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* Moribito stars Haruka Ayase as bodyguard Balsa. http://dramaquarterly.com/spirit-guardian/

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SERIES has two main purposes: first, to respond to the surge of scholarly interest in TV series in the past few years, and compensate for the lack of international journals specializing in TV seriality; and second, to focus on TV seriality through the involvement of scholars and readers from both the English-speaking world and the Mediterranean and Latin American regions. This is the reason why the journal's official languages are Italian, Spanish and English.

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EDITORIAL

INTRODUCTION: SERIALS IN EAST ASIA

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This special issue of *Series* offers an introduction to the television serial industry that has flourished in East Asia over the past half century and has engaged millions of viewers across China, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, amongst others. Serials from South Korea and Japan are frequently sold to other countries and dubbed or subbed into other languages, and thus reach large audiences in countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines or Vietnam. It is also common for a serial to be remade elsewhere – perhaps the best known of these is the cluster emanating from the Japanese manga serial *Hana Yori Dango* (Boys Over Flowers) by Kamio Yoko, serialized from 1992 to 2003. It was adapted as a live action television serial in Taiwan in 2001 as *Meteor Garden,*[1] as *Hana Yori Dango* in Japan in 2005, as *Boys Over Flowers* in South Korea in 2009, as *Siapa Takut Jatuh Cinta* (Who's Afraid of Falling in Love?) in Indonesia in 2017, and as a remake of *Meteor Shower* and *Meteor Garden* in China in 2009 and 2018, respectively. The cross-border interest that accompanies such movements also supports drama-themed tourism, as fans of particular serials seek to visit places where favourite scenes were filmed. Such tourism has been cultivated as an element of the 'Korean wave', for example – after the great success of the historical drama series *Dae Jang Geum* (also known as *Jewel in the Palace*) in 2003, a *Dae Jang Geum* theme park was opened in 2004 and remained open to the public until 2014 (it continues as a site for subsequent historical dramas). Informal tourism is also popular, and more recently online sites have carefully documented every filming location in Korea and Quebec that appears in *Dokkaebi: The Lonely and Great God* (2016-2017).[2] A visit to such a location enables visitors to imaginatively embed themselves within the serial by replicating an action or gesture performed there by their favourite characters and recording it on camera.

Despite the massive popularity of television serials across the region, they remain virtually unknown in the West and have received almost no scholarly attention. The seven articles that follow here deal with a tiny sample of the vast number of drama serials that have been produced.[3] They cannot illustrate how East Asian television drama represents all possible serial genres, although serials are in general not concerned to be generically 'pure' but choose to blend genres in order to tell their stories in the most effective way. Across their range, these serials comprise legal dramas, detective fiction, historical period drama, medical drama, science fiction, teen rom-com, and others. Television serials are mostly tied to realist representation, even in historical period drama, but there has been an increased interest in fantasy in recent decades. Fantasy may be located in exotic supernatural or parallel worlds but is more likely to employ stories from mythology and folklore. In addition to blending genres, serials from different countries will, unsurprisingly, differ modally: for example, Japanese serials lean toward realism, whereas realism in Korean serials is predominantly depicted as melodramatic.

A crucial issue in discussion of East Asian serials is the distinction between *serial* and *series*. The basic distinction here is that made by John Fiske: a series relates a gathering of stories, each of which is contained within a discrete episode, while a serial is constructed as continuous storylines – normally more than one – that continue through each episode (Fiske 1987: 150). From the beginning of their production, East Asian narrative serials have a scheduled definite endpoint and, in comparison with the self-contained programs in American series, for example, would fall within a loose construction of a 'mini-series' or 'limited series' with one continuous storyline. The programs discussed in the following articles range in length from the five episodes of the 2008 Hong Kong mini-series *The Trading Floor* to the forty episodes of both *The Greed of Man* (Hong Kong, 1992) and *Guardian* (China, 2018). There is no meaningful median figure, as the four production industries discussed here have different conventions. Japanese serials, also known as *doramas*, usually comprise ten to fourteen one-hour episodes, in which one story runs throughout the episodes and thus character and situation can be explored more deeply than in a series made up of discrete episodes. The most common duration of Korean serials is sixteen one-hour episodes, although longer serials are not uncommon and a very popular program that has not been pre-produced can have two or more episodes added. At the time of writing, China has the longest running serials, with forty episodes each of forty-five minutes the median length. However, the crucial point is that all of these programs are not series but serials with one main narrative arc. The live-action Japanese fantasy serial *Guardian of the Spirit* (22 episodes, 2016-2018) is thus framed by the quest of female hero Balsa to protect Prince Chagum from the as-

1 Because of the long timespan over which a manga serial can extend, and the inclusion of many self-contained episodes without any connection to other parts of the series, it is not unusual for intermedial adaptations to appear before the original series has concluded.

2 For example: http://www.flyhoneystars.com/2016/12/26/filming-location-goblin-the-lonely-and-great-god/; http://pheurontay.com/drama-goblin-filming-locations/; and https://myhungrypress.com/goblin-filming-sites/.

3 The online site 'Dramaload' (http://www.dramaload.se/drama-list/) enables viewers to watch or download around 850 South Korean drama serials produced since 2000 and here made available subtitled in English. The list is far from comprehensive and represents only one country in the region.

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sassins who seek to kill him, but the building blocks of the narrative are discrete episodes. *Guardian of the Spirit*, like the Korean serial *Let's Fight, Ghost* (2016), works within a structure in which, according to Jason Mittell (2015: 19), plotlines are centred on series-long arcs while still offering episodic coherence and resolutions.

This principle of the integrity of episodes within an overarching frame is overtly disrupted in *Dokkaebi: The Lonely and Great God* by spreading a segment within a micronarrative across two episodes. A self-reflexive example appears within a recurrent story-line involving attempts by the greedy aunt of Ji Eun-Tak, the female protagonist, to find Eun-Tak's bankbook and gain access to the money from her mother's life insurance. In Episode 2 the aunt attempts to get rid of two buffoonish loan sharks by telling them about the bankbook, and so they kidnap Eun-Tak as she leaves school. The episode concludes on a country road with an exaggeratedly dramatic cliffhanger when Kim Shin and the *jeoseung saja,*[4] the two immortal male leads, appear in order to rescue Eun-Tak. The rescue is accomplished in the first eight minutes of Episode 3 in a segment which is one of the serial's funniest: its melodramatic comic mode combines action, the characters' appearance in long black coats (which instantly became the pinnacle of Korean fashion) and dissonant contrasts on the soundtrack to hilarious effect. This organization of the constitutive elements of the fiction illustrates the great potential of interweaving multiple story strands within serial structure.

Seriality is inherent to fiction, a fact which is underscored by the intersections of the lives of the immortal characters in *Dokkaebi* with the short lives of humans, some of whom appear in subsequent reincarnations. Such effects of serial transformation of narrative embed the audience within the pattern consisting of a present action which is also a component of the drive toward an eventual outcome. The embedding effect then further induces its audience to become co-author of the serial by speculating about the as yet undisclosed past and possible futures (Oltean 1993: 11). As Veronika Keller shows in her study of music (this issue), musical motifs are another device that may link episodes within the larger structure. A further aspect of audience embedding is the extensive appearance of product placement in serials across East Asia, by now an old phenomenon but increasingly essential to the funding regime of production. Manya Koetse (2019) points out that a strong current trend in the Chinese advertising and marketing industry is to develop branded content deals with television programmers and other relevant sectors. Koetse argues that although product placement can alienate viewers if it is overly intrusive, it can also provide them with "a sense that they've become some sort of an insider, that they are part of the story. Chinese audiences appreciate that feeling of familiarity in the programs that they watch" (Koetse 2019: n.p.). Fans can also respond to product placement by seeking to embed themselves more deeply by means of drama tourism to cafés or shopping centres that appear in a serial. In a clip posted on YouTube, Limpeh from Singapore and Indra from Indonesia together visit the *BBQ Olive Chicken* café in which many scenes in *Dokkaebi* are set. As they enter, Limpeh affirms, "It is always such a very magical feeling to come into one of the actual places you've seen in the drama", although they are a little disappointed that they are unable to sit at a particular table featured in the serial and have their photos taken.[5] The makers of *Dokkaebi* at times treat product placement self-reflexively and humorously, as when, having fallen in love with the proprietor of the chicken outlet, the *jeoseung saja* visits every evening to buy takeaway chicken, even though he is vegetarian, and displays it to viewers as if he is in an advertisement.

On a larger scale, audiences may engage with a serial on the basis of familiarity when it is an adaptation of a pre-text that exists on one or more media platforms. Three of the serials discussed in the following articles are intermedial adaptations: *In This Corner of the World* (Japan), *Guardian of the Spirit* (Japan), and *Guardian* (China). Audiences often view an adapted work not as a potentially unique creation but as a secondary product inevitably inferior to the original because it cannot replicate the primary act of creation which brought forth that original. In his analysis of *In This Corner of the World* – the manga (2008-2009), the anime film (2016) and the nine-episode television serial (2018) – Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto explores the notion of fidelity in relation to three multimodal platforms. He argues that the basis for such a discussion is not a matter of priority, or the relative importance of each medium, but of the possibile comparisons between texts produced in two different types of media. What common elements exist that might enable comparison? He argues that manga and anime have a close affinity as aesthetic media, but whether a particular adaptation is faithful to its original cannot be discussed by simply interpreting their semantic core (meanings) or comparing perceptual similarities

4 A *Jeoseung Saja* ('Afterlife Messenger') is a Korean psychopomp who guides newly deceased souls down the road that leads to the afterlife.

5 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j99pLVnHX14 (last accessed 06-11-19).

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(stylistic features). The idea of fidelity has little to do with measurement of the degree of resemblance or interconnection between individual textual elements, but instead needs to address the relationship of the original and the adaptation in terms of a process of structural transformation of one semiotic system into another. For Yoshimoto, the aim of adaptation is not to faithfully replicate the original in a different aesthetic medium but to produce a new work by creatively using the result of a close reading of the original. He argues that creative freedom exercised without "accurate reading" produces a new work derived from the original but not an adaptation and thus finally concludes that although the TV adaptation of *In This Corner of the World* is a well-made drama it is a lesser work than its predecessors because of a lack of artistic self-consciousness – that is, it fails to adapt the reflexivity of the original manga and the anime version either faithfully or creatively.

Helen Kilpatrick offers a different perspective on adaptation, arguing that viewer familiarity with the pre-texts of *Guardian of the Spirit* (novels and/or anime) is countered by the introduction of different narrative techniques from those encountered previously, techniques which demand different 'reading' strategies, such as the more complex ways in which characters' viewpoints and motivations need to be pieced together by viewing audiences. Such narrative strategies add a further dimension to the serial's fantasy genre and replacement of the usual masculine samurai hero with a warrior heroine to produce affective engagement with gendered positionings, especially a deconstruction of dominant patriarchal ideologies. Employing an analytic approach grounded in cognitive narratology, Kilpatrick demonstrates how the serial's narrative techniques prompt viewer mental processing with regard to cultural schemas and scripts of, for instance, male/female roles in family relationships, women's participation in the employment sector, and marriage and childbearing. Focusing on the four episodes of the First Season (2016), which introduce the series' main tropes, she thus argues that *Guardian of the Spirit* is a model of how a drama series can interrogate some of East Asia's dominant masculinist discourses by subverting dominant gender binaries and by provoking deep consideration of the main female protagonist's rejection of conventional feminine, familial and employment roles within Japan's conservative and stratified social milieus.

Yue Wang explores a different kind of issue in adaptation and active audience engagement in an examination of the drama serialization of *Guardian*, an online Chinese *danmei* novel. *Danmei*, or Boys' Love (BL), is a genre of male-male romance created by and for women and sexual minorities (Yang and Xu 2017: 3). During the adaptation process the drama's production team heavily expurgated the content of the story in an apparent attempt to evade the heavy censorship likely to be imposed by censors. In Chinese (post)socialist ideology homosexuality has been considered a violation of the patriarchal heterosexual family, supernatural narratives have been viewed as backward superstitions, and socially wronged lower-class members are seen as a threat to social stability. The "top-down expurgation" elides homosexuality by emphasizing brotherhood and replaces supernatural and fantastic tropes such as ghosts with science fiction devices. The response of fans of the novel to the expurgation has been active and creative, so that the adaptation of *Guardian* and its reception have become a battlefield of strategic compliance and resistance, where economic demand and political power, modern liberal attitudes toward gender, sexuality, and equality and traditional values concerning harmony, conformity, and authority contest and negotiate. In a remarkable performance of participatory pop culture, fans of the novel, who call themselves "Guardian Girls", creatively utilise a subversive strategy in their comments, artworks, and fictions, and these strategies together with their affective investment actively dismantle the monopoly of official discourse that aims to silence the marginal outcasts and maintain order. The fans' "bottom-up subversion" indicates the increasingly visible feminist and queer desire for alternative content in Chinese media, where representations of heterosexual romance subservient to the patriarchal ideology have long dominated the screen.

Moving away from adaptation of successful pre-texts, and focusing on a sub-set of a Korean genre she calls "the supernatural serial", Sung-Ae Lee examines how in the 21st century South Korean television drama has turned to folklore and folkloric supernatural tales as media for humour and social critique. Shared scripts (models we construct to make sense of people and things in the world) have evolved that constitute intertextual linkages amongst the supernatural dramas, especially in the modifications of and additions to Korean folklore about supernatural beings with which audiences can be assumed to have some familiarity. Supernatural serials may draw on a range of non-human or undead characters, but Lee considers a group in which each serial has a ghost and a ghost seer as one of the principal characters, and each blends ghost story with other genres (especially romantic comedy, bromance, school story, crime story, and culinary drama). This blending is used to foreground the plight of characters who are marginalized and alienated from mainstream society.

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The serials on which Lee focuses were all made for cable television, so the potential audience is smaller than for public broadcast channels, but writers and directors for cable television will at times address their audience as a more discerning one – for example, by including more intertextual and metacinematic jokes or by offering audiences viewing stances in which strong empathy with characters interacts with a more analytical perspective. Because Korean dramas usually have a single director and a single screenwriter they are apt to be internally consistent in narrative and directing styles, a strength which is further enhanced by a trend to move away from live production towards complete or partial pre-production. The benefits are evident in areas such as the use of exotic overseas settings, high production values, sophisticated special effects, and outstanding soundtracks (see also Veronika Keller's analysis of pop music in Korean serials in this issue).

The telling of ghost stories as a medium for social critique aligns "the supernatural serial" with a general concern with social problems in East Asian television serials. Such concern appears across all genres but is readily associated with realism. In her discussion of the Japanese serial *Woman* (2013, 11 episodes), Forum Mithani argues that reimagined nostalgic images of motherhood and rural childhood in the serial explore the contradictions inherent in these images. The technical aspects of the production turn on a visual style employed in other cultural products which engage in nostalgic depictions of the post-war past. Scenes were characteristically filmed in natural light with only one camera, and a fixed focal length was preferred to zoom. The soft "real life" lighting, shallow depth of field and extensive use of close-ups help create the illusion that viewers are part of the drama and intimately connected with the characters' thoughts and feelings. Viewers thus feel comfortable with a nostalgic fantasy that seems real.

The images represent nostalgia for a past that never existed, but was invented in the years after World War 2 in response to anxieties over the rapid social changes Japan was experiencing during the process of modernization. Mithani suggests that these idealizations of a native place centred on a devoted, benevolent mother have been principally the conceptions of male scholars, intellectuals and producers of culture, and recent attempts to revive them reflect a dissatisfaction with the weakening of Japanese masculinity in an era of economic decline and job insecurity. Where men look to the past as a bulwark against an uncertain future, women in contrast now strive to change their circumstances by achieving equality in the home as well as the workplace and do not wish to embrace the nostalgic conception of motherhood and home. Counterpointed narratives in *Woman* which depict a warm maternal embrace and then deconstruct that representation disclose that the pseudo-nostalgic maternal ideal is implausible in contemporary society.

Winnie Yee argues that television serials in Hong Kong have a long history of realist story-telling, and while television stations are reluctant to portray politically sensitive matters, they do deal with issues which are at least implicitly political such as identity formation and cultural differences among Chinese communities. Television drama plays an important role in forging and challenging the collective idea of Chineseness, and in the case of Hong Kong expresses postcolonial Hong Kong identity. Yee examines the financial crime thriller, a film and serial genre extensively cultivated in Hong Kong. In considering examples produced twenty-six years apart – *The Greed of Man* (1992) and *The Trading Floor* (2018) – she traces how Hong Kong's identity has been located in its financial prosperity, which has acted as a shield separating Hong Kong from the Mainland. She notes shifts that have taken place toward the growth of transnational collaborations intended to appeal to a wider Asian market and in the advent of the sequential-episodic structure discussed above which have internal coherence and resolution but which are also imbricated with a series-long narrative arc. A comparison of *The Greed of Man* and *The Trading Floor* demonstrates the continued dominance of finance in the everyday life of Hong Kong people and also illuminates the cultural response to this fixation on finance in the post-1997 era in such outcomes as the replacement of family values by professional bonding. People who are motivated by a shared sense of outrage join together either to fight for democracy and equality or simply to retaliate for some harm they have experienced.

Finally, Veronika Keller's research into pop songs in Korean television dramas offers a perceptive exposition of an area that has received very little attention outside Korea, where music is usually only perceived as mood enhancers for individual scenes and not as a pivotal part of both the narrative and the emotional tone of a serial. Purpose-composed pop music became integrated into serials in the early 1990s, first as theme songs and later to mark crucial moments in the developing relationships of the protagonists. Functioning in much the same way as a leitmotif, once established as a song for a character, a couple or a mood, a particular pop song recurs throughout a serial. Songs, therefore, add a new layer of meaning to a scene, not only through lyrics and music, but

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especially by referring to past developments and incidents, thus becoming an integral part of the connecting narrative arc and giving the serial an individual character. Keller pays close attention to "couple songs", which have provided the most recognizable connection between music, narrative and recurring images or themes in almost every romantic Korean drama in recent years. She shows that it is thus possible to connect multiple images and meanings to certain pop songs so that later scenes are not only directly linked to the overall narrative but new layers of meaning not explicitly shown in the actual scene are also added. These tight connections between pop songs and narrative themes have become so overtly used in recent serials that they have in themselves become narrative formulas of the whole genre, creating a sign system of its own in interaction with visual sign systems.

The articles in this special issue on East Asian serials make a rich and varied contribution to the field of serial studies. They draw attention to the vast pool of serials that has been produced in East Asia and demonstrate some of the heterogeneous approaches that may be taken toward the forms and social assumptions of these multiple and blended serial genres. For future work, it would be interesting to extend some of these perspectives to comparative research in order to elucidate patterns, characteristics or trends of serial television across the various production industries. For example, do the generally shorter Japanese serials create a nexus of auditory and visual sign systems in a way similar to South Korea? How do contexts of production shape non-realist genres? In what ways is the dominant structure of a series-long narrative arc punctuated by internally coherent episodes being varied? The field seems wide open, and we invite our readers to enter it.

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IN THIS CORNER OF THE WORLD AND THE CHALLENGES OF INTERMEDIAL ADAPTATION

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KEYWORDS
Japanese television; manga; anime; adaptation; fidelity.

ABSTRACT

In This Corner of the World, a Japanese television drama broadcast in summer 2018, is an adaptation of Kōno Fumiyo's critically acclaimed manga with the same title and also its feature-length anime version directed by Katabuchi Sunao. Released in 2016, Katabuchi's film, along with the latest work in the Godzilla franchise *Shin Gojira* (directed by Anno Hideaki) and Shinkai Makoto's blockbuster anime *Your Name*, became a widely recognized social phenomenon. This article examines the television drama *In This Corner of the World* in relation to the original manga and anime adaptation to explore the problematic of intermedial adaptation. First, it briefly reexamines the discourses on fidelity in adaptation studies, and then discuss what the idea of fidelity can or cannot elucidate when it is applied to the interconnection among the three different versions of *In This Corner of the World*. Second, through a close analysis of the television drama and the original manga, it attempts to elucidate the formal challenges posed by cross-media seriality, including the issue of translatability of reflexive style and form from one medium to another, and explore the socio-political implication of a general shift from narrative seriality to cross-media seriality in the Japanese media landscape.

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0. INTRODUCTION

In This Corner of the World is a critically acclaimed comics or manga by Kōno Fumiyo, which was serialized in a comic magazine and published in book form between 2007 and 2009. Set in Hiroshima and its nearby city of Kure from 1934 to 1946, it tells the story of Suzu from nine to twenty-one years of age. Suzu grows up in Hiroshima's small seaside community called Eba, and in 1943 moves to Kure to marry Hōjō Shūsaku, whom she met once under highly unusual circumstances ten years before. The narrative is organized around small daily episodes from Suzu's new life as a member of the Hōjō household and her interactions with various people around her. While the everyday life of ordinary citizens is depicted, often with a sense of humor, in painstaking detail, readers are also constantly reminded of the larger socio-political conditions in which the characters all live. Even though no overtly political statement is made, Kōno's manga does not indulge in fetishism of the everyday as a means of disavowing the political. In 2016, *In This Corner of the World* was made into a feature-length animation film or anime by the director Katabuchi Sunao. Widely accepted both as a very faithful adaptation of the original manga and as a superb work of anime in its own right, Katabuchi's film became a social phenomenon in that year along with the latest work in the Godzilla movie franchise *Shin Gojira* (directed by Anno Hideaki) and Shinkai Makoto's blockbuster anime *Your Name*. Then, in 2018, partly inspired by the success of the anime, the Japanese television network Tokyo Broadcasting System (TBS) adapted Kōno's manga into a nine-episode drama serial, which was broadcast by TBS and its affiliates from July to September.[1]

This article examines the television drama *In This Corner of the World* in relation to the original manga and its anime adaptation. It is worth looking at this television drama closely not because it is a superb example of cross-media migration but because it foregrounds, perhaps unintentionally, the problematic of intermedial adaptation. Strong connections exist between the manga and the anime; the television drama, too, follows the narrative of the manga fairly closely for the most part. Nonetheless, those viewers who enthusiastically support the anime version because of its close proximity to the manga may find the television drama unsatisfying as a work of adaptation. Although it is overall a well-made work, the television drama was not as popular as the anime. Whereas Katabuchi's meticulously crafted anime tries to transcode the textuality of Kōno's manga as its own audio-visual rhetoric, the television drama has a tendency to reduce it to the thematic contents of story. Because of this difference, the television drama *In This Corner of the World* may be judged as a less "faithful" rendition of Kōno's original manga than Katabuchi's anime film. Of course, faithfulness or its cognate notion of fidelity has consistently remained a controversial idea in adaptation studies. Without precisely specifying what is meant by faithfulness or problematizing this concept at its core, the difference between the anime and the television serial will remain vague at best. Therefore, in the following, we will first revisit, at the risk of being redundant, the question of fidelity in adaptation studies, and then discuss more specifically what the idea of fidelity can or cannot elucidate when it is applied to the interconnection among the three different versions of *In This Corner of the World*. In the second part, through a close analysis of the original manga and the TV adaptation, we will attempt to elucidate the formal challenges posed by cross-media seriality, including the issue of translatability of reflexive style and form from one medium to another, and explore the socio-political implication of a general shift from narrative seriality to cross-media seriality in the age of digital image and communication.

1. FIDELITY AND ADAPTATION

Fidelity in adaptation studies has almost always been regarded as a problematic idea. As Kamilla Elliott writes, "fidelity has been the bane of adaptation studies" (Elliott 2013: 22). A straightforward definition of fidelity such as that identified by David T. Johnson—"fidelity refers to the extent to which a given aesthetic object [...] reflects a *faithful* understanding of its source" (Johnson 2017: 87)—cannot but raise more questions than answers. For instance, what exactly constitutes a faithful understanding? Is it the same as a correct or accurate understanding? What is the difference between understanding and interpretation? How can we distinguish reflection from its cognate or related terms such as re-presentation, reproduction, imitation, or transposition?

Many scholars reject the idea of fidelity not just because of its ambiguity but also because of the fundamental assumption underlying it. For the scholars who insist on the utmost importance of medium specificity, fidelity is an unacceptable notion because it erases the incommensurability of differ-

1 In the credits of the television drama, there is a specific "thank you" acknowledgment to the anime's *seisaku iinkai* (production committee).

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ent types of media by assuming the existence of a common denominator. For those who refuse to establish any hierarchical order among different media (e.g., literature and film) pertaining to their relative aesthetic worth or cultural significance, fidelity is nothing more than a misguided concept because it valorizes the original as the origin, the unsurpassable norm for any subsequent adaptations (Elliott 2013: 22–3).

Nonetheless, we cannot dismiss fidelity too hastily because it is inseparable from two important issues for discussions on adaptation: i.e., comparison and evaluation. Even though an original literary source and its film adaptation are often posited against each other to see whether the latter is as good as or inferior/superior to the former, we also compare them to understand their similarities and differences, or a non-evaluative relationality of two works, without relying on any prefixed hierarchy (Elleström 2013: 115). What is at stake here is not the relative significance of each medium but the possibility of intermedial comparison. How can we compare two texts produced in two different types of media? What can be used as a basis for comparison? Can we compare them without positing some common element or ground? Does the original, be it a novel or a work of manga, perhaps contain some kind of "essence", the thing that singularly determines its uniqueness (Cutchins 2017: 78)? If it does, what then would be the essence of Kōno's manga *In This Corner of the World*? Is it the story, characters, visual style, a combination of them all, or something entirely different? Regardless of how we answer these questions, it is clear that to compare two medially heterogeneous works, a simple juxtaposition is not enough; that is, it requires some kind of common ground that makes them comparable. And it is this ground for comparison that the idea of fidelity, no matter how problematic it may be, provides for discussions on intermedial adaptation.

Fidelity is not the only possible criterion for determining the value of an adaptation; that is, "the aesthetic worth of the adaptation" can be assessed without focusing "on its adherence to the source" (Johnson 2017: 89). But does the concept of fidelity really become irrelevant when the adaptation is treated as an independent work of art and evaluated as such? At first glance, it may appear that the evaluation of an adaptation, when it is treated as an aesthetic work on its own, does not require a comparative perspective as a necessary condition. If the fact that the work is an adaptation is nothing more than a contingent factor, fidelity becomes a non-issue. Yet, to the extent that no work can exist as a hermetically sealed system severed from a complex web of intertextual relationships, evaluation always necessitates some kind of comparative perspective. In the case of adaptation, the most prominent intertext is of course the original source. In other words, even if the adaptation is regarded as a stand-alone work, we end up going back to square zero. No matter how hard we try to get away from it, the idea of fidelity seems to keep coming back in an endless loop.

How can we escape from what appears to be a closed loop? Some scholars believe that the persistence of fidelity as a pivotal idea in adaptation studies should not simply be regarded as a problem to be solved. Instead, it should be interpreted as a symptom of critical failure to produce the precise nomenclature of intermedial relationships loosely lumped together under the name of adaptation. According to this criticism, the problematic of fidelity will consequentially disappear once a more comprehensive set of taxonomical categories are invented to describe every possible type and feature of intermedial relations accurately. However, such a quest for taxonomical totality will not necessarily lead to a critical breakthrough in adaptation studies. As Colin MacCabe writes,

> Thomas Leitch has pointed out that one of the abiding weaknesses of adaptation studies is its drive to taxonomize. Why this drive is doomed to failure is that the number of variables involved in any adaptation from the linguistic form of the novel or short story to a film's matters of expression approach infinity (MacCabe 2011: 8).

The proliferation of precise taxonomical categories would theoretically allow us to have a better grasp of endlessly variable components of adaptation. In reality, however, it frequently makes intermedial theories and discussions on adaptation more idiosyncratic and obscure, and, as Fredric Jameson points out, reinforces a sense of impasse or futility (Jameson 2011: 215). Any elaborate system of classification cannot avoid the danger of concealing what is fundamentally at stake in intermedial adaptation and, consequently, obscuring the reason why, despite the myriad criticisms of it over many years, the idea of fidelity still exerts considerable influence over adaptation studies.

What appears to be an endless repetition of criticism of fidelity itself has been criticized as a symptomatic sign of adaptation studies' impasse. "Indeed, the critique of fidelity has become so commonplace that the *critique* of this critique is also widely reiterated" (Elliott 2013: 24–5). But why is the same argument repeated so many times as if the question of fidelity had not been seriously discussed before? Are we

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inherently forgetful of or fundamentally indifferent to the past? Or, sensible as these questions may appear, are they perhaps misdirected in a fundamental sense? It is too easy to criticize current and earlier generations of scholars for not paying enough attention to what was already said about fidelity by other critics and scholars in the past. It is of course important to avoid a self-centered claim positioning oneself as the first person to introduce a particular argument that was already made by another or other persons before. Nonetheless, it is very unlikely that once we understand a full history of critical debates on adaptation and fidelity, adaptation studies will be released from repetition compulsion and will start making a steady advance based on a systematically accumulated body of knowledge. Elliott's meta-critical reassessment of adaptation studies and its treatment of the question of fidelity is very illuminating. At the same time, we also need to point out that there is nothing particularly unique about adaptation studies' repetition compulsion allegedly arising from its historical amnesia; in fact, it is commonly found in many fields of the humanities. Without constant repetition, revision, and rediscovery, humanistic knowledge would die out eventually. Furthermore, despite a superficial impression, it is not the case that the same argument has been repeated so many times in adaptation and other studies; that is, the ostensibly identical argument signifies something different each time it is repeated. What matters is not an overall argument but subtle differences and modifications, not just what is repeated but what is excised or unsaid. In other words, it is precisely in repetition—repetition of difference—that we find a kernel of adaptation studies.

2. *IN THIS CORNER OF THE WORLD* AND THE MULTIFACETED DIMENSIONS OF FIDELITY

To what extent is the idea of fidelity relevant for our analysis of the television drama *In This Corner of the World* and its relationship with the original manga and the anime version? How can we productively compare the three different versions of *In This Corner of the World*? In order to answer these questions, it is essential to clarify the specific nature of connections between the manga and the anime first because without any doubt fidelity plays a pivotal role in the determination of those connections.

The anime *In This Corner of the World* is widely accepted as a very faithful adaptation of the original, as is definitively demonstrated, for instance, by the Japanese scholar Hosoma Hiromichi (2017). This is largely due to the director Katabuchi's meticulous approach to the whole project. He pays the utmost respect to Kōno's manga, and experiments with a wide range of stylistic techniques and formal methods to animate the manga faithfully. At the same time, according to a widely accepted critical consensus, he has succeeded in creating an outstanding work of anime that can aesthetically stand on its own. Yet it is also important to keep in mind that the relationship of manga and anime in general is not exactly the same as that of the novel and anime or literature and film. Whereas the adaptation of a novel into a film requires a series of semiotic translations or transcodings, there are inherent stylistic affinities—or near identity, with regard to visual figures—between manga and anime. An anime adaptation of a work of manga can literally animate it while closely keeping its original visual style intact. Of course there are crucial differences separating them, most notably with regard to the representation of time and movement. Consisting solely of static images, manga represents temporal changes by fully exploiting the formal potentiality of spatial disjunction between graphic frames on a flat piece of paper or between pages.[2] It can make its readers understand how much time has elapsed between two frames—e.g., a nanosecond, a minute, an hour, ten years, or even a million years—without specifying the exact length of time. Sometimes the readers cannot determine how much time has passed between two frames or even the temporal status of a framed image, and yet have no difficulty understanding the flow of the narrative. This inbuilt temporal ambiguity of manga cannot exactly be reproduced in an animation film because of the latter's formal determinants. Such additional structural elements as physical movement, temporal duration, voice, sound effects, and music, which are absent in manga, provide anime with many other aesthetic possibilities and limitations. Nonetheless, it is reasonably safe to say that no other genre of aesthetic media has a closer affinity with manga than anime.

To illustrate a formal connection between the manga and the anime, and the television drama's difference from them, let us take a brief look at an early scene in the narrative that Hosoma analyzes in detail (Hosoma 2017: 115–25). In this scene, the protagonist Suzu, nine years old at this point, arrives at the center of Hiroshima City by a boat. Her job is to deliver packs of dried seaweed sheets or *nori* to a customer.

2 This means that reading manga on a smartphone or tablet can potentially create a different sense of temporal continuity/discontinuity.

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Right after getting off a boat, she tries to tie a large package on her back by using a nearby stone wall as a temporary support. In the original manga, her action is shown in three frames or panels. In the first panel, we see Suzu placing the package against the stone wall next to stone steps; in the second panel, she has turned around to tie the package on her back; the third panel shows Suzu from behind, climbing the stone steps with the package on her back. Hosoma argues that even in this simple sequence of three panels, we can observe subtle movement and bodily adjustment (e.g., Suzu slightly shifting her weight towards the wall to prevent the package from slipping). In the anime, a semiotic coding of movement virtually existing in still images needs to be translated into an actually moving image. We will not examine Hosoma's compelling analysis of how the director Katabuchi actualizes the manga's virtual movement because it is too technical for our purpose here. The important point is that the manga's three panels and the anime's short sequence can be compared to each other in a technically rigorous fashion because Suzu in the anime is not played by a human actor but, as in the original manga, represented by two-dimensional drawings. If fidelity or faithfulness can be taken up as a meaningful issue here, it is because manga and anime are fundamentally different from, yet at the same time, remarkably similar to each other. The same scene also appears in the TV adaptation. A child actor performing the role of Suzu is shown in two shots where she is tying the package on her back. There is absolutely nothing special about the segment, the style of which is so typical of a live action drama shot with a cinematographic camera. To discuss the question of fidelity, we must look at different parts or aspects of the television drama because this scene simply does not provide a main ground on which the fidelity of the TV adaptation becomes a critical issue.

If the idea of fidelity means something, it is inseparable from the reading competency of those responsible for production of an adaptation. Yet the concept of close reading has no direct connection with the degree of the adaptation's faithfulness to the original. Close reading is concerned with how accurately the creators of the adaptation read the original, not how accurate the adaptation is vis-à-vis the original. The adaptation based on close reading can therefore uncannily resemble, or on the contrary, appear to have no apparent connection to the original on the surface. Another crucial point is that accurate reading is not the same as correct interpretation of meanings. Accurate reading does not try to uncover the correct meanings of a text; instead, it elucidates how meanings are produced by the formal structure, stylistic mechanism, and other concrete details of the text. Katabuchi and creative staff of the anime *In This Corner of the World* have read the original text of manga very closely, and meticulously analyzed the original's style and semiotic codes. As this anime shows, a successful work of adaptation often does not try to reproduce the original's meanings but transcode its formal system by using a different set of semiotic elements.

However, the notion of either close or accurate reading is hardly a panacea for adaptation studies. We need to take note of a complicated relationship between accuracy and creativity in adaptation, the general purpose of which is not to produce a faithful copy of the original in a different aesthetic medium but to bring forth a new work of art by creatively using the result of a close reading of the original. Creative freedom exercised without accurate reading does not exactly result in an adaptation. Here something like "inspired by" is a more appropriate phrase to characterize the new work's relationship to the "original." On the other hand, accuracy without creative freedom may result in an adaptation without much aesthetic value. Of course, the relation of the original and the adaptation can never be reducible to a strict binary logic of either/or. Between the two extreme cases just mentioned, there are many other possibilities where adaptations are produced with a different mix of accuracy and creativity. We also need to acknowledge the possibility of fruitful misreading or misunderstanding for producing an adaptation with high aesthetic value. Yet it is debatable whether the aesthetically superior work of adaptation that completely misunderstands the original can still be regarded as a work of adaptation or even appropriation. In this case, it is probably more helpful to examine the relationship between the "original" and the "adaptation" by using the notion of intertexuality in a purely formal sense, and focus on the textual interconnections rather than authorial intentions.

The idea of close reading allows us to delink the fidelity of adaptation from the faithful reproduction of the original's meanings or outward appearance. Fidelity is not primarily about the perceptual similarity between the original and the adaptation or the reproduction of the original's semantic core. Whether a particular adaptation is faithful to its original cannot be discussed by simply interpreting their meanings or comparing their stylistic features. Instead, we need to focus on the semiotic system of the original as a unified totality and its counterpart in the adaptation. Comparing individual semiotic elements from the original and the adaptation detached from the structural totality of each cannot elucidate

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the precise role of adaptation mediating the two. This is why intertextuality is an indispensable concept yet of limited effectiveness for thinking through the question of adaptation. The idea of fidelity has little to do with measurement of the degree of resemblance or interconnection between individual textual elements; instead, it allows us to rethink, without making any judgment on aesthetic value, the relationship of the original and the adaptation in terms of a process of structural transformation of one semiotic system into another.

For our study of *In This Corner of the World*, fidelity is important in a different sense, too. If we examine the relationship of Kōno's manga and Katabuchi's anime only in terms of how the adaptation is faithful to the original, we are missing the point. For what is at stake is not just a transformative relation of the two semiotic systems but the manga's and the anime's treatment of historical facts. That is, the fidelity of transcoding becomes further complicated because it is entangled with an equally, if not more, complex issue of historical fidelity. This means our analysis of the television drama *In This Corner of the World* cannot ignore how it represents historical facts either. In terms of its plot, character construction, and individual episodes, the television drama is fairly faithful to the manga and the anime. We do not see many deviations or extraneous additions, except one formal feature, to which we will come back shortly. Does this mean that the television drama handles historical details as carefully as the manga and the anime? How does it deal with the issue of historical fidelity as such? Does that additional formal feature usher in a new perspective on history that is different from the previous two works' stance on history?

3. **THE OPTICAL AND THE REFERENTIAL**

The manga *In This Corner of the World* is a superbly realistic work, which gives unparalleled attention to historical details. But this does not mean it tries to represent history realistically. The visual appearance of Kōno's work does not create an optical illusion of reality. Rich in representational details yet cartoonish, Kōno's drawings depict historically real buildings, sceneries, and objects with referential—but not necessarily optical—truthfulness. We are attracted to the warm quality of her hand-drawn pictures, and simultaneously, awed by their referential accuracy. With this distinctive formal feature, Kōno's manga appears as the opposite of "the simulacrum, whose peculiar function", writes Fredric Jameson, "lies in what Sartre would have called the *derealization* of the whole surrounding world of everyday reality". Jameson claims that the aesthetic simulacra radically defamilialize our perception, so that the "world thereby momentarily loses its depth and threatens to become a glossy skin, a stereoscopic illusion, a rush of filmic images without density" (Jameson 1991: 34). In contrast, the manga *In This Corner of the World* attempts to re-realize the derealized everyday world of wartime Japan. On the one hand, as visual representation, it is depthless and non-illusionistic because Kōno constantly reminds us of the fact that the images we see are in the end nothing more than printed images. She continuously tries to draw our attention to the flat surface of paper as the ground on which all images including words and pictures appear. On the other hand, as referential sign, Kōno's manga is constructed on deep layers of historical facts. We are overwhelmed with the density of historical references and cannot but be impressed by a variety of stylistic devices she uses to create this density.

The anime *In This Corner of the World* is equally obsessed with historical accuracy, and the director Katabuchi even ups the ante. For instance, in his conversation with Hosoma, Katabuchi mentions a tiny ship that appears briefly in the scene of Suzu's wedding night. It is so inconspicuous, playing no significant role in the story that Hosoma does not remember having seen it. Although it does not appear in the original manga, Katabuchi added the ship to the scene because he learnt through his research that that ship had been really there on the day of Suzu's wedding (Hosoma 2017: 225). Yet why does he show something which probably every viewer would fail to notice? The anime's obsession with historical details is potentially a double-edged sword. On the one hand, while we may be impressed with the factual accuracy of representation, there is also a danger of our losing sight of a larger historical picture. If the attention to historical details is valorized for its own sake, history may slip through our hands. On the other hand, instead of interpreting the anime's meticulously researched details merely as a sign of its historical accuracy, we can understand them as an attempt to re-present the past as historical presence. What is at stake is not just the accuracy of facts and information but that the event shown really happened in actual history. It is less about mimetic accuracy and more about an ethical stance on fictionalization of historical materials (Furuya 2018: 209).

What we have here is another type of realism, not an illusion of reality created by photographic mimesis but a reality effect of referentially authentic image that allows us to see the multi-dimensionality of history. It is important that both the manga and the anime do not have a photorealistic appear-

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ance. They give us a strong sense of historical reality precisely because their cartoonish images do not deceive us with illusionistic realism. We are always aware of a distance between image and reality, and it is precisely through this nonidentity that history emerges as the real. This means that the television drama, if it wants to inherit the historical authenticity of the manga and the anime as its own feature, needs to find a different method for creating a distancing effect. Unlike hand-drawn images, as employed in the anime version of *In This Corner of the World*, a live action drama shot on location or in a television studio cannot rely on the self-generated difference as a window on history. CGI, which is used in the TV adaptation to reconstruct the urban landscape of Hiroshima and Kure of the 1930s and 1940s, may look uncanny because of its hyperrealism. But this does not automatically translate into the production of difference necessary for activating historical consciousness.

4. FANTASY OF REALITY, REALITY OF FANTASY

The manga *In This Corner of the World* freely moves back and forth between reality and fiction, the everyday and creative imagination, and this world and an alternative world. The two terms in each of these pairs do not constitute a rigid dichotomy because the boundary separating the two is not fixed but permeable. Imagination is not, therefore, a means of escaping the mundane everyday or the unbearable condition of reality. On the contrary, it is precisely through the power of imagination that the worldliness of this world and the real condition of our existence become perceivable. The anime *In This Corner of the World* particularly amplifies the undecidability of the interrelation between reality and fantasy by fully utilizing the characteristics of animated image, visual effect, color, sound, music, actor's voice, etc.

Interestingly, the television drama *In This Corner of the World* does not particularly underscore the role of fantasy or imagination. Instead of exploring the complex interaction between fiction and reality, the television drama displaces it with the historical interrelationship between the past and the present by adding a new framing narrative to the original story. Set in the year 2018, the framing narrative focuses on three characters, a young woman called Kayo, her much older friend Setsuko, and a young man Eguchi, who is a would-be boyfriend of Kayo. The first episode of the television drama opens with Kayo and Eguchi visiting an empty house where Suzu used to live, and ends with the scene where she decides to live in this house. In the second episode, the framing narrative appears only briefly toward the end. Kayo tells Eguchi she may convert the house into a café or a b&b. Eguchi asks her if she's so stressed out, and she replies yes. The narrative then goes back to the past to show Suzu's childhood friend Mizuhara on the deck of the Japanese Imperial Navy's heavy cruiser Aoba somewhere in the Pacific. He picks up a feather of a white heron falling from the skies. The third episode starts with a scene in the present time, where we first see Kayo in a class for people interested in opening a café. In the following scene in a restaurant, she is talking with Eguchi, who asks her whether she has already decided not to go back to her nursing care job. In the rest of this episode, the narrative stays with Suzu and her story in the past. In episode four, the framing narrative does not appear even once; in episode five, the narrative returns to the present only towards the end. With the subtitle "August, Heisei 30" (August 2018),[3] we see Kayo and Eguchi near the Hiroshima Peace Memorial or Atomic Bomb Dome. After a short flashback showing how Kayo met Setsuko for the first time, Setsuko shows up to meet Kayo and Eguchi. The episode ends with a quick return to the past ("March, Showa 20" or March 1945). In episode six, about thirty seven minutes into the story,[4] the narrative jumps to the present time. We see the continuation of the framing narrative interrupted in the previous episode. Kayo, Setsuko, and Eguchi pray in front of the Memorial Cenotaph for atomic bomb victims. Setsuko tells her younger friends that she is a *hibakusha* (atomic bomb victim), and shows illustrations of a café she has drawn for Kayo. In this scene, we learn for the first time that Setsuko is a daughter of Suzu. The narrative then returns to the past ("June, Showa 20"). In episode seven, the framing narrative appears only briefly in the middle of the episode. After showing Kayo, Setsuko, and Eguchi walking in Eba, Suzu's hometown, the narrative quickly goes back to the past, 6 August 1945. Episode eight does not show the contemporary scene until the end where the three characters are walking up a slope near Suzu's house. The final episode, too, mostly stays with the main narrative. It is about forty six minutes into the story that the framing narrative appears. When Setsuko says, "let's go to see Suzu san", the narrative briefly moves back to the spring of 1946

3 "Heisei 30" or the thirtieth year of the Heisei era in the Japanese calendar is the year 2018.

4 Time refers to the originally broadcast version of the drama including commercial breaks, not to the DVD version later released in 2019.

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and shows Mizuhara, who has survived the war, returning to his hometown. The drama ends with the contemporary scene, the image of an old lady shot from the back, cheering for the professional baseball team Hiroshima Tōyō Carp (and also for the city of Hiroshima) in the ballpark.

As is clear from the description above, throughout the nine episode serial, the past and the present are juxtaposed to each other. Yet, whatever the intention of the creators may be, the effect of this montage is rather weak and ambiguous. The framing device does not radically change our perception of the original story because it adds nothing especially new, except the information that Suzu and her adopted daughter Setsuko are alive and well in 2018. Between the past and the present, there is no interaction to speak of; unlike reality and fantasy in the manga and the anime, the two flows of time do not react to or interfere with each other. Instead, they exist as two autonomous temporalities even though Setsuko (and to a lesser extent Kayo) are supposed to function as a bridge between the past and the present. From the beginning to the end, the framing device does not offer any significant insight into the main narrative or the challenge of intermedial adaptation.

The television drama adds the new contemporary story to the original one without thinking through the issue of narrative perspective. The construction of two temporal levels, i.e., the time of narration as an event and the time of narrated event, cannot but introduce the act of narration as a critical issue for historical understanding. Yet the television drama, despite what it does, virtually pays no serious attention to the problem of narrative point of view and the agency of narrator. None of the three contemporary characters, Kayo, Eguchi, and Setsuko, is unambiguously marked as the narrator of the main story. The fact that they appear sparsely and randomly makes it further difficult to see the meaning and necessity of the framing narrative. It is not particularly surprising if the viewers completely forget about the existence of the added story, which appears only briefly when least expected.

The two-tier narrative structure of the television drama foregrounds the fact that the story does not just take place but is narrated. Furthermore, the added framing narrative cannot but bring the complex relationship between history and memory to the fore. The problem, again, is that the creators of the drama do not seem to understand the meaning of their creative adjustment. Memory can be either individual or collective. Yet no matter how authentic it may be, memory cannot be equated to history because it is directly linked to particular agents' past experiences or recollections of those experiences. In contrast, history is about "objective facts". However, facts still need to be arranged into a structurally coherent plot narrated from a particular perspective. To the extent that our understanding of historical facts is always mediated by narrative, history strives to be objective yet can never attain the status of being value-free or neutral. Needless to say, this does not mean objective facts are after all irrelevant or simply inaccessible. History that does not respect or willfully distorts facts cannot be called history. Nor does the rhetorical nature of history make all historical narratives equally valid or trustworthy. Facts by themselves do not guarantee the dependability of a particular historical narrative or perspective because they do not exist autonomously as such but come into existence through a complex interpretive procedure in the first place. It is therefore no surprise that some histories are more compelling than others even when they all respect the weight of factual evidence. The framing narrative of *In This Corner of the World*, whether intentional or not, introduces the question of history and memory in order ultimately to negate them both. Since the framing narrative formally distinguishes the past from the present, the historicity of the past seems to be foregrounded. Yet, as discussed earlier, the relationship between the main and framing narrative remains uneven and ambiguous throughout the nine-episode series. As the boundary between history and memory becomes blurred, history is gradually transformed into a nostalgic memory of the past. At the same time, the uneven narrative structure decouples memory from agency, resulting in pseudo memory without a remembering subject, either individual or collective. Thus, what the viewers see is an emotionally moving story intended for reinforcing a shared communal feeling rather than highlighting the complexity of the relationship between memory and history.

In the television drama, the most unbelievable image, which nearly destroys the dramatic integrity of the main narrative, appears without any warning in episode eight. Twenty five minutes into the story, a big ephemeral right hand emerges out of nowhere, and touches Suzu's head gently (Figure 1).

This image of a divine hand looks visually tacky, and in terms of its meaning and narrative function, rather baffling. Why is this unnerving image shown at the risk of snapping the viewers out of their identification with the absent narrator? Because of the exceedingly unrealistic image of the divine hand, the viewers may awaken from a virtual state of hypnosis momentarily. Yet one thing that can be said with certainty

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FIGURE 1: *IN THIS CORNER OF THE WORLD* (2018)

is that it is not intended to be a textual device for producing an estrangement effect. The hand of God comes from Kōno's manga (Kōno 2009, vol. 3: 96), and to that extent, it may be interpreted as a sign of faithfulness in adaptation. Whether it really signifies the television drama's fidelity to the original manga can be determined by examining how and for what purpose Kōno shows this hand in her own work. While certainly drawing the readers' attention to itself, the divine hand in the manga hardly looks out of place both stylistically and thematically. It is an overdetermined image of drawing pictures, or more generally, artistic creation. From the very beginning to the end, the manga is centrally concerned with Suzu's drawings and fantasies. Drawing pictures of everyday objects, family and friends, scenery and city landmarks has been such an important part of her life and personal identity that she is driven to complete despair when she loses her right hand by a delayed-action bomb dropped by a US bomber. She tries to draw a picture with her left hand but, at least initially, to no avail. Although its meaning is hardly univocal, the divine hand in the manga can be partially interpreted as Suzu's lost right hand. On the surface, the main narrative of the television drama follows the plot of the manga fairly closely, so that it includes many scenes where Suzu draws sketches and illustrations. Yet the television drama is in the end far more interested in depicting Suzu's relationships with her husband Shūsaku, family, and new acquaintances than exploring the complex interaction between her creative imagination and daily experiences.[5] Drawing pictures therefore ceases to be

5 Can we account for this shift of focus by paying attention to the difference in intended audiences? If we can, then, what does it tell us about the two different—yet to some extent overlapping—groups of audiences? Despite plenty of anecdotal evidence showing young people's indifference toward broadcast television, it is too easy to assume that the television drama's preoccupation with human relationships and the manga's foregrounding of aesthetic devices and creative process can be explained in terms of generational differences between television viewers and manga readers. Perhaps it is more fruitful to focus on the difference between the industrial structure of television broadcasting and the system of manga-publishing business. If the center of gravity in Japan's creative industry has been increasingly shifting from film and television to manga, anime, and games, it is mainly because of the exponential growth of participatory culture facilitated by the Internet and digital technologies. In this culture, viewers and readers can so easily become producers; isolated consumers are now members of multiple communities that facilitate active communication among its members. While Japanese television still posits its viewers mostly as traditional consumers, those who watch, produce, or share online videos belong to participatory culture, in which human relationships are in constant flux, as they can be instantaneously formed or dissolved in both real and virtual spaces. It is therefore possible to see the television drama's preoccupation with

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the essential core of her identity; instead, it becomes just one of her many character traits. Because of this adjustment in narrative focus, the sudden appearance of the divine hand in the television drama looks odd and out of place.[6]

To understand the effect of the divine hand in the manga *In This Corner of the World* and its TV adaptation, we must also pay closer attention to their formal aspects. The readers of the manga may wonder what this hand is, what its diegetic status is, and what it signifies literally and metaphorically. Yet they would not find it a fundamentally perplexing image due to its material quality. In terms of its visual appearance and formal property, the divine hand in the manga is indistinguishable from other images such as characters, objects, and sceneries: they all exist on the same flat page as drawn pictures. Therefore, the divine hand in the manga can easily turn into Suzu's imaginary right hand drawing pictures, and allegorically stand for both the hand of the author of *In This Corner of the World* (that is, Kōno Fumiyo) and that of the anonymous author-persona who narrates the story. The hand of God is a meta-level image, yet visually indistinguishable from other object-level images because the planar surface of paper is a heterogeneous space where different levels of signification coexist without being organized into a visibly obvious hierarchical structure. Therefore, we can see it simultaneously as an object-level image that can be interpreted metaphorically in relation to some diegetic aspects of the text, and as a meta-level image that invites us to reflect on the manga's conditions of possibility as an aesthetic work.

There is nothing essentially meta-critical about drawing pictures. It bears a meta-critical function only because Kōno consciously and carefully develops it as a reflexive motif in her manga. Highly aware of its own status as manga, i.e., as a series of drawings arranged to tell a story, *In This Corner of the World* not only highlights the art of image-making persistently but also consciously incorporates a wide range of media into its textual system. Similarly, the TV adaptation shows from time to time drawings (some of them by Suzu and others without a clearly identified author) and the scenes of Suzu drawing pictures. Episode one includes, for instance, a drawing of Suzu's family, a map showing a route from Suzu's hometown Eba to her new home Kure, her wedding reception scene, and a water color painting of Mizuhara watching the sea and "white rabbits" (=white-crested waves). But it is difficult to see them functioning as some kind of critical commentary on the art of television drama making. Within the context of the television drama, these images hardly constitute moments of self-reference, let alone reflexivity.

Kōno compellingly shows that manga does not have to be a mere tool for illustrating some preformed ideas; instead, it can be a medium that reflexively articulates new ideas and concepts on its own. In her work, the motif of 'drawing pictures' urges us to critically reflect on the representational possibilities and limitations of manga in depiction of the recent past (i.e., people who experienced that past are still alive and remember it). Television can also be a reflexive medium rather than an illustrative storytelling device or what Japanese used to call "electronic picture-card show" (*denki kamishibai*). Yet the bizarre image of the divine hand in the TV adaptation of *In This Corner of the World* cannot but reveal its creators' lack of understanding of the reflexivity of the original manga and the anime.[7]

Is it possible to say the same thing about the framing narrative that we examined earlier? Why did the creators of the television drama take the trouble of introducing the framing device that is not part of either the original manga or the anime version? To the extent that it constructs another perspective potentially allowing the viewers to look at the main narrative from a critical distance, the added frame is meant to introduce a reflexive moment that the implausible hand of God fails to deliver. Yet, as we already saw, the framing narrative does not in the end produce either a distancing effect or a multi-layered vision of history. The reason for this failure is not necessarily attributable to the drama creators' misunderstanding of what constitutes reflexivity; instead, it has more to do with their decision to deemphasize the presence of fantasy, which occupies a crucial position in Kōno's manga yet appears as nothing more than a minor narrative motif in the television drama.

The clearest example showing the different treatment of the power of fantasy in the manga and the TV adaptation is found in their first major episode, the scene of abduction

Suzu's relationship with her husband, family, and neighbors as a structural equivalent to the reflexivity of the divine hand in Kōno's manga; that is, rather than being an expression of historical nostalgia, it allegorically invokes the specific mode of spectatorship that was once dominant in the so-called age of television.

6 While stylistically the image of the divine hand is incongruous with the conventional realism of the television drama, its ghostly quality, which signifies the simultaneous presence and absence of the hand, fits the drama's thematic content quite well. This image also looks like an atavistic return to the early cinema (e.g., the trick effects of Georges Méliès), which could potentially give rise to a meta-historical reflection on television as a narrative medium.

7 Due to limitations of space, I cannot discuss how Katabuchi "adapts" the original manga's reflexivity to anime in this article. But it deserves an extensive analysis on its own.

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in 1934. In place of her elder brother who is down with a cold, her parents ask Suzu to deliver packs of dried seaweed sheets to a customer in the central area of Hiroshima City. Without too much trouble, she gets her errand done. Feeling happy with a box of candy she just bought, Suzu sits by a river to draw a picture of the Hiroshima Prefectural Industrial Promotion Hall (i.e., the "Atomic Bomb Dome" or the Ground Zero). Then suddenly, she is snatched by a rag-picker. Locked inside a two-wheeled cart covered with wood panels, she meets a slightly older boy who is resigned to accept his fate as a victim of kidnapping. This boy is none other than Shūsaku, Suzu's future husband. Yet, after realizing what has just happened to her and being unable to suppress desire to see her family again, Suzu decides to escape. Shūsaku, inspired by her energy and strong will, changes his mind, too. Working together, they finally succeed in their attempt and run for their lives. A nondescript depiction of the abductor encourages the viewers to focus on the interaction between Suzu and Shūsaku, and contributes to the transformation of the whole abduction episode into an origin story of their relationship; that is, since the day they met for the first time under highly unusual circumstances, Suzu and Shūsaku are destined to get married even if they never see each other again until they fully grow up. This is how Suzu's abduction and escape is depicted in the television drama.

In the original manga, we see something quite different from what is described above. The most conspicuous difference is that in Kōno's manga, the abductor is not a man but a monster disguised as a rag-picker. He abducts children as his own food as opposed to the television drama's abductor, who is probably involved in human trafficking. A general tone of the episode is much more humorous in the original manga than in the TV adaptation. Whereas in the television drama Suzu and Shūsaku escape from the impending danger by making an existential decision not to accept their situation as an inevitable fate, Kōno's Suzu, who is thrown in an open wicker basket rather than inside a locked cart, defeats the monster simply by using her wit. Shūsaku's attitude towards the abductor is also remarkably dissimilar in the two works. The kidnapper in the television drama is nothing but an object of his fear; Shūsaku in the manga shows sympathy toward the monster. Worrying that the monster will be hungry without the two children or his dinner, Sūsaku leaves a small box of candy in the perpetrator's right hand.

Given such divergence, there is no big surprise that the meanings of fantasy are significantly different in these two works. On the surface, the treatment of the abduction episode is more realistic in the TV adaptation. After all, a monster roaming in a bustling urban quarter to abduct children without being noticed by anyone around him seems completely out of place in a conventionally realistic narrative replete with historical information, details, and facts. Thus, the fairy-tale atmosphere of the original manga is all gone, replaced by a melodramatic sequence of a destined couple's nick-of-time escape. For Suzu, who now appears as a modern subject, her experience of becoming a victim of abduction is so unexpected and traumatic that she must reprocess it as her fantasy. As a result of repression, her memory of the event becomes ambiguous, making her feel unsure if she is remembering a real event she experienced or a dream that is too vivid to be distinguished from an actual experience. However, there is absolutely nothing fantastic or unreal about the depicted event itself. Meanwhile, what is at stake in the original manga is not her ambiguous memory of the event but her actual experience of the event. The abduction story of Suzu is incredible, yet that is what she experiences as a child and how she remembers her experience. The event itself, not just her recollection, is imbued with a deep sense of fantasy, and this is consistent with many other episodes in her life later, including the appearance of the divine hand. The manga's obsession with historical accuracy and the fanciful nature of its protagonist appear incompatible only when reality is equated to the believability of outside appearance or vraisemblance. Is the abductor really a monster? Or is he actually a man whom Suzu perceives as a monster in her fantasy? We don't know the answer to these questions because the truth is not obscured by the ambiguity, but that ambiguity itself is the truth.

Here we must discuss the title of the work briefly because its ambiguity is reflective of the truth of the ambiguity we've been examining. The original title *Kono sekai no katasumi ni* is usually translated into English as "In This Corner of the World". What is underlined is the fact that the protagonist Suzu lives in *this corner* rather than other corners or places in the world. The singularity of experience is tied to a particular geographical area or location "here" as opposed to "there". If she had been in a different corner of the world, she would not have met Hōjō Shūsaku as a child or married him later. Even though she may be one of many ordinary citizens living in wartime and postwar Japan, Suzu is a unique individual, absolutely irreplaceable with anybody else even if that person closely resembles Suzu in terms of her physical appearance, personal background, world view and way of thinking. On the other hand, the original title can alternatively be translated

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as "In the Corner of This World", too. When interpreted this way, it emphasizes that Suzu lives in *this world* (here) rather than some other world (there). Yet the possibility that this title negates also allows us to imagine those other worlds as alternatives to the world where Suzu actually exists. Such alternatives include a world that could have existed with a different turn of events in history or a virtual world of fantasy and imagination. Each of the two interpretations of the title encapsulates the narrative kernel of Kōno's work very well, even though taken together, they do not necessarily constitute a coherent whole.

The monster is not an evil menace but the other that can be dangerous and lovable at the same time. Although Suzu and Shūsaku cannot comprehend what the monster is, it is not completely impossible to communicate with him. The unknowable yet curiously relatable monster is a liminal existence mediating between reality and fantasy. To a certain extent, so is Suzu. To escape from the monster, Suzu cuts a black seaweed sheet in the shape of a lens, makes some small holes in the cutout, and attaches it to the lens of a telescope. When the monster sees the sky with the telescope, he is tricked into believing that it is already night, and instantaneously falls into a deep sleep. Suzu is a visual artist who can create a fantasy of a starry night with a sheet of dried seaweed and a simple telescope; the monster, who may be a real or fantastic creature, mistakes the fantasy created by Suzu as real. From the perspective of Suzu, there is nothing particularly incongruous about the presence of a monster among human crowds. Existing in a liminal zone between reality and fantasy, Suzu observes the world with the eye of a documentary filmmaker and at the same time appropriates it as raw materials for her personal storytelling. This ambiguity of the monster's mode of being reminds us of the necessity of fantasy for our awareness of the reality of the world. Stanley Cavell writes:

> It is a poor idea of fantasy which takes it to be a world apart from reality, a world clearly showing its unreality. Fantasy is precisely what reality can be confused with. It is through fantasy that our conviction of the worth of reality is established; to forgo our fantasies would be to forgo our touch with the world (Cavell 1979: 85).

It is not the case that we can establish a more direct access to reality by freeing ourselves from fantasy. On the contrary, the absence of fantasy has dire consequences for our relationship with the world. In Kōno's manga, Suzu and Shūsaku see the monster-abductor one last time in Hiroshima after the war. Without showing his face, the monster waves his large hairy left hand to Suzu and Shūsaku as if bidding farewell to them, possibly to the readers of the manga, too, and of course thanking them for a small box of candy when they were kids. Or perhaps it is more a gesture of reminder than of farewell, gently warning them and us not to forget the necessity of fantasy as a means of keeping a firm grip on reality.

When Japan lost the war, many people changed overnight, quickly forgetting the wartime imperial ideology, and embraced a new reality of US occupied Japan. The reaction of Suzu, however, is different in the manga and especially in the television drama. After listening to the emperor's radio broadcast announcing acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration or the ultimatum calling for Japanese surrender, Suzu refuses to acknowledge the defeat, and angrily declares her intention to fight to the very end. She uncontrollably screams others should also keep fighting until no single Japanese remains alive. Isn't this, she shrieks, what they were all taught by the state throughout the war? She is of course not a militarist. Then, why does she reject the news of the surrender and insist on preparing for a final battle on Japan's mainland no matter what the cost? During the war, fantasy was suppressed. Suzu first lost her sketchbook, which was confiscated by the military police ludicrously suspecting her of being an enemy spy. Then, with the loss of her right hand, she was no longer able to draw as well as she used to do. In other words, she was forced to give up her creative fantasies for the sake of wartime Japan's "reality". But now she realizes that what was forced onto her and other ordinary Japanese as "reality", which she accepted as a good imperial citizen, turns out to be nothing but the most delusional fantasy without a modicum of truth. It is this deception she vehemently refuses after the Japanese surrender to the Allied Powers. The attempt to remove fantasy from reality absolutely is the most deluded form of fantasy. The point of her rejection—even though she may not be fully aware of the implications of what she is saying—is that the normal reality of wartime Japan was far crazier than her crazy idea of fighting until the very end.

5. **CONCLUSION**

Fredric Jameson argues that "whenever a film pauses on a television monitor or a computer screen, whenever a television program projects a movie clip, or indeed when any of the visual media pause on the spectacle of someone reading

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a book", we find a concrete manifestation of the competition between television and film, film and literature, and other types of new and old media. Both intermedial adaptations and any works reflexively highlighting intermedial relationships can "be grasped as allegories of their never-ending and unresolvable struggles for primacy" (Jameson 2011: 232). If we accept his claim, we can start reexamining adaptation studies not as a mere sub-field of literary or film studies but rather as a site where media-related disciplines are continuously being reconfigured through mutual interaction. Because intermedial competition will not disappear anytime soon, adaptation studies as a field of inquiry will continue to exist while simultaneously eliciting criticism and negative responses.

Yet it is also important not to universalize Jameson's argument too hastily. Putting it another way, we should not forget his famous dictum—"Always historicize!"—when trying to understand the implications of his metacommentary on adaptation, which is not a universally applicable axiom but a historically contingent interpretation. Furthermore, media themselves do not have any permanently fixed features or formal properties, making it impossible to treat them as autonomous entities unique unto themselves. They are not only embedded in the complex networks of technological, social, and cultural forces but also subject to the shifting dynamics of intermedial connections including discursive ones. This means that the specificity of intermedial connections makes sense only when it is treated as a fundamentally relational idea, and that critical discourse on intermediality cannot remain neutral in relation to the object of its discussion. In other words, the discourse or meta information is an integral element of what constitutes the intermedial relationship in the first place (Schober 2013: 98).

The seriality of contemporary Japanese television is not necessarily constituted by a series of dramatic and other types of episodes broadcast regularly over an extended period of time. Instead, it frequently manifests in serialization of actors and television personalities, gossip and scandals, practical tips and random trivia. Self-reference, combined with insider's anecdotes and jokes, is too often confused with reflexivity. The mainstream media tightly controls the viewers' access to information to produce a very specific kind of national-subject with a limited range of—mostly consumption related—interest. In contrast, it is what used to be regarded as subculture such as anime and manga—quintessential genres of serial media—that now seem to have the capability to produce aesthetically better works inspiring the viewers to reflect on many socio-politically significant issues that mainstream entertainment carefully avoids or insidiously ignores. This schematic description of seriality in the Japanese media scene is applicable to Kōno Fumiyo's manga *In This Corner of the World* and its adaptations. The TV adaptation of *In This Corner of the World* is a well-made drama, even better than many other works on Japanese television in terms of quality of actors' performance, screenplay, and visual image. Although it wisely avoids indulging in a closed play of endless self-referencing, as examined already, this television drama still falls short of adapting the reflexivity of the original manga and the anime version either faithfully or creatively. This is probably due to a failure of close reading on the part of the creators of the television drama; at the same time, it also symptomatically signifies the precarious position of Japanese television as the weakest link in the intermedial networks of serial culture today.

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THE VIEWING MIND AND LIVE-ACTION JAPANESE TELEVISION SERIES: A COGNITIVE PERSPECTIVE ON GENDER CONSTRUCTIONS IN *SEIREI NO MORIBITO* (GUARDIAN OF THE SPIRIT)

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KEYWORDS
Japanese television; gender; narrative strategies; cognitive processing; Moribito.

ABSTRACT
The recent (2016–2018) live-action Japanese television series, *Seirei no Moribito* (Guardian of the Spirit), was produced by NHK in the vein of the *taiga* (big river) historical drama, but challenges this and other Japanese generic and cultural conventions. It does so not only through its production as a fantasy series or its warrior heroine rather than the usual masculine samurai hero, but also through clever narrative strategies which operate to maintain viewer interest and produce affective engagement with gendered positionings. A cognitive narratological exploration of these story-telling devices and the scripts and schemas they conjure helps demonstrate how the series operates affectively to deconstruct dominant patriarchal ideologies. This examination explores how narrative techniques prompt viewer mental processing with regard to cultural schemas and scripts of, for instance, male/female roles in family relationships, women's participation in the employment sector, and marriage and childbearing. A close analysis of the filmic strategies and devices which encourage audience engagement with the main female protagonist, Balsa, and her relationships casts light on the state of some of the changing attitudes to gendered social and personal roles in the context of recent and topical social discourse in Japan.

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0. INTRODUCTION[1]

Interpretations of creative productions such as fictional film and novels rely on the interaction between narrative strategies and the mental activity of audiences. While narrative strategies build up the storyworld and its main thematic significances, they also prompt mind work which helps construct, reiterate or deconstruct the story in collaboration with inherent cultural knowledge which is called up, often unconsciously. As cognitive narratology scholars suggest, the basis of all human cultural activity is that we think in stories which require capacities such as language, perception, memory, predictive thinking, embodiment, and metaphorical reasoning (Herman 2013; Richardson and Steen 2002). Fictional representations are thus important for cognitive development and for reiterating and creating meanings in interaction with the social world. Television drama series fall into such a category but generally utilise more complex narrative stimuli than singular film narratives in order to, as Shim et al. (2018: 1973–4) suggest, provoke the excitement and curiosity that will keep viewers returning for future episodes and seasons. Techniques such as flashbacks, preview trailers, cliffhangers or other open-ended closures all operate to construct narrative suspense, complexities, or ambiguities. The latter help activate affective functions such as curiosity, predictive skills, memory capacity, or emotional engagement with story elements and characters. As John Fiske discusses in his seminal work *Television Culture* (1987), the medium of television produces particular affective engagements with media texts which, for instance, encourage viewer alignment with characters in series. A cognitive enquiry into how narrative strategies encourage the viewing mind to operate while watching and interacting with protagonists in the recent (2016–2018) 3-season (22-episode) television series, *Seirei no Moribito* (Guardian of the Spirit, henceforth *Moribito*, which means "guardian") offers insight into attitudes towards some of East Asia's dominant masculinist discourses. It casts light on how this and other drama series can affectively conjure and subvert dominant gender binaries by provoking deep consideration of the main protagonist's rejection of conventional feminine, familial and employment roles within Japan's conservative and stratified social milieus. As *Moribito*'s first (2016) season introduces the series' main tropes and encourages audience engagement with the main character, Balsa, in challenging ways which continue throughout the three seasons, Season 1 provides the focus for the investigation.

Moribito, nominated in 2017 for the Best Drama Series category in the 45th International Emmy Awards (Pickard 2017), is a beautifully-produced, high-tech (4K format) experimental fantasy. It is based on the multi-volume, award-winning young adult fiction series of the same name, written by Uehashi Nahoko in the 1990s. The novels became so popular with general (adult) readers that they were subsequently re-published with, for instance, more complex orthography. They also inspired offshoots in other media forms such as a radio play, and an anime series (in 2007) which aired internationally, so the title is well known throughout Japan and the rest of the world.

Both the *Moribito* novels and the latest television series have been at the cutting edge of two separate currents in Japan which relate to female characters, roles, and audiences. In the first, Uehashi's works arose amidst an emergent genre of neo-Japanesque fantasy written for young adults by women who created strong roles for women and girls.[2] In contrast to many previous Japanese narratives set in 'the West' or with European female protagonists, the *Moribito* novels explored the politics, economics and religions of five fictional countries and broke new ground in terms of scale, complexity, and character appeal (Doi 2017: 401). The series is set in an alternative world based on a richly layered but unknown time and space which, as Itsuji Akemi (2006: 92) suggests, is unusual in Japanese fantasy, especially in that it is firmly marked as within Asia. Instead of making the usual references to ancient Celtic times, the King Arthur legend, or the *Record of Ancient Matters* (Kojiki), for instance, it blends a cultural mishmash of Asian history, mythology, and customs from a political rather than spiritual logic (Itsuji 86).

In the second current, the *Moribito* live-action television series has arisen amongst an international climate of interest from television networks in female audiences (Le Fèvre-Berthelot 2018: 9; Umibe in Pickard 2017). Despite being produced by NHK in the vein of the corporation's *taiga* (big river) realistic historical drama – a major staple of Japanese television – the series, which aired in prime time on Saturday evenings, breaks with *taiga* (and other) con-

1 My sincere gratitude goes to the anonymous reviewers who provided detailed comments and suggestions for the improvement of this paper. Any errors are nevertheless my own.

2 Another of these neo-Japaneseque series is *Twelve Kingdoms* by Ono Fuyumi which was, like *Moribito*, transformed into an anime series which aired in the 2000s.

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ventions in several major ways. *Moribito*'s heroine, Balsa (*Barusa*, played by Ayase Haruka) not only contravenes the genre's male samurai or wandering artisan heroic convention, but its supernatural elements also challenge the dominance and approach of historical realism. As indicated by the series' executive producer Endo Masafumi (2016), fantasy is unusual in Japanese live-action television. According to Joon-Yang Kim (2013: 225–6), the *taiga* has also had a Yamato-centric focus which emphasises a homogeneous – and masculine-driven – nation; one which has subsumed minority groups and erased marginalised identities.[3] Balsa's subversion of the fictional New Yogo colonisation process is therefore iconoclastic of centrist patriarchal regimes and their processes of power and domination, cultural elements which often remain unquestioned in *taiga* and other television productions. The name Balsa (バルサ) is written in katakana, the Japanese script used for foreign names and words, so is immediately recognisable to Japanese speakers as non-Japanese, thus signifying her as from outside New Yogo and/or the series as set outside Japan (but comparable to the region and historical setting). Further, Balsa is prominent throughout the series despite her absence from several volumes in the original novels. As chief producer Umibe Kiyoshi reveals, this decision was jointly made by script writers, including author Uehashi.

The *Moribito* production team's attention to audience indicates the currency of the gender issues raised in the narrative and an awareness of the process of adaptation. Indeed, the team created the series with an international audience in mind (Umibe; also see Endo 2016 and Pickard 2017). The process of adapting a well-known work requires strategies that stimulate interest for previous and new audiences from varied cultural backgrounds, both internal and external to Japan. Viewers who have read the *Moribito* novels (or seen the anime), for instance, already know the basic storyline so they, along with new audiences, must be kept stimulated with, for instance, different narrative techniques from those found in written works.[4] That is, stimulation occurs at least partially through different narrative devices which demand different reading strategies, such as the more complex ways in which characters' viewpoints and motivations need to be pieced together by audiences.

3 As Kim indicates, Yamato is an old name for Japan which centered on Kyoto and/or Nara and sometimes has nationalist implications (2013: 225).

4 See Jason Mittell (2010) for differences between reading novels and television series.

1. **NARRATIVE DEVICES AND COGNITIVE PROCESSING**

In most if not all television series, narrative devices operate with cognitive processes to prompt the mental evaluation of new information against familiar cultural understanding and experience. The presentation of various scenes which incorporate partial information, ambiguities, or complexities necessitates imaginative mind work by which narrative and emotional gaps are filled while watching. As with other art- and complex- film narratives, *Moribito* uses narrative sequencing which strategically confounds in order to invoke complications, excitement, or ambiguities. These convolutions create puzzles which affectively stimulate conscious or unconscious mental activity. As Steven Willemsen (2018: 4) has suggested, complexities which "strategically confuse, perplex, mislead, or destabilise" can add an enjoyable and challenging mental engagement through what he calls "cognitive puzzlement". Moreover, the emergent confusion and (momentary or enduring) uncertainty not only make viewing more rewarding, but "can in turn incite viewers to engage in more active sense-making and interpretation [as long as they maintain their narrative interest], by which they attempt to attribute or restore the story's logic or coherence" (Willemsen 2018: 23). This kind of narrative complexity moves well beyond the descriptive mode and encourages the kind of active mental exercise which *Moribito* prompts so well. Indeed, *Moribito*'s narrative entanglements and complications demand significant cognitive processing of the socio-historical fantasy elements and of character subjectivities. This processing combines to help construct, interpret and deepen meaning. In short, complex mental activity creates a more embodied or affective understanding of story and character development.

Moreover, as the fantastic operates at a further remove from reality, series like *Moribito* require more mind work to make deeper metaphorical connections than realistic fictions do. Nevertheless, fantasy still relies on a complex dynamic of mimesis whereby, as Jan Alber et al. suggest about literary texts, readers must both activate and adjust real-world parameters when making sense of them (2018: 440). This kind of sense-making similarly applies to filmic fiction, and this paper explores how *Moribito*'s televisual techniques operate in co-operation with mental processing of cultural knowledge (particularly schemas and scripts) to produce affective engagement which challenges many of the dominant masculinist discourses found in Japan (and elsewhere).

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2. THEORY OF MIND (ToM)

A cognitive perspective (at least partially) examines how fictional characters, readers and viewers perceive what other characters think. Just as the brain has an effect on how people think and act in certain situations in real life, the same kind of perceptive capacities are stimulated when reading fiction or when watching fictional drama. Narrative understanding relies on accessing a higher mental capacity to make inferences about the subjective feelings and experiences in the minds of any fictional characters. As Lisa Zunshine suggests, reading fiction calls for "mind-reading – that is, the inference of the mental state from the behaviour – that is necessary in regular human communication" (2006: 9). This "mind-reading" ability is also known as theory of mind (ToM): the human capacity to imagine and predict what other people may be thinking or feeling and to attribute reason or cause to their behaviour (Garfield, Peterson and Perry 2001: 495). ToM is thus required to build up protagonists' subjectivities, or what is known more generally as characterisation. Subjectivity, as John Stephens (forthcoming) explains,

> is a product of the constantly changing relationships a person has with the multiplicity of social discourses he or she engages with – that is, the "subject positions" which a person occupies from moment to moment and from which subjectivity is negotiated through interrelationships.

As Stephens further indicates in relation to connections between ToM and subjectivity in fiction, ToM is a key part of "the cognitive processes employed in constructing the illusion of complex characterization", and it occurs through the mental mapping of character subjectivities, or "getting inside a character's head". This kind of mental attribution of subjectivity to fictive characters "pivots on the representation of thoughts, feelings, emotions and intentions, and this again comes down to theory of mind" (Stephens). In other words, narrative forms and devices not only prompt mental activity in order to interpret story events and schemas or scripts, but also to understand characters. Filmic strategies which encourage complex theory of mind activity therefore have a large influence on the mental processing of gendered and other subjectivities in building up a picture of main characters like Balsa and her interlocutors.

3. SCHEMAS AND SCRIPTS

Although *Moribito* can be viewed (or read) from various critical perspectives,[5] this examination of the live-action series' narrative strategies demonstrates how they utilise cultural schemas and scripts to prompt and deconstruct discourses of gendered social participation. Schemas and scripts represent stereotypical and expected information (Herman 2013). Whereas a schema guides mental expectations about more static concepts such as a samurai, scripts guide expectations about more dynamic processes such as what may happen during or after a rescue. The *Moribito* series conjures a (masculine) samurai hero schema, for instance, only to challenge it through the introduction of the exiled Balsa as a champion spear fighter and saviour of the young Prince Chagum after an attempt on his life. Balsa is thus introduced as a courageous defender of justice, a commoner who not only flouts the standard hero schema, but also some of the New Yogo domain's (and Japan's) most entrenched gender conventions and scripts.

Many gender conventions stem from women's life-course schemas such as those of the "good wife, wise mother" (ryosai kenbo) or housewife (sengyō shūfu). These schemas and their associated scripts have dominated Japanese culture since at least the 1890s (Meiji Era). Even though these ideologies were promulgated by hegemonic powers who wanted to project a "modern" (western) image to the world in order to gain equity in trade and economics, as Alissa Freedman (2015) and other scholars have shown, male-dominated economic and corporate concerns remain deeply entrenched in Japanese cultural productions today. The discourse continues to be reinscribed through many television dramas despite many transformations through education and popular media since Meiji. *Moribito* and Balsa's prominence in the series, however, help challenge the patriarchal values often reinforced by other post-war television shows and film about women and girls. 30-year-old Balsa goes against the status- or power-driven dictates of each fictional kingdom's male establishment figures, for instance, and affective engagement with her position – her demeanour, age, voice, lifestyle, major life decisions, thoughts and emotions – is stimulated precisely because she is highly unconventional within both her textual and extra-textual domains. Indeed, the renowned talent (tarento), Ayase had to lower her usual

5 For respective politics, class, gender and postcolonial deconstructive analyses, see: Itsuji 2006, Enomoto 2007, Kido 2007, Kilpatrick and Muta 2013.

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voice for the role of Balsa and did most of the action shots herself (Umibe). The role also contrasts with most of Ayase's previous dramatic roles, including that of a wife in the recent *taiga* historical drama series, *Idaten* (2019), about the (1964) Tokyo Olympics.

4. EMPLOYMENT SCHEMAS AND SCRIPTS

The latest *Moribito* series now sits amongst a trajectory of television narratives about working women for female audiences, but disrupts the masculinist employment scripts which other shows continue to reinscribe. One such script involves women's labour force participation. Women's labour generates much social debate which can be linked to "good wife, wise mother" schemas and associated scripts, especially in relation to working mother and child-rearing activities. As some scholars have indicated, women are often blamed for putting their careers before relationships and childbearing (see, for example, Freedman and Iwata-Weickgenannt 2011, Sugawa-Shimada 2013, Mandujano-Salazar 2017,). This kind of discourse is intrinsically tied to economic perspectives which become particularly evident amidst Japan's recent labour shortages. Whereas women's participation in the Japanese workforce has been encouraged by government and other vested interests through, for instance, the Equal Employment Opportunity Law of 1986 (and supporting legislation in the 1990s), high rates of women's under-employment, lesser pay, and limited career tracks have continued. Indeed, as women's employment rates have been increasing (*Nikkei Asian Review* 2018), masculinist anxieties have persisted. These concerns revolve around, for instance, the breakdown of the family unit, the disinclination of young women to marry (or to marry late) and declining birth rates – all matters which negatively impact economic growth. Although the government has been trying to manage declining fertility rates since they fell to 1.57 in 1989, its failures of inclusion and egalitarianism can be seen through the constant updates to measures and policies such as the inaugural 2007 Charter for Work Life Balance (see, for instance, Ikezoe 2014: 108–9, and *The Economist*, 2016). Nevertheless, such measures have neither increased birth rates nor improved women's more precarious labour-force trajectories.

Further, women who have made alternative life choices such as not marrying or having children have been disparaged in pejorative terms such as *make-inu* (loser dogs) – versus *kachi-inu* (winner dogs) who are married with children – and *arafō* (around forty). (For more on the genesis of such terms, see Freedman and Iwata-Weickgenannt 2011: 300). Such derogatory terms persisted at least until an awareness of the consumer power these women cohorts wielded, after which the more neutral term "single" *o-hitorisama* gained currency (Mandujano-Salazar 2017). By recent Japanese convention where the marriage age would be twenty-seven to thirty, women would either be thinking of marriage or be married with children, especially by forty. These are of course significant ages in a woman's biological life which affect childbearing, family relationships and workforce participation. As Ysela Mandujano-Salazar (2017: 530–1) indicates, this age range forms part of the Japanese *seken* (social "jury") discourse in which society and industry have been reluctant to expand concepts of femininity and women's social roles. As Freedman and Iwata-Weickgenannt (2011) have indicated, despite the promise of more and varied career opportunities for women, most Japanese television series have mostly reinscribed masculinist discourses about women's work and life concerns. These programmes are more inclined to see women and girls as sexualised objects or as aides for the (masculinist) corporate world, and are often more interested in socio-economic concerns than any form of social equity, in the employment sphere or elsewhere.

5. EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL SCHEMAS AND SCRIPTS IN JAPANESE DRAMAS

A brief overview of some prominent female dramas and anime in Japan helps trace dominant discourses on what Mandujano-Salazar calls the ideal "female life course" (2017: 536). Japanese television dramas have reflected post-war gender transformations and anxieties since at least the 1960s. As Tamae Prindle (2016: 430) asserts, questioning of women's roles began to occur during the 1960s amid Japan's so-called "economic miracle" period. This fledgling interrogation was in response to earlier television live-action dramas such as the 1920s–50s' "hahamono" (mother) tragedies about maternally-oriented women who make sacrifices for their children. 1960s' and 70s' genres included the love story and "domestic bliss" films. Manga and anime series in the high-economic-growth period from the 1970s to the 1990s then produced what Sharalyn Orbaugh (2003) has called the "busty battlin' babe", the strong, attractive young female fighter with magical powers, such as Honey Kisaragi from *Cutie Honey* or Major Motoko Kusanagi from *Ghost in the Shell*. Moreover, as Akiko

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Sugawa-Shimada (2013 205) indicates, both the "magical girl" (mahō shōjo) and the feminine Romantic beauty (bishōjo) who was set against regal European backgrounds have also featured prominently in many Japanese novels, manga and anime series. Nevertheless, as Gabriella Lukács (2010) has indicated in her groundbreaking research on Japanese television, aesthetic and economic concerns remained a dominant motivator for programming. Even so, Noriko Aso (2010) has demonstrated that there has been an increasing questioning of values and expectations for women. Aso argues that there is some rejection of mainstream societal beliefs about gender and family roles in her examination of animated television series such as *The Rose of Versailles* (Berusaiyu no Bara, 1979–80); *Those Obnoxious Aliens* (Urusei Yatsura, 1981–86); and *Revolutionary Girl Utena* (Shōjo Kakumei Utena, 1997–98). On the other hand, Akiko Sugawa-Shimada has indicated a more ambivalent trajectory in gender transformations and their representation. Although she has shown how manga and anime such as *Meg the Little Witch* (Majokko megu-chan, 1974–1975) and *Candy Candy* (1976–1979) have reinscribed the shōjo as a "thoroughbred, upright, fashionable, and lady-like" or "cute" object of the male gaze (2013: 201), she also notes that some later "magical girl" animations have offered some resistance by invoking a "cute goth", a blend which has helped subvert "hegemonic femininity and gender roles" (2013: 202). As Tanaka Hiko (2011: 229) suggests, however, even the portrayal of Balsa in the 2007 NHK *Moribito* anime series, depicts her as more voluptuous than muscular in theatrical action scenes which place the anime in the historical context of beautiful girl soldier animation such as *Sailor Moon* (Doi 2017: 404).

These series about and for young women have more recently been followed by a relatively new or trendy Japanese (and Asian) television drama. As Gabriella Lukács (2010) has suggested, trendy dramas were created by commercial television networks in the late 1990s in response to economic challenges caused by market downturns. As neoliberal market trends saw productions moving away from story-driven dramas towards more consumer-driven shows, the new dramatic form began to feature celebrities (or *tarento* working in various genres) who became valuable as signifiers of lifestyle (or "affect", in Lukács terms). In the context of neoliberal reforms, although they were created and designed so that viewers could keep up with the latest trends, they also encouraged social adaptation to widening social inequities, new consumer systems and exploitative labour practices. These trendy dramas targeted the demographic with the highest disposable income, young single working women, and focused on the realisation of happiness which, as Ysela Mandujano-Salazar (2017: 536) suggests, mainly came to centre around marriage and work. Indeed some of these dramas were named according to prominent issues in the female life course. *Around Forty*, for example, is the name of a 2008 TBS television series which aired in a time spot often reserved for dramas which tackled "difficult" issues, thus underscoring the perception of unmarried, childless women as a "social problem" (Freedman and Iwata-Weickgenannt 2011: 302). *O-hitorisama*, too, became the title of a 10-episode drama broadcast in autumn 2009 on TBS dealing with female singledom (Freedman and Iwata-Weickgenannt 2011: 300). Mandujano-Salazar argues that some of these dramas, such as *It is not that I can't marry, it's that I won't* (Watashi kekkon dekinai-n ja nakute, shinai-n desu, 2016, the same year as the first *Moribito* season), provide examples of resistance to dominant discourses "the idea that wifehood and motherhood are the only valuable female roles" (2017: 537) and showcase "alternative models of femininity" (2017: 526). In contrast to this view, however, Alissa Freedman has shown in her body of work on *Tokyo Sonata* (2015) that there has been a marked tendency in primetime dramas to reinscribe patriarchal economic values through, for example, lead female characters who are usually corporate secretaries and who cannot be seen as more successful than their male colleagues. Further, they are often depicted as having to make a choice between their careers or having their own families, decisions which ultimately help maintain the aims of corporate Japan (Freedman 2017: 66). Freedman further demonstrates that many of the successful female workers decide to go overseas to follow careers after love has failed them at home, and that these dramas continue to classify gender roles by putting an emotional face on discussions about women in mass media.

Whereas the latest *Moribito* live-action series has arisen amidst these kinds of conservative portrayals of women and girls in film and television drama, it shatters many of their hegemonic conventions and values. Despite (or because of) its quasi-medieval, fantasy setting, it provokes deeper and more complex questioning about binary feminine or masculine roles and choices in life. Even within the fictive patriarchal domains around New Yogo, Balsa's border transgressions (both physical and metaphorical) subvert many dominant East Asian gendered social and familial conventions. She is not only strong and feisty, but also a working woman in an androcentric world which is in many ways analogous to present-day patriarchies. Further, Balsa's life choices about love, family and marriage

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contrast with trendy dramas and their ilk where she decides to remain single and without children despite her latent romantic interest in Tanda, her constant and faithful domestic backstop who firmly supports her work in the social sphere. By provoking interrogation of Balsa's (and others') choices and behaviour then, the series destabilises many of the conventional life-course discourses. Balsa's role subversions include those of: the rebellious and fierce fighter (anti- or failed-) daughter figure to Jiguro, her foster father and life teacher; the steadfastly single, tough (non-maternal) adult protector of the young Prince Chagum; and the close friend (non-wife) for the shaman Tanda whose overtures she ignores. The drama thereby questions feminine roles and life choices in ways which engage viewers in an ongoing enquiry about gendered schemas and scripts of work, marriage and domesticity to which Balsa and others close to her do not conform.

As Gabriella Lukács indicates, production and consumption elements operate through a "web of (inter)textual relations" (2010: 79) which has an affective dimension that influences viewing agency. Whereas Lukács shows that meaning goes beyond any individual programme, **s**he also finds that producers' focus on ratings (based on viewers' and advertisers' satisfaction) to keep customers happy can negatively affect the ability to provide objective commentary or critique on contemporary social issues. In contrast with such consumer-driven affective engagement, the *Moribito* experiment stimulates more agentic affective reading relationship with the text and its surrounds. Intertextual comparisons of Balsa's gender-role transgressions with earlier television models of, for instance, the devoted mother, the demure daughter, the beautiful or magical shōjo, or the busty fighting girl, and the "trendy" working woman lead to mental evaluations which challenge such representations. Whereas Balsa may have special powers, she is quite different from the schematically-driven magical or battling bishōjo (beautiful girls), the conventional fighting girl in many manga or anime. Moreover, as a fighting woman who is in the same age group as many of the single, more fashionable and consumer-oriented protagonists of the current trendy dramas, for instance, Balsa breaks various conventions that these earlier images promulgate. Her common clothing and life decisions, for instance, contravene the materialistic lifestyle tendencies or other marriage/career choices and familial conventions they promote. Further, Balsa is not only staunchly non-materialistic and unconcerned with her appearance, but her weathering and independence also set her apart from most other popular female and shōjo television characters by firmly rejecting any objectification by the male gaze. She also shows remarkable fortitude in her rejection of love, marriage and a comfortable home life, and instead of leaving Japan for a career overseas (after giving up on love and marriage at home), she remains in the immediate region to pursue her fighting career. That is, she remains to fight against corrupt patriarchal systems in her own and other proximate nations.

Aside from her superior physical competence in martial arts (which she has acquired through hard training) against lesser-skilled male soldiers, Balsa's actions and behaviour evoke a more negotiated subjectivity in interaction with influential masculinist plotters. Whereas Balsa is predominantly contrasted against an array of such male protagonists, be they close personal friends, acquaintances or antagonists, her considerable warmth, kindness and mundane humility contrast and blend with her superior intellect and fighting skills throughout. She often makes friends of erstwhile enemies, and her values of equity, loyalty and justice are able to be assessed in many episodes through her collaborations with, for instance, commoners, elite, or the indigenous Yakoo (ヤクー); all those who work with her to uncover imperial deceits and plots (see Kilpatrick and Muta 2013). Balsa is thus a much more complex and multi-dimensional (and older) "modern" woman who, in both appearance and demeanour, earns her place by surpassing the prowess and ethics of the powerful men in the story's patriarchal world. As a mature, single, weather-beaten, warrior-working woman who makes considered life choices, Balsa contravenes schematic gender norms, and helps set the stage for cognitive assessment of her independent subjectivity. Such mental assessment occurs through the contrast of cultural conventions laid down in both previous dramas and in the rigidly patriarchal New Yogo and its surrounds. Assessment of Balsa's and others' subjectivities arises in relation to, for instance, various situations, time-frames, emotions, causes and effects.

6. SEQUENCING STRATEGIES AND COGNITION IN *MORIBITO*

Much cognitive assessment is stimulated in *Moribito* through sequencing strategies which bring some elements to the fore and cause others to recede. These elements then need to be (mentally) retained and later integrated into the broader picture in order to assess and ascertain potential meanings and significances. Mental activity not only connects newly-provided information in events being viewed with past narrative

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action and what is known or given about the story as a whole, but also incites active consideration of connections between events and characters. Open-ended or cut-off scenes and sequencing can generate, for instance, highly-nuanced predictive capacity as the brain compares stored knowledge and experiences with incoming information and makes predictions about what will come next. An example of how ToM combines with audience predictive activity in *Moribito* occurs through the ultimate cliffhanger which comes at the end of Episode 1.04. Here, Balsa throws a knife from one direction at the Kanbal king she despises, while Jin, her erstwhile foe, fires a crossbow from another. Because the camera cuts away from the target after Jin's arrow, the audience must speculate about whether it is directed at Balsa or the Kanbal king. Under the assumption that Balsa must survive (because a new season could not begin without her), postulation is also needed about other potential forking paths and character motivations. In other words, the ending not only sparks questions about who Jin's arrow is aimed at but also conjecture about what his intentions are, and what will happen next if he or Balsa succeeds or fails in killing the king. How will the incident be a catalyst for the next season? Will Balsa be compelled to flee from New Yogo, and seek safety in yet another kingdom? The cliffhanger thus not only whets a viewer's appetite to return for the next season, but simultaneously incites deep thinking about what is in characters' minds and about possible scenarios which have been conjured and held in memory, and which will then need to be confirmed or rejected later.

7. SETTING AND SUBJECTIVITY

Sequencing and other film devices also operate with the construction of setting which in turn affects character assessment in crucial ways. Setting and sequencing become important in the building up of information about Balsa's attitudes towards the world, especially in her interactions with the storyworld's patriarchal state. Different camera techniques, angles, or quick shot-reverse-shot segments early in *Moribito*'s Episode 1.01, for instance, require the audience to consider her subjectivity against temporal and spatial connotations or dissonances. They conjure cultural schemas which provoke cognitive consideration of the socio-historical setting and how elements build and relate to each other within the more rigid, status-oriented space against the flow and space of nature. Class divisions, for example, are invoked in the initial scenes through Balsa's introduction within a hierarchical patriarchate even before the opening credits, where the camera shots allow for a mental contrast of the appearance and tone of Balsa with the participants in a regal procession which immediately conjures a status-conscious past with hints of danger amidst the lonely mountain pass. Here, mind work is driven entirely by camera work, sound and music for the first four-minutes, without any verbal dialogue until the end of Balsa's dramatic rescue of the as-yet-unknown young prince. The rescue showcases Balsa's transgressive spear-wielding talents as she saves him from an assassination attempt (a scene which itself is significant for its script-breaking elements, as discussed below). In the build up to the rescue, an initial aerial shot over the remote mountain ravine pans in to a close up of a swirling river far below, then pans along a high mountain path and closes in on the pageantry of an archaic-seeming retinue, replete with clashing cymbals, as a palanquin manoeuvres the perils of falling rocks. The setting is not necessarily Japan, but for those familiar with Japanese history, the procession is reminiscent of a *sankin kotai* (alternate attendance) retinue of the Edo period (1603–1868), where daimyō lords were required to travel to Edo (modern Tokyo) to pay (enforced) respect to the shogun who resided there. The subsequent cut to a distant human figure on a narrow path across the mountains (who turns out to be Balsa) may initially evoke a schema or script of a (male) wandering merchant or rōnin (masterless samurai) from the *taiga* historical drama convention.

The proximity of the two separate scenes prompts viewers to speculate about how they may be connected, and encourages a recognition of the markers of a class differential between the characters. As the camera closes in on the as-yet-unnamed Balsa from behind, and as she turns back (towards viewing space) and is looking around intently, the pacing allows for mental adjustments to any schema called up, from a male *rōnin* to a female wanderer, for instance, and the audience must search further for connections and potential significances. As John Fiske (2011 69–70, 96) has suggested in his seminal work *Television Culture*, the convention of the close-up is an important ideological and technical tool. It can engage viewers' assessment of the subject under scrutiny in televisual moments of hostility or intimacy. As Fiske further indicates, these assessments also depend on other technical, social and ideological codes by which subjects are contextualised. Assessment of the two separate scenes thus involves speculation about Balsa's potential circumstances and how she will be linked to the procession. As the camera zooms in

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FIGURE 1. SEQUENCE DEMONSTRATING BALSA'S RESPONSES TO STIMULI.

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yet closer, the timing and lack of dialogue allow for viewer scrutiny of Balsa's clothing, posture and apparent positioning in the world and her attitude and responses. The shots not only show Balsa as woman, but in contrast to the colourful, luxurious attire of those in the retinue, she is wearing a duller, comfortable travelling cloak, with a bound-up spear (which is being carried as a stick with bundle over her shoulder). The extreme close-ups of Balsa also mean that viewers are unconsciously aligned with her position as she is noted as an outsider or commoner protagonist in this apparently hierarchically-oriented, masculine storyworld. This alignment further encourages anticipation about what will happen to her and what will happen next. These early scenes thus immediately conjure ideas of this woman as a breaker of conventions particularly as, by the end of the rescue, she has transgressed many physical or metaphorical boundaries or gendered schemas and scripts already existing in an audience's mind.

Whereas these critical opening scenes encourage assessment of Balsa's subjectivity through their close-up scrutiny of Balsa's visage – her gestures, facial expressions and eye-shifts at critical sounds and sights – the camera work prompts further complex mind work and predictions about her role as a seasoned wanderer-heroine. The partial pieces of information encourage assessment of her as a woman accustomed to the elements and comfortable in the natural environment, yet also alert and ready to take action if necessary. Indeed, she is introduced as being so acutely aware of her surrounds that she seems to have special powers of perception. For instance, when the camera cuts away from her at a sudden loud screech, a long pan follows her line of sight as she is observed intently watching a giant, surreal-looking bird of prey (the first sign of fantasy) fly past and up towards the imperial procession as it is proceeding over a high bridge in the distance. (Known as *nāji* [ナージ], these birds are a recurrent motif and eventually play a crucial role at the end of Season 1.)

Another cut back to Balsa's face and body, however, shows her suddenly alert to something untoward across the mountain (at 00.00.55). As the camera again follows her line of vision up towards the procession, the sightline moves to a higher viewpoint of the retinue which could not be hers. Rather, the sightline is constructed firstly to register an aerial shot of the procession, potentially from the point of view of the *nāji* (see top left image in Figure 1), and then the point of view of someone who has apparently shot a projectile. There is also a fleeting, blurry image of a splash of colour from the procession – an extreme close-up of the cymbal player's attire – and an ox's eye (see Figure 1). Together with the perception of both Balsa's alertness and the ensuing melee in the procession, the shot-reverse-shot sequence arouses audience suspicions about something or someone apparently out-of-place in the higher mountains. The partial information encourages the formulation that the ox pulling the palanquin has been shot. The camera work here thus helps foreshadow Balsa's embroilment in the assassination attempt. The cuts help formulate postulations and must be retained in memory in order to assemble these and other hints which indicate the possibility that the person who has shot the projectile is behind the young Prince Chagum's "accident".

In alluding to Balsa's highly-attuned skills of perception, and to the cause of the "accident", the sequence generates connections to the deeper levels of intrigue – between Balsa and the New Yogo kingdom she is visiting, and between her and the prince she later saves and who she eventually comes to protect. That is, together with the concept of hierarchical differences as the potential cause for the narrative action and story development, these filmic strategies foreground the concepts of political and personal intrigue by prompting questions about what Balsa has seen, how it might fit into the story, and what her role will be. The open-ended shots not only build curiosity and foreshadow the upcoming action, but also encourage the attribution of important characteristics to Balsa. Theory of mind needs to be applied in relation to Balsa's actions, assessments of her moral stance, and anticipation about her position in connection to those in the world around her and particularly to her future relationship with the young prince. The world itself must also be mentally connected to the imperial powers she is about to encounter. Such assessments then need to be held in memory to be adjusted against later scenes.

8. **RESCUE SCRIPT**

Filmic strategies also operate together with ToM and other mental activity in the subversion of the normal rescue script – that is, intrinsic cultural knowledge of expected behaviour after a rescue. The script prompts further cognitive assemblage of information about the storyworld through interaction with Balsa's attitudes towards (masculine) authority figures, for example. A basic script for an encounter with a rescuer after the saving of someone's life would usually include some expression of relief or gratitude, and/or a reward or token of appreciation of some kind (which may come later). It may also

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involve a gendered script with a stereotypically male saviour and a female being rescued or an expression thanks from a relieved relative or acquaintance of the rescued person. In accordance with David Herman's suggestion that scripts are particularly useful for understanding how narratives "focus attention on the unusual and the remarkable" (2002: 90), Balsa's rescue of the prince is not only remarkable in its subversion of the conventional "skilful male-rescuer" stage of the script, but also at the gratitude stage. Indeed, the narrative's already-established status/power dichotomy is likely to trigger schemas and scripts related to unequal gender relations and strengthen affective viewing alignment with Balsa's attitude (already well-established after having closely witnessed her exclusive skills, prowess and moral ethics).

Theory of mind interaction with Balsa's attitudes is generated at the first dialogue after the rescue (at 00.03.47) in the form of a demand initiated by the aggressive male soldier who the audience has witnessed watching Balsa's exploits as a bystander. He is apparently in charge of protecting the prince (deduced through mental assemblage of events and appearances). After Balsa has emerged from the swirling rapids after saving Chagum and is walking across the riverside rocks, this guard contravenes the gratitude stage of the standard rescue script by appearing singularly unimpressed with her presence let alone her prowess. When he crudely demands to know her name instead of thanking her, or even politely acknowledging her bravery, Balsa's equally curt response also contravenes rescue script expectations. She immediately turns on her heel rather than showing any respect for his authority or providing any further information. While such a dangerously-executed rescue by a woman is remarkable in the socio-historical setting, the soldier's apparent indifference to her feats is also highly untoward. His lack of awe, appreciation, or respect for her success in saving Prince Chagum from certain death, and his abruptness or rudeness in the situation are strategically positioned to arouse audience curiosity. Together, the soldier's gruffness and Balsa's response call up audience ToM to try to ascertain and attribute possible reasons for the apparent hostility between them. His terse attitude may be postulated as a soldier's or masculine arrogance, an annoyance with her interference in matters of state as a bothersome woman or commoner. The attribution of ToM to the soldier's antagonism towards Balsa not only foreshadows suspicions about his attitude towards her rescue of the prince, but they must be recalled later. Some of these speculations are at least partially confirmed in the next scenes which help piece together the basis of the intrigue.

In comparison with assessment of the guard in this scene, ToM may attribute Balsa's dismissive stance towards him as an expression of her surprise at his contravention of the rescue script, or her impatience with, disregard for, or hostility towards military, imperial, or masculine authority, and alerts the audience about a deeper intrigue with a potentially hostile regime. Regardless of whether the audience registers the power or gender relations consciously or unconsciously, the characters' contravention of conventional rescue, gender or power schemas and scripts prompts a mental search for potential cause-and-effect explanations for characters' behaviour. These various speculations must then be held in memory and assessed against upcoming scenes in order to put together more information about the protagonists' respective attitudes and the already-insinuated power dynamics among characters in the land at large.

Analysis of the momentary but suspenseful conclusion to this untoward encounter further demonstrates how filmic techniques activate ToM to arouse misgivings about the motives of the palace guard. ToM operates to build up potential causes for the mystery (which is later exposed as part of the machinations of New Yogo's hegemonic patriarchy). Immediately after Balsa's withdrawal from the soldier, for instance, the camera abruptly cuts away from her to a split-second shot (at 00.03.50) from a slightly lowered viewing angle towards an out-of-focus guard in similar uniform to that of her interrogator. Along with a sharp whooshing sound, the quick, blurred images show the male's right arm pitching back then forward. (See Figure 2.) Audience mind work must link the man in this flash with the soldier who has just questioned Balsa in order to recognise that he is now attacking her as she is walking away. These shots thereby call forth further speculation about the reasons behind Balsa's attitude while also providing partial confirmation of earlier suspicions about both characters and the intrigue.

Filmic techniques thus engage the viewing mind through the crucial aspects of speculation and memory capacity. This shot of the attacking soldier recalls the earlier image and whooshing sound which the camera fleetingly registered as moving towards the procession just before the melee when Chagum's carriage was upended, and when Balsa's gestures and facial expressions conjured a sense of something awry (at 00.00.55–57). Viewers must mentally compare these shots through memory in order to come up with the explanation that the palace guard is the "someone" behind the uproar in the procession and the upending of the prince's carriage. Whereas the audience has been able to previously draw an as-

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FIGURE 2. IMAGES OF THE ATTACKING SOLDIER (AT 00.03.50) AND EARLIER SHOTS OF THE LEAD-UP TO HIS "DEMAND".

sessment of the situation through witnessing Balsa's reaction to the earlier arrow directed at the procession, because this sword attack on Balsa is directed towards the viewing space in close proximity to her (in her absence), her feelings or emotions are unable to be witnessed, but are instead transferred to the viewer-as-Balsa. That is, in Fiske's terms, the close-ups align the viewer with Balsa-as-receiver of the blow against the soldier as the villain. Nevertheless, the contrastive shots disconcert and incite further enthrallment. While emotions and questions are left up in the air, the camera work also fosters attentiveness to the guard's awareness of Balsa's suspicions and knowledge as dangerous to him.

Camera work further arouses speculation about the reasons for the guard's attack and about deeper upcoming mysteries to alert audiences to the need to activate memory – to be particularly attentive to each and every potential clue. Awareness of the need for further memory capacity is stimulated, for instance, when the camera cuts away from the attacking soldier just as suddenly to the opening credits (which showcase Balsa's signature spear). The brevity and positioning of the attack signal to audiences that elements of the attack should be retained in memory. Later recall of this cliffhanger explains why, when Balsa next appears in "present time" (00.07.55), she is tied in a prison cell with a facial wound (after having apparently been struck with the flat of the sword). Such sequences not only stimulate questioning about significance and connections but also presage continuing narrative complexities about palace deceptions and scheming.

Ultimately, these as-yet-unanswered sequences – the fraction-of-a-second camera shots at key moments of intrigue – establish the narrative pattern: that answers will only come in parts, and only to the attentive, alert viewer to be assessed and processed as bits of stray information to be pieced together. In other words, understanding of the story and postulations about reasons for subjects' actions require cognitive capacity – alertness, attention to detail, memory and recognition of momentary fragments – to put together the answers to the deeper mysteries, all of which are later partially revealed and related back to power, gender, class and race relations which have arisen from earlier scenes or episodes.

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In order to further demonstrate the effectiveness of techniques which generate complex cognitive dynamics around representations of gender, these open-ended strategies can be contrasted with the more descriptive explications in the preview montage of the series which was produced for screening as a nominee for the 45th Emmy Awards. The preview, created for English-speaking audiences, uses a para-textual masculine voiceover which explains the story's plot rather than leaving viewers to deduce or deconstruct any potential significances arising from the narrative presented in the montage itself. For instance, the initial voiceover focuses on the 'guardian' subjectivities of Prince Chagum and Balsa – in that order: "This is the story of a young prince who becomes the "guardian of the spirit" and the woman who protects him".[6] Rather than encouraging audience mental activity, such oration (also projected in writing across the screen) immediately instantiates Chagum's class status as a "royal" protector and host of the water spirit – referred to as an egg (tamago) – which inscribes him with the higher social role (as protector of the wellbeing of the storyworld). It thus relegates Balsa to a secondary "guardianship" script, inscribing her as the more domestic and maternal protector of a child in contrast with the more worldly intellectual and integrative prowess she demonstrates throughout the series (as implied through the preview montage). Whereas later visuals from this same montage indicate a different story – of Balsa's bravery, skills, and defiance against the arrogance of the male "protectorate" – the denotative (versus connotative) voiceover produces a less interrogative, less compelling and challenging viewing or interpretative experience. Perhaps the socio-cultural references and complexities of the narrative were deemed too demanding for an English-language audience, or perhaps the subtleties of the deconstructive elements were somehow missed by the production or translation teams, or maybe this narration is simply an indication of the implicit and entrenched dominance of the masculine voice in English. Nevertheless, the mental impact of gendered binaries in the initial narration is hard to override once provided in such an authoritative manner. While the narration in the preview discourages much self-reflection on the more nuanced aspects of dissonant gender roles in the series, astute viewers may nevertheless be intrigued enough by Balsa's integral role as the bodyguard heroine who works hard at social rather than maternal or personal bonding. If so, such viewers would certainly be kept stimulated by the mental activity required by the continually evolving complexity of plots and relationships which unfold throughout this stimulating series.

9. NON-CONSANGUINEAL AND SUPERNATURAL BONDS

Indeed, one part of Balsa's rescue conjures another type of schema which stimulates mental consideration of familial relationship ties such as mother/child bonds or blood connections. The supernatural connection scene between Balsa and Chagum which occurs under the water, before Balsa pulls the prince out of the river, conjures the mother/child schema but explodes conventional connections or scripts through its defiance of earthly or blood-related orientations. The formation conjures the beginning of a deep bond between Balsa and Chagum but the scene also encourages conceptual work about different kinds of ethics for bonding with and protecting others. In contrast with previous scenes which showcase Balsa's tough physical skills (such as her acrobatic skills with the spear and rope), as the underwater Chagum becomes illuminated with the strange light of the egg within him, Balsa gently flows into the Moebius-like penumbra of light and water surrounding him. (See Figure 3.) All the light and fluidity of this transcendental underwater connection allude to a higher (and more intimate) form of non-consanguineal bonding which subverts dominant (real- and story- world) schemas or scripts of genetically-related, maternal/paternal and protective ties. As Ella Tennant suggests in a different context, water "possesses a magical quality which enables it to absorb our imaginings and projections – the perfect gender fluid shapeshifter [which] is often easily equated with spirituality, sexuality, mysticism and the soul" (2017). Mystical water (and other elemental) connections are contrasted with more mundane physicality throughout, especially as the egg actively grows within Chagum as the series progresses. The water scenes connote a blended sense of a protective spirit which opposes any simple binary construction such as mother/parent and child, or earth and sky, especially as the fluidity of water symbolises how beings from all walks of life in the realm need to bond together to combat the present drought throughout the land (which is tied up with the water spirit now manifest within Chagum). The entire scene suggests a supernatural (and near-death) experience in which Balsa and Chagum are bound together in a "cocoon" which anticipates

6 See the preview at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YsxSZ-sHWyg. It can be compared with NHK's synopsis (in English) at https://www.nhk.or.jp/moribito/en/season1.html, which puts Balsa firmly at the centre.

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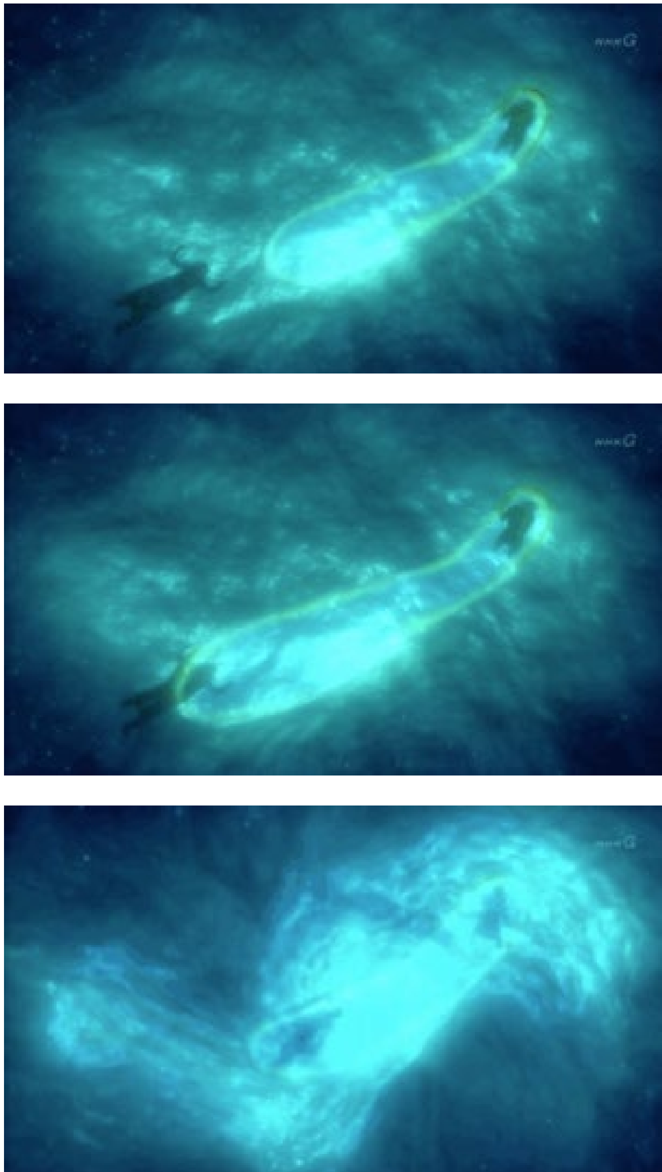

FIGURE 3. BALSA (AT BOTTOM LEFT) BREAKING THROUGH CHAGUM'S UNDERWATER "COCOON".

their future ties and can also be later ascertained as integral to their different "guardianship" roles, and to the storyworld at large.

Moreover, a similar kind of metaphorical bonding schema or script applies to all the central relationships in *Moribito*. None of the familial or protective connections are through blood ties. For instance, Balsa is the reluctant then affectionate foster-parent-protector of Prince Chagum, while Chagum is the fearful, then hopeful, protector of the (water) spirit within him (and is also more affectionate towards Balsa and Tanda than to his blood father who is embroiled in plots to destroy him as heir-apparent). Further, Balsa's guardian, Jiguro, acts as her foster father – as nurturer, trainer and physical protector (from assassin hunters) – while the male healer-shaman figure, Tanda, is Balsa's affectionate base and home-maker/carer and Chagum's foster-parent-protector. This fluidity of gender roles within non-blood affiliations also contrasts markedly with the land's staunchly patriarchal New Yogo court and its ideas of what needs protecting (or destroying) and how such "protection" should be carried out. It transpires that Chagum's father, the god-emperor, has plotted with his courtiers to have his own son killed in order to protect the throne/realm because the "demon" spirit within Chagum will expose the secret of the emperor's mortality. These contrastive familial/protective metaphors all activate audience ToM assessment of character subjectivities through the mental attribution of reasons for characters' bonds with others close to them and their attitudes towards others in the story realm. In other words, mental comparisons between real- and story- world scripts operate with narrative gaps, trial-and-error explanations for characters' behaviour, and intrigues to interrogate the traditional hierarchical, familial and gendered human relationships.

10. FLASHBACKS AND NURTURING SCHEMAS

Audiences must further interpret nurturing schemas through cognitive processing of flashbacks or mises-en-scène which present disjointed information and/or interrupt the main narrative's timeline or flow of events. As Jason Mittell (2010) points out, such disjunctions necessitate more complex comparative affective processing of the story's characters, temporalities and causal connections. Indeed, *Moribito* producer Kiyoshi Umibe indicates that the insertion of scenes from Balsa's earlier life into the present day makes the story harder to follow, but can make "the protagonist's emotions and motivations easy to grasp" (Pickard 2017). Crucial background information about Balsa's past has to be pieced together through cuts back and forth in time and juxtaposed scenes which occur at particular points in the narrative sequence. Many flashbacks call up nurturing scripts which act to subvert the three main female "life course" schemas of (obedient) daughter, (maternal) protector, and potential (romantic) partner or wife. Scenes of Balsa's life with her now-deceased

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FIGURE 4. DISSOLVE FROM THE TRAUMATISED CHILD, CHAGUM, TO TORTURED ADULT, BALSA (AT 00.07.50).

foster-father Jiguro, the hard-nosed but caring warrior, are strategically positioned at important moments in the development of her most personal present-day relationships.

The first flashback after the opening credits in 1.01 (at 00.06.00), for instance, prompts comparison with Balsa's rescue of Chagum by depicting her own rescue by her father's faithful friend Jiguro. Jiguro has become the foremost figure in her young life when she is six years old, after her father, who had been loyal to the then Kanbal king, has been murdered at the behest of the treacherous aspiring king. As the fleeing Jiguro pulls the young Balsa onto his horse, the camera zooms in on her doll as it is dropped and left behind. As the scene conjures all the searing trauma of the abrupt departure, viewers can attribute Balsa's emotional loss (of, for instance, her dislocation from all that is familiar to her; homeland, family and treasured doll) as a metaphorical farewell to her girlhood. The trauma of such home/father/daughter/girlhood displacement is further reiterated in the next scene where Jiguro responds to the young Balsa's continuing tears by telling her somewhat harshly that she can never return home (in a scene mirrored later in her own protective relationship with Chagum). The sequence is neatly woven together by the dissolve from traumatised child to tortured adult at 00.07.50. (See Figure 4.) This kind of juxtapositioning of her present life with flashbacks to her ruptured earlier life in Kanbal with Jiguro helps viewers piece together how she has developed her skills and determination, her worldview or *raison d'être*.

This early montage prompts mind work which postulates Balsa's practical attitude and toughness as a sloughing off of "girlishness" through her mirroring of the tough love of Jiguro, her non-blood-related father. Such mirroring also helps map situations such as Chagum's own ruptured relationship with his father, the god-emperor, and its role in his own development of subjectivity, onto and through Balsa's experiences and his receipt of her foster care and training. Echoes of the now-revealed deceptions behind the new Kanbal throne further conjure parallels with the machinations behind the New Yogo court. This new-found awareness of the treachery in turn arouses consideration of some of the potential reasons for Balsa's lack of respect for patriarchal blood lines, structures or religiously-endowed state authority figures (such as Chagum's father and the present ruler of Kanbal).

11. FLASHBACKS AND THE WORKING WOMAN

Much of the attribution of Balsa's adult subjectivity as a working woman-bodyguard/protector is also built up through flashbacks of developmental moments in her early life with Jiguro which interrupt scenes of her own present-day training of Chagum in the martial arts. Whereas these evocations draw attention to Jiguro's nurturing and hard training of the young Balsa, they also provide access to the development of her spear skills and to her frustrations, failures and determination along her "career" path. As the narrative progresses, in 1.03 in particular, a series of Balsa's memories encourage consideration of potential rationale for her present work ethic (and how this rationale transmits to Chagum). Several scenes which project Balsa's memories while she is tending to Chagum in the remote cave stimulate thought about her career decisions. Tanda has found the cave in order to harbour the three of them while they wait for the egg to hatch, but he is presently away researching the legend of the spirit of the egg. As the egg is now growing within Chagum and becoming restive (ascertained through its illumination in his chest and expressions of his fear and of adult concerns), Chagum

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questions Balsa about why she learnt to fight. The camera cuts (beginning at 00.20.00) back and forth from present to past as she begins to answer that she had wanted to acquire strength to defeat the Kanbal ruler (and thus help the kingdom) rather than simply wanting to learn to protect herself. The first flashbacks cut to Balsa as she witnesses Jiguro do battle with a man he eventually kills, then to Jiguro's deathbed with Balsa at his side. As the cuts go to and fro from present-moment scenes Balsa is simultaneously recounting the story to Chagum: Jiguro had to kill eight of his former close friends who, although they were fellow-Spears from Kanbal, had been ordered to hunt him (and Blasa) down and had been doing so for eighteen years. At the deathbed scenes, Balsa promises Jiguro that she will save eight people. The compensatory nature of her act of saving Chagum needs to be postulated (by both Chagum and the audience) here as the camera cuts back to the present where Balsa expresses her regret about her own selfishness and Jiguro's wasted life: that Jiguro had to give up his life to look after her. That is, Balsa's belated recognition that Jiguro had killed friends and given up everything – his home, country, livelihood, and family life – for her must be measured against her rescue of Chagum. Back in "real" time (at 00.25.39), Chagum similarly uses ToM to ascertain that her pledge to Jiguro to save eight people is the reason that Balsa rescued him. The audience must then measure his (vocalised) reasoning against Balsa's response: that saving someone is harder than killing because, as she ruminates, someone gets hurt in any rescue and that wound will create a new conflict. These philosophical reflections may further trigger the memory of Jiguro's early advice to the crying six-year-old Balsa in 1.01 (at 00.06.00) that one can never look back, but can only make the most of this life. In turn, the memory flashbacks encourage consideration of the life experiences and hard choices which have moulded Balsa into the fiercely independent career woman and tough but affectionate guardian she has become – just as Jiguro was to her.

12. SUBVERSIONS OF "GOOD WIFE, WISE MOTHER" SCRIPT: THE (NON-)DUTIFUL DAUGHTER

The cuts back and forth depicting Balsa's deep indebtedness to and affection for Jiguro also call up and deconstruct daughterly aspects of the "good wife, wise mother" script. For instance, an implication of the juxtapositioning of battle and domestic scenes with Jiguro (and Chagum) is that Balsa contravenes "proper" daughterly conventions. The usual "dutiful daughter" script is one of obedience to fathers (and elders), rather than of the feisty rebellion, independence and self-determination which is evident in the flashbacks of Balsa's training sessions with Jiguro and in her battles against others. While her self-purported "selfishness" further conjures a sense of her daughterly failure, alternatively, it simultaneously interrogates notions of requisite "daughterly duty". Observations of Balsa's expressions of regret about not fulfilling her daughterly obligations encourage, for example, a contrastive empathetic alignment with her as an ethical and responsible being who has succeeded in getting through difficult life circumstances; without a homeland, any fixed abode, or any "natural" family. Another cut back to Jiguro affirms this more empathetic perspective as he reassures her (at 00.24.00) that he has enjoyed spending his life with her (as she is now enjoying her time with the sometimes petulant Chagum), even as Jiguro implies its difficulties when he observes that saving people is harder than killing them (words she repeats to Chagum). Balsa's subjectivity as a devoted, loyal and caring "daughter", her unusual care of Chagum, her training, and the affective dismissal of her sense of failure as a daughter to Jiguro's (maternal and paternal) nurturing are mapped from one generation to the other to call up alternative life scripts for both genders in relation to caring and bonding. Balsa's positive intersubjective relationships, together with the responsibility she takes on for Chagum and the difficulties and rewards it brings, also affirm her career choice (to be a bodyguard). Such mental affirmations encourage rejection of the concept of the need for fulfilment through the more conventional female "life course" script – of love, marriage, housework and children. All of Balsa's difficult life choices are spurred by rationale which flouts conventional scripts.

13. THE SINGLE WOMAN (O-HITORI-SAMA)

While the memory flashes with Jiguro often mirror stages of Balsa's relationship with Chagum to imply reasons for her attitudes towards work, other memories are juxtaposed against present moments with Tanda to provide consideration of her resolutely single status. In a rejection of the conventional schema of marriage as "domestic bliss" for women in Episode 3 (from 00:40:00–42:00), Balsa is seen refusing to acknowledge Tanda's overtures of marriage. While Tanda rejects the stereotypical marriage proposal script by simply

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asking her to live with him rather than explicitly proposing, he suggests even more significantly that she continue with her bodyguard work and just come back "home" to him when she needs. Although Balsa displays no surprise at his suggestions, her face and body language (as she turns away from him) imply her refusal, her active choice to deny something which may be attractive to her. Theory of mind may attribute Balsa's implicit rejection as a resolve to remain single despite her evident respect and (maybe romantic) affection for Tanda, and despite her reliance on him as her "backstop" for refuge, respite, or healing after her battles in the social world. Together with the camera's focus on bodily gestures, her silence further encourages the speculation that Balsa is contemplating his proposal. Her departure back into the cave without answering may thus be taken as her decision to put her work and duty before any personal desires or comforts. This assumption is confirmed in later scenes in which the young Chagum continually sees them as a couple. On the other hand, Tanda, who is biting his lip as he anxiously awaits an answer outside the cave, is obviously disappointed but appears reluctantly accepting of Balsa's decision (and he does not bring it up again, although other scenes allude to it). While this particular scene encourages consideration of alternative familial and working choices for both genders, it also leaves room for consideration of the difficult emotions which come with this kind of major decision in life.

14. SUBVERSIONS OF GENDER BINARIES

Public/private-sphere gender reversals such as Tanda's domestic skills, Balsa's bodyguarding skills, and Chagum's egg-birthing role (Doi 2017: 402) further subvert the "good wife, wise mother" schema and associated scripts by provoking interrogation of set binaristic (masculine/feminine) roles. When Tanda makes a home for Balsa and Chagum in the cave, for instance, it is apparently natural – unquestioned by the characters – that he tends to Balsa when she returns to his hearth from her bodyguard duties. Indeed, Tanda performs stereotypically femenine roles such as cooking and tending to the sick, weak or wounded, and they sit alongside his apparent comfort with taking a secondary role in the more violent battles of the social world. (See, for instance, 1.03, at 00.53.00, where he stands back and watches Balsa's fierce defence of Chagum from the giant serpent, Rarunga, which is trying to obtain the egg.) At the same time, switches in convention are wryly noted in the same episode when Balsa's lack of prowess in the kitchen is highlighted by Chagum's teasing and welcome relief at Tanda's return to cooking after a few days alone with Balsa, and by images of her chopping wood for Tanda's cooking fire (in 1.03, at 00.07.02) which alert viewers to the masculine/feminine role subversions. Indeed, the occasional visual joke overtly mocks other stereotypical scripts such as that of offering a helping hand to women, children or the elderly, all of whom *Moribito* depicts as valuable, capable and independent members of society. In 1.03 (at 00.00.08), for instance, Tanda's hand is knocked away in no uncertain terms as he offers it to the feisty old Toragai, the ambiguously-gendered, but ultimately woman "master" of the parallel universe (of Nayugu) who has special knowledge, skills and supernatural powers (such as the ability to transport her spirit/soul). While the joke is on Tanda here, it also conjures a light-hearted camaraderie which can be contrasted with the serious plotting of the male antagonists from the upper echelons of each of the kingdoms. Such subversions of conventional binaries prompt further consideration of male-dominant martial arts' skills or female-only mothering/caring/nurturing. Whereas some of these relationship roles may be considered as superficial role reversals, Balsa and other characters are always more multidimensional than a rigid binary model would allow. Indeed, viewers must interact with and assess various gender, age and class concepts and characters who have multiple subjectivities as sometimes flawed, yet independently capable and successful at various combinations of nurturing, caring (for others and/or the environment) and employment. Individual talents become especially apparent when the characters collectively unite for the common good rather than compete for more selfish purposes such as career enhancement or the maintenance of individual or deified courtly power in the realm. Although the series offers only a few women characters, especially at the upper echelons, Balsa is surrounded by supportive and equally multi-faceted males and other more ambiguously gendered characters who all help subvert the typically masculine heroic convention (of the *taiga*, for instance) and other more fixed binaries.

15. CONCLUSION

Ultimately, the narrative strategies in the *Moribito* television series prompt highly complex mental activity through scenes which conjure, suggest, thwart and surprise rather than explain events or characters' actions. Particular filmic techniques operate, for instance, to conjure schemas and scripts which then need to be held in memory to inspire en-

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quiry into the narrative's potential connections with contemporary socio-cultural constructions, particularly those related to gendered structures and institutions. In other words, the filmic methods utilised to develop Balsa's character in interaction with her social milieu stimulate viewing minds by raising questions about women's roles and participation relative to modern patriarchal Japan (and elsewhere), where there are continuing failures of inclusion and egalitarianism. Audiences must, for example, consider the complexities of Balsa's (and others') evolving subjectivity – or why Balsa thinks, feels and acts the ways she does – against more conventional discourses of the "good wife, wise mother" and its life course. Techniques such as close-ups, flashbacks, mise-en-scène, and cliffhangers all combine to activate theory of mind and the mental assessment of Balsa's (and others') subjectivities. They build up information and fill in gaps about present relationships, then subject these assessments to scrutiny across staged settings and events of the recent and distant past. They must also be further measured according to relationships amongst the dominant authorities in each of the kingdoms, including those with (super-) natural powers.

Furthermore, these techniques provoke engagement with Balsa as a much more complex feminine/ist character than many of the socially-constructed images of women produced through other televisual media in real life. By prompting mind work which draws attention to the limitations of the implicit and entrenched stereotypes found in many other Japanese media narratives, and in Japan as a whole, audiences are encouraged to build, reflect upon, and deconstruct many of the conventional schemas and scripts which underpin these media. Balsa must be measured against, for instance, the schema of the sacrificial mother, obedient wife or dutiful daughter which were prevalent in early television. The series' constructions and viewing alignments (or distancing) with Balsa and other characters steadfastly avoid any reinscription of the male gaze found in previous anime images such as the cute (kawaii) fighting girl (sentō shōjo) or "busty battlin' babe". The timing of the *Moribito* series further means that Balsa can be directly contrasted with many of the women characters from more recent trendy dramas who are problematised as loser spinsters or career women who become such merely because they have "lost" in love or similar. *Moribito* succeeds in cleverly challenging stereotypical gender roles by interpellating audiences into alignment with Balsa as an independent career woman who works hard for both social justice and the personal rewards she attains. Indeed, after she works through losses, anxieties and failures, hers is the narrative of a heroine who flourishes in broader and unexpected developments which encourage new scripts for girls and more mature women.

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O-hitorisama (TBS October 2009 – December 2009)
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Sailor Moon (Toei Animation 1992 – 1997)
Those Obnoxious Aliens (Kitty Films 1981 – 1986)
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OFFICIALLY SANCTIONED ADAPTATION AND AFFECTIVE FAN RESISTANCE: THE TRANSMEDIA CONVERGENCE OF THE ONLINE DRAMA *GUARDIAN* IN CHINA

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Adaptation; Media Censorship; Chinese TV drama; Boys' Love Fandom; Fan Fictions.

ABSTRACT
This article examines how the adaptation process and fan engagement are constituted in the Mainland China media landscape by focusing on the phenomenally popular online drama *Guardian* (镇魂 2018). Through an in-depth analysis of this series, the article explores the contestation and negotiation between the "top-down expurgation" from the drama's production team during its adaptation process and the "bottom-up subversion" from the fans of this series during its reception and consumption. If the intentional expurgation signifies a strategy of survival confronting the restrictions imposed by censors, then the fans' creative activities work as a kind of resistance to the (post)socialist ideology in China, where homosexuality has been considered a violation of patriarchal heterosexual family, where supernatural narratives have been viewed as backward superstitions, and socially wronged lower-class members are seen as a threat to social stability. The adaptation of *Guardian* from novel to drama and its reception becomes a battlefield of strategic compliance and resistance, where economic demand and political power, modern liberal attitudes toward gender, sexuality, and equality and traditional values concerning harmony, conformity, and authority contest and negotiate.

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During 2012 and 2013, *Guardian* (镇魂), a fantasy novel about legendary gay romance by online writer Priest, became a hit among readers just as the author's many other works have done. As one of the most renowned authors among the female *danmei* (耽美) subculture, a subculture characterized by its explicit depiction of male homosexual relationship by (mostly heterosexual) female authors and for female readers, Priest's novels always generate a legion of loyal fans. In 2017, the novel was adapted into a web drama of the same title. In the context of Mainland China, where both LGBT-themed works and supernatural narratives are under severe regulation by the media authorities, *Guardian*'s transformation from novel to drama underwent significant changes and compromises. To pass Mainland China's strict but vague media censorship and gain permission to broadcast online, *Guardian* as a web drama has expurgated from the original novel much sensitive content that may attract disapproval from media regulating authorities. This "top-down expurgation" functions predominantly on two interrelated layers: it highlights brotherhood to eliminate the visibility of homosexuality, and to replace supernatural and fantastic tropes such as ghosts with science fiction devices. As part of the replacement, the drama also deletes depictions of social inequality and moral corruption with the purpose of promoting an uplifting and positive outlook among citizens and thus maintaining a harmonious society. In this double purge, the ghost is aligned with the homosexual and the socially wronged, and thus becomes a metaphor of the marginal members of Chinese society who are excluded from the mainstream.

These expurgations are deemed acceptable by censors and the drama gained permission to be broadcast in the streaming platform *Youku* (优酷) from 13 June 2018 to 25 July 2018. By 2 August 2018, *Guardian* had attracted 3.4 billion video views on the streaming platform, and thus became a phenomenal Chinese web drama. On 2 August 2018, eight days after the final episode of *Guardian* was released on *Youku*, the series was banned for some unknown reason. On 10 November 2018, *Guardian* was re-released on *Youku* with some scenes missing. Some netizens argued that the show was banned because it "advocated feudal superstitions, exposed the dark side of society, and included some graphic depictions of bloody violence". But this information has not been confirmed. A more likely reason for this ban may be the drama's engagement with LGBT themes.[1]

A large group of fans known as "Guardian Girls"[2] was generated by the release of the serial, mainly out of love for the original novel and the exquisite and subtle performance of the two leading male actors. But fans are not satisfied with the "top-down expurgation" employed by the production team in the serial's visual representation. "Guardian Girls" creatively utilise a subversive strategy in their comments, artworks, and fictions, and these strategies, together with their affective investment, actively dismantle the monopoly of official discourse that aims to silence the marginal outcasts and maintain order. The fans' "bottom-up subversion" indicates the increasingly visible feminist and queer desire for alternative content in Chinese media, where representations of heterosexual romance subservient to the patriarchal ideology have long dominated the screen.

The tug-of-war between releasing and banning embodies a power struggle both between political authority and market economy and between official discourse and grassroots voices. If the "top-down expurgation" by the production team and corporate owners during the adaptation process signifies a strategy of survival in the face of restrictive censorship, then the fans' "bottom-up subversion" functions as a kind of resistance to the (post)socialist ideology in China, where homosexuality has been considered a violation of patriarchal heterosexual family, supernatural narratives have been viewed as backward superstitions, and socially wronged lower-class members are seen as a threat to social stability.

Henry Jenkins (2006: 169) points out that the interplay and tension between "the top-down force of corporate convergence and the bottom-up force of grassroots convergence" is the driving force behind the changing media landscape. In the case of China, the landscape is further complicated by the state authorities who control and censor the content of media products. In the traditional media scene, TV dramas are apt to reflect and reaffirm social ideology as much as they question it. In the new convergence cultural and transmedia environment, this struggle over ideology becomes more nuanced and complicated inasmuch as the advance of technology has made fans' comments and adjunctive creative

1 For more information on the ban, see http://www.sohu.com/a/244984591_509883.

2 The majority of *Guardian*'s fans are female; however, it does include some male fans. Here I use "Guardian Girls" as a convenient term to address this group, with full awareness of its demographic heterogeneity. On 20 July 2018, *Youku*, the streaming platform of *Guardian* had garnered sixty-six million likes from its users for the drama *Guardian*. As a marketing strategy, the company paid the advertisement fee to project pictures of the principal male actors of *Guardian* and "Guardian Girls" onto the big screens of twin towers located in Global Harbour of Shanghai. This episode shows media corporations acknowledging and collaborating with grassroots fans, turning the affective powers of online fans into visible capital signals.

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works more available and accessible and thus less subject to control by corporate owners or political censorship. Through an analysis of *Guardian*, this article explores how the adaptation process and fan engagement are constituted in the media landscape of Mainland China. Between the "top-down expurgation" by the drama's production team during its adaptation process and the "bottom-up subversion" by the fans of this series during its reception and consumption, *Guardian* has become a battlefield of strategic compliance and resistance. It is the site of a contest and negotiation between economic demands and political power, and between modern liberal attitudes toward gender, sexuality, and equality and more traditional values concerning harmony, conformity, and authority.

1. GAY ROMANCE VERSUS BROTHERHOOD: THE ERASURE OF CARNALITY AND ITS RETURN THROUGH FAN'S VOICES

The original novel from which *Guardian* has been adapted was produced and circulated mainly among the *danmei* subculture,[3] which features depictions of male-male same-sex romance created by and for women and sexual minorities (Yang and Xu 2017a: 3). Chinese *danmei* fictions and subculture first appeared in the 1990s, under the influence of Japanese boys' love (hereafter BL) manga and BL fan culture. Japanese manga has a long history of depicting male homosexual stories by female artists and for female readers. Originated in the 1970s, this now fully matured BL subgenre has been viewed as a way to express repressed female desire and create alternative narratives for women under patriarchal society by its bold utilization of the female gaze and its subversion of heterosexual conventions (Aoyama 1988, McLelland 2000, Nagaike 2003, Wood 2006). This genre came to China through the transit port Taiwan, and remains highly popular in China as well as in other East Asian countries.

Although BL subculture originated in Japan, it is well acknowledged that it has a growing transnational readership and appeals to people from different national and cultural backgrounds, not only limited to Asian countries but also extending to the Anglo-European world (Wood 2006, Pagliassotti 2009). However, the unique political and cultural context renders the dissemination of *danmei* works more dangerous and challenging in China. Because of its "dual association with homosexuality and pornography", the genre remains a vulnerable target of state censorship (Yang and Xu 2017a: 4). Unlike the laissez-faire Japanese and North American markets, the Chinese publishing industry as well as media production is under severe control and regulation by the party-state (Zhang 2017: 123).[4] Most Chinese *danmei* narratives come in the form of fiction, rather than manga like Japan, and these novels are prohibited from publication in print form in Mainland China, although Mainland *danmei* authors could choose illegal self-publishing or be published by some Taiwanese publishers. Under such circumstances, as Feng (2009: 6) argues, online literature website becomes a safe haven for *danmei* works, and she appraises *Jinjiang* (晋江) Website (www.jjwxc.net) as such a place. Established in 2003, *Jinjiang* Website is one of the earliest and most influential Chinese literature websites, and publishes predominantly heterosexual romance and *danmei* novels by and for women. However, the Internet is not a utopia that is free of restraint and censorship, and the situation has worsened over the decade since the publication of Feng's analysis of *danmei* fiction (2009). Several anti-pornography campaigns launched by the government in the past years have had a disastrous impact on online websites. With the biggest readership base and the most developed commercial connections, out of self-protection, *Jinjiang* issued a "stricter-than-government" self-censorship which banned "any depiction of body parts below the neck" (Yang and Xu 2017b: 174). Although the regulation also

3 The word *danmei* (耽美) is from the Japanese word *tanbi*, which literally means 'addicted to beauty'. In Japan, this subculture is sometimes also called *yaoi*. In the Japanese context, there used to be a distinction between *shonen-ai*, a subgenre characterised by Platonic love between two beautiful and androgynous young boys, and *yaoi*, which often depicts pornographic male-male sex scenes (Wood 2006: 395). But the distinction has become obsolete in recent years and boys' love (BL) now functions as an all-encompassing genre term. In China, fans often use *danmei* and BL interchangeably. For more details on Chinese *danmei* novels and culture, see Chiang 2016; Feng 2009; Martin 2012; Xu and Yang 2013; Yang and Xu 2017a, 2017b; Zhang 2017.

4 This is not to say that in Japan and Anglo-European countries, fans enjoy complete freedom to create, circulate, and consume BL contents. In these countries, certain subgenres and plots are also under regulation from either publishing houses, or national law. Pagliassotti (2009) illustrates the adaptation strategies employed by U.S publishers to avoid or change certain potentially offensive contents from Japanese BL manga, such as underage sex, or incest plots. Wood (2013) illustrates how legal censorship influences retailers' attitude towards BL works in U.S. However, Chinese fans undoubtedly face stringent censorship from the government "on a daily basis" (Yang and Xu 2017a: 11). Contents circulated on the Internet are also under regulation and may result in their creators and distributors receiving prison sentences. Recently, *danmei* author Tianyi (pseudonym) was sentenced to ten years imprisonment for illegally publishing her works for profits. See news reports on such cases: https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/nov/20/chinese-writer-tianyi-sentenced-to-decade-in-prison-for-gay-erotic-novel.

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applied to heterosexual romance genres, the *danmei* genre has been most heavily damaged.

Under such strengthening state- and self-censorship, the original novel from which the drama *Guardian* has been adapted was serialised on *Jinjiang* from November 2012 to March 2013.[5] In other words, before it was adapted into TV drama and was subjected to expurgation, the creation and reception of Priest's original novel had already endured (self-) censorship. One of the reasons why Priest (a pseudonym, out of self-protection) as a prolific author could achieve high status among *danmei* fans in recent years is that she seldom describes explicit sex scenes between her male protagonists, and she never explores such thorny themes as underage sex, BDSM, incest, and non-consensual sex. This relatively safer style contrasted sharply with earlier Chinese *danmei* novels, which were more diverse in content and more daring in their exploration of forbidden themes and non-normative sexualities. Such a safer style also renders her novels more financially successful since it is easier to be published in print (after minor modification) and adapted into audio drama, television, film and animation. *Guardian* is such a case.

Although pre-modern Chinese elite culture embraces a soft and feminized masculinity and male same-sex intimacy (Hinsch 1992, Song 2004, Wu 2004), gay-themed media representation became taboo after the communist party came to power (Dong 2005, Lim 2006).[6] In 2016, the series *Addicted* (上瘾), which is based on another *danmei* novel, was removed from all Chinese video streaming websites by the order of SAPPRFT (State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television).[7] This series boldly tried to include several kissing and intimate bed scenes between two male protagonists, and thus was cut off before its later episodes were released. With this lesson from a pioneering work, *Guardian* employed a more conservative adaptation strategy to disguise its homosexual relationship as homosocial bonding.

These recent endeavours to adapt popular *danmei* novels into TV dramas indicate that the market economy acknowledges the rising female purchasing power in new era China, yet the producing house must find a way to detour around the tight state control to communicate with their target audience. During this process, the tension and negotiation between economic and political powers are complex. Where Western slash narratives often queer some masculine and heterosexual narratives such as *Star Trek* (Russ 1985, Penley 1991), the adaptation process of *Guardian* from text to drama "de-queers" an explicit homosexual romance to a homosocial bonding to circumvent stringent censorship. Not only are kisses, caresses, and other intimate bodily gestures deleted from the pretext in the TV drama, but many dialogues which express the affection between the male protagonists, Shen Wei (沈巍) and Zhao Yunlan (赵云澜), are also excluded. For example, in 1.11 – which corresponds to Chapter 42 in the original novel – a scene in which Shen and Zhao drunkenly kiss has disappeared. Instead, a dialogue emphasising that they are "good brothers" has been substituted to feebly veil the erotic tension between the two characters (1.17, 40:30-40:40). Another common strategy is to add heterosexual storylines centred on minor female characters to dilute the intensity of homosexual attractions.[8] But the most devastating strategy used by the production team of *Guardian* is its change of the ending. The original novel ends with the gay couple living "happily ever after", but the drama ends with one of them dead and the other alive, but soulless and amnesiac. If deleting intimate bodily touches and adding female characters could be roughly counted as camouflage, while the text

5 For the original novel written by Priest, see: http://www.jjwxc.net/onebook.php?novelid=1673146. Because of the popularity of the TV drama, one overseas fan (RainbowSe7en) started to translate the novel voluntarily from Chinese to English on Wattpad (https://www.wattpad.com/story/153357561-guardian-english-version-bl-novel). The translation started from 29 June 2018 (after the drama had been released) and is ongoing. Wattpad is an Internet community for readers and writers to publish new user-generated stories in different genres. The users of Wattpad can directly interact with the writers and share their opinions with fellow readers. This is another proof of global and transnational BL fandom.

6 The premodern male-male intimacy is largely practiced under the polygamy structure, in which a prominent man with enough wealth and status can have a main wife as well as multiple concubines and enjoy sexual liaisons with prostitutes and entertainers (both male and female). The homosexual acts between male patrons and boy servants or male cross-dressing opera actors, although running the risk of being critiqued by rigid Confucian moralists, have been tolerated as an aesthetic trend as long as the patron fulfils the primary duty required by the Confucian paradigm, which is producing male heirs for the family. This type of homosexual act should be carefully distinguished from modern homosexuality as a sexual orientation and identity. The modern and contemporary discrimination and marginalization of homosexuals in China is mainly based on heteronormative culture and out of the fear that sexual minorities may cause social instability. The influence of Confucian culture in contemporary China renders it less tolerant to homosexuality arguably because of "concerns about keeping the family intact" (Adamczyk and Cheng 2015). The Confucian notion of filial piety requires sons and daughters to fulfil the expected mission, including getting married and having children of their own.

7 The series *Addicted* is now available on YouTube, but remained unfinished after only 15 episodes. See news reports on its ban: https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2016/mar/04/china-bans-gay-people-television-clampdown-xi-jinping-censorship.

8 In another TV drama *S.C.I. Mystery* (S.C.I. 谜案集, 2018) adapted from a *danmei* novel, one male character is changed into a female character to make a gay couple into a heterosexual couple.

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can still be "erotically charged for the viewer and appeal to a wider range of fantasies" because more is left to the audience's imagination (Wood 2013: 59), then the change of ending has much more destructive power to erase significant queer meanings from the original text. Since a happy ending is largely part of readers' expectations of a popular romantic melodrama (Brooks 1995), a genre to which most *danmei* novels inevitably belong, a distortion of such a convention has huge affective impact on reader's response. If "the pattern of separate suffering prior to a happily-ever-after" of the melodrama mode confirms "the romantic, heterosexual coupling" (Kapurch 2012: 177), then with a story with two main male characters which concludes in separation and death conveys an unambiguous message to the audience, that any potential non-normative relationship (especially between people of the same sex) will end miserably.

Fans are not satisfied when confronted with these top-down expurgations and therefore employ diverse and vigorous tactics to resist. Especially dissatisfied with the heart-breaking ending, many fans write their own versions of the story to create a much happier closure. Even the original author Priest (under requests from disappointed fans) wrote a *fanwai* (番外), an extra story, as a response to the drama's distortion of her work. Priest's *fanwai* piece does not falsify the drama, but rather supplements it. She renders the storyworld from the drama as one of the many parallel universes her characters inhabit, but indicates this one is an especially bad one. David Herman coined "storyworld" to suggest "the world-creating power of narrative," and its ability to relocate interpreters from the actual, here and now world to an alternative possible world that is constituted by the deictic centre within the narrative (2002: 15-6). As Herman notes, different non-fictional narratives about the same topic will contrast with and compete with each other, whereas fictional narratives "cannot be falsified by virtue of their relation to other storyworlds" (2002: 16). Priest's extra story to the drama verifies Herman's argument, that the storyworld of a pretext and its adaptation could be viewed as parallel (story)worlds, with the latter extending and altering the scope of the former.

In the digital media landscape and Internet-connected era, the boundary between professional and amateur, between reader and author, between adapters and fans is radically blurring. Priest may be the author of the original novel, but she is also one of the fans of the TV drama. Several actors and actresses of the *Guardian* crew also claimed they are fans of Priest's original novel, and they necessarily bring their understanding of the pretext into their performances, which partially makes up for the clumsy alteration. The two male actors' subtle performances maximize the homosexual undercurrents under the disguise of bromance. Restrained from physical intimate contact, they mobilise eye contacts, facial expressions, and body gestures to hint the romantic and sexual attractions between characters. One particular scene that is not described in the screenplay is even improvised by the two actors.[9] In this scene, Zhao Yunlan (performed by Bai Yu) and Shen Wei (performed by Zhu Yilong) are sitting side by side in a taxi. Tortured by stomach pain, Zhao puts his head on Shen's shoulder to rest, and Shen tenderly adjusts his position to make Zhao rest comfortably (1.08, 25:00-25:30). For Linda Hutcheon (2013: 82-3), there is an increasing distance from "the adapted novel as the process moves from the writing of the screenplay to the actual shooting" and what actors adapt is actually the screenplay. By spontaneously adding this conventional romantic scene, the two actors innovatively altered the screenplay to further its homosexual undertone. The producing team also tries to leave, in a limited way, visible traces of the queerness of the original story for audiences to recognize. In a word, the adaptation process of *Guardian* endured collaborative and complicated sometimes even paradoxical negotiations amongst its major players, including the director, the screenwriter, the original novelist, actors, and musical team, during which their identities as "producers" and "fans" are often fluid and unfixed, and the "sacrosanct elements like priority and originality" are upended (Hutcheon 2013: 122).

Although the fidelity debate has lost currency in recent adaptation studies (Leitch 2003: 161), in *Guardian*'s case, the distance between drama and novel still matters because it is involuntary and thus encodes significant political implications. From sexually explicit early *danmei* novels, to Priest's rather safe style which only includes kissing and touching and steers away from actual penetration, to the drama's further cleansing of any intimate bodily gesture, we see a gradual de-embodiment and abstraction of homosexual desire. In a way, the difference between homosexuality and homosocial bonding is the existence and absence of carnality.[10] What most fan fictions of *Guardian* (both novel and drama) do is return the absent corporeal aspect to the relationship between two male characters. Preeminent in fan resistance against the puritanical power of the censor is a popular subgenre of fan-

9 For the improvising of some scenes, see the interview of Zhu Yilong by Juzi Entertainment: https://www.bilibili.com/video/av26467710 (01:20-01:43).

10 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's work (1992) has illustrated how homosociality and homosexuality are extremely close to one another, and the ostensible distinction between them is always porous.

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fiction known as PWP (Plot? What plot?). PWP refers to short erotic scenes which describe sexual encounters with little or no story context.

The genre PWP undoubtedly belongs to pornographic writing, whose main purpose is sexual arousal. Pornography used to be viewed as a genre detrimental to female subjectivity for its objectification and subordination of women. However, there are feminist critiques of the anti-porn stance premised on the assumption that "pornographic discourse is recuperable for women and for a feminist agenda" (Ziv 2015: 6). PWP fan fictions fit with such an argument, which is explicitly set out in Joanna Russ's pioneering article (1985) on Kirk/Spock slash fiction: "Pornography by Women, for Women, with Love". The suffix "with Love" pinpoints the crucial difference between commercial male-oriented pornography and fan girls' non-commercial pornographic writing. In PWP fan fictions inspired by *Guardian*, the depictions of explicit sex scenes and the description of characters' emotional bonds are never separated. Sexual intimacy is often the embodiment of the couple's emotional intimacy. Thus, the purpose of such PWP works is no longer simply sexual arousal in readers but also affective satisfaction. In yigulanshan's (一顾阑珊) "Sweet Dreams as Usual" (好梦如旧), a PWP fiction which gained most "likes" among fans on *Lofter*, oral sex is described as foreplay to intercourse between two male characters.[11] The depiction of physical sensation during oral sex has been endowed with metaphoric meaning:

> Shen Wei's eyes widened while he felt that Zhao Yunlan swallowed his penis gradually.
> So hot.
> Shen's five fingers gripped Zhao's short hair, and his body was tight.
> The wind in Hell is cold, and his body, which had a ferocious mien, is also cold. Only after encountering Zhao, Shen finally knew that as well as cold there was heat in the world too. (My translation)

In this excerpt, the word "hot" in the second paragraph expresses the physical reaction to oral sex, while in the fourth paragraph, "heat" as the opposite of the coldness in Hell includes a metaphorical meaning. It not only refers to the body's reaction to the surrounding temperature, but also indicates a sense of belonging, caring, and intimacy born out of an intersubjective relationship. In other words, in traditional commercial pornography, sexual arousal and release is the ultimate goal, while in the amateur fan's pornographic writing, sex is not the goal but only a process, through which the intense love and passion between characters become visible. There are two thousand words after the ejaculation of both characters in "Sweet Dream as Usual" (overall ten thousand words) which depicts their intimate feelings and memories. As Catherine Driscoll (2006: 86) argues, the sex scenes in PWP stories are rarely solely utilitarian, but contribute to the whole narrative and characterisation. She concludes that fan fictions intersect and reflect both the genres of porn and romance yet belong to neither. Fan fictions also attract the criticisms most frequently directed at both romance fiction and pornography. That is, they are aesthetically inferior and morally dubious (Driscoll 2006: 95).

Thus branded as aesthetically inferior and morally dubious, PWP stories come under the scrutiny of China's cultural gatekeepers. To make their erotic and pornographic texts visible to other members of the community, *Guardian* fans need to employ a series of strategies and tactics to dodge the red line. In this process, they are doing what Constance Penley (1991: 139), inspired by Michel de Certeau, called "Brownian Motion", or "the tactical manoeuvres of the relatively powerless when attempting to resist, negotiate, or transform the system and products of the relatively powerful". In her examination of Kirk/Spock fandom (*Star Trek*), Penley has demonstrated that fans are "constantly involved in negotiating appropriate levels of technology for use" (1991: 141) in their activities such as zine publishing and the making of fan videos. In the case of Kirk/Spock fandom, fans' efforts to keep technology accessible and democratic is to resist the corporate control of mainstream media and the capitalist system. In the Chinese context, fans' tactical manoeuvres and technological sharing are mainly out of their struggle against authoritarian media control. One important online battlefield is *Lofter*. As one of the most popular online websites for Chinese fan works, like *Jinjiang*, it is also under strict regulation by the state. *Lofter* adopts a sensitive-content examination system to keep the works published online "clean" and "healthy". Confronted with such a situation, Chinese technology-savvy fans employ several strategies. For example, a fan fiction author will publish only a preview of her work (written in Chinese) on her *Lofter*'s homepage. The preview is free of any graphic depictions of sex scenes. Then she will add an external hyperlink to this page,

11 The preview of this fiction is posted on *Lofter* (http://197141.lofter.com/post/1e15331e_eeabcdba). The full version could be seen from AO3 (https://archiveofourown.org/works/15163085). This is an exemplary practice of strategical detour through overseas websites to circulate sexually explicit contents among Chinese fans.

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which points to the whole piece of work, published usually on AO3 (Archive of Our Own), a non-profit open source repository for fan works based in the United States. Since AO3 welcomes multi-language fandoms and is not banned by the China's notorious Great Firewall for now, it becomes an online refuge for Chinese fans who post their explicit boys' love fan fictions on it. Apart from detouring through overseas websites, another technological way to sidestep censorship is to convert long text into image, for the content of images is less detectable by the sensitive-content examination system. To put text-into-image upside down is a further guarantee. Sometimes fans may also use spaces and slashes between taboo words to avoid censorship (Jacobs 2015: 114). Many guides produced by fans on topics such as "how to use AO3 effectively and correctly" or "how to add text-into-image in your homepage" are available on *Lofter*, which indicates a community with a strong atmosphere of mutual support in the face of political power. These collaborative "guerrilla-warfare tactics" (Feng 2009: 15) help to consolidate a sense of solidarity, and technology empowers Chinese fans from a relative powerlessness position into certain agency.

2. GHOST VERSUS MUTANT: THE DEBATE ON RATIONALITY AND PASSION

The special identities of the two gay characters in Priest's novel add to the work's vulnerability to media censorship. Zhao Yunlan, the chief of Special Investigations Unit (SIU), a secret institution hidden within the police system, has been able to see ghosts since birth. His unit consists of a group of non-human staff, including a snake spirit, a ghost, a Buddhist monk, a zombie, and a talking cat. His male lover Shen Wei, under the guise of a university professor, is actually the Ghost Slayer, a half-god-half-demon creature who was born in the depths of Hell. The cases SIU deal with are mostly committed by grudging ghosts who seek vengeance on earth. In the later part of the novel, a larger storyworld based on Chinese mythology and the religious concept of reincarnation takes shape. It emerges that Zhao Yunlan is the reincarnation of the ancient Mountain God Kunlun, a contemporary of Nüwa, Fuxi, and Shennong, the three sovereigns in Chinese pantheon. The Mountain God Kunlun and the Ghost Slayer Shen Wei have been star-crossed lovers for ten thousand years. Such a supernatural storyworld touches another sensitive point in Chinese media: the ghost and its implied cultural and political implications.

As early as the Republican period (1911-1949), the Guomintang (GMD) government had already embarked on an official campaign to eradicate superstitions and promote modern science (Pang 2011, Xiao 2013). Perhaps because ghost belief is so ubiquitous in pre-modern Chinese folk religion, and it closely relates to many practices viewed as barbarous and absurd from a modern Enlightened view, both GMD and its successor, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), extol an official ideology which eschews spiritual existence and advocates modern science. As Pang Laikwan's insightful research shows, the reason behind the state's anti-superstition film policy is twofold. First, it is the literal meaning of ghosts which a modern socialist state tries to eschew since folk beliefs about ghosts have been ingrained in the daily life of Chinese people since the distant past. Second, the rich allegorical potential of ghost images "might be encoded and decoded in ways over which the state has no control" (2011: 461). Horror-inducing ghosts are inclined to be vengeful and usually victims of injustice in their lives. Their return and haunting implicitly criticises the failure of legal investigation. As Patrick Colm Hogan (2011: 225) remarks, societies tend to "develop representations of justice that favoured official modes of criminal investigation and punishment and disfavoured individual initiatives outside the control of the state". Therefore, to make vengeful ghosts disappear from the screen is also to make the repressed members in society invisible, to avoid the reflection of social malaise and injustice.

The double implications of the ghost figure – both as a belief of pre-modern folk religion and as a reflection of contemporary social injustice – make it an unruly symbol that arouses horror not only among audiences but also among media authoritarians. To tame this threatening metaphor as it is manifested in the novel *Guardian*, the TV drama refashioned the supernatural story into the discourse of science. Therefore, all ghosts are transformed into aliens, who came to the earth in spaceships tens of thousands of years ago and, having mixed with the human species, thus became mutants with special superhuman abilities, who live underground at the core of the earth. At the same time, the mythological origin of the main characters' past lives is replaced by the trope of time-travel.

Apart from macro-level story transformation, micro-level replacements occur throughout. Many pre-modern folk religion practices have been sanitized, including the use of the Daoist yellow talisman to exorcise demons and ghosts, the reciting of Buddhist sutras as self-protection, and the fortune-telling based on one's birth chart ("the eight characters"

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八字). For example, in Chapter 28, a strange phenomenon of *yinbingjiedao* (阴兵借道) has been described as a large group of ghosts who are newly dead people (caused by a natural disaster such as an avalanche) and who walk along a road in the world of the living and become visible to humans. Both Zhao and Shen had witnessed this phenomenon and had shown full respect to these unfortunate souls. In Episode 1.09 (19:35-20:25) of the drama, the same phenomenon has been mentioned in a dialogue between three characters and has been given a scientific explanation ("a short-term retrospective phenomenon in vision caused by the magnetic material of iron oxide which reacts in rain and snow"). These are but a slice of the holistic replacement of the discourse of the fantastic and supernatural with science and technology, and the subsequent hybrid of these two distinct discourses is detrimental to the overall storyline. This process of holistic transplantation assaults not only the so-called "superstitious" practices of folk religion, which did not fit into the category of institutionalised religion, the systematic and institutional religions such as Buddhism also become a target. A distrust of indigenous cultural and literary tradition and a preference for imported cultural tropes are also discernable. One member of the SIU team, the monk Lin Jing, has been changed into a genius software engineer who resembles a mad scientist figure. Shen Wei used to teach literature in a university in the original novel, but has now become a professor in biology. The Hell where dead people dwell becomes a settlement of an alien species, whose highest leader becomes the Occidental-sounding Regent instead of Yama who originated from Hinduism.

It is not purely a question of updating a backward and unscientific worldview by the rhetoric of progress, rationality, and Enlightenment on an epistemic level, as Prasenjit Duara (1991: 81) demonstrates in his study of the campaigns against popular religion in early twentieth-century China, but it is also a "politicization of knowledge" ending up "with a significant expansion in the power of the state". In other words, what disturbs media censors is not only the existence of ghosts in a fantasy narrative such as *Guardian* because of its deliberate departure from consensus reality and the confusion it may cause to readers' cognition, but also the symbolic meanings of the fantastic tropes and their represented social realities. Ghosts endow rich symbolic meaning, which are capable of becoming "instruments of political satire, vehicles for wild imaginations, channels for escapism, allegories of sexual freedom" (Pang 2001: 474). They can also be a metaphor to represent and reflect the darker side of society, which inevitably dismantles the illusion of a harmonious society promoted by Chinese official discourse.

Several cases from the original novel reveal poignant issues emblematic of Chinese contemporary society, such as gender inequality, moral corruption, and many resurgent social vices. Suspects who committed crimes usually belong to the underclass and have to struggle to survive in a profit-driven society. They have been wronged and thus became revenging ghosts who seek justice in their own way, which calls into question the functionality of the legal system, the welfare facilities, and civil society. For example, the first case of the original novel tells a story about a girl, Li Qian, who murdered her grandmother, and about the return of the old woman's ghost, a tragedy caused not by the evil of humanity but by the social milieu. Li Qian's parents prefer sons over daughters and after her young brother is born illegally due to the one-child policy, she is abandoned by her parents. She thus lives together with her old grandmother and the two are extremely close. When her grandmother has a sudden stroke and dies, Li Qian uses the mysterious but powerful Sundial of Reincarnation to bring her grandmother back to life – the cost is to surrender half of her own lifespan. Moreover, without economic support and public welfare, she has to work extremely hard to do part-time jobs to earn her education fees. Her grandmother then suffers from Alzheimer's disease, which worsens the situation. Li Qian starts to regret the decision to resurrect her grandmother: "... my only family suddenly passes away, my parents despise me, I struggle to pay tuition, and I can't find a job here; I am pathetic, aren't I? I have to...endure all of that; I really shouldn't have brought grandma back, I should've just died with her" (par. 3, chap. 19).[12] Exhausted Li Qian finally decides to murder her grandmother by an overdose of pills, thus relieving herself from the burden of her grandmother's care. Since Li Qian touches the Sundial of Reincarnation, one of the four Mystical Artifacts from Hell, she starts to see ghosts from the underworld. Her grandmother's ghost returns to protect Li Qian from being devoured by a hungry ghost. What is chilling in this story is not the return of the dead, but how easily an extreme situation can turn a good person into a murderer. The neglectful parents, the competitive job market, and the unsound social welfare system all contribute to the crime committed by a once-caring girl. The TV version changes the parricidal act into a less chilling suicide, in which the grandmother willingly ends her own life to free her beloved granddaughter. By replac-

12 The translations are from RainbowSe7en's online translation of *Guardian* in Wattpad.

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ing an appalling crime with a self-sacrificial act, the TV drama also shuns the pungent social criticism behind Priest's novel. Moreover, these either ghost or human characters represent lower-class grudges and hatred that are deeply at odds with the official discourse of China that promotes "positive energy", which is roughly defined as an uplifting and positive attitude and emotion both in individuals and in collectives such as society and nation (Yang and Tang 2018: 15). Therefore, the replacement of ghosts by aliens in the adaptation of *Guardian* is an attempt to hide the internal violence and wounds caused by the rapid modernisation of China. The emphasis on science and progress erases local mythological and literary traditions of spectral narratives, thus revealing the authority's desperate clutch on linear development and economic achievement, with no regard to the casualties of such a rapidly developing society.

Despite the banning of ghost narratives by the cultural gatekeepers, contemporary Chinese audiences nevertheless embrace this age-old genre wholeheartedly. The fondness of modern readers for ghost stories does not prove that they still believe in folk religion, nor would they show particular interest in the potential for political and ideological interrogation that inheres in such spectral figures. Rather, what they want is just a good entertaining story, which could arouse intense emotional responses such as terror and passion in their minds. Indeed, fans of *Guardian* are using their affective voices to counter the official discourse on rationality and progress. For example, most fan fictions insist on using the mythological and fantastic framework from the original novels instead of the thinly constructed science fiction settling invented by the drama. The pretexts they draw from are not limited to Priest's novel, but also includes various ghost narratives from classical literature. Moreover, their affective voices grant the otherwise elusive and invisible ghosts an embodied existence, manifested principally by the character of Shen Wei. In the following section, I will use fan fiction texts to illustrate how fans' embodied affective narrative counters both the TV drama's de-sexualisation of homosexuality and the obscuration of spectral beings.

3. A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF EMBODIED AFFECTION

The endowment of *qing* (love, emotions, desires, pathos) enjoys a preeminent status in traditional Chinese narratives especially in those dealing with ghosts and spirits: "The theme of death and resurrection by dint of love's invincible power is widely recognized as highly original in Chinese literary history" (Lee 2007: 43). Such an emphasis on *qing* in Chinese ghost narratives fits with theories of affective narratology set out by Hogan (2011). The romance between Zhao Yunlan and Shen Wei inherits this affective tradition. Shen, originally a demon born from the depth of Hell, is transformed into a human by his deep affection for Zhao. Their ghost-human gay romance touches two taboo topics in the contemporary Chinese media landscape, the homosexual and the supernatural. Thus these star-crossed lovers (as alien-human bromance in the drama version) end up miserable in the last episode of the series, Zhao witnessing the death of his lover/friend Shen in the final battle against the villain, while he himself survives but with the loss of all his memories.

In the previous section, I have already examined the original author's reaction to this new ending. By providing an alternative narrative based on parallel world theory, Priest offers a morsel of consolation for heartbroken fans of both the series and the novel. Unlike this pain-relieving extra piece provided by Priest, some fan authors choose to face this sad ending head-on without blinking. "Dearest" (亲爱的), written by 66 and "PTSD" (巍澜 PTSD 一篇), written by budaixiong shuixingle (布袋熊睡醒了) continue the drama's ending with their narrative focus on Zhao's post-trauma experience.[13]In these two texts, an amnesiac Zhao struggles to live in a world without his lover Shen. Although his mind has lost the memory of Shen, his body still feels the physical pain of loss. In "Dearest", the spitting of blood by a suspect triggers a physical reaction from Zhao, since it reminds him of the symptoms Shen endured before death. Zhao immediately loses consciousness, and hereafter always feels a dull pain in his chest, while constantly seeing an illusory redness. He also finds himself being followed by a female ghost who is dressed in red and spits blood. After exorcising this haunted female ghost, Zhao stops feeling any pain. The ghost figure has been obscured in the TV adaptation, yet it reappears in fan narratives such as this one to become the embodiment of the pain caused by love and loss. Although exorcising this ghost relieves Zhao from physical suffering, he also loses the ability to have emotions and feelings.

13 Originally, 66 (pseudonym) posted her fan fictions on the website *Lofter*. After being plagiarised by other netizens, she cancelled the account and deleted all the works. Afterwards, she posted on her *Sina Weibo* a link to Baidu Wangpan (a Cloud service provided by Baidu Company) as a more clandestine way to distribute her works to fans. For her "Dearest" and "Xiao Wei", see: https://www.weibo.com/5873034077/Hdso4neiI?filter=hot&root_comment_id=0. For "PTSD", see https://www.weibo.com/ttarticle/p/show?id=2309404270167357026630.

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The narrative arc of "PTSD" is very similar to "Dearest". In this text, horrified by an icicle (the same weapon which killed Shen in the drama) which he sees in a movie, Zhao falls into a coma. In an attempt to find out why he has such an intense fear of an icicle, Zhao goes to a therapist for help, but to no avail. Near the end of the story, Zhao again suffers an attack of stomach trouble, which is reminiscent of the scene from both the drama and the novel in which Shen takes tender care of Zhao when he suffers from stomach ache. Zhao has a unique experience in his illness:

> That night, he wrapped his body in a blanket, and the room was filled with dust and still air. Zhao Yunlan resisted the rhythmic collision of a vomiting impulse from his gastric mucosa, while he felt that something had completely and absolutely embraced him in the void.
>
> He could tell this mysterious experience to no one. He took off all the clothes in this embrace, slowly opened his body and handed over his pain. It was the most nervous and yet the most reassuring moment in his life. After more than a year, he still could not remember anything, but he touched him with his body. The burned incense ash was piled up in the incense burner, the medicine bottle was in the refrigerator, the time was in the dead body of mosquitoes, and Zhao Yunlan was in his illness. He also embraced his own body, which has been forever damaged, as if to embrace the only relic that could prove love had existed. (My translation)

These two fan-authors' narratives are fairly dark and grim in their depiction of the protagonist' post-trauma experience and his unsuccessful recovery. Zhao's mental depression and anxiety are manifested in a carnal and somatic way, including coma, physical illness, and optical illusions. The pain caused by the loss of a loved one becomes a series of pathological symptoms. As Shigehisa Kuriyama (1993: 58) has argued: "Desires and emotions figured centrally in traditional East Asian conceptions of disease, but they were never based in some disembodied psyche. They were invariably intertwined with somatic experience". In "Dearest", the pain has been embodied as the female ghost whose red clothes and spitting blood reflect Shen's torture. In "PTSD", although in the end Zhao "still could not remember anything" on an intellectual level, he felt Shen in a bodily way: "he touched him with his body". His own body thus becomes the witness of their love, even though the love has been forgotten in the mind. In these two short stories, the dead Shen is just like a ghost who remains invisible yet tangible. Although he has been erased in the mind of his lover, he has been incorporated into his embodied memory.

Another short story, "Xiao Wei" (小巍), also written by 66, is narrated through the perspective of Shen, and again constructs a parallel between love and biological instinct. Shen's affection towards Zhao has been described in a corporeal way. For example, he swallows a piece of paper that inscribes the word Kunlun, the name of Zhao in his previous life, then vomits at the first sight of Zhao.

The embodied affection is observed by fan reviewers of these derivative texts. One comment from *Sina Weibo* on "Xiao Wei" reads:

> Apart from the fantasy of pink bubble-style romance and superficial heroism, Wei/Lan has been so vividly connected to the world through blood and flesh [...] The original novel from Priest nurtures the heart like a river, while the words from 66 penetrate the bones like a needle. (bayidianyingzhipianchang [巴依电影制片厂] 03 January 2019)

Another reader's review of "Xiao Wei" posted on *Lofter* is titled "Because love is flesh, is the flower born out of blood" (Сумасшедшая 28 August 2018).[14] From these comments, we could see that fan-readers express their responses to fan fictions in a similar corporeal way ("through blood and flesh", "love is flesh"), they are also capable of distinguishing the literary style of the original novel and the target fan fiction ("Priest's novel nurtures the heart, while 66's works penetrate the bones"). Scholarship on online fan fiction often underlines their distinction from traditional literary activities by emphasising the interactive and spontaneous aspects of this new mode. Yet as some studies show, fans often view their role as reviewers seriously and frequently engage "in the kind of analysis preferred by literary critics" (Thomas 2011: 18). The readers' feedback on some *Guardian* fan fictions fit with this observation. They resemble traditional literary critics but in a more affective and metaphoric way.

Judith Zeitlin (2007: 14) has emphasised the pervasiveness of *qing*, the affective element, in Chinese ghost stories: "although in abstract terms, *qing* is conceptualized as a universal force of nature, in its embodied form, *qing* is a

14 http://tobeaherobybeingazero.lofter.com/post/1d1313ec_efc3abfb.

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ghost and a woman". In *Guardian*'s case, *qing* is both a ghost and a gay man. I underline the embodied affective aspects in fans' narratives and reviews of *Guardian* because it is exactly this crucial aspect that has been lost in the censorship. Therefore, the fans' reclamation of carnal desire and strong emotional bonds is crucial in their resistance to the officially sanctioned adaptation of the drama. The change from homosexuality to homosociality erases the existence of carnal desire, and because of the invasion of science fiction tropes, rationality replaces the role of passion and emotion. Fans' embodied affective narratives are fighting back to target precisely what is lacking in the drama's storyworld: the mutual, intense, and sensuous love between two male characters.

4. CONCLUSION

Chinese censorship has a long history of claiming a moralist and didactic method towards cultural products. As Zhiwei Xiao (2013: 112) points out, as early as 1926, to receive censors' endorsement and official award, a film "would have to be realistic in its portrayals of social life, have a positive and uplifting moral message, encourage scientific inquiry, and bring audience some educational benefits". Among many sensitive topics, works which "contradict the principle of modern sciences and promote superstition" and which include "graphic depiction of sex, nudity" are under special regulation (Xiao 2013: 124). To maximise the deterrent effect of such regulations, the language used in officially issued policies and protocols is deliberately ambiguous, vague, and imprecise, which not only grants the censors more space to exercise their power (Xiao 2013: 125), but also effectively encourages self-censorship among artists and media producers (Ng 2015: 242). The top-down adaptation process of *Guardian* from novel to drama showcases this closely interlinked mechanism of censoring and self-censoring, resulting in a sanitised version which promotes modern science, praises brotherly bonding, deletes depictions of the dark side of society and conveys uplifting moral messages to its audience.

Equipped with online communicative technology and myriad social media platforms, fans in the twenty-first century are no longer passive receivers of media products and government regulations, but have become significant players in the convergence culture along with media corporations and government authorities. In my analysis of the online fandom of *Guardian*, I have demonstrated how members of the fan community reinforce their subjectivity through advanced technology, strategic tactics, and mutual support in their counter-discursive online activities. Moreover, the embodied affective narratives of some fan fictions compensate for the absence of sexual and spectral scenes in the TV drama.

Throughout this article, I have conducted a cultural study of the online drama *Guardian* largely based on the interaction between the "top-down" force of media corporations and the "bottom-up" force of grassroots fans, with the political force of government censors an ever-present consideration. Many studies on media fandom have already demonstrated the active fans' "poaching" of the source text and their subversive resistance to corporate ownership and mainstream ideology (Jenkins 1992). However, some scholars (Gwenllian-Jones 2002, Gray et al. 2007) have questioned the accountability of this "incorporation/resistance paradigm" that generally dominates fandom studies in that it does not adequately encompass the diversity of fandom activities. Indeed, in *Guardian*'s case, just like in the general *danmei* fandom, fans' diverse reactions could not be sweepingly characterised as "resistance" or "counterpublic" (Chiang 2016, Yang and Xu 2017b). Some fans acquiesce in the censorship and others are more radical in their expression of discontent. Some fans disapprove of certain subgenres and topics in fan writing, while others appeal for more freedom in all kind of fictional imaginations, and different groups of fans are sometimes overtly hostile to each other. In addition, fans' writing of *Guardian* predominantly focuses on the romantic relationship and seldom touches serious social issues such as disparity between rich and poor and gender inequality. As some researchers point out, the *danmei* fandom in China is mainly composed by middle class girls who reside in big cities (Yang and Xu 2017a, Zhang 2017), and thus class inequality and urban-rural disparity is hardly a concern in their writing, which prevents their resistant writing from engaging with broader social issues. Indeed, the majority of *Guardian* fans do not consciously view themselves as political dissidents. What they have enjoyed most in the fandom of *Guardian* is having "fun", to be amused or to be touched. By laughing at the numerous funny catchphrases and visual/texual memes based on the drama, or crying at the sincere love between two men, they are affectively engaged in this fandom. My hypothesis is that this affective fandom germinates subversive potential.

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SUPERNATURAL SERIALS AS SOCIAL CRITIQUE IN RECENT SOUTH KOREAN TELEVISION

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KEYWORDS

Supernatural serial; cognition and affect; multiple personality; genre blending; script theory.

ABSTRACT

South Korean television drama often employs ghost stories as a medium for social critique, as in the series *Dokkaebi: The Lonely and Great God* (2016-17), *Let's Fight, Ghost* (2016) and *Oh My Ghost* (2015). Blending ghost story with other genres, these series foreground the plight of characters who are either ghosts or young people able to see ghosts. Both are isolated by their liminal condition and the multiple personalities it entails, the ghosts because they cannot communicate with the living and the ghost seers because their uncanny ability has set them apart since childhood. Both lack immediate families, which further isolates them in a society with communal values centred on family. Both thus readily symbolize people marginalized because of gender, social status or restricted economic access, but also serve as a commentary on the disintegration of the family in contemporary South Korea. The viewing audience is positioned to align and empathize with ghost and/or seer in their struggles with lost identity and the quest for justice which will free the ghost from its liminal state, and is thereby implicated in a crisis of subjectivity and prompted to reflect upon its own position in society.

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0. **INTRODUCTION**

In the 21st century, South Korean television drama has turned to folklore and folkloric supernatural tales as media for humour and social critique. This turn coincides with the emergence of horror as a cinematic genre in the late 1990s, but is further shaped by two factors. First, because television audiences are less easily age controlled than cinema audiences, representations that might be regarded as extreme are excluded, even though screening times are as late as 10.00 p.m. Second, as Jinhee Choi argues, Korean horror was from the outset largely shaped by *Whispering Corridors* (1998) and the other films in this series, which imbued Korean horror with a specific schema Choi defines as "a *sonyeo* (girls') sensibility" (2010: 126). While the films are set in girls' schools and explore the "subtle psychology" of teenage female characters, the emphasis on sensibility enables "audience engagement with characters beyond gender-bound identification" (2010: 127). Further, while the films may produce a frisson of fear by means of conventional cinematic techniques – tracking along a dim corridor and the irruption of a sudden apparition, for example – the horror is more a cognitive affect than a recoil from a visual effect. Educational and gender regimes shape and repress the lives of girls (Choi 2010: 127, Lee and Stephens 2013: 98-99), producing an existential anxiety, but the social commentary implicit in such representations readily extends to television serials in which ghosts, other "undead" entities, and characters who interact with them embody sections of society which have been excluded from well-being.

Entities that appear only in liminal or subliminal domains and effectively exist only as instantiations of schemas resonate with the schemas and scripts in the minds of viewers, those important components of the models we construct to make sense of people and things in the world (see Oatley 2003: 269). This article will examine a sub-set within what I have called "the supernatural serial", drawing its examples from a bundle of serials broadcast on cable television between 2013 and 2017: *Who Are You?* (2013), *Ghost-Seeing Detective Cheo Yong* (2014 and 2015), *Oh My Ghost* (2015), *Let's Fight, Ghost* (2016) and *Dokkaebi* [or *Goblin*]*: The Lonely and Great God* (2016-17). Supernatural serials may draw on a range of non-human or undead characters, but this particular sub-set has a ghost as one of the principal characters, and each blends ghost story with other genres (especially romantic comedy, bromance, school story, crime story, and culinary drama) and use this blending to foreground the plight of characters who are marginalized and alienated from mainstream society. South Korean (henceforth Korean) television produces a vast number of serials which run for only one season in a miniseries format. The number of episodes varies between ten and twenty-four, with sixteen the most common length for serials with contemporary settings, such as those in my corpus. This compact form, in comparison with American television series, entails that Korean dramas usually have a single director and a single screenwriter, and are thus apt to be internally consistent in narrative and directing styles. Discernible shifts in either are therefore more meaningful than those in serials with multiple writers and directors.

Each serial in the sample, with the exception of *Ghost-Seeing Detective Cheo Yong*, consists of sixteen episodes, each episode of approximately one hour (*Dokkaebi* a little longer). *Ghost-Seeing Detective Cheo Yong* was originally ten episodes and, unusually, a second season, also ten episodes, was produced a year later. All the serials were made for cable television, so the potential audience is smaller than for public broadcast channels, but writers and directors will at times address it as a more discerning audience – for example, by including more intertextual and metacinematic jokes or by offering audiences viewing stances in which strong empathy with characters interacts with a more analytical perspective, or what Jason Mittell (2015: 46) terms an "operational aesthetic". In the supernatural genre, this entails self-conscious reinventions of myth, intertextuality, and playful frame-breaking allusions, among other strategies. Because these serials blend fantasy and humour, their metacinematic strategies can seem very evident, and their popularity suggests that viewers respond positively to allusions to other works or self-reflexive comments on genre, even if they do not (yet) appreciate the impact on a work's texture and meaning. Producers of serials on cable are also following a trend to move away from live-shoot production format towards complete or part pre-production. The benefits of pre-production are evident in *Dokkaebi* in such areas as the use of an attractive overseas setting for several sequences (in this case Quebec), high production values, sophisticated special effects, an outstanding soundtrack,[1] a stellar cast and a well-plotted narrative distinguished by the witty, dead-pan banter between the two male leads.

1 At one time, seven of the songs from the serial occupied top ten positions in the pop music charts in South Korea. This phenomenon in turn increased the interest in the serial and the size of its audience.

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1. ALIENATION, LOST IDENTITY AND COMMON SCRIPTS

The appeal to audiences of the principal characters across this group of serials also lies in a common script of alienation grounded in various forms of loss of identity. The desire to recover a lost or displaced identity is a recurrent theme in South Korean TV drama, and answers to a wider concern in society and culture about the purpose of life in a seemingly hostile world. Alienation is evident in the central characters of each serial, who are ghosts or young people afflicted with an ability to see ghosts. Both kinds of character are cut off from family and the social mainstream by their condition and the multiple personalities it entails as they mentally move between worlds: the ghosts because they can seldom communicate with the living, and the ghost seers because they have either been socially ostracized since childhood due to their alterity or are unable to lead everyday normal lives because of some trauma in adulthood. All are without immediate families, which constitutes depleted subjectivity and lack of agency in a society with communal values centred on family.

Both ghosts and ghost seers thus conform to recognizable scripts. A ghost is cognitively impaired and driven by a limited range of motives and desires. The longer a ghost roams the world, the more embittered it becomes and the more apt to turn to evil, and more inclined to possess the bodies of the living. Ghostly possession occurs in most of the serials discussed here. Ghosts have usually died young and may be amnesiac (lacking memory of past identity and/or unaware of how they died), they may be suppliants, wishing to convey a message to their families or to receive a ritual burial, or they may be vengeful, bearing a grudge against the living, either because they have died violently and not been avenged or, in the case of a female, because she is a virgin ghost (*cheonyeo gwishin*), having died a virgin in a society which still determines a woman's social value by biological reproduction, childcare and home management. She is thus unable to pass on into the afterlife and persists as the most feared kind of ghost, random and vindictive in her attacks upon the living, especially young men or people enjoying the institutions of marriage and family denied to her in life. Suppliant ghost sequences are usually brief, as in several examples in *Dokkaebi*, but an exemplary extended sequence occupies a story arc that spans Episodes 3 and 4 of *Who Are You?* Jang Yeon-Hui[2] has been killed by her intended mother-in-law, and her body dismembered and the hands and feet scattered. Although the rules of this serial only allow a ghost's voice to be heard by a shaman, Yeon-Hui appears several times before Yang Shi-On, who identifies her and is able to nudge the investigation in the right direction and prevent a cremation of the rest of her body under a false name.

The core of the ghost seer script is that he or she can see, hear, communicate with and even touch ghosts. This unusual ability may stem from several causes, of which three are most common: temporary possession by a spirit during childhood; descent from a parent or grandparent who is a shaman; or a near-death experience, especially involving a coma, in which the spirit leaves the body and enters the liminal space inhabited by spirits. All three have their source in long-held shamanistic beliefs and practices in Korea, even if the dramas are treating these as folk beliefs and practices. Out-of-body experiences and possession by spirits are familiar aspects of shamanism. In the course of *Who Are You?*, a young shaman, Jang Hui-Bin, is surprised as she transitions from a charlatan to a ghost seer, visited by ghosts because she is the only one who can hear them speak, and is at last enabled to offer constructive advice to her clients. While out-of-body experiences have been long recounted across the world (Greyson 2016: 394), the connection in television drama between coma and out-of-body experience is mainly a late 20th century phenomenon prompted by the emergence of resuscitation science and life-support systems. As Sam Parnia observes, medical science now indicates that death "is not so much of an absolute black and white moment but rather a 'gray zone' that may be potentially reversible for prolonged periods of time after it has begun" (2014: 76). Logically, the altered cognitive process which enables a subject to "see" ghosts might be identified in popular culture discourse as a consequence of post-resuscitation syndrome, the damage to the brain that occurs along with the return of spontaneous circulation (Parnia 2014: 77). The particular convention in TV dramas is thus a very recent development wherein shamanism meets neuroscience.

Ghost seers likewise share attributes of a common schema. They tend to be social isolates, and have spent lonely childhoods because their peers shun them through fear or contempt of their difference. Their isolation is exacerbated by the loss of their parents during early childhood. Eun-Tak (*Dokkaebi*), Bong-Pal (*Let's Fight, Ghost*), Bong-Seon (*Oh My Ghost*) and Cheo Yong (*Ghost-Seeing Detective Cheo Yong*) all share these attributes. Seers are nevertheless clever and do

2 In accordance with Korean practice, names appear as family name followed by given name, unless a cited author has adopted a different order when publishing.

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well in education, and their role is normally positive: ghosts commonly want the seer to resolve unfinished business to allow them to move on into the afterlife, and the seer may begin by fearing these ghosts and subsequently become willing to help them. Underlying the relationship is the conceptual metaphor Dislocation is a Lost Object, which is realized by Hyeon-Ji, a wandering spirit now back in her body, when she describes ghosts as "lost, [...] hurt and broken" (*Let's Fight,* Ep. 16: 1:00:48 ff.): "[Ghosts] want to go to the other world, but they've lost their way and are wandering here. [...] Not all ghosts are bad. They are hurt and broken, just like us". Such empathy may prompt the seer to form strong (even romantic) bonds with some spirits, to the extent that "ghost romance" becomes an identifiable mode, if not a genre: in *Oh My Ghost*, for example, Sun-Ae is the first real friend Bong-Seon has ever had, and the friendship works to the advantage of each – because on many occasions they share Bong-Seon's material body, Sun-Ae becomes able to move on into the afterlife, and Bong-Seon's career and love life begin to flourish. The viewing audience is positioned to align and empathize with ghost and/or seer in their struggles with lost identity and the ghost's quest for the justice which will free it from its liminal state, so the audience is thereby implicated in a crisis of subjectivity and prompted to reflect upon its own position in society. Because both ghost and ghost seer are lonely and emotionally isolated, they become a narrative focus for a perceived deficiency in empathetic capacity in Korean society. In such ways liminal characters are used by writers and directors to advocate for a society that is intersubjective and altruistic.

Such thematic significances constitute intertextual linkages amongst the supernatural dramas, although these linkages are more overt in the construction of the storyworld and character typologies, which are grounded in modern adaptations of the Korean folklore which has been familiar to audiences from childhood retellings. As in the West, newly invented motifs may have comic and/or thematic functions. For example, amongst the schemas for a female ghost that appear in supernatural dramas, the virgin ghost (*cheonyeo gwishin*) is a favourite of writers and, as mentioned previously, is often represented as dangerous: In *Oh My Ghost*, however, the schema becomes a source of humour when the ghost of Shin Sun-Ae assumes her virginity is the cause of her liminality and so sets out to lose it by possessing living women and attempting to seduce men. The humour lies in both the motif of ghostly possession and an original take on the behaviour of the *cheonyeo gwishin.* A second schema which illustrates the liminal state of the ghost is the *jibak ryeong*, a ghost compelled to haunt a single site, usually the site of her death. In *Ghost-Seeing Detective Cheo Yong*, the main female protagonist is the ghost of a murdered school-girl who is confined within a police building but discovers she can get outside if she possesses the body of Ha Seon-U, a staid and serious female detective. She can thus help solve crimes, since she can still see and speak with other ghosts, but there is also much comic confusion amongst Seon-U's colleagues when she suddenly starts behaving like a frisky schoolgirl and demanding to visit restaurants.

2. SPECTRAL AMNESIACS, SPECTRAL INCOGNIZANTS AND POLYVALENT SELVES

A major modern variation to these three ghost schemas, which also applies to male ghosts, is that in addition to their function as sources of humour their cognitive status may be that of either a spectral amnesiac or a spectral incognizant, who does not know that she has died and cannot understand why everybody seems to be ignoring her (see Lee 2015 for an extended discussion of the two types). Briefly, a fully amnesiac ghost is unable to recall her name, her life as a human, nor the circumstances of her death, while a partly amnesiac ghost, such as Sun-Ae in *Oh My Ghost*, cannot remember her death or any events leading to it. Amnesia is often a metaphor for the repressed traumas of Korean history (Lee 2015: 127-8), while amnesiac characters are so widespread in Korean serials that, like comas, with which they are often linked, they are a narrative cliché. Supernatural serials favour spectral amnesiacs, presumably because there is a mystery to be solved and ample room for audience speculation, but also because, along with possession, amnesia is a fruitful device through which to link a character to notions of polyvalent selves (dissociative identity disorder or multiple personality disorder) as circulate in popular psychology and in film and television. A further recent development of the spectral amnesiac schema has been the *jeoseung saja* figure. A *jeoseung saja* ('afterlife messenger') is a traditional Korean psychopomp, who guides the spirits of the recently departed down *Hwangcheon* Road to the afterlife. Although various embellishments of the *jeoseung saja* were introduced in *Arang and the Magistrate* (2012), the most imaginative adaptations emerged in 2017 in *Dokkaebi*, *Black*, and the film *Along with the Gods: The Two Worlds*. In *Dokkaebi*, as punishment for the heinous crimes he has committed, a person is transformed into a spectral amnesiac, wiped clean of all memories but suffers the emotions of guilt. In *Arang and the Magistrate*, a *jeoseung saja*

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cannot die but can utterly cease to exist; in *Dokkaebi*, once a *jeoseung saja*'s wrong-doings have been expiated he (also she in *Dokkaebi*) is returned to the cycle of birth, death and reincarnation.

As mentioned above, modern variations to ghost lore suggest some isomorphism with popular conceptions of cognition disorders referred to as dissociative identity disorder (DID), multiple personality or (non-clinically) polyvalent selves (Walker 2011: 44). Wayland Walker's lay definition of the condition is a good fit for the representation of polyvalent selves in Korean serials: "The presence of two or more distinct identities or personalities or personality states (each with its own relatively enduring pattern of perceiving, relating to and thinking about the environment and self)" (2011: 44). Polyvalence occurs either because of ghostly possession or a perception that the self has been reincarnated and past selves can be recalled. All examples involve two separate entities, and consequently the representation of multiple identities is not a popular psychoanalytic issue as in the numerous well-known Hollywood examples.[3] The narrative structures of the serials in various ways emphasize polyvalence. In its simplest form, while a ghost may have a living and a post-mortem personality, it needs to some extent to recuperate subjectivity and agency in order to move on. Polyvalence seems apparent in the case of Hyeon-Ji (*Let's Fight, Ghost*), a wandering spirit whose body is still alive, but these identities are sequential rather than simultaneous. When her spirit returns to her body in Episode 11, and she awakens from her coma, she has no memory of her time spent as a ghost, and has instead become a ghost seer. In the literature about dissociative identity disorder it is claimed that dissociation erases patients' memories of their own trauma histories, so Hyeon-Ji's gradual recovery of memory, both of the cause of her injury and her experience as a quasi-ghost seems to be modelled on DID therapy. However, these premises also seem to be mocked in that the therapist assigned to her is the serial killer responsible for her original injuries.

Other playful representations of popular understandings of polyvalent selves are found in *Oh My Ghost* and *Ghost-Seeing Detective Cheo Yong*. A general convention in relation to possession is that the host's subjectivity and personality are suppressed and buried deep in the unconscious, so the personality of the ghost takes over, in much the same way as an *alter* is presumed to take over in DID. Invasion of a body by a ghost with a much more ebullient personality than her host can produce quite different outcomes. In the culinary drama, *Oh My Ghost*, Na Bong-Seon has inherited her ghost seeing ability from her shaman grandmother, and has lived her life afflicted with introversion, fearfulness and low self-esteem, but when possessed by extroverted Shin Sun-Ae she becomes confident and outgoing. Intersubjective relations grounded in theory of mind now come into play as her at first puzzled co-workers begin to like her, treat her differently, and expect that she will consistently be her *alter*. When in Episode 5 her boss takes her to see a psychiatrist, she is diagnosed with bipolar disorder – extroverted and sexually curious when manic and the opposite when depressed. The scene reminds viewers that, as Peter Verhagen (2010: 552) remarks, Western approaches to mental health are limited and potentially destructive when applied outside the original culture. The possibility of spirit possession would not be considered, since standard psychiatry regards this notion as a cognitive delusion (Breakey 2001: 62), but this Western diagnosis is indicated as culturally alien by the doctor's uncontrollable facial spasms, which are caused by the ghost of his grandmother clinging to him and blowing on his cheek, which, only Bong-Seon can see (see Figure 1). Bong-Seon herself, when pleading with Sun-Ae to stop trying to possess her, avers that she is afraid of being possessed because of her fear that others will see her as "another person", that is, as afflicted with DID.

Different versions of polyvalence are represented in each season of *Ghost-Seeing Detective Cheo Yong*. Neither of the women possessed by schoolgirl ghost Han Na-Yeong is a ghost seer. In Season One, detective Ha Seon-U is sceptical that spirits exist and suffers distress because she cannot grasp that the frequent gaps in her memory are the product of dissociation. The notion that polyvalent selves reflect cognitive impairment prompts her to conclude that she is going mad. In contrast, her replacement character in Season Two, Jeong Ha-Yun, is open-minded about spirit possession, amused at the idea of a detective being possessed by a ghost detective, and willing to cooperate with Na-Yeong to solve crime cases. These dramas – and others – thus play with popular psychology by placing it in dialogue with traditional and emerging folklore and using this dialogue to challenge such concepts as that there is only one self in each human body. When a human is possessed by a ghost, the displacement of consciousness and subjectivity is only permanent in cases of possession by an evil ghost, where the host's subjectivity remains acutely diminished even after the ghost is destroyed. Ju

3 *The Three Faces of Eve* (1957), *Sybil* (1976), *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* (1977), *Voices Within: The Lives of Truddi Chase* (1990), *Frankie & Alice* (2010), *Waking Madison* (2010), *United States of Tara* (2009-2011).

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FIGURE 1. *OH MY GHOST* (EPISODE 5, 32:25-33:08). TOP: THE PSYCHIATRIST'S STRANGE CONTORTIONS; BOTTOM: BONG-SEON AND HER UNIQUE GHOST-SEER PERCEPTION OF THE SCENE.

Hye-Seong (*Let's Fight, Ghost*) is condemned to live out his life in prison, traumatized by the memory of all the people he murdered, whereas Choe Seong-Jae (*Oh My Ghost*) is depicted as suffering from retrograde amnesia and depressed by his inability to remember anything. In both cases, viewers may assume that possession by an evil spirit can be understood as a form of psychological trauma consequent upon the identity displacement experienced. The host conforms to a common schema for a sociopath: he feels neither empathy nor emotion nor love, and his behaviour is not constrained by feelings such as fear, anxiety, remorse, or guilt.

The motif of reincarnation in *Dokkaebi* imparts an emphasis on polyvalent selves comparable to the motif of possession in the other serials. The two principal time streams,

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over 900 years apart, enable a popular conception of reincarnation to thematize memory and multiplicity. Polyvalent selves emerge as characters reappear in different social and historical contexts. An analogy can thus be drawn between the appearance of these multiple states and the fragmentation of what it has meant to be Korean during Korea's tumultuous history.

3. NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

The distribution of major characters between ghosts, ghost seers and ordinary people promotes a common bipartite structure, in that the serials commonly consist of two story strands imbricated by theme and by the involvement of at least two of the principal characters in each other's strand. Each strand may primarily be the quest of one of these characters, but may be elaborated by sub-plots involving supporting characters. The strands eventually merge. This relatively simple structure is employed in *Oh My Ghost*, *Let's Fight, Ghost* and *Ghost-Seeing Detective Cheo Yong*: the ghost's quest is to discover why she has become marooned in a liminal state, and consequently gain release, while the seer's quest is to attain a state of human well-being, involving, for example, the overcoming of threats and the development of a sociable life based on intersubjective relationships, love, and a successful career. A unifying device may prove to be that the principal antagonist is revealed to be common to both strands (for example, Choe Seong-Jae in *Oh My Ghost*; Ju Hye-Seong in *Let's Fight, Ghost*).

Ghost-Seeing Detective Cheo Yong exemplifies the simplest structure amongst the corpus sample. The two ten-episode seasons are structured in the same way: there is a framing story arc which is established during the first two episodes and resolved in the final two episodes. Episodes 3 and 8 contain discrete stories, with some narrative or thematic links to the overarching story arc and closing segments that connect vertically to that arc or horizontally as anticipations of the next episode. The structure of *Who Are You?* is very similar: protagonist Shi-On's ghost-seeing ability is a continuing storyline, while most of the cases she solves are discrete storylines within the larger arc. In both serials these discrete episodes would still make sense if watched out of order. The three principal characters of *Ghost-Seeing Detective Cheo Yong* are the ghost seer, detective Yun Cheo-Yong, his professional partner, female detective Ha Seon-U, and teenage ghost Han Na-Yeong, the amnesiac ghost of a murdered female high school student. Na-Yeong is both a virgin ghost and a *jibak ryeong*, unable to leave the police precinct, and is delighted when Cheo-Yong is assigned to the station and she realizes that after years of isolation someone can see and hear her. She insists on helping him solve crimes. The framing story involves an evil ghost (Yang Su-Hyeok) who was a sociopathic killer when alive and who has merged with a vengeful ghost to kill the members of a religious cult responsible for the death of the second ghost and his pregnant wife. Imbricated with this story is the mystery of Na-Yeong's death.

Supernatural serials are not just heavy in social criticism but also tend to be very intertextual, and this one is especially so because, apart from the final two episodes which wrap up the plot, each episode is developed as an example or blend of recognized genres, scripts and social themes, with the ghost-story element incorporated into the blend. Episodes 1 and 2 blend ghost, detective and hospital dramas; Episode 3 blends ghost hunters with a stalker story; Episode 4 is a school story, much indebted to *Whispering Corridors* and thematically linked with Na-Yeong's back story; Episode 5 blends a vengeful ghost story with a social realist narrative about exploited migrant workers; Episode 6 is a family story about the destructive potential of mother-son dyads; Episode 7 is the story of a sociopathic woman who is killing off her relatives by staging accidents or suicides, but is found out when the ghost of her stepdaughter, who haunts a small figurine, reveals all to Na-Yeong (the idea that material objects and personal possessions can be haunted or contain traces of human memories is widespread and forms the basis of *Who Are You?*); finally, Episode 8 is a familiar critique of the social immorality caused by collusion between the wealthy and an easily corruptible justice system. The story pivots on the gang rape and murder of a young woman, which happens frequently in Korea, in this case the perpetrators are three socially privileged men. The corrupt justice system enables them to escape without charge, while the dead girl is smeared as promiscuous. A core theme is dismissive attitudes to rape by Korean men and within the legal system. The depiction of social sickness and corruption in a dark world, and settings in sleazy clubs and dimly lit industrial basements impart a gothic or *film noir* texture to the episode and underpin its social critique.

Ghost-Seeing Detective Cheo Yong exemplifies the kind of serial in which, according to Mittell (2015: 19), plotlines are centred on series-long arcs while still offering episodic coherence and resolutions, although the second season sometimes seems to lose sight of the series-long arc. Despite its genre

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blending, the predominant genre is the *whodunit?*, which not only imparts a strong impetus to the narrative but also well suits discrete episode organization and, it must be said, the practice of continuous shooting as the series is being aired. In contrast, the structure of *Dokkaebi* is more complex. First, it has few discrete micro-narratives, and so does not work on the principle of episodic coherence within a series-long arc. A relatively self-contained sequence, such as the kidnapping and rescue of Eun-Tak, may span episodes – in this example, nine minutes at the end of Episode 2 and nine minutes at the beginning of Episode 3. Second, it belongs to a genre in which modern-day events are a distant consequence of events that occurred in the past (here, 900 years previously), so instead of narrating the ghost's life before death as narrative flashbacks, as in *Oh My Ghost*, there are parallel narratives and thus an additional layer of story which involves transformation or reincarnation and thereby interrogates relationships among memory, history and experience, and asks whether the significance of experience is permanent or subject to change. The two stories of *Dokkaebi* concern four principal characters: First, Kim Shin, a human transformed into an immortal *dokkaebi* (which roughly translates as 'goblin') after his death. A capricious deity has cursed him with immortality, loneliness and the pain of witnessing and remembering the deaths of everyone he forms bonds with. He is 939 years old in Episode 1, and remembers everything he has experienced over that vast time span. Impaled by an invisible sword, he can find oblivion only if he meets "the *dokkaebi* bride", who can see and pull out the sword. Second, Wang Yeo, Kim Shin's king in the Goryeo Dynasty (918-1392), was transformed into a *jeoseung saja* as punishment for his crimes – the slaughter of Kim Shin and of his sister and Wang's wife, Kim Seon, and his own subsequent suicide.[4] Like all *jeoseung saja* he is amnesiac, with no memory of his past identity or his crimes. After having a strong affective response to a portrait of Kim Seon (which he had himself painted after her death), he confesses, "I don't have memories, only feelings. I was just incredibly sad. My heart hurt" (Episode 8: 21:28). Although he has been a psychopomp for 300 years, he has no understanding of human culture or custom. The third, Eun-Tak, a 19-year-old schoolgirl, is the goblin bride. In a random act of kindness, Kim Shin had enabled her critically injured mother to cheat death and give birth to Eun-Tak, who is thus not simply human – because she should not exist at all – and sees and communicates with ghosts. Finally, Kim Seon, known as "Sunny", is a reincarnation of Kim Shin's sister. People find her very beautiful, but she is solitary and eccentric. She meets and falls in love with Saja, but their different existential statuses and their previous life history preclude a relationship.

4. HISTORICAL SERIAL, MEMORY AND TRAUMA

The broad genre of historical serial (known as *sageuk* in Korean) always has the potential to relate particular narratives to larger issues of Korea's violent history, especially when the past is overtly juxtaposed with the present. The idea of memory is thus imbricated with trauma, and both memory and trauma are recorded in the body of Kim Shin in the sword which has impaled him for 900 years. Throughout the serial there is an interplay between history from above, constituted by some form of historical record, and history from below embodied (in this drama) in objects and the body. When Eun-Tak attempts to research the history of Kim Shin, she can only learn that he was a great military leader, but she can find nothing about his death, which seems hidden from official history. An excellent exploration of the interactions of history, memory and multiple identity occurs in Episode 3 (55:07 ff.), when Saja and Sunny first meet. This sequence, and what immediately follows, also involves the audience in processes of remembering, in that it not only must recall details from the episodes so far, but must store up details which are not yet explained. Saja's attention is attracted by a street hawker selling jewellery, whom he fails to recognize as one of the two avatars of the *Samshin Halmeoni*, a triple goddess of birth and fate, who in her grandmother form previously prevented him from taking nine-year-old Eun-Tak into the afterlife. That form also emerges in this scene as an image caught in a mirror on her stand, seen only by the viewers (see Figure 2). *Samshin Halmeoni* obliquely draws his attention to an ancient ring on her stall, which again the audience should recognize as a ring worn by the queen, Kim Shin's sister, at the time of her death and heavily foregrounded in Episode 1 (02:27; 14:32). But as he is about to pick it up the ring is snatched by another hand, Sunny's. He turns to look at her

4 The character does not learn he is Wang Yeo until Episode 12, and is referred to and addressed throughout as *Jeoseung Saja*. English subtitles call him "(Grim) Reaper", although this is somewhat misleading. He is not a personification of death (perhaps more like a metonym) and only coincides with the European Grim Reaper insofar as the Grim Reaper in European mythology is often also imagined as a psychopomp. Kim Shin refers to him familiarly as *Saja* ('messenger', but also a homonym for 'lion'), and I have adopted that name herein to distinguish him from the other *jeoseung saja* who appear in the serial.

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FIGURE 2. *DOKKAEBI* (EPISODE 3: 55:07 FF.): SUNNY AND SAJA DISPUTE ABOUT THE RING, OBSERVED BY *SAMSHIN HALMEONI* (TOP, CENTRE; BOTTOM, IN THE MIRROR).

and tears begin to fall from his eyes. It will be several episodes before it is revealed to the audience that his response to both the ring and to Sunny is prompted by a memory deeper than conscious cognition, which lies in the multiple identities of the two characters – Sunny as reincarnation of the queen, and Saja as reincarnation of her husband, the king who ordered her death.

5. *DOKKAEBI* AND OPERATIONAL AESTHETIC

Dokkaebi is an outstanding example of a supernatural serial, and develops a subtle complexity through the different existential statuses of its four main characters, its mythological inventiveness and intertextuality, its long narrative arcs, and its frequent metacinematic effects. Mittell (2015: 41) has observed that creators have responded to shifts in production and consumption of television "by creating a more self-conscious mode of storytelling than is typically found within conventional television narration". This "operational aesthetic" (Mittell 46) invites viewers to engage with narrative as analysts of form, whether narrative, visual or auditory. The expectation that the audience of *Dokkaebi* must negotiate its complexity in many aspects is established early on, but an excellent example is the segment mentioned above which spans the end of Episode 2 and the beginning of Episode 3. One of the funniest sequences, it is part of a sub-plot concerning Eun-Tak's relatives which unfolds in small vignettes over Episodes 1-11. When Eun-Tak was aged nine her single mother suddenly died, and for 10 years Eun-Tak has been a Cinderella figure in the home of her abusive aunt and two feckless cousins. On her nineteenth birthday (the age of majority in South Korea) the aunt pressures her to hand over the $150,000 from her mother's life insurance policy. However, the bankbook has disappeared (it is later revealed that it always disappears because a ghost, a friend of Eun-Tak's mother, has been protecting the money on Eun-Tak's behalf), and Eun-Tak decides to run away. Two loan sharks come to threaten the aunt because she owes them money, and then kidnap Eun-Tak from school to force her to hand over the bankbook. On a deserted country road at night, their car is stopped by Kim Shin and Saja. When the gangsters try to drive forward, Kim Shin uses his magical sword to slice the car in two lengthways. Eun-Tak is thus rescued and the gangsters are left to spend two days trapped under one half of the car. While the sequence is almost discrete narratively, it performs several functions. It sketches the difficult life Eun-Tak has been leading for ten years and establishes her resilience; and it is an important step in advancing the bromance between the two men. Formally, however, its comedy largely stems from its operational aesthetic, especially its multimodal metaphorical elements. First, the car stops and the streetlights go out in sequence, accompanied by a musical soundtrack with an evenly spaced crescendo as each light is extinguished. This is a simple metaphor, narratively expressing that *something* is approaching, but also picking up the conceptual metaphor LIGHT IS GOOD, DARK IS BAD. The event is made salient by a point of view, shot-reverse shot, as the scene shows the characters in the car expressing surprise, followed by an elevated shot from behind the car of what they can see. Second, as Kim Shin and Saja approach the car in almost slow motion, wearing long black coats, there is an audio metaphor as the music on the soundtrack ("Sword of the Warrior") repeats the same musical phrase but on a rising chromatic scale, now imparting an intensely dramatic sense of impending doom as the dark

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figures approach the car. "Sword of the Warrior" is a leitmotif which earlier appeared, for example, in the climax to a battle in Episode 1, when Shin cut down the leader of an enemy army. The element of self-conscious overstatement in both visual and auditory effects draws attention to production processes and hence is a metacinematic comment on the creation of mood and affect. The fantastic bisection of the car imparts a new direction to this commentary as it introduces a sudden shift from melodrama to slapstick comedy reminiscent of TV cartoons as Eun-Tak and gangsters part company in different halves of the car, and the soundtrack absurdly shifts to Sarah Brightman's well-known rendition of the romantic song, "Time to Say Goodbye" ("Con te partirò"). When Eun-Tak's half of the car comes to a halt, casually held upright by Saja, the sequence introduces a game with theory of mind. Despite the centuries they have lived, and their apparent ability to hear people's thoughts, neither Shin nor Saja is competent in theory of mind, and this lack is a rich source of comedy throughout the serial. First, as Shin takes Eun-Tak's hand to help her from the wrecked car, he asks, "Are you hurt?", and she is flabbergasted that it does not occur to him she has been so traumatized by the destruction of the car she is almost inarticulate. Second, a key irony is that one of Eun-Tak's rescuers is Saja, who usually calls her "Missing Soul" and has already tried repeatedly to escort her into the afterlife; the sequence ends with Eun-Tak asking with much hesitation if she has died and whether the road they are walking along is the road to the afterlife. Meanwhile, the two men are holding a silent conversation by telepathy, at cross purposes, so when Shin suddenly shouts, "Be quiet!" Eun-Tak can only assume he is addressing her. Great power requires human insight.

The metacinematic element of the operational aesthetic is often cued by an interplay of fantasy and humour, by references to other works or by self-reflexive comments on genre. As Shin and Saja first approach the car in the sequence discussed above, one of the gangsters breaks the narrative frame by asking, "Who are these sons-of-bitches? Are they from Men in Black?" (see Figure 3). The question is a simple response to their visual appearance (made funnier in retrospect by the huge demand for brandname long black coats in Korean shops after the episode was screened), but audience members may enjoy the reversal of the premise of the *Men in Black* films, in which humans police non-human aliens. Further, throughout the serial the gatherings of the *jeoseung saja* constitute a running reference to the *Men in Black* films: they are dressed in black, bureaucratized and stripped of memory ("neuralyzed").

A recurrent discourse about genre is attached to Saja's addiction to daytime serials and his propensity to interpret human life on their basis – for example, when in Episode 4 (04:14 ff.) Eun-Tak delivers a bad parody of the Cinderella script as her own life story, he whispers, "I know this story. I saw the drama!", and when in Episode 11 (08:07) Shin warns him to stay away from his sister, Saja reflects, "I know this drama. I've seen it a lot in the mornings". The serial's mythological innovations are foregrounded by Eun-Tak's recurring connection of *dokkaebi* and brooms: in the folklore, objects often handled by people, such as brooms, may turn into *dokkaebi*. As the "*dokkaebi* bride" her destiny is to pull out the invisible sword that has impaled Shin for 900 years and thus turn him to dust. Not knowing that will be the outcome, she jokes that he will turn into a broom, so she won't pull out the sword until she needs one. There are also simple frame-breaking jokes, as when Shin and Eun-Tak go to the cinema and watch *Train to Busan*, starring Gong Yu, the actor who plays Shin. Such allusions are a kind of fanservice, complimenting the audience for its cultural knowledge.

A variant appears in *Who Are You?* (Episode 4: 39:07), when detective Choe Mun-Sik remarks that he has been told he looks like a king in a TV drama (the actor, Kim Chang-Wan, played King Injo in *Iljimae*). More complex is a moment in Episode 5 (05:30) of *Dokkaebi* when Eun-Tak muses on that evening's events and wonders what genre they were in, "heart-pounding rom-com, strange and beautiful fantasy, or sad melodrama?". Other serials contain compa-

FIGURE 3. *DOKKAEBI* (EPISODE 3: 14:50): MEN IN LONG BLACK COATS (KIM SHIN, LEFT; SAJA, RIGHT).

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FIGURE 4. *GHOST-SEEING DETECTIVE CHEO YONG* (EPISODE 3: 02:07): FRAME-BREAKING AND EXTREME CANTING.

rable frame-breaking, self-reflexive segments. Episode 3 of *Ghost-Seeing Detective Cheo Yong*, for example, opens with a ghost-hunter script as two young men enter a murder-scene at night to film it for their ghost-hunting website, and the parody of the Syfy Channel's "supernatural reality" program *Ghost Hunters* is emphasized by their repeated requests to the audience to "like" their program, by extreme canting (about 55 degrees) of the camera (see Figure 4), and by their panic when they do encounter a ghost.

6. **CONCLUSION**

The supernatural serial, and in particular the sub-set involving ghosts and ghost seers, developed as a versatile and inventive genre in the second decade of the 21st century. Blending genres and leavening their narratives with humour, the serials are representations of and metaphors for social alienation grounded in various forms of loss of identity. This theme is one of the most common in Korean television drama, so the inventiveness and innovative handling of traditional folklore enable original approaches to be developed from some shared scripts. A desire to establish justice and order in a society where many people are displaced or liminal is expressed in the simple metaphor of the lost property department in the police building in *Who Are You?* Yang Shi-On and her assistants catalogue the lost objects, shelve them in a large store-room, and post photographs and descriptions online. This construction of an unassuming order is then taken further when Shi-On perceives some supernatural aura pertaining to an object, followed by an encounter with a ghost and thence to an establishment of order through solving a crime. Underpinning these representations is the conceptual metaphor DISLOCATION IS A LOST OBJECT, which offers an elegant example of how depth of significance in these serials can lie in everyday concepts. The visual representation of these objects and their associated events (catalogued, stored, returned to owner, stolen, or subject of an investigation) imparts a material presence to the target domain, that is, *dislocation* or *displacement*. Both ghost and ghost seer conform to recognizable schemas of dislocation, either because of the circumstances surrounding the death of the one, or the isolating life

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experiences of the other. The desired and, in these serials, generally achieved outcomes are for the ghosts to move on to their place in the afterlife and the seers to attain a state of well-being in their society.

Shared scripts and schemas that have evolved in the 21st century constitute intertextual linkages amongst the supernatural dramas, especially in the modifications of and additions to Korean folklore about supernatural beings with which audiences can be assumed to have some familiarity. Recent serials have been highly inventive in this area and innovations can be effective in thematic foregrounding against the common script or in creating humorous effects, even when, or perhaps especially when, audience members take umbrage at an apparent disregard for tradition. At the same time, innovation can also affirm traditional belief and cultural practice, as in the many examples in which the relationship of spectral amnesia and polyvalent selves serves to challenge the premises of Western psychiatry that exclude the supernatural and spiritual from concepts of mental health. Embellishments of the *jeoseung saja* figure in the second decade of the 21st century may also presage an emerging stream within supernatural narratives that develops the "*sonyeo* sensibility" identified by Jinhee Choi in tandem with new masculinities and spiritualities. The great audience popularity of the *jeoseung saja* in *Dokkaebi* and the film, *Along with the Gods: The Two Worlds*, may produce such a shift in representation. Finally, the various supernatural serials have proved flexible in their handling of common structures – series-long arcs incorporating episodic coherence and resolutions, intermingled parallel plots involving characters with differing existential statuses, and long narrative arcs which blend diverse genres.

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(DE)CONSTRUCTING NOSTALGIC MYTHS OF THE MOTHER IN JAPANESE DRAMA *WOMAN*

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Japan; television drama; motherhood; furusato; nostalgia.

ABSTRACT

In a time of uncertainty and crisis, many Japanese have sought comfort in images of an idyllic native home, centred on a devoted, nurturing mother. Paradoxically, while this romanticised conception of the “mother” is mourned as a casualty of modernisation, it is a relatively recent invention produced in response to anxieties over the rapid social changes Japan experienced during the post-war period. The construction of this maternal fantasy has primarily been the work of men seeking solace in the warm embrace of the “mother” as compensation for their diminishing social status. However, nostalgic representations are not invariably sweet reminiscences. The television drama *Woman* is one example of a media product that exploited the nostalgic image of motherhood without ignoring its contradictions. I argue that in its depiction of two contrasting returns to one’s native home, the drama constructs an indulgent, child-centred idealisation of motherhood only to deconstruct it through the revelation of its artifice. In the process, it reveals the contrasting dissatisfactions of men and women in contemporary Japan.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In Japan, as elsewhere, the nostalgic reimagining of the countryside has been a recurrent theme of modernity. A "reawakened agrarian vision" is experienced by each generation feeling anew the conflict between city and country, present and past (Gluck 1985: 178). The concept of *furusato* – a term denoting one's ancestral or native home, which invariably conjures images of communal living in a rural landscape – has been invoked in order to bring comfort at times of personal anxiety or national crisis. To reference an example from the recent past, following the triple disasters of earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown that afflicted the Tōhoku region in 2011, volunteers at evacuation sites expressed their solidarity by singing *Furusato* (My Old Country Home) (Suzuki 2015: 114), a song learned by Japanese children in elementary school that describes reminiscences of a pastoral childhood spent chasing rabbits and fishing in rivers. *Furusato* was invoked as a symbol of the destruction of nature, the lost homes and lost families that resulted from such cataclysmic devastation (Suzuki 2015: 115).

Furusato as a nostalgic representation of childhood has become synonymous with an idealised image of motherhood (Robertson 1988: 500, Creighton 1997: 242). Both *furusato* and the "mother" are associated with love, warmth, nurturance and a sense of belonging (Creighton 1997: 243). They are sanctuaries of retreat from the rigours of urban life. Much like *furusato*, the "mother" is also mourned as a casualty of the forces of industrialisation. Herein lies the paradox: these nostalgic conceptions of *furusato* and the "mother" are recent inventions created in response to anxieties over the rapid social changes Japan has experienced during the process of modernisation. Such inconsistencies point to the re-interpretive power of nostalgia, which reveals more about present conditions than past realities. It is provoked by a "dissatisfaction with the present on the grounds of a remembered, or imaged, past plenitude" (Robertson 1988: 504).

The nostalgic idealisations of a native place centred on a devoted, benevolent mother have been, for the most part, the conceptions of male scholars, intellectuals and producers of culture. They reflect the dissatisfaction of men who, in Japan's post-capitalist age of economic decline and job insecurity, can no longer rely on the stereotype of the corporate warrior as financial provider for the family to define their masculine identity. Anxiety over their diminishing social status has caused some to resurrect outdated notions of the "traditional" family based on a male breadwinner and female homemaker. However, women have also expressed their dissatisfaction with the post-war "maternal fantasy" (Asai 1990), which has presumed and impressed upon their supposed instinct to care and nurture, regardless of their actual desires. Faced with the prospect of bearing the double burden of childrearing and work, with little support from men or the (patriarchal) state, many continue to reject the roles of wife and mother, as persistently low marriage and birth rates attest.[1]

The fictional drama series *Woman* (2013) reflects this contrast between male and female dissatisfaction, encapsulating many of the competing discourses surrounding motherhood, family and communal bonds that have emerged in recent years. On the one hand, by referencing the aesthetics and the mood of the 1960s and 1970s, the drama invites the viewer to indulge in a nostalgic fantasy of mother-child bonding. The central narrative concerning the protagonist's return to her native place and the maternal realm reproduces the romanticised imagery of the home centred on an affectionate, devoted mother. This male-produced maternal construction is emblematic of a reactionary discourse that has railed against feminism and urged women to return to the domestic sphere. On the other hand, a subplot featuring a mother who refuses to submit to the maternal fantasy provides an outlet for female dissatisfaction. The depiction of a homecoming that is far from heart-warming punctures the fictions of idyllic *furusato* and the presumption of maternal love. I argue that the motif of motherhood as performance first constructs, and then deconstructs, the post-war concept of the "mother".

2. MALE NOSTALGIA FOR THE LOST IDEAL OF THE MOTHER

Three years prior to making *Woman*, the all-male creative team consisting of producer Tsugiya Hisashi, director Mizuta Nobuo and scriptwriter Sakamoto Yūji first collaborated on the critically-acclaimed television drama *Mother* (2010). It centred on a 35-year-old childless academic, Nao, whose maternal feelings are awakened when she encounters an abused girl. The 11-part series charted the protagonist's transformation from a lonely, emotionally-repressed, socially-awkward woman to one who, through embracing her

1 The crude marriage rate has fallen from a post-war high of 12 per cent in 1947 to 5.1 per cent in 2015. During the same period, the total fertility rate (TFR) fell from 4.54 to 1.45 births per woman (NIPSSR 2017a).

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maternal aspect, becomes more expressive, is able to rebuild kinship ties and eventually find emotional fulfilment. Nao's own mother represents another paragon of maternal virtue, making numerous sacrifices, which include suffering 13 years of imprisonment for a crime committed by her daughter. The discourse surrounding the drama reinforced its maternalist message. The tagline, "Motherhood drives a woman crazy", suggested that maternal instinct was an overwhelming drive that no woman could ignore. In an interview, Tsugiya, revealed that he and his co-creators had aimed to tell a story depicting a woman undergoing a process of psychological and emotional maturity (Asō 2010). His comments imply that only through motherhood could a woman achieve full self-realisation.

The construction of selfless, compassionate motherhood in *Mother* follows a pattern of sentimentalised representations, often the creations of men, which have come to epitomise the post-war image of the mother. In particular, the use of melodramatic tropes such as the liberal use of affect and the tragic-mother narrative in *Mother* echoes the post-war *hahamono*, or "mother films", characterised by their emotive glorification of maternal love and devotion. *Mother* borrows the familiar *hahamono* plot of a mother of low social standing sacrificing her personal happiness for the sake of her children's security. It plays on the "nostalgic sweet resonance" (Minaguchi 2002: 104) imbued in the cry of "*okāsan*" (mother), uttered by a child yearning for their mother, which has become sentimentalised to such an extent that just the sound of this word is enough to pull on the heartstrings (Yamamura 1983: 55).

Such imagery is best understood within the context of the maternalist discourse that emerged during the 1960s and 1970s. Tsugiya, Mizuta and Sakamoto belong to the generation raised during this period; their glorified vision of motherhood was no doubt influenced by the culturally-constructed stereotype that abounded at the time. Doi Takeo's (1973) theory of indulgent co-dependence, or *amae*, is of particular relevance. Doi posited *amae* – indicating a desire for one's needs to be indulged by another – as an instinctive emotion that fosters a sense of oneness between mother and child, necessary for healthy psychological development (1973: 75). Supported by theories of maternal deprivation promoted by experts both in Japan and the west (Kyūtoku 1991, Bowlby 1979), *amae* psychology justified what have become the conventional norms of day-to-day childrearing. Mothers are encouraged to satisfy the child's desire for love and security through close physical contact, which involves prolonged breastfeeding, co-sleeping and co-bathing (Johnson 1993: 131). This child-centred perspective of motherhood constructed a fantasy of the mother as an undesiring, selfless being whose sole reason for existence was to care for and nurture others (Asai 1990: 100).

The rapid social changes Japan experienced during the post-war period of high economic growth and intense urbanisation were, however, seen as a threat to the mother-child bond. The social advancement of women was blamed for an apparent loss of maternal instinct (Ochiai 1997: 126). Implicit in such arguments was the conflation of the maternal principle with traditional, rural Japan, the notion that motherhood as a concept predated civilisation, and was thus inherent to Japanese culture. Yoda (2000: 871) notes the paradox in the consistent framing of maternal love as a "supplement of modernity". Research has established that motherhood and maternal love did not exist as ideological concepts in pre-modern Japan (Niwa 1993, Koyama 2013). It was not until the prosperity of the post-war era, when male white-collar workers were able to support the family on a single wage, that the full-time "professional housewife" became the norm. The 1960s and 1970s were a golden era for the family: the number of marriages increased to an all-time high of over one million per year and the country experienced its second post-war baby boom (Kumagai 2015). The female labour participation rate, which had been over 60 per cent in 1910, had fallen to 45.7 per cent by 1975, and the image of the devoted mother lovingly nurturing her children came to define the ideal family (Ochiai 1997: 18, 15, 50). Far from being a vestige of a bygone era, the maternal ideal was a product of the very process – modernisation – that is blamed for its destruction (Yoda 2000: 871).

The mythology of the "mother" has, of course, long been dismantled by feminist scholars, both in Japan and further afield (Ueno 1996, Ohinata 1995, Badinter 1981). The notion that all women possess an instinct to nurture and find fulfilment in the experience of motherhood is contradicted by the disillusionment expressed by many. This is particularly so in Japan, where women are still expected to shoulder the lion's share of childrearing, regardless of whether they work outside the home or not. As a result, women have continued to limit the number of children they have or reject motherhood altogether. Half of never-married women in their thirties believe raising children is a "great psychological strain" (Tachibanaki 2010: 150). Meanwhile, in response to a survey asking why married women had not had as many children as they had hoped,

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more than a fifth of respondents in their thirties felt they could no longer mentally or physically bear the burden of childrearing (NIPSSR 2017b: 21).

Economic uncertainty has meant the aspiration of becoming a fulltime housewife supported by a corporate warrior husband is no longer viable. Instead, contemporary women seek a partner who will cooperate in the home (Ogura 2003: 36). Men, however, continue to hold on to outdated notions of masculinity and traditional gender roles. Surveys of unmarried men show a continued preference for female marriage partners with conventional feminine traits, such as domesticity and docility, suggesting a persistent desire to depend on a supportive wife in the home (Nemoto et al. 2013). Thus, such men continue to see the heterosexual marriage in terms of *amae* ideology, with women assuming the maternal, nurturing role.

This yearning for a "lost" ideal is reflective of a backlash against female emancipation, partly fuelled by a crisis in masculinity. Japan's economic decline following the collapse of the bubble economy led to two "lost decades" during which increasing numbers of men became trapped in non-regular employment and saw their prospects of marriage and family dwindle as a result (Kano 2015: 88). Persistently low marriage and birth rates have triggered fears over the collapse of the "traditional family", based on the gendered dichotomy of the male breadwinner and female homemaker, considered the cornerstone of Japanese society (Kano 2011: 53). Women are once again being urged to return to the domestic realm to pursue their "natural" vocation of childrearing.[2] Perhaps not coincidently, this period has also witnessed a boom in nostalgic media focused on the more optimistic era of 1960s and 1970s, commonly referred to as Shōwa nostalgia, as this period corresponds to the late Shōwa era (1926-1989) (Hidaka 2017: 2). Amidst worries that contemporary Japan is becoming a "relationless society" (Allison 2015: 45), it is perhaps unsurprising that people might yearn for the "good old days" of family centred on a compassionate, indulgent mother. In this sense, Japan is not an isolated case; economic uncertainty and the breakdown of traditional family structures have fuelled a global shift towards conservatism. As such, Shōwa nostalgia may be regarded as a local iteration of a wider cultural trend that references a recent, pre-feminist past, with shows such as *Mad Men*, set in 1960s-70s America, finding international success.[3]

Woman capitalises on this trend for nostalgic media in its evocation of Shōwa-era imagery. It shared many commonalities with its stablemate drama *Mother*, including the preoccupation with a sentimentalised image of motherhood reminiscent of the post-war ideal rooted in *amae* theory. The glorification of the mother-centred home as a place of retreat from the rigours of the social world reinstated nostalgic conceptions of *furusato* and motherhood. The reproduction of melodramatic tropes, such as maternal suffering and emotional excess was also resonant of *hahamono* films. In keeping with other media referencing the Shōwa era, the nostalgic imagery in *Woman* "are not simply pleasant reminiscences of that period but rather are a form of criticism of post-war society" (Hidaka 2017: 25). However, the framing of maternal love and social bonds as victims of the process of modernisation also reveals the inconsistencies in the post-war idealisation of the maternal realm as a vestige of the "good old days".

3. NOSTALGIA FOR AN IDEALISED PAST IN *WOMAN*

Woman is an 11-part fictional drama series that aired on national television channel NTV during the summer of 2013. It was broadcast on Wednesday nights at 10pm, a slot associated with dramas exploring contemporary social issues, predominantly targeted at a female audience. *Woman* referenced many of the issues that have become topical in recent years, particularly following the triple disaster, including grief, poverty, single-motherhood and social connection. The heroine, Koharu, is a young, working-class widow struggling with the financial and practical burdens of raising two children single-handedly after the death of her beloved husband, Shin. Her difficulties mount when she is diagnosed with a life-threatening condition and she is forced to seek support from her mother, Sachi, who abandoned her as a child. In its depiction of these two mothers, the drama employs a style that is distinctly and deliberately retrospective.

The themes of nostalgia, *furusato* and familial harmony are presaged early in the drama. The opening scene is a flashback to the first meeting between Koharu and Shin, during which Koharu sings a verse from "Sunset Behind Distant Mountains" (*Tōki yama ni hi wa ochite*), a song set to Dvořák's Largo from

2 As recently as May 2018, Hagiuda Kōichi, executive acting secretary-general of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, made remarks suggesting that encouraging men to participate in childrearing was detrimental to children and more needed to be done to create an environment in which children could be with their mothers (Nakamura 2018).

3 For more on the global trend for nostalgic media, see Niemeyer (2014).

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FIGURE 1. SHOT REVERSE SHOT SEQUENCE OF INTIMATE MOTHER-CHILD BONDING IN *WOMAN* (EPISODE 1.01).

the Symphony No. 9 that became popularised during the 1960s. The Largo has long been associated with nostalgic images of *furusato* in Japan; an earlier version of the song was known as *Goin' Home* (Nishimura 2014: 6). The rendition Koharu sings describes an evening family gathering around a fire in a rural setting at the end of a working day. This sentiment is encapsulated in the phrase *madoisen*, an old-fashioned word meaning "happy circle", evoking images of familial harmony, which becomes a dominant theme of the drama.

This scene becomes the first chapter in the story of the couple's courtship, marriage and family life, related in the form of a montage of clips. Koharu's narration of this opening sequence – she is telling the story to her daughter Nozomi – establishes her role as a mediator between the present and past. The construction of Koharu as a representation of the "good old days" extends to her wardrobe, which favours light, practical clothing meant to evoke the warmth of the 1960s and 1970s, according to the stylist who worked on the drama ("Natsu dorama 'ura' awādo!" 2013). Even Koharu's frugality – her lack of adornment, buying clothes second-hand and keeping a household account book – recalls the thriftiness of the housewives of the wartime and post-war era who were encouraged to save for the sake of the nation (Garon 2000: 77).

The technical aspects of the production also drew from the past. Director Mizuta eschewed advances in television production in favour of a cinematic style. Instead of using multiple cameras and lighting from all angles, the drama aimed to reproduce the soft, "natural" lighting of real life. As many of the scenes were filmed at dusk, this technique imbues the images with a sepia tone evocative of a bygone era. This visual style has been observed in other cultural products referencing the post-war Shōwa era, which have featured sunsets and orange hues (Hidaka 2017: 66). Zoom lenses were rejected in favour of fixed focal length lenses; the shallow depth of field and extensive use of close-ups created a sense of introspection, allowing viewers to focus on the characters' thoughts and feelings. The objective was to "give the viewers the sense that they are in the drama," thus drawing them into the nostalgic fantasy (Tanaka 2013).

A scene from Episode 1 illustrates how these techniques were used to reproduce heart-warming images of *amae* nurturing. Koharu and her four-year-old daughter, Nozomi, lie under the covers of their shared futon, their faces softly illuminated by the lowlight coming in through the blanket covering their heads. Koharu plays with her daughter's hair as she fondly reminisces about her first encounter with the young girl's deceased father. A shot reverse shot sequence invites the viewer into this intimate scene of mother-child bonding (see Fig. 1).

As an old-fashioned heroine, Koharu is an anachronism in a contemporary society that no longer respects "traditional" ideals, a reminder of a glorified past, when human kindness was held in higher esteem than material wealth. This conflict between the "old" and the "new" becomes evident in another scene from the first episode depicting a visit to a local festival. The socio-economic disparity between Koharu's family and their neighbours is thrown into sharp relief as Nozomi, wearing a second-hand T-shirt, interacts with other children dressed in colourful summer kimonos. As the young girl marvels at the candy apples her friends have purchased, her mother looks on wistfully; unable to afford any of the goods on sale, Koharu has brought her own, home-made food. Nozomi, however, appears unperturbed; picking up one of Koharu's *inari-zushi* (rice wrapped in sweetened fried tofu – a snack

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popular with children), she proudly declares it to be the "food of kings".

The symbolism of the contrast between the modern American candy apple and the traditional Japanese *inari-zushi* cannot be lost on the viewer. The latter, modest but lovingly made by mother's hand, provides more nourishment than the former, which, for all its flamboyance and novelty, lacks substance. In other words, there can be no material substitute for maternal love. This messaging echoes other nostalgia-evoking media that have implicitly criticised the social changes that have resulted from modernisation, including the increased emphasis on material wealth and a perceived loss of appreciation for social connection (Hidaka 2017: 61). The festival setting becomes somewhat ironic. An event that is supposed to celebrate Japanese traditions and facilitate communal bonding has become a site of modern consumerism and an exposition of social disparity. One could read this juxtaposition as a cynical view of the recent boom in nostalgia, which has reduced the experience to a commodity, to be purchased, consumed and disposed of without any deeper engagement.

Any unqualified glorification of the post-war era risks obscuring the plight of those that were left behind during Japan's rapid advance from post-war devastation to economic powerhouse. Koharu represents one of the "left behind", a victim of the capitalist values of competition and individualism that emerged during this period. This is rendered with heightened sentimentality in a later scene from Episode 1, in which Koharu is forced to beg for spare change from a local government bureaucrat after her application for welfare is rejected, in spite of her obvious need. The sight of the desperate mother on her knees, as the official looms over her reflects her powerlessness in the face of an indifferent society that has forsaken communal ties in favour of greed and self-interest. The capitalist urban space, a product of modernity, is presented as a source of misfortune and unhappiness, a typical trope of melodrama (Gledhill 1987, Viviani 1987).

The scenes described above reveal the inconsistencies in framing maternal love as a vestige of the distant past. The glorification of Koharu as a "traditional' mother figure in the festival scene ignores the reality that the prosperity that ac-

FIGURE 2. THE SPATIAL DISTANCE BETWEEN KOHARU AND SACHI SYMBOLISES THE DISHARMONY IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP IN *WOMAN* (EPISODE 1.03).

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companied Japan's post-war progress enabled the practice of *amae*-rooted motherhood Koharu is meant to represent. This paradox is brought into sharp relief by the tragic-mother narrative the drama employs to invite empathy for its protagonist. By casting Koharu as a victim in this way, the drama inadvertently admits the role of capitalism and material wealth in the construction of the maternal ideal.

3. GOIN' HOME: REDISCOVERING THE MATERNAL NATIVE PLACE

In order to find salvation from the rejection and isolation of contemporary society, Koharu must return to the nurturing maternal realm of her native place. Poverty and illness force her to re-establish her relationship with her mother Sachi; it is this reconciliation that becomes the central focus of the narrative, reproducing many of the discourses concerning childrearing and the maternal role that emerged during the post-war era. Reuniting after a long estrangement, their relationship is initially strained, as each blames the other for their perceived abandonment. The failure to make a "happy circle" is symbolised by the spatial distance between Koharu and Sachi in a scene from Episode 1.03 (see Fig. 2). Not only do the two sit apart, they face away from each other, emphasising the gulf in their perspectives. Nevertheless, Koharu's position at the low dining table, a site of nourishment and interaction, suggests a desire to achieve *madoi*, or familial harmony, with her mother. As a symbol of traditional culture, the table is a nostalgic representation of the hearth of the *furusato*.

The mother-child bond can only be restored through a process of regression into the past, with Koharu playing the dependent child desiring maternal indulgence and Sachi re-enacting the role of the nurturing mother by attending to her physical and emotional needs. The turning point comes in Episode 6, in one of the most nostalgically resonant scenes of the series. After Koharu collapses from ill health, Sachi brings her sleeping daughter a meal. Lighting plays a crucial role in creating the nostalgic mood: the light from the setting sun coming in through the open sliding paper doors bathes the scene in a soft, yellow glow (see Fig. 3). The sense of a sentimental longing for the past is heightened by the gentle strains of the Largo, symbolising Koharu's return to her "native place". The casting of veteran actress Tanaka Yūko in the role of Sachi is also significant. Tanaka is best remembered for her role as the eponymous heroine of the immensely popular NHK serial drama, *Oshin* (1983-1984).[4] Oshin's self-denial, self-restraint and endurance for the sake of her children offered an attractive image of motherhood, which continues to be idealised by contemporary Japanese (Holloway 2010: 48). Broadcast during an era associated with high levels of consumption, its appeal rested on its reminder of the values that were believed to have been lost during Japan's era of high economic growth, such as compassion, kinship and the warmth of the family (Kido 1999).

FIGURE 3. SACHI TENDS TO HER AILING DAUGHTER KOHARU IN *WOMAN* (EPISODE 1.06).

Close physical contact – a key element of *amae* parenting – plays an important role in the bonding process. Hands do much of the work, offering comfort and reassurance through the act of touching, holding or stroking. They directly facilitate Koharu's reversion to her childhood self. For example, in a key scene from Episode 1.09, the connection between Sachi and daughter Koharu is re-established through a virtual game of cat's cradle; the superimposition of a transparent black-and-white image of a child's hands making the same movements symbolise Koharu's regression, enabling her to submit fully to the role of the indulged child. What follows is a torrent of emotion, as Koharu, recalling her feelings at the time of her abandonment, first pushes her mother in anger, then begins to sob loudly as she is embraced by her mother. Her repeated cries of "*okāsan!*" (mother) evoke the emotional intensity of the post-war *hahamono* films. As the tolerant, compassionate mother, Sachi creates a safe maternal space within which Koharu is able to access memories of her childhood, act out her frustrations and ultimately seek reassurance.

4 *Oshin* holds the record for the highest ratings for a Japanese drama series, reaching a peak of 62.9 per cent (NHK 2008).

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There is a similar reversion in the final episode, as the pair reminisce about the past once more. Koharu's face beams as she recalls a childhood memory of being kept warm and protected by her mother during a typhoon. They have the following exchange:

> Koharu: Have I grown? (ōkiku natta)
> Sachi: You have.
> Koharu: I've wanted to show you all along how I've grown.

The use of the phrase ōkiku natta – more common in conversations between adults and young children – emphasises Koharu's childish desire to be indulged with praise from her mother. Then, in an echo of the scene from the first episode depicting Koharu's intimate conversation with Nozomi, there is another shot reverse shot sequence, this time of Koharu and Sachi resting their heads on the low dining table, hands clasped, the latter relating stories from her own childhood. Their coming together at the table represents the completion of the "happy circle", the achievement of familial harmony.

This heartening portrayal of mother-daughter reconciliation reaffirms the discourse glorifying *furusato* as an idyllic maternal realm. Koharu's regression into the past to receive the maternal nurturance she was denied as a child also appears to reproduce the ideology of *amae* as necessary to establish a sense of security. Furthermore, this process allows the rehabilitation of Sachi as a "good" mother, effectively rewriting history by erasing Koharu's memories of abandonment. However, the practice of reversion and re-enactment also undermines the notion that maternal instinct is an inherent quality or immutable state of being. Rather, to paraphrase Butler (1988), motherhood may be regarded as a social construction that is constituted and reconstitutes itself through its performance. This notion of motherhood as performance rather than essence is emphasised in a subplot featuring another return to one's native place that is far from idyllic. Having constructed the maternal fantasy, the drama proceeds to deconstruct it by exposing the myth of the selfless, undesiring mother.

4. DISMANTLING THE MYTHS OF *FURUSATO* AND MOTHERHOOD

An alternative mother-child reunion involving Koharu's deceased husband, Shin, is presented through a series of flashbacks in Episode 7. In the present day, Koharu and her children travel to Shin's hometown to learn more about him. There they discover a letter from Shin, written shortly before his death, in which he describes his own homecoming as an adult. The picturesque landscape presented in the opening scenes – a rustic mountain village surrounded by luscious forest – reproduces familiar cultural imagery of *furusato*. When Koharu arrives in the village, she is immediately transported to her youth, bounding along the mountain road, her arms stretched out like a child imitating an aeroplane. The countryside represents freedom and youthful exuberance, a welcome respite from the harshness of adult life in the city. Flashbacks depicting Shin's return to the village initially suggest the stirrings of a sweet reflection on a childhood filled with bucolic escapades. "The mountains one can see from here are the mountains I saw everyday as a child", he narrates, as he stops at a shop to pick up a pack of his favourite Morinaga milk caramels, a classic Japanese sweet, known for its traditional taste and iconic Shōwa-era packaging, associated with nostalgic memories of childhood.

However, the fantasy of the *furusato* as a safe haven is soon dismantled when Shin arrives at his mother's home and it becomes apparent there is no warm maternal embrace or lovingly-cooked meal waiting for him there. The only sign of life in the small, dark apartment is a dismal bunch of flowers standing in an empty beer can. In fact, for all its rural charm, the village is the site of a horrifying family secret. Shin's single mother abandoned him at the age of eight to be with a lover in Tokyo, forcing him to fend for himself for three years. He was able to conceal her neglect by taking over her maternal duties, washing his own clothes, preparing his own meals and even cutting his own hair. Instead of the close-knit community suggested in popular cultural representations of *furusato*, the village becomes a place of insularity and indifference, where the neglect of a child can be ignored or go unnoticed for years.

Framed from the perspective of the child, the depiction of the mother is overwhelmingly unsympathetic. Unlike Sachi, who felt forced to leave Koharu in order to escape domestic violence, the actions of Shin's mother are deemed less forgivable because they were motivated by her desires as a woman, which overrode any maternal aspect. As such, she has violated the fantasy of the selfless, undesiring mother. The notion that she is a selfish monster devoid of maternal instinct is reinforced by the suggestion she may have intended Shin to die in order to benefit from a life insurance policy. However, in exposing the cruelty of an individual woman, the story of Shin's childhood also undermines the fantasy of the family centred

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FIGURE 4. SHIN'S MOTHER'S EMBRACE CONCEALS HER LACK OF MATERNAL AFFECTION IN *WOMAN* (EPISODE 1.07).

on a selfless mother. What in other circumstances might be a comforting image of a mother embracing her young son, her hand stroking his hair (see Fig. 4), is betrayed by adult Shin's narration, which reveals that the words she whispers in his ear are not messages of love but threats designed to intimidate him to continue the façade of family life. The maternal touch as an expression of affection and reassurance becomes a hollow performance, an act that deflects from the mother's true feelings towards her son. Equally, the son is forced to reciprocate in this theatre, suppressing his yearning for his mother's return by imagining his situation as a fun adventure. Even the milk caramels acquire a bittersweet significance. They were the "reward" Shin received as a boy from his mother for keeping their "secret". As she places them in child Shin's hand she promises to return for him, but never does. The lost charm of the sweets represents the unfulfilled hopes and illusory nature of *furusato* and motherhood.

Those unfilled hopes are as much the mother's as they are the child's. Wrapped inside the dominant discourse of a deviant mother is the narrative of a woman disillusioned by the limitations of her rural setting and the reality of childrearing – an experience she inelegantly sums up as "cleaning up your shit" – which have stifled her dreams of a better life in the city. These images demonstrate the emptiness of both the *furusato* and maternal tropes; their connectedness here strengthens the critique of both. The reunion between an adult Shin and his mother offers some insight into her anguish over her inability to perform the maternal role. Shin has returned to show his mother that he is now an adult (note the similarity to the sentiment that will later be expressed by Koharu when she tells her mother she wants to show her she has grown). Before parting, he makes a final reference to his abandonment, addressing her by the epithet he used as a child: "Mummy, I was fine. I enjoyed keeping my promise to you. Because I loved you. Because what was fun for Mummy was fun for me [...] Mummy, thank you. I am doing well. Take care". Shin's regression into his childhood self stands in contrast to Koharu's. It acts not as an indulgent plea for the love of his mother, but rather as an opportunity for retribution. His resolute commitment to the performance of the dutiful son is a stark reminder of her inadequacy, becoming a weapon with which he is able to inflict on her the pain he was forced

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to endure as a child. The long strangled moan she emits in response is a measure of her torment over her failure to submit to the maternal fantasy.

This chasm between Shin and his mother reflects the disparity in outlooks between Japanese men and women, with the former continuing to hold on to outdated notions of gender and family, while the latter demonstrate increasing resistance to the maternal ideal. However, Shin's adherence to the illusion of familial harmony also functions as his means of surviving the horrors of his upbringing. The alternative – to admit that his mother did not love him – would be unbearable in a society that holds maternal love in high regard. *Woman* does not deny that nostalgic memories of the past are a romantic fantasy, but nevertheless encourages maintaining the illusion as a means of coping with the difficult realities of life. It admits that family history is not one of incontrovertible facts. Again, the motif of rewriting history is suggested, as Shin refashions his childhood abandonment as a fun adventure and, upon reading his letter, his wife, Koharu, and daughter, Nozomi, choose to believe this version of events. According to Koharu, "there is no such thing as happiness or unhappiness, just a heart that can feel happiness". The apparent message is that, while nostalgic memories of childhood may simply be a construction of one's imagination, their significance is not undermined.

5. CONCLUSION

This examination of the nostalgic representations of *furusato* and motherhood in *Woman* has revealed how the myths surrounding these concepts are constructed, only to be dismantled by the inconsistency of their logic and the contrast drawn between a reformed mother and an unrepentant one. Superficially, there is a vast disparity between Shin's tragic homecoming and Koharu's affirmative experience. However, both expose the artifice of idealised images of maternal love and familial harmony to varying degrees. On the one hand, the reconciliation between Koharu and Sachi reproduces the discourse of the idyllic native place centred on a devoted mother, encouraging the viewer to indulge in its glorified depiction of *amae* nurturing. On the other, the motif of regression and re-enactment also exposes the performative nature of motherhood and family, an admission that a loving relationship between mother and child cannot be presumed. The revelations regarding Shin's formative years only serve to emphasise this point.

These conflicting accounts of motherhood reveal the disparities in perspective not only between mother and child, but also between women and men in post-capitalist Japan. Whereas men continue to look back to the past in search of relief from an uncertain future, women have increasingly sought to improve their present circumstances by achieving equality in the home as well as the workplace. The nostalgic representation of motherhood and home in *Woman* appears to offer some comfort to those that yearn for the maternal ideal. However, its nostalgic rendering is also an admission of its implausibility in contemporary society, challenging conventional notions of motherhood and femininity.

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DECODING *THE TRADING FLOOR*: CHARTING A POSTCOLONIAL HONG KONG IDENTITY THROUGH THE TV SCREEN

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Hong Kong; Financial Crime Thriller; Postcolonial Identity; Local; Transnational.

ABSTRACT
This article adds to the analysis of Hong Kong TV culture by investigating recent trends in television production. It demonstrates that the small screen has become a means of grappling with postcolonial Hong Kong identity, most noticeable in its reinvention of the genre of the financial crime thriller. This analysis must be considered against the background of two new developments in television: the growth of transnational collaborations intended to appeal to the Asian market, and the advent of TV series that replicate the experimentation of American shows and dispense with the traditional episodic narrative.

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1. INTRODUCTION

TV dramas are not among the most widely researched products of Hong Kong popular culture. But we should not therefore assume there are fewer TV viewers than cinema audience members, or that Hong Kong TV does not appeal to a shared sense of Chineseness. The few studies of Hong Kong television that have been published tend to focus on the many renowned directors and actors who received their training in TV before embarking on their film careers. This article is intended to contribute to this under-researched field by providing an analysis of recent trends in Hong Kong television production. It demonstrates that the small screen has become a means of expressing postcolonial Hong Kong identity, most noticeable in its reinvention of the genre of the financial crime thriller. This analysis must be considered against the background of two new developments in television: the growth of transnational collaborations intended to appeal to the Asian market, and the advent of TV series that follow the experimentation of American shows and dispense with the traditional episodic narrative.

Hong Kong is often perceived as an economic miracle. A fishing village transformed into a cosmopolitan financial centre, Hong Kong has attracted the world's attention. The critical question is how the return of political sovereignty will affect the city as a vibrant financial and cultural hub. The urgent need to confirm the city's unique status has prompted scholars to revisit its long history of cultural production. While Hong Kong cinema and literature have remained the focus of international scholarship, the ways in which TV has shaped the Hong Kong identity and created a "viewing community" among diasporic subjects should not be underestimated.

It is important to note that the collective identity of Hong Kong people is built not only on a sense of community but also on tradition of segregation. Sociologist Kit-wai Ma, in his seminal work on Hong Kong TV culture, argues that,

> Television centripetally drew on to itself the public antagonisms against the outsiders, constructed a social stigma for them, and projected it centrifugally into social discourses and practices. But since the early 1990s, mainlanders have been gathering political power, and there has been a deeply felt identity crisis and resentment against the 'invasion' of mainlanders (1999: 17).

After providing a brief background of Hong Kong television culture, this article will focus on two shows that deal with financial issues, *The Greed of Man* (1992) and *The Trading Floor* (2018). The controversial 1992 TV drama *The Greed of Man* (translated also as *Great Times*, *Dashidai*) created new expectations in Hong Kong audiences and served as a prototype for the transnational miniseries *The Trading Floor*. Rather than simply reinforcing the stereotype of Hong Kong as financial centre, *The Trading Floor*, produced by Andy Lau's Focus TV for Fox Networks Group, appropriates the genre of the financial crime thriller to re-establish a new flexible postcolonial identity.

2. THE BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF HONG KONG TELEVISION SERIALS

Unlike many national TV industries, Hong Kong's TV industry has always relied on the free market. The leading television network is Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB), which was established in 1967. The oligopolistic ownership of Hong Kong's television industry reflects the colonial political and capitalist economic structure of the city. The primary goal of TV stations is to generate profits. As Lisa Leung observes,

> From the heyday of TV production (early 1970s) until the government's announcement to grant three more TV licenses, Hong Kong has (for 40 years) been living with only two functioning TV stations. Hong Kong is only comparable to Japan in the (low) number of free-to-air TV licenses, and much worse when compared to neighboring areas such as Taiwan and South Korea (Leung 2015: 424).

Television before 1997 strove to be apolitical. It did not critique the British colonial government or the motherland; instead, it provided programming that was largely entertainment. Nevertheless, it played an important cultural role: "Almost all of the approximately 6 million inhabitants of Hong Kong in the early 1990s had at least one television in their homes and turned to television as their central source of information" (qtd. in Wilkins 2009: 59). The prevalent view is that Hong Kong's television industry is complicit in cultivating political indifference among the general public. As Wilkins notes,

> The elite, based in global capitalist structures, continue to dominate and prosper, strengthening

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> a clique of profit-driven industrialists at the expense of substantive political debate and critique. In essence, the economic conditions of the industry, coupled with restrictive political agencies, limit the potential for more participatory, democratic engagement (2009: 65).

While it is true that Hong Kong TV stations are reluctant to portray politically sensitive matters in the TV dramas, they do deal with issues such as identity formation and cultural differences among Chinese communities, which can be highly political. As many scholars contend, the consumption of media plays a significant part in shaping the cultural public sphere (Iwabuchi 2015: 109). Television plays an important role in forging and challenging the collective idea of Chineseness.

TVB owns the world's largest Chinese television library and exports the greatest number of programs (Zhu 2008: 66, To and Lau 1995). TVB launched its first satellite cable service TVBS in Taiwan on 17 October 1993, and within a year was available in more than half of Taiwan's households, or 90 per cent of the entire cable audience (Ma 1999: 47). According to Zhu Ying, Hong Kong's TVB remains the biggest international broadcaster in Chinese, "serving international media markets from the Asia-Pacific region and Australia to North American and Europe" (2008: 67). It is estimated that TVB delivers 1000 hours of programming each year to the TCC (The Chinese Channel), which has a European audience of 850,000 (Zhu 2008: 67). Because of its wide dissemination, TVB has played an active role in exporting Hong Kong culture to the rest of the world. It also contributes directly to the interpretation of Chineseness among Chinese communities within and outside of Hong Kong. Scholars such as Cindy Wong (1999) and Amy Lee (2009) argue that feelings of connectedness are cultivated through TV programs, and a sense of communal identity has always been key to the international marketing strategy of TVB. Furthermore, as Lee notes, "The transnational circulation of Hong Kong television dramas and films, due to their cultural intimacy with immigrant communities (exemplified by Chinatowns), plays a large role in forming an immigrant mass culture in the U.S. and elsewhere" (2009: 184). However, the dominant role of TVB has gradually waned as audiences have acquired a broader range of entertainment platforms.[1] To understand the ways in which culture and identity are shaped, we need to examine what kinds of shows become popular and how transnational collaborations such as *The Trading Floor* have affected their viewership.Hong Kong's TV industry has transformed in tandem with the political history of the city. A movement towards celebrating Hong Kong's identity emerged in the 1970s when the colonial government promoted the idea of "Hong Kong is our home" and undertook campaigns to boost a sense of citizenship (Ku 2019: 452). When China indicated its intention to resume sovereignty of Hong Kong at the beginning of the 1980s, it was at a time when the colony itself was experiencing rapid economic growth and the Conservative Party in Britain had just won its election and returned to power. The Sino-British Joint Declaration signed by China and Britain represented both a compromise among China, Britain, and Hong Kong, and a compromise among different classes in Hong Kong. It is generally agreed that "China's strategy focused on building a united front with the capitalist class, the social class that was expected to assume a leadership role in running a capitalist SAR" (Lui et al. 2019: 7). The institutional design of "One Country, Two Systems" was the ultimate political compromise. However, as a result of growing political discontent and crises such as the SARS outbreak in 2003, post-1997 Hong Kong has undergone an identity crisis and feels in danger of losing its exceptional status as a financial hub and gateway between Mainland China and the rest of the world.

Lee notes that successful television serials have gradually changed from family sagas to dramas featuring middle-class professionals (lawyers and doctors), which reflect the evolution of Hong Kong's economy: "Hong Kong's television's focus has shifted away from the rags-to-riches myth of corporate family melodramas (or epics) to the cosmopolitan lifestyles of young professions" (2009: 186). While Lee's observation is quite true, there has been a more recent development in Hong Kong TV that has also had large ramifications.

In the past decade, the hegemonic status of TVB began to wane. With the advancement of technology, more choices were available. The proliferation of alternative online viewing sources and the advent of non-domestic television program

1 There are different means of gauging the popularity of post-1998 TV programs in Hong Kong. In addition to the TV audience measurement used by Nielson, there are the surveys conducted by the Public Opinion Programme at The University of Hong Kong that cover the viewing size and behaviour of Hong Kong households. These surveys include non-conventional platforms, such as PC and mobile gadgets. The surveys' Quality-Mass Index measures individual programmes' popularity (their level of recognition) and appreciation (the general evaluation of their quality). The Quality-Mass Index lists the programmes with highest scores in both popularity and appreciation. During the years from 2009 to 2019, the productions by RTHK (a public broadcasting service and a department of Hong Kong) have consistently topped the list. For further references, please consult: https://www.hkupop.hku.hk/english/tvai/index.html

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service licences have slowly changed the viewing patterns of Hong Kong audiences. The demand for more domestic free television program service licences has been competitive. The Hong Kong Television Network (HKTV), owned by Ricky Wong, applied for a free-to-air broadcast licence at the end of 2009 but eventually withdrew the application in April 2014, after the government rejected the application owing to "a basket of factors" while granting licences to two other applicants (PCCW and iCable Communication) in 2012. Leung notes that the problems encountered by HKTV became emblematic of the challenges facing the Hong Kong people in their pursuit of democracy:

> When Hong Kong TV Network Limited (HKTV) was refused its free-to-air TV license in October 2013, it sparked off a political social movement, as a record number of supporters staged overnight rallies outside the government headquarters to demand an explanation and for the authority's decision to be revoked... The demand for creative and quality TV programs became the demand for cultural rights of the citizens, as they rallied to call on the government for direct elections (2015: 422).

Deprived of the opportunity to broadcast via mobile TV, HKTV decided to take its shows to the Web in October 2014. The station produced 17 dramas in two years and was said to have 385,000 viewers per day in November 2014, but within seven months it has lost 95% of its audience (Chow 2014, Cheng 2018). HKTV cancelled drama production after September 2015 as the revenue from the internet commercials failed to sustain its continued development. The short-lived success of HKTV is an interesting phenomenon to contemplate. It suggests that there is a longing for democratic opportunities (free from the dominance of TVB) on the part of both producers and audiences. The range of dramas HKTV offered on topics such as elections, policing, journalism, and detection suggests that it was hoping to tap into cultural anxieties. Its pilot dramas such as *The Election* (October 2014), *The Borderline* (November 2014), and *To Be or Not To Be* (December 2014) have been praised for their attention to detail, carefully written scripts, and brilliant acting: "*The Election*, in particular, was regarded as a striking parody of some real-life political figures – and of the collusion between businesses and government" (Leung 2015: 431). The short life span of HKTV drama suggests that it was unable to crack the monolithic structure of Hong Kong's stagnant TV industry, a response that many see as symptomatic of Hong Kong's future. For Leung, "HKTV has come to 'personify' the essential qualities and values behind 'creativity': passion, dedication, perseverance and the will to strive, attributes all associated with the 'Hong Kong spirit'" (Leung 2015: 431). Yet, the fate of HKTV demonstrates that when Hong Kong was given an opportunity to celebrate polyphonic voices, that option was swiftly repressed. It is indicative of the underlying anxiety of TV spectators and a reflection of the high level of political control.

3. **FROM APOLITICAL TO POLITICAL**

Ackbar Abbas's discussion of Hong Kong cinema before 1997 can be used to shed some light on the relationship between television serials and Hong Kong's cultural identity. In his seminal discussion of the disappearing culture of Hong Kong before the handover, Abbas urged Hong Kong artists and scholars to find themselves a subject before the colonial period was officially ended. Abbas considers Hong Kong cinema particularly fascinating because of the innovative tools filmmakers employ to depict and interpret the city. He argues that the success of Hong Kong cinema lies not in its technical competence (which is world-class)

> but because of the way film is being used to explore and negotiate a problematic and paradoxical cultural space without abandoning its role as popular entertainment. The new Hong Kong cinema claims our attention because it has finally found a subject – it has found *itself* as a subject (1994: 66).

In his discussion of Wong Kar-wai's *As Tears Go By* (1988), Abbas argues that Wong reinvented a genre in order to combat colonial assumptions:

> If the formulaic demands of the genre of the 'gangster' film imply colonization and self-colonialization by clichés, and if subverting the formulaic is not viable for a number of reasons... there is still a third possibility: that of doing something else with the genre, of nudging it a little from its table position and so provoking thought (1994: 72).

For Abbas, such reinvention of a genre addresses postcoloniality not as a theory but as a practice. Similarly, as this paper will demonstrate, television serials provide useful in-

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sights into Hong Kong identity. TV serials deal more directly with finance, both in its mythic form (as cultural imagination) and its realistic form (as a fact of everyday life), to reflect the postcolonial anxiety stemming from Hong Kong's waning influence.

The two series were chosen for analysis because of their shared subject matter – finance. The image of Hong Kong as a financial hub has shaped the city's economic model as well as the mindset of its people. The model of success that Hong Kong represents has been analyzed by numerous sociologists: it is the result of the combination of a free market capitalist economy (with limited state intervention), a political system that is only partially democratized so that politics can be downplayed, and a judicial system that is basically unchanged from the colonial period (Lui 2015a: 401). This model has contributed to a generally passive Hong Kong identity, largely lying dormant and embedded in daily life. This identity is not constructed through active rebellion against a former colonizer but through passive endorsement of communal belonging.

The prosperity of Hong Kong is celebrated by a wide range of stakeholders. Finance remains key to both political and cultural discussions of Hong Kong. The recurrent motif of finance in TV is evidence of its significance in shaping the identity of the people of Hong Kong. A comparison of the two series, which were produced 26 years apart, demonstrates the continued dominance of finance in the everyday life of Hong Kong people, and illuminates the cultural response to this fixation of finance in the post-1997 era.

The close connection between politics and business began with the British colonial government and has continued post-1997. In their introduction to *Ten Years after Colonialism*, a special issue of *Postcolonial Studies* (2007), Kwai-cheung Lo and Laikwan Pang argue that the elites in Hong Kong long planned to turn the city into a global financial centre. The future of Hong Kong lies in its capacity to become a means for Mainland Chinese corporations to raise money by facilitating the transnational circulation of capital. As Lo and Pang note, "being a part of China under its national sovereignty as well as a global space serving the interests of multinational corporations, the city would not participate in the so-called 'Beijing Consensus' or the Chinese model of coordinated development" (2007: 350). In the 21st century, "branding" has become closely associated with the formation of identity. As Sue Jansen (2008) argues, "Branding not only explains nations to the world but also reinterprets national identity in market terms and provides new narratives for domestic consumption" (qtd. in Iwabuchi 2015: 17). According to Yiu-wai Chu, the branding of Hong Kong as financial hub and world city can be traced back to 1996, before the former colony's reversion to Mainland China: while

> [i]t might not be a problem to have a commercial center in a city … it becomes a problem if the Central District *is* Hong Kong. When 'Central District Values' monopolize the territory, the flying dragon sees only development and progress (2010: 50). Chu notes the dangers involved in reducing Hong Kong to a mere financial centre and celebrates Central District values (Central District is the CBD of Hong Kong). The internalization of biased and partial perceptions of Hong Kong has perpetuated the colonial mentality beyond the colonial period. Can decolonization be achieved?

If politically Hong Kong has to consolidate its role as financial centre, it needs to demonstrate its unique position and its reliable, transparent, and fair financial infrastructure. This may be the impetus behind the revival of the financial thriller genre in Hong Kong television. The resurgence of the financial thriller corresponds to a moment of crisis. Post-1997 Hong Kong entered, yet again, into what Walter Benjamin calls "a real state of emergency" (1968: 257). There is an urgent need to reflect on the grand narrative of Hong Kong that compels its citizens to see it only from a financial perspective. While critics may have looked to literature and cinema to challenge this grand narrative (Cheung 2001), we will consider the way television has articulated the post-1997 identity crisis.

The financial crime thriller belongs to the genre of the thriller — "an 'umbrella' genre comprised of an evolving complex of (sub-)genres" (Derry qtd. in Castrillo 2015: 111). The genre is characterized by certain narrative strategies and recurrent motifs. Like the detective genre, the thriller features protagonists who want to achieve an obvious goal and whose progress is thwarted by intense emotional provocations. Often the social reality depicted in thriller is a world gone awry, where reliable moral standards are challenged (Castrillo 2015: 111-2). The protagonists in *The Greed of Man* and *The Trading Floor* are characteristic of the genre. The flashbacks and various subjective points of view in *The Trading Floor* effectively mimic the chaotic financial world the series depicts. Crosthwaite maintains that the popular fiction known as "financial thrillers" can be traced back to the early 1970s, although it did not emerge as a distinct sub-genre until the

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mid-to-late 1990s. He argues that “it is a product of the rapid financialization of the global economy that resulted from the collapse of the Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rates in 1973 and the policies of financial deregulation pursued over subsequent decades” (2010: 5). TV serials focused on finance reflect the climate of extraordinary volatility in financial markets during last ten to twenty years.

Rather than passively accepting that Hong Kong has become yet another Chinese city, Hong Kong TV producers have continued to stress its singularity. By challenging, redefining, and expanding the notion of “finance” in what is often conceived as clichéd and formulaic TV drama, the Hong Kong financial thriller has become a site where various antagonistic forces can be negotiated.

4. FROM SERIALS TO MINISERIES

As noted above, Hong Kong’s identity has primarily been defined by the city’s capitalist development under British colonialism, and its current identity crisis circumscribed by its place in the global economy. Still, television can expose various, often unconscious, sensibilities. The dominance of TVB in the mass media market and its role in providing entertainment to the general public since its establishment in 1967 do not necessarily represent the suppression of heterogeneous voices.

In critical media studies, television has traditionally been conceived as representing dominant ideologies in service of the status quo (Ma 1999: 2). As Eric Ma aptly observes, this theory is brought into question by television’s emphasis on a wide range of voices. In his formulation of textual paradigms in television programming, Ma distinguishes between “choric” and “lyric” dramas (qtd. in Liew 2015). Ma argues that the dynamic between the “choric” (collective expressions) and the “lyric” (individual expressions) creates a site where mainstream capitalism is placed against “multiple layers of polysemic voices” (Ma 1999). Often, the polysemic voices underscore the many variations in the formation of identity. Ma’s analysis draws attention to the differences and potential deviations within the entertainment business. *The Greed of Man*, a serial created by Ka-fai Wai for TVB in 1992, is a case in point.

Drama series have been a primetime staple in Hong Kong since the 1980s. According to Zhu Ying, the most common genres offered by TVB and ATV (another TV station, with a relatively small market share) are detective and police dramas, courtroom dramas, hospital dramas, business and social mobility shows, costume dramas, and martial arts programs. Portrayals of love, romance, and domestic relationships are popular across genres (Zhu 2008: 69). Zhu identifies four ways of structuring TV drama – the continuous serial (such as soap operas), series made up of self-contained episodes, miniseries that carry the storyline to a final resolution, and the single-play drama. TVB has been quite successful in prolonging the lifespan of single-play drama. However, Hong Kong audiences are also fond of serials that depict long family sagas or corporate dramas and that follow the development of individuals over the span of a decade or two.

Among the many successful and highly acclaimed TV serials, *The Greed of Man,* produced in 1992, was one of the biggest hits; fans have called it “divine drama”. The story, set in Hong Kong and Taiwan, spans three decades and deals with regional and global social and financial developments. In forty episodes, the advent of Hong Kong as a financial centre and the dominant role it has come to play serve as the backdrop for a saga of feud between two families, the Tings and the Fongs. The popularity of the TV series is evident from the high ratings it received in its initial run in 1992 and in its rerun, shown at midnight in 2015. While dealing with the traumatic events in the lives of two childhood friends, Chun-sun Fong and Hai Ting, and their families, the series focuses on the effects of financial upheavals and stock market reversals. The success and failure of the two families depend on their investments, a situation that reflects that of Hong Kong. The story begins with the 1973/74 stock market crash that devastated Chun-sun Fong. His only son, Chin-bok Fong, following in his footsteps, uses the stock market to take revenge. The story follows the feud between the two families, until all the Fongs, with the exception of Chin-bok, have been slaughtered by the Tings. It is again the stock market that Chin-bok turns to in order to bring down the Tings. Ma maintains,

> The dominant discursive construction of GT [*The Greed of Man*] highly endorses the supreme goal of moneymaking by opportunism ... In this context GT is legitimising the unique brand of opportunistic capitalism which Hong Kong considers as the most important asset of the people in the unstable social environment of the 1990s (1999: 102).

While opportunism plays a major role in *The Greed of Man*, I would argue that it is presented with heavy cynicism: the horrifying fate of the Tings underscores that greed leads not to success but to death.

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Finance is a means for the weak to avenge themselves in *The Greed of Man*. The series is a portrait of a society where human relationships are replaced by economic privileges, a reflection of Hong Kong residents' increasing sense of alienation in the pursuit of economic growth. *The Greed of Man* met with a mixed reception: it was praised for its unconventional subject matter but condemned for a degree of violence rarely seen on public television. On the strength of the show's popularity, Ka-fai Wai and film veteran Johnnie To cofounded Milkyway Image in 1996 and One Hundred Years of Film Company Ltd in 2000. The film scholar David Bordwell maintains that Milkyway Image played a vital role in the Hong Kong film industry by introducing "a creative dialogue rare in Hong Kong film" (qtd in Yau 2009: 122). Challenging the official narrative and exposing the cruel reality of the everyday life of Hong Kong people became the signature themes of the two co-founders.

Many famous actors and directors have moved from television to film. In addition to Ka-fai Wai, Sean Lau (who played the only son Chin-bok), Andy Lau (the producer of miniseries *The Trading Floor*), Tony Leung, Francis Ng (a leading character in *The Trading Floor*) and many others embarked on a film career after working at TVB. This trend was a direct consequence of the rising popularity of Hong Kong cinema in the 1990s. The growing appeal of film is in part responsible for the fact no similar financial crime thrillers were produced upon the departure of Wai, with the exception of a "sequel", *Divine Retribution* (2000), produced by TVB's rival station ATV in 2000. Directed by Wai and featuring Sean Lau, *Divine Retribution* did not receive much attention: the original characters were changed to avoid any association with the original TVB series.

In Hong Kong, then, it seems that the TV stations and the film industry have a zero-sum relationship: the rise of one is reflected in the fall of the other. Hong Kong cinema had its heyday in the 1990s. Post-1997, the economy faltered due to the SARS outbreak and growing political discontent in Hong Kong. In 2003, the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) was signed, and co-production between Hong Kong and Mainland China led to a paradigm shift in Hong Kong's film industry. Scholars have noted that, while the economic impact of CEPA was not obvious immediately,

> it did mark a significant change in Hong Kong's positioning vis-à-vis China. Whereas in the past Hong Kong was always seen as a platform through which China could reach out to the world, with the SAR assuming an active role in leading the latter onto the stage of the world economy, increasingly it was realized that it was a globalizing China that shaped the course of Hong Kong's future development. Accordingly, Hong Kong readjusted its positioning, perspective, and outlook (Lui et al. 2019: 13).

The rise of the Chinese market prompted fundamental changes to Hong Kong's film industry. A number of filmmakers stopped producing local films and courted the larger Chinese market, but they encountered problems with distribution. Some filmmakers remained true to the Hong Kong spirit but shifted their medium (Pang 2010). TV series once again became a means of portraying Hong Kong's unique situation and its new postcolonial identity, which struggled to find creative ways to negotiate the constraints imposed by the mainland.

Some argue that, in response to the changes in the city, TVB drama series have shifted to accommodate the concerns of general viewers post-1997. For example, the focus has moved away from the rags-to-riches myth of corporate family melodramas and instead deals with the cosmopolitan lifestyles of young professionals (Lee 2009: 186). Lee notes that in the series *Split Second* (2004), "[t]he police narrative, which relies on instituting control and social order, seems a particularly well suited response to the tyranny of time and anxieties about not having enough time in a world increasingly saturated by time-space compression" (2009: 187). *Split Second* is a new type of Hong Kong TV series that no longer relies on the clichéd trope of good vs. evil but challenges our notions of justice. The oscillations between characters' identities as cops and crooks "mirror the promiscuous relationship between the state (as represented by the police) and capital (as represented by the triad)" (Lee 2009: 189). As the world of *Split Second* becomes increasingly dystopian and both the state and the capitalist system are brought to the point of crisis, the show toys with the attraction to extra-legal justice. Hong Kong may no longer be a colony, but as the series dramatizes, the city still lives with the consequences of hands-off colonial policies that allowed corrupt practices to go unchecked. The portrayal of the officers' identity crises in *Split Second* reflects Hong Kong's own fractured sense of identity.

Lee focuses on the way TVB production has reflected the problems of Hong Kong citizens. A recent five-part series, *The Trading Floor*, performs the same function but by different means. It is set in the fictive East Asian "*Gaoyun* City", which, in many ways, closely resembles Hong Kong. Following a narrative of financial ruin and revenge similar to that of *The Greed of Man*, *The Trading Floor* also starts in *media res* and in the

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present day. Anthony Yip (Secretary of Minister of Economic Development of *Gaoyun* City) is shown lamenting the waning influence of *Gaoyun* City as Singapore becomes the preferred headquarters for multinational conglomerates: "We are in a state of emergency but people are still ignorant of it".

This anxiety is shared by Hong Kong, which also faces competition from both other Chinese cities and other Asian countries. Spanning the years from 1997 to 2017, *The Trading Floor* tells the story of a team of financial mercenaries who called themselves "CASH." Anthony Yip is the financial guru who betrayed his own protégé Wai Hong (played by Taiwanese actor Joseph Chang) to make his own fortune in the 1990s. Angry with his former mentor, Wai Hong returns from a long exile in Myanmar to outwit him on the trading floor.

Gaoyun City is plagued by crises that are not unfamiliar to a Hong Kong audience – collusion between government and property developers, corrupt financial practices, and the eroding of democratic rights. Like *The Greed of Man*, *The Trading Floor* registers the challenges and difficult alternatives faced by a postcolonial city. The stock market becomes the site of both financial calculations and personal revenge: the boundary between rational knowledge and extreme emotions becomes blurred. The show's creators seem to be challenging the supposedly distinct separation between rationality and emotions in postcolonial Hong Kong, and the complicated subplots of the miniseries (involving mass protests, the sacrifice of female bodies, and the dominance of the financial infrastructure) also deal with issues of conflicted identity. The complicated narrative structure is in the tradition of American TV, but it is presented as a quick-paced thriller (one of the most popular genres of Hong Kong cinema).

Gaoyun City depends on historical baggage (colonialism) that it wants to offload. Ackbar Abbas's discussion of Marc Augé's notion of "non-place" is useful in understanding the strategies adopted in the city, which represents post-1997 Hong Kong. To Abbas, Augé's non-place must be understood as a paradox – "it is a result of excess and overcomplexity, of a limit having been exceeded" (2000: 722) rather than non-existence. A "non-place" is characterized by an overwhelming number of details. These details, however, are not meant to be knitted together to form a cohesive explanation: what makes the "non-place" unique is the "disjuncture – and the mobile, fugitive, fragmentary detail" (2000: 773). In *The Trading Floor*, the audience is presented with an overwhelming number of details about the financial markets: it is only through the friction of these details that we catch sight of the intersection of finance with other aspects of life.

Why is it illuminating to juxtapose these two series? Comparing them highlights the shaping of the Hong Kong, the hard-won awareness that has grown since decolonization. One of the major differences between *The Trading Floor* and *The Greed of Man* is that family values have been replaced by professional bonding. Though there are characters in *The Trading Floor* such as Sarah, who plots revenge for the death of her mother, very little attention is given to the emotional bonding of family members. People who are motivated by a shared sense of outrage join hands either to fight for democracy and equality or simply to retaliate according to the principle of "an eye for an eye". A similar phenomenon has characterized the civil movements in Hong Kong. While families were torn apart during the 2014 Umbrella Movement because of political disagreement, strangers with common goals and visions formed strong bonds. The broken family also reflects Hong Kong's status as an orphan, who can neither remain nostalgic for its former colonizer nor commit wholeheartedly to the motherland.

The portrayal of the deterioration of mentor/protégé relationships is not uncommon in conventional TV series. In *The Trading Floor*, the fight against the father-like figure is in the name of higher goals. In a capitalist society, it is easy to blur the fine line between collaboration for mutual benefit and complicity in crime. At the conclusion of the miniseries, the protégé, Wai Hong, discovers that Anthony Yip has not deviated from his original objective: he got close to the financial giants in order to take them down. This final twist may offer the audience some reassurance of man's basic decency, but the preview of the second season suggests there are always bigger and more powerful players manipulating the market. The ending of the first season portrays post-1997 Hong Kong as an ever-striving hero. The need to identify and fight against a higher power mirrors the political pressure Hong Kong people are currently experiencing. The helplessness felt by the Hong Kong people is reflected in the endless continuation of the struggle. *The Trading Floor* does not offer its viewers the hard-won equilibrium that marks the conclusion of conventional family sagas; instead, it portrays a constant state of emergency.

5. **THE PRESENCING OF ABSENCE: THE LOCAL IN THE TRANSNATIONAL**

"In a riddle whose answer is chess, what is the only prohibited word?" (Borges 1964: 53). If all narratives can be perceived as riddles, then the most important word of a narrative would

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be a word that is never explicitly mentioned. In the case of *The Trading Floor*, it would be the word Hong Kong. The fictional *Gaoyun* City where all the action takes place exists in the non-fictive world: there are many references to real cities and nations such as Singapore and Myanmar. This fictionalization of Hong Kong seems unnecessary as all the incidents, and even the characterization of the Minister of Finance, are clearly modelled on Hong Kong. The space that Hong Kong would occupy, however, has been replaced by an overwhelmingly detailed depiction of a financial system that affects all aspects of everyday life. The uniqueness of *Gaoyun* City is also reflected in the absence of references to a national body. The self-sufficient city seems to be functioning in the global capitalist system free from any political pressure.

Hong Kong, the subject of the miniseries, occurs in its negation in the Derridean sense. Borrowing from Yiu-wai Chu's analysis of strategic erasure of Hong Kong identity in Mainland-Hong Kong co-productions (2018), the same paradigm can be used to understand the significance of *The Trading Floor.* Jacques Derrida, in his famous discussion of grammatology, argues that the meanings of signs are always deferred, as meaning is construed through an endless chain of difference from other signifiers. He uses the concept of *sous-rature* (absent presence) to describe how meaning is constructed through a conjunction of differences from other signifiers. To convey *sous-rature,* Gayatri Spivak uses the following example: "to write a word, cross it out, and then print both the word and the deletion" (qtd. in Fanghanel 2014: 347). The word is inadequate and hence it is crossed out, but it remains legible. Its absence is therefore presenced. Derrida argues that a new space is created by this absenting. Hong Kong is absent in the miniseries *The Trading Floor*, but a new space has been created by the process of erasure. This space is the space where a new postcolonial subjectivity can be constructed. This is also a space where the local can coexist with the global.

The miniseries strategically uses Chinese-language-speaking actors from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Mainland China. While the production team is from Hong Kong, the use of well-known actors from Mainland China and Taiwan has boosted its popularity. *The Trading Floor* was nominated for the Best Drama Series at the 23rd Asian Television Awards, and both Francis Ng and Joseph Chang were nominated for Best Actor in a Leading Role – clear indications of the show's popularity. Premiering in May 2018, the series captured 300 million clicks on Tencent Video, was given an 8.3 rating on Douban, and was responsible for the rise of SCM (formerly STAR Chinese Movies) to the No. 1 Mandarin movie channel in Singapore. The simultaneous airing of *The Trading Floor* on Tencent Video, FOX+, and FOX's on-demand streaming service created a vast audience for the miniseries in both Mainland China and the rest of Asia. These new modes of transmission and collaboration have allowed Hong Kong drama to become popular throughout Asia. Cora Yim, the head of Chinese entertainment and Hong Kong chief for Fox Networks Group notes, "A story about the financial market in Hong Kong can be identified with by a lot of Asians in the region" (Chow 2017). Whether this sense of identification leads to a deeper understanding of one's own society and culture and that of others remains a question.

Koichi Iwabuchi, in his analysis of East Asian media culture, notes that there has been a process of *re*-Asianization in the media culture. He observes,

> the rise of East Asian media cultures shows both the de-Westernization of global media culture flows and the simultaneous de-Asianization of these products, as they rearticulate Asia not through traditional cultural forms but via globalized media cultures. Just as crucially, this rise also generates a process of *re*-Asianization, since it highlights the exclusionary politics practiced by corporate governance in its management of the connections that link regional media cultures (2010: 408).

It is sometimes thought that when cultures compete with each other for global screen time, local details are sacrificed. Iwabuchi (2015: 4), however, argues that in the development of modern nation-states, national identity and internationalism operate in tandem: the appropriation of national stereotypes is characteristic of the "market-driven mode of industry-state alliance for the global promotion of media culture" as it encourages a "banal inter-nationalism," which presents the nation as a unit for global cultural exchange, competition, and diversity.

I would argue that the attempt to erase the local flavor of Hong Kong (e.g., by creating a fictional city, as is the case in *The Trading Floor*) encourages viewers to appreciate the unique features of Hong Kong in this age of "banal internationalism." "Banal internationalism," according to Iwabuchi, is predicated on the view that when one discusses international mobility, one assumes that there are national cultural boundaries that are blurred in the process of exchange:

> Such a conception of the nation as an organic cultural entity not only endorses the essentialized

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> ownership of national cultures via the notion of 'cultural DNA'.... [it] also fails to take into account the fact that national boundaries are discursively drawn in ways which suppress various socio-cultural differences within the nation itself and disavow their role as constitutive elements of it (2010: 411).

In the case of *The Trading Floor*, transnational influence is evident in the collaboration with American media outlets and the adoption of Western business practices. However, as Iwabuchi observes, genuine inter-cultural dialogue is absent: "a container model of the nation is further reinstituted as the inter-nationalized circulation and encounter of media culture has become a site in which national identity is mundanely invoked, performed, and experienced" (2015: 9). While the creative energy of *The Trading Floor* encourages a critical reappraisal of Hong Kong identity, the show is bounded by the Hong Kong stereotypes required by globalization. Hong Kong continues to be represented by references to finance, the market economy, and consumption. Lui maintains that this stereotypical image is the greatest obstacle to Hong Kong's advancement in new directions. The successful model has become a nostalgic burden (Lui 2015b: 16).

6. CONCLUSION

This article began with a brief discussion of Hong Kong's television history to demonstrate the important role TV series played in the early decades of public television. Generally, these series, produced by the leading TV station TVB, were considered simply a form of entertainment, with no political agenda. However, some of the series produced in recent decades have carved out alternative spaces in the popular culture in order for the audience to engage with social and political realities. This paper focuses on the financial crime thriller, a popular sub-genre on both the small and big screens of Hong Kong. These shows locate Hong Kong's identity in its financial prosperity, which has acted as a shield separating Hong Kong from the Mainland. This paper has shown the dark side of Hong Kong's success: its capitalist market economy and "One Country, Two Systems" rule of law has confined the cultural imagination of Hong Kong people. The potential for real decolonization can only be mooted through the creative licence of popular culture.

The Greed of Man, produced in 1992, demonstrated yet again that Hong Kong's financial status is viewed as holding the key to the city's future. The Hong Kong movie business flourished in the 1980s and 1990s, but recently it has lost its edge, creating a gap that TV series have filled. The reappropriation of the financial crime thriller in *The Trading Floor* has allowed audiences to explore the many tensions and controversies that have beset Hong Kong. While "Hong Kong" is not mentioned, its image is conjured up by the portrayal of an omnipresent financial system and the manipulation of stock markets. Hong Kong's absence is also its presence, just as a crossed-out word remains legible. This legibility (presencing) is exposed through the condition of erasure: Hong Kong is erased by the myriad of details attending the portrayal of financial systems and their victims. Such a presencing allows the audience to reflect on a future when Hong Kong will be eventually erased if it cannot achieve genuine decolonization.

In his discussion of Hong Kong cinema, Abbas commends the ways it has found to portray a new cultural and political reality after the 1997 handover. Wong Kar-wai's films, in particular, present the city not as just a geographical setting, but as "a protagonist: alluring, deceptive, ungraspable, perceptible only in fragments, metonymies, displacements" (1999: 362). For Abbas, the cities portrayed in Hong Kong cinema are non-places, which are fascinating, and act as Hong Kong's reverse image. The reverse image "constitutes the political 'voice' of the Hong Kong cinematic, insofar as this negativity can be related to the problematic nature of a colonial space making the transition from imperialism to multinational capitalism, a space where all the rules have quietly and deceptively changed" (1999: 363). In *The Trading Floor, Gaoyun* City similarly invokes the possibility of self-erasure so as to create a way of accessing a space it forecloses. Even though banal internationalism and the stereotypes it fosters condition the success of transnational media productions, a creative miniseries can serve to cultivate the awareness to reject these stereotypes, to struggle, and to move on. This is a potential space where a new postcolonial identity can be forged. This postcolonial identity must dispense with the clichéd image of a financial center and be brave enough to expose the possibilities that erasure would allow.

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Films

As Tears Go By (1988)

TV Series

The Greed of Man (1992)
Divine Retribution (2000)
Split Second (2004)
The Election (October 2014)
The Borderline (November 2014)
To Be or Not To Be (December 2014)
The Trading Floor (2018)

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MUSIC KEEPS US TOGETHER: POP SONGS IN KOREAN TELEVISION DRAMAS

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KEYWORDS
K-drama; soundtrack; hallyu; pop song; leitmotif.

ABSTRACT
In the early 1990s the "trendy drama" became part of Korean TV programming. Mainly focused on a younger audience, it not only showed the modern urban lifestyle of its protagonists searching for love, but also integrated newly composed pop music into the series, first as theme songs and later by playing musical pieces at crucial moments in the developing relationships of the young couples.

This article analyzes the important part these songs play in the development of the narrative of Korean TV series (or K-dramas) over its whole run, and, in a lesser extent, the part music and singers play in the marketing process. This is exemplified by the musical concepts of three recent series: *Dokkaebi: The Lonely and Great God* (2016-2017); *While You Were Sleeping* (2017); and *Because This Is My First Life* (2017). Similar to the concept of a leitmotif, once established as a song for a character, a couple or a mood, pop songs are used throughout the run of a series. They therefore add a new layer of meaning to a scene, not only through lyrics and music, but especially by referring to past developments and incidents, thus holding the whole series together and giving it an individual character.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Pop songs – rather, music in general – are mostly ignored in English academic publications about Korean TV dramas, which instead focus on the reception of said K-dramas outside of Korea and the new digital age or on script-based narrative concepts (Yoon and Kang 2017: 7-10).[1] The omission of musical aspects is not surprising, however, as outside of musicologist studies, music is oftentimes only perceived as mood enhancers for individual scenes and not as a pivotal part of both the narrative and the overall tone of movies and TV series. In K-dramas, music plays an important role for the production team to tell their story, as Rocoberry, a Korean indie pop duo, described in an interview when discussing their assignment for the Original Soundtrack (OST) of *Dokkaebi: The Lonely and Great God* (2016-2017). They were asked to compose a song "that conveys suffering and beauty concurrently" (Hong 2017). It took them twelve different compositions until 'I Will Go to You Like the First Snow' was chosen, and after this initial acceptance another seven rewrites until the production team was satisfied with the outcome (Hong 2017). The end product, as will be discussed later, was integrated into two episodes where it not only underscored two of the most important and emotional scenes of *Dokkaebi* but also gave them new narrative layers, both on their own as well as in connection to each other. It is thanks to this implementation of pop songs in Korean series, where the placement of music has such a narrative effect, that they have become an integral, and – for people outside of Asia – unique characteristic of the whole genre of K-drama.

Pop music, or vocal music in general, was not an element of early Korean TV dramas, which have been a part of programming since the first public broadcaster KBS (Korean Broadcasting System) went on air in 1961. Many of these early series were period dramas, focused on specific Korean themes; popular music was therefore not fitting for the overall tone (Chung 2011: 59, 62-4). This changed when in the early 1990s Japan set a new trend across Asia with series like *Tokyo Love Story* (1991) or *Long Vacation* (1996), so called "trendy dramas", which were "urban-set and targeted at women" (Kim 2014a: 8). Right from the start, pop theme songs were also implemented as integral elements of these trendy dramas, like Kazumasa Oda's hugely successful 'Rabu sūtorī no totsuzen ni' from *Tokyo Love Story* (Freedman 2015: 119). But because of the embargo against all Japanese products until 1998, Korean broadcasters were not able to import the original series. Instead they adopted this new genre and released their own trendy dramas such as *Jealousy* (1992). This series, like its Japanese predecessor, not only introduced an "attractive young cast" (Cagle 2014: 196), but also a catchy pop song as its theme tune. Thanks to the success of the series, the following Korean dramas also integrated pop songs and vocal music started to replace parts of the traditional instrumental soundtrack (Cagle 2014: 196-7), setting off a trend which continues until today.

Jealousy was not only a domestic hit with a viewership of over 50 per cent. It was also the first drama sold to China (Sohn 2016). Since the mid 1990s the number of exported dramas to other Asian countries has increased, a phenomenon called "Korean Wave" or "Hallyu". For nearly a decade, Korean dramas were imported to Asian countries with huge success,[2] and they became important for both the economy as well as the international image of South Korea. Around the mid 2000s, the numbers of exported K-dramas dropped, and though huge international hits like *Coffee Prince* (2007) rekindled interest in Korean TV series, the character of the Korean Wave had changed, and was thus labeled by scholars "Hallyu 2.0": Korean pop music (or K-pop) became the number one exported cultural product, benefitting from the rise of social media, which also made it possible to consume Korean music and dramas in Western countries, thereby also expanding the Korean Wave beyond Asian countries (Jin 2016: vii-viii).

In this age of Hallyu 2.0, different Korean cultural products are often marketed cross-media, thereby interlinking K-dramas and K-pop. As early as 1997, when *Star In My Heart* (1997) introduced leading actor Ahn Jae-Wook's songs 'Wound' and 'There's No One Important As You', dramas were used to promote pop songs, while the signing of "idols" for acting roles was intended to draw back the younger audience who had already lost interest in "trendy dramas" (Cagle 2014: 199, S. Lee 2015: 16). This kind of cross-media promotion is grounded in the Korean idol star system, developed by the big entertainment groups like CJ in the 1990s. In general, it "depend[s] on the medium of records, heavy

1 While Yoon and Kang don't explicitly mention research on music in K-dramas, all the books about *Hallyu* published in North America they list (2017: 9) hardly mention music connected to television at all. This is also true for the two important books on K-pop by Lee (2015) and Fuhr (2015) and the newer books on K-drama, like the one edited by Park and Lee (2019). The only major exception is Hae Joo Kim's dissertation "Hearing the Korean Global: *Hallyu* in the Music of K-dramas" (2015).

2 It should be mentioned that in this early phase Korean dramas were sold much cheaper than Japanese equivalents, thus the decision by Chinese broadcasting stations to buy these series was largely economic (Kim 2014a: 9).

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promotion on television media and management activities" (Lee 2009: 492). Thus from the beginning, new idol acts were required not only to sing and dance, but also to entertain in television programs, both music shows as well as variety (Lee 2009: 492), and dramas became another forum for promoting idols on television.[3]

One of the biggest hits of this kind of collaboration between music and dramas was *Dream High* (2011). This series revolves around a group of aspiring pop stars at Kirin High School of Arts, played by successful singers like Bae Suzy, IU or Taecyeon of 2PM (Kim 2015: 232-233). Its pop soundtrack became very successful, with IU's 'Someday' reaching number one at Gaon charts and the album reached number five in March 2011, after the *Dream High Special Concert* with the cast was broadcast. This album consisted of 12 tracks, ten of them pop songs. Most of them had already been released individually as downloadable singles during the run of the series, and thus the success of the series and its OST were interlinked even more. This practice of allowing audiences to download not only the whole album but also single songs started in 2009 and 2010 with, for example, *IRIS* (2009) and *Road No. 1* (2010). It remains the case that one or two songs from a series' OST are made available weekly for download, and then an album is released around the time the last episode airs. These songs can not only be bought via national online music stores like Melon, but also via iTunes or Amazon music, thus making them accessible to foreign fans. Similarly, the distribution of the series also changed during Hallyu 2.0 thanks to streaming sites like Dramafever (2009-2018), Viki (since 2007), Netflix and Amazon Prime. They all provide K-dramas with either fan-made or professional subtitles in multiple languages, and thus make these productions not only available but also understandable worldwide.

Because K-dramas are targeted at both a domestic and an ever-growing international market, they simultaneously set trends for other (Asian) series and adapt to international demands. As Yoon and Jin write, cultural exchange in this age always goes both ways (2017: viii). This willingness to adapt also means that the drama's narratives and especially the characters constantly have to change, despite tendencies to reproduce formalized schemas and scripts.[4] One such script is the typical Cinderella story, which traditionally features a dominant male lead but has also engendered new interpretations: in series like *What's Wrong With Secretary Kim* (2018) or *Because This Is My First Life* (2017) the economic differences between the man and the woman are still as expected from these stories, namely, the man is rich or at least financially more stable than the woman. However, when it comes to emotions or the question of power and dominance in the relationship, the couples are equals, with the man unconditionally accepting the female protagonist as strong and independent. As a further variation, the Cinderella-concept is even reversed, letting a poor man meet a rich woman in *The Beauty Inside* (2018).

It is because of this continuous change of preferred narratives and overall formulas, I argue that there is no definition of the genre "K-drama" (aside from being a television series made by a Korean production company) which would apply to all dramas produced in the last two decades. Instead, there are some major characteristics which are true for a certain amount of years, and because this paper mainly discusses three dramas from 2016 to 2017, the following generalizations should only be read as true for this time frame – and basically every drama breaks with at least one of them:[5]

1. Most K-dramas consist of only one season with 16 (up to 24) one-hour long episodes,[6] shown biweekly over the course of two months. Usually there is also only one main writer, one director and one musical producer throughout the series. These conditions allow for a rather conceptualized narrative and style for the end product.
2. The majority of Korean dramas are still live produced (meaning most of the shooting and post-production happens parallel to the airing) by independent production companies. This procedure can result in exploita-

3 This kind of horizontal promotion strategy is still very common today. For example Yook Sung-Jae, vocalist and dancer in the boy group BToB, also worked as an actor (e.g. in *Dokkaebi*), as a host (e.g. in 2012 of the music television program *The Show* (2011-present)) and a cast member of multiple variety shows (e.g. *Master in the House* (2017-present)).

4 The term script is used following David Herman, defining it as: "a knowledge representation in terms of which an expected sequence of events is stored in the memory" (2002: 10). These scripts consist of numeral schemas, like for example the "extremely rich and handsome male lead" (called *chaebol*) consists of schemas like a problematic family-background, adoration by everyone based on physical appearance or a cold and distant character.

5 In addition, this article only discusses music in biweekly prime time series, which have the biggest budget in the Korean television industry, and not the daily morning and evening shows (see Kim 2015: 108-9).

6 In Korea broadcasting stations are not allowed to interrupt a program with commercials. Because of that in 2017 they started to release two half hour episodes every evening (Park 2017). Therefore *While You Were Sleeping* officially has 32 episodes of 30 minutes, but its narrative still follows the structure of a series with 16 episodes of one hour.

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tion of workers, accidents and poor artistic results.[7] At the same time, the series itself can be extremely consumer orientated and even incorporate viewer input into the narration (Oh 2015: 133, Kim 2015: 83-4).[8]

3. Both the main plot and especially the characters develop throughout the series and most episodes end in a cliffhanger, leading into the next chapter (Kim 2014b: 249).
4. Although basically every TV-genre is represented in Korean series, such as fantasy, horror, medical and legal dramas and so on, most of them also include melodramatic elements and a romance (Kim 2015: 85). These romances have a quite formalized script: from the first encounter of the couple the relationship culminates in a meaningful kiss around mid-season, then leads to an inevitable breakup in the penultimate episode, finally ending in reconciliation. The "couple song" (see Chapter 5: 103-104) follows this script and interlinks the different aspects throughout the series.
5. K-dramas have an OST, consisting of pop songs and instrumental music (Kim 2015: 110). The pop songs are digitally published throughout the run of the series.

2. POP SONGS IN K-DRAMAS

Although many parts of this definition are not unfamiliar to Western viewers, the overall shortness of the series, which is reminiscent of miniseries rather than the weekly installments stretching over a couple of years on European or American television, is initially quite unusual. Maybe even more unusual is the use of newly composed pop songs in the soundtrack. This approach is somewhere between using a newly composed instrumental score and the compilation soundtrack, consisting of pre-composed pop songs (or sometimes, as in *Amadeus* (1985), classical pieces) found in Western movies and series, and reflects the storytelling of especially Korean Melodramas and RomComs: their main plots revolve around smaller, daily themes like finding true love and improving the living conditions of the main characters, not grand schemes about saving the world (Kim 2015: 108). Donnelly (2005: 136) suggests that pop songs, which are already part of the daily life of most viewers, fit these kinds of stories better than grand orchestral scores. At the same time, love stories in K-dramas are usually not mundane, but (melo-)dramatic and highly idealized. Because of this mixture of both daily and overly dramatic themes in the storytelling, many pop songs in K-dramas also reflect this narrative approach in their music by having a melodic, ballad-like part, followed by a more dramatic, fully orchestrated finish.[9]

While newly composed songs together with an instrumental score make up the bulk of the soundtrack in Korean series, pre-composed pop songs are also used and are often presented as diegetic, that is, the music is produced by a source within the series' narrative. Most scholars argue that "diegetic music serves primarily to reinforce the realistic depiction of the *mise-en-scène* so as to enhance the verisimilitude of the narrative action" (Holbrook 2005: 48). The very common "restaurant scenes" in K-dramas, for example, are often underscored by diegetic pop songs (both Western as well as Korean) "and can range from an *eumak gamdok*'s personal musical preference to songs that subtly comment on the discussion taking place between the characters onscreen" (Kim 2015: 109).

In addition, pre-composed pop songs are used diegetically and non-diegetically to set a scene in a certain timeframe: the soundtrack of the three installments of the *Reply*-series, set in 1997 (2012), 1994 (2013) and 1988 (2015-2016), for example, consists mostly of pop songs from these eras, some of them newly recorded (H. Lee 2015). The same goes for flashbacks: the tenth episode of *First Life* begins with the story of how the now adult female leads first met in High School, starting with pictures of their hometown of Namhae, underscored by Kim Jong-Kook's 'Loveable' from 2005. While in this instance the song is mostly a gateway back to the past, the different temporal layers transmitted through songs can also have a deeper narrative meaning: in the final episode of *A Gentleman's Dignity* (2012), all eight main characters visit a club where Psy's 'Gangnam Style' is playing. The episode aired about one month after the release of the single, so this song was part of the original viewer's everyday life. Another tem-

7 Oh Youjeong (2015: 134-5) gives some examples of this problem from the early 2010s. A more recent occasion was the second episode of *A Korean Odyssey* (2017-2018) where parts of green screen and wires used for fighting scenes were seen in the aired episode (Kim 2017).

8 The airing of several episodes of *Clean With Passion For Now* (2018-2019), for example, were delayed because of sport events. Consequently, in Episode 13, a dialogue about a football match substituting for the drama a character wanted to watch was added, a tongue-in-cheek acknowledgment of the viewer's complaints about the delay.

9 See for example 'Beautiful Moment' by K.Will from *The Beauty Inside*. It starts as a melodic ballad, the singing voice mostly accompanied by a single piano and guitar. When the chorus starts for a second time, a short pizzicato bridge leads to the more dramatic part of the song, now accompanied by strings and percussion.

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poral layer is added when Lee Jung-Rok (Lee Jong-Hyuk), while on the dance floor, offers his still beloved ex-wife Park Min-Sook (Kim Jung-Nan) headphones, referencing a similar scene in *La Boum* (1980), which was previously also reproduced in the Korean movie *Sunny* (2011). Just like the main characters in both movies, Jung-Rok tries to draw Min-Sook into a romantic world of their own, underscored by a song only they know about. But in the K-drama, it is not a schmaltzy ballad like 'Reality' by Richard Sanderson which starts to play, but Los del Rio's 'Macarena'. This song is not explicitly established as being important for their relationship, but viewers know that the two married in 2002 (1.07), and one can assume that 'Macarena', which became popular in Korea around 1996, was a song from their dating time, probably with fun and happy associations, because quite soon the two start to dance together and rekindle their relationship without dialogue.

These correlations between music and narrative are possible thanks to certain associations tied to pre-composed music. These "'images' [are] conjured by the lyrics, its iconic singer(s), its record-sleeve, the ubiquitous accompanying video-clip, its previous use in adverts [or other movies and series] or the 'dream-images' it conjures up for the individual or collective consciousness [...]" (Lannin and Caley 2005: 9-10). Newly composed songs on the other hand come without these images and offer in a way a clean slate, which then can be filled with new associations created by the series itself (Kim 2015: 124) and the music process of the product: 'Stay With Me' from *Dokkaebi's* OST, for example, brings images of the two singers Chanyeol (from the boy group EXO) and Punch. Its video clip was released on the day of the first episode, one day before the actual song became available. Here we see images of both singers in the recording studio, scenes from the series itself and new footage with the actors. And finally, as it is reused multiple times in the series, the song also brings more and more images of past events within the universe of the story, in this case especially to the first part of the romance between Kim Shin (the Dokkaebi) and his bride. It is played the first time Ji Eun-Tak confesses her love to Shin (1.01); in this case, though, it is not an expression of her love (yet), but the acceptance of her destiny as his bride. The feelings are similarly indistinct when the song is played again for Kim Shin's confession of love. Here he already has feelings for her, but also tries to push her back because he knows that their love has to end in tragedy (1.05). So when the song is played at their first kiss (1.06), viewers bring these images of a problematic and maybe even tragic love story with them, making the kiss bittersweet in the end. Therefore, the purpose of 'Stay With Me' is to connect three major steps in Eun-Tak and Kim Shin's relationship, and to illustrate its contrary emotions, similarly to an instrumental score which "functions to sustain structural unity and illustrate narrative content of films, both implicitly and explicitly" (Rodman 2017: 120). 'Stay With Me' therefore becomes a kind of "leitmotif" for the relationship.

The leitmotif is a concept established by Richard Wagner in his operas, to connect music to both the developing narrative and characters. They are "developmental associative themes that comprise an integral part of the surrounding musical context" (Bribitzer-Stull 2015: 7, 255-8). As Rodman argues in his article about music in *Pulp Fiction* (1994) and *Trainspotting* (1996), pop songs can also function as a leitmotif: in *Pulp Fiction* mainly to characterize the protagonists through different musical styles and in *Trainspotting* to appropriate different narrative situations (2017: 125-35). Korean dramas go even further and not only connect their songs to certain characters or narratives in one or two scenes, as in Rodman's two examples, but multiple times throughout the series. Contrary to instrumental leitmotifs, however, their musical content is set and therefore has no (musical) development. Still, the songs are established as markers for certain characters, moods or the developing relationship of the couples through repeated connections between a song and certain images, its lyrics and its musical content. Music, therefore, adds not only new layers of meaning to isolated scenes but the overall narrative of a whole series. In addition, there are also some more practical reasons for using pop songs over the course of one series multiple times, as Kim (2015: 188) suggests, it "establishes a feeling not only of familiarity but also, ultimately, of emotional attachment", therefore deepening the connection of the audience to the series and make them tune in week after week. It also fits with the budgeted and time restricted working environment which is still quite typical for many K-dramas and ultimately sells the OST (Kim 2015: 188-9).

These repeated appearances of certain songs throughout a series and their resulting meaning for the overall narrative is the major focus of the rest of this paper. Three series have been chosen to highlight the different aspects of (pop) songs in Korean TV Series: *Dokkaebi*, whose songs have multi-layered meanings connected to different aspects of the narrative; *While You Were Sleeping*, a drama with a K-pop idol as the female lead who contributed one of the series' character songs, 'I Love You Boy' to the soundtrack; and finally, *Because This Is My First Life,* which has one of the most sophisticated musical concepts in a TV series of recent years, not only for

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Series	Production company	Music label
Dokkaebi	Haw&Dam Pictures (subsidiary of the CJ Group)	CJ E&M Music (now Stone Music Entertainment, part of CJ Group)
WYWS	SidusHQ (part of iHQ Inc.)	iHQ, Gazi Contents, LEON
First Life	Studio Dragon (part of CJ Group)	CJ E&M Music

TABLE 1: CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE PRODUCTION COMPANIES AND MUSIC LABELS OF *DOKKAEBI*, *WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING* AND *BECAUSE THIS IS MY FIRST LIFE*.

its romance narrative, but also as a characteristic for the female lead.[10]

While You Were Sleeping is a mixture of RomCom, legal drama, thriller and fantasy. These different genres are reflected in the music: while the RomCom-parts are accompanied by pop songs, the other parts only have an instrumental score. *Dokkaebi* uses a similar approach to differentiate its historical and modern-day scenes through music by having only one pop song (1.10) in the multiple flashbacks to historical Goryeo era, thus reserving pop music mainly for the present and the two love stories. This important connection between romance and pop songs is also represented via the musical genres of the songs. All are ballads, pop or R & B, genres dominated by love songs, with occasional hip hop sections. These genres also coincide with the most popular K-pop genres (Lie 2015: 64, 98),[11] thus connecting these two successful parts of Hallyu 2.0.

Choosing popular music styles is also an economic decision, as songs play a huge part in the marketing of a series nationally and internationally, and therefore their mass appeal should be considered when talking about the OST (Kim 2015: 142). Also, original songs are part of the package when a series or a movie is sold to foreign companies. This condition does not apply to pre-existing images and music, and therefore the exported versions of a series such as *Reply 1997* (2012) on (German) Netflix may often shed whole music sections or even whole scenes. And finally, the series are also used to promote new songs and certain artists. This is possible because most of the time, the production company and the music label are subsidiaries of the same company (Table 1).

The OST in general and especially the newest released song is advertised in every episode by banners and by being repeatedly featured in the series. And while most of the songs are used for narrative reasons, there are occasions where a song is clearly just promoted. This practice is most obvious when a song only appears in one scene, as is the case in *While You Were Sleeping*. Of the fourteen songs on the OST, eight are featured multiple times throughout the series, but the last six songs can only be heard once, usually in the episode right before their single release. In all instances their narrative impact is minimal to non-existent (because they are only played over the end credits) thus reducing the series to a mere commercial platform.

In addition to these economic considerations, the practice of featuring exclusively composed songs offers artistic and narrative freedom. In a 2014 interview, singer Lisa (Jung Hee-Sun), who contributed to the OSTs for *I Am Happy* (2008) and *Queen Insoo* (2011-2012), explained the production process behind her compositions. In most cases she gets a script beforehand to understand the overall tone of the series and also works together with the script writers and producers, thus adjusting the song to the narrative (Stanley 2014). Aside from external composers like Lisa or, in the case of *Dokkaebi*, Rocoberry or the duo 10 cm, many of the songs and the instrumental score are (co-)composed by the music director, thus ensuring a certain level of musical consistency throughout the series. The soundtrack for *Because This Is My First Life,* for example, is mainly (co-)composed by Moon Seong-Nam, who sets a unique tone by using elements of Jazz music in both the songs as well as the instrumental pieces.

3. CHARACTER SONGS

At first glance, *Because This Is My First Life* is an ordinary romance falling within the often used script of “contract marriages”, with Nam Se-Hee (Lee Min-Ki) and Yoon Ji-Ho (Jung

10 It was also taken into consideration to choose series from a broadcasting channel (SBS) as well as a cable channel (tvN) and different production companies (Sidus HQ – *While You Were Sleeping*; Hwa&Dam Pictures – *Dokkaebi*; MI Inc. – *First Life*) to illustrate a certain degree of generality.

11 Other genres like rock or rap are often found in OSTs for series with more action elements like *Prison Playbook* (2017–2018) or *Lawless Lawyer* (2018).

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So-Min) as the main couple who first move in together as housemates and then decide to have a platonic marriage under contract to justify their living together to their families. Aside from this relationship, the series also puts the professional and character development of Ji-Ho, a 30-year-old aspiring script writer, full center, accompanied throughout the whole series by the song 'Drawing a Star'. The text of this song has a strong persona who makes multiple references to herself and her feelings while thinking about somebody, presumably a loved one. This reading becomes even clearer when in Episode 16 the meaning behind the picture of the mentioned "stars" is revealed: Ji-Ho's mother explains that throughout her marriage there were multiple beautiful moments which she collected like stars to use them in the darker times of their relationship to be able to stay with her husband. However, the simple romantic connotation of the song is only significant on the surface, and because of its function as Ji-Ho's leitmotif throughout the series it evolves a more differentiated meaning.

Aside from the song itself, there are multiple instrumentations, with only four on the official OST album: 'Star Billy' (piano and brass band), 'Star Picture Strings' (piano and string orchestra), 'Star Game' (Chip-Tunes and sounds from a keyboard) and 'Star Swing' (Swing Band). The first episode also features three other instrumentations: a slower version (in this article designated as 'Star Slow'), a rock version, connected to the rock middle part of the song (designated as 'Star Rock') and finally a banjo/glockenspiel version (designated as 'Star Banjo'). The multiple instrumentations of this song are used to underscore Ji-Ho's emotional journey in the series. At the beginning of the series she becomes homeless (1.01) and soon quits her already unsatisfying job after a co-worker attempts to rape her and nobody takes the incident seriously (1.02, 1.03). With the help of her friends and husband she finds the strength to sue the attacker (1.14) and to get back into her job, even writing her own K-drama in the end (1.16).

The effervescent and, thanks to its simple "la la la" chorus, seemingly somewhat mindless vocal version of 'Drawing a Star' is established at the beginning of the first episode, accompanying Ji-Ho's new-found freedom after working as an assistant writer and living with her boss for the past three months. However, the feeling of freedom and a happy outlook on life displayed both by the scene as well as the song is only short lived: she learns her apartment is now occupied by her younger brother and his pregnant bride, thus requiring her to look for a new home. While she is searching for cheap apartments on the internet, her mother brings her *miyuk gook* (seaweed soup) for her birthday, accompanied by the melancholic instrumental 'Star Slow', and gives Ji-Ho some money for the deposit. But obviously her mother has no idea how much it takes to rent a decent apartment in Seoul and so Ji-Ho is completely on her own now. But she still has hope left, shown a little bit later by a montage of her looking at cheap but uninhabitable apartments, which is underscored by the cheery "la la la" chorus. After these setbacks she finally finds a boarding room through her friends, and can even give her mother's money graciously to her new sister-in-law ('Star Slow', referring to the previous scene in which she was given the money) and moves into her new apartment ('Star Rock'). After one day she still has not met her new landlord, who she assumes to be a landlady because of the feminine name "Se-Hee". By chance she finally runs into Se-Hee outside a restaurant while he watches a soccer game. A dedicated Arsenal fan herself she joins him and both are disappointed about their team seeming to lose ('Star Banjo'). The episode ends with them meeting again at the bus station. There Se-Hee consoles Ji-Ho, and in a spontaneous decision, she kisses him before jumping on the bus – still not knowing that they are housemates.

In the other fifteen episodes of the series the full song is only played a couple of times, either representing Ji-Ho's roots or her inner self, for example, when Se-Hee arrives at her home Namhae (1.11) or when she finally becomes more confident either as a writer or in her relationship (1.9, 1.16). The different instrumentations, on the other hand, underscore a kaleidoscope of scenes showing the different layers of her character (her playfulness, awkwardness, shyness, intelligence, and her prevailing positive outlook on life), similar to the first episode, where the emotions tied to music range from happiness to despair. The different renditions of the song also function to highlight every realization (spoken out loud in the scene or by her voice-over) about herself or her relationship and thus closely follow her emotional development throughout the series. Thanks to the different instrumentations 'Drawing a Star' is present in every episode and therefore becomes a major part of both the style of the show as well as its musical brand.

In this first example, one song is used to underline a character and her different emotions. In addition, character songs can also directly express the thoughts of a protagonist, especially when the song is recorded by the actor or actress, who are often (former) K-pop idols. In many series they contribute one or more songs to the soundtrack, but in most cases do not play the role of a musician or diegetically sing, even when the series itself is sometimes quite conscious of the actors' second job and the script may then play with the audience by,

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for example, teasing them to hope for a singing performance which never happens.[12] In *While You Were Sleeping* both main actors, Bae Suzy and Lee Jong-Suk each recorded two songs for the soundtrack. They are always used non-diegetically, but the fact that they are recorded by the actors enhances the function of songs as a voice of the characters, especially if viewers are aware of whose song they are hearing, which, thanks to marketing, should be the case. The addressed "image" coming with a song, in this instance of the singer, can thus play an important narrative role by connecting the voice of the singer and the actor. This connection can be exemplified by Bae Suzy's 'I Love You Boy'.

The main leads in *While You Were Sleeping* are Jung Jae-Chan (Lee Jong-Suk), a prosecutor who is neither rich, athletic, nor very experienced in his profession (therefore going against the usual K-drama script for the male protagonist), and Nam Hong-Joo (Bae Suzy), a witty reporter. Both are able to see future events in their dreams and after they meet for the first time, they start to use this ability to help other people and each other. With the support of police officer Han Woo-Tak (Jung Hae-In), who also dreams about the future since being saved by Jae-Chan, they fight against former prosecutor and main antagonist Lee Yoo-Beom (Lee Sang-Yeob). These confrontations, which heat up more and more from mid-season on, become the major subject of the series and provide legal and thriller elements. The romance element consequently plays only a minor role in many episodes and overall the relationship develops without most of the usual detours.

Romantic scenes are always accompanied by pop songs, such as 'I Love You Boy', which represents Hong-Joo's side of this relationship, and is thus both a character as well as a couple song. The song is established in Episode 4 while she and Jae-Chan are on the bus. He falls asleep on her shoulder – a typical staple for the beginning of a relationship, although usually it is the woman who dozes off. In this scene the song only foreshadows Hong-Joo falling in love, which is finally confirmed in Episode 6. Here the song becomes her voice, when we see her emotions shift from being a little bit angry at Jae-Chan, to being drawn to him, and finally expressing these feelings by physical contact: 'I Love You Boy' starts after Jae-Chan confirms he will always be at her side when she is afraid. This confirmation makes her want to hold his hand, but he, unaware of the situation, pulls away. The music stops and is followed by a few seconds without music (a grand pause is also part of the piece's composition with varying length matching the editing in the series), heightening her disappointment. He then finally grabs her hand and the music starts again with the lyrics of the chorus (in English): 'Because I love you boy'. In this whole scene Hong-Joo doesn't say a word, so her changing feelings can only be seen through Bae Suzy's acting and the music. This use of the song as a mirror of her feelings is repeated in Episode 9: after she dreamt about Jae-Chan being stabbed and (presumably) killed she promises to herself that she will protect him. Following this moment her song starts and this time, during the composed grand pause, she speaks, saying, as the character, "please, don't get hurt", immediately followed by the music again playing 'Because I love you boy'. This time the song is a non-diegetic continuation of the diegetic conversation and again reflects her emotions.

4. MOOD SONGS

All the above examples of character songs accompany a certain protagonist throughout the series, but they are not really paraphrasing a certain mood in each scene in which they are used.[13] Not even the multiple instrumentations of 'Drawing a Star' have consistent connections between music and emotion throughout the series. Certain "mood songs" can appear in scenes with different characters but always underscore one set of emotions. This is quite common in K-dramas and many of the repeated songs in series of the 2000s fall within this category. Cagle analyzed 'Don't Forget' by Ryu from *Winter Sonata* (2002), a series oftentimes labeled as the first big Hallyu hit. The song is played in two episodes: when secondary lead Kim Sang-Hyuk (Park Yong-Ha) breaks up with female lead Jeong Yoo-Jin (Choi Ji-Woo), he tries to let her go, but at the same time, as the lyrics of the song suggest, does not want to forget her. The same is true for the second time the song is played. Now it is main lead Lee Min-Hyung (Bae Yong-Joon) breaking up with Yoo-Jin, thinking they are half siblings. His feelings are paralleled with his love rival's before, in that he tries to forget Yoo-Jin but also cannot let go (Cagle 2014: 208-9).

12 Eun Ji-Won, former member of 1990s boy group SechsKies, for example, plays one of the main characters, an ordinary teenage boy, in *Reply 1997* (2012). The series itself revolves around the group's fan culture in the mid 1990s, but Ji-Won's character in the series is totally separated from his real self in 1997. The writers were nevertheless aware of this non-diegetic layer of the character and wrote in multiple jokes, such as when his friends speculate whether the character actually has some resemblance to Eun Ji-Won of SechsKies.

13 This can both mean enhancing obvious emotions on screen as well as bringing forth more subtle ones. For an analysis of the latter in K-dramas see Kim (2015: 150-6).

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In this example the song is only played in two episodes, but like character songs, mood songs often appear multiple times throughout the run of a series, as will be shown by the example of *Dokkaebi*. This series is about Kim Shin (Gong Yoo), a warrior from the Goryeo era, punished by a god with immortality and cursed to search for his true bride, the only person able to pull out the sword piercing his chest and thus enable him to die. After 900 years he finds this bride in the 18-year-old orphan Ji Eun-Tak (Kim Go-Eun) who can see ghosts, and they fall in love with each other. The series also focuses on the developing friendship between these two characters and their surrogate family, consisting of a mostly depressed and vegetarian Grim Reaper (Lee Dong-Wook), his bored-with-life love interest Sunny (Yoo In-Na) who is also Eun-Tak's boss, and Duk-Hwa (Yook Sung-Jae), the good-natured but still sometimes childish grandson of Kim Shin's current servant. There are quite a lot of funny moments in the series, mainly thanks to the bromance between Kim Shin and the Grim Reaper, but overall there is a sentiment of sadness and melancholy, especially when it comes to Eun-Tak. These two general moods of the series are also represented in the OST which has fast and upbeat pieces like the instrumental 'A Glittering Wind', or 'LOVE' by Mamamoo, as well as slower songs like 'Stuck in Love' or 'And I'm Here', which draw their melancholic subtext not only from the serene melody and sad lyrics but also from Kim Kyung-Hee's mellow singing style. Especially 'And I'm Here' becomes an important mood song for Eun-Tak's sad but still hopeful life: After losing her loving mother at age nine she has to live with her aunt who only wants the money Eun-Tak got from her mother's life insurance (1.01). But thanks to the constant intervention of a friendly ghost, the money is kept safe and finally comes back to her (1.10), confirming that her mother in the end successfully cared for her daughter even after death. This sentiment of being always there for another person, "No matter how / Near or far apart", is the theme of 'And I'm Here'. The lyrics are not completely clear about who makes this promise and, thanks to the line, "to let you feel my pulse", it probably is not about a dead person watching over a surviving family member. Nevertheless, the lyrics transfer this feeling of protection even after a physical separation, and as it is featured in multiple scenes when Eun-Tak thinks about her mother, it initially functions as a theme song for their relationship. Throughout the series, however, this interpretation is broadened to a more general promise of taking care of each other, for example, when the song is played while a ghost asks Eun-Tak to help her grieving mother (1.05) and when Duk-Hwa's grandfather and longtime servant of Kim Shin, dies (1.12). Here the song underscores three scenes in which the above mentioned "family" tries to comfort each other after this loss and therefore keeps the promise in the song, "When you feel so lonely / I'll be here to shelter you". This connection between the song and these emotions of comfort and protection is taken up again in the scene which depicts the greatest loss in the series: in order to destroy an almost invincible evil ghost which plans to possess Eun-Tak, Kim Shin finally forces her to pull out the sword. Together they defeat the enemy with said sword, but afterwards have to face Kim Shin's death. The length of the final scene between the couple perfectly coincides with the song and after nearly a minute of just a silent goodbye between the two lovers (with the song still playing), Kim Shin starts to dissolve into ash when the last line, "And I'm here home, home / With you / With me" fades away. Eun-Tak then breaks down, crying in sadness and despair. These emotions are immediately picked up by Ailee's 'I Will Go To You Like the First Snow' – the title a reference to Kim Shin's promise to come back to her as rain and snow (1.13).

'And I'm Here' is played once again, this time with reversed roles when Eun-Tak dies and has to say goodbye to Kim Shin, who in the meantime came back from the dead (1.16). As in Dokkaebi's death scene, 'I Will Go To You Like the First Snow' follows 'And I'm Here', this time as a symbol for Eun-Tak's promise to come back in her next life. Plot-wise it is clear that these two scenes are connected, but not when it comes to the *mise-en-scène*. For example, Eun-Tak's whole body is visible in a wide angle as she sobs (1.13), while Kim Shin's frame in this scene is much closer and his body is mostly hidden behind bars. Thus, by repeating the connection of the two songs in both scenes, it is the music keeping these two narratives together. At the same time, 'And I'm Here' also brings the "images" of both loss and protection established in the other scenes underscored by this song, and perhaps reminds the viewer who grieves with both main protagonists that this love is stronger than death.

5. COUPLE SONGS

In most K-dramas there is absolutely no question about who the central couple is, mainly because the marketing before the first episode is already quite clear about who will end up together. Because of these set couples, it is not the purpose of the music, or any of the other relationship markers, to confirm who will end up together. Instead, it has to be a second layer for the development of the relationship. It

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foreshadows the relationship, similarly to the sleeping on the other's shoulder, offering an umbrella in the rain or catching the other when falling, followed by a dip and a near kiss, in the early stage and later confirms that this couple really belongs together. Especially the last purpose is quite important in K-dramas where, thanks to the already mentioned melodramatic romance script, the main couple sometimes does not share much screen time, especially in episodes towards the end.[14]

Couple songs are generally introduced at the first meeting of the lovers. In the case of *Dokkaebi*, it is 'Beautiful' by Crush (1.01). The song then underscores multiple positive moments in the relationship between Kim Shin and Eun-Tak, such as a walk together (1.06) and their first real kiss with true feelings on both sides (1.10). But it is also played in times of distress, such as after an argument (1.02). Here they are physically separated, but still thinking about each other. Playing their song confirms that even after they have fought their love is still alive. Therefore, couple songs can represent the whole love story and multiple emotions by being a reminder of the always present love between the main couple, even when they are fighting and physical or emotionally separated. The very prominent narrative of a destined love in K-dramas can also be transported through the lyrics of couple songs, here exemplified by both couple songs in *Dokkaebi*, Kim Shin's and Eu-Tak's 'Beautiful' and 'I Miss You' by SOYOU for the Grim Reaper and Sunny. These two songs represent the underlying sentiment of each destined love story: while Kim Shin and Eun-Tak live "A beautiful life / Beautiful day", because in their time as a couple they feel happy and a deep connection, there is an overall melancholy throughout the other relationship and even when the Grim Reaper and Sunny are together they feel as if they are missing something or somebody. To some extent, however, both songs spoil the ultimate nature of the two relationships. But because in the series they are never played to the end, only viewers who bought the soundtrack were aware of this foreshadowing. In 'Beautiful' the line about "It's a beautiful life / Beautiful day" turns to "It's a sorrowful life / Sorrowful day" in the last two verses. As mentioned above, after having spent some loving weeks together, their story ends in tragedy when first Eun-Tak is forced to kill Kim Shin and after he comes back she dies in an accident. The lyrics, therefore, are basically a spoiler for the last episodes, while the other couple song *I Miss You* speaks more generally about the reason for the feeling of loss and tragedy behind the love between the Grim Reaper and Sunny: "Did you recognize me right away? / Why did you come to me now? [...] You are my destiny / Even if I'm born again / Wherever you are hiding / I will find you". These lines refer to the fact that they were husband and wife in another lifetime when their love ended tragically because he, the king, ordered her to be killed. Viewers only deduce this information over the course of the series.

Similar to the character song, aside from this overall meaning the couple song can also reflect and comment on the actual feelings in a specific love scene, such as the first real kiss between the main couple in *While You Were Sleeping*. This kiss first seems to happen when both of them are sitting in the car and 'I Miss You' by Davichi starts to play, a song already connected to one other romantic scene (1.05) but not established as their couple song. Consequently, the attempted kiss and the song are cut short when Jae-Chan cannot move forward because of his seat belt. Feeling quite awkward they do not continue and just say goodbye at her doorstep, accompanied by the instrumental version of the series main theme 'Your World' by SE O. But right before parting, Hong-Joo suddenly decides to finish the kiss. At this moment the music stops, heightening the surprise and awkwardness between the two. Thinking it was the wrong timing for their first kiss, Hong-Joo quickly retreats into her house, while Jae-Chan is left baffled and with ambiguous thoughts. Only when he is back in his home and their already established couple song 'You Belong To My World' by Roy Kim starts, it becomes clear that Jae-Chan is actually quite happy about their kiss, making the couple song and the feeling of love inseparable.

CONCLUSION

Couple songs provide the most recognizable connection between music, narrative and certain images. Nearly every romantic K-drama in recent years has one or two early established songs which accompany the couple through their

14 Kim wrote in her dissertation about an additional aspect: "[The unexpressed] love relationships [in K-dramas] form over time and are bonded through musical moments on the soundtrack where a song fills in, giving expression to words and gestures that remain understated, or unstated." (2015: 135). In more recent K-dramas it is still an important part of the love story that the couple shows restraint, but thanks to the fact that the first kiss now oftentimes already happens in the middle of the drama and not, like in many from the early 2000s, only in the last episode, maybe even last minutes, the development of the relationship after this first kiss, including skinship and sex, becomes more important. Because of that, I argue, couple songs nowadays are not only there to highlight understated love and sexual tensions, but now also underscore obvious love scenes.

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courtship. These couple songs repeatedly align images of a first meeting and the first steps toward courtship with a particular song, which then becomes a kind of leitmotif for the rest of the series and signals that a scene about true romance is either happening or to be expected. The same applies to songs which repeatedly underscore certain characters or moods. It is therefore possible to connect multiple images and meanings to certain pop songs, as in the case of 'And I'm Here' (*Dokkaebi*), so that later scenes in a series are not only directly linked to the overall narrative but new layers of meaning not explicitly shown in the actual scene are also added. These outcomes are not only products of repetition, but also of paratextual elements (or "images") outside of the series, such as the singers, especially when they are also the actors. Finally, as shown by the example of the two couple songs in *Dokkaebi*, the lyrics of these songs are usually written to engage with certain emotions and plotlines and therefore add even more to the story. This purposeful context is one reason why many pop songs in K-dramas are still in Korean, but also have at least one English line or chorus, so that both national and international viewers understand at least the core statements of the lyrics.

In the end, these tight connections between pop songs and, in most cases, love, are so overtly used in K-dramas of the last decade that they have become narrative formulas of the whole genre themselves, even when their first role as translating unsaid parts of a love story to audience become less important nowadays, because more and more dramas include both skinship as well as complex developments of a relationship after the first kiss. Nevertheless, their presence readily enhances the emotions of certain scenes, such as that of the first kiss, because viewers are used to expecting a scene of this kind when a pop song is played. These formulas also enable an opportunity to play with them and use them in parodies. When the two (male) friends Yoo Shi-Jin (Song Joong-Ki) and Seo Dae-Young (Jin Goo) use the same umbrella in *Descendants of the Sun* (1.15) both the camera angles and the playing of 'Everytime' by Chen and Punch establish a reference to similar love scenes between main couples in other series. This effect, on the one hand, makes the scene comedic by breaking gender stereotypes, but at the same time also underlines the deep bromance of these two soldiers. Thus, pop songs are not only part of the overall narrative of a series itself, but create a sign system of its own, oftentimes combined with a visual one, which is typical for K-dramas. This becomes even more obvious when you consider the changing styles and narrative approaches of K-dramas in the last decade. While more detailed analyses of these changes are still rare, authors such as Kim wrote about the importance of subtlety in K-dramas up until the early 2010s, when relationships visually only moved forward by mere suggestions like longing looks or small, accidental skinship. In this kind of story telling the music played an important part in illustrating and deepening the relationship and make it possible for the audience to relate to things they did not really see on screen (Kim 2015: 155). As shown in this article, pop songs in newer K-dramas still follow this kind of style, and, as in the case of the first kissing scene in *While You Were Sleeping,* can illustrate unsaid emotions. But, I would argue, in general K-dramas have become more direct in recent years, especially in the second part of the series after the first kiss. This different narrative style did not change the usage of pop songs though, and they are still dominantly used in scenes relevant for relationships. Therefore it seems that these musical and narrative traditions, together with the structure of the Korean entertainment industry and its cross-promotion, guarantee that newly composed pop songs will also be part of future productions, even when their texts and storylines change over time, thus making these pop songs one of the unique selling points of K-dramas.

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Films

Amadeus (1985)
La Boum (1980)
Pulp Fiction (1994)
Sunny (2011)
Trainspotting (1996)

TV Shows

The Beauty Inside (2018)
Because This Is My First Life (Yibun Saengeun Cheoeumira, 2017)
Clean With Passion For Now (Ildan Tteugeopge Cheongsohara, 2018-2019)
Coffee Prince (Keopi Peurinseu 1hojeom, 2005)
Descendants of the Sun (Taeyangui Hooye, 2016)
Dokkaebi; also *Guardian: The Lonely and Great God* (Sseulsseulhago Chanlanhasin – Dokkaebi; 2016-2017)
Dream High (Deurim Hai, 2011)
A Gentleman's Dignity (Shinsaui Poomgyuk, 2012)
I am Happy (Haengbok Hamnida, 2008)
IRIS (Airiseu, 2009)
Jealousy (Jiltu, 1992)
A Korean Odyssey (Hwayuki, 2017-2018)
Lawless Lawyer (Moobeob Byeonhosa, 2018)
Long Vacation (1996)
Master in the House (Jibsabuilche, 2017-present)
Prison Playbook (Seulgirowoon Gambbangsaenghwal, 2017-2018)
Queen Insoo (Insoodaebi, 2011-2012)
Reply 1997 (Eungdabhara 1997, 2012)
Reply 1994 (Eungdabhara 1994, 2013)
Reply 1989 (Eungdabhara 1989, 2015-2016)
Road No. 1 (Rodeu Neombeowon, 2010)
The Show (2011-present)
Star in My Heart (Byeoleunnaegaseume, 1997)
Tokyo Love Story (1991)
What's Wrong With Secretary Kim (Kimbiseoga Wae Geureolgga, 2018)
While You Were Sleeping (Dangshini Jamdeun Saie, 2017)
Winter Sonata (Gyeoul Yeonga, 2002)

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