The Korean Wave in Translation

TRANSLATING AND RECEIVING KOREAN MEDIA

FROM SQUID GAME TO LIFE ON MARS

Edited by
Jonathan Evans, Jinsil Choi and Kyung Hye Kim

Translating and Receiving Korean Media

In recent years, Korean culture has been incredibly successful internationally, from the films of auteur directors like Bong Joon-ho (*Parasite*) to shows like *Squid Game* and K-pop music. At the same time, media from the UK has also been successful in South Korea, with popular shows such as *Killing Eve* and *Life on Mars*. Written by scholars working across translation, film and media studies, this volume examines the ways in which Korean media has been received and translated in the UK, as well as how British media has fared in South Korea. Case studies explore how Korean media is (re)packaged and categorised for a Western audience and how paratextual material (trailers, adverts, fan reactions) mediates films and shows for international audiences. The book also examines how the Korean remake of *Life on Mars* localises the British show, how *Squid Game* has been audio-described and how slower media models can suggest more sustainable forms of consumption and distribution. Demonstrating how interdisciplinary research can shed light on different aspects of global media culture, this volume will be essential reading for scholars and students working on the translation and international media circulation. It will especially appeal to readers interested in the interactions between British and Korean media.

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Jinsil Choi is Associate Professor at Tabula Rasa College, Keimyung University, South Korea.

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The Korean Wave in Translation

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The Korean Wave in Translation series will aim to discuss issues of translation, invisibility, and the meanings of 'K-ness' in conjunction with the cultural phenomenon, the Korean Wave.

Following the explosion of K-Wave products into the global mainstream, this series comes at an opportune moment. Though there has been study into the difficulties and nuances of translation of Korean into English, recent smash hit films, record breaking TV shows, and successful bands – i.e. *Parasite* (2019), *Squid Game* (2021), and BTS, to name a few – demonstrate that the K-Wave is influential on such a scale that specific attention must be paid to the translation of K-Wave media. This series will consider how K-media is being translated for the global audience and how depth of meaning has thereby been limited. This study is both a linguistic and cultural study, examining the process of translation and meaning-making engendered by the ever-successful K-Wave, with specific focus on the role of consumers in crowd-sourced meaning-making.

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Introduction

Jonathan Evans, Jinsil Choi, and Kyung Hye Kim

Film director Bong Joon-ho caused a stir with his acceptance speech for the Golden Globe for best foreign language film in 2020. The most quoted line from his speech was "Once you overcome the one-inch tall barrier of subtitles, you will be introduced to so many more amazing films" (quoted in Yalcinkaya 2020). The film that won, *Gisaengchung/Parasite* (Dir. Bong Joon-ho, 2019), had already won the Palme d'Or at Cannes and went on to win the Academy Award Best Picture (the first foreign language film to do so). Shortly afterwards, the South Korean TV show *Ojing-eo geim/Squid Game* (Dir. Hwang Dong-hyuk, 2021) became the most watched show internationally on Netflix in 90 countries (Tan 2021). The massive international success of these two Korean media products brought new attention to South Korean film and TV, though for many viewers, they just confirmed a trend that had been going on since the mid-2000s of high-quality visual narratives coming from South Korea. The international success of these films and TV shows has gone hand-in-hand with the ongoing international popularity of other Korean media, such as K-pop, in what has become known as *hallyu* or the Korean wave. This has attracted a great deal of scholarly attention (Chua and Iwabuchi 2008; Y. Kim 2013, 2022; Lee and Nornes 2015; Jin 2016, 2024; Roy and Das 2022; Shin and Whitaker 2023; Samosir and Wee 2024; on New Korean Cinema, see also Shin and Stringer 2005; Paquet 2009; Choi 2010).

This volume takes a slightly different tack. Instead of seeing the Korean wave as solely a success story of South Korean media pluckily taking on the world, it sees it as part of a larger phenomenon of international media flow, specifically focusing on the reciprocal relationships between Korean media and British media. One of the reasons to focus on British media is that Britain has a long history of public broadcasting in the form of the BBC and, since the 1980s, Channel 4, both of which have nurtured homegrown talent and produced an enormous range of TV shows and films, from cult classics like *Doctor Who* to popular versions of novels by Jane Austen and Charles Dickens, which themselves form part of a heritage film and media tradition. Equally, British media has often been sidelined by American media, which remains more hegemonic in many forms due to the power and popularity of Hollywood and the various networks. Certainly, British media has had less impact in Korea than American media, with low percentages of ticket sales

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(Korean Film Council 2023; see also Evans and Choi 2023, 11) and relatively little academic research on the topic.[1] British media is, then, in a hegemonic language (English) but not necessary in a hegemonic tradition,[2] and this means that how it travels and how it is translated and adapted for local cultures, as well as their reactions to it, is of interest in understanding the cultural flows of media beyond a model of Hollywood and the rest of the world. British film and media, then, illustrate Atom Egoyan and Ian Balfour's argument that "Every film is a foreign film" (Egoyan and Balfour 2004, 21), as all films are foreign to someone somewhere; but British film and media is also surprisingly foreign to other Anglophone viewers and viewers in other cultures who are more experienced at dealing with American media and film, as is the case in South Korea.

The shape of the project behind the book was also defined, in part, by being funded by the Fund for International Collaboration and the Economic and Social Research Council (UK). The original project brought together scholars in film and media, Korean, and translation studies to discuss and analyse the reception of Korean media in the UK and British media in Korea over several events in Busan, Glasgow, Daegu, Seoul, and London. The chapters in this book are the results of some of that research.

Streaming, diversity, and sustainability

One of the things that attracted us to working on streaming, especially in the form of over-the-top (OTT) services, such as Netflix or Watcha, is that they have the capacity to carry an enormous amount of content. This can lead to what Chris Anderson (2004) called the "long tail", where smaller, less well-known films and media become visible because of the sheer amount of content available. While later studies have questioned the economics of the long tail (e.g. Coelho and Mendes 2019), it remains an interesting possibility for media watching and certainly seems to be experientially borne out by the reappearance of older shows and films on YouTube and other streaming platforms, both free and paid for, as well as the phenomenon of collectible Blu-ray discs of old movies – often from less-prestigious genres like horror or thrillers – that has appeared in the last 10–15 years. Disney+, as Disney's homegrown platform, has made available a huge amount of Disney's back catalogue, some of which was previously very popular (e.g. *The Little Mermaid, The Lion King*), as well as a number of TV shows that had been forgotten or which only had cult status (e.g. the sitcom *Dinosaurs*). Importantly, some of this material has been produced in languages other than English in locations other than North America. Where, previously, foreign-language media was difficult to find in Britain and the USA, being constrained to arthouse cinemas, late-night films, or series on public service channels, such as the BBC or Channel 4 (in the UK) or specific cable packages (in the USA), streaming has made it much easier to access media from around the globe. To an extent, it was our initial observation of this phenomenon, especially in relation to Korean media in the UK and British media in Korea, that sparked our interest in this topic and led to the network project that underpins the research in the chapters in this book.

Yet Netflix's catalogue is not the same around the world, and Ramon Lobato (2019) has explored the relationship between streaming and nations. Far from offering a homogenous service across the countries it services, Netflix is affected by international licensing agreements, which affect which media content can be shown in which locales, as well as the availability of subtitles and dubbing in local languages. While there is a greater availability of material from around the world, it is not the same material.

This greater range of material takes part in a widening diversity of stories that are told and bodies that are seen on screen. For example, Disney shows like *The Owl House* (2020–2023) and *Primos* (2024) have featured Hispanic protagonists, while *Amphibia* (2019–2022) and *The Ghost and Mollie McGee* (2021–2024) feature protagonists with Thai heritage. Netflix has been tracking its own diversity statistics and highlights how leading roles are now gender-balanced and nearly 47% of leads are from an ethnic minority (or were in the 2020–2021 season).[3] As such, streaming services are offering a lot more diverse and inclusive homegrown programming. Imported materials, in the form of translated media, also contribute to this through showing different cultures and ethnicities. For example, the increase of Chinese-language materials from Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan show local narratives and actors on a global scale. This is especially true on Netflix, which (in its UK version) has materials from around the world, with particular concentrations of Indian films and Korean dramas. Streaming, therefore, offers a more diverse and inclusive range of narratives than broadcast TV, both in the materials produced by platforms and also in their international acquisitions. This does not mean, however, that there is no room for improvement, as current statistics from Netflix focus solely on ethnicity and gender, and there are other forms of minoritisation that can and should be represented more.

Streaming platforms also differ from previous forms of media distribution in their sustainability, which we understand here as encompassing both environmental and social impact. The diversity we discussed in the previous paragraph is part of that social sustainability and the creation of new jobs in the media, though it should also be noted that it is not straightforwardly positive or sustainable, given the ways in which media production itself has an environmental impact. As Richard Maxwell and Toby Miller (2012) argue, all media have an effect on the environment, which is often through less obviously visible means: as consumers of streamed media, we do not think of all the wires needed to make that content appear in our house or on our phones, nor do we see the mines where rare earth metals used in those phones come from. The carbon produced by watching streamed television is also relatively high, once all parts of the chain of production and consumption are included (Sweney 2021). There is an increasing awareness of this within the media industry, and initiatives like We Are Albert, which certifies the sustainability of productions through estimating their carbon output. However, sustainability is rather complex, and there are ongoing issues around increased production and consumption, which are not easily resolved. That said, it is an important topic to examine as part of the overall understanding of media.

Streaming and translation

Streaming usage has accelerated since the COVID-19 pandemic, and the strong presence of international media on services such as Netflix highlights the importance of translation for the success of selling media content to new audiences. The growing use of OTT platforms and video-on-demand (VOD) services has led to more media content, such as TV programmes and documentaries, as well as films being available to wider audiences.

Indeed, OTT and streaming platforms, which not only offer a wide range of media contents produced in different languages and countries but also are gaining momentum, seem to be the most popular and efficient way to introduce international media content to audience groups in the other country. In addition to the existing platforms like Netflix, a number of local OTT platforms have grown. Examples of local OTT platforms include TVING, Coupang Play, Watcha (Korea), Hulu, d-anime Store (Japan), iQIYI, and Tencent Video (China). These homegrown OTTs seem to take a leap forward: at least in the Korean market, TVING surpassed Netflix in total daily hours watched, narrowing the gap with global streaming giant Netflix (Kim and Yeom 2024) and challenging the Netflix-centric video culture, which may be partly due to the increasingly dispersed contemporary Korean video culture that Jennifer M Kang acknowledges (Kang 2024).It is, therefore, not surprising to see a growing body of work on the effect of Netflix and streaming more generally on the media (e.g. Barker and Wiatrowski 2017; Lobato 2019; Pilipets 2019; Lotz 2022). However, these studies have rarely explored the role and the complexities of translation, despite the pivotal role of translation in promoting media content on streaming platforms. Within translation studies, there has been some work on translation for Netflix (Pedersen 2018) and other services like Rakuten Viki (Dwyer 2012), and the special issue of the journal *Target*, co-edited by Choi, Kim, and Evans (2023), focuses on the ways in which translation for streamed media differs from translation in other media. It is certainly encouraging that the research remit has recently extended to cover a variety of topics and language pairs. For example, like the work of Valdez et al. (2023), Dallı (2024) discusses English as a pivot subtitling language on Netflix. Similar scholarly inquiry can be found in other non-English language literature, including Sung, Han, and Lim (2022), Ann (2023), and Kim (2024). One of the findings of Ann's study (2023) that examines the Netflix Korean original series *Kingdom* and its Arabic subtitles (via English as a pivot) suggests that the English pivot translation resulted in the Arabic translation's noticeable deviation from the Korean source text. Kuscu-Ozbudak (2022) and Bucaria (2023) contribute to the current scholarship by focusing on the audience's reception of subtitling on Netflix, while Hayes (2021) and Hayes and García-Escribano (2022) focus on dubbing on Netflix. The concept of paratexts, which has mostly been applied to the study of (written) literature and sometimes to the media, has also been adopted in Kiran (2023) to discuss translation and localisation of media paratexts on Netflix. The dynamic and multidirectional nature of streaming services that go beyond the traditional unidirectional flow (e.g. translations of Hollywood

films produced in dominant languages like English to dominated languages like Korean) has allowed studies of a variety of language pairs, e.g. English-Turkish (Kiran 2023; Dallı 2024), Korean-Arabic (Ann 2023), and Korean-Japanese (Cho and Cho 2023). Beyond the study of subtitling strategies and English as a pivot language, researching Netflix remakes has also been conducted (e.g. Cho and Cho 2023), where the source and the target media texts are investigated to identify the extent to which linguistic and non-linguistic interventions are made to ensure the remake is acceptable to the target audience.

Korean Media in Britain, British Media in Korea

In the UK and Korea, the other country's media have been seen as niche products, and research on the other country's media have typically come from media studies. In 2012, scholars of Korean film based at UK universities had a one-day workshop in London, entitled "Korean Film: Years of Radical Change" and discussed different aspects of South Korean film (Jackson 2016). The year 2012 saw an upsurge of interest in Psy's *Gangnam Style*, and the profile of South Korean popular culture was highly raised under the name of Hallyu (or the Korean Wave). Ever since then, film studies scholars in the UK continued the Korean Screen Culture Conference, and there is a growing recognition of Korean cinema in recent years. Due to the huge success of Korean cinema worldwide and particularly from the 71st BAFTA awards in 2018, Korean films received much attention in the UK, such as *Agassi/ The Handmaiden* (Dir. Park Chan-wook, 2016) and *Parasite*. The annual London Korean Film Festival is a good example that aims to introduce Korean films to British audience. Despite a growing number of studies in Korean film and drama series written in English, the reception of Korean media in the UK is still largely underexplored. Oh (2008) explored ways to promote Korean films as a cultural brand in the UK but did not discuss the reception of a particular Korean film in the UK. From translation studies, little has been identified as to how British audiences receive Korean films through translation, but the few exceptions include the editors' work in 2022. We investigated the British audience reception of code-switching in the *Handmaiden* DVD translation. We found that while the film was received excitedly in the UK, some general audiences misunderstood the film as a Japanese production, which may be attributed to the colour change errors in the DVD English translation (Choi, Kim, and Evans 2022).

Similarly, in Korea, work mainly from media and film studies has explored features of British films, produced by renowned British filmmakers, such as Alfred Hitchcock, Richard Lester, and Hugh Hudson (S. Kim 2013, 2016, 2019). Studies on New Wave films in Korea and the UK have also been carried out with a comparative view (Chung 2018), while the British film history has been discussed (Park 2003; Yoo 2022). However, studies on British films such as these are relatively rare, and the reception of British films in Korea has been little explored. The few exceptions include Kim and Son (2022)'s study, which, for educational purposes,

used British films, such as *Love Actually* (Dir. Richard Curtis, 2003), *Notting Hill* (Dir. Roger Michell, 1999), and *About Time* (Dir. Richard Curtis, 2013) to teach British accents to Korean undergraduate students, but this study did not analyse the audience reception of the filmic content.

This volume

Such research gaps highlight the need for this edited volume, which is split into two parts: the first four chapters (Part 1) focus on the reception and translation of Korean media in the West, focusing specifically on the UK, while the last three (Part 2) focus on the translation and reception of British media in South Korea. In Chapter 1, *Zoë Shacklock* investigates how British audiences access and encounter Korean television dramas on streaming services, such as Netflix and Viki. She analyses features of streaming platforms, such as categories and algorithms, and argues that audiences' taste reflected on their consumption habits is combined with the distributers' transnational formation of platforms. She highlights that the interface determines what programmes are visible to which audiences and discursively shapes how certain audiences perceive transnational television. Netflix UK organises categories considering national borders and boundaries, setting Korean programmes as foreign and separate from the unmarked Western, while Viki categorises Korean television by internationally familiar genres.

Next, *Ji-Hae Kang* explores media discourse about *Squid Game* in South Korea and the UK, which achieved a huge success worldwide. Investigating discourses in popular news media in both countries, such as *the Guardian*, *the Times*, *The Economist*, *Chosun Ilbo*, and *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, she reveals similar and different discursive constructions. While both British and Korean media frequently highlight its global popularity, British media tend to accentuate more on Netflix's success of its internationalisation strategies and the popularity of non-English shows in the British audiovisual market and its possible negative consequences. In addition, Korean media tend to highlight inequality in the Korean society, while British media tend to underline extreme anxieties portrayed in *Squid Game*.

One area of media translation that is increasingly visible and is the triumph of various rights movements may be audio description (AD). There have been active discussions of media accessibility within and beyond translation studies (e.g. Matamala and Orero 2016; Talaván, Lertola, and Moreno 2021), but relatively little attention has been paid to AD in Korea, where only a handful of studies can be identified at the time of writing (e.g. Jeong and Kim 2022). *Soo-Yeon Seo*'s *Coherence of the Korean and English audio description of Squid Game* fills such a void. Seo examines the English audio description of *Squid Game*, particularly focusing on the four non-verbal elements – *ddakji*, figure in the mask, robotic doll, and *dalgona* – with the aim of identifying how these key players in the narrative are translated in AD and how multimodal elements like sound and visuals are considered to achieve the overall coherence of the AD texts. OTT platforms expand their global reach and AD services to broaden the audiences, but this means the detailed visual

representations of culturally specific items not only need to be added to AD when they first appear on the scene but should also be maintained throughout to achieve coherence and to allow visually impaired international AD users to appreciate different cultures and foreign-language films.

Whilst most of these studies present a case-study, *Jonathan Evans* discusses media translation and digital distribution technologies at a macro level. *In Translation, streaming and the Korean Film Archive: toward sustainable solutions*, Evans draws our attention to one of the most pressing issues and that relates to the main theme of this volume: sustainability. Various practices pervasive in the translation industry from having a short-term contract and short-term labour to environmentally damaging activities are all touched upon. Slow but more sustainable models of media production and consumption and schemes that recognise environmental sustainability that are potentially open to engagement with audiovisual media translation are also discussed in depth.

In the first chapter of Part 2, *Jinsil Choi* explores a Korean streaming platform's (Watcha) paratextual formation of BBC drama series *Killing Eve* (2018–2022) and its reception in South Korea. She highlights how distributers in cross-cultural boundaries reformulate and reconfigure promotional narratives to suit target audiences' taste. She argues that Watcha's promotion strategies to hide the original's queer motives in its trailers for Season One change as the series receive an excited response in South Korea. She discusses Korean audiences' more favorable attitude toward two women's love based on the analysis of audience reviews on Watcha and argues that it suggests changing social attitudes toward queer culture in Korea.

Kyung Hye Kim investigates Korean audiences' participatory roles and the fluidity of authorship focusing on the case of the British film *I, Daniel Blake* (Dir. Ken Loach, 2016). She analyses paratextual elements of the Korean translation available on a Korean streaming platform, such as trailers, posters, promotional videos, and user-generated videos on YouTube, and highlights the temporality of authorship in this digital era. In the analysis of user-generated videos, she discusses how users reconstruct meanings and a central discourse of the source text, while they suppress the director and screenwriters' intention in the original through non-translation. She further underlines the role of epitexts in the digital era, which can significantly change the main narrative of the original.

While these studies focus more on the reception of the translated media, *Hye Jean Chung's Local nodes in global media networks: the Korean remake of BBC's Life on Mars* draws our attention to the global media network through the case of international remakes to position the Korean remake within the local media context and on global networks. Other media texts that feature the narrative device of time travel and nostalgic reimagining of the past are also discussed in terms of the sociocultural significance of the year each remake is set in. She argues that each international remake travels to the period that is significant in the nation's history, e.g. the year that witnessed visibility of the nation in the global arena, modernisation, and growth.

Concluding remarks

It is hoped that this book enhances our understanding of the dynamic media exchange by examining patterns and popularity of British media texts (films or TV shows) available on streaming services in Korea, and Korean media available on British streaming services, focusing on the role of translation in making accessible British media in Korea and vice versa. It can also help understand how translations of media productions for international audiences can develop sustainable (in both an economic and environmental sense) media industries in the UK and Korea. Demonstrating the changing nature of television and film due to the impact of streaming services, this volume can also serve to transnationalise the understanding of British and Korean media beyond their cultures of origin to understand their dissemination and reception in other locations, considering how translation and distribution thus affect the afterlives of media texts. Moreover, it will also develop our understanding of the increasingly transnational audience for media and how this can affect and alter production practices.

Notes

1 It is notable that when we searched this topic on Google from the UK in October 2024, the outcomes of the project that this book is part of were among the highest ranked. Work in Korean includes Kim 2019.
2 There are also media produced in Welsh and Gaelic, but they are outwith the scope of this study, and it is not entirely clear if they are distributed internationally. A search on Netflix UK for 'Welsh language' only comes up with two shows, and only one appears to be set in Wales. Results for 'Gaelic' also only show one show set in Scotland (which is in English).
3 https://about.netflix.com/en/news/making-progress-our-latest-film-and-series-diversity-study-and-netflix-fund (last accessed December 21, 2024).

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Part 1

Korean Media in the West


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1 Taste at the interface

Streaming K-dramas in the UK

Zoë Shacklock

In July 2021, Netflix debuted a promotional campaign titled 'The World is on Netflix'. The campaign began with a video titled 'Netflix streams the world's stories across the universe', in which a group of technicians travelled to Area 51 and 'translated' five Netflix series into an 'alien language', before seemingly broadcasting it to the Kepler-160 system. The video ends with the promise that 'if extra-terrestrials are watching, Netflix can help them understand humanity'. The following day, a second video was released to fulfill this promise. It begins with a cartoon alien on a spaceship orbiting Earth, angrily swiping through news and security footage from Earth before discovering and selecting the Netflix logo. The alien, together with its fellow crewmembers, experiences a range of emotions while watching Netflix series, from sadness to humour, from fright to love. As the sun rises over the planet below the aliens, a title card pops up, stating that 'the world's stories are on Netflix'.

This promotional campaign has much to tell us about how Netflix understands its own position and its own role within a global media ecosystem. Firstly, Netflix clearly positions itself as a global or transnational platform, a site where all the world's voices and stories can be found and accessed. Secondly, Netflix sees itself as the entity that mediates the encounter between local and foreign contexts. Within the advertisement itself, this is represented by the alien community, who are able to understand the human race through their consumption of Netflix content. Yet the broader implication applies for any viewer who might be watching material that seems foreign or unfamiliar: Netflix will, the service promises, allow you to understand a world, a people, a culture that might seem alien to you. In doing so, Netflix positions itself as the *interface* between self and other, between familiar and strange, between local and foreign. And this is explicitly visualised through the interface that the aliens navigate, in which the Netflix logo stands out in bright colours from the grey, pale colours of the other footage on their screen. In this video, Netflix not only promises an encounter with the other but also suggests that the organisation of the interface might tell us something about *how* that encounter should unfold – in the case of the aliens, the full colour spectrum of the range of human emotions.

I started this chapter with a description of this campaign because it summarises much of what I am interested in – the transnational encounters that audiences

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have with international streaming television and how they might be facilitated or shaped by specific streaming interfaces. The chapter argues that the interface plays a crucial role in determining not just what programmes are visible to which audiences but discursively shapes how we should understand transnational television. I explore these ideas through a case study of accessing K-dramas through the interfaces of Netflix UK and Rakuten Viki. The term 'K-drama' refers to television fiction created in South Korea and encompasses a wide range of genres, not exclusively dramatic texts. K-dramas are a prominent feature on both Netflix, the largest and most ubiquitous SVOD (streaming video on demand) service, and Rakuten Viki, an SVOD that focuses exclusively on East Asian content. Using Hyejung Ju's (2021) definition of transcultural consumption as defined by patterns of both otherness and similarity, I look at how the organisation of the interface – in particular, the category and the algorithm – encourages encounters with both otherness and with familiarity respectively. In doing so, I update Straubhaar's (1991) work on 'cultural proximity' to argue that what I term 'consumption proximity' determines viewer's encounters with K-dramas on streaming television. The algorithmic organisation of streaming television means that Korean television's ability to reach audiences is determined by the extent to which their consumption habits align with a transnational taste formation. Consequently, while Netflix's intergalactic campaign still revolves around discourses of travel, I argue that at the interface itself, it is taste that is the dominant framework for understanding transnational television flow today.

Travelling television and television interfaces

Discussions of global television distribution have always been structured by the interplay between similarity and difference. For some scholars, it is the *otherness* of global television that holds the most power, and its meaning derives from the fact that it comes from somewhere else and travels to arrive somewhere new. Mimi White notes that many of the foundational theories of television, such as Raymond Williams' work on flow (1974), present the experience of watching foreign television as 'an ethnographic discovery' (White 2003, 100). For Williams, it was the experience of watching American television in a hotel room in Miami, with its rapid, frequent commercial breaks that inspired him to understand television as continuous flow rather than discrete programmes with interruptions. Here, it is foreign television's status as 'other' that facilitates Williams' understanding of the medium itself, its very difference and unfamiliarity giving it the power to reveal some deeper truth. In a similar way, theories of cultural imperialism see media distribution and consumption as a one-way flow of material outwards from the Anglophone world. The 1985 UNESCO report identifies two major flows of media and information around the world: from the centre to the periphery and from the North to the South (Mowlana 1985, 64). These theories focus on the power differential between dominant television industries and the rest of the world and, as Lisa Parks and Shanti Kumar state, often fall into the trap of 'characterising non-Western societies as being "traditional" and previously unspoiled by contact with modern

(Western) cultures' (2003, 5). Cultural imperialism thus again stresses the difference, or seeming 'inauthenticity', of dominant global television's presence in a local culture.

Other theorists focus instead on tracing the similarities between local and global television. Most famously and significantly, Joseph Straubhaar coined the term 'cultural proximity' to describe television audiences' viewing preferences (1991). Developed as a criticism to theories of media imperialism, cultural proximity refers to the idea that audiences prefer to watch material that is most similar, or proximate, to their own culture. Straubhaar argues that cultural proximity is 'perceived in specific things like humour, gender images, dress, style, lifestyle, knowledge about other lifestyles, ethnic types, religion, and values that seem familiar or comfortable' (2021, 26). Consequently, on television, cultural proximity is visible most obviously in audiences' preference for local or national programmes but can also be seen in the importance of regional television markets, such as the flow of media throughout Latin America, Europe, or East Asia. Cultural proximity is central not only to understandings of the format trade on television but also to understandings of transnational adaptations: if a programme's success depends on cultural proximity, then international programmes or formats need to be adapted to that local context in order to be successful (Moran 1998). For these theorists, it is *similarity* to local or national contexts that is most important in understanding the flows of global television.

Across all of this scholarship, the key question involved is the question of how television *travels*: for the cultural imperialists, it is the incursion of dominant Western television into less powerful media cultures; for Straubhaar, it is the easy movement of texts between similar nations; for Williams, it is the movement of audiences into and out of unfamiliar television contexts. C. Lee Harrington and Denise Bielby, in their work on the flow of global television content through international trade fairs, argue that any theory of travelling television needs to pay closer attention to these channels of circulation (2005). They explore how buyers at trade fairs negotiate a web of contextual elements, such as national, star, and/or authorial reputation, existing fan audiences, and economic and critical success, arguing that some of these 'travel well on the circuit of culture', and that some do not (2005, 905). Thus, the movement of global television involves a range of different kinds of travelling and a range of overlapping patterns of both similarity and difference. For Harrington and Bielby, understanding global television requires understanding the details of the distributional pathways that programmes have taken to reach audiences, rather than trying to develop a universal theory to describe all television distribution.

The two key issues circulating throughout this discussion – distribution circuits and audience experience, and the relationship between similarity and difference – have also been central to understandings of Western engagement with Korean film and television. Chi-Yun Shin outlines the significance of distribution circuits in determining the cultural meaning of East Asian films in the West (2008). She argues that the prominence of Tartan Films' 'Asia Extreme' label – the most high-profile label for distributing East Asian films in Western markets – linked East Asian

cinema with violent, shocking content, cementing 'Western audiences' perception of the East as weird and wonderful, sublime and grotesque'. For Shin, distribution pathways work to discursively mark out East Asian cinema as 'other'. More recently, Hyejung Ju focuses on Western audience's engagement with Korean television on Netflix (2021). She argues that Western audiences engage with Korean programmes *transculturally*, something which involves 'both exotic and somehow familiar perspectives on K-drama texts, allowing foreign viewers to experience a reminiscent sense as well as a sense of fascination for "otherness" ' (2021, 174). Ju traces these patterns of both similarity and difference not only within the content and aesthetics of the programmes themselves but also across audience reviews on IMDb. Hyunji Lee echoes Ju's argument, suggesting that it is the 'combination of familiarity and difference' involved in the transnational consumption of K-dramas that increases the appeal of such media (2018, 367). Lee goes on to largely focus on the differences, arguing that K-dramas are 'perceived and enjoyed as a "different" text' by Western viewers (2018, 373). For all of these authors, the distribution and reception of K-dramas in the West is shaped by a play between similarity and difference, although different emphases may emerge depending on the particular context.

Yet in the world of streaming television, the organisation of distribution systems and audiences and the very relationship between local and global television all look somewhat different. Ramon Lobato argues that 'Netflix does not fit particularly well with the scalar vocabulary of national/transnational/global on which the field of media studies has traditionally relied', instead combining elements from all scales in different ways (2019, 70). While the workings of media trade fairs are largely hidden from public view, streaming's combination of different scales of location is made explicitly visible to audiences at the level of the interface itself. A streaming service's interface refers to the graphical, interactive screen of menus that we encounter and navigate in order to select particular film or television programme to watch. Daniel Chamberlain argues that media interfaces are both 'non-places', in that they are not 'in themselves destinations' but sites of transit and transportation, aimed at moving audiences from their homes into the world of entertainment (2011, 234). If Harrington and Bielby see the trade fair as the key transportational site in which local and global television meet, I would argue that the interface has taken on this role today. It is the interface that determines what programmes are visible to us and how and through which labels, menus, and categories we must navigate in order to find them. It is the interface that brings together local and global television and holds the potential to recombine these categories together in different ways. And it is the interface that positions us within this mediated geography, offering us a whirlwind tour across a world of television before we even enter the programmes themselves.

I am particularly interested in streaming television's interfaces because television itself has always been understood as itself an interface – a point of encounter between here and there, between private and public, between self and other, between home and world. Misha Kavka refers to as the 'cusp of the interface constituted by the . . . TV screen' (2008, 28), and David Morley describes television as

offering an 'interfacing' between public and private, local and global (2003, 273). Both of these authors explicitly describe television as an interface, a point at which two different things can meet, interact, and transform one another. This quality is also central to transnational encounters with television, which, as I have outlined, stand as its own interface between similarity and difference. While Kavka and Morley were both writing before the development of streaming television, today, television-as-interface has moved from being a figure of speech, or a more abstract quality of the medium, to being explicitly visualised in the graphical interfaces of streaming television services – interfaces that explicitly shape how those more abstract forms of encounter and access happen.

It is important to note that the interface is never neutral. Chamberlain uses another spatial metaphor to describe the interface – the 'scripted space' (2011, 233). Borrowing the term from Norman Klein's work on the architectural determination of theme park experiences (2004), Chamberlain argues that media interfaces are designed to prioritise interactivity and agency, a design that works specifically to obscure the careful 'scripting' that occurs underneath (2011, 240). For Chamberlain, an analysis of media interfaces reveals not just the scripting of ideology and power structures but also the 'broader techno-cultural formation[s]' of the media ecologies within which they operate (2011, 249). Elsewhere I have made a similar argument, suggesting that the organisation of streaming television interfaces works discursively to construct ideas of identity – in particular, how the categorical organisation of LGBTQ streaming television produces knowledge about what does and does not count as queerness (Shacklock 2023). In this chapter, I argue that the discursive power of the interface's scripted spaces equally works to shape ideas of what counts as local or global television and how we as audiences should be responding to it. For if the interface presents itself as the threshold through which we can access television from elsewhere, it also carefully designs how that experience is shaped, shaping the parameters of our encounters with global television.

Constructing otherness in the category

In the United Kingdom, Netflix is by far the most high-profile and popular streaming service offering Korean programmes, with 59% of UK households subscribing to the platform in 2023 (Ofcom 2023, 16). Korean television is available on other platforms: Rakuten Viki has an extensive catalogue of East Asian television (including K-dramas) yet relies on volunteer fan labour to provide subtitles. Apple TV and Disney+ both offer selected Korean or Korean-American 'originals' – at the time of writing, only one each, *Pachinko* (Apple TV, 2022–present) and *Snowdrop* (JTBC/Disney+, 2021–2022), respectively. Netflix, therefore, combines the breadth and diversity of a platform, such as Rakuten Viki, with the industrial weight and authority of the more established streaming services and remains the most dominant site through which to watch K-dramas in the UK. The service began acquiring distribution rights for K-dramas in 2016, and the first Korean Netflix original, *Kingdom* (2019–2020), aired in 2019. Also in 2019, Netflix signed a three-year partnership with CJ ENM and its subsidiary, Studio Dragon, to produce

original series. Netflix CCO Ted Sarandos described the deal as 'allow[ing] us to bring more top-tier Korean drama to Netflix members in Korea and all over the world', clearly working to establish Netflix's reputation as the leading international home for K-dramas (Siklos and Ko 2019). In a press statement from January 2023, Netflix stated that more than 60% of all Netflix members had watched Korean titles in the past year, and Don Kang, Netflix VP of Content in Korea, claimed that the service 'will continue to be the ultimate destination' for Korean media (Cho and Lee 2023).

Yet while Netflix may present itself as the international 'destination' for Korean media, it is worth remembering that for every Netflix user, the interface through which they access this media looks slightly different. As opposed to linear, broadcast television, in which programmes are delivered to us according to the schedule and are encountered as time-based, streaming television is presented to us first and foremost via the category. Categories are determined by metadata or the various labels that a programme or film is labelled with. Metadata categories include genre categories, such as comedy, drama, fantasy, and many more; format categories, such as whether a property is a film or a television series, or whether it is documentary or animation; constructions of quality, such as 'award-winning'; and, of course, national signifiers that point to a country of origin. The organisation of the categories on the homepage – which ones are present, the order that they appear in, and the selection of thumbnails we see within them – are determined by the workings of the Netflix algorithm. I will return to consider the algorithm in more detail later in this chapter; for now, I want to explore how Netflix categories Korean television and what kind of transnational thresholds these categories construct for us to step across. To do so, I will use my own Netflix interface as an example. I am a casual but not committed viewer of K-dramas, and my interface provides a useful example of a non-fan encounter with Korean television. In using my own interface as a case study, I am inspired by Amy Holdsworth's suggestion that the autobiographical tells us 'not only something specific about television but also something more general about *living* with television' (2021, 5; original emphasis). While Holdsworth is interested in the long durational aspects of both ordinary life and television, I want to consider what the personalised interface tells us not just about television's scripted spaces but also how it constructs and shapes our own experience of the local-global threshold.

Most obviously, Netflix groups K-dramas together under the 'K-drama' category. Here, we see an equal construction of genre (drama), but also nation, in terms of the 'K', or Korean. The construction of a nationality category is not rare on the Netflix interface; on mine, I also frequently see British and US categories, again often combined with genre or quality signifiers, such as 'drama' or 'award-winning'. The prevalence of such nationally-oriented categories tells us immediately that when it comes to contemporary television, nation still matters: national origin is just as important as quality or genre as a framework for understanding television. This may feel like an obvious point, but it is worth remembering that Netflix could easily prioritise other metadata elements over nation. The consistent and repeated use of the national category serves to re-inscribe the borders of the nation at the level

of the streaming interface, parcelling out and neatly isolating K-dramas from other programmes on the service.

As well as nation, we also see other geographical signifiers inscribed within the categories – in particular, a transnational understanding of continents or world regions. My Netflix interface also presents me with categories for East Asian TV and the more general Asian TV. These categories still include Korean television but also programmes from Japan (*Run for the Money* [Netflix, 2022]*, Midnight Diner* [Netflix, 2016–2019]) and China (*The Untamed* [Tencent Video, 2019]). Much of the scholarship on transnational television recognises the importance of considering supra-national regions alongside nation. Jean Chalaby explores the rise of pan-European channels, outlining how these channels both present global news and content to European audiences while engaging in some practices of localisation within nations (2002). For Chalaby, these channels act as a 'bridge that helps the global reach the local' (2002, 200). John Sinclair analyses the power of the Latin American television market, arguing that it contributes to the construction of 'geolinguistic regions', ones which challenge the North/South binary (1996, 36). The construction of supra-national regions thus not only acts as another site of television distribution and circulation but also another way of understanding one's own position within a globalised media environment: for Europe's balance of global news and localised content, transnational television promotes community through difference; for Latin America's 'contra-flows' of Spanish and Portuguese-language programmes, television establishes a community and an industry that exists in parallel to US and English language cultures.

On Netflix, the presentation of the regional category also works discursively to construct a particular geographical dynamic for UK viewers to inhabit. As well as determining the construction of categories, metadata also determines how we search for programmes and what we find; you can only find something with a keyword search if you search for keywords that have been tagged as metadata. If a programme has not been tagged as historical, for example, it will not appear in any searches I perform for historical dramas. Consequently, the recurrence of Korean programmes throughout the Asian categories tells us that in order to find it, we simply need to search for 'Asian television'. For those of us in the UK, 'Korean' is to some extent interchangeable with 'East Asian' or 'Asian' television. To put this into further context, it is worth noting that I have never seen an 'Americas' category on my interface, and British television never appears in any regional category, whether European or English-language. Consequently, while Korea and East Asia are interchangeable, the US and the UK are never substituted for anything but themselves. The category labels that Netflix uses and presents thus work to both script and reveal the broader geopolitical dynamics of the media ecology in which streaming operates, hinting at the fact that even within the global promise of Netflix, patterns of dominance still persist.

To return to Ju's suggestion that the Western 'transcultural' engagement with K-dramas involves both familiarity and difference, we can see how the category reiterates what she calls that 'sense of fascination for "otherness" ' (2021, 174). The Korean and Asian categories discursively construct Korean television as something

that can and must be isolated from other content on the service, in a way that reiterates both the primacy of nation and the dominance of a West-East split. At the time of writing, my Netflix interface presents me with the 'Sci-Fi & Fantasy Programmes' category, which includes *Warrior Nun* (Netflix, 2020–2022), *Avatar: The Last Airbender* (Nickelodeon, 2005–2008), *Lucifer* (Fox/Netflix, 2016–2021), and *Stranger Things* (Netflix, 2016–present). It also presents 'Casual Viewing', including *Superstore* (NBC, 2015–2021), *Kim's Convenience* (CBC, 2016–2021), *Travel Man* (Channel 4, 2015-present), and *Motherland* (BBC Two, 2016-present). 'Quirky Viewing' offers *Derry Girls* (Channel 4, 2018–2022), *The Good Place* (NBC, 2016–2020), *The Umbrella Academy* (Netflix, 2019–present), and *Emily in Paris* (Netflix, 2020–present). Few Asian programmes are included in any of these categories; instead, they remain predominantly separated out into the national or regional oriented categories. Consequently, on my interface, Korean and East Asian television is almost always separated out and marked as coming from 'elsewhere'. In contrast, Western television is presented more often as an unmarked default, simply able to be casual or quirky without an additional national label attached. It is likely that more committed viewers of K-dramas will be met with a different categorical construction; my point is simply that at a more casual (or initial) engagement with Korean streaming television, the interface always parcels it out as something different, something exotic. Through the construction of the national and regional category, UK audiences are invited to encounter Korean television by stepping across a threshold into a world marked as 'other'.

Consumption proximity and the algorithm

If the category helps to inscribe the experiences of difference and otherness that make up Ju's theory of transcultural engagement, then it is the algorithm that constructs feelings of similarity, recognition, and reminiscence. An algorithm is simply a set of rules or procedures that are followed to compute a task or solve a problem. While algorithms structure all sorts of computer functions, they are most visible today in their predictive functions, as a tool that determines how our various online platforms are organised and presented to us: everything from sorting emails to targeting advertisements to recommending items for purchase or consumption. Netflix, like other streaming services, uses what we call a collaborative filtering algorithm to organise individual users' interfaces (Johnson 2019). Collaborative filtering works by mapping similarities between the different taste profiles of different users. To use a K-drama example, if my friend and I both watched *Extraordinary Attorney Woo* and I went on to watch *Crash Landing on You* (tvN, 2019–2020) and my friend watched *The Silent Sea* (Netflix, 2021), it would recommend the two latter shows to both of us, based on the shared point in our history. Collaborative filtering algorithms rely on machine learning, in which the more information they receive about both individual users' preferences and a broader user base, the 'smarter' or more 'accurate' they seemingly become. On Netflix, this information is gathered from not just user viewing preferences but also the specific thumbnails they choose to click on, information about time spent browsing, and how long or

how much of a programme a user watches. Matthias Frey suggests that a collaborative filtering algorithm 'quickly sizes you up and suggests content that, based on its data from other users, a person like you would enjoy' (2021, 43). The algorithm, then, promises to recognise something about your media preferences based on its similarity to those of other users.

Earlier in this chapter, I outlined the theory of cultural proximity, in which audiences prefer to watch material that is somehow 'proximate' to their own cultural backgrounds and contexts. I want to update this theory for the age of streaming, arguing that it is what I term 'consumption proximity' that determines, shapes, and predicts viewers' encounters with international television. If I want Korean programmes to be displayed prominently on my Netflix interface, I need to have made consumption choices that are similar, or proximate, to the particular selection of choices that the algorithm identifies as being part of a Korean media taste formation. Consequently, if decisions about cultural proximity happen at the level of distribution deals (such as Harrington and Bielby's trade fairs), in which buyers and executives decide whether a text will be successful in a new market, decisions about what is and is not 'proximate' on streaming are mediated by the workings of the algorithm. Rather than cultural proximity, it is consumption proximity that determines our likelihood of watching and encountering transnational streaming television.

To identify how these patterns of consumption proximity might work, I created a new Netflix profile on my own account, effectively beginning with a 'blank slate'. In order to begin watching, you must first select your preferred language and then select three thumbnails from a list of programmes, which will, Netflix promises, help the service 'to find TV programmes and films you'll love'. Immediately, Netflix asks users to reflect upon, identify, and communicate their own consumption preferences, making it clear that such consumption patterns are central to the operation of the platform. However, the initial list was overwhelmingly composed of US and UK programmes: the only Korean programme included was *Squid Game* (Netflix, 2021–present). Consequently, the default Netflix user in the UK is not only presumed to be interested in predominantly Western content but also unable to step outside of this positioning (although this may also be influenced by my choice of English as my preferred language).

To proceed, I selected three programmes to best model an average UK viewer: *Stranger Things*, the second-most popular programme on Netflix (behind *Squid Game)*, and two UK-set programmes, *Sex Education* (Netflix, 2019–present) and *The Crown* (Netflix, 2016–present). Unsurprisingly, Netflix did not initially recommend me any K-dramas or any Korean media at all. The 'Trending Now' and 'Popular on Netflix' categories always reflect what is trending and popular amongst viewers with similar viewing histories to you, not the most watched programmes on the platform overall. These categories were filled with scripted US and UK programmes, such as *Peaky Blinders* (BBC One/Two, 2013–2022), *Breaking Bad* (AMC, 2008–2013), *Wednesday* (Netflix, 2022), and *Friends* (NBC, 1994–2004). Further down the interface, I was presented with a range of categories that encompassed quality ('BAFTA Award Winners & Nominees'), audiences (Family Watch

Together TV), and modes of viewing ('Watch in One Weekend'). With little information on my taste preferences, the interface reflected not my own habits but more externally defined categories, such as quality judgments or audience groupings, or Netflix's own preferred mode of marathon consumption. At this point, the interface was not providing me with a reflection of myself but an invitation to engage in sanctioned consumption habits – 'good' taste, family viewing, and marathon viewing. It is, of course, significant that this initial interface contained few invitations to watch non-US/UK television, only including *Squid Game* and the German Netflix original *1899* (Netflix, 2022) in the 'Watch in One Weekend' category. Again, the default user, and the default invitation to begin carving out a consumption pathway through the interface, remain overwhelmingly Western-focused.

To watch Korean television, I needed to choose to follow a pathway that was not offered to me on the front page of my interface. I searched for the K-drama category and began to watch *Business Proposal* (SBS TV, 2022), watching the first two episodes. The next day, I logged back into Netflix and was presented with a top banner for *Hometown Cha-Cha-Cha* (tvN, 2021), a romance-oriented K-drama. Yet further down my interface, the categories continued to be largely Western-oriented, the similar categories of quality and audiences (this time, teen dramas) as before. Following Netflix's recommendation, I watched two episodes of *Hometown Cha-Cha-Cha*. On day three, my interface began to provide me with far more programmes from Korea: the very first category on my interface, following 'Continue Watching' and before 'Trending Now', was 'K-Dramas', and 'Trending Now' now category was overwhelmingly oriented around K-dramas, including *Crash Landing on You*, *Extraordinary Attorney Woo* (ENA, 2022), *Vincenzo* (tvN, 2021), and *Twenty-Five Twenty-One* (tvN, 2022).

After three days of browsing, clicking, and watching, I was able to recognise my own consumption history (and preferences) reflected back at me at level of the interface; it was similar to my activities of the preceding three days. The 'reminiscent sense' that Ju identifies in transcultural television engagement is, on streaming, mediated by the workings of the algorithm. It is the interface that feels familiar to us that provides us with a feeling of recognition, a testament to the previous choices we have made. In Matthias Frey's survey of Netflix user experiences, he found that users accepted that their Netflix recommendations had a 'significant relationship to some aspect of their own identity' (2021, 151). Users thus expect that the algorithm tells them something true about themselves, holding up a mirror in which they can see their own preferences and identities reflected back at them. Netflix encourages such recognition through categories such as 'For You', which again serve as an explicit reminder that the programmes we see on the interface have a meaningful relationship to our own selves. While part of what users might see in the algorithmic mirror may align with cultural identity, it is important to remember that the algorithm does not make recommendations based on demographic data but entirely on a user's consumption history and its similarity to that of other users. Again, the feelings of recognition, similarity, and proximity that we experience at the interface are based in consumption proximity – proximity to our own previous choices and how similar they may be to that of other users.

In updating the idea of cultural proximity to consumption proximity, I am updating another key term or metaphor that emerges in discussion of transnational television – the idea of travel. Harrington and Bielby note that transnational television is always discussed through 'discourses of tourism, migration, global trade and diaspora', meaning that both programmes and viewers are imagined as 'travellers, tourists, sojourners, exiles, vagabonds, pilgrims, or nomads' (2005, 903). Indeed, in Lee's analysis of Western audiences' encounters with K-dramas, she notes that viewers described K-drama viewing as a form of 'travelling' itself (2018, 374). Yet Harrington and Bielby are cautious about this metaphor, suggesting that it flattens the complicated processes and circuits within transnational television, across industrial, distributional, and reception contexts (2005, 916).

Rather than travel, I argue that encounters with transnational streaming television are largely mediated by discourses of taste. Ien Ang suggests that audience's ability to encounter transnational television depends on whether they exist within or outside of what she calls a 'zone of cultural affinity' (2004, 305). Yet on streaming services, as I have argued, this zone is a zone of *consumption* affinity. To see K-dramas on a Netflix interface, one must have displayed consumption habits that are similar to other users who watch K-dramas. In the user profile that I designed for this chapter, it took three days of watching K-drama episodes and clicking on K-drama thumbnails – three days of performing a particular taste preference – for the algorithm to plot it against other users and begin to reflect it back to me. Again, rather than cultural proximity or cultural affinity, what mediates the likelihood of a Netflix UK user encountering K-dramas is their similarity to the K-drama taste profile that Netflix has built up through collaborative filtering. Our encounters are mediated primarily through our selective consumption, our ability to enact particular tastes on the interface, which in turn reflects a particular kind of taste back to us.

Taste is a useful framework for approaching transnational streaming television because it is, of course, already a key framework and metaphor through which people talk about streaming. Matthias Frey considers whether Netflix has the power to shake up ideas of 'good' taste from a bounded concept that is shaped by a 'small, homogenous cultural elite' to a more fragmented world of many different personal tastes (2021, 193). Similarly, the repeated use of the 'binge' metaphor to characterise Netflix's invitation to watch many episodes of a series at once again discursively presents the platform as a site of consumption and taste. Yet ideas of 'taste' have also been key for understanding transnational encounters with K-dramas. Jennifer Rachel Dutch has argued that food is a crucial site of affective meaning for Western fans of K-dramas (2019). Drawing from ideas of culinary tourism, she argues that Western fans 'yearn' for authentic Korean cuisine (2019, 8). She makes the interesting point that 'while culinary tourism represents the exploration of "an other" ', international K-drama fans desire less an encounter with new cuisine than with more of the same of what they have already been consuming – as she says, "not a true taste of Korea, but the real flavour of K-Dramaland" (2019, 17). Here, Dutch alludes to those two patterns of feeling that make up Ju's transcultural reading strategy – similarity and difference – suggesting that Western fans'

taste preferences are organised around proximity to media texts, not to a desire to broaden one's actual palate.

To apply these ideas surrounding taste to the discussion so far, we can see that on Netflix, the category offers an opportunity to explore and consume the other, a kind of culinary tourism laid out in a buffet. The algorithm, conversely, narrows down our taste into a recognition of particular taste formation, a particular cuisine, one that is more a reflection of ourselves and our own tastes. Consequently, the patterns of similarity and difference that both Ju and Lee foreground in their work are mediated and experienced at the level of the streaming interface. Henry Jenkins, writing in 2006, argues that transnational fan audiences use international media consumption as an 'escape route' from the limitations of their own local communities and cultures (152). Here, Jenkins uses a metaphor of travel to present transnational fandom as an explicit rejection of and resistance to cultural proximity. Yet at the streaming interface, while the bounded category may allow some kind of escape into something 'different', the algorithmic organisation offers not movement elsewhere but a mirror reflection of one's own consumption. Consequently, the framework of taste allows for a better recognition of this dialectic of similarity and difference and how it is foregrounded by different elements of the streaming interface.

Otherness and similarity on Viki

Thus far, I have been focusing on Netflix, which, as I outlined earlier, is the dominant service through which UK audiences access K-dramas. Yet my conclusions about the interface are limited to Netflix: while streaming interfaces do share elements in common across services, each has a distinctive organisation that will undoubtedly shape the transnational encounters we have at their thresholds. I want to turn now to explore these transcultural patterns of similarity and difference, and questions of taste, through a different streaming service – Rakuten Viki (hereafter referred to as Viki). Founded by Korean entrepreneurs in Singapore in the mid-2000s and purchased by the Japanese technology conglomerate Rakuten in 2013, Viki focuses exclusively on East Asian film and television; as its tagline states, it is 'the heart of Asian entertainment'. Much of the existing scholarship on Viki focuses on its reliance on fans and fan labour to provide subtitles (a practice known as fansubbing). Tessa Dwyer sees Viki fansubbers as challenging dominant ideas surrounding the one-way flow of media, deliberately attempting to 'overcome the geopolitical realities' that determine the traditional limits of transnational media distribution (2012, 236). Jamie Henthorn suggests that fansubbers work collaboratively to imagine (and reimagine) what work and labour might look like in a global community (2019). Both of these authors see Viki as a threshold between local and global at which new ideas of the transnational are produced. Yet their focus on labour – on the specific activities, organisation, and experiences of fansubbers – means that neither considers how these 'geopolitical realities' might be encountered by audiences at the front-facing level of the interface itself.

Like Netflix, Viki organises and presents its programmes through various categories. Categories are presented on the homepage of the interface in the same format as Netflix: users can scroll vertically through the list of categories and horizontally to see the items within each category. Yet unlike Netflix, Viki includes an explicit invitation to browse categories through the drop-down 'Categories' menu at the top of the page. This menu presents categories organised in three groups: nation (Korea, Mainland China, Japan, Taiwan, Thailand, and Others); genre (including romantic comedy, costume and period, romance, crime and mystery, and action); and a selection of different types of content, such as 'new', 'paid content', 'watch free', and 'fan collections'. It is immediately clear that Viki's categorical organisation sets up a distinct geopolitical configuration, one that, for Western viewers, offers a different transnational encounter than Netflix. Unlike Netflix, the East-West split is not inscribed or reiterated at the level of the interface. There is no indication here of a difference between East Asian television as 'other', marked out from the rest of the service's offerings. The organisation of the different national categories does reveal something about the power of different national television industries – Korea and Mainland China at the top of the list and the nondescript 'Others', which includes one programme from Vietnam and four from Hong Kong. Consequently, while this categorical organisation still inflects and mirrors the dominant media patterns within the region, in terms of which nations export more television and hold more power in the region, it does not rely upon a binary construction of self and other.

Underneath the list of nations, there is a button to display 'All Categories'. Interestingly, clicking through to this page brings up a list that removes any reference to nation at all, instead revolving entirely around genre categories. These genres overwhelmingly reflect genre configurations that are familiar to Western audiences – crime, music, romance, medical, supernatural, etc. – with only a few specific to East Asian television, such as 'BL' (Boys' Love, referring to male-male romances aimed at mostly female audiences). Lee argues that Western fans of K-dramas are 'drawn to, at least in part, the familiarity of the genres and tropes which are influenced by Western media' (2018, 373). On Viki, the category does not reiterate and construct otherness at its threshold; rather, it encourages a feeling of recognition and similarity, framing and organising East Asian television through a diverse range of genre categories that are recognisable to Western audiences.

Viki does not use an algorithm in the same way as Netflix; it does not use viewing history to personalise its homepage for individual users. Consequently, it is not structured by consumption proximity in the same way as an algorithmically organised service. However, I argue that 'taste' is still a prominent factor in our engagement with the Viki interface. On Viki, taste formations are clearly visible and displayed in the 'fan collections' category, accessible through the category menu on the homepage. This page displays a range of collections that have been curated by users on the service – as Viki describes it in a subheading, they are 'handpicked shows by fans for fans'. The titles of these categories vary: some simply foreground a fan's favorite shows, such as 'Enjoy watching!' or 'The Best of Dramas'; others reiterate standard national or genre categories, such as 'K-drama and Chill' or 'Vampire Dramas'. Derek Kompare sees fan curation as creating pathways of

access, operating 'in service of bringing new people into the fandom' (2018, 107). Charlotte Stevens, in a reflection on curating vidshows (collections of fanvids to be screened for fellow fans), similarly understands the act of curation as providing a path but sees this as predominantly an *interpretive* path – in her case study, one that guided viewers through the pleasures of vampire films and television (2017). Following Kompare and Stevens, we can see fan curation as establishing its own kind of threshold encounter, one that sets up parameters for entry into a particular fan culture or fan text. Yet in Viki's fan collections, the path that each curated category invites us to follow is a path through the taste of the creator. Indeed, some categories make this connection between curation and taste even more obvious, explicitly referencing different appetites: 'La Créme de la Créme Culinary Dramas', or 'Insanely Hot Guys'. Consequently, Viki's fan collections become a site for experiencing otherness, in which we are invited to cross a threshold into the different personal tastes of different users. By marking out each fan collection as a separately authored taste formation, this section of Viki's interface invites us to browse a varied buffet of different tastes.

Conclusion

To conclude, I want to return to where I began this chapter, with a brief discussion of the cultural politics embedded in streaming marketing campaigns. In 2022, Viki released a commercial titled 'When K-Dramas Watch You', which depicts a Western woman watching a conversation between a Korean couple. After the couple question why the woman is watching them, she replies that she is simply 'watching some Viki'. A simplistic Viki interface suddenly appears on the screen around each of the couple's faces, framing them within a pale-blue rectangle with playback controls, a running time, view options, and the Viki logo in the corner. As the couple grapple with the rectangular interface, attempting to remove it from their faces, the Western viewer is joined by a translator and editor, who translate the couple's dialogue and provide cultural context for specific phrases or terms. Like the Netflix commercial that I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, Viki presents their service as a form of cultural encounter, one that allows users to access and understand a foreign language and culture. The commercial explicitly and overtly ties this encounter to the interface itself, for it is the sudden emergence of the interface that allows the woman to gain a deeper understanding of both the couple's words and their meaning.

On Netflix and Viki, it is the interface that plays the most important in shaping what kind of transnational, transcultural encounter we have with the international television we consume. On Netflix UK, the category reiterates national borders and boundaries, marking out Korean programmes as foreign and separate from the unmarked Western default; on Viki, the category aligns Korean television with internationally familiar genre categories. On Netflix, taste becomes a self-reiterating loop in which our own preferences are mirrored back to us; on Viki, taste is an encounter with the *other* – the taste preferences and appetites of different users, explicitly marked out as such. Western viewers navigating both services

engage in Ju's transcultural consumption, structured by a pattern of otherness and similarity. The specific nature of these encounters and these patterns, however, will be different depending on the service we use, the interfaces we navigate, and our own tastes.

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2 Making sense of streaming success

The discursive construction of *Squid Game*'s success by the South Korean and British media

Ji-Hae Kang

This paper investigates how *Squid Game*, a South Korean drama television series created by Hwang Dong-hyuk and released worldwide on Netflix in September 2021, is discursively constructed by the British and South Korean media, respectively. Using the critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework (Fairclough 1995, 2003), the study examines the ways in which news and magazine articles represent the streaming platform's most-watched show series and its global success. Based on an analysis of articles published in *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *The Economist*, and the *New Statesman* on the one hand and Chosun Ilbo, Kyunghyang Shinmun, Sisa Journal, and Hankyoreh 21 on the other, the paper shows how the series is discursively constructed from different perspectives. In the case of the South Korean media, the study argues that particular focus is given to the increase in the country's soft power, an unprecedented global rise and popularity of Korean cultural content, as well as deep feelings of inequality and ebbing opportunities in the Korean society depicted in the series. The British media's coverage, on the other hand, tends to place greater emphasis on the success of the international business model of Netflix and the ways in which extreme anxieties in modern life, portrayed in the dystopian drama, resonate with global audiences.

Introduction

This chapter analyses the ways in which the success of the Korean-language television series *Squid Game* is discursively constructed by South Korean and British news outlets. Using the critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework, the study examines how South Korean and British news organizations covered the global popularity of the Korean-language show, which became a television phenomenon in the evolving media landscape, breaking records as the most watched show on Netflix with 1.65 billion hours streamed in the first four weeks (Spangler 2021). For most South Koreans, *Squid Game*'s global success was an issue of immediate interest, as the kind of popularity enjoyed by the series was unprecedented for a Korean show released on a global streaming video-on-demand (SVOD) platform. While many in South Korea (hereafter Korea) viewed the success as an opportunity for local producers to introduce their content to the global market, others raised concerns that an enhanced role of Netflix and other global streaming platforms in

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the domestic media market could lead to "further subordination of local production and distribution to the hands of US capital" (Kim 2022, 1509). In the case of United Kingdom, where *Squid Game* was also immensely popular and Netflix has a strong social presence, the show's success is possibly of less interest to audiences, given that the series features mostly Korean actors speaking the Korean language and deals with socioeconomic and cultural topics based on Korean lifeworld. From the point of view of British audiences, the show may invoke feelings of geographical, psychological, and sociocultural distance and come across as something less noteworthy or interesting (cf. Florea and Woelfel 2022).

At the same time, the increasing availability and easy accessibility of foreign-language videos on SVOD platforms function to collapse space and time for audiences using these services. The distant is no longer the distant for many as streaming technology has "fundamentally changed the everyday experience of time and space by collapsing them into a feeling of right now, right here" (Nan 2023, 156). Yet this does not straightforwardly translate into a change in audience attitudes toward linguistically and culturally "Other" content. For English-speaking audiences, non-English shows, such as *Squid Game*, and the numerous unfamiliar elements in these shows, are still approached with reservation. This is exemplified in a statement that appeared in a news article in *The Guardian* in October 20, 2021: "The originals are punchy, sharp and aesthetically innovative. But at the heart of it we haven't become a nation who like to be challenged all the time with foreign-language dramas".

The news article cited earlier underlines the significance of news media's mediating role in offering evaluations of works of culture, both proximal and distant, and verifying them as worthy of attention. News outlets create, influence, and circulate narratives concerning cultural content. Even though social media virality and their echo chamber effect have been discussed by numerous scholars in relation to *Squid Game*'s and other audiovisual works' success (Correia, Guimarães, and Teixeira 2022), many regard social media's function as "back channels" (Sutton, Palen, and Shklovski 2008), supporting, highlighting, commenting on, or opposing the narratives of the mainstream news media (Ahmed et al. 2022). The instructional function of mainstream news media has played a significant role in bringing people's attention to *Squid Game* from a number of perspectives. As such, this paper concentrates on the news media's meaning-making role in the Korean and British society by analyzing the ways in which the news texts represent the show's success and make it newsworthy.

Squid Game was created and directed by Hwang Dong-hyuk, a Korean filmmaker, for Netflix. Released in September 17, 2021, this nine-episode, Korean-language series is a dark and suspenseful thriller that portrays cash-strapped and socially precarious contestants risking death to vie in a survival game for a 45.6 billion KRW (38.5 million USD) prize. The show explores themes of class inequality and the dehumanizing qualities of hypercompetitive capitalist society by presenting stories of desperation and brutal human conditions in each episode. There have been numerous criticisms concerning the show's graphic violence and bleak outlook on humanity. However, the show's sharp social commentary, complex and interesting

characters, visually compelling art, appealing music, and intense scenarios have received positive reviews. Commentaries on the drama have ranged from expressions of strangeness of a Korean series becoming a global sensation (Ahmed et al. 2022) to an emphasis of the ways in which the show is a validation of how "local cultural products, in tandem with transnational proximity, deconstruct static cultural proximity in the global cultural scene" (Jin 2022, 16).

Although there are existing academic publications on the reception and representation of *Squid Game*, especially in relation to its representation by American press and reception by American audiences (Oh 2022; Ra 2022; Dunn and Young 2022), no study to date has provided a systematic comparison of Korean and British news stories on *Squid Game*. A comparative analysis of Korean and British news media's discursive construction of *Squid Game*'s success contributes to enhancing an understanding of how the show's success is mediated and interpreted, as well as which aspect of the show's success is considered worthy of reporting by media organizations in respective societies. In other words, considering that the selection of news items and the actual formulation of news is based on news values, this chapter interrogates the connection between reporting of the drama's success and the issue of newsworthiness in corresponding societies.

News media's reporting of a global streaming success

Global streaming success and Korean cultural output

The rapid rise of SVOD services has reshaped content consumption, offering easy-to-use, non-linear services that offer "binge-able" titles based on personalized user preferences. National and multinational streaming platforms are creating their own revenue models and growth trajectories as they navigate evolving audience tastes, technological innovation, and market complexities. Against this background, Netflix, the largest curated video entertainment service in the world with more than 200 million subscribers in more than 190 countries, implements a strategy of creating original international content to stay relevant and attract a steady influx of new customers (Lotz 2021).

For Netflix, having its videos become a global streaming success is an issue of critical importance. In Wayne and Uribe Sandoval's (2023) study on discourses on streaming success as related to two globally popular non-English language originals, *Fauda* (2015) and *La Casa de Papel* (2017), Netflix executives were found to regard streaming success as series that "travel" (2023, 86), the conditions for which are production value and authenticity. For Netflix's creative talent, a successful series contains stories of moral complexity and universal appeal. They viewed shows that feature interesting and morally ambiguous characters, set against the narrative or generic conditions produced by the global economic and political crisis, as more likely to become popular worldwide.

The word "travel" appears again in a description of *Squid Game*'s global appeal by Minyoung Kim, Netflix's vice president of content for the Asia-Pacific region. Regarding *Squid Game*'s success, Kim stated that "[w]e knew we wanted this show

to travel" and that the show is "perfect evidence that our international strategy has been right" (Brzeski 2021). During her interview with *The Hollywood Reporter*, Kim attributed the popularity of the show to five factors: 1) the global appeal of survival game genre; 2) cultural authenticity and the simple and straightforward nature of the games; 3) the art, especially the mise en scène and the music, supported by substantial funding; 4) notable scenes that become talking points and can easily be turned into memes; and 5) the themes of societal inequality, presented in a captivating manner.

Parallels may be identified between Kim's delineation of streaming success factors and the discourses by Korean producers and critics regarding the show's global popularity. In the case of the latter, the show's success is mostly attributed to the high quality of Korean cultural output, production value, and a narrative appeal to a global audience. *Squid Game* is cinematically well-crafted and shows how a typical K-style (Korean style) work that manifests a Korean-style juxtaposition of the unfamiliar and uncanny with genuine sincerity can appeal to global audiences (cf. Kim and Park 2021). Korean stories are often absurd and strange from the perspective of international viewers, but they are presented in relatable and earnest ways (Hong 2022). Often overflowing of emotionally rich interactions, or *shinpa*, Korean drama features heroes who are presented as deeply flawed, ordinary people, trapped in impossible situations and clinging to shared values, such as love and family and caring for others. That the characters "smell like humans", according to many, has been a key aspect of relatability and genuine sincerity.

Discourses on global streaming success differ depending on whose perspective is taken into consideration. For news media outlets, one of the key factors that shape discourses on global streaming success is the impact of streaming services on the domestic audiovisual market. Effects of the streaming services vary based on a range of structural dynamics, such as national scale, language, and pre-existing norms tied to particular macroeconomic conditions. The business of television and film has been "transformed by digital distribution and internationalization" (Lotz, Potter, and Johnson 2022, 272), and the impact of the emergence of global SVODs, such as Netflix, is dissimilar depending on the market conditions.

In the case of the United Kingdom, which has been one of the leading players in the production of national television, the impact of Netflix has been mixed. Netflix produces a large amount of original content in the country and has increased competition and innovation. However, it is regarded as a threat to traditional broadcasters for contributing to create an environment which has led to a reduction in investment in public service broadcasting (Lotz, Potter, and Johnson 2022). The real-term declines in public funding and advertiser spending have been apparent since 2010, and the primary area of revenue growth for the UK television market lies in subscription fees. Yet this increase has been driven by US-owned SVODs, such as Netflix, Amazon, and Disney (Ofcom 2020). Broadcast television and linear viewing has been steadily declining, largely replaced by subscription-video-on-demand services and YouTube, especially among younger audiences.

In Korea, the domestic audiovisual market is much smaller in scale compared to the US or UK, and the structural asymmetries caused by disparities in technologies,

financial strength, and power between local and global players in the market continue to this day. Korea has a strongly dominant terrestrial broadcasting markets, and thus, it had been difficult for the pay TV market to grow (Dwyer et al. 2018). Its video culture has changed from a broadcast-focused culture into a diversified experience that includes a variety of videos from both domestic and global streaming services. While producing media content on the part of Korean production studios proved to be difficult due to the small scale of the domestic market, engaging Korean media industries to produce global SVOD platforms' original content aimed at both Korea and the global market has created opportunities for Korean production studios to produce media products and exercise creativity. For many producers in the field, Netflix and foreign streaming platforms have become essential to manufacturing mega-budgeted content. As such, Netflix is viewed as a "double-edged sword in media production" (Kim 2022, 1512), in that it is regarded both as 1) an investor which would enable Korean audiovisual industry to produce a variety of content and introduce its products worldwide and 2) a competitor that has the potential to threaten domestic media production, especially by reducing the position of Korean media production to mere subcontractors of the platform.

Making sense of events and newsworthiness

News researchers have used the notion of "news values" to explain the selection of news items and the actual formulation of news. News values are the criteria that news workers apply to determine what is news (Bell 1991; Richardson 2007; Brighton and Foy 2007). Serving as benchmarks for deciding which stories make the cut and which parts are highlighted or excluded in the process of news production, they reveal information about "the (*imagined*) preferences of the expected audience" (Richardson 2007, 94; italics in original) about what is newsworthy.[1] Numerous scholars have provided taxonomies of news values since Galtung and Ruge (1965) initially identified 12 news factors that determine the newsworthiness of a story. From a discourse-based perspective, Van Dijk (1988) presents the following as news values: novelty, recency, presupposition, consonance, relevance, deviance and negativity, and proximity.[2] Focusing on the connection between news values and discourse, he emphasizes that news values are used to make decisions about the inclusion and exclusion of material and about which aspects of selected stories to foreground or background. More importantly, they transcend individual judgments and function to discursively reproduce society through the media.

Out of numerous news values, many scholars regard "relevance" as a core value. As a "trade-off between maximizing new information while minimizing processing effort" (Barchas-Lichtenstein et al. 2021, 50), relevance is understood in comparative rather than absolute terms, as people pay attention to what is most relevant at a given time. Also, relevance is described in terms of spatial proximity by such researchers as Cotter (2010), who argue that professional journalists focus primarily on relevance to the community of coverage, that is, people who live where they report. In many cases, newsworthiness is considered intrinsic to the reported event, "the farther away something is, the more significance, drama, or

human appeal it must display if it is to make a local news list" (Conley and Lamble 2006, 48–49). Events, however, are not always intrinsically newsworthy, and news values are not always obvious. Newsworthiness is also discursively constructed to engage audiences, and events can be represented as newsworthy with specific application of discursive strategies (Bednarek and Caple 2012; Bell 1991). Thus, in news stories, discourse strategies are used to create, indicate, or emphasize news values (Bednarek 2006; Bell 1991; Conboy 2006). As news values are not neutral, but reflect ideologies and priorities held in society, they are an ideologically loaded way of perceiving – and presenting – the world (Bell 1991). According to Hall (1973, 235), although the news values of mainstream journalism may appear to be "a set of neutral, routine practices", they constitute an "ideological structure" that privileges the perspectives of powerful groups within society.

In the case of news stories on *Squid Game*'s global popularity, newsworthiness is connected to the issue of distance. For Korean news outlets, *Squid Game* is newsworthy in that the show has direct relevance based on its geographical and cognitive proximity. What is of interest from a research point of view in such a case is how news outlets utilize the potential for interpretation of this proximal event for Korean audiences and what kind of discursive strategies are used for their representation.

In the case of British media outlets, the dimension of distance is more complicated and requires a careful consideration of the diverse factors related to the show and the SVOD service. Both *Squid Game* and Netflix are familiar to British audiences, and the seamless offering of foreign TV shows and films, released simultaneously worldwide, with easily accessible subtitles and dubs, has helped to create proximity of these foreign audiovisual materials. On the other hand, there is still the long-running and deeply entrenched resistance to foreign and non-English language film and TV for English-speaking audiences (Demont-Heinrich 2022). Thus, in the context of reporting on the *Squid Game*'s success, there is a need for British news outlets to use discursive mechanisms to bring the event closer to British audiences and to enhance its relevance. Newsworthiness needs to be discursively created and emphasized to engage readers and get them to read about foreign cultural products. The news producer's building of the event's newsworthiness through language entails a process of discursively creating, highlighting, or foregrounding relevance.

The discursive construction of *Squid Game*'s success

Data and method of analysis

This section examines news media's representations of *Squid Game*'s success by qualitatively analyzing news texts published by four media outlets in Korea and four in the United Kingdom. Two Korean dailies, *Chosun Ilbo* (조선일보, CI) and *Kyunghyang Shinmun* (경향신문, KS), and two Korean news magazines, *Sisa Journal* (시사저널, SJ) and *Hankyoreh 21* (한겨레21, HK), were chosen for this study. Also, two British dailies, *The Times* (TT) and *The Guardian* (TG), and two

British news magazines, *The Economist* (TE) and the *New Stateman* (NS), were selected. The choice of news organizations was based on their influence, circulation, and perceived reliability in the respective societies, and an effort was made to choose news outlets spanning across the political spectrum.

The period examined in this study is between September 1, 2021, to February 27, 2022. News articles on the show were retrieved from Korean and British news outlet websites through keyword searches. "오징어게임 [*Squid Game*]" in Korean and "*Squid Game*" in English were used in the search, and the collected news texts were then manually checked for relevance. Articles containing a single mention or a few mentions of *Squid Game* in a discussion of a completely different topic were excluded from the dataset. A total of 196 articles, including opinion pieces and pure reporting, were collected, and the dataset consisted of 140 Korean and 56 British news articles. Information on Korean and British news articles is shown in Table 2.1 and Figure 2.1.

In this study, Fairclough's (1992, 1995, 2003) critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework is used. As a framework used to uncover ideology in language, CDA

Table 2.1 South Korean and British news articles on *Squid Game* used in this study

Country	*South Korea*				*United Kingdom*			
News Outlet	*조선일보 (Chosun Ilbo, CI)*	*경향신문 (Kyung-hyang Shinmun, KS)*	*시사저널 (Sisa Journal, SJ)*	*한겨레21 (Han-kyoreh 21, HK)*	*The Guardian (TG)*	*The Times (TT)*	*The Economist (TE)*	*New Statesman (NS)*
Subtotal	61	70	6	4	37	12	4	3
Total	141				56			

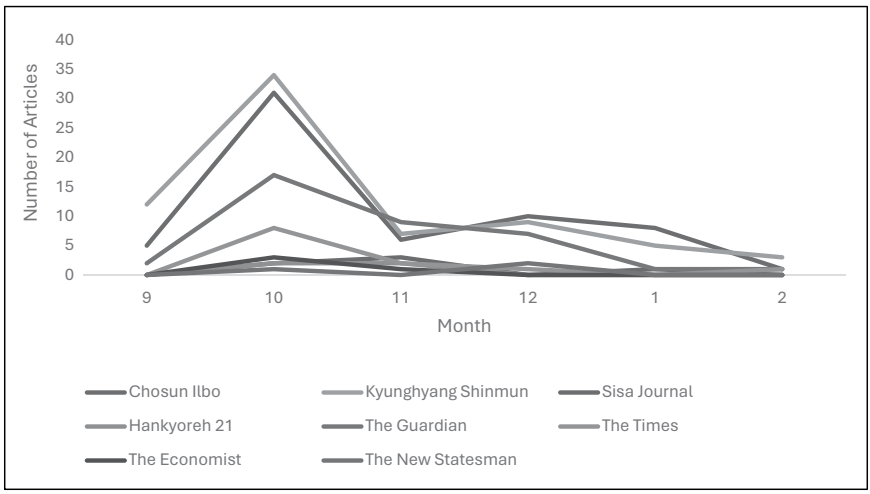

Figure 2.1 Number of news articles on Squid Game by news outlet

recognizes that language is not neutral and is centrally concerned with power. It moves beyond textual analysis, to include wider systematic analysis of relations between discourse and other elements of social processes. For Fairclough (2005, 924), discourse is "an element of social processes and social events, and also an element of relatively durable social practice". The framework aims at not simply analyzing discourse per se but examining "the relations between discourse and non-discoursal elements of the social, in order to reach a better understanding of these complex relations (including how changes in discourse can cause changes in other elements)" (Fairclough 2005, 924). Due to its problem-oriented and context-sensitive approach, CDA is useful for illuminating hidden agendas in discourse and interrogating constructed social realities that become naturalized or accepted in speech.

The selection of CDA to investigate Korean and British news outlets' discursive constructions of the streaming success of *Squid Game* is motivated by CDA's interdisciplinary framework that enables the intricate connections to be made between discourse and power – i.e. the power to shape peoples' perception, beliefs, and social relations – to be uncovered. The framework is used in this study to scrutinize which aspects of events are selected for inclusion and highlighting in news stories and how language is used to handle causality and position readers. CDA has been described as the "single most authoritative line of research" in analyzing news media (Carvalho 2008, 162). As such, this study focuses on linguistic forms and the discursive strategies that include the choice of lexical items and the use (and meaning behind the use) of construction of in- and outgroups, amongst others.

Findings

The ways in which *Squid Game*'s success is formulated and represented by the Korean and British media are interrogated in this section. An analysis of the Korean media's representation of the show's popularity will be followed by an examination of the British media's portrayal. News texts published by Korean news outlets are originally written in the Korean language; however, for the purposes of this paper and due to space limitation, only their English translations, produced by the author of this chapter, are presented in this section.

Korean news stories

Korean news texts on *Squid Game*'s success focus on the unprecedented global popularity of the show, offering a detailed report on the show's favorable global reception, as well as the reasons for and the significance of the success. The stories are often accompanied by figures (e.g. number of viewers within a certain period, Netflix video rankings, etc.) or assessments from other sources, especially highly regarded foreign news sources. Focus is also given to Korean popular culture's positive reception by global audiences, as well as the effect on Korean media industry.

A TRIUMPH OF "SOUTH KOREAN" ACCOMPLISHMENT

The success of *Squid Game* is discursively constructed as a unique Korean achievement in Korean news texts.

(1) *The Korean drama* "*Squid Game*," which was released on Netflix on the 17th of this month, has attracted the attention of the world not for its story but for its unique Korean games. There are many games that are familiar to us, but unfamiliar to foreigners, such as "The Mugunghwa Flower Has Bloomed", "Marbles", and "Squid Game". The success of the show is attributed to the fact that it blends Korean themes with themes that people in the world can relate to. (CI, 9/27)
(2) Following the phenomenal success of the *Korean production* among Netflix original series, many global OTT companies, including Disney+, are rushing to increase their investment in Korean dramas. (KS, 12/19)
(3) *K-content like "Squid Game"* and "*Hell*" have risen to the top of Netflix as international audiences embrace non-English-language dramas. But this does not mean that *we* are making money. (CI, 11/29)
(4) In the end, the difference [of Squid Game] stems from the meta-narrative, the underlying structure of the *Korean narrative* that we are so familiar with as our own. What is familiar to *us* feels very new and unfamiliar in another culture. (KS, 10/22)
(5) Ironically, the reason *we* could create *the Korean Wave drama [Squid Game]* that has a global appeal is most likely because the content of the drama is not a forced imagination but is rooted in the harsh reality that *we* are genuinely living. What might be an imagination to *others* is for *us* a reality, allowing *us* to depict and create it more vividly. (CI, 10/13)

Squid Game may be described in numerous ways – e.g. a Netflix original, a Netflix show, a Korean drama released on Netflix – but as demonstrated in (1)–(5), the series is presented as a Korean show. This identity attribution, achieved by adding *Korean* or *K-* in the referring expressions, through which "indexical meaning" (Blommaert 2005, 11) is produced in addition to referential meaning, is found in many Korean news texts.[3] Referring expressions convey social meaning, which functions as "interpretative leads between what is said and the social occasion in which it is being produced". Thus, the addition of *Korean* or *K-* in the referential expressions indexes a Korean identity that functions to categorize the show not as a Netflix show but as a Korean show.

Identity and categorization issues are brought up again in the use of *we*/*us* and *others* in (3)–(5). In the case of (3), which is part of a report on *Squid Game*'s success written by a staff reporter, an "inclusive *we*" is used to evoke a sense of togetherness and blur the writer-reader divide. What is more interesting is that *we* is actually used to group the reporter, audiences, and the Korean producers – who are not making money from the success of the show – into a single category. As they are presented as in-group and a sense of commonality and solidarity is evoked by

using *we*, the implication is made that Netflix, as the entity that is making money, is outgroup. The news text engages in a polarization strategy that presents Netflix as engaging unfair commercial practices. Pronouns function as "demonstratives of distance" (Van Dijk 1984, 125), constructing discourses of difference between the Korean media industry and Netflix.

In (4) and (5), an inclusive *we* is used again, but *we/us* and *others* serve to mark Koreans and their experiences as distinct from other people in the world and their experiences. The use of *we/us* as a universal reference to all Koreans works to create in-group and outgroup identity and construct a sense of unity and solidarity among Koreans. The polarized identities also function to portray the rest of the world, including viewers from different parts of the world, as a single category of *others,* not as diverse and complex groups of people. A cultural dichotomy is at work, as Koreans are represented as sharing an identity and experiences, while other viewers in the world are put into one grouping.

A BOOST IN SOUTH KOREA'S CULTURAL AND POLITICAL INFLUENCE

In connection to the portrayal of the show's success as Korea's accomplishment, *Squid Game*'s popularity is also presented as enhancing Korea's cultural and political influence worldwide.

(6) *The Guardian*, a British daily, reported on December 4 (local time) that the number of English-speaking learners using the global foreign language learning app *"Duolingo," which has 500 million members worldwide*, surged after the *Squid Game* was aired. After Squid Game was released on Netflix in September, the number of Korean learners increased by 76% in the UK and by 40% in the US in just two weeks. Duolingo cited *Hallyu as the driving force behind the skyrocketing demand for Korean language learning*. (CI, 12/6)

(7) During the seminar at the Center for International and Strategic Studies (CSIS), *Professor Nye* stressed *that South Korea has tremendous soft power and soft power potential of K-wave on the international stage*. More broadly, he emphasized the power of cultural actors in upholding universal values and promoting long-term development. (KS, 10/6)

(8) Reports from foreign media suggest that North Korean teenagers who secretly watched the globally popular South Korean Netflix series *Squid Game* were caught and faced severe punishments, including execution and life imprisonment. On November 15, *RFA [Radio Free Asia]* reported that *Squid Game* is *gaining popularity [in North Korea], resonating with the affluent class and young people in Pyongyang*. (SJ, 11/24)

In (6)–(8), the show's success and its effects are described in terms of an increase in Korea's cultural and political influence. In (6), a global increase in Korean language learners is presented as a direct result of *Squid Game*'s success, which is portrayed in terms of "Hallyu", i.e. "Korean Wave" or the global popularity of Korea's culture. In the case of (7), the drama's success as part of "K-Wave" is described

as leading to an increase in Korea's soft power, i.e. the ability to achieve foreign policy objectives or obtain preferred outcomes by positive attraction and persuasion rather than coercive pressure. A more specific example of Korea's increase in soft power is provided in (8), which describes North Koreans watching the show, even though such acts are strictly forbidden and punishable by death.

What is interesting here is the way in which social actors, which provide credibility to the statement that *Squid Game*'s success indicate a rise in Korea's cultural and political influence, are presented. Institutional authorities with influence or expertise, such as *The Guardian*, Duolingo (one of the most popular language-learning platforms in the world), Professor Nye (a renowned political scientist who introduced the concept of soft power), and Radio Free Asia (a reputable nonprofit organization operating a news service and providing information, news, and commentary about events in Asia) are discursively invoked to add credibility and legitimacy to Korea's growth in cultural and political power. As such, the discursive strategy of "authorization" (Van Leeuwen and Wodak 1999, 92), which refers to the legitimation of a position or perspective by reference to authority, is used in (6)–(8). In the case of (8), in particular, the description of how watching a television drama is punishable by execution and life imprisonment in North Korea and yet North Koreans still choose to watch the *Squid Game* shows the use of discourse strategies of "moral evaluation" (legitimation by reference to value systems) and "rationalization" (legitimation by reference to the knowledge society has constructed to endow them with cognitive validity). In addition to authorization, the statements in (8) not only offer a negative evaluation of North Korea's control over its people but also allow readers to derive the opinion regarding South Korea's enlarged soft power in North Korea due to the popularity of South Korean cultural content (see next section for further details on soft power).

"UNIVERSALLY RELATABLE"

Although Korean news outlets invoke a unique Korean identity in news discourse dealing with *Squid Game*'s success, Korean news media also discursively construct *Squid Game*'s global success in terms of universal values and relatability.

(9) The narrative of "Squid Game" addresses *people's anxieties about a hypercompetitive society and their discontent with the deepening polarization* following COVID−19. *Many empathize with the game's participants, who are depicted as helpless and fragmented individuals*. (KS, 9/27)

(10) The BBC stated, "The drama 'Squid Game' addresses *the class conflicts of modern society in a way that resonates with people worldwide*". It added, "This narrative structure is similar to the South Korean movie 'Parasite', which also *deals with inequality in wealth and injustice*". (CI, 10/4)

(11) Director Hwang Dong-hyeok of Squid Game summarized the secret to *Squid Game*'s global success: "It's a game with very simple rules". He said, "A game with the most Korea-specific features has the biggest global appeal". There

is no need for linguistic, cultural or historical translation. The unsettling simplicity makes us freeze and sometimes exhilarates us. (CI, 10/1)

(12) Critic Ha Jae-geun said, "The death survival genre, which has a larger overseas fan base, has a familiarity that appeals to overseas viewers, and the Korean elements added to 'Squid Game' would have felt refreshing to them". He also said, "The *human-centred story seems to have attracted foreign viewers in a fresh way*". Critic Kim Sung-soo also mentioned, "The melodramatic elements [신파, *shinpa*] are, interestingly, being newly evaluated abroad", adding that a "strong sense of attachment and responsibility towards family and community" *is a core theme that absorbs viewers worldwide*. (KS, 9/26)

In (9)–(12), *Squid Game*'s success is discursively constructed in terms of a universal values which people from different parts of the world identify with. In (9) and (10), which are reports on the global popularity of *Squid Game*, the news texts point out that the narrative of desperate individuals experiencing class polarization in the era of neoliberal capitalism attracted global audiences, as socioeconomic inequality and ordinary people's struggles are shared experiences for many in the world. The description of neoliberal capitalist exploitation is realized in the lexical style, i.e. in the use of words such as *anxieties, hypercompetitive, discontent, polarization, helpless, fragmented, class conflicts, inequality,* and *injustice*. The discursive strategy of authorization is used in (10) as BBC's voice is invoked to legitimate the opinion that the show's success is due to the global viewers' connection to and enjoyment of the drama's messages.

Relatability is portrayed from a slightly different perspective in (11) and (12), emphasizing universal values but with a specifically Korean twist. In the case of (11), the relative simplicity of the Korean games is described as enabling the audiences to focus on character narratives and underlying themes. In (12), genre familiarity and melodrama are brought up, as these factors are described as the reasons for *Squid Game*'s global popularity. According to the news text, a unique blend of genres, including thriller, survival game, melodrama, and social commentary work to offer something new to the audiences worldwide. Also, by adding *interestingly*, the reporter expresses an awareness of the divide in response among Koreans regarding the emotionally charged scenes in the show, which many Koreans view as excessively sentimental and melodramatic. This characteristic, referred to as *shinpa* in the Korean language, is often interpreted in the Korean society in negative ways, e.g. tearjerker. While many international audiences are reportedly attracted by *shinpa*, as evidenced by selection of the "Gganbu", the show's emotional sixth episode, as their favorite (Kim 2021), numerous Korean viewers, especially younger viewers, find such overflowing of emotion distasteful, disparaging it as "*K-shinpa*". In (9)–(12), the show's relatability is viewed in terms of the strength of the narrative, i.e. well-developed characters and relationships, suspenseful pacing, universal themes of poverty, greed, violence, and the human cost of capitalism.

British news stories

British news texts dealing with *Squid Game*'s success focus on rendering the show legible for British audiences. The show's popularity is approached in terms of Netflix's global expansion strategy, *Hallyu* and its positive global reception, and the narrative appeal of the drama. Furthermore, British news outlets provide contextual information about the show by offering a general account of Korea's socioeconomic situation (e.g. mounting household debt, weak social safety net, and other market failures in Korea).

A VICTORY OF NETFLIX'S INTERNALIZATION STRATEGY

The discursive construction of *Squid Game* as a Netflix show is notable in British news texts.

(13) *Squid Game is Netflix's biggest debut hit*, reaching 111 million viewers worldwide. (TG, 10/13)
(14) It's not the violence that makes it surprising that *the Netflix series Squid Game* is about to surpass *Bridgerton* as the streaming service's most popular show. It's the fact that it's a Korean-language drama, subtitled or dodgily dubbed into English (and with barely a sex scene). (TT, 10/10)
(15) *This is Squid Game, Netflix's surprising new smash hit*. The show, released on September 17, was met with zero fanfare; very different from the extensive marketing campaigns awarded to its more recent successes, *Bridgerton* and *The Crown*. (NS, 10/1)
(16) Disney, Hollywood's biggest studio, has been pushing deeper into Asia, launching its Disney+ service most recently in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and *South Korea (the setting for "Squid Game", Netflix's global smash-hit in 2021)*. (TE, 11/8)

In (13)–(16), the addition of *Netflix/Netflix's* in the referential expressions indexes *Squid Game* as a Netflix production. In the case of (16) in particular, Korea is presented merely as "the setting for Squid Game". This is in sharp contrast to South Korean news texts which construct the show's identity as a Korean drama and use discursive strategies to detach the show from Netflix. Even though the show is referred to in diverse ways in other British news texts (including *South Korean drama/series/thriller* in certain instances), *Squid Game* is predominantly identified as a Netflix show. This identification is often followed by a description of Netflix's strategies of securing a stable supply of multilingual and multicultural content (including original international content), which are produced, coproduced, or distributed exclusively by Netflix.

The foregrounding of the Netflix factor contributes to giving proximity to the report, rendering the news more understandable and relevant for British readers unfamiliar with the series.

"UNIVERSALLY RELATABLE"

Squid Game's success is discursively constructed in British news texts in relation to its relatability. Ranging from poverty and inequality to the desperation which can drive precarious people to make dangerous choices in a neoliberal capitalist society, the themes in *Squid Game* connect global audiences to the drama on an emotional level. Also addressed in the reports are the specific elements in the story that enable audiences to empathize with the story, such as childhood games, morally ambiguous characters, and their struggles to learn lessons from the consequences of their actions.

(17) At its core – and partly why it's so compelling – is the class struggle. *We*'re living in a time where the gap between extreme wealth and extreme poverty has never been wider, so the concept of the rich exploiting the poor for sport, or simply to alleviate boredom, feels particularly deranged. (TG, 11/9)
(18) Debt has come into sharper focus for all of *us* since the pandemic, which is possibly one reason why *Squid Game* has become so popular. (TT, 10/9)
(19) This unflinching look at how desperation changes *us* makes *Squid Game* as moving as it is exciting. It searches for an answer to one terrifying question: When pushed, what are your limits? What would you do? Its chilling brutality has *us* hooked. (NS, 10/1)
(20) Squid Game is an allegory of modern capitalism, but it also takes aim at what *we* deem entertainment. (TG, 10/12)

In (17)–(20), descriptions of similarities of market failures in Korea and the UK, as well as empathy regarding people's choices made in desperate situations, function to create relatability. Pronouns play a key role in creating relevance in the examples. An inclusive *we*is used to evoke a sense of commonality and rapport between the writer and the audience, which renders the experience of watching the show and feeling connected to the story and the characters as something that is shared.

The use of the inclusive *we* and the foregrounding of relatability may be viewed as an attempt on the part of the British press to place the largely unknown Korean show into legible frameworks. However, the invocation of relatability in situations where the non-Western object is made legible and palatable for Western viewers without much effort being put into understanding culture-specific meanings has been criticized in the academia (Ra 2022; Oh 2022). Cultural understandings of *Squid Game* may be simplified and made flat when it is consumed with little or no background knowledge of Korea-specific meanings. For example, the show's reference to Korean social or historical issues, e.g. the reference to the real-life 2009 Ssangyong Motor strike that functioned as a background for the protagonist Seong Gi-hun's heavy debt, is rarely addressed in British news texts. In fact, the Korean debt situation referenced in the drama is made relevant and legible for British readers by invoking a British context, as seen in (21).

(21) The underlying anxiety used to be environmental collapse, and the backdrops tended to be post-apocalyptic, following some unknown weather or war event. *Now the threat is debt, which feels so Victorian*. (TG, 10/9)

In the few news texts that address the issue of translation, however, there are efforts to understand Korea-specific meanings, even though the focus is on language and cultural issues rather than the locality of Korea's socioeconomic problems. These news stories deal with debates about what gets lost in translation and whether Netflix is investing enough in creating accurate translations.

(22) After all, any English speaker would have flinched at the expression used in episode 8: "You always have to get in trouble to know it's trouble". (What?) *The real translation is this*: "You always eat it before you can tell whether it's shit or doenjang [brown fermented soybean paste]". You don't have to speak Korean – or even have tried doenjang – to get it. (TG, 10/14)

In (22), an emphasis is made at a gaining granular understanding of a culture via a more refined translation. The focus of (22), however, does not extend to problematizing a historical understandings of a foreign drama or "the aesthetics of the smooth and the flat" (Nan 2023, 157). The argument fails to address how the process of translating and interpreting a foreign drama may be intricately tied to broader issues of preserving cultural uniqueness and authenticity, fostering cultural sensitivity, and resisting the pressures of commercial and aesthetic standardization and simplification. In (22), efforts made to understand the locality of cultural conditions or language-specific meanings are approached in terms of emotional investment in "binge-worthy shows". This is evidenced by (23), which immediately follows (22) in the news text.

(23) With series like *Squid Game* becoming as successful as they are, some may wonder why people care so much about translation. Says Youngmi Mayer: "I guess you could ask, do people really care about Star Wars? Some people would tell you they don't care about Star Wars at all. And other people would answer that they've based their entire life on it. If one word was mistranslated they would be incredibly angry". (TG, 10/14)

HALLYU'S SUCCESS AND SOUTH KOREA'S GROWING INFLUENCE

The news texts describe *Squid Game*'s success in terms of *Hallyu*, which they view as expanding Korea's global influence. While *Squid Game* is seen as advancing *Hallyu*'s prominence globally, the latter is described as simultaneously elevating the show's worldwide reach.

(24) South Korea is coming – let the games begin. Hooked on *Squid Game*? That's not a coincidence, says Harriet Walker. *It's part of the K-Wave sweeping pop culture from fashion to TV and music*. (TT, 10/18)
(25) *How Korean culture conquered the world*. We're all K-fans now, but the popularity of exports, such as *Squid Game*, is no accident; it's the product of an ambitious government plan decades in the making. (TT, 10/10)
(26) *The success of Squid Game amplifies South Korea's increasingly outsized influence on global popular culture*, following the likes of K-pop band BTS and Oscar-winning movie *Parasite*. (TG, 10/13)

Squid Game's global popularity is discursively constructed in terms of Korea's growing cultural influence in (24)–(26). In (24) and (25), metaphorical expressions and elements of hyperbole are used (e.g. *K-Wave sweeping pop culture, How Korean culture conquered the world*) to manufacture an exaggerated force of Korean cultural reach. An overstated effect is created in (26) by the lexical choice of *amplifies, increasingly,* and *outsized*. All of these "contribute to the dramatization and general newsworthiness of acts of communication within news stories" (Heywood and Semino 2007, 42).

(27) Much of this analysis *presents South Korea's cultural success as an important tool of soft power* – a state's ability to wield influence in the world by getting other countries to align with its interests without coercion or threat. (TE, 10/22)

Extract (27) describes the rise in Korea's cultural power in terms of an increase in political influence. The term "soft power", notably defined by Nye (2011, 20–21) as "the ability to affect others through the co-optive means of framing the agenda, persuading, and eliciting positive attraction" is used here. "Attraction" may be understood in terms of "a *natural* objective experience" (Mattern 2005, 591; emphasis in original), but, as many scholars have pointed out, news outlets also function as a "conduit through which soft power resources are amplified and transmitted" (Pan, Isakhan, and Nwokora 2020, 55) via news discourse. This transmission function is no doubt part of how the media contribute to soft power (Warren 2014). News discourse is used to not only amplify but also reduce or erase any form of soft power of a country. This is noteworthy in British news texts, as shown in (28).

(28) Some might argue that American pop culture contributed to the demise of the Soviet Union, but the eastern bloc's dysfunctional economic system probably had more to do with it. Soft power is not strong enough to overcome great missteps or weaknesses. The best Korean film and television draws far too much attention to social problems to lend itself to nationalist PR campaigns. The best evidence for the political importance of Korea's culture may thus be attempts to suppress, rather than co-opt, it. Mr Moon may be courting musicians and filmmakers. But previous governments kept blacklists of those whose political views they disliked, cutting them off from state funding. Such policies made life difficult for individual artists. They did nothing to dampen the popularity of their work (TE, 10/22).

In (28), which appears further down in the same article as (27), the argument is made that cultural power and political power are not necessarily causally connected, and Korea's significant social, economic, and political problems neutralize any chances of cultural influence becoming political clout. Even though soft power may be shaped by pre-existing cultural or reputational resources, the discursive characteristic of soft power is also significant in that it connects to the discursive construction of "Other" and specific contexts of communication.

THE FOREGROUNDING OF THE NEGATIVE

Many media scholars have pointed out that bad news is considered more newsworthy and attract audiences' attention (Harcup and O'Neill 2001; Golding and Elliot 1979). In (29) and (30), the ways in which *Squid Game*'s success is represented with negative overtones are exemplified.

(29) It's part of a wider trend for all things Korean that has been percolating for several years. Korean women have a ten-step skincare routine for perfecting their complexion, using practical and borderline obsessive products designed to fix commonplace complexion issues, as well as to counter various things of their physiognomy they had no idea were problematic. (TT, 10/18)
(30) Not all exports are winners. Take *mukbang*, one of the OED's new additions: it means watching a person consume a vast amount of food on video. Some might say it makes even more uncomfortable viewing than an episode of *Squid Game*. (TT, 10/10)

In (29), "a wider trend for all things Korean" is described as comprising of odd, and even bizarre, processes, even though this aspect constitutes a very small part of Korean culture. In (30), Korean culture is described in terms of "mukbang", which refers to a video that is livestreamed or uploaded on such platforms as YouTube or TikTok, featuring a host consuming food while interacting with the audiences. Created and uploaded by individuals, the videos, while uncomfortable to watch in certain instances, cannot be regarded as an "export" of Korean cultural industry. The discursive strategy of generalization and stereotyping is used to emphasize exotic aspects of Korean culture.

(31) "*Squid Game* no threat to traditional British TV hits, finds Barb". (TG, 11/30)
(32) Is a Netflix drama more popular than a BBC drama? . . . Vahdati says her company's data shows how the streamer can selectively release data to shape the narrative about their output: "The originals are punchy, sharp and aesthetically innovative. But at the heart of it we haven't become a nation who like to be challenged all the time with foreign-language dramas". (TG, 10/20)

The title of a news article "*Squid Game* no threat to traditional British TV hits, finds Barb" in (31) suggests that there is concern in the British society that *Squid Game* may be a "threat" to British TV. Here, *Squid Game*'s identity as a non-British drama is evoked (more specifically, identities of "Netflix's non-English show" and "a South Korean drama" are elicited.). This point is brought up again in (32), where "We haven't become a nation who like to be challenged all the time with foreign-language dramas" positions English and non-English drama in a confrontational relationship, with English-language shows given a positive evaluation. The examples here demonstrate the othering of Korean popular cultural and non-English shows.

Discussion and conclusion

This chapter has examined how *Squid Game*'s success is represented in news stories published by mainstream Korean and British news outlets. News media play a powerful mediating role in generating extra-screen discourses and narratives concerning cultural content and audience engagement. Instructing viewers to watch an audiovisual product in a prescribed manner, news outlets maintain an authoritative position in validating, as well as invalidating, a show as "quality" or worthy of audience's attention. At the centre of this study is the question of what kind of identity is attributed to *Squid Game* and how its success is interpreted and represented by Korean and British media outlets, respectively, in the era of SVOD services. For international audiences, the show may feel distant in that it is a Korean-language series featuring Korean actors and Korean lifeworld but at the same time proximal in that it is available on Netflix and easily accessible with dubbing and subtitles.

The analysis shows that news stories on *Squid Game*'s success are covered in distinct ways in South Korea and the UK. This is not to say that different news outlets in one country cover the event in similar ways; rather, the ways in which the show's success is approached and made legible are diverse within a country and even within one news outlet. Despite this heterogeneity, some key distinctions are found between Korean and British news reporting of the event.

News stories on the *Squid Game*'s success appeared more frequently in Korean news than British news. Korean outlets discursively constructed *Squid Game*'s global popularity in terms of a unique Korean achievement, increasing global influence of Korea, and Korean media industry's ability to create universally relatable and well-made stories. Parallels are found in the news texts produced by British news outlets in that the show's popularity is also discursively constructed in terms of successfully creating an appealing story with universally relatable themes, *Hallyu*'s success, and South Korea's growing influence. However, there is also a strong tendency of British news outlets to discursively construct *Squid Game*'s success in terms of Netflix's internalization strategy and as part of a culture which is peculiar and exotic. The show's success is also portrayed in terms of the penetration of non-English shows into the British audiovisual market and its possible negative consequences.

One element that is noteworthy in the reporting of the *Squid Game*'s success is the role of national identity, which functions to create newsworthiness for both Korean and British news outlets. The strong influence of national identity on news coverage has been argued by numerous scholars (Crawford 2012; Rowling, Sheets, and Jones 2015; Shahin 2016; Song, Lee, and Huang 2019), and this study also shows that news stories tend to project a positive national image or defend the image when it comes under threat. This is particularly well demonstrated in Korean news texts dealing with Korean cultural achievements on the global stage and Korea's growth in soft power. In the case of British news media, *Squid Game*'s success is discursively constructed as symbolizing a threat to British television, resulting from Netflix's internationalization strategy and growing popularity of quality non-English drama.

What is interesting is that whereas news outlets from both countries emphasize relatability of the drama, they also focus on polarized identities. In Korean news stories, binary opposition exists between Korean producers/media industry on the one hand and Netflix on the other, as well as between Koreans and the rest of the world. The use of these opposing categories function to highlight a unified Korean national identity and unique national competence. This is discursively achieved by using an inclusive *we*, referential expressions which index particular meaning, and discursive strategies of authorization and legitimation. In the case of British news stories, the undesirable portrayal of non-English drama and Korean culture is accompanied by an othering process that centres on lexical choice and the use of generalization, stereotyping, and discriminatory discourse. Peculiar aspects of the Korean culture are generalized, creating a negative image of Korean culture.

As many scholars have pointed out, the everyday mode of media consumption has become transnational and streaming services have "altered the status of the transnational within TV culture" (Chalaby 2022, 223). Nevertheless, findings from this study show that news outlets' mediation of this experience and culture is based on what is considered newsworthy to engage audiences. The values of national identity, relevance, binary oppositions, negativity, and entertainment are at work in the news representation of *Squid Game*'s success. To create and foreground newsworthiness, different aspects of the drama's success are selected and highlighted, going beyond changing audience tastes and streaming platform strategies.

News texts offer information about events, but they also have signifying power in that they represent events in particular ways. The production of news is an established institutional activity, predominantly characterized by the interactions and tasks of journalists in various settings, including newsgathering contexts, newsrooms, and meetings. News stories, which are the final product of these complex processes, mediate our understanding of the world and reinterpret meanings in ways that advance the ideological positioning and interests of news producers.

Despite the pervasive influence and power of news media, especially manifested in the British news texts' Orientalization of Korean culture and the lack of awareness of historical and social context in the representation of *Squid Game*, the global popularity of the show still manages to raise awareness for a non-Euro-American-centric culture. The show's success could be an opportunity for Korean cultural product, or any cultural product from non-Euro-American-centric culture, to transcend national and regional boundaries, creating an impact beyond what audiovisual products have achieved so far. Furthermore, researchers of intercultural studies, media studies, Korean studies, and other related fields are in a prime position to disseminate culture-specific knowledge through sharing research and more publicly accessible writings. They can offer people in different societies a richer and more layered experience, ultimately enhancing the impact of an audiovisual work and any related content. Researchers play an integral role in the media landscape, and their participation in the intricate interactions within the media ecosystem will contribute to decentring knowledge and acknowledging and raising awareness of increasingly complicated flows of global culture.

Notes

1 Other factors in addition to news values may need to be considered in an explanation of what lies behind journalistic news decisions (e.g. organizational or economic factors that may also influence news selection). Yet as many news researchers have pointed out, news values are valuable, as they interrogate the criteria involved in the selection of news. As one of the most important areas of journalism studies, they "[go] to the heart of what is included, what is excluded, and why" (O'Neill and Harcup 2009: 162).
2 Van Dijk's (1988) news values are described as follows: 1) novelty is the requirement that news should in principle be about new events; 2) recency is the requirement that the events described in the news is recent, within a margin of between one and several days; 3) presupposition is a requirement that an understanding of new events and discourse are based on old information; 4) consonance is the requirement that news should be consonant with socially-shared norms, values, and attitudes; 5) relevance is the requirement that information that is preferred are those about events or actions that are relevant for the reader; 6) deviance and negativity refer to the value of negativity of the news; and 7) proximity is the value of local and ideological proximity of news events.
3 According to Blommaert (2005: 12), indexical meaning is "what anchors language usage firmly into social and cultural patterns".

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3 Coherence of the Korean and English audio description of *Squid Game*

Soo-Yeon Seo

Introduction

The development of streaming platforms, such as Netflix, Disney+, Apple TV+, and Amazon Prime Video, has made it increasingly simple and convenient to enjoy audiovisual content (e.g. movies and TV programmes). These platforms are accessible through electronic devices from almost anywhere and at any time, with thousands of different programmes waiting for viewers to select from, but the same cannot be said for people with vision or hearing impairment. This is because different disabilities will require the provision of specific access services. For example, deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals need subtitles to identify speakers' name, dialogue, music, and sound effects, while the blind and partially sighted people need audio description (AD) of characters, changes in time and place, movements, and objects.

It is no exaggeration to say that this accessibility has been reinforced by a variety of studies, such as researches on the teaching of translation practice and theory (Díaz-Cintas 2008; Pym 2009) and researches on AD and subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing (SDH) examined through the perspective of media accessibility (Braun and Orero 2010; Matamala and Orero 2016; Gurkan and Diaz-Cintas 2017). The efforts have led to many online platforms offering a combination of AD, SDH, and dubbing for some of their visual contents. For example, Netflix provides audio description of Guillermo del Toro's *Pinocchio* (2022) in six languages (English, German, Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, and French) and closed captions in 37 languages. SDHs in English, Portuguese, and Spanish are also available. This has certainly allowed those visually impaired and hearing-impaired of those languages to enjoy *Pinocchio*.

In this chapter, I will focus on AD, mainly because I have worked in this field for about 22 years and I would like to share some practical ideas. For users with visual impairments who rely on auditory information, i.e. dialogue and sound effects, AD is the 'verbal narration of non-verbal content (for example, settings, gestures) inserted between dialogue' for different types of content (Gerber 2007, 28). An audio describer who describes those narration needs to identify the meaning encoded in these other modes and translate non-verbal elements, apart from

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dialogue, into language so that blind and partially sighted users can follow what is being shown. Just as translated subtitles are limited by the number of characters on the screen, AD needs to adjust the length of sentences to avoid overlapping dialogue. This is due to the fact that gaps between dialogues are scarce and sometimes not even available. Therefore, only contextually relevant and necessary information should be selected and inserted into gaps between dialogues to mitigate the inherent and technical difficulties of AD. Therefore, many studies of AD suggest that it is essential to find the right time to insert commentaries and to be precise in the description (Salway 2007; Branje and Fels 2012; Mazur and Chmiel 2012; Romero-Fresco and Fryer 2013; Mazur 2014).

It is important to choose not only accurate words to depict but also succinct names and to use them consistently. This is in line with the importance of coherence in translation studies. In translation, as an 'act of communication', coherence is 'as a covert potential meaning relationship among parts of a text, made overt by the reader or listener through processes of interpretation' so that 'the reader or listener must be able to relate the text to relevant and familiar worlds, either real or fictional' (Blum-Kulka 1986, 17–18). The same can be said for AD. If meaningless or incoherent words are used, AD users will experience a 'serious mismatch between the commonly expressed concepts and the recipient's prior knowledge', which can lead to misinterpretation or a lack of understanding of the meaning and thus a frustrating experience (Robert and Dressler 1981, 84).

It is also relevant to consider the coherence of AD to take into account sound and image association. As 'multimodal texts as audiovisual materials' (Braun 2012, 646), AD should not only describe images in the film but also include sounds as an important element of description, which not only stimulate our ears but also our imagination (Fryer 2010, 206). A case in point is the Netflix drama *The Night Agent*, episode 3, 'The Zookeeper'.[1] Two characters, A and B, meet by the lion pit in a zoo to discuss an imperative issue involving state secrets. The lions are not visible, but their occasional roaring can be heard from the off-screen. The scene then shows a zookeeper throwing a chunk of meat into the lion pit as A says: 'In the wild, sure, bear, lion, majestic powerful, all that shit, but in here, they're basically just giant house pets'. Moments later, the screen shows the zookeeper unlocking the door with a bundle of keys and then leaving, with A saying: 'The bitch with all the keys'. The sound of the lion's low snarling and the clinking of the keys are closely linked to the dialogue. In addition, the phrases 'in here' and 'The bitch with all the keys' are seamlessly linked to the pictures and sounds on the screen to create multiple meanings. The drama was audio described in English, Portuguese, and Spanish. In English AD, the AD uses the space between dialogues to describe the image. The first AD says, 'A zookeeper tosses meat into the pit', to match the picture of the zookeeper throwing a chunk of meat to the lion, and the second says, 'The zookeeper fumbles with her keys'. This is a basic description method of AD, where images and descriptions are displayed in sync with each other. Just as sighted people create meaning by associating sound and image, visually impaired people can create their own meaning with the benefit of coherent AD. The example shows that sound is also a vital element in AD.

Previous studies on coherence in AD have examined from multimodal and cognitive perspectives (Braun 2012), comparing the use of 'help' and 'thanks' in English and German AD (Gronek, Gorius, and Gerzymisch-Arbogast 2012). Taking the second study a bit further, it shows that in both German and English audio described of the movie, the English AD explicitly uses 'thanks' to mean thanks (AD: to say thank you, the boy gave them three pears, one each), while the German one simply describes the movement as the boy giving them a pear (AD: give). The study concludes that the English AD tend to use 'thanks' more explicitly than the German one, making it difficult to use English AD as translations into German (or any other language) due to coherence of AD and cultural differences. In Korea, studies on AD have been actively conducted: objectivity in AD (Lee 2019, 2020), body language in AD (Seo and Lee 2021), and multimodal cohesion between AD and audio subtitling in accessible films (Yoon 2022). However, there is still a lack of research on how coherence is related to multiple audiovisual sings, such as sounds and images in film. In particular, it is necessary to study how coherence is generated when providing AD for foreign video contents and what factors should be considered to maintain it. Since OTT (over-the-top) platforms provide a wide variety of video contents for people around the world to enjoy, audio describers have the opportunity to describe more foreign contents, which is expected to increase.

In this context, this chapter selects the Netflix drama *Squid Game,* which became very popular worldwide, to examine (1) whether the key elements, 'ddakji', 'masked man', and 'dalgona', in the drama are effectively named in AD; (2) multimodal elements (sound and image) are considered to maintain coherence; and then (3) any elements that need to be further explored are identified. This study is expected to provide practical assistance to audio describers who are required to interpret various foreign audiovisual programmes going forward. In addition, it can be used as a reference and educational material for AD producers and aspiring audio describers. This chapter will begin with a brief overview of the history of AD in Korea.

An overview of the history of Korean audio description

AD in Korea begun in 2000, when the Korean Blind Union introduced a 'descriptive video service (DVS)' conducted by the broadcasting station WGBH in Boston, USA, in 1987.[2] The term 'descriptive video', which was translated as 화면해설 (Hwamyon-Haesol: screen description), became settled in Korea, mainly in broadcasting. In October 2000, the Korean Blind Union held the first Korean Film Festival for blind and partially sighted people, featuring three AD films (Lim 2000). In 2001, MBC broadcast the drama *Country Diaries (1980)* [전원일기: Jonwon-Nilgi] with AD as a pilot project, and it was offered steadily beginning with the KBS drama *Love on a Jujube Tree (1990)* [대추나무사랑 걸렸네: Daechunamu Sarang Golryonne] with AD in 2003. In 2004, terrestrial broadcasters, such as KBS, MBC, and SBS, allowed to broadcast their programmes during the daytime on a pilot basis, so they continued to produce AD[3] with the Korean Blind Union as a way of social contribution. Since then, the provision of AD in Korea has steadily and increasingly developed,[4] and now not only cinemas

but also OTTs, such as Netflix and Disney+, offer AD in their programmes. One of the areas that have seen significant growth in AD is the performing arts, such as theatres, museums, and exhibitions. Since the implementation of the act on the support for cultural and artistic activities of artists with disabilities in 2020,[5] various institutions and organisations have been developing various ways to improve access to art and cultural products. For example, the Korea Disability Arts and Culture Centre, established by the Korean government in 2015, helps artists with disabilities to perform a variety of art activities, and the National Theatre Company of Korea and the Arts Council Korea provide various performances with AD, SDH, and Korean sign language (KSL) on an annual basis, allowing many people with disabilities to enjoy their performances. For example, the National Theatre Company of Korea provides AD, SDH, and KSL for major and popular performances, such as *Saint Joan* (2022) [세인트조앤: Sseinteu Joaen], *A Boatful of Fish* (2023) [만선: Manson], *The Cherry Orchard* (2023) [벚꽃동산: Botkkott-Dongsan], and *The Orphan of Zhao, the Seed of Revenge* (2023) [조씨고아, 복수의씨앗: Jossigoa-bokssu-e-ssiat], and operates an online theatre to provide a variety version of accessible performances with AD, SDH, and KSL. The next will review the literature on coherence in AD.

Literature review and theoretical background

Research on the issue of coherence in AD

One of the key studies that discuss the issue of coherence in AD is Braun's (2012, 648) 'extended models of coherence' which combines semantic and pragmatic together. It is not only about creating cohesion in the text in terms of semantics but also about creating connectivity when recipients process texts in terms of pragmatic, which take into account recipients' background knowledge, understanding of the world, etc. (Braun 2012, 647–48). Braun has selected several scenes from the film *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (2003) and analysed the intermodal connectivity (e.g. dialogue, music, movement), focusing on the following three points:

1) How coherence is created from AD by the combination of sound (e.g. sound effects, dialogue) and image;
2) How coherence created by dialogue and image is represented in AD; and
3) How coherence is created in AD based on omitted information (the receiver's comprehension).

First, sound and AD text coherence, an example of film soundtrack or sound heard in everyday life, are represented in AD. This is the sound a viewer hears as a sound effect in the film as the characters walk down the hallway. In AD, the scene was described as 'walks through the house', instead of directly describing as keys jingling or parrots chirping, which encourages AD users to match the sound and image to improve consistency (see example 1 in the next section).

Example 1 Sound and AD Text Coherence

Sounds	*AD Commentary*
(a) the sound of a packet of keys (with a dozen or so) in Catharina's (Vermeer's wife) hand when she takes Griet to Vermeer's studio (b) the sound of a parrot in the hallway	Explain the sound corresponding to (a) as "keys" (b) AD: They pass a parrot on a perch

The second is an example that shows dialogues in a film, which can influence AD users' understanding of visual information, such as characters' movements or gaze. In example 2 later, firstly, (a) describes the painting itself to indirectly understand what Maria's word 'it' refers to, and secondly, (b) describes Catharina's gaze on Griet (which triggers the action) to help the AD audience understand why Griet went into the studio alone.

Example 2 Dialogue and AD Text Coherence

Dialogue and Situation	*AD Commentary*
(a) Griet notices Vermeer's painting in the studio and looks at it in awe / the camera switching between the painting and Griet's face. At this point, Maria (Catharina's mother) appears and asks, 'Tell me, girl, do you think it finished'? (b) Catharina arrives with her daughter, Cornelia, and Griet in front of the studio and says, 'Go in' / Griet enters	(a) to create coherence, the audio describer briefly describes the painting when it is close-up on the screen, then describes Maria's appearance (b) to create coherence between Catharina's dialogue (I . . . my husband . . . go in) and Griet's movement, AD utterance: 'She looks at Griet and Cornelia'[6]

The third example later shows how coherence is achieved in AD texts. For example, if viewers take the structure of a place or space in a film, they can easily follow the story by listening to the dialogue and simultaneously understanding the space of the film, such as where the characters are standing or the direction they are moving. However, in the AD version, it is often difficult to provide effective descriptions due to the lack of gaps between dialogues. Braun (2012) notes, in example 3 later, that in scene (a), the audio describer uses the verb 'arrive' as an action ending and the term 'on the landing' to help establish the space. This means that the two terms allow AD users to visualise that there is a staircase at the end of the corridor. However, she points out that the description of Catharina looking into the studio and the description of Griet opening the studio door to enter are inconsistent descriptions, which results in confusing AD users about whether the door was already open or closed in the first place.

Example 3 Coherence in AD

Scene	*AD Commentary*
(a) Catharina, Griet, and Cornelia stop on the front steps of the corridor leading to the studio. The studio door is slightly ajar.	(a) AD writes: 'They arrive on the landing. Caterina looks into the room and hesitates. . . . She (Griet) slowly opens the door into the darkness'.

Based on the finding, Braun (2012) highlights that coherence is crucial in AD since incoherence in AD can lead to poor comprehension for users who rely on AD to watch a film.

Local and global coherence and audio description

In a film or drama, an object or a character may appear once, but it may also appear throughout the film. Van Dijk (1977, 2008) suggests that an event can be depicted at various levels, from the general to the specific, which he calls local (micro) coherence and global (macro) coherence: in terms of AD, the former is coherence within an individual scene, while the latter encompasses the scene as a whole (Braun 2007, 9–10). For example, when providing AD for a scene where a character appears only once, and is referred to as a man or a woman, or identified as a 'man with glasses' or a 'woman with a hat', the image and the description are consistent: local coherence. On the other hand, for characters who appear in all episodes with considerable significance, their names in the original work are used in AD to improve coherence: global coherence. Benecke (2007, 6) further refers to the practice of referring to a character by a characteristic or occupation (e.g. PE teacher) and then assigning the character a given name when it becomes contextually significant as 'intended hyper description'. This approach can be thought of as a hybrid of local and global coherence.

Data and methodology

This chapter analyses coherence in AD in the Netflix Korean drama *Squid Game*. It released simultaneously in 190 countries on September 17, 2021, including a Korean AD and SDH. Unlike Netflix's popular series *Bridgerton* (2020) and *Stranger Things* (2016), which were dubbed into 14 and 19 languages, respectively, and offered AD in two or three languages, such as German and Portuguese, *Squid Game* was dubbed into 21 languages, with AD in 14 of them,[7] due to its global popularity.[8] As *Squid Game* is a good example of broadening the scope of audiences by increasing the provision of AD, this study compares and analyses how the three objects (dddakji, masked man, and dalgona) in *Squid Game* were audio described in Korean and English and examines whether they are coherent in terms of relevance and continuity. These three items were chosen due to the following reasons. The first 'ddakji' appears in episode 1, when a man in a suit offers to play

ddakji with a protagonist, Gi-hun. As one of the traditional Korean games, ddakji is very familiar to Koreans. However, it may be difficult to understand for foreigners, especially for foreign blind and partially sighted users who have to rely on auditory information to understand the drama. The second object is the 'masked man', who is dressed in a red jumper suit and wears a black mask with a circle, triangle, or square on it. These figures, whose ranks are determined by the patterns on their masks, appear throughout the drama, and thus, relevance and continuity are important when referring to and describing them. The third, 'soltang ppopkki'[9] or 'dalgona', is a Korean street snack, but names are slightly different across regions.[10] Dalgona is a familiar snack to Koreans, but for foreign AD users who encounter it for the first time in the drama, it may be an unusual and strange snack. Therefore, this study discusses the way these three items were described in Korean and English AD in terms of achieving coherence.

This study followed Braun's three categories (2012) to analyse three significant objects in *Squid Game*: ddakji, masked men, and dalgona. However, due to the specificity of ddakji and dalgona in relation to Korean culture, several variables were found in the Korean and English AD. In addition, the masked men, who appear throughout the series, require a new category of nomenclature due to the various audiovisual information, such as costumes, masks with a different shape on them, and dialogues. Therefore, I analyse (1) AD and coherence of audiovisual signs, (2) AD and nomenclature coherence, and (3) AD and cultural coherence.

Results

AD and coherence of audiovisual signs

In episode 1, ddakji[11] is used in a recruitment game to gather participants for the squid game. After being beaten up by loan sharks, Gi-hun (played by Lee Jung-jae) sits in a chair and waits for the subway. A neatly dressed man (played by Gong Yoo) approaches Gi-hun and offers him a game called ddakji. The well-dressed man shows Gi-hun a stack of money and a number of red and blue pieces of paper folded into a square in a hard case, which is called a ddakji (the name of the game and the tool are the same). At this point, the camera shows the ddakjis, providing viewers with visual information about their shape, colour, and size, while the well-dressed man provides auditory information with the word: 'I'm sure you've played Ddakji before, right?' After the game actually starts, the upbeat, sharp sound that is heard when the two men throw down their ddakji functions as the dominant auditory information, increasing viewers' tension. Thus, while the shape and colour of ddakji should be consistent with the visual information, the clear and loud sound of ddakji after they start the play should be consistent with the auditory information. The Korean AD refers to the term 'ddakji' as it is used by the character in the dialogue, while the English AD uses a 'domestication strategy' (Venuti 2021) to translate the term 'tile' when the ddakji first appears, describing, 'Stacks of money rest inside next to square tiles of folded paper'. Simultaneously, the English one employs a 'foreignisation strategy' to use the phonetic form of

ddakji (Venuti 2021).[12] The practice of layering paper ddakji to make them stronger and sturdier is well-known among Koreans, and the cheerful sound of the ddakji smashing against each other is also familiar. However, for foreigners, especially for the audio describer who had to write AD based on watching the ddakji only via images, it would have been effective to use both the domestication strategy as 'square tiles of folded paper' (see example 4 later) and the foreignisation strategy as 'ddakji' since ddakji is an unfamiliar play tool.

Ddakji also requires an examination of what effect the sound has on the viewer. In general, visual information is heavily loaded in AD, but auditory information like sound effects is sometimes overlapped on AD due to space restrictions between spoken words. This means that auditory information tends to be sacrificed in the service of explaining visual information. However, in terms of audiovisual media, the sound generated by the action of characters plays an important role to attract viewers' attention and contributes to a sense of realism (Fryer 2016, 30). Therefore, it is one of the important qualities of AD to make good use of sound effects so that AD users can enjoy audiovisual contents in three dimensions. In the ddakji scene described in example 4 later, the sound is interesting because the sound of Gi-hun throwing down his ddakji is weak, but when the well-dressed man throws down his ddakji, the sound is loud and powerful. During the course of several rounds of playing ddakji, this sound is naturally associated with the slapping of Gi-hun's cheek as he repeatedly loses to the man, causing his cheek to turn red. In English SDH, for reference, the sound of Ki-hoon's ddakji is omitted, while the sound of the man's ddakji is shown as 'loud clacking'. All of these sounds (the strength and weakness of ddakji sound and the sound of the slap) blend into background sounds for viewers and help to bring the experience to life, but blind and partially sighted viewers, especially foreign ones who are unfamiliar with ddakji sound, may find it difficult to distinguish between the two if no AD is provided or if the naming is ambiguous. Therefore, the simultaneous use of domestication (tile) and foreignisation (ddakji) in English AD is related to sound coherence. The following example 4 shows that both AD versions convey a sense of realism by appropriately leaving the sound of ddakji and slap (in bold) between sentences.

Example 4

[한국어음성해설]	남자가딱지를내리치는순간**(**딱지소리**)** 파란색딱지가뒤집어진다. 지하철에서승객들이내리다가**(**뺨맞는소리**)** 딱지치기를하고있는남자와기훈을쳐다본다**. (**딱지소리**)**
[Back translation (BT): Korean AD]	The moment the man slams his ddakji throws down *(ddakji sound)* the blue ddakji flips over. (. . .) Passengers on the subway get off *(slapping)* and look at the man and Gi-hun playing ddakji. *(ddakji sound)*

(Continued)

[English AD]	*(clacking)* The stranger throws down the red tile, the blue tile flips over. Commuters step off a train to find the two men playing Ddakji. *(slapping)* Gi-hun throws down his tile. *(clacking)*

The second object to be analysed is the 'masked men', who wear bright red jumpsuits and black masks with a circle, square, or triangle covering their faces. The three symbols on the masks indicate their rank.[13] The hot-pink-coloured[14] jumpsuits are complementary to the participants' green-coloured tracksuits. According to Hynes (2009, 545), 'colour is sometimes referred to as the 'silent salesperson' as it exerts persuasive power at a subliminal level'. Some viewers may argue that the masked men in the hot pink colour is to indicate their suppression and control over the participants in the green colour. The example 5 later is from episode 1, where the masked men first make their presence clear. The Korean AD describes the colour of their costume as red.[15] However, the descriptions of the shapes on the masks (i.e. circle, square, triangle) are missing, giving no clue as to the rank of the masked men.[16] On the other hand, the English AD does not mention information about the colour, but it does provide a complete description of the shapes on the mask. Therefore, as the story progresses, it should help English AD users make connections when the correlation between the masked man's rank and the shape on the mask is revealed.

Example 5

[한국어음성해설]	문이열리더니빨간색유니폼에검은색가면을쓴진행요원 **9**명이 등장한다. . . . 진행요원한명이맨앞으로나와선다**.**
[BT: Korean AD]	The door opens to reveal *nine staff [members] in red uniforms and black masks*. *One of the masked man* steps to the front.
[English AD]	A pair of huge metal doors slides open, revealing *nine figures in jumpsuits*. *Eight of them sport masks with circle designs*. *One wears a mask with square*. *The figure in the square mask* steps forward.

The object, a masked man, also needs to consider coherence with dialogue (auditory information) in the flow of story. In other words, it is uncomplete information which is not comprehensible from solely auditory information (dialogues) or visual information (images). In general, when directive words such as this, that, it, etc.,

are used in dialogue, visually impaired users experience gaps in information. In the scene, for example, where the masked men first appear at the participants' accommodation, one of the participants asks, 'You all have masks. Why are you wearing those things?' The manager in the square mask replies, 'We do not disclose the faces and personal information of our staff to any of the participants'. Therefore, the information corresponding to 'those things' needs to be provided in advance in order for AD users to easily understand the dialogue between the two of them. This is also a way to improve the coherence of spoken words and images to help users' understanding. In example 5 earlier, the Korean AD describes it as 'nine staff [members] in red uniforms and black masks', while the English one says, 'Eight of them sport masks with circle designs. One wears a mask with square'. It is clear that the Korean and English AD are slightly different in the amount and placement of information, but they are both consistent with the dialogue by informing users beforehand that the masked men are wearing masks. The examples of ddakji and masked men show that coherence can be achieved through a strategy of leaving the dominant auditory source (ddakji sound and slap) intact to allow AD users to fully enjoy it and of faithfully describing the shape and colour of objects (ddakji and masks).

AD and nomenclature coherence

The nomenclature of AD can be related to local coherence and global coherence. While local coherence shows how AD is associated with the audiovisual elements within a scene, global coherence encompasses an entire film or drama. The second analysed object, 'masked man', is an example of local-global coherence. The circles, triangles, and squares on the masks of the men indicate rank, but there is no explicit explanation provided. Instead, it is left to viewers to identify as the drama progresses. For example, in the scene where nine masked men appear in the accommodation, one square mask stands alone in the centre of other nine masked men with other symbols, giving instructions to the participants. Non-blind viewers can immediately identify that the square mask is of a higher rank and that the shapes on the masks are a sign of rank. Although those shapes on the masks are an integral part of the narrative that helps AD users follow the drama, it is not possible to provide a lengthy description of 'a mask with a square on it' every time a masked man appears because AD is always constrained by the amount of space available for insertion. The Korean and English AD use a similar strategy to solve this space limitation, which is to describe the shape of the man's mask in detail at the beginning and refer to it briefly as the story progresses. For example, the Korean AD says, '네모가면 [nemo-gamyon: square mask]', and English AD also mentions, 'the square mask'. The idea is to mix the specific and dominant information of shape and mask to indicate that the terms 'square mask' and 'triangle mask' used in AD are the same object as the masked men, which is a form of synecdoche that 'substitutes the part for the whole' (Gibbs 1999, 63).

Synecdoche is a nomenclature strategy used in AD text when there is not enough space between dialogues to give full description, or when the name of a character or object is ambiguous. In a film, for instance, there is 'a necklace with a moon-shaped pendant', or 'a man who always appears in a black bowler hat', but an audio describer may not know the object or character's name, or not be able to describe them. In the former case, the exact name of the object is not spelled out in the dialogue or script, and in the latter case, revealing the name would be a spoiler that reduces AD user's entertainment. In both of these cases, sighted users are not affected in their understanding of the story, as they are able to memorise the object as an image. However, blind and partially sighted users cannot follow the story or get confused if their names are not delivered effectively. To address this problem, AD employs synecdoche strategically, as gaps between dialogues do not allow for detailed descriptions of objects at each appearance. This explains why 'the masked man' is called as 'the square mask' or 'triangular mask'. Additionally, the shape of figures is described so that AD users can naturally understand masked men's rank. The nomenclature strategy of the masked men can be said as a description that takes into account local and global coherence while resolving gap constraints of AD.

AD and cultural coherence

Cultural models emphasise a particular domain of knowledge or activity shared by people in a social group or subgroup (Ungerer and Schmid 2006, 51–52). A country or region's culture is naturally shared across generations, so no additional explanation is required for people within that group. This is true for traditional foods and games. In this context, 'ddakji' and 'dalgona' will be analysed for cultural coherence. Soltang ppopkki or dalgona (as one of the beloved traditional Korean candies) and ddakji (as a traditional game) have been featured in many both old and contemporary Korean television programmes. Thus, it is safe to assume Koreans have a common background knowledge of dalgona and ddakji; however, this might not be true for international audiences, who do not share the same culture. These cultural-specific items need to be explained in detail in AD, from its appearance to its ingredients for the international audience who rely on AD.

Firstly, in example 6 later, looking at ddakji, in the scene where Gi-hun is surprised to see the hard case containing ddakji and some money, the Korean AD starts with the character's action: 'Gi-hun hesitates when he sees the case'. Without having to describe its shape and material, the term ddakji would be sufficient for a Korean AD audience, so the character's action is explained first to synchronise with the image in the scene. The English AD, on the other hand, explains that it looks like 'square tiles of folded paper'. It is clear that space has been reserved by omitting descriptions of the characters' actions in order to provide more detail about the ddakji that may not be familiar to English-speaking AD users. The ITC Guidelines (2000, 15) note that 'occasionally a little additional explanation can help', which is an essential strategy, especially when adding AD to content produced in other cultures.

Example 6

[한국어음성해설]	기훈이가방을보고멈칫한다. 안에딱지와돈이들어있다.
[BT: Korean AD]	*Gi-hun hesitates when he sees the bag.* There's ddakji and money inside.
[English AD]	Stacks of money rest inside next to *square tiles of folded paper*.

The second subject of analysis, 'dalgona', can also be viewed as a cultural specificity. Dalgona is one of the Korean street snacks that is made from melted sugar and caramelised with soda, pressed flat by using a presser, and then stamped into various patterns (stars, circles, triangles, etc.). If you successfully separate the pattern without damaging it, you will get a free one. In the drama, dalgona is used in such a way as a game of life and death. Participants can live if they separate a pattern of circle, triangle, star, or umbrella stamped on the dalgona without damaging it; otherwise, they are shot on the spot. In particular, the dalgona game scene visually shows participants scratching or dipping with a needle and licking the sweets to get the pattern to come off, rather than telling the story through dialogue, so there are many references to the dalgona name in AD text. This suggests that the naming of dalgona is crucial.

'Dalgona' is referred to as 'soltang ppopkki (sugar draw)' directly on screen. For example, the word soltang ppopkki (visual information) is shown on the screen in Byung-gi's recollections,[17] and in the following scene, a female voice of the game (auditory information) announces soltang ppopkki as the next game. While the audiovisual information clearly shows that dalgona is soltang ppopkki, the Korean AD uses multiple terms, such as 'soltang ppopkki', 'ppopkki', and 'dalgona'. A closer look reveals that 'dalgona' is used to refer to the sugar candy itself, and soltang ppopkki or ppopkki is used to refer specifically to the game itself. On the other hand, in the English AD version, the word soltang ppopkki in Byung-gi's flashback scene is phonetically changed to dalgona based on the English dubbing, and for reference, the English SDH also translates it to dalgona. As the game makes progress, the female voice of the game equally announces, 'The second game is dalgona'. This suggests that the English AD achieved coherence by phonetically transliterating soltang ppopkki as dalgona, while the Korean AD failed to achieve coherence due to the interchangeable use of the two or more terms referring to the same object. However, it is hard to say that the Korean AD confused users by mixing the terms. This may be based on the assumption that Korean audiences have already been exposed to the interchangeable use of 'soltang ppopkki' and 'dalgona' in the Korean culture, where users are embedded.

The other example involving dalgona also illustrates a sense of cultural idiosyncrasy. In example 7 later, the images corresponding to the AD show sugar in a ladle being stirred with a stick and melted in a portable gas burner, showing the process of making dalgona in several short shots. The Korean AD adds a commentary, 'Add soda', as the melted sugar turns a light-brown colour, even when there is no scene where soda is actually added. This may seem misleading, but dalgona cannot

be made without soda, and most Koreans know that dalgona is made by mixing melted sugar with soda to inflate it. In other words, the moment the shot switches from the sugar melting to the sugar changing colour, non-blind Korean viewers could cognitively fill in the gap to interpret that soda must have been added. Many cognitive linguists agree that humans use their experiences, background knowledge, and so on to understand a given phenomenon (Shapiro 2014). In this context, the Korean AD fills in the gap to make the description sound more logical. The English AD, on the other hand, focuses more on the shape of the dalgona by illustrating that it is pressed into a round and flat disc. Dalgona is an unfamiliar object to English-speaking blind and partially sighted people. Without describing the shape of a dalgona as a round and flat disc, it is difficult for them to fully comprehend that participants in the dalgona game scratch the dalgona must remove the stamped design without damaging it.

Example 7

[한국어음성해설]	뽑기장수는작은국자에설탕과소다를넣어잘휘저은뒤 누르개로눌러별과우산등의모양틀을찍는다.
[BT: Korean AD]	The vendor *stirs sugar and soda together in a small ladle*, then presses it down with a stamp to make a star, umbrella, and other shapes.
[English AD]	A stick stirs sugar in a ladle, *the sugar melts and browns,* then plops onto a metal surface. A hand stamps *the sugar into a disc* then stamps them with different patterns, including a star and an umbrella.

In summary, when explaining something as culturally specific as ddakji and dalgona, a strategy to help foreign AD users follow the story is the consistent use of terminology to achieve coherence and providing detailed description of a shape and function when necessary.

Conclusion

This chapter analysed the extent to which three objects 'ddakji', 'masked men', and 'dalgona' are consistently presented in the AD of the popular Netflix drama *Squid Game*. It focused on the following three points: (1) coherence of audiovisual signs in AD, (2) nomenclature coherence in AD, and (3) cultural coherence in AD. In the case of ddakji scene that accompanies audiovisual signs, the Korean AD adopted a strategy of unifying the term 'ddakji' based on the dialogue and using sound effects at the right time to achieve coherence. For the English AD, the shape and material of ddakji were described in detail, and both domestication (tiles of folded paper) and foreignisation (ddakji) strategies were used, with sound effects for greater coherence in the whole. In the case of masked men, both language ADs increased the local coherence by describing masks in detail and the global coherence by using

abbreviated names that are based on a combination of specific and dominant information, such as 'the square mask'. Finally, in the cases of ddakji and dalgona, which corresponds to cultural coherence, the Korean AD used both terms 'soltang ppopkki (sugar draw)' and 'dalgona', while the English AD attempted to improve coherence by the consistent use of terminology (dalgona), taking the Korean culture into account and focusing on describing the shape in the context of the story. While English-speaking, non-blind viewers will quickly recognise images and follow the story even when they do not know the exact name of the object, blind and partially sighted English AD users will need a description of the object, including its shape and colour, alongside the exact name. Furthermore, if this object appears throughout the entire film or drama or reappears at intervals, it needs to be linked by name to ensure coherence, indicating that it is the same object. While the Korean AD omitted descriptions of the shape and colour of the two objects earlier, the English AD was relatively detailed, with additional words (e.g. tile, disc) added.

OTT contents, like *Squid Game* or *Pinocchio*, are frequently accompanied by additional AD from other cultures. In these cases, an audio describer may be required to describe exotic landscapes, foods, costumes, and games. As the ddakji and dalgona cases demonstrate, the inclusion of additional words is necessary for cross-cultural audiences to fully understand the events being performed (Vermeulen and Ibáñez Moreno 2017, 18). Understanding different cultural products requires communication (Holliday, Kullman, and Hyde 2016, 21), which requires tools. Language is a powerful tool for communication and a cultural tool (Everett 2012), and audio describers use these tools to translate the non-verbal markers in film or drama into language. AD can help blind and partially sighted users understand foreign culture through language and help them communicate with that content. This is why an audio describer is occasionally referred to as a 'cultural mediator' (Sanz-Moreno 2017). AD is presented to visually impaired users in the form of auditory information. Thus, coherence in AD is 'intrinsically indeterminate because it is relative to participants ascribing their understanding to what they hear' (Bublitz, Lenk, and Ventola 1999, 154). This is why user studies are needed (Salway 2007; Braun 2012; Fryer 2016). This fact can be seen as a limitation of this study, but it also confirms the need for further research, such as user interviews and comparative experiments. Nevertheless, this study offers a comparative analysis of AD in two different languages, categorises their coherence, and most importantly, shows what factors AD should take into account in the case of cultural specificity. Therefore, this study can be used as an educational resource and reference for AD practice from different cultures.

For OTT platforms that provide content to global audiences, expanding the use of AD services can help to broaden their audiences. Beyond the entertainment aspect of visual contents, which allows blind and partially sighted AD users from foreign backgrounds to experience and appreciate different cultures through those materials, it can also be a valuable resource for adults and children with visual impairments to improve their own language and learn foreign languages (López 2008; Moreno and Vermeulen 2015; Walczak 2016; Navarrete 2018). The more AD content that overcomes languages and social barriers to disability is produced,

the more opportunities there will be for blind and partially sighted AD users to improve their language skills, learn about different cultures, and access richer resources for foreign language education. This chapter concludes with the hope that more AD will be produced on online streaming platforms, as these positive attributes are promoted.

Notes

1 The analysis was performed by the author.
2 Researchers Inhwan Seo and Yonghoon Lee went to the United States and introduced it (A call interview between Inhwan Seo and me, May 11, 2023).
3 MBC and SBS provided AD dramas *Marry Me!* (2004) [결혼하고싶은여자: Gyolhon Hago Sipeun Yoja] and *Little Women* (2004) [작은아씨들: Jageun Assideul], respectively.
4 In accordance with Article 69 of the Broadcasting Act, descriptive video service (AD) fulfilled the 10% requirement for terrestrial broadcasters by 2014 and has continued to be provided to date in Korea.
5 The act aims to promote the cultural and artistic activities of artists with disabilities and contribute to the improvement of their quality of life.
6 Braun (2012) raises an issue that referring to Catharina's daughter, Cornelia, in the description may require unnecessary information processing for AD users, which is why clear description is important. Since the scene is about Catharina giving her maid, Griet, a job, one might assume that AD users would understand that 'go in' is addressed to Griet, not her daughter, but this ambiguous inference suggests the need for user studies. When I actually checked the scene in question, I found that Catharina says, 'Go in', while looking at Griet. Additionally, it would be awkward to see her daughter, Cornelia, saying, 'I . . . my husband does'.
7 Available in 14 ADs: Korean, English, German, French, Spanish, Italian, Indonesian, Thai, Turkish, Polish, Hindi, Japanese, Portuguese, and Russian.
8 When *Squid Game* was released on Netflix in 2021, it was only available with Korean AD and SDH, English, Spanish, and simplified Chinese subtitles, but the drama quickly became immensely popular that viewers around the world took to social media to express their disappointment with the lack of accessibility, leading Netflix to offer AD, SDH, dubbing, and subtitles in multiple languages (VerbalEyes 2022).
9 Back translation: sugar picking/honeycomb challenge.
10 Depending on the region, they were called ladle, picking, or poo-shaped sweets (when sugar is formed into a lump instead of being pressed flat).
11 When using a ddakji as a game term in the drama, it is capitalised, and when used as a proper name for an object, it is lowercased.
12 English AD: Commuters step off a train to find the two men playing ddakji.
13 According to director Hwang Dong-hyuk, 'A circle represents a worker, a triangle represents a ward, and a square represents a manage' (Kang 2021).
14 In an interview, Hwang Dong-hyuk, director of *Squid Game*, explains, the 'colour (hot pink) is soft, playful and innocently childlike, and the contrast with the green is impressive' (Na Won-jung 2021).
15 Korean AD is described as red, reducing the accuracy of the information.
16 Both the Korean and English ADs miss the shape on the masks and the colour of the jumpsuit in this scene, respectively, but when the masked man reappears later, the AD in both languages make good use of space to explain what is missing. However, it can be argued that this does not qualify as AD in which visually impaired users receive the same or a similar amount of information as a non-visually impaired user from the first appearance of the masked man.

17 In episode 3, Byung-gi gets some game information ahead of time in exchange for collusion with a couple of organ traffickers: a small piece of paper they slip into his bread reads 'soltang ppopkki'.

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4 Translation, streaming and the Korean Film Archive

Toward sustainable solutions

Jonathan Evans

As I was writing the first draft of this chapter, the world saw a summer of floods, wildfires and extreme weather. Newspapers were wondering if the climate is already broken.[1] The answer seems to be 'not yet', but the risk is still very high. It is hard, in this context, not to think about sustainability and sustainable working practices, which are necessary in order to reduce the human impact on the environment and to, if possible, create restorative practices that can help to ameliorate damage that has already been caused.

Translation and media would not seem to be areas that are directly or obviously linked to the climate. When we think of climate change, the obvious industries are carbon-producing, fossil fuel guzzlers like transport or construction or energy production (at least in places that use gas or coal-powered power stations). Translation, on the other hand, just feels like the movement of words on a page, or more likely, a computer screen, while media, one might think, is more problematic in the way it creates objects (DVDs, Blu-ray discs, etc.) that need to be shipped from place to place. However, thinking through the production cycle of media makes clear a more complex set of needs, from transport and construction, to power usage and the use of rare earth metals in the electronics we use to watch and otherwise consume media content.

In this chapter, I explore the ways in which media and translation are connected to the environment and look at ways of making a more sustainable approach to media distribution and translation. In order to do this, I explore the notion of 'slow media' and explore how the practices of the Korean Film Archive could be considered slow and sustainable, with the goal of finding other ways of imagining the media sphere that could be applied more generally. I start by exploring the relationships between translation and media and the environment, before moving on to existing sustainable solutions and then discussing the Korean Film Archive.

Translation, media and the environment

Before entering into a more substantial discussion of the existing scholarship on the topic, there are several reasons I think that the discussion of translation and the environment has not been at the front of people's minds until quite recently. First is the overwhelming tendency for anyone involved in translation as a practice and

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translation studies as a discipline to have a training in modern languages (with perhaps a bit of comparative literature or linguistics) and so have spent much of their undergraduate years worrying about improving their accent, learning grammar, understanding new vocabulary and so on, with less attention to research on the environment and human impact on it. This is changing, I would suggest, due to the increase in work on the environmental humanities (as seen in, for example, the journal *Environmental Humanities*, published by Duke University Press since 2012) and the growth of ecocriticism (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996; Hiltner 2015), that is, the analysis of the intersections between literature and the environment. I do not mean to complain here: my point is that when one has training in a discipline that does not focus on the environment, or for which (until recently) the environment has not been a focus, then the environment tends not to be at the forefront of your thinking. Secondly, the image of a translator as an individual working on a laptop in a home office is quite prevalent among freelancers:[2] the figure of the translator is not one who moves around a lot, taking private jets to important meetings. Instead, it is a more modest figure who probably has a very low carbon footprint. Yet the use of a laptop, internet technologies and the energy grid all have their environmental impacts, as I shall discuss in relation to the environmental impact of technologies and media.

As such, it is unsurprising that little work appears in translation studies on translation and the environment. The use of the term 'environment' in translation studies often relates to translation technologies, often computer-aided translation tools (CAT tools), rather than the natural environment (Abrányi 2016). The key work that addresses the relationship between translation and the environment, and which has had most influence in the field since its publication, is Michael Cronin's *Eco-Translation* (2017). Cronin focuses on the ways in translation as a practice and translators as a social group can contribute to ameliorating the ecological crisis of the Anthropocene. Cronin discusses the role of translation in relation to the attention economy, in food cultures, in interacting with other species, the important connection between translation and technology and the role of travel writing in connecting the environment and translation. The arguments in the book aim to give a comprehensive overview connecting translation and the environment. They lead to a more environmental translation studies, one that, like environmental humanities and ecocriticism, both of which Cronin draws on, addresses the ways in the environment is always already imbricated in translation practices and how translation practices can thus impact the environment.

My aim here is somewhat different than Cronin's, as I am concerned more specifically with the environmental impact of translation practices, especially in relation to audiovisual translation. Cronin does mention the environmental impact of computers and communications technologies (2017, 94–102), such as the use of rare earth metals and the growing need for electric power to make everything work, which is increasing as more people use the internet for streaming video. He offers, as a solution to the problems created by 'hi-tech' technologies, the use of 'low-tech' (103–6) technologies, which are not exactly older technologies but which are less powerful and potentially less damaging. However, rather than exploring this

at length, he then quickly moves on to the grounds of intellectual and cultural diversity (107–15). While I agree that this is important, I want to consider more sustainable practices related to forms of distribution that use modern technology to circulate cultural materials, such as films, as well as the other environmental impacts, and thus go beyond Cronin's work.

A different approach to eco-translation can be found in Gengshen Hu's work (e.g. Hu 2020), which argues that translation as a practice resembles an environment, and translators adapt texts to fit to that environment. It draws from an understanding of natural development as adaptation that is essentially Darwinian (Magagnin 2020, 118) – that is, that translations, like species, adapt to the environment that they are in. Here, ecology is used primarily as a metaphor for understanding translation processes, rather than considering the effect of translators on the natural environment around them (this can be part of Hu's ecology as well, though it is not foregrounded as such).

The influence of Cronin and Hu's work can be seen in the increasing number of events that focus on ecology and translation, such as the International Association for Translation and Interpreting Studies (IATIS) 2021 in Barcelona entitled 'The Cultural Ecology of Translation'. A special issue of *Atelier de Traduction*, from 2021, entitled 'Écologie et traduction, écologie de la traduction [Ecology and translation, ecology of translation]' (Regattin 2020) further developed approaches to the connection between ecology and translation, with articles analysing specific examples of environmentally related texts or examining existing theories. Less directly, the influence of Cronin can be seen in the growing interest in sustainability in translation studies. The meaning of sustainability can be contested, as Tom Kuhlman and John Farrington (2010) argue, but they also provide a relevant definition of it as 'maintaining well-being over a long, perhaps even an indefinite period' (3441). They demonstrate how, following the 1986 Brundtland report, sustainability is understood to include economic, social and environmental elements. A conference in Vienna on 'Sustainability and Translation' from 2021 shows the way in which this work has been developing, though there is not yet a representative volume on it. Alongside papers that explored translating environmental knowledge, or that posited, following Cronin, the importance of translation for biocultural diversity (thus, the social element of sustainability), there was also work that examined the ethical and economic issues around translation and sustainability. This shows a growing interest in the topic and the main areas of discussion. However, what is missing is more thinking through of the impact of translation as a practice on the environment, rather than the potential of translation for encouraging better understanding of that environment.

It is helpful to turn to recent work in media studies for an understanding of the environmental impact of media. As translation is a practice that uses various media, from paper and ink to printed circuit boards, LED monitors and internet connectivity, research in media studies can reveal the less obvious and more hidden aspects of the impact of translating on the environment.

A key work that addresses the environmental impact of media technologies is Richard Maxwell and Toby Miller's *Greening the Media* (2012). Going beyond

the obvious issues of power and rare earth metals needed for computer equipment, they demonstrate how all forms of media have negative effects on the environment. Even an older technology, such as paper, requires much water as well as chemicals in order to process raw materials (originally rags and, from the late 1800s, wood pulp) into white paper that can be used for writing on and printing (Maxwell and Miller 2012, 46–51). Printing itself uses powered presses, which would have been coal-powered before they became electric. Maxwell and Miller point out that the paper industry 'was the "second largest consumer of energy"' in the United States in the late twentieth century (2012, 51), as well as being third largest producer of greenhouse gases (Maxwell and Miller 2012). This is only to consider the production of paper and printed materials. Clearly, as they also point out, there is the necessity of growing wood for pulp or using existing forests, which poses other environmental risks. Yet it only gets more complicated, as paper waste is also a major problem; approximately 90% was not recycled in the USA in 2011 (Maxwell and Miller 2012). Other countries are better at recycling, but this still leads to an enormous amount of waste paper. Maxwell and Miller also examine the sorts of chemicals used and the difficulty in disposing of their waste products, which can be carcinogenic.

If a relatively low-tech technology, like paper, poses so many problems, then it is clear that more hi-tech items, such as laptops, tablet computers and internet technologies, pose even more problems. It is not just the issue of extracting rare earth metals from the ground – a process that is heavily damaging to both the land around and the humans doing it, as in the case of tantalum in Africa (Maxwell and Miller 2012, 21), which has also indirectly funded conflict in the Congo (Maxwell and Miller 2012, 93–94). There is also the problem of processing these materials into products and, once again, the difficulty in disposing of them after use. Maxwell and Miller highlight how a good deal of this work has been moved to the Global South (104) and is associated with numerous health risks for workers. The production of physical media, like records, DVDs and so on, also uses an enormous amount of power and creates an enormous amount of waste. This seems rather intuitive to understand in terms of environmental and social costs.

Less obvious, because more easily overlooked, are the environmental effects of creating and distributing media products, such as films, TV shows and games. The production of media content, as Maxwell and Miller (2012, 70–71) highlight in relation to the film *The Beach*, requires the movement of a great number of people and materials around, which uses a significant amount of power and which can also damage the local environment when not using roads and so on. Furthermore, in the specific instance of *The Beach*, changes were made to the setting that included moving sand dunes, which unmoored them and reduced their protection from monsoons (Maxwell and Miller 2012). The distribution of the films also has a number of effects, from the shipping of physical media around the globe, to the more hidden and thus less discussed consequences of online distribution. When we discuss the internet, we tend not to think about the physical infrastructure that underlies the whole thing – a collection of wires. Copper, which forms a part of that wire structure, is, of course, a mineral that needs to be mined and refined, and Maxwell and

Miller (2012, 55–56) detail the environmental damage of both of these processes. Yet the wires themselves are encased in something, too, which must also be produced: before 1950, this tended to be rubber known as gutta-percha for undersea cables, and after that date, it has tended to be polyvinyl chromide (PVC) plastic (Maxwell and Miller 2012, 57), which is a petroleum product and which causes pollution in its creation and disposal. In addition to the creation and maintenance of the wires, the placing of cables underwater can cause abrasion to the seabed and damage underwater habitats (Maxwell and Miller 2012). Beyond cables, the use of satellites also creates an enormous amount of waste, both in the production and launching of them, as well as the space waste when they stop working (Maxwell and Miller 2012, 80). All of this infrastructure has, therefore, an environmental impact that must be considered, even if it cannot obviously be seen.

This brief discussion highlights that all media has some sort of environmental impact that needs to be managed. This comes from the production, use and disposal of consumer products, as well as the costs of making media content and the further costs of distributing it. It does not seem feasible to stop using media at all, especially as it is an ingrained habit in most people's lives in one form or another. So there needs to be some sort of approach to making media more sustainable, that is, usable over a long, if not indefinite, time period.

Translation is imbricated in all this. Translators use computers, internet technologies (freelancing is unimaginable without email, and most translators will now use the World Wide Web as a research tool) and the power they need to run. CAT tools and other translation software further enmesh translators with technologies. Pertinent to this volume is also the impact of audiovisual translation, especially in the streaming era, when more material is being distributed and translated (as I will return to in my discussion of the Korean Film Archive later). While it is true that freelance translators working from home are less likely to be creating as much environmental impact as a film crew making an international production as they are not travelling, there are still ways to reduce that impact and make mindful decisions about what technologies to use and, where possible, how to power them. Translators are also, in part, responsible for the international distribution of media in translation, through the very act of translating it, as well as making available technologies through the translation of manuals and so on. It is not a straightforward choice of using a low-powered laptop or choosing a green energy supplier: there are other ways in which translation as a practice impacts, sometimes indirectly, on the environment.

Sustainability and the media

For media to become sustainable, it must aim to reduce the damage it causes or, better, be restorative: actually improve the environment. This can come from cautious use of less damaging materials (vegetable-based inks, for instance, in printing) or through the use of existing materials and infrastructure that do not need new construction. Yet this is to only speak of the environmental aspects of sustainability: there must also be social and economic sustainability. So to understand

sustainability in the media, there must be development in relation to environmental impact, as well as looking at the social and economic impact. The same holds for translation, and I would argue that much of the discourse around media production can be applied to translation as well.

Media producers have received most attention in relation to the sustainability of media processes, as their jobs and livelihoods are most obviously linked to the media. Angela McRobbie, in her *Be Creative*, has highlighted how media and cultural industries jobs now require the ability to move cities (and sometimes countries) for short-term contracts (2016, 6), part of what she calls the 'middle-classification' of the culture industries (10). This she links to a type of entrepreneurial mindset, not least as there are financial risks to any sort of setting up a business and being self-employed. Citing Isabell Lorey, McRobbie argues that this focus on creativity and entrepreneurship is part of a larger precarisation of workers (14). For McRobbie, the question is how to square the benefits of being creative (e.g. self-expression, non-alienated working practices, etc.) with an economic situation that makes making a living off such creativity difficult, and which, through the use of project work, can make planning for the future difficult. In other words, McRobbie's concerns are those of the sustainability of professions in the cultural industries, given the various pressures on participants in those professions.

To my mind, these are similar issues to those found in the profession of translation. The move to a very precarious form of employment, where most translators are freelance and paid by the word, combined with falling prices, has already been discussed by translation scholars (Moorkens 2017) and echoes some of McRobbie's discussion. McRobbie does, however, explore alternative practices in her book, analysing small fashion designers in Berlin as another way of doing fashion that differs from practices prevalent in London (McRobbie 2016, 115–45) and which could be viewed as more sustainable, though not without problems. Joss Moorken's suggestions for translators are more limited, including developing new competences (such as working with translation technologies) and 'push[ing] back . . . against the globalised pressure on pricing' (Moorkens 2017, 473). Given that Moorkens is writing an article, not a book, he has less room to explore precisely just how that might be done. I would suggest that looking over at what is happening in media studies and the cultural industries to address similar issues would offer relevant models for the social and economic sustainability of translation as a paid profession.

Seeing as sustainability incorporates the environmental, social and economic impact of a practice, and while I have discussed these separately, they are not always separate, as the impact on the environment can also have a social and economic impact, and the same applies to the other aspects. Therefore, any attempt to make more sustainable practices must thus address each of these elements. In what follows, I look at two approaches, one aimed at production and the other more at consumption, for making media sustainable, with the idea that translation is, also, a central part of media consumption and distribution in a globalised context.

The approach, or moreover, certification, aimed at producers is a British scheme known as Albert.[3] Albert allows media production companies to measure and

reduce their carbon production when making TV shows and films. They do this through offering, for a subscription, access to a carbon calculator and offering a carbon action plan to reduce emissions. This should then allow production companies to understand and act on their environmental impacts.

In addition, Albert also promotes content on climate change within media content itself. To this end, they offer a guide on 'Telling Climate Change Stories' as well as an editorial tool that evaluates the potential of a climate change story to affect audiences. The website also includes examples of films and TV shows that address climate change. These range from the British motoring programme *Top Gear* to the Korean film *Okja* via the British comedy show *The Mash Report*. The mix of scripted drama and lightly/unscripted entertainment demonstrates the multiple ways media content can positively address climate change. This is clearly an important initiative, but it is not clear what the precise effects of discussing climate change in media content are in terms of actual change.[4]

One might criticise Albert for being primarily focused on carbon emissions, given the vast range of complex environmental effects of media production, as discussed earlier. Yet reducing carbon creation could have an important effect on the environment and would be likely to reduce other impacts, too, as all the technologies used for making media use power and so carbon is a by-product of all the processes. It also creates a metric which is simple and easy to measure, which can lead to its uptake, as it reduces a complex process with many variables to something that is relatively easily understood. However, in relation to my earlier discussion of sustainability, it only addresses the environmental impact of media creation, rather than the social and economic part as well. It would be good to expand from carbon metrics to also include fair pay, equitable treatment for local populations and so on. To an extent, the former of these will be addressed by union agreements and local laws, but not all workers on a media production will be unionised. Having producers sign up to a commitment would improve working on the media for all stakeholders. To an extent, these criticisms are addressed by similar schemes that exist elsewhere, such as the Nordic Film Commissions Sustainability Pledge[5] and Green Film,[6] highlighting the general move to more sustainable media creation that focuses on more than just the environmental aspects of sustainability.

Albert is also a voluntary certification, meaning that it will tend to be used by those producers who already think that reducing environmental impact is important. It has, however, become mandatory for creators working for a number of broadcasters, including BBC, ITV, Channel 4, UKTV, Sky and TG4, and international streaming services, like Netflix, meaning that it is starting to become a standard certification in the British media industry. Its effect should, therefore, be increased. Albert is, therefore, on its way to becoming a useful model of how to do sustainable TV, even if it could be improved and internationalised, perhaps in combination with other schemes such as Green Film. A similar certification for reduced environmental impact is also imaginable for the translation industry; again, it could focus initially on carbon production but then expand to take in social and economic aspects. It should also be noted that translation is part of media distribution and would, in theory, be covered by Albert and other media schemes as part of

post-production, though it is not clear if this is the case from material available on the Albert website.

While Albert focuses on the producers, the concept of slow media focuses on consumers. Slow media draws from the various 'slow' practices that have been springing up in relation to food, exercise, sex (Honoré 2004) and even academia (Berg and Seeber 2017). Slow is understood as a contrast to the 'fast' processes of, for example, fast food, fast fashion and so on, which are seen as being quick but not sustainable or beneficial. In some ways, it is an attempt to overcome what Jonathan Crary (2014) has called the 24/7 commerce of the internet, which encourages full-time consumption, by following other ways of consuming and creating.

While various aspects of slow media had existed since the 1990s – for example, the continuing use of vinyl records as a form of intensive listening among music fans, despite the easy availability of CDs and later MP3s and streamed music[7] – the Slow Media Manifesto of 2010[8] set up a clear direction for the concept. Through a series of 14 theses, the manifesto presents slow media as a way of consuming and producing media that is sustainable in the social, economic and environmental senses. This is highlighted in the first thesis, 'Slow media are a contribution to sustainability', where the quality of materials and processes is discussed. Following the manifesto, slow media is made up of products that require attentive viewing and consumption, as well as being a mode of consumption – 'monotasking' rather than multitasking and leading to social interaction through discussion. This differs from Cronin's (2017, 20–27) discussion of attention in *Eco-translation*, where he notes the concept of attention economy, that is, where the viewer's attention is valorised, before focusing on the visibility that translation affords texts as well as the visibility of translation. Instead, here, attention is attention to the text, through a mindful choice of what to watch and consume, as well as contemplative, or one might say 'deep', consumption, in contrast to the less mindful consumption of media as background or distraction.

Jennifer Rauch extends these ideas in her book *Slow Media* (2018), which has a chapter on precisely the topic of mindful attention (79–98). Rauch makes even clearer the connections between slow media and sustainability. Chapters focus on the relationship with other forms of slow culture, such as slow food, as well as working practices, environmental issues, attention and even a recuperation of Luddism, the movement of nineteenth-century textile workers who destroyed industrial machinery they feared would make their jobs nonexistent (Rauch 2018, 102).[9] Rauch's slogan of 'good, clean, fair' for journalism (2018, 33–52) offers a memorable distillation of the ethos of slow media: good quality media content, clean or nonpolluting and fairly paid. Achieving this across different media forms would lead to more sustainable media.

How might translation become part of this? Translation is, as I have argued, an integral part of the international distribution of media and should necessarily be part of any slow media or environmentally conscious media production. It should use sustainable technologies and offer fair pay in sustainable jobs. This is easy to say, but given current practices in the translation industry (as discussed by Moorkens 2017), it seems a bit of dream to ask for. Yet this is part of the way in which

slow media and the environmental certification of Albert and other organisations works: it is aspirational, aiming to create a situation where media is sustainable.[10]

The 'slow' movement is not without its critics, however: slow food has been called elitist (Rauch 2018, 29) because one needs time and money to be able to pick and choose between different options and sources. Certainly, access to fresh vegetables and other healthy food has an effect on people's choices (Story et al. 2008), which can lead to better health outcomes than if one does not have access to them. Yet as Rauch (2018, 30) argues, much of what slow food promoted was, in fact, local staples, 'time-tested peasant foods', which would use local produce. Moving the discussion to media, Rauch (2018) highlights that many slow media practices are easily available and remain relatively cheap. She points out that one can use the public library. However, this is only the case if there is one nearby and easily accessible; this is not always the situation for many people. Nor, following Maxwell and Miller (2012), is print necessarily a sustainable form of media. However, Rauch's argument still holds, even in places where libraries are hard to find or use. There is an enormous amount of media available out in the world, and a good deal of that is available quite cheaply or freely accessible through the internet. It should be highlighted that slow media is not just about analogue media but also about how one *consumes* media: choosing carefully what one watches or listens to, paying attention while doing so, contemplating afterward and discussing it with friends. None of these actions are media specific, that is, they are not tied to records or cassettes (to name two resurgent analogue formats) but could equally be undertaken through Netflix, YouTube or other streaming services. One might contend that, as computer-based systems, they require all the toxic materials discussed earlier, and this is true, but they also use existing technologies that people are likely to have already (such as a mobile phone), reducing the creation of new waste due to needing different machines for every form of media (as was the case in the 1970s). Sustainability is not about avoiding new technology but using it in a way that causes minimal impact on the environment while supporting fairly paid jobs.

The Korean Film Archive and sustainable media

I have dwelt on these theoretical issues, as these topics are relatively under-discussed in translation studies, and it is thus important to establish what the issues are and what solutions might already exist. As I have argued, translation is an integral part of media distribution, even if it can be separated out as a process (as can filming, special effects and so on). This means that we can examine the environmental impact of media and questions around sustainability in the media industries to shed light on practices in the translation industry, especially in relation to audiovisual translation. In this section, I turn to analysing an example of translated media distribution that can offer some insights into possible forms of sustainability for international media. To do this, I will discuss some of its environmental impacts as well as its connection to slow media more generally through its choice of content and the forms of attention and practices of watching that it suggests.

The Korean Film Archive is a physical institution that exists in Sang-am (Seoul) and Paju (Gyeonggi province). Founded in 1974 as the Korean Film Depository, since 2002, it has been funded by and part of the Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism.[11] Its mission is to acquire, restore, preserve and show films and media. In this, it is similar to other film archives around the world, and it is part of the Federation of Film Archives. In addition to its work with film archiving, it also produces books about film in English and Korean, and since 2014, it has been releasing DVDs and Blu-ray discs of Korean films. It also screens films at its physical locations.

What makes it interesting for my concerns with sustainability and seeking alternative ways of distributing media is its online presence. Without this, it can only be accessed in person or through physical media, both of which require transportation (for people and objects), as well as the creation of the physical media themselves. While there are certain social advantages to physical screenings, especially for people based in the city of Seoul, this model poses a number of challenges in terms of disseminating film internationally and having an impact beyond South Korea. An online presence allows this and may offer some ways of thinking about sustainably doing so.

The Korean Film Archive runs the Korean Movie Database,[12] as well as three YouTube Channels and one Naver (a South Korean streaming service) channel. The Korean Movie Database is an image and text-based resource about Korean cinema, similar to, as the title indicates, the Internet Movie Database (IMDb), though the site is less interactive and does not offer viewers the opportunity to comment on movies. Available in English and Korean, its role is to offer information about Korean movies to local and international viewers, with the goal of disseminating knowledge about Korean cinema, with, I would suggest, the ultimate goal of getting more people to watch Korean cinema.

While the KMDb has a view-on-demand (VOD) section, this requires a login, limiting who can access it. The Korean Film Archive's use of YouTube and Naver offers another way of disseminating films and media over its four channels. One of the channels is called the Korean Film Archive Official Channel[13] and features videos in Korean that offer introductions to and commentary on Korean films that are in the collection. One video, for instance, is a New Year's video,[14] which includes messages of good luck cut from 100 movies to make a video. A Korean pop song plays over the top of the dialogue, and each film is named in the top right of the video. The aesthetic of the video is much like other online listing videos available elsewhere on YouTube and gives a modern interpretation to older movies, making them seem less distant in time. It is a playful way to expose viewers to the different films and give a hint of the archive available. It draws from the phenomenon of spreadability (Jenkins, Ford, and Green 2013), that is, the way in which film and media clips are edited and redistributed by different agents. However, where this differs from Jenkins, Ford and Green's original formulation is that this is being done by an institution rather than individual fans, demonstrating the way in which the institution is aware of and using internet trends as part of its dissemination. The channel serves as an entry point to Korean-speaking viewers to the history of

Korean film and media and, through its remixing and commentary on older films, an advert for those films.

There are two further YouTube channels: Korean Classic Film and Korean Animation Channel.[15] Korean Classic Film is in English and mirrored on Naver in Korean, while Korean Animation is in Korean on YouTube. These two channels offer access to older Korean films and Korean cartoons, including feature films and shorter animations. The animations are presented with their Korean names and an English translation, for example, *ŏrŭmsonyŏ chŏn'gisonyŏ* (*ice girl electricity girl,* my translation)*/Why did they become anti-heroes?*[16] This gives the impression these are available with English subtitles, but the only subtitles provided were auto-generated Korean language ones. There is an auto-translate option, but it is cumbersome to use and difficult to read, as it appears not as fully formed subtitles but as individual words and phrases as they are spoken. It looked more like respoken live subtitles than traditional subtitling. Linguistically, the sentence structures seemed acceptable, if not entirely fluent, in English (e.g. 'Thanks to Hiro, the village was calmed down and the villains moved to the control center'). However, the service was patchy, and the subtitles stopped working on occasion, meaning that a viewer without Korean would struggle to follow the action (this was certainly the case for me). It is clear from this that the subtitles have not been considered in the presentation of some of these videos, suggesting they are not aimed for international audiences. However, this is not the case for all the videos on the channel. For example, for *t'aegwŏndongja maruch'i arach'i/the Taekwon Kids*,[17] the subtitles were available in English, Korean and auto-generated Korean. That suggests a more international audience was in mind, though all the comments on the video that I could see were in Korean, so it is not entirely clear if it was being watched by people who did not speak Korean. The animation channel offers a deep dive into Korean animation but is aimed more obviously at viewers who can speak Korean, though it does also include some subtitles for English-speaking viewers and can thus be understood as being partially, if not consistently, aimed at international audiences.

Korean Classic Film, on the other hand, is presented first in English on YouTube, and films have the option of English subtitles. This is more clearly internationally facing. Twenty-four of the films are offered in Malay, Vietnamese, Indonesian, Thai and Arabic subtitles, as a way of increasing international viewership and perhaps benefitting from the popularity of K-drama in those locations to increase interest in Korean film more generally. Some of the films have been 4K remastered, making them more watchable on modern TV equipment. There are some collections offered to make it easier to navigate the films, based around actors (e.g. Kim Ji-mee), directors (Kim Soo-yong) or genres (feature-length animation, erotic cinema).[18] Further collections are based around critic's (Chung Sung-il) or director's (Bong Joon-ho) choices. The collection of Bong's favorite films uses Bong's international fame (as director of the Oscar winning *Kisaengch'ung/Parasite*) to interest viewers from outside of Korea. These collections facilitate the choices one might make as a viewer, rather than trying to browse the more than 100 films hosted by the channel.

The Korean Film Archive YouTube presence engages in some sustainable and slow media practices, though it is not a perfect example of either. However, as we saw earlier with Albert, small modifications and approaches can be useful in bringing attention to wider issues and encouraging take up. In terms of slow media, the Korean Classic Film channels are set up to encourage the watching of feature-length films, a practice that already requires concentrating over longer stretches (e.g. more than 90 minutes). While it might be possible to binge-watch the films on the site, this is less likely than with the shorter episodic form of TV shows or the scrolling of very short forms like TikTok videos. The fact that the films were previously screened theatrically also suggests a quality to them that one might not expect to find in user-generated content. Most of the films come from the longer history of Korean cinema, often before the 1990s, and so are less likely to be familiar to viewers than more recent work. They feel like a deep dive into Korean cinema and a move beyond the K-dramas and films on Netflix. My own impression was that I would get more out of them if I knew more about Korean film history, and I think this is where the choice of films makes sense in terms of slow media: it encourages a longer-term engagement with Korean cinema, and more broadly, Korean history and culture, in order to be able to understand the films that are being shown. Of course, it is possible to pick one as a one-off choice, for fun, and understand it enough to enjoy it, but the range of films and the age of them offers more complex viewing pleasures for audiences who choose to develop their understanding and knowledge. The narrative and film styles of the films are also not the same as more recent films and so require different forms of attention, which can be learned. This, again, is typical of slow media, which encourages a more contemplative and mindful use of media.

The interface for accessing the films, though it uses the attention-grabbing YouTube system, is actually somewhat frustrating to use. To find a film from the homepage of the channel involves either searching through the list or using the search bar. YouTube does offer suggestions for what to watch next and autoplay, but these options can be turned off. Each of the films on the Classic Korean Film channel links to an entry on KMDb, which allows users to find out more information about the film, but this is a click away and requires more work than the preview function on Netflix. These aspects feel like poor design decisions, as they make the system less intuitive or easy to use and are almost certainly not intentional, but the result is that they require more work to use the channel than more polished streaming services, giving users the opportunities to take breaks and to come away from the illusion of endless entertainment. In addition, where Netflix will often sort films into genres and allow these to be searched, this feature is missing on YouTube, meaning that to choose a film, the user has to read the description and sort through information. This again frustrates an illusion of seamlessness and forces users to make more informed decisions about their watching. These features, then, encourage a more mindful approach to watching the films: choosing them with care and deliberation, rather than allowing the algorithm to suggest them (though if one watches enough, it will also do this). The use of curated playlists facilitates viewing somewhat, but they are chosen by humans rather than the recommendation

system, meaning that there is often more connection between the films and, moreover, that the connection between the films is meaningful. They counter the database consumption (Azuma 2009) practices encouraged by algorithmic recommendation systems that focus on surface similarities by creating a narrative environment to the collection of films.

The use of YouTube and Naver as means of distributing the films can also be seen as a sustainable practice. While not exactly an open source technology (Pearce 2014), these are browser-based systems that are very widely available. Importantly, they work on existing browsing devices, so users do not need to get new technologies to watch them. This is an important point, as one of the key generators of e-waste is needing different technologies for different tasks. Being able to continue using existing technologies reduces the need for new ones, though it does not end it, as phones, tablets and computers typically need upgrading every few years (though this is not a necessary feature of such technologies, and they can have longer functional lives).

One feature where sustainability is double edged is the use of old movies. The movies that are distributed by the Korean Film Archive are films that have already had a theatrical run and are often decades old. Many were made before the concept of sustainable film production had entered into the industry, meaning that no special consideration was made of the environmental and social impact of the film productions. However, like the use of older and already existing technologies, old films require less carbon than new films, as they have already been made. There are still some costs for digitising and for restoration, but these are minimal in comparison with filming and production. The distribution of older materials, then, is like a form of recycling, where old items are reused and can be thus seen as a sustainable activity, at least environmentally. However, the obvious downside is that there are far fewer jobs. This seems almost like a satirical view of degrowth, the idea that economies need to shrink in order to produce less carbon and become more sustainable (Latouche 2009). The sudden stopping of production of all films would indeed reduce carbon production, but it would also destroy the film industry and have significant social and economic impacts. As such, it is not a solution. However, the way in which older films have been made available and watchable does suggest ways in which the longer history of cinema can be distributed and made available, which does not have to contrast or conflict with the distribution of current and recent films. They are part of the same industry and can usefully influence each other.

One aspect of the Korean Film Archive channel that seems unsustainable over the longer term is the translation. The subtitles, the homepage on YouTube claims, are produced by Google. It is not clear what precisely this means in terms of process. I have discussed examples earlier where the only subtitles are auto-produced by YouTube, as well as other examples which appear to follow more normative patterns of subtitling. Machine translation has been making inroads into subtitling, though it is usually post-edited (Hagström and Pedersen 2022); that is, humans review the raw machine translation output and make minimal corrections to make it usable. In comparison with fully human translations, the result can be of lower

quality (Hagström and Pedersen 2022), but compared to raw machine translation output, it is much more usable. Given the fact that YouTube already has machine translation and automated caption technology built into it and the existence of Google Translate, it seems very likely that some machine translation has been used in this process. There may be humans involved, but fewer than would be necessary to do fully human translation, and this is where the sustainability issue comes in. While there are plentiful subtitles for a low cost (low enough that the Korean Film Archive does not charge for access to the films), this reduces the need for human translators and their expertise. This goes against the principles of slow media ('good, clean, fair', as Rauch put it) and could be remedied through using humans. Commercial distributors of older films, such as *Second Run* in the UK, often boast of 'new and improved English subtitle translations',[19] so it is not impossible that new translations would, in fact, be attractive to audiences. As so often in film distribution, though, subtitling here is outsourced and seems to be overlooked as part of the film experience, yet it could be priced into the costs of restoration.

The Korean Film Archive, then, offers some aspects of a sustainable approach: the use of existing technologies to encourage the watching of older films in a way that limits the creation of new waste. Yet as we have seen, just copying their practices would not result in sustainable media in the social and economic aspects. That does not mean that we cannot learn from them and see the elements that are successful. To be sustainable, there must be a reduction of environmental impact while maintaining the social and economic value. This may indeed shrink, but to do so effectively, that reduction must be managed carefully. This is the balance any sustainable future must aim for: reduced environmental impact aligned with social and economic wellbeing. This can be achieved through working on multiple fronts, and the Korean Film Archive's practices do offer some useful ways of increasing sustainability. However, to further develop sustainable media practices, greater use of certifications like Albert and more education on choosing media in the form of slow media would increase the sustainability of production and consumption. Translation is a necessary part of this, even if often overlooked by media producers, but should become more central to understandings of international media distribution so that it is never an afterthought.

Notes

1 See this typical article in *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/aug/28/crazy-off-the-charts-records-has-humanity-finally-broken-the-climate.
2 Indeed, the Prospects website, aimed at jobseekers in the UK, highlights that you will probably work from home as a translator (https://www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles/translator).
3 All primary references to this scheme are drawn from its website, http://wearealbert.org.
4 Van der Linden, Leiserowitz, and Maibach (2019) have demonstrated how changing people's perception of the scientific consensus leads to a change in their attitudes and support for action, so it does seem that indirect methods, such as storytelling in media, could influence their later opinions and behaviour.
5 https://nordicfilmcommissions.com/sustainability-pledge (last accessed March 7, 2024).
6 https://www.green.film/ (last accessed March 7, 2024).

7 This is distinct from DIY practices in music and the arts that could also be connected to the notion of slow media given their complex relationship with capitalism (Spencer 2008; Monacelli 2023).
8 https://en.slow-media.net/manifesto (last accessed March 7, 2024).
9 Rauch is not the only scholar returning to Luddite ideas, see also Gavin Mueller's *Breaking Things at Work: Why the Luddites were Right about Why You Hate Your Job* (2021). Luddites offer a historical example of the radical critique of technology in the workplace.
10 'Slow translation [*la traduction lente*]' has been proposed by Raúl E. Colón Rodríguez (2020), though he focuses on this as an activist practice, drawing from other slow movements, rather than as a more general translation practice as I would suggest here.
11 Information about the Korean Film Archive is taken from the English version of its website, https://eng.koreafilm.or.kr/main. Information about the funding of the archive can be found in Article 34 of the South Korean Promotion of the Motion Pictures and Video Products Act (Act No. 7943, April28, 2006, and amendments).
12 KMDb.or.kr (last accessed March 7, 2024).
13 https://www.youtube.com/koreanfilmarchive (last accessed March 7, 2024).
14 As one might expect when accessing the site on January 25, 2024, as I did to write this chapter. The video is, at the time of writing, available on the main entry page for the channel but also here: https://youtu.be/j0R_-H8vyNM?si=6EzwI10N58pEplJt (last accessed March 7, 2024).
15 Respectively, https://www.youtube.com/user/KoreanFilm and https://www.youtube.com/koreananimation (last accessed March 7, 2024).
16 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kNhWkQoyTDI (last accessed March 7, 2024).
17 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T72cNxXqkbs.
18 Given the censorship of explicit material on YouTube, and the status of these films as once theatrically released, the erotic collection is not particularly explicit. No age restrictions appeared when I opened videos on this list.
19 This is common on their film releases and a typical example can be found here: https://www.secondrundvd.com/release_skolimowski.html.

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Part 2

British Media in South Korea


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5 Paratextual repackaging and reception

Reframing and promoting queer themes in *Killing Eve* in Korea

Jinsil Choi

Introduction

Killing Eve was a huge success both in the UK and in Korea. In May 2019, it received several accolades, including the British Academy Television Awards for Best Drama Series, and the actresses who played the two leading characters, Sandra Oh and Jodie Comer, won the Golden Globe Award for Best Actress (Television Series Drama) in 2019, 2020, and 2021. *Killing Eve* was produced by Sid Gentle Films for BBC America and BBC Three and is based on Luke Jennings's novel *Codename Villanelle*. The series consist of four seasons, first released in the UK on April 8, 2018, and it continued for nearly four years until its last episode on April 10, 2022. The Korean over-the-top (OTT) platform, Watcha, distributed the series with subtitles first in Korea in June 2019 as a Watcha Exclusive.

The series follow Eve Polastri (Sandra Oh), a British intelligent investigator who initially worked as an analyst in MI5 and later recruited to an undercover division in MI6 with a mission to locate Oksana Astankova/Villanelle (Jodie Comer), an international psychopathic and ruthless assassin. Villanelle works for a secret organisation called The Twelve, but she does not know what or who The Twelve is/are exactly. Pursuing Villanelle and identifying the true nature of The Twelve are the key to Eve's mission. Eve is married, loving her husband, Niko, an English-Polish math teacher, but as the series proceeds, Eve finds herself irresistibly obsessed with Villanelle. While *Killing Eve* illustrates somewhat common themes of MI6 involving thriller genres, agents hunting for criminals, it can be differentiated from others with similar motifs, in that it involves queer romance between the two heroines, the hunter and the hunted.

Despite the queer narrative thread in the original show, it is interesting that the series received an enthusiastic response from the Korean audience. Although Korea is one of the most economically advanced and culturally Westernised Asian countries, albeit to a differing extent across sectors and regions, it holds a somewhat conservative and contested position on LGBTQIA issues politically and legally, as witnessed in the court's denial of a same-sex marriage license in 2016 between filmmakers Kim/Cho Kwang-su and Kim Sung-hwan.[1] While some Koreans acquiesced to the ceremony, fundamentalist Christians waged a severe protest (Henry 2020, 1–2). However, seven years after, we are witnessing changing social

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attitudes toward sexual minorities. The Court acknowledged the legal status of same-sex marriage in February 2023 (BBC Korea 2023). In July 2023, more than 30,000 people gathered in Euljiro to attend the 24th Seoul Queer Culture Festival, promoting an improved perception of sexual minorities. With the exception of the two-year hiatus due to COVID-19 pandemic, the Festival had been held in Seoul Plaza since 2015, when Park Won-sun from the Democratic party was in post, but in 2023, Seoul City, of which Mayor is now from the conservative, People Power Party, disapproved the use of Seoul Plaza in favor of the Christian Television System for its youth concert (Oh and Lee 2023). Despite the existing social and political tension, the fact that more than 30,000 people celebrated the festival suggests some changing social attitudes, and this chapter takes the success of *Killing Eve* with a queer narrative as an example of this change.

Focusing on the case of the Korean translation of *Killing Eve* (2019–2022), this chapter discusses how the series became successful in the Korean society despite its queer romance content, focusing on its paratextual formation and reception of the original content. Drawing on Genette's (1997) concept of paratext and on reception studies, it carries out a comparative analysis of BBC and Watcha official trailers and then discusses Korean audiences' reviews left on and promoted by Watcha to reveal the extent to which the narratives of the original trailers of BBC are adapted and negotiated for the Korean culture by Watcha and how Watcha's initial promotion strategies, differing from later seasons, evolved as the series unfolded and received enthusiastic responses from the Korean audience. As Baldo, Evans, and Guo note (2023, 167), the "question, then, of how ideas about homosexuality and other sexual minorities are translated and negotiated in and through translation remains central to understanding the interactions between different local forms of sexual minority and sexual identities around the world". Based on the distributer's changing illustration of queer content through its promotional trailers and the analysis of Korean audience's favorable attitudes toward the two lesbian women, this chapter suggests changing attitudes toward queer culture among the young generation in Korea.

Prior scholarship from media and film studies largely concentrates on features of movie trailers, such as their advertising nature and paratextual characteristics, and the effectiveness of trailer advertising (Gray 2010; Kernan 2004; Klecker 2015; Karray and Debernitz 2017). From a perspective of reception of queer elements in films, attention is paid to how audiences receive queer content in different cultural contexts, including India and Korea (Benshoff 2004; Choi 2008; Mokkil 2018), and how international or local film festivals function as the avenues for queer film distribution, circulation, and reception (Tan 2019; Damiens 2018; Mokkil 2018; Richards 2016). A recent study by Chen (2023) explores how queer subtexts in the Chinese TV drama *World of Honor* have been reframed by media paratexts in cyberspace and illustrates the important participatory role of audiences in creating meanings of homosexual interactions through reviews, comments, and fanvids. However, as Baldo, Evans, and Guo (2023, 166) rightly point out, "despite growing quantities of work on LGBTIQA+culture in China, Latin America and elsewhere, still much of the work in this area is being written and published in the

USA". Furthermore, little research has been undertaken as to how original trailers are adapted to different cultures and the extent to which audiences' affective experience may change narrative formations of serial trailers on streaming platforms. Unlike the traditional film culture, where theatres function as the dominant form of distribution, streaming platforms in today's digital culture boost audiences' more active and affective role by enabling them to engage in prompt and active formation of the peritext of filmic content through comments and thus to affect consumers' decision-making, as in Chen's research. In the case of *Killing Eve* in Korea, audience reviews seem to play a key role in deciding the distributing platform's promotion strategies, which initially tended to self-censor and cut female-female romance subtexts in its paratexts.

In what follows, I discuss streaming platforms' reconfiguration of trailers and audience reviews that serve as paratexts and peritexts, "located within the same volume" (Genette 1997, 4–5). Then analyses follow as to how *Killing Eve* BBC official trailers are adapted for Korean audiences, as the series unfold from Season One to Season Four. Then I explore audience reviews left on Watcha in order to identify how Korean audience reviews may affect the distributor's promotion strategies through its paratexts, such as trailers. I argue that the impact of paratexts and peritexts is in a virtuous circle, affecting one another, in a way to realise the best interests of distributors.

Streaming platforms' reconfiguration of trailers and audience reviews as peritexts

According to Mueller (2022), of a typical total budget of $100 million, $65 million goes to production, while distribution and marketing cost around $35 million. Most movie advertising budget is used before the theatrical release (Elberse and Anand 2007), and previews or trailers are the most common method of movie advertising before the theatrical release (Faber and O'Guinn 1984; Karray and Debernitz 2017). According to the Motion Picture Association of America, 54% of viewers watch the trailer before seeing the movie (Karray and Debernitz 2017, 368).

Trailers resemble a prenarrative system of early cinema, which Tom Gunning refers to as "montage of attractions" (2006, 384), borrowing the notion from Sergei Eisenstein (1974, 78–79). The cinema of attractions precisely refers to "its ability to *show* something" (emphasis original) like an exhibitionist cinema, "willing to rupture a self-enclosed fictional world for a chance to solicit the attention of the spectator" (Eisenstein 1974, 382). As Lisa Kernan points out (2004, 7–10), trailers are configurated in such ways as in the case of early cinema before 1906 to attract spectators' attentions through collages of images, symbols, and sound effects non-linearly, sustaining the overall narrative flow. However, at the same time, trailers can be relevant to the filmic narratives, being "themselves little stories constructed within the anticipatory dimension of capitalist realism in which carefully selected individual cinematic images, dynamically combined in highly teleological editing structures, shine with a surface gloss of exaggerated spectacularity" (Kernan 2004, 10).

According to Kernan (2004, 9), generic features of trailers from all eras include the following: introductory or concluding address to the audience about the film through titles or narration, selected scenes, quick-cut action scenes, and features of significant cast members. As many scholars from film studies note, trailers have much in common with advertising, as audiences of advertisements "mediate between particular ads and 'referent system' – or the body of social knowledge on which advertisers and audiences alike draw and rely – and in this process audiences co-constitute the meaning of ads" (Kernan 2004, 9). However, more importantly, "desires" to watch a given film or "a body of expectations", which differentiate film as a product from other advertised goods, as Kernan notes, can surely differ from culture to culture. To satisfy audiences who participate in the meaning-making of trailers, distributers endeavor to tailor promos and trailers to adapt to a target culture.

According to Genette's categorisation, trailers can be seen as instances of a film's public "epitexts", texts outside of the work, while Watcha's audience reviews can be considered as "peritexts", located within the same work (Genette 1997, 4–5). Unlike the traditional configuration and curation of films in theatrical environments, audience reviews on streaming platforms constitute part of whole viewing experience, together with the filmic content. Subscribers on streaming platforms navigate their choices of audiovisual contents based on algorithm, but at the same time, they choose what to see based on reviews, content summaries, official trailers, interviews, etc., on streaming channels. If trailers are seen as "free samples" (Kernan 2004, 2) to shoppers, as film scholars often draw an analogy between window shopping and trailer viewing, reviews, too, are undeniably popular items of shoppers' window shopping. Trailers offer "audiences concise, direct-address cinematic texts that serve as both attractions and as a form of persuasion" and "allow audiences to read the phenomenon of promotional narrative in a particularly dramatic way", but more importantly, "trailers' promotional rhetoric speaks to the ideological and cultural conditions" (Kernan 2004, 7).

In the streaming era, trailers of audiovisual contents are distributed on various channels, such as OTT platforms, YouTube, search engines like Google, and a Korean search engine, Naver. This means that trailers nowadays are not only epitexts, texts outside of its volume, but also peritexts, texts located within the volume, because OTT providers often display trailers for their targeted audiences on their platforms alongside the film or show they are the trailer for. Audiences for streaming have more access to promos and trailers, as they can search and watch them whenever they want (i.e. at home, on the metro, at cafes, etc.) through various devices (i.e. tablets, smartphones, and laptops). Bearing this in mind, distributors actively promote imported audiovisual contents through promos and trailers, often changing the originals to be more adapted to the target culture. In the case of culturally sensitive themed motifs, such as queer romance as discussed in this chapter, these can be changed or removed not only from trailers but also from the main stories of films or audiovisual contents. For example, in the case of Disney Pixar movie *Lightyear* (2022), due to a kissing scene between a lesbian couple, the

movie has been banned in 14 Middle East and Asian countries, and Chinese movie regulators requested the removal of the scene (Wei 2022).

In what follows, I discuss how Watcha reconfigured or curated queer motifs of the original BBC trailers of *Killing Eve* as the series unfolded, in comparison to its original trailers.

Reconfiguration and curation of *Killing Eve* trailers and evolving promotion strategies

Each season of *Killing Eve* consists of eight episodes. Season One first aired on April 8, 2018, in the UK and last aired on May 27. Season Two first aired on April 7, 2019, and last aired on May 26. It was on June 28 in 2019 that Season One and Two of *Killing Eve* were first distributed by the Korean OTT Watcha through its platform exclusively to the Korean audience. For the initial two seasons, Watcha posted only one trailer, creating a montage of some images from the BBC's original trailer for Season One and changing the narratives to suit to Korean audiences. Compared to the BBC original, it significantly removes queer relations between the two heroines. About a year later, Season Three first aired on April 12, 2020, and last aired on May 31, and it was distributed in Korea on June 24, 2020. Season Four first aired on February 27, 2022, and last aired on April 10; it was introduced to Korea on May 11, 2022. For Season Four, unlike other seasons, Watcha provided two trailers: one for 1.51 minutes and the other for 30 seconds.

Seasons One and Two: reframing and cutting queer motifs for Korean audience

When Watcha first distributed Seasons One and Two simultaneously, it highlighted conflicts between the two heroines, while it concealed queer romance between them, unlike the BBC version. This is evident in both the story description and the trailer posted on its website for Season One. For Season One, BBC describes Villanelle as "a stylish assassin", highlighting her sexual appeal and the nuances of the two women's romantic relationship, as shown in its description: "When a spy tracks down a stylish assassin, the hunter becomes the hunted. A bloody, funny thriller about two women lethally obsessed with each other". In contrast, Watcha's description seems to focus more on their conflicting relationship as an agent of MI6 and an assassin: "첩보요원을꿈꾸던정보국직원이브, 직업만족도 99.9%인사이코패스킬러빌라넬. 서로의존재에매혹된두사람은집착에사로잡혀쫓고쫓기는추격전을시작한다 [Eve, an intelligence agency employee who dreamed of becoming a spy, and Villanelle, a psychopathic killer with a job satisfaction rate of 99.9%. The two are both captivated by each other's existence and obsessed, they begin a thrilling game of cat and mouse, chasing each other relentlessly]".

Similar to the story description, for Season One, the original BBC trailer curates the two women's ties of sympathy. Meanwhile, Watcha offers only one trailer for Seasons One and Two, focusing more on their confrontation as the hunter and the

hunted and Villanelle's killing.[2] Extract 1 is a conversation between Eve and Villanelle in the BBC official trailer of Season One.[3]

Extract 1 [BBC trailer for Season One]

Eve: I know you are an extraordinary person. Exceptionally bright. Determined. I know something happened to you. I know you're a psychopath.

Villanelle: You should never tell a psychopath they are a psychopath. It upsets them.

Eve: Are you upset?

The audio provides the two women's talk only, unsynchronised from the images, focusing more on the emotion and relation between the two women and highlighting Eve's sympathetic attitude toward Villanelle. In Extract 1, Eve emotionally consoles Villanelle, complementing Villanelle's virtues, while Eve ascribes Villanelle's killings to her mental illness, caused from some unwanted events. This may arouse the audience's sympathetic attitude toward the psychopathic Villanelle and the two women's relationship. When Eve asks Villanelle, "Are you upset?" because Eve called Villanelle "a psychopath", Villanelle makes a sad face, asking for some sympathetic attitude from Eve. This scene may invoke empathy not only from Eve but also from the general audience, who may feel sympathetic toward Villanelle, who experienced difficult times in her childhood. Such scene illustrating the two women's emotional connection differentiates *Killing Eve* from other films or series, featuring common chase-and-run relations between assassins and intelligence agents.

In contrast, Watcha's official trailer of Seasons One and Two does not feature any queer theme but a chase and run between an agent and a killer, as in Eve's line, "Are you alright? I'm gonna kill you. I know you are a psychopath".[4] Also, the Watcha official trailer features various characters, including the dealer and trainer of Villanelle, Constantin, focusing more on killing and confrontation. In the trailer, Constantin's voice is included, while the screen features Eve, Villanelle, and victims. Compared to the BBC original trailer (one minute), the Watcha trailer is shorter (36 seconds), and it is more like a montage of various scenes that feature Villanelle's vicious kills and Eve's hunting, as clearly illustrated in the close-up shots of killing kits and weapons. It additionally highlights its exclusive distribution, as in "왓챠플레이단독공개 [exclusive release on Watcha Play]", and the series' details of awards in the form of intertitle, which can be construed as Watcha's promotion strategies for Korean audiences.

Seasons Three and Four: promoting queer motifs for Korean audience

From Season Three, Watcha seems to have changed its promotion strategies, explicitly revealing the female characters' physical contacts and further highlighting the series' queer motifs in trailers. The Korean audience's response after the release of Seasons One and Two seem to be a catalyst for change, which will be discussed

more in detail in the next section. In addition, from Season Three, Watcha actively promotes Sandra Oh, particularly her ethnic identity as Korean. For Season Three, Watcha strategically promotes not only its official trailers on its platform but also Sharon Choi's 37-minute interview with Sandra Oh, the heroine Eve, as peritexts, unlike BBC.[5] Sharon Choi became famous in Korea after interpreting for director Bong Joon-ho of *Parasite* (2019) at the Academy Awards in 2020. This means that Watcha strategically promotes the Korean Canadian actress, Sandra Oh, in particular, by highlighting her being a Korean descendent and successful Hollywood star.[6] From Season Three, Eve's ethnic background as a Korean descendent in the US is curated in a series of episodes through her speaking in Korean, buying Korean food from a supermarket, and working in a Korean restaurant. Meanwhile, BBC iPlayer displays two interviews with Jodie Comer (*Movies with Ali Plumb*, *The Story So Far* from BBC Radio 1, and *The One Show* on June 9, 2021) but does not display an interview with Sandra Oh. The two streaming platforms, therefore, seem to have different promotion strategies targeting different audiences, promoting an actress with the same ethnicity for domestic audiences (Jodie Comer for the UK audience and Sandra Oh for the Korean audience).[7] This can be interpreted as a distributer's endeavor, as Kernan notes, to tailor trailers and promos to adapt to a target culture.

In the Watcha trailer for Season Three, Eve's Korean ethnicity is clearly accentuated, while the BBC trailer does not reveal her Koreanness. Extract 2 is the BBC official trailer for Season Three, while Extract 3 is the Watcha official trailer for Season Three.

Extract 2 [BBC trailer for Season Three][8]

Villanelle: When I think about my ex today, I realise I am so much happier now she is dead.
Kenny: You know you shouldn't leave your front door open because of the amount of people that have tried to kill you.

Extract 3 [Watcha trailer for Season Three][9]

[ST]
Villanelle: *I just did a really bad breakup* [my emphasis]. When I think about my ex, I realise I am so much happier now she is dead. I am moving up in the world. [singing]
Constantin: Eve is alive.
Eve: 봉투하나더주세요.
Caroline: She's back, Eve.
Eve: This isn't about me. Why don't you give me a break.
Kenny: *You don't seem to be very happy*.

In Extract 2 and 3, it is evident that Watcha explicitly renders the two women's emotional attachment and solidarity even more than the original BBC trailer, as in the feature of Villanelle's line, "I just did a really bad breakup", presupposing the

two women's reciprocal romantic feelings. The insertion of Kenny's line addressing Eve in the Watcha trailer, "You don't seem to be very happy", hints on Eve's emotional attachment to Villanelle, even after Villanelle tried to kill Eve, and this is sharply in contrast to his warning about Villanelle in the BBC trailer, "You know you shouldn't leave your front door open because of the amount of people that have tried to kill you". This implies that not only Villanelle, who has identified as lesbian from her youth, but also Eve falls in love with Villanelle, too. In addition, the intertitles of the original BBC trailer, "obsession", "never", and "dies", are translated in Watcha as "네생각을멈출수없어 [I cannot stop thinking about you]", which explicitly addresses the theme of obsession, 'you'. In this case, 'you' can mean both Eve and Villanelle, signaling Eve and Villanelle's reciprocal love more explicitly.

As noted, Watcha actively promotes the heroine as being a Korean descendent from Season Three. Unlike its BBC counterpart, Watcha features Eve's line in Korean in the trailer – i.e. "봉투하나더주세요 [please give me another [plastic] bag]" – and is not subtitled for Korean audiences. The scene sophistically curates Eve's Koreanness, buying a Korean noodle in a Korean supermarket.

For Season Four, the Watcha trailer is nearly identical to the BBC trailer (both 1.51 minutes), except the translation of intertitles. The queer motifs are further accentuated in both the BBC and Watcha trailers, featuring physical contacts between female characters, such as a kiss between Villanelle and a black woman.[10] Queer motifs in the BBC original, such as Villanelle's killing with a woman, and some provocative themes, such as Eve's bisexual orientation featuring her kissing with a male agent and asking for sex, are reused in the Watcha trailer for the Korean audience. Interestingly, the Watcha trailer further highlights the two women's obsessive relationship through the intertitles, such as "최후의집착 [final obsession]", instead of using "Till death do us part" in the BBC original.[11] This evidences Watcha's evolving promotion strategies accentuating and promoting queer relations between the female characters, which was initially hidden in its trailers for previous seasons.

An analysis of Watcha audience reviews

BBC iPlayer displays content descriptions and titles of all episodes of Season One in one go. This means that a fairly detailed content information of each episode, such as titles, can be seen by one click. Meanwhile, Watcha offers a brief content description of the series, relevant videos, director and cast information, and audience reviews in the first page. For a detailed information of each episode, it needs another click for 회차정보 [episode information]. This means that Watcha prioritises promos, such as trailers and interviews, cast information, and reviews, compared to BBC iPlayer.

At the time of writing (July 6, 2023), 172,498 reviews are posted for Season One, 106,169 for Season Two, 59,324 for Season Three, and 9,560 for Season Four, nearly 350,000 reviews in total. Although Watcha does not offer the exact dates of reviews posted, it offers an approximate posting date, such as 'three years ago',

and some reviewers note the exact date of their post. Based on this information, we can guess approximately when the review is posted, as Watcha sorts the reviews in order of date. Reviews posted before the release of Season Three in June 2020 may have influenced the distributor's changing promotion strategies.

It is clear that Season One received enthusiastic responses from the Korean audience, given the number of reviews posted. From the analysis, it is evident that many Korean viewers were fascinated by the two heroines. A review by Blossom says, "한동안이브와빌라넬의매력에헤어나올수없다. 그리고난킬링이브에미쳤다!!![I cannot get out of the charms of Eve and Villanelle. And I am so crazy about *Killing Eve*]"; another reviewer, Krema, says, "세상에서가장매력적인두여성캐릭터의충돌. 짜릿하고쾌락적이다 [The world's most attractive two female characters' clash. Thrilling and hedonic]"; Charami says, "너무섹시한둘 [very sexy two]", and a reviewer named Lingling also complements the two heroines that "여성주연의완벽한드라마. 매력적인캐릭터, 호기심을자극하는스릴있는전개, 이브와빌라넬중도저히한명을고를수없다 [A perfect drama with a female lead. Attractive characters, a thrilling development stimulating curiosity, cannot choose one between Eve and Villanelle]". In addition, a lot of audiences appreciated the queer relationship. A reviewer named Hanul thinks, "내생애최고의로맨스 [the best romance in my life]"; Enhee says, "둘이그냥사귀자 [why don't you two just date?]"; Siyun says, "빌라넬때문에처음으로정체성혼란온시리즈. . .라뷰. . .![Because of Villanelle, for the first time, [I] was confused about my sexual identity . . . love you!]"; Park Gyu-won says, "이렇게재밌는드라마오랜만에본다. . .악명높은암살자이지만생각보다순수하고순정파인빌라넬의유부녀꼬시기이야기 [It has been a while since I watched such interesting series. . . . A story of Villanelle's seduction of a married woman, who is a notorious assassin but pure romanticist than I expected]".

For Season Two, in which Eve and Villanelle's relationship is more clearly focused on and developed, rave reviews acclaiming their relation become quite visible. A reviewer, Ssong-I, said, "둘이뽑뽀언제함 [when do the two kiss]"; Sun-jeong said, "시즌 2 둘의퀴어라인도드라져서루즈해도재밌었고 [Season Two was loose but interesting because the two [women]'s queer storyline became conspicuous]"; another reviewer, Kimu, acclaimed the description of women's love in *Killing Eve* by saying that "영국드라마는여자끼리사랑도귀엽게설레게표현하는듯 [British media content seems to make love between women cute and fluttering]". However, it was interesting that both for Seasons One and Two, some notes against racial discrimination are found, as in Yon's review that "울산드라언니차별하지마 [don't discriminate our sister Sandra]"; _jyeongmovie_ says that "어짜피 racist 드라마는안사요~ [I don't buy racist drama, anyway]"; and another reviewer, Mimi, decided not to watch *Killing Eve* anymore by saying that "탈덕선언. 1. 킬링이브팀의아시안배우인종차별 2. 갈수록줄어드는이브캐릭터분량, 심리묘사.[to declare to quit being a fan of *Killing Eve*. 1. The production team's racial discrimination against the Asian actress 2. Less feature and psychological description of Eve]". In fact, there was some criticism on the production team of *Killing Eve* in 2020 before the release of Season Three in Korea. On June 16, Lewis (2020) from *Independent* notes that "Killing Eve has come under fire for having

a lack of racial diversity among its writing team". Its writer, Kayleigh Llewellyn, was criticised for tweeting a picture of Season Four's writers' room, in which all of the nine writers were white. Lewis further notes the decreasing quality of *Killing Eve* with each season, citing critics and states that "some fans have suggested that the show has focused too heavily on Villanelle (Jodie Comer) and not enough on Eve Polastri (Oh) in later seasons", as the reviewer Mimi also noted. This certainly explains why Watcha promotes an interview with Sandra Oh on its platform for Season Three and more focus on Sandra Oh's Korean background in the trailer for Season Three. During the Interview, Sandra Oh and Sharon Choi discuss racism. One of the interview video titles is "산드라오 '우리는이미인종차별이뭔지알아요' [Sandra Oh, 'we already know what racial discrimination is']".

In contrast to previous seasons, some negative reviews are more identified on the Season Three webpage, as the decreasing number of reviews also indicates its decreasing popularity. While some reviewers still complement the series, such as Kyeoul's review that "괜찮아난재밌게봤어 [That's ok. I find it interesting]" and Park Hyunseob's review that complements *Killing Eve*'s various locations, "나라의아름다움을담아내다[It shows the country's beauty]", many audiences criticise less connecting stories and less focus on Eve. A reviewer, How, says, "스토리는점점산으로 [the story goes to the mountains]"; Ssu says that "이렇게갑자기재미없어져도되는거임? [Is it okay to be not interesting all of sudden?]"; Let's watch TV with Chunsik says that "다음시즌도이모양이라면각본을뒤엎어야 [it should upset the scenario if next season is like this]". However, some other viewers who empathised with the queer love express a more favorable attitude, such as mayond's review that "진짜사랑을했구나 [[they] did a real love]"; Seungyeom says that "이브랑빌라넬의사랑방식이너무짠함 [the way Eve and Villanelle love is too sad]"; Otaku as changeable as weather says that "야. . .니네걍. . . 같이살면안되냐ㅠㅠ [hey . . . why don't you just . . . live together (sad face)]".

Reviews of Season Four also show some opposing responses. Some faithful reviewers still complement the story of *Killing Eve*. Malcha says that "내뿜는피보다절절하고진했던, 지긋지긋하리만큼지독했던순애 [more ardent and thicker than blood that spouts, tediously deadly love.]"; Evie says that "너무사랑하게되면그것에대해이야기하는게겁이날때가있다. 킬링이브가그렇다[when you love something too much, it can be scary to talk about it. It's the case of Killing Eve to me]"; Kimaemi says that "내인생드라마. 킬링이브보려고왓챠결제했는데보길참잘했다라고생각한드라마[My life soap opera. I subscribed Watcha to watch Killing Eve and I thought it was the right decision]". In contrast, some other reviewers criticise the ending of Season Four, such as Mujimongmaehan Cinephile, who says that "결말. . .이. . . 이기뭐꼬 [the ending . . . what is this]"; Tomato says that "꼭이래야만했나 [Did [they] have to make like this]"; Zoe also says that "이게뭐고 [what is this]". However, some other reviewers also criticise the story of Season Four, but they tend to express their disappointment about the homosexual characters. A reviewer, Valen, says that "레즈비언좀해피엔딩하게해주라[please make a happy ending for the lesbians]", and ve says that "왜꼭죽여야만했어왜. . .! 성소수자캐릭터들좀행복하게해줘라. 너무허무하게끝나버

렸다난시작도안해봤는데 [why did you have to kill? Why . . .! Please make the sexual minority characters happy. It ends fruitlessly. I didn't even start it]". Such reviews certainly imply some changing attitude toward sexual minorities among young generation. As Henry notes a growing interest in LGBTI-related topics at South Korean universities (Henry 2020, 6), such examples clearly evidence that the series' queer motifs are favorably received by the Korean audience.

Conclusion

Taking the case of *Killing Eve* as a popular TV show with queer narrative motifs, this chapter discussed the extent to which the narrative of the original official trailer of BBC is adapted to Korean culture and how Watcha's initial promotion strategies in Season One aimed to remove the love relationship between the two heroines and focus on the killing. As opposed to the BBC counterpart, the Korean trailers evolve as the series received enthusiastic responses from the Korean audience. The analysis has revealed that Watcha's initial promotion strategies reflected in trailers for Season One and Two changed as the series' queer love relations were unexpectedly raved about by the Korean audience. The analysis clearly revealed the Korean audiences' excited responses to the love of Eve and Villanelle, as some reviewers heartfully support their happy ending. Watcha changed its promotion strategies from Season Three onwards to not hesitate to promote the queer relationship in its trailer and to adapt to Korean audiences' taste, as evidenced by its post of Sharon Choi's interviews with Sandra Oh. As the analysis shows, some criticisms by the Korean reviewers against racial discrimination of the Asian actress were identified, which may have influenced the distributor to consider Sandra Oh's character more, leading to the curation of trailers accentuating Eve's Korean background, unlike the BBC counterpart and the promotion of the interview with Oh, showing the implication to the Korean audience that "Sandra Oh, 'we already know what racial discrimination is", as in the interview title. The analysis of the reformation of trailers and reception clearly indicates some changing, favorable attitude toward queer motifs among the young generation in Korea.

Such growing interest in queer-themed films and shows in Korea is also evidenced by the changing content curation on OTT platforms. Citing a Korean OTT platform, Wavve, Nam (2022) from *Busanilbo* notes that queer-themed Korean TV shows, such as 남의연애 [*His Man*] and 메리퀴어 [*Merry Queer*], increase the number of Wavve subscribers, and Netflix is also open to the production of sexual minority content. As Ng (2023) notes, because of the public's and the commercial media's increasing interest in LGBTQIA content and the rising influence of fan cultures, digital media and streaming platforms are more open to LGBTQIA content that had previously been outside the mainstream. As of August 2023, Watcha promotes top queer films and shows from Watchapedia, which lists 127 films and shows, such as *Fingersmith* (2005) and *Brokeback Mountain* (2005).[12] This certainly indicates the distributors' and audiences' growing interest in queer-themed films and shows in Korea.

Notes

1 Kims held a public wedding ceremony near a site along Cheonggye Stream, downtown Seoul, in September 2013, which was hotly broadcasted by mainstream TV news channels and newspapers. Some progressive politicians, such as Park Won-sun, Mayor of Seoul (2014–2020), publicly suggest that Korea become the first country to legalise same-sex marriage, supporting the right of sexual minorities (Henry 2020: 1–2), but the court denied the marriage license between them in 2016.
2 The original BBC trailers are available on BBC iPlayer and YouTube, while Watcha's adapted versions are available on Watcha and YouTube.
3 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kk0PyD-XNZA (last accessed on July 3, 2024).
4 https://watcha.com/contents/share/tRBxA7l (last accessed on July 3, 2024).
5 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xvVKwUXv54E last accessed (last accessed on July 3, 2024).
6 Sandra Oh was quite well-known in Korea after her role in *Grey's Anatomy* from 2005 to 2014 (Season One to Season Ten).
7 https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/search?q=Killing+Eve last accessed on July 3, 2022. At the time of writing in July 2023, the interviews no longer exist on BBC iPlayer. https://watcha.com/ko-KR/contents/share/tEgM2MJlast accessed on July 3, 2023.
8 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vh1icDxH5R0 (last accessed on April 7, 2023).
9 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-GbQoPf7vq8 (last accessed on July 3, 2023).
10 For the BBC trailer, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SPJZ39qK33M (last accessed April 13, 2023), and for the Watcha trailer, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMZIUz1oip4 (last accessed July 3, 2023).
11 "Till death do us part" is part of a wedding vow in English, so it also delivers the two women's relationships. However, Watcha chose a phrase that could represent the two women's somehow pathological obsession more instantly. In fact, its literal translation, "죽음이우리를갈라놓을때까지" may read more romantic than the Watcha's intertitle "최후의집착".
12 https://pedia.watcha.com/ko-KR/decks/gcd93W3ld9, accessed August 28, 2023.

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6 Streaming age

Fluidity of authorship and paratextual repackaging in media translation

Kyung Hye Kim

Introduction

Authorship has become a fluid and loose concept in the digital era, especially in the streaming industry, where users often claim part (joint) authorship. Various scholarly inquiries have been produced across disciplines in this regard. For example, copyright and joint authorship in the video game streaming industry have been discussed in law and business studies (e.g. Holden and Schuster 2021), particularly regarding questions of whether a player can be considered a co-author and copyright protection for users' in-game avatars. In fandom studies, how fans define the authorship and ownership of collective works made online has been discussed (Sarikakis, Krug, and Rodriguez-Amat 2017). However, surprisingly, no discussion on translation can be found in this context, despite translation being very much, if not all, part of what we experience through streaming platforms.

Against this backdrop, this chapter discusses how translations and 'audience-created' (Gray 2010), unofficial (Mittel 2015, 262) movie review videos reframe a source film and further complicate the concept of authorship in the age of streaming. More attention is provided to how various paratextual elements surrounding translated media texts disseminated through various streaming platforms influence the (re)interpretation and reframing of the translated film in the target culture. It also shows how various audiences can frame the same scene in different ways in their respective attempts to construct their discourse and legitimise their own interpretation of the story.

Streaming, which refers to all forms of media distribution in which videos are watched over the Internet, has become a significant aspect of media consumption and reconfigured the contemporary global media ecosystem, facilitating more dynamic interactions and multidirectional translation flow of films and media texts, which would have been impossible previously. Since the rise and expansion of the streaming giant Netflix, an increasing number of local streaming platforms have emerged that often outperform big international platforms.

Streaming services have resulted in some profound changes. First, obtaining a physical copy to watch films is no longer necessary because all files are streamed and not downloaded.[1] Users can simply go online or subscribe to access a seemingly unlimited number of videos and navigate through online media archives, unlike in

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the late 1980s and 1990s, when individuals needed to find a video rental shop. Accessing media through the Internet has significantly changed how we consume media. It has increased the range of what can be watched or accessed at any time, thus giving media content consumers greater freedom in terms of when, where, and what to watch.[2] Streaming services have further expanded home-viewing experiences by giving viewers control over the flow of a narrative. According to Laura Mulvey (2006), who explored how new media technology alters spectators' relationships with films, audiences can watch media content at their own pace. We can pause, reverse, and fast-forward media, which would not have been possible with traditional cinema, which certainly changes the audience's experience by granting more agency.

Second, technological development has also meant that a wide variety of media content can be watched on various devices. Viewing patterns have become individualistic to the extent that family members can watch different media content on different devices simultaneously under the same roof. Another example is how common watching YouTube clips on public transportation on the way to work has become. Third, individualised, independent viewing patterns mean that media content is no longer aimed at larger groups of viewers but targets small, niche audiences. To meet such individualised viewing patterns and draw the attention of niche audiences, streaming services have diversified their content in terms of genre, format, theme, and language and attempt to include content that was largely been marginalised in the previous media ecology. This is markedly different from the distribution style in the past, in which media content was produced to be shown in a cinema or on public television for a wide public audience. This change has enabled the contraflow of media content and de- or recentring the understanding of global media production, in which media texts produced in various cultures other than Hollywood are readily available. This has also led to a more dynamic flow of media content, increasing Korean speakers' exposure to non-Hollywood media content, including that from the UK, and non-Korean speakers' exposure to Korean media.

Fourth, many streaming platforms, but most notably Netflix, release episodes of various drama series all at once, enabling the audience to engage in binge-watching or marathon-viewing (i.e. watching media content for a prolonged period).[3] Moreover, compared to the cinema, streaming services have relatively low-quality sound, thus encouraging audiences to use subtitles and changing audience behaviour to make using subtitles as a matter of course common (Cunningham 2023; Chen 2023).

Finally, the change that is most important and relevant to this chapter is that, contrary to what was commonplace in the past, viewers are no longer passively receiving media. They are active and socially connected and even often resist changes in media content due to translation. For example, the Korean version of the movie poster for *Barbie* was retracted following a dispute over its Korean translation, with a revised version released shortly after. The first live-action fantasy comedy film based on Mattel's Barbie fashion dolls was released in the US in 2023, and its Korean translation was released in the same year. Prior to its release in Korea, the distribution company released a poster that was heavily criticised by the prospective

Korean audience, who argued through various social media platforms and personal blogs that different Barbie characters were downgraded in the Korean translation poster compared to the source poster. For instance, 'Barbie is everything' and 'He is just Ken' in the source text (ST) were replaced by only the names – 'Barbie' and 'Ken', respectively – limiting the emphasis placed on Barbie as an independent, capable woman in the English ST poster (Lee 2023). Korean audiences also found that other Barbie characters with different professions (e.g. a popular writer, Nobel laureate in physics, and diplomat) were removed in the Korean poster. Only the two characters of Barbie and Ken were foregrounded, bleaching out the diversity added to the source story. Resistance to the posters and complaints from the Korean audience eventually made the Warner Brothers Korea rerelease new posters with the initially missing material reinstated. As this example demonstrates, contemporary media content consumers participate in the culture and interact with mass content. Contemporary viewers are not an unquestioningly loyal audience but social, active, and socially connected, as Jenkins (2006) describes.

Therefore, this chapter explores a wealth of other entities surrounding media text offered by different agents in the translation and promotion processes and discusses how paratextual elements surrounding the translation of media texts, including those audience produce, reconstruct the meaning and central discourse of a ST. A comparative textual and paratextual analysis of the British film *I, Daniel Blake* is conducted to illustrate this, drawing theoretical insight from Gérard Genette's concept of paratexts and Jonathan Gray's understanding and application of paratexts to media texts. *I, Daniel Blake* is a British film directed by Ken Loach, an internationally critically acclaimed film director and screenwriter whose films touch on various social issues, such as inequalities and poor working conditions in the US (*Bread and Roses*, 2000), working class and immigrant rights (*It's a Free World. . .*, 2007), the Irish War of Independence, and the Irish Civil War (*The Wind that Shakes the Barley*, 2006). Through *I, Daniel Blake*, Loach criticises the bureaucratic misery and box-ticking assessment that the welfare state in the UK has become while showing how people attempt to retain their dignity when living with hunger. This film is used to demonstrate how source promotional videos are repackaged in Korean-translated promotional videos shared on a streaming platform by a local Korean distribution company and how part of the source film is selected and reframed in Korean citizens' unofficial fan-created review videos.

Following this introduction, Section 2 elaborates on the theoretical background in which the application of paratexts to media texts and translation studies, as well as other concepts, such as framing and authorship, are discussed. Section 3 offers a brief description of the film *I, Daniel Blake* before presenting an in-depth comparative analysis of both paratexts and texts in Section 4.

Paratexts, media, (re)framing, and authorship

Discussing the potential, power, and role of paratexts as the 'fringe' and 'threshold' of a text that control our approach and interpretation of it, Gérard Genette

(1997, 14) argues that paratext is the 'most socialised side of the practice of literature'. Paratexts, following Genette, both control and frame the whole reading of a text. Text producers, such as publishers and authors, act as mediators to shape the intended readers' interpretations. Genette (1997) categorised paratexts into two groups: peritexts and epitexts. The former are texts around, or within, the text itself (e.g. titles, notes, forewords, blurbs, covers, prefaces, introductions, and footnotes); the latter are texts physically distant from the volume (e.g. author interviews, reviews, letters, critical literary analysis, and diaries). However, his definition and understanding of paratexts is limited to the presentational elements around or within a physical copy of a text. This is understandable, not only because he himself was a literary critic but also because his time was very much based on printed media, before various new digital media types common in the twenty-first century, including streaming media, became available.

Several of the digital paratexts are very similar to the literary paratexts as defined by Genette; thus, the concept has been employed in media and film studies. For example, as Kathryn Batchelor (2018) explains, DVD covers can be considered to be parallel to peritexts, such as book covers, and interviews or commentaries are comparable to epitexts.[4] However, digital media texts have other features to which Genette's original definition no longer applies. For example, some e-books are programmed to start from the first page of the main body of a text, not the cover page, which results in the presentation of different types of paratexts (Batchelor 2018, 49). Search engines, such as Google, and online bookstores, such as Amazon, serve the same function as various paratextual elements in printed literature that present the work (Batchelor 2018, 51–57). Often, paratextual elements of online news dictate where the news piece should be placed and how the text should be read. For example, Hågvar's study (2012) of newspaper content taxonomies focused on the paratext, which label a newspaper's content sections, provides an interesting example of the death sentence of an American mass murderer who participated in a television dating show in the US. One Norwegian online newspaper placed it under the 'celebrity' section, highlighting his celebrity status but minimising the victims' voices, whereas another newspaper placed it in the 'foreign affairs' section, foregrounding the 'serial killer' story with no mention of 'celebrity' in the headline.

Thus, many media and film studies scholars have further developed and applied Genette's original concept to the study of digital texts. Jonathan Gray (2010, 2015, 2016, 2018) is one of the earliest and leading figures who acknowledged this limitation and highlighted the nature of paratexts being constitutive and central to our understanding of a media text.[5] Although, as Batchelor (2018, 58–59) points out, Gray was not the first to apply the concept to the study of media texts, Gray's work has sparked in-depth discussions of the concept and its application to media text analysis. Moreover, Gray expanded the existing definition of paratexts beyond the limit of the medium of text (as in a mere written piece) and emphasised their active and powerful role, when he argued that paratexts can change 'the cultural and perceived meaning of its original text' (Gray 2010, 2).

Importantly for my discussion, Gray goes beyond Genette in acknowledging other mediators, such as audiences and paratext creators, and discussing 'audience-created' (Gray 2010) paratexts in some depth. When Genette discussed paratexts, he implied author-sanctioned or author-approved paratexts and excluded any non-author-sanctioned reviews from the discussion. However, non-author sanctioned reviews are increasingly visible and influential in the digital era, as evidenced in the *Barbie* example discussed earlier that shows how audiences can directly challenge industry-created paratexts. Gray (2010, 23) acknowledges this point by categorising paratexts into two types: (1) 'entryway paratexts', the paratexts produced to control the potential viewer's attention before viewing, and (2) 'in medias res paratexts' that became available 'during' or 'after' viewing, working to police certain reading strategies 'in medias res'. Emphasising that 'we need an "off-screen studies" to make sense of the wealth of other entities that saturate the media, and that construct film and television' (Gray 2010, 4), Gray discussed various forms of promotional marketing, including 'ads, previews, trailers, interviews with creative personnel, Internet discussion, entertainment news, reviews, merchandising, guerrilla marketing campaigns, fan creations, posters, games, DVDs, CDs, and spinoffs' (Gray 2010, 11). Other scholars also have made similar points, employing subtly different terms. For example, while Gray (2010) uses 'industry-created' and 'viewer-/audience-created' paratexts, Jason Mittel (2015) employs 'official' and 'unofficial/fan-created' paratexts.

By acknowledging the contributions audiences make and their participation in media production, Gray also touches on the complexities of authorship. The concept of authorship is quite blurry and fluid in digital media. Often readers become content creators who rewrite the text, as in the case of fan fiction. For films, a film director may change a sequence or cut out scenes from what a screenwriter already wrote, in the same way a film editor may change the final product. Distributors also commonly cut out some scenes, such as to make the film suitable for a target group (e.g. PG-13 audiences). Thus, Gray (2013, 88–89) suggests the temporality of authorship, which opens the door for 'authorial clusters' (i.e. marketing teams or special effect artists).

Nevertheless, translation has rarely been discussed in these studies, even when various mediators' intervention and translational shift is often clearly visible, further challenging the traditional understanding of authorship. Furthermore, audiences are very active in the production and dissemination of media texts, often by raising challenges or questions about subtitles and translations, as shown in the *Barbie* case and in other studies (Kang and Kim 2020). According to Batchelor (2018, 128), viewer-created paratexts also 'function as a site where the strategies used in the industry-created paratexts for presenting the subtitled nature of the dramas can be directly and indirectly contested'. This is indeed true when users make film reviews, whereby only some parts of a film are chosen to be translated and introduced, owing to space restrictions. Thus, how viewer-created paratexts, which involve translation, guide the views through the interpretation of a media text would be worthwhile to examine. In this chapter, both entryway paratexts and in medias res paratexts will be analysed.

Analysis

I, Daniel Blake tells the fictional story of Daniel Blake, a middle-aged British widower and carpenter who survived after a near-fatal heart attack. A National Healthcare Service consultant tells him to rest and not work; however, he must keep looking for work to receive a job seeker's allowance. As the Department for Work and Pensions decides he is not entitled to sickness benefits, he wants to submit an appeal. The appeal must be done online, although he is computer illiterate. Daniel befriends Katie, a single mother of two, and they help each other. On the day of Daniel's appeal, he suffers another heart attack and dies. Katie reads a eulogy at his funeral that Daniel intended to read at his appeal, which is the end and one of the highlights of the film.

Having continuously touched on social issues and depicted narratives of those marginalised in society throughout his career, director Loach is known as a social activist and leftwing filmmaker (Busby 2021). His story of a working-class man caught in a state of limbo between medical and employment bureaucracy and his blatant description of a mass bureaucratic welfare state has exceptionally appealed to many people. *I, Daniel Blake* was Loach's biggest success at the UK box office, and he won the Palme d'Or at the 2016 Cannes Film Festival. When it was released in the UK in 2016, promotional videos were distributed by Entertainment One (hereafter eOne), and the film was translated into Korean and released in Korea in the same year. Notably, in line with the narrative of *I, Daniel Blake*, which highlights the people stuck on the bureaucratic hamster wheel, the Canadian multinational entertainment and distributing company eOne turned down the opportunity to have a big premiere in London but held multiple screenings nationwide. This was a deliberate attempt to give more voices to marginalised communities and a conscious effort for more sustainable film distribution.

However, unfortunately, such a creative and intentional endeavour is not always maintained for various reasons. When the film was released in Korea, a local Korean distribution company made promotional videos (i.e. entryway paratexts), and what was pronounced and signalled in the English promotional videos was missing from the Korean ones, giving the film a different frame. A few citizens have made 'audience-created' (Gray 2010), unofficial, fan-created review (Mittel 2015) videos about this movie (i.e. in medias res paratexts) and share them on platforms such as YouTube, where some part of a film is chosen, reframed, and given new interpretations alongside translations. Therefore, this section examines how translation and user-generated movie review videos reframe the source film through a comparative analysis of the different promotional videos, which help reveal how paratextual elements added in the translation process can also be an effective tool for reframing the source film.

Paratexts and reframing

To examine how paratexts in translation and user-generated movie review videos contribute to reframing and reinterpreting the source film, various paratextual

Table 6.1 The comparison of epitexts of *I, Daniel Blake* in the UK and Korea

Country	*UK*	*Korea*
Distribution company	eOne	CGV
Cinema types	Turned down the opportunity to have a big premiere but held multiple community screenings	Various multiplex cinemas
Notable figures in the promotional video	Introduced by Jeremy Corbyn, Scottish trades union congress	Introduced by Lee Jun-ik, a Korean filmmaker
Recurrent expressions	"I am Daniel Blake"	Highlighted individual participants' own names
Used expressions in media promotion	#WeAreAllDanielBlake	"I am a citizen, nothing more and nothing less"

elements disseminated through streaming platforms are investigated. The epitexts (i.e. texts physically distant from a film) are examined first. Table 6.1 compares the epitexts and agents involved in the media text distribution in the UK and Korea.

The English ST film was distributed in the UK by eOne. As noted earlier, the distribution company deliberately turned down an offer to screen *I, Daniel Blake* in multiplex cinemas when the film was released, as the then eOne executive Alex Hamilton explains in the interview (Ritman 2017):

> So we had the premiere up in Newcastle [where *I, Daniel Blake* is set]. We turned down London. They wanted to do a big thing around it. We just said, "Look, London isn't appropriate for the premiere of this film." We did lots of community screenings and employed regional marketing officers and did stuff that basically got the film seen a hell of a lot before it went out.

Instead, eOne organised over 500 community screenings so those who could not afford cinema tickets could still watch it in a group (Stephens 2017). Loach also noted in the interview that eOne made the film available for an audience beyond cinemas by screening it at community centres, trade unions, rooms above pubs, and even food banks (Lewis 2016). Involving local staff and independent cinemas, unions, and activist groups, this community screening practice not only gave audiences independent cinema experiences and a sense of solidarity but also provided better sustainability.[6] Reaching out to the audience outside the usual cinema would have given the audience the feeling that the story is not a distant fiction but very much part of the reality and society in which they live. Moreover, these screenings were often followed by discussions and interviews with the screenwriter and film crew, as organised by local activists.

eOne UK uploaded a paratextual material to YouTube entitled 'I, Daniel Blake – we are all Daniel Blake', alongside the hashtag used to promote the film: #WeAreAllDanielBlake.[7] In this video, people of diverse genders and races and with different accents read aloud fragments of the most representative lines from

the film (the eulogy). Different individuals announcing 'I, Daniel Blake' are very much pronounced in this video, which is directed towards the title of the film. It also provides the audience with a sense of solidarity, showing that anyone could find themselves in the situation the fictional character Daniel Blake faces in the story. One person who appeared in this promotional video, or what Mittel (2015, 262) calls an 'official industrial extensions', was the British leftwing politician, Jeremy Corbyn. He receives no special attention/space, to the extent that anyone who is not interested in UK politics would easily miss. He reads out the same lines as everyone else, and his cut is placed in the middle of different participants.[8] His presence is not marked but seamlessly integrated into this video, which speaks volumes regarding the main message the distribution company wished to deliver: anyone, regardless of their social status, job, gender, or race, can be Daniel Blake. '#WeAreAllDanielBlake', the hashtag used on various social media, including Twitter (now X), YouTube, and Facebook (now Meta), also supports this point. Thus, various epitexts suggest that the source film is far from being solely commercially driven; its target audience is not those who are looking for recreational and blockbusters but, instead, those seeking more sustainable ways to experience films, and it has a clear message regarding the current status quo of society.

When *I, Daniel Blake* was subtitled and released in Korea, various epitexts of the Korean translation (hereafter TT) were produced. However, they framed the source film very differently. First, the Korean translation of *I, Daniel Blake* was held in various multiplex cinemas: CGV, Lotte Cinema, Megabox, and CineQ, according to the Korean Film Council Korea Box Office Information System.[9] Each of these cinemas is owned by a different conglomerate and a medium-sized enterprise. Its availability at those big cinema chains somewhat counteracts the discourse the UK distribution company built through various promotional activities.

The film was promoted by an initiative called 'Dada Project', which was led by CGV, one of the three Korean multiplex cinemas, to enhance diversity in films. The Korean translation of the film has at least three 'official industrial extensions' (Mittel 2015, 262), which are all available on Naver TV, a Korean streaming platform. The first one translates the original promotional YouTube video by eOne and adds a short part, where an established Korean (commercial) filmmaker, Lee Joon-ik, introduces the film by simply reading some lines.[10] Having Lee introduce *I, Daniel Blake* may have been seen understandable, considering that he is well-known for both his commercially and critically acclaimed films, touching on various topics, from queer issues to anarchism. In the second video, Lee briefly explains the film and the director Ken Loach, with accompanying hashtags: #na, taniel pŭlleik'ŭ [#I, Daniel Blake], #kamdok k'elloch'i [#Director Ken Loach], and #hyŏnsil, taniel pŭlleik'ŭ [#Reality, Daniel Blake].[11] Lee encourages audiences to consider what the value of life is by explaining that 'yŏnghwaboda tŏ yŏnghwagat'ŭn hyŏnsirŭl majihanŭn i sigie naeiri ŏttŏk'e toelji puranhan sanghwangesŏ, onŭl naega sanŭn salmŭi kach'inŭn muŏsin'ga? na taniel pŭlleik'ŭrŭl pomyŏn ansimi toel kŏt kat'ta [In a time when reality feels like a movie than any movie itself, and in a situation where there is anxiety about what tomorrow will bring, what is the value of the life I live today?I think I will feel reassured after watching *I, Daniel Blake*]'. As Gant (2016) rightly points out, '[t]he challenge for eOne with *I, Daniel Blake* was to

position the film as inspiring rather than depressing angry-making'. Viewing it from this point, we may be able to understand why Lee highlights the 'value of life' and says,'I will feel reassured'.

Nevertheless, it remains unclear to what extent Lee's framing of the film adequately repackages the social injustice Loach strived to put forward in the source film. The third and last promotional video is in Korean and parallel the English source promotional video in terms of its format, in which individuals of diverse backgrounds and ages appear.[12] The beginning of the video is very similar to the source, with individual Korean participants reading out the lines from the film. It is then followed by the scenes where they would say, 'I, Daniel Blake', if it were to follow the same format and layout of the English ST. However, they instead read out their own names, not 'Daniel Blake'. Furthermore, while 'I, Daniel Blake' was very much emphasised by being repeated in the English promotional video to underline that anyone can be Daniel Blake, other lines from the film are highlighted in the Korean version: 'I am a citizen, nothing more and nothing less'.

As a result, the message denoted in the consistent and repetitive mentioning of 'I, Daniel Blake' that anyone can have the same experience the protagonist encountered is shifted in the Korean paratexts, which present it as a film about a man who wants to be treated fairly and with dignity. Thus, the Korean trans-edited videos highlight that each of us is entitled to have 'rights' in society that must be respected, whereas the English source video encourages audiences to take the film narrative as their own story and to problematise the current social system that could potentially lead to anyone being in that situation.

Audience-created videos

The examination of the epitexts of *I, Daniel Blake* in the previous section reveals the different ways in which the same film was framed and the core message delivered to the audience changes to a considerable degree. However, many other unofficial, fan-created (Mittel 2015, 262) movie review videos may even change the frame completely. Despite being unofficial and unsanctioned, user-generated review videos often play a substantial role in framing various texts and moulding the audience's views. Moreover, adding other frames to the film, they further complicate the already complex concept of authorship.

As Robert Brookey and Jonathan Gray (2017) have noted, authorship and production are very messy processes. Films have an issue of agency, including filmmakers, directors, and screenwriters; however, Gray has rarely acknowledged the role of translation and translators in media production. Although translation is often left out of the discussion in media studies, the role (both professional and nonprofessional) translators play is increasingly visible, to the extent that translators often intentionally intervene in the construction of meaning or reframing media texts. This is often motivated by ideological and socio-political reasons, which further challenges the traditional understanding of authorship. For example, according to Youngsook Oh (2012), the narrative in *Red Sorghum* (*Hong gaoliang*, dir. Zhang Yimou, 1988) originally stated that a character joined the Gongchandang (Communist Party of China). However, the word 'Gongchandang' was replaced by

Kuomintang (Chinese Nationalist Party) in Korean subtitles when it was released in Korea in 1989.[13] Such censorship and drastic changes introduced in translation and editing raise questions about the sloppy and complex concept of authorship. Here, translation can be considered a social action that contributes to the construction of discourse.

Generating review videos of non-Korean films inevitably involves gatekeeping and translation processes because the users/content creators will choose the scenes which interest them most to present within their frame of narrative, whereby narratives encoded in other parts of the original story will consequently be downgraded or even bleached out. To illustrate this point, two user review videos of *I, Daniel Blake* are chosen. For each review video, a substantial part involves translation because, while the source film is in English, the user-video creators' first language is Korean, and their expected addressees are Korean speakers. The two videos were chosen based on their popularity and the differences in their nature, with one by an institution and the other by an individual, and their views towards the societal issues described in the film. As discussed later, both videos quote the eulogy, the cornerstone of the film, but they use translation as a tool to frame the text in a way that supports their own interpretation of the narrative.

The first is a review video by a Korean centre-right-wing political commentator, critic, and YouTuber, who had 537,000 subscribers to his YouTube channel at the time of writing.[14] In this review video, watched 3,800 times at the time of writing, he labels Loach as a 'leftwing director' and introduces this movie mainly to criticise what he labels 'pokchihŏul [specious welfare]'. The review video is entitled 'yŏnggukp'an "semonyŏ sagŏn". . . in'ganŭi chajonsim, pokchihŏul! yŏnghwa "na, taniel pŭlleik'ŭ" [the British version of "a mother and two daughter case"[15] . . . the pride of a man, specious welfare! The film "I, Daniel Blake"]'. Not a generic title such as 'I Daniel Blake review' but such a specific title demonstrates how paratexts (titles in this case) are deliberately used to frame the source movie. Here, the movie is used as a tool to criticise both Korean conservative and liberal politicians as well as 'establishments', seen from his comment:

> As you know, it is said that the UK has a well-established social welfare system in the West, known for 'from cradle to grave', and this film shows how many people suffer through the loophole. It sharply reveals and lays bare the malady of the social welfare system, universal welfare, and bureaucratic malaise. This shows a very different aspect from Korea's sham leftwing who call for universal welfare, in the sense that such malaise and ills were revealed by a left-wing director.[16]

From another comment, we can see how the character is reinterpreted and reframed to make his own claim (emphasis added):

> Like these, there are romantic comedies set in London, the UK, and the UK presented in those films is splendid. In this modern day, it is a city of high-tech culture and fashion design. *Well, those people were all against Brexit. But people in the UK like Daniel Blake voted for Brexit*. There is one

> thing the director Ken Loach does not know. Not everything can be solved under this kind of specious liberals.[17]

In this particular review video, Daniel Blake, the main character, is presented and labelled as someone who 'voted for Brexit', which is not what the source film wanted to describe. The fact that the film itself was made and released (May 13, 2016) before the Brexit referendum (June 23, 2016) adds weight to the argument that the link between Brexit and the main message of *I, Daniel Blake* this reviewer tried to construct is weak.

In addition to the new framing the reviewer gives the movie, another layer of framing is added to the source movie, which demonstrates how the original authorship is challenged. In this video, the film, as well as Loach's speech, are introduced only through the voice and words of this reviewer, where no ST is given. With only a summarised Korean translation provided, whether the Korean translation is his or from someone else remains unclear. As powerful as the eulogy is in the film, the reviewer introduces it in his review video but only in parts, rather than in full. The missing parts are italicised in the ST eulogy:

ST eulogy

> I am not a client, a customer, nor a service user.
> I am not a shirker, a scrounger, a beggar, nor a thief.
> I'm not a National Insurance Number or blip on a screen.
> *I paid my dues, never a penny short, and proud to do so*.
> *I don't tug the forelock but look my neighbour in the eye and help him if I can*.
> *I don't accept or seek charity*.
> My name is Daniel Blake. *I am a man, not a dog*.
> *As such, I demand my rights*.
> *I demand you treat me with respect*.
> *I, Daniel Blake, am a citizen,*
> *nothing more and nothing less*.

Korean translation provided in the review video

> nanŭn ŭiroeindo kogaekto sayongjado animnida [I am not a client, a customer, nor a service user]
> nanŭn keŭrŭmbaengido sagikkundo [I am not a shirker, a scrounger,]
> kŏjido todukto animnida [a beggar, nor a thief.]
> pohŏm pŏnho sutchado [I'm not a National Insurance Number]
> hwamyŏn sok chŏmdo animnida [or blip on a screen]
> nae irŭmŭn taniel pŭlleik'ŭimnida [My name is Daniel Blake.]

The main message Loach sends to society and the audience through *I, Daniel Blake* is that poverty is not the fault of the poor. This can be seen from his interview explaining how he embarked on this film project (Lewis 2016):

> Few people are aware of what's going on, and the scale of it, affecting hundreds of thousands of people, many of them feeling ashamed. . . . Occasionally they do an exposé, but they present poverty as the fault of the poor. They don't have the right CV to get the job, they're inadequate, that's the line. We have the television programmes about benefits, 'benefits cheats'. They show people who have huge problems – with their health, addiction – and they're presented as undeserving and typical.

Such media practices targeting unemployed people receiving government benefits are particularly evident in newspaper headlines, where 'benefit claimants are treated with unremitting hostility' and described as 'dossers' and 'layabouts' (*The Sun*), 'scroungers' (*The Daily Mail*), and 'skivers' (*The Express*)(de Vries Robert 2017, para. 5).

However, the lines that explain what the director probably wanted to highlight – 'I paid my dues, never a penny short, and proud to do so, I don't accept or seek charity. . . . As such, I demand my rights. . . . I demand you treat me with respect', which challenges the prejudice towards people on benefits and pensions – are all omitted in this review video. Concurrently, the film conveying that crippling bureaucracy and those who are on the dole also deserve societal attention, not prejudiced looks, is reframed in this review video as a 'leftwing' director's blatant criticism on 'specious' welfare. This shows how reviewers' own selective translation with no ST given contributes to the reframing of a film. If we accept Gray and Johnson's (2013, 4–6) definition of authorship that it is 'not just a question of art and individual expression, but also of social and institutional structures that govern cultural production, enabling, compelling, and authorising some forms while constraining others', we can further argue that (non-)translation is used as an instrument to constrain or even suppress other interpretations while compelling his interpretations.

The second example is a YouTube channel run by a centre-left news media outlet, *Hankyoreh*, in Korea.[18] The nature or setup of this review video is somewhat different from that in the first video discussed earlier since the former is an individual, private channel, whereas the latter is run by an institution and thus is filmed and edited professionally. Nevertheless, it can be argued that these two videos are in the same category (i.e. audience-created/unofficial review videos), following the distinction between 'audience-created' (Gray 2010)/unofficial, fan-created (Mittel 2015, 262) and author-sanctioned/sanctioned, or 'official industrial extensions' (Mittel 2015, 262). Moreover, this may show how different socio-political views influence how the same video is reviewed, compared to the first video that was a review by a centre-right individual. The second video was also selected due to its popularity: it had 579,000 subscribers and had been watched 1,100 times at the time of writing.

In this video, the editor-in-chief of a Korean weekly film magazine, *Cine 21*, which is also part of the Hankyoreh media group, is invited by two television hosts to review and comment on the film. Similar to the first video examined earlier, the two hosts and the editor-in-chief relate the plots of *I, Daniel Blake* to the societal issues in Korea. However, the power of solidarity among people, which is

juxtaposed with the cold bureaucracy, is more foregrounded. A more interesting point is the label given to Loach, which works as a paratext, considering its impact on the view of the director and his films. In the second video, Loach is called 'the poet for the blue collars', whereas he was a 'left-wing director' in the first. The former highlights the 'art' of a film genre and uses a term denoting groups of working individuals, which allows various types from blue, white, and pink to no collar; whereas the latter is a simple binary political term that does not consider political views as being on a spectrum. Consequently, the former label – the paratext – frames the film as a story of working class, whereas the latter makes it a politically laden one.

Three other differences can be noted in the way the same film is reviewed between the first and the second videos. First, the second audience-created video problematises and accentuates the reduction of welfare and privatisation that would ultimately lower dignity, unlike the first that emphases the loophole of 'specious' welfare. This is evident in the title of the second video: 'nanŭn kaega anira in'ganimnida, "na, taniel pŭlleik'ŭ" [I am a man, not a dog, "I, Daniel Blake"]', where 'human dignity' is underlined, unlike the first one with 'specious welfare' in the title. The *Cine 21* editor-in-chief's comments also align with this point: 'sahoega kyesok pokchirŭl ch'uksohago tto chisokchŏgin minyŏnghwa chŏngch'aegi iŏjimyŏnsŏ kalssurok saramdŭrŭi chajon'gamŭl kalgamŏkko ittanŭn saenggagi tŭlgŏdŭnyo [I think society is eating away at people's dignity as it continues to reduce welfare and continue to privatise]'. The film is described as showing the audience how capitalism may exclude people, with the argument made that personalised welfare is necessary. 'Dignity' is underlined throughout the video, which may be the influence of the shift in the entryway paratexts discussed earlier: as noted in 3.1, the Korean paratexts of the translation were about a man who wants to be treated fairly and with dignity, although the English source encourages a critical view on social system to consider that anyone could potentially be in Daniel's situation.

Second, reviewers add more Korean examples that help audiences sympathise with the story. Katie looking for sanitary pads at food banks, which was not discussed in the first video, is related to a Korean case where some Korean girls had to use shoe inserts as a substitute for sanitary pads and tampons as they struggled to have access to those essentials. Katie's child being bullied for having worn-out soles is related to some reported Korean cases where people (and children) living in council houses are bullied and treated outcast, with fences built around the housing block to separate those living in council houses and even different car parks.

Third, the video finishes with the same eulogy, fully translated with no editing. The first and the last two lines were translated and read out by a host in Korean (italicised in Excerpt 2), and the rest is provided transparently together with the original film with accompanying subtitles, allowing the audience to follow the source. The specific lines missing from the first video that contest the views and media practices that blame people in the same situation as Daniel Blake and present them as undeserving are all delivered.

Excerpt

nanŭn ŭiroeindo kogaekto sayongjado animnida [*I am not a client, a customer, nor a service user*.]
nanŭn keŭrŭmbaengido sagikkundo kŏjido todukto animnida [I am not a shirker, a scrounger, a beggar, nor a thief]
nanŭn pohŏm pŏnho sutchado hwamyŏn sok chŏmdo animnida [I am not a National Insurance Number or blip on a screen]
nan mungmukhi ch'aegimŭl tahae ttŏttŏt'age sarassŭmnida [I have done my duty, kept my head down, and lived an honest life]
nan kupsildaeji anhatko [I do not tug the forelock]
iusi ŏryŏumyŏn kŭdŭrŭl towassŭmnida [When my neighbours were in need, I helped them]
chasŏnŭl kugŏrhagŏna kidaejido anhassŭmnida [I have never begged for charity, nor did I depend on it]
nanŭn taniel pŭlleik'ŭ [I am Daniel Blake]
kaega anira in'ganimnida [a man, not a dog]
ie nanŭn nae kwŏllirŭl yoguhamnida [As such, I demand my rights]
in'ganjŏk chonjungŭl yoguhamnida [demand you treat me with respect]
na, taniel pŭlleik'ŭnŭn [*I, Daniel Blake,*]
han saramŭi simin kŭ isangdo kŭ ihado animnida [*am a citizen nothing more and nothing less*]

This comparative analysis of the two audience-created videos shows the fluid nature of authorship in the digital era. New authorship is claimed through the new interpretation of the story in the videos, which use non-translation and selective appropriation to give weight to the intended reading. This is also realised through the active use of paratexts, such as labelling and titles. In particular, the same director is referred to with different labelling, which can arguably be considered another set of designed paratexts. Consequently, the original author's (director's) work is challenged and rewritten, which demonstrates Gray's concept of 'authorial flux': the fluid nature of authorship that is reconfigurable and continuously reconstructed in specific discursive circumstances.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how promotional videos as paratexts can frame the same film in a subtly different way, thus sending different messages to the prospective audiences. The discourses constructed through various paratextual elements in the source culture can be bleached out or replaced by the new frame given by promotional videos provided in the culture where the ST is translated. Added to this is another layer of user-generated, audience-created film review videos. Some scenes can be omitted deliberately in an attempt to construct the reviewer's/audience's intended discourse concerning the film, using translation as a tool to legitimise their interpretation. As this analysis of the two audience-created videos

demonstrates, paratexts, non-translation, and selective appropriation in reviews can be used as tools to reframe a film, wherein new authorship is claimed. An interesting point revealed in this analysis, which has not been examined properly in previous research, is the relationship between promotional videos (entryway paratexts) in a target culture and the interpretation presented in audience-created videos (in medias res paratexts). The consistent mention of 'dignity' in the Korean promotional videos is highlighted in the second audience-created video as well. This demonstrates that the promotional videos that are produced independently from the source culture significantly influence the target audience's understanding of the source film, who rely heavily on translations and promotional videos produced in their first language.

The role and the power of epitexts, especially non-author-sanctioned reviews, were not the central concern of Genette (1997), who dismissed them as more of a marketing and promotional tool. However, as this chapter has demonstrated, epitexts can significantly modify the main narrative of the ST and the established discourses surrounding it. The mediatory role of film reviewers and their beliefs, as well as their views on society, determine the type of layers added to the discourse on the ST, in which both translation and non-translation are employed as tools to support and give weight to the reviewer's interpretation of the ST. Such practices further challenge the already fuzzy notion of the authorship of media texts. This reminds us of the significant role of translations and translators in the dissemination of media texts and the need to acknowledge their roles.

The findings of this study encourage the consideration of translation in a broader context, beyond the traditional source and target link. The assumption that the audience will share their reviews based solely on the official translation is no longer valid. An audience's interpretation and understanding of the story of a translated film are multifaceted, multilayered, accumulated, and influenced by fellow audiences, promotional videos, and non-author-sanctioned and audience-created videos.

Notes

1 Both YouTube and Netflix allow users to watch audiovisual materials on the Internet with some differences: services like YouTube offer a variety of free content, whereas services like Netflix offer a variety of content but is exclusive to those who have subscriptions.
2 Netflix was initially launched as an online mail-based rental business.
3 Interestingly, Netflix recently released one season of a Korean drama called *The Glory* into two parts and released the two parts with a two-to-three-month interval, which is quite different from the service pattern it used to have, where audiences could enjoy binge-watching. This is understood as its strategy to lock the subscribers.
4 See Batchelor (2018: 59) for an indicative list of paratexts of media texts.
5 Batchelor (2018: 58) highlights that a paratext in Gray's work is 'not something which serves as threshold to a text' but that 'it is paratext and work together which make a text', whereby the term 'text' is viewed as something that is 'constructed by readers'. However, as pointed out in both Batchelor (2018) and Brookey and Gray (2017), this view is not widely accepted. I, therefore, like Batchelor (2018), follow Genette's definition of paratext as opposition to text.

6 It also should be mentioned here that such practice was possible by the British Film Institute's (BFI) 'Big Audience Award' distribution scheme (Forrest and Merrington 2021), which is to increase the diversity and geographical spread of the audience.
7 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NjxRIax5AIs (last accessed October 30, 2023).
8 Jeremy Corbyn mentioned the film at Prime Minister's Questions to call on the government to abandon the plans to cut Employment and Support Allowance in the UK, which is for those who are unable to work due to illness or disability. Him mentioning *I, Daniel Blake* in his speech was recorded and shared on his own YouTube channel, and this functions as an epitext of the film.
9 https://www.kobis.or.kr/kobis/business/mast/mvie/searchMovieList.do (last accessed October 30, 2023).
10 https://tv.naver.com/v/1276574 (last accessed October 30, 2023).
11 https://tv.naver.com/v/1285892 (last accessed October 30, 2023).
12 https://tv.naver.com/v/1291575 (last accessed October 30, 2023).
13 Oh (2012) presumes that the alteration was likely introduced by the distribution company.
14 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8AoEYqc91GQ (last accessed October 30, 2023).
15 A tragic suicide case of a poverty-stricken mother and two daughters prompted by illness and financial difficulties.
16 ST: 'yŏnggugi chal asidasip'i yoramesŏ mudŏmkkajiranŭn sahoebokchich'egyega sŏgu chungenŭn chal kusŏngdoen nararago hanŭnde kŭ hŏtchŏm sogesŏ ŏlmana manhŭn sarami kosaengŭl hanŭn'ga hanŭn naeyongŭl poyŏjunŭn yŏnghwaindeyo, hŭnhi iyagihanŭn sahoe pokchi sisŭt'em, pop'yŏnjŏk pokchi, tto pokchiŭi kwallyojuŭi pyŏngp'ye tŭngŭl sillarhage kkaballyŏnnŭnde chwap'agamdogi irŭl kkaballyŏttanŭn chŏmesŏ pop'yŏnjŏk pokchirŭl chujanghanŭn han'gugŭi ŏngt'ŏri chwap'awanŭn aju tarŭn myŏnmorŭl poyŏjundago hal su issŭmnida'. All translations are mine unless otherwise stated.
17 ST: 'yŏngguk rŏndŏnŭl sojaero han irŏn romaent'ik k'omediga issŭmnida. kŏgie nat'ananŭn yŏnggugŭn chŏngmallo mŏtchijyo. yojŭm kat'ŭn kyŏngue ch'ŏmdan munhwa p'aesyŏn tijainŭi tosiimnida. cha, kŭrŏn saramdŭrŭn pŭreksit'ŭe chŏnbu pandaerŭl haessŭmnida. kŭnde yŏngguge irŏn taniel pŭlleik'ŭ kat'ŭn saramŭn pŭreksit'ŭe ch'ansŏnghaessŭmnida. k'en roch'i kamdokto hana morŭnŭn ke issŭmnida. irŏn ŏttŏn chinboranŭn hŏul haesŏnŭn modŭn kŏsi haegyŏldoeji annŭnda'.
18 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-hkEw9s0x0 (last accessed October 30, 2023).

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7 Local nodes in global media networks

The Korean remake of BBC's *Life on Mars*

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Introduction

Life on Mars is a British television series that was broadcast on BBC One between January 9, 2006, and April 10, 2007. The story focuses on Detective Chief Inspector Sam Tyler (John Simm), who works for the Manchester Police in 2006. After he is hit by a car, he wakes up to find himself in 1973 as a detective inspector in the same station. The main mystery of the show is presented in the tagline: "Am I mad, in a coma, or back in time?" The other tantalising question is if he will ever return to the present (if he has, indeed, travelled back in time). In addition to its popular and critical success at home, *Life on Mars* has enjoyed a prolific afterlife in the form of transcultural remakes in various national contexts: the United States, Spain, Russia, the Czech Republic, and South Korea. This provides an apt case study to explore the potential for cultural translation and the transnational mobility of media content. The popularity of these transcultural remakes contradicts concerns expressed by fans of the BBC version that the show's cultural specificity could not be successfully replicated elsewhere.[1] Its propensity to be adapted in different national contexts reveals the flexibility and mobility of its narrative form, themes, and characters, which turned out to be translatable and relatable to non-British viewers.

In this chapter, I focus on the Korean remake of the BBC series, *La-i-peu on Ma-seu* (*Life on Mars,* 2018), to examine how it fits into the Korean media industry's endeavors to diversify TV content for local audiences and to engage in global media flows.[2] This chapter will consider similarities and differences between the BBC source material and the Korean remake, but my main purpose is not to conduct a comparative analysis between the two. Rather, I focus on the Korean remake to study how it positions itself within the local media context and in global and regional media networks. Driven by changes in the transnational topography of media production and distribution, the Korean media industry is attempting to assemble the local and the global into new forms. I analyse the Korean remake of BBC's *Life on Mars* as a local node in a globally connected network of intersecting media flows and trends. This transcultural remake, I contend, is a prime example of media content that exhibits both cultural specificity and transnational legibility.

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I consider the following questions: How did the Korean version successfully adapt the source material to the historical context of South Korea in the year 1988? What kinds of culturally specific idioms and events were deployed to localise the British series? How does this transcultural remake fit into media flows and cultural exchanges on local, regional, and global levels? To search for possible answers, we can study how local media industries are influenced by increasingly global trajectories of media content. If we focus on local nodes in global media networks, we can better understand how globally mobile content is embedded in local settings, even as it thrives in an environment of cross-pollination. By conducting inquiries into such nodes and networks, we can analyse complex entanglements of the local and the global.

The plasticity of global media

In an interconnected global mediascape, media industries are engaging in transnational flows of capital, creative labour, and cultural products. This geographical expansion is facilitated by global streaming services that provide a diverse range of locally created media content to subscribers around the world. Amid such changes, Korean TV series are experiencing an upsurge in popularity and recognition on online streaming platforms. For example, the Korean drama *Ojingŏ keim* (*Squid Game,* 2021–present) is one of the most-watched Netflix Original Series overseas. Other Korean dramas released on Netflix, including *Chiok* (*Hellbound*, 2021–2024), *Chigŭm uri hakkyonŭn* (*All of Us Are Dead,* 2022–present), *Tŏ kŭllori* (*The Glory,* 2022–2023), and *Kisaengsu tŏ kŭrei* (*Parasyte the Grey*, 2024), also received significant attention from non-Korean audiences.

Trying to recalibrate its strategies in this global media environment, the Korean media industry is currently adjusting its systems of production, distribution, and investment. As production costs rise, so have viewer expectations for high production values, technical sophistication, and quality content (Frater 2023). Industry insiders are looking inward and outward for content and intellectual property that could catch the interest of investors, broadcasters, and viewers. With the support of global financial investment, the expansion of online distribution infrastructures, and increased opportunities to reach a wider audience, Korean producers and directors are attempting to diversify genres of local TV dramas and to develop fusion genres that participate in transnational media trends, instead of simply importing TV series from abroad. These new ventures include hybrid formats featuring non-conventional narratives that deviate from the familiar forms of melodrama and crime shows, as well as remakes of quality shows. For instance, British TV series *Life on Mars*, *Doctor Foster* (2015), and *Luther* (2010–2019) were produced as Korean remakes.[3] Another example is the Korean Netflix Original Series *Chongiŭi chip: kongdonggyŏngjeguyŏk* (*Money Heist: Korea – Joint Economic Area*, 2022), which is based on the Spanish-language show *La Casa de Papel* (*Money Heist*, 2017–2021). These transcultural remakes illustrate how the Korean media industry is expanding its transnational reach by benchmarking overseas media content that is locally produced and globally distributed.

The recent rise of transnational media trends reveals the expanded scope of multidirectional media connections. Michael Curtin suggests that we should find new ways to analyse the topographies and trajectories of contemporary media that are becoming "more plastic and complicated" in "an increasingly porous and dynamic environment" (Curtin 2020, 90). Curtin writes:

> [A]s media professionals interact in transnational venues and platforms, much of what they learn and observe filters back to national and local contexts where textual features and production techniques are imitated or adapted, resulting in hybrid content that is reimagined for different publics. Remarkably, adaptations move "up" and "down" as well as "across." That is, content and aesthetics not only circulate widely, they are also refashioned to address different topographies of imagination. And they create new topographies.
>
> (Curtin 2020, 97)

These new topographies are not geographically contained within national borders. Through his concept of "media capitals," Curtin analysed real cities that performed as "centers of media activity," such as Mumbai, Cairo, and Hong Kong (Curtin 2003, 203). As he notes, however, contemporary media environments are now much more geographically complex, with trajectories of media adaptations travelling "up," "down," and "across," instead of being grounded in specific cities.

To address this enhanced flexibility, Curtin refers to Bhaskar Sarkar's ideas on the global. Sarkar writes:

> The global effectively materializes from the mobile encounters between mutating nodes – as networks of shifting relations between entities that are themselves in process of becoming. A constellation of relations in conditions of chronic *mutability*, the global is best thought of as a fluid emergence rather than as a stable totality. What is at play here is rather distinct from a dialectical process: for the latter would lead to the sublation of difference into sameness, and eventual homogenization, whereas the global-as-emergence results from the transitory and contingent connections between singular local nodes.
>
> (Sarkar 2015, 452–53, emphasis in original)

Here Sarkar chooses the term "nodes" to describe intersecting points of "shifting relations" that are mutable and fluid, rather than stable and homogeneous. Comparable to Curtin's use of the term "topographies," Sarkar's use of the term "constellation" also indicates the complex, fluid, multifaceted, or "multinodal," aspect of these media encounters and adaptations. Furthermore, Sarkar presents the concept of "plasticity" to envision global configurations as "a set of relations between units that are in a continual state of transformation" (Sarkar 2015, 453).

This plasticity is evident in *Life on Mars*, which can be regarded as a productive local node in global media networks. Although it was produced by OCN, a Korean cable company – not a global streaming service – for a (mostly) Korean audience, this drama series invites analysis on how local and global media content are converging in, and flowing out of, the Korean media landscape. The show's

production reflects the Korean media industry's attempts to diversify its content for local and global consumption. Not only does it offer insights into efforts to localise non-Korean media content but it also reveals how TV formats and trends circulate within an increasingly interconnected global media ecology. The task of analysing the various trajectories of media flows that coalesce in this case study engages with the localising strategies of transcultural remakes. It also illuminates how these endeavors influence and invigorate local media environments by generating and developing new hybrid genres.

Life on Mars: from the UK to Korea

The BBC version of *Life on Mars* was highly popular and critically acclaimed for successfully combining elements of various genres: crime fiction, police procedural, science fiction, and mystery.[4] The show was praised for addressing social issues that were pertinent to regional specificities of Manchester in the 1970s, such as problems faced by the working class, the precarity of labour unions, violence among football fans, and IRA bombings. Brett Mills writes that "the series draws on the tropes of British social realism that have been at the heart of national culture" (Mills 2012, 134). Because of this culturally specific focus, many fans of the BBC show were wary or critical of the American remake, *Life on Mars* (2008–2009). Some considered it as a product of cultural imperialism that illustrates how the American media industry asserts and maintains its cultural hegemony by appropriating and subsuming the local media content of other nations. Others protested that the American version would replace the gritty quality of the British series with Hollywood glamour and thereby dilute the authentic national identity, that is, the inherent "British-ness" of the show (Mills 2012, 141).

Despite grim predictions that the show's innate British-ness would not translate well into other cultures, more remakes of *Life on Mars* were produced in different national contexts. In chronological order, they include the American version that aired from October 2008 to April 2009, a Spanish remake (*La Chica de Ayer*, or *The Girl from Yesterday*) broadcast from April to June 2009, a Russian remake (*Obratnaya storona Luny*, or *The Dark Side of the Moon*) broadcast from November 2012 to March 2018, a Czech remake (*Svět pod hlavou*, or *World Under Head*) broadcast from January to March 2017, and the South Korean remake (*La-i-p'ŭ on Ma-sŭ*, or *Life on Mars*) that aired from June 9 to August 5, 2018.

This geographical and cultural mobility of BBC's *Life on Mars* is noteworthy when juxtaposed with the fact that its narrative is focused on temporal mobility. These different axes of mobility share a common goal: to shed light on social changes, whether these changes arise from the passing of time or a shift in geographical and cultural location. The narrative device of time travel is not simply used to evoke a sentimental longing for the past. Each international remake travels to a different historical period. This trope of time travel was used as a localising strategy to establish cultural relevance by having the protagonist return to a significant moment in national history. For example, the Spanish version, *La Chica de Ayer*, returns to 1977, two years after the death of the dictator, Francisco Franco. Ruth Gutierrez Delgado and Isadora Garcia Avis suggest that the show could have

had a stronger cultural impact if it had been set during Franco's regime instead. They write:

> In 1977, Samuel encounters a country where democracy had already been set in motion and things were starting to change; if he had travelled back to the 60s, he would indeed have found a more obscure period (one that would have been more painful to explore), but the dramatic contrast and the cultural clash created by the dictatorship would have been more intense.
>
> (Delgado and Avis 2018, 36)

Joseba Bonaut and Teresa Ojer consider the Spanish version to be less successful than its British counterpart and also see it as a missed opportunity to portray the social problems that arose during one of the most turbulent periods in Spanish history – the nation's transition to a newfound democracy (Bonaut and Ojer 2012, 162). They compare this show with a popular Spanish TV series, *Cuentame como paso* (*Tell Me How It Happened*, 2001–2023), which presents the social reality of a Spanish family during the last years of Franco's rule.

In contrast, the protagonist in the Korean remake returns to 1988. The socio-cultural significance of the year 1988 also looms large in the history of Korean modernisation and South Korea's development as a democratic nation. One major event is the end of Chun Doo-hwan's military dictatorship (1980–1988), which signaled the transition from the Fifth Republic to the Sixth, the present-day government of South Korea. This year symbolises the shift from a long period of military rule to a democratic government and, consequently, a more open and liberal society. During the presidency of Roh Tae-woo (1988–1993), Chun's successor, the Korean government instituted democratic reforms and revised authoritarian laws to allow direct presidential elections and many civil liberties, including freedom of the press.[5]

The Korean and Spanish versions do share one key aspect that distinguishes them from the British version: a focus on family drama. Delgado and Avis write:

> *La Chica de Ayer* focuses on the emotional dimension of the story, developing a romantic relationship between Samuel and Ana, and expanding Samuel's relationship with his parents, in a way that is more typically seen in melodrama. These changes may respond to two specific characteristics of the Spanish TV market: firstly, science fiction has never been a popular genre on Spanish television. Secondly, dramedy and melodrama have traditionally been very popular among Spanish prime-time audiences.
>
> (Delgado and Avis 2018, 35)

This description may well be applied to the Korean context as well. As in the case of Spanish television, many Korean TV dramas can be included in the genre of melodrama, so it is not surprising that family relations were brought to the foreground. Because of this adjusted focus, the protagonist's trip back to 1988 prioritises a reconciliation with his absent father and his acceptance of his father's death.

In the Korean remake, the protagonist Han Tae-joo (Jung Kyung-ho) is a detective who works for the National Forensic Service. In 2018, he is called to investigate a serial murder case. When he is on the verge of catching the murderer, Tae-joo is shot by a mysterious figure and hit by a car, as in the BBC version. When he regains consciousness, Tae-joo finds himself in the year 1988. He is now a detective who was recently transferred from Seoul to a small city, where he lived briefly during his childhood. Like his British counterpart, Tae-joo desperately tries to return to his present but is constantly distracted by a series of murders that follow the same pattern as those he was trying to solve in 2018. In 1988, Tae-joo meets his long-lost father who mysteriously disappeared when he was a young boy and reconnects with him and his mother. Tae-joo also forms close relationships with his colleagues: the head of the homicide team, Kang Dong-chul (Park Sung-woong), and an intelligent but overlooked female officer, Yoon Na-young (Ko Ah-sung). The former is the Korean counterpart of Detective Chief Inspector Gene Hunt (Philip Glenister) and the latter, Annie Cartwright (Liz White). The character of Han Tae-joo is depicted as a stoic stickler for rules who relies on scientific evidence. In contrast, Kang Dong-chul deploys intuition and common sense to solve cases and has no qualms about bending the rules to catch criminals.

Each episode of the Korean version begins with opening titles that refer to the BBC series. For the most part, the Korean remake is similar to the source material in terms of characters and storylines. It even retains the show's conclusion instead of choosing to surprise the audience with a different ending. Some changes were made, however, and studying these revisions in the Korean version can be useful in identifying what was deemed culturally relevant in the South Korean context in 2018. For instance, the Manchester setting in the British version plays an important role in providing the cultural backdrop and in constructing the so-called authenticity of the main characters. In contrast, the Korean version is set in a fictional town, although the show was shot on location in Busan and Daegu. Just as the BBC version presented Manchester as "the North," that is, *not* London, the Korean remake accentuates the fact that this small town is *not* Seoul, thereby alluding to the disparity of social development between the two cities. In other words, this small city is provincial and parochial, in both historical and geographical terms. The fact that the protagonist is from Seoul is emphasized several times to reinforce his "otherness," which is also aligned with his supposedly advanced and sophisticated (i.e. meticulous) method of police work that often conflicts with the intuitive (and at times, impulsive) method preferred by his colleagues. This character trait is conflated with Tae-joo's temporal and geographical relocation from a more "advanced" environment, that is, the future and the capital city of Seoul, respectively.

Localizing content in the global media ecology: *Life on Mars* in Korea

Life on Mars aired on the cable channel OCN, as part of its OCN Original Series, from June 9 to August 5, 2018. The OCN Original series comprises high-concept quality dramas that deviate from conventional melodramas, which have long been

the staple of Korean television. Examples of well-received OCN series include *Boisŭ* (*Voice*, 2017), *T'ŏnŏl* (*Tunnel*, 2017), *La-i-p'ŭ on Ma-sŭ* (*Life on Mars*, 2018), and *Gyŏngiroun Somun* (*The Uncanny Counter*, 2020–2023). The Korean version of *Life on Mars* was created by Studio Dragon, a production company that produces TV dramas for local cable channels, tvN and OCN, as well as Netflix Original Series. Popular examples of their work include *Misŭt'ŏ sŏnsyain* (*Mr. Sunshine*, 2018), *Sŭwit'ŭhom* (*Sweet Home*, 2020–2024), and *Vîncenzo* (2021–present), among others. Studio Dragon is a branch of CJ ENM, which is a vertically integrated media conglomerate in South Korea that owns theatres, film investment and distribution companies, cable channels, and television production companies.

The storyline of *Life on Mars* shows similarities with the storyline of another TV series that previously aired on OCN: *Tunnel*, a show featuring a police officer from the 1980s who inexplicably finds himself in the future rather than the past. It is likely that these two shows were targeting the same audience. For one, both were shown on the same cable channel, and both are crime dramas that deal with time travel and serial killers that are active in two time periods. Yet another popular police procedural series, *Shigŭnŏl* (*Signal*, 2016), shares many of these traits. This show, which was also produced by CJ ENM and aired on tvN, became one of the highest-rated Korean dramas in cable TV history. It was adapted as a Japanese TV series in 2018, with the Korean boy band BTS singing the opening theme song. *Tunnel* was adapted as Thai and Indonesian TV shows in 2019. Meanwhile, the Korean remake of *Life on Mars* was broadcast on tvN Asia in Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka. All three shows can be considered as productive local nodes in a globally connected media network.

When positioned within the local context, *Life on Mars* coincides with other popular TV series in Korea that deal with time slips and nostalgic imaginings of the past. A successful example illustrating this trend of commercialising nostalgia for a supposedly simpler time is the popular *Ŭngdaphara* (*Reply*) TV drama franchise, which has three installments: *Ŭngdaphara 1997* (*Reply 1997*, 2012), *Ŭngdaphara 1994* (*Reply 1994*, 2013), and *Ŭngdaphara 1988* (*Reply 1988*, 2015–2016). This cultural implementation of nostalgia can also be compared to a similar trend found in UK media that uses time slips as a narrative device, including the long-running *Doctor Who* franchise (1963–1989, 2005–present), *Goodnight Sweetheart* (1993–1999, 2016), and the historical drama *Outlander* (2014–present). By widening the geographical scope, we can recognise that both British and Korean versions of *Life on Mars* engage in a globally legible media trend that normalises fantastical narratives by merging with science fiction or inserting supernatural elements in a mundane environment.

The motif of time slip (or time travel) was previously popular in Korean cinema around the turn of the century. Examples include *K'ara* (*Calla*, Song Hae-sung, 1999), *Tonggam* (*Ditto*, Kim Jung-kwon, 2000), and *2009 Rosŭt'ŭmemo-rijŭ* (*2009: Lost Memories*, Lee Si-myung, 2002). In his analysis of this trend, David Martin-Jones describes what he calls "South Korean time travel narratives" as "*decompressed* narratives that experiment with recent national history to

contemplate the effect of the past on the present" (Martin-Jones 2007, 48, emphasis in original). He considers how these films provide a moment of pause that allows for "a reflective space in which to relive recent history" (Martin-Jones 2007, 48), that is, a chance to decompress the rapid development of Korean economy and democracy, which Kyung-sup Chang has described as "compressed modernity" (Chang 1999, 30). According to Martin-Jones, these films replay the past by deploying the genres of science fiction and fantasy, thus "facilitating a cinematic working through of a recent trauma to the national psyche" (Martin-Jones 2007, 48). In this context, the trauma specific to South Korea is related to the Asian economic crisis that occurred in 1997 and lasted until 2001. This period, often referred to as the "IMF crisis" because Korea was bailed out by the International Monetary Fund, became a moment of historical trauma and national shame with lasting repercussions on both individual and collective levels.[6]

The excessive speed, or compression, of Korea's development has generated many social crises, such as economic inequity, regional tensions, generational conflict, and cultural friction between local/global and urban/rural. These issues are addressed in the critically acclaimed Korean film *Sarinŭi ch'uŏk* (*Memories of Murder*, Bong Joon-ho, 2003), which dramatised the Hwaseong serial murders that took place during the late 1980s and early 1990s. As previously noted, the year 1988 signifies the putative end of authoritarian violence in South Korean history, but Bong's film suggests that this institutional violence left indelible residues not only on the collective psyche of the nation but also on individual psyches and communal lives in the form of violent and perverse crimes. In his article on Bong's film, Joseph Jeon ponders the historical repercussions of an infamous series of murders in a rural area and their connection to the systemic violence inflicted by a totalitarian regime. He writes:

> The period represented in the film is an absolutely crucial moment in modern Korean history, coinciding with the end of Chon Tu-hwan's military dictatorship in 1988; the appearance of violent crimes in the sleepy rural villages in which the film is set serves as a synecdoche for the vexing emergence of Korean modernity in general.
>
> (Jeon 2011, 77)

Bong's film greatly influenced crime fiction produced in Korea, including *Life on Mars*. Although the Hwaseong serial murders are not specifically mentioned in the show, the protagonist works on similar cases involving a serial killer in both past and present timelines.

Life on Mars travels back in time to the year 1988, mentioned earlier as a crucial period in the democratisation of South Korea. This year also marked a pivotal moment that increased the visibility of the Korean nation in the global arena. The government used the 1988 Seoul Olympics to pursue, promote, and actualise industrial and economic development through campaigns and narratives of modernisation and growth. The success of the Olympics was one notable outcome of the nation's economic progress, which is colloquially described as the "miracle

on the Han River." The preparation process for the Olympics is mentioned a few times in the show as a reminder to the protagonist (and the viewers) of its historical setting.

As in the BBC source material, the Korean remake of *Life on Mars* draws upon nostalgic memories of the past. Even though the series is a crime show, its atmosphere is tinged with a sense of longing, which is emphasised by its warm, sepia-tone aesthetics, rather than grounded in gritty reality. Although the Korean version alludes to such problems as class inequality and police brutality, it is not as overtly critical and cutting as Bong's film. Instead, it engages in a diluted form of social critique that is not uncommon in Korean mainstream media. References to societal concerns of that time are mostly used to illustrate the social environment and cultural backdrop of 1988. For instance, *Life on Mars* includes a reference to daylight saving time (called "Summer Time" in Korea), which was enforced twice during the 1940s and 1950s (1948–1951; 1955–1960) and was reinstated briefly for the Seoul Olympics to synchronise with other nations. This "Summer Time" was deployed in *Life on Mars* (episode 11) to intensify narrative tension when Tae-joo, unaware of its implementation in 1988, miscalculates the time and misses an important appointment with his colleague Yoon Na-young, thereby putting her in danger.

More socially significant incidents referenced in the series include an internment camp called "Brothers Home" (*Hyŏngjebokchiwŏn*) and an infamous hostage situation that took place in 1988. Regarding the former, the show reveals that the serial killer who is active in 1988 had been incarcerated and abused in an institution, in a clear allusion to the notorious "Brothers Home," an internment camp that operated in Busan during the 1970s and 1980s. Although the camp purported to be a welfare facility set up for homeless people in preparation for the Seoul Olympics, inmates of the camp included lost children, students, and civilians who were captured and incarcerated against their will for minor crimes, vagrancy, or simply for being at the wrong place at the wrong time. Moreover, inmates were forced to undertake slave labour, and many were beaten, tortured, and sexually abused. The human rights violations committed by the camp were later exposed by former inmates.[7]

Meanwhile, the hostage situation depicted in the Korean version localised a similar situation that occurred in episode 6 of the first season of the BBC version. In the Korean remake, this incident (featured in episode 7) dramatised an actual event that received much media coverage at the time and raised awareness of the inequality, injustice, and corruption rampant in contemporary Korean society. On October 8, 1988, a group of prisoners escaped while they were being transferred to another prison. Four convicts, including Ji Kang Hun, held a family hostage after breaking into their home in Seoul. This hostage situation and the standoff between the escapees and the police were broadcast live on television and concluded with the death of three prisoners. Ji became famous for his criticism against economic disparity and social inequality in South Korea, especially for his statement, "*Yujeon mujwai mujeon yujwai* (Not guilty if you're rich, guilty if you're poor)," which become a popular phrase used to criticise the hypocrisy of powerful elites who

receive relatively light sentences for their crimes. Ji was specifically referring to the preferential treatment given to Chun Kyung-hwan, brother of former president Chun Doo-hwan. Chun had embezzled approximately 7 billion won but only received a prison term of seven years, which was shorter than those of people who were in prison for lesser crimes, including Ji Kang Hun himself.[8]

Mediated memories of personal and collective trauma

In *Life on Mars*, the protagonist Tae-joo receives an opportunity to relive history from the perspective of an adult to work through childhood trauma based on repressed memories of his father. By foregrounding the pain caused by violent, criminal patriarchal figures, this show also evokes the repressed memories of the nation during the era of dictatorship. This invocation of collective trauma provides a backdrop to the individual trauma of the protagonist, whose family drama at the micro level relates to the social oppression under dictatorship at the macro level. Framed within the genre conventions of fantasy, this fictional depiction of a past marked by violence on the double registers of the national and the individual is notable in the way it tangentially references the past ordeals of the Korean nation in the form of popular entertainment.

The hypothesis that the protagonist has not travelled back in time but is trapped in his own subconscious while he is in a coma is even more convincing in the Korean version because Tae-joo's process of working through unresolved psychological issues regarding his absent father is reiterated throughout the series. Haunted by flashbacks of his father standing next to the bloody body of an unconscious woman, Tae-joo finally learns the supposed truth of his father's death. The protagonist's trauma-inducing recollection of a morally corrupt and criminal father can be interpreted as a reference to the patriarchal political power and brute force wielded by military dictatorships that ruled modern Korea in the past. The traumatic residues of patriarchal violence are even more starkly personified by the father of the two serial killers, who are presented as foils for the protagonist. Whereas Tae-joo manages to "work through" his trauma, the two serial killers either fail or refuse to do so.

The paternal figure is a recurring motif in *Life on Mars*. The Korean version emphasises Tae-joo's relationship with his father by focusing on the emotional scars left behind by his father's sudden disappearance. When Tae-joo meets his long-lost father, he is shocked to discover that his father was a criminal because Tae-joo's mother had told him that his father relocated to the Middle East to earn money, as did many other Korean men during the 1980s. Despite this devastating revelation, Tae-joo is also given an opportunity to rekindle a sense of kinship and camaraderie with his father. From a third-person perspective, he witnesses affectionate moments between his father and the younger Tae-joo, which corresponds with fragments of his own first-person memories. The adult Tae-joo also forms a friendly rapport with his father as a peer. Sometimes the two relationships intertwine, as in a comical sequence that shows the adult Tae-joo and his father together at a public bathhouse. This scene, which might seem odd to non-Koreans,

is designated to pull at the nostalgic heartstrings of Korean viewers who may have similar childhood experiences of going to a bathhouse with their parents. Forming or strengthening social bonds at a communal bathhouse is, in fact, a cliché in Korean popular culture, given the intimate nature of seeing other people exposed and vulnerable as they bathe.

Other paternal characters also stand in for Tae-joo's absent father. His superior officer, Dong-chul, represents a patriarchal figure that wields authority over his officers but takes care of them in his own way. Despite his gruff exterior, Dong-chul is fiercely loyal and dedicated to his job and the members of his police squad. Dong-chul's character also infuses humor into serious situations. A comical sequence reveals that he lacks authority in his own household, which belies his charismatic, tough-guy persona at the workplace. He eventually wins over the cool and reserved Tae-joo, who comes to regard him as a paternal figure. Dong-chul even infiltrates Tae-joo's domestic space, initially as an unwelcome guest. Tae-joo's gradual acceptance of Dong-chul in his home is an external gesture that reveals his internal tolerance for Dong-chul's values and *modus operandi* that conflict with his own in the workplace.

Another notable paternal character is the well-known actor Choi Bul-am, who represents the prototypical father figure for many Koreans who enjoyed watching the popular TV series *Susa Banjang* (*Chief Detective*, 1971–1989) and *Chŏnwŏnilgi* (*Pastoral Diary*, 1980–2002). Dressed as his iconic character in the crime show *Chief Detective*, Choi appears to break the fourth wall of the TV screen to address Tae-joo. Although it is not mentioned directly, Choi could have played a substitute father role for the protagonist because it is likely that Tae-joo, as the only child of a single working mother, spent much time watching television alone. Choi Bul-am is the Korean counterpart to the "test card girl," who appears in the BBC version as an uncanny intrusion into Sam's living space and mental space. Choi's appearance is similarly disconcerting to Tae-joo, but his character is much less menacing and eerie. Rather, Choi's familiar presence is comforting and welcome because this fictional character takes on the role of a mentor and gives advice and admonition to the protagonist when necessary.

As in the case of the British source material, the Korean show's self-reflexive use of popular culture and media emphasises the mediated connection between past and present, memory and imagination. Here, the term "media" is used in both broad and narrow meanings of the term. In addition to broadcast media (i.e. radio and television), the physical form of an individual and the cognitive map residing in one's body can also be regarded as modes of mediation, particularly for embodied memories and nostalgic imaginings of the past.

Intersection of nostalgia and fantasy

In *Life on Mars*, Tae-joo's absent father and his mysterious death result in psychological trauma that is exposed and addressed during his journey to the past. Tae-joo recovers memories that he buried in his subconscious as a disavowal of his father's criminal activities. Can we extrapolate this to a social register? That is,

does this show provide an opportunity to scrutinise how Korean society has buried disturbing, traumatic memories of the past under the veneer of nostalgia while placing emphasis on economic development and democratic progress to justify the necessity for violence? If we proceed to rectify past sins and crimes by reevaluating figures of patriarchal authority from previous generations (i.e. fathers, dictators), is this journey to the past a necessary act of reckoning or a regressive way to avoid working through national trauma? To answer these questions, we can contemplate ways that nostalgia can be mobilised to understand and relive the past.

Svetlana Boym notes that the sentiment of nostalgia is prevalent in the popular culture of the late twentieth century. Boym writes:

> In counterpoint to our fascination with cyberspace and the virtual global village, there is a no less global epidemic of nostalgia, an affective yearning for a community with a collective memory, a longing for continuity in a fragmented world. Nostalgia inevitably reappears as a defense mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheavals.
>
> (Boym 2001, xiv)

This yearning for another time is still palpable in the twenty-first century, as demonstrated in the many iterations of *Life on Mars* and other media products that similarly evoke this longing for an imagined collective past and for "continuity in a fragmented world." Boym's description of nostalgia as a "rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress" is an apt depiction of the protagonist's journey in *Life on Mars* (Boym 2001, xv). On a personal level, the protagonist's sense of emptiness seems to stem from the sudden disappearance of his father during his formative years. Meanwhile, on a collective level, the sense of discontent and uncertainty pervasive in contemporary Korean society seems to stem from unresolved historical trauma and "the unrealized dreams of the past and visions of the future that became obsolete" (Boym 2001, xvi).

Boym describes two kinds of nostalgia: restorative and reflective. She explains the differences between them as follows:

> Restorative nostalgia stresses *nostos* and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home. Reflective nostalgia thrives in *algia*, the longing itself, and delays the homecoming – wistfully, ironically, desperately. Restorative nostalgia does not think of itself as nostalgia, but rather as truth and tradition. Reflective nostalgia dwells on the ambivalences of human longing and belonging and does not shy away from the contradictions of modernity. . . . Reflective nostalgia does not follow a single plot but explores ways of inhabiting many places at once and imagining different time zones.
>
> (Boym 2001, xviii)

Neither category wholly describes the nostalgia deployed in *Life on Mars*. I contend that the show oscillates between the two but that it settles closer to restorative nostalgia. Tae-joo's trip to the past is a homecoming of sorts – initially unwanted

but increasingly therapeutic. His coma-induced "awakening" forces him to confront his avoidance of past trauma. Ultimately, Tae-joo realises that his personal past cannot be recovered and that his broken childhood family cannot be mended. He accepts the imperfect nature of recovering the past. Although he cannot reconstruct "the lost home" described by Boym, Tae-joo ultimately chooses to dwell in the imaginary past. This denouement signifies his death, but it paradoxically indicates the recovery of hope, or the recovery of a past moment when hope for a better future – on both personal and collective registers – was deemed to be an attainable goal. In a word, it fulfills a fantasy of starting over, that is, of rebooting the mistakes and social problems that materialised in the process of modernising a nation.

This fantasy of returning to an unblemished past is also depicted – and discarded – in another acclaimed Korean film, *Bakha Sat'ang* (*Peppermint Candy*, Lee Chang-dong, 1999). In this case, the protagonist, a desperate, embittered middle-aged man called Kim Yong-ho (Sol Kyung-gu), does not directly travel to the past. Instead, the flashback structure of the film transports the spectator to the past. In an early sequence, Yong-ho stands in front of an incoming train and shouts, "I want to go back!" before he is presumably struck and killed. Shown in reverse chronology, each subsequent scene gradually moves backward in time and shows the protagonist in crucial moments of his life that coincides with momentous periods of social upheaval in South Korea. The film concludes with Yong-ho as a young man who is on the verge of falling in love and blissfully free from the haunting memories of violence that will be inflicted on him (and by him) in the coming years. The film's ending is superficially analogous to that of *Life on Mars*. Both conclude with the protagonist smiling and gazing into a sunlit future. Although Tae-joo's smile is full of hope, Young-ho's eyes fill with tears, as if he somehow anticipates what the audience already knows – the historical events that will transform him into a violent, ruthless man as he stumbles through the tumultuous process of democratisation and modernisation.

The nostalgia mobilised in *Life on Mars* indicates a yearning for a time when the end of military dictatorship signaled the emergence of a less oppressive, more democratic society – a time when Korean society was fueled by aspirations to proceed toward economic growth and social equity. Despite significant changes in Korean society, these hopes for the future have not actualised in our present as anticipated. Accordingly, the show's grim depiction of the present alludes to the widespread sense of crisis and disillusionment in contemporary South Korea. Despite the economic and cultural achievements of the nation since the year 1988, optimistic projections for a brighter future are no longer deemed tangible in the year 2018, which is implied in the ambivalent ending of *Life on Mars*.

Conclusion

The Korean version follows the conclusion of the BBC source material. Tae-joo wakes up from his coma in the present. He reconnects with his mother and catches the serial killer with his ex-girlfriend, who happens to be the public prosecutor on the case. Despite these resolutions, Tae-joo feels empty and unsatisfied, and he is

shocked to discover that his colleagues in 1988 were killed the night he returned to the present because of his absence. Unable to adjust to his old life, Tae-joo jumps off a building to return to 1988. Tae-joo manages to arrive just in time to save his colleagues from being beaten to death. The show concludes with Tae-joo looking content as he rushes to solve another case with his team. Tae-joo hears the faint attempts of his doctor trying to revive him in the present on the car radio, but he turns it off, saying, "I don't want to hear it." Dong-chul turns the radio back on but to a different station that is playing Cho Yong-pil's "Unknown World," a popular song released in 1985.[9] Tae-joo's assimilation into this fantasy past is complete when he finally sings along with his colleagues. This concluding scene is a subtle reference to the central role of music in inducing the nostalgia of an irretrievable past. This savvy use of music is more overt in the BBC version, as evidenced in the show's title, which is named after a song by the English musician David Bowie.[10]

Despite this deployment of nostalgia, the past is not simply filtered through rose- or sepia-tinted glasses in either show. Discussing *Life on Mars*, John R. Cook and Mary Irwin observe how the BBC version oscillates between depicting the 1970s as "a 'golden' time of freedom" and as "a time of restrictive unsophistication" (Cook and Irwin 2012, 85). This oscillation of seemingly contradictory representations of the past is likewise evident in the Korean version. Even so, the imagined past is ultimately chosen by the protagonist as preferable to his present, despite his amicable relationships with his mother and ex-girlfriend. In the Korean remake, Tae-joo's return to the past is initially regarded as a return to the site of trauma. After he processes the revelation about his father's mysterious past, Tae-joo seems to work through his childhood trauma. He ultimately selects the nostalgic fantasy version of the past since it is implied that the protagonist does not actually go back in time but instead returns to an imaginary past constructed by his coma-induced fantasies and based on the mediated experience of history lodged in his subconscious. Although Tae-joo presumably dies (or relapses into a coma) in his present reality, the ending is depicted as a happy conclusion because he has returned to a fantasy world based on collective nostalgia and one that fulfills his longing for community and kinship. Here, the sense of kinship is shared with his work colleagues instead of his family – his father, who abandoned him in the past, and his mother, whom he abandons in the present.

The aforementioned films, *Peppermint Candy* and *Memories of Murder*, also participate in this recurring, pervasive desire in Korean culture to *imagine* a return to the past – to navigate personal and national crises with the benefit of hindsight and to take the time to relive our collective trauma so we can contemplate on what went wrong. Unlike the protagonists in these films, Tae-joo finds a way to return to the past, whether by death or delusion. In conjunction with this temporal mobility depicted in the text, *Life on Mars* exhibits geographical mobility on the contextual level. As a successful product of localising strategies in the global media ecology, this show demonstrates how the local and the global can converge to produce plastic and translatable forms of transcultural content. Despite the show's seemingly gloomy stance on contemporary Korean society, the possibility of a different future is conveyed in the hopeful gaze of Tae-joo. Here, this anticipated future might not

hold the promise of a more democratic and equitable society, but it projects the potential of an increasingly interconnected global mediascape.

Notes

1 See Mills, Brett. 2012. "American Remake – Shudder: Online Debates About *Life on Mars* and British-Ness." In *Life on Mars: From Manchester to New York*, edited by Stephen Lacey and Ruth McElroy. University of Wales Press.
2 I hereafter refer to the Korean version as *Life on Mars* (instead of the Korean-language title) and the source material as BBC's *Life on Mars*.
3 *Doctor Foster* and *Luther* both proved to be highly translatable. In addition to South Korea, the former was remade in France, Russia, India, Turkey, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines. The latter was remade in Russia, India, France, and South Korea.
4 The show's popularity extended to its sequel, *Ashes to Ashes*, which aired on BBC One from February 2008 to May 2010.
5 Remnants of military rule, however, lingered under the presidency of former General Roh Tae-woo. Many Koreans consider the election of the first civilian president Kim Young-sam as the proper end of military rule.
6 The Korean film *Kukkabudoŭi nal* (*Default*, Kook-Hee Choi, 2018) dramatises this moment of national financial crisis, including the government's negotiations with the IMF.
7 These atrocities were also published in international news outlets. See the following BBC article: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia−52797527.
8 Chun was released after serving approximately three years.
9 With a career that spans five decades, Cho Yong-pil is hailed as one of the most influential and important figures in South Korean pop music.
10 The title of the Spanish remake, "La Chica de Ayer," refers to a song by Spanish group Nacha Pop. Also, the title of the Russian series, *The Dark Side of the Moon*, is a reference to the Pink Floyd album of the same name.

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