geopolitical position, and against the particular unevenness in the production of this specific text, including mostly Korean cultural workers – director, most screenwriters, cinematographer, and several producers. As such, this essay argues that *Ultimate Oppa* presents a cross- national romantic fantasy ambivalently. Specifically, I argue that the film presents a Filipina woman's heterosexual romantic fantasy within dialectic tensions: (1) undesirable and desirable Koreans and Filipinos, (2) illusory and actualized Korean romantic fantasy, and (3) liberating and conservatizing desires.

### **“My Heart and My Blood are in this Record”: Contesting History in Hanjungrok, The Throne, and Secret Door**

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The question of how fiction should represent history resurfaces with each new generation of popular media. Korea has been no exception; one need only point to the controversy raised by the 2021 drama *Snowdrop* to see how historical distortion can anger an audience. Controversy like that caused by *Snowdrop*, to say nothing of earlier historical films and drama (*sageuk*), raises a question: Do dramas have a responsibility to stay as close as possible to the “facts” of history? And if the “facts” of history are themselves hotly contested, what criteria should guide the representation of historical figures and events? I seek to answer these questions by examining historical texts, film, and drama concerned with one of the most shocking events in Korean history: the death of Crown Prince Sado of the Joseon Dynasty. The

circumstances of Prince Sado's death remained shrouded in mystery until the publication of the autobiography of his wife, Lady Hyegyong. The autobiography is called *Hanjungrok* and was translated into English as *The Memoirs of Lady Hyegyong*. In it, Lady Hyegyong recounts the circumstances of Sado's life, from his cold relationship with his father to his worsening mental illness and the atrocities that he committed before his death. It mattered greatly to Lady Hyegyong that her record be recognized as truth. She wrote in part to debunk a conspiracy theory denying Sado's insanity and claiming he had simply been a victim of political intrigue. This conspiracy theory has had a vibrant second life in modern Korean film and television. I propose to read *The Memoirs of Lady Hyegyong* against the 2012 film *The Throne* and the 2014 drama *Secret Door*. While both works invent much that has no basis in history, *The Throne* stays closer to the account given in the *Memoirs*, while *Secret Door* closely hews to the conspiracy theory. Finally, while recognizing that film and television have no inherent obligation to represent history faithfully, I propose simple, concrete steps broadcasting companies can take to acquaint general audiences with the facts and questions of history on which so many gripping narratives are based.

### **Telling a Korea Story: Representing THE Korea on the Hong Kong Screen during 1950s-1970s**

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After the Korean War, the Korean peninsula, along with most parts of the world, was doomed to the most confrontational years of the Cold War that followed. Unlike within their own country where a one-sided, united, dominant idea about Korea was within their capacity to indoctrinate the masses, and unlike in their competing counterpart (the other Korea) where it was not possible to preach their propaganda on an effective scale, two Koreas cast their eyes on the rest of the world to battle for the right to define Korea, especially regions like Hong Kong where opposite ideological camps could de facto coexist and exert impact in competing ways. One most effective way was cinema, the industry of which in Hong Kong was pioneering in Asia and beyond during those decades. South Korea mainly found their voice in film co-productions with Hong Kong filmmakers, while North Korea exported their films to the Hong Kong and mainland Chinese markets. Noticeably, both the heights of South Korea-Hong Kong co-productions and North Korean film exports in Hong Kong were around 1957-1973. In this research, I look at major film activities two Koreas engaged in during the 1950s to 1970s, including film festivals, film co-productions, and film exporting, to see the vehicles through which two Koreas define themselves to others. And then, in particular, I look at the co-productions between South Korea and Hong Kong, to explore how South Korea took advantage of the Hong Kong film industry, the most influential Asian one at that time storming the markets of East Asia, Southeast Asia, and even the United States and Europe, to shape and tell a Korea story, thus maximizing the range of South Korean propaganda influence in battlefields full of potentials and possibilities. I mainly look at espionage films, melodramas, and martial arts films among all the co-productions, arguing that a sense of political alliance between South Korea and Hong Kong was enhanced through stories of, for instances, South Koreans and Hong Kongers working together against North Korea, romance between South Korean men and Hong Kong women (I term it as “한남콩녀”), common Confucian values, and shared antagonism against Japan due to the mutually relatable colonial history. On the North Korean side, I look at materials on the 14 films exported and screened in Hong Kong and explore their ways of voicing their messages and defining their Korea.

### **Calligraphy of Aegyo: Captioning Culture in Korean Television Entertainment**

**Ulloa, Franchesca**

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**Kim, Pil Ho**

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As a product of significant international export, contemporary Korean television entertainment programming (*yenŭng*) provides more than a difference of language, but also presents a notably different standard when it comes to the consumption of visual media, including its “captioning culture.” This study explores how producers of three variety shows, *Hello Counselor* (Annyŏnghaseyo), *Weekly Idol* (Chugan aidol), and *Running Man* (Rŏnning maen) across different broadcast stations (KBS, MBC, and SBS

respectively) use “impact captions” to accentuate and enhance the viewers’ experience with variety shows. While expressing anger, embarrassment, *aegyo* (cuteness), and more, the position, color, font, and form of expression are analyzed from the first five minutes of each show. This study contributes to English language research of Korean media captioning that has expanded from television screens to becoming the standard editing styles for videos across countless Korean visual content channels. For a foreign viewer of Korean television, it is not easy to understand the complexity and fondness Korean audiences may have towards what seems, at first, to be a mere distraction. However, after spending the time to learn more about its history and explore its purposes, one can have a better appreciation of how much work goes into the production of such entertainment programs. In addition to the peculiar visual aesthetics, impact captions play an important role as a narrative device, injecting a third-person voice into the scene or dialogue unfolding in front of the viewer. We argue, therefore, that impact captions embody intermediality in the true sense of the term as captioning culture spreads across different visual media platforms, such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok and others in the digital age. Originating from Japanese television shows, currently Korean entertainment programs are at the forefront of its global spread thanks to the rising popularity of *Hallyu* and K-pop, whose idol stars make frequent appearances on variety shows to make themselves personable to the viewers by displaying *aegyo* and other emotional expressions.

### **No Catfight but Fistfight: Lee Ji-won’s *Miss Baek*’s Representation of Female-to-Female Physical Violence**

**Virone, Oriana**

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Patriarchal societies’ collective unconscious tends to identify violence as a manly prerogative. This is reflected in cultural representations, including in cinema. Of course, this does not mean that violent women are excluded from the big screen. Nonetheless, when women do cause physical harm in fiction, it is often because they are badass killers, avengers, superheroines or maniacs. Furthermore – excluding within the porn industry – female characters fight off screen, in a comical way, in an aesthetic way, against men. On the other hand, any representation is intrinsically connected to historical, social and political background. It is therefore interesting to look at the 2018 Lee Ji-won’s South Korean feature *Miss Baek*. The movie revolves around Sang-ha (Han Ji-min). The latter is mourning her mother and crosses the path of a young girl being abused by her father and her stepmother Joo Mi-kyoung (played by actress Kwon So-hyun). In her attempt to save the child and to heal her past traumas, Sang-ha confronts Mi-kyoung and the two women end up fighting with all of their might. A closer look at the film, and more specifically at its fighting scene between the two protagonists, will allow to explore various questions. Firstly, is that specific scene challenging Korean audiovisual and narrative gender norms? Can that scene be understood as a new empowering display of femineity or, on the other hand, as women performing masculinity? What is more, has the current gender debates in South Korea provided a fertile ground for this scene to exist? If so, how? Is the display of violence between women an attempt to reclaim social and political power? These questions will be discussed by intertwining literature review from film studies, Korean studies and gender studies with the actual fighting scene, while contextualizing the feature in its socio-political and cinematic South Korean background.

### **North Korean Defectors in South Korean Media: “They Don’t Represent North Korean Defectors at All”**

**Wright, Amanda**

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I hope to present ongoing research, the initial findings of which were presented in “North Korean Defectors in South Korean Media: The State of Representation and Defectors’ Thoughts on Infotainment, *Squid Game*, and How Their Community Can Be Better Portrayed,” which includes the titular quote a defector gave. This article was written after interviewing just three defectors, and while it was a helpful start to investigating defector representation, the unexpected findings require further examination. Part of the conclusion was predictable; defectors were uncomfortable, offended, and discouraged by what they saw as overt sexual and victimization in traditional South Korean media. However, their intense



frustration at the 'Strong North Korean Defector Woman' stereotype was surprising. This has clear parallels to the problematic 'Strong Black Woman' stereotype, which was outside the scope of the previous piece to discuss at length. It also may be seen as an iteration of the 'Dragon Lady' stereotype, present both in Eastern and Western representations of Asian women. Also significant is that this portrayal is being done by the South Korean-born majority through their near monopoly in the representation of the already highly stigmatized North Korean defector minority. I plan to interview at least five additional defectors and present their views more completely than is customary (as done in the aforementioned piece). Though rather bulky, it is vital to present the public a more thorough summary of interviewee responses than the sporadic quotes that are commonly used. With five to ten respondents, it may not be possible to include a thorough synopsis of every answer in the body of an article; however it is necessary to have such summaries available online or by request (with such availability noted in published works), in addition to the more succinct presentation of responses in a peer-reviewed format. This is uncomfortable for many of us as authors, but such reductions in gatekeeping are especially important when dealing with marginalized groups.