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South Korean Television Dramas

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
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Abstract

South Korean Television Dramas

By

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This dissertation analyzes Korean soap operas/television dramas as social and cultural texts that transmit the oral logic and emotional underpinnings of the Korean patriarchal family and social structure in a period of rapid social change.

The dissertation reviews the history of Korean serial television dramas and studies three genres with an analysis of one or two examples of each genre: historical dramas (*The King and I*), professional dramas (*Air City* and *Golden Time*) and home dramas (*Dear Parents*).

The dissertation focuses on continuities and some changes in the ways the patriarchal basis of the traditional Korean family, the traditional and newly-emerging roles of woman, and the larger challenges of a modernizing society are portrayed in Korean television drama. Class divisions, personal virtues, romance and familial loyalties provide the background against which male characters are established as patriarchs. Korean soap operas portray the women's ability to shape patriarchy through feminine affability

and strong emotional bonds among the women in the family.

Virtuous women are portrayed as being powerful but caring. Their polite and yielding natures give them the victory in the end as they guide their family through the multiple dimensions of family life and relationships. In contrast, villainesses and rogue matriarchs, such as domineering mothers-in-law, usually end with ruined lives or having to give up their power. In the historical drama, *The King and I*, powerful matriarchs such as the queen dowager and the great woman seer must yield their power to their sons who become the new patriarchs in the royal household. At times, the villainesses seem to be the more rational characters as the virtuous women bear all the burdens and sacrifice themselves for others. However, their virtues make them powerful and everything is under their control in Korean soap operas.

The dissertation analyses the strength of the female emotional bond in Korean dramas. The bond is created through women-only gatherings in the house. Through constant dialogue throughout the day and special times in the evening when they gather to talk, sing and cry with catharsis and happiness, they maintain their emotional bonds of friendship and concern for each other. On the other hand, male characters, whether they be quiet and reserved fathers, war heroes, members of the royal dynasty or kings, have no such bonds except in military situations where they must depend on each other. As soap operas have focused on virtuous women for nearly forty years, the female bond is well developed but the male bond is still in its incubation.

Relatively new soap operas, short serialized professional dramas, present female and male characters that reject the patriarchal culture. Their workaholic lives leave no time for love or

personal relationships or for the patriarchal social structure. However, the professional dramas with their aloof rejection of the dominating culture gain a smaller ratio of viewers than dramas that support the patriarchal family. The research reveals that the serial form of long-running television soap operas encourages viewers to find their social role and function in supporting the patriarchal social system through identification with the characters portrayed. Thus Koreans' conflicts about how patriarchal values can be adapted to modernity are worked out through the dramas that captivate Korean and international audiences.

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Introduction

When my advisor suggested that South Korean Television Drama would be a good subject for my dissertation, I was embarrassed. I asked myself: does he know what I am doing in my dormitory? To ease my homesickness I watched many hours of Korean television dramas during my Ph. D. days. A guilty pleasure! Why, as an international student, was I wasting precious time watching soap operas from my home country when I could have been improving my English and meeting American peers? The soap operas healed my homesickness as they connected me to the Korean society to which I belong. I decided to delve into South Korean society as the subject of my dissertation. Soap operas matched my intention well.

As I watched Korean soap operas, what shocked me was that they are almost entirely centered on the family. Family was the keyword to understand Korean society. Nationalistic and historical stories, workplace stories, and home stories started from and ended at the family level. In the early years of Korean dramas, the concept of family included town and urban neighborhood communities but the concept changed over the years to include only the nuclear family and its in-laws. I found few exceptions to this trend. To be more specific, family, that is, the patriarchal family, and women's role in upholding patriarchy are the main themes of my dissertation.

Despite this continuity in the underlying concern with women's roles in sustaining patriarchy, I find complex contradictions and changes in Korean soap opera. There are powerful women who control men and children to uphold their patriarchal roles and to live their daily lives at their best, as well as women who are powerful villainesses and, in the recent professional dramas, women who reject love and patriarchal culture for their commitment to careers or to the good of their communities. Thus Koreans' complex conflicts about how a patriarchal society can adapt to modernity are worked out through the dramas that captivate Korean and also, lately, international audiences.

The first chapter describes the history of Korean television dramas from the time of Japanese colonial rule from 1910 to 1945, through the

United States occupation after World War II, to the present time.

Chapter Two looks at Korean historical dramas featuring the royal families of the Joseon Dynasty and military heroes. The typical plots in dynasty dramas included power struggles, battles for enthronement, and romance. The drama, *The King and I*, about the royal family and the eunuchs who serve within the palace is analyzed in depth.

Chapter Three examines Korean professional dramas which center on the workplace rather than the family. The characters in professional dramas are individuals who devote themselves to their work rather than to their family. In this chapter, I discuss three series: *City Hall*, a story about a man and woman with political ambitions; *Air City*, a story about the professionals who maintain operations and national security in a large airport; and *Golden Time*, a story about medical doctors and nurses in the Emergency Room of a hospital.

Chapter Four explores home dramas and the dynamics of family members as they maintain and restore patriarchal family structures and values in their daily lives. The drama, *Dear Parents*, gives a clear view into the inner workings of a family as it follows the relationships among parents, their children and spouses, relatives and in-laws.

Many of the dramas and series presented in this dissertation can be found with English subtitles on YouTube.com and other websites that feature international television programs. Watching them with special attention to changes in women's role may be of interest to you.

1. History of South Korean Television Dramas

The Serial Format

Radio dramas in Korea were broadcast starting from October 1928 while Korea was under Japanese rule. The content, subject, and ideas for television dramas are related to the early radio dramas. Film, *Manhwa* cartoon strips, novels and radio's inventory of play scripts were the initial general resources for Korean television soap operas beginning in 1952.¹ Different types of media shared content despite the different modes of expression, and the original Korean television dramas were also added to the inventory of stories as time went on. As Korea's national inventory of stories from the 1910s has usually made female characters the most active proselytizers for patriarchy, female characters' emotions and actions have continued to take up most of the running time.

Television dramas are different from other media because of the synergy of three characteristics: serial format, voice, and face. When radio serials were given the name 'soap operas' in the 1920s, the term insinuated that serialized dramas encouraged housewives to kill time, and to be easily influenced by advertisements aired between the serials for products like soap and laundry detergents. The name, soap operas, despite its earlier devaluation, now signifies the most important characteristic of television dramas, the serial form. The serial format loosens the ties with other storytelling media, and the form designates television dramas as the place for the viewers' ritualized practice of watching each episode. Television soap operas with their visual presentation are more effective than radio dramas in carrying emotional identification² for the viewers. It is also said to have been easier for actors to emotionally identify with the

¹ Television transmission during the Korean War and the late-50s should be controversial whether it is included in the history of 'Korean' television dramas or in some foreign plan. See footnote 6.

² To sum up the explanation on emotional identification of television dramas, pleasure-based media exists for individual emotional identification. A person usually becomes emotional about television dramas. Emotions awaken one's senses as well as construct one's consciousness and intelligence—to train to know virtue. Releasing and emancipating viewers themselves in body, thought, and mind is expected in repetitive watching.

characters in televised serials than in voice-acted radio dramas.³ Film's revolutionary plots and experiments in expressing the human psyche are not conducive to repeated watching but rather to marked impact. Whereas *Manhwa* and novels are not passive entertainment, since it is necessary for the readers to engage in holding the book and active page-turning, soap operas unfold on the screen automatically when the television is on as the viewer does house chores and other work which require attention and but also allow for distraction. Television is the extraordinary medium that satisfies face, voice, and length of time.⁴ The length of the number of episodes maximizes the synergy among all three. So the serial form is the most important of all. Face, voice, and length, the three sources of media attraction - with no need to be aesthetically meaningful - are in fully developed form only in soap operas.

Verifying the precise influences from different media and literature on television and soap operas is very difficult. No medium manifests all three aspects except for television dramas: radio dramas lack visual imagery, films lack length, and *Manhwa* cartoons and novels lack face and voice. Moreover, television dramas, the late comer in the entertainment industry, achieved peak level quickly through indiscriminate copying. Korean television produced copies of American and Japanese soap operas. It also copied many ingredients from other media. The copies might have been a soap opera's framework, an internationally popular character, a scene, storyline, or ambiance. What would have been the impact in television dramas when the actress Pok Hyesuk, whose debut was in 1926 and whose original contribution was in film, worked in radio drama, film, and then in television drama in 1965 Korea? The actress and her colleagues experienced American cinema from the 1910s and they saw the American soap operas of the 1950s. Radio dramas and film developed under Japanese rule and the American Occupation, and soared high in quality and in quantity at that time. Pok Hyesuk also took part in Korean and European theatrical plays even though theater was not comparable in popularity, and the plays delayed the development of the serial form. Television recorded and aired stage plays like Marionette shows and Henry

³ May 26, 1981. Pok Hyesuk. "A Memoir," *Donga Ilbo*

⁴ For examples and references relating other media to television dramas, see the first pages of *Historical Dramas*, *Professional Dramas*, and *Home Dramas*.

Ibsen's *A Doll's House* prior to the stabilization of television serials. Manhwa cartoons and novels provided storylines that could be extended over many episodes, and this helped the actress and her colleagues better understand the soap operas they starred in. It would be easy to grasp all or some of these from the character Pok portrayed in a soap opera of 1965.

The serial form was fully developed with the long-run series dramas. During the two decades from the time the radio serial form was imported by a radio station in Seoul (starting with the 1946-48 American Occupation until 1966 and 1968⁵), the number of radio dramas increased to more than 150 and the best stories were sold to film and television organizations. Television dramas expanded radio dramas' 20-30 minute serial format into a fixed one-hour format. Later radio also followed with one-hour dramas in the late 1960s to compete with television dramas. Television dramas in the '50s-'60s were serialized in 5 to 30 episodes in weekend serials, but there were also many television dramas of less than five episodes which ended in a month. The serial form and deviations from radio dramas were also influenced by foreign television dramas.

From 1962 -Present: Stabilizing the Form

The early period of Korean television drama is critical for understanding the serial form because of the elements that expedited its rapid stabilization. Early Korean television dramas in the 1950s⁶ began with foreign influence such as production inspiration from the United States and theatrical narratives and content from Japan. They were also influenced by

⁵ Ch'oe Ch'ang-bong, Kang Hyŏn-du. 2001. 163

⁶ Korean television drama as a division with its serial form began in the mid-60s. Prior to the nationwide transmission of television dramas, a 20-minute soap by HLKZ-TV (1956-59), license held by the Korean television maker RCA, was aired on the sub channel of AFKN, the television channel for the American military population. It was at the time when television was an object for exhibition in a grand hotel in Seoul, the capital city. Radio was the ruling medium in the 1960s. By 1960, the government implemented radio distribution town by town. On the other hand, television stations had unstable transmission with many complaints. RCA's, AFKN's, and HLKZ-TV's soap operas might be called the first in the history of Korean television drama. But not until *Episodes from Real Stories* and *Episodes of Ilyo-Yuho*, and the establishment of TBC and MBC, did the public have access to soap opera screening to the extent where a viewer group was formed.

regulative intervention from the national government. More imported American TV shows were broadcast than original Korean dramas until the imports were banned by the government and the Korean television dramas gained audiences' trust. Korean television dramas followed Japanese tear-jerking *Shinpa* (drama) narrative along with dedication to the 'catharsis inside the family' theme of radio dramas. The government directed that television dramas promote virtue and serve the national interest; this is evidenced by the national intelligence agency's staff writing the script for a television drama.

Spectators were also literally prepared in their watching and listening abilities because the Korean audience had been showered with artistic productions in the Golden Age of film (1956-65) and radio drama (1966-68). The audience's well-known enthusiasm for new media also stabilized television, and this enthusiasm established the television drama industry quickly.

Broadcast in 1963 on KBS, *Kukt'omali*, a Korean Romeo and Juliet story, was the first television historical drama. The number of viewers of this original soap opera can only be guessed at since this was a time when television sets were rare and the people in towns gathered in front of a shared television to watch together. What is clear is that the early viewers of the first television historical drama were used to its discourse and plot. Korean audiences read historical novels and they listened to radio historical dramas and watched historical dramas in street theaters from the 1900s. Those novels, radio dramas, and theater plays are part of the national inventory of stories.

The first three broadcasting companies were the public Korea Broadcasting System (KBS), the privately operated Tongyang Broadcasting Corporation (TBC) which opened in 1964, and the Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), which opened in 1969.

Two programs, *ER* (Episodes from Real Stories, 1964-1985) and *EIY* (Episodes of Ilyo-Yuho, 1965-1970) were the first to use the serial form as distinguished from the independent episodes of *Sunday Serial* and *Friday Theater* of KBS, the station run by the government which broadcast

television dramas from 1962. *ER* was written by Kim Tong-Hyon, a Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA) official, and it included real KCIA stories of spy-catchers and soldiers. *EIY*, written by Yuho, the legendary writer of home comedies, introduced urban affairs and family life of the time into his stories.

Fast stabilization brought success in the realm of television which diminished the influence of movies and radio drama, but it did not mean that all content was welcomed by the viewers in the early period of its development. Competition among broadcast companies for viewers meant that they competed with similar drama stories and depended on a few star playwrights. Broadcasting stations televised their popular and profitable serials for long runs, such as a decade or two, and they often, even annually, remade some beloved serials.

1970s-1980

The fundamental development of serial television drama started from 1970. Daily serials and weekend serials moved into prime time, and a few of them were bundled into approximately 200 to 400 episodes each.

In the 1970s, television dramas were copied from radio dramas. According to *100 Years of Korean Broadcasting*,⁷ television recruited its staff members from radio and film organizations. In fact, actors and staff members worked in the studios inclusively for radio, television, and film. Radio and film supplied human resources as well as an inventory of stories.

The three television stations, KBS, MBC, and TBC, participated in the flourishing era of television dramas. Given the number of television dramas and the number of episodes, the 1970s was the unsurpassed decade in the history of television dramas. Two long-running soaps *Susa Panjang* (Chief Police Investigator, 1971-89) about crime in the streets of Seoul and *Chŏnwŏn Ilgi* (Country Diary, 1980-2002) about modernization and

⁷ Ch'oe Ch'ang-bong, Kang Hyŏn-du, *Uri pangsong 100-yŏn [Korean Broadcasting 100 Years]* Seoul: Hyŏnamsa, 2001

urbanization of a farm family and their neighbors adorned the start and the end of the decade.

Television dramas of the 1970s were much longer than the 1960s serials of 1-30 episodes, and the serial format carried the nation into an emotional whirl as long serials and ritualized viewing practices encouraged viewers to emotionally identify themselves with the characters and action in a deeper way than the shorter mini-series did. The history of the Korean serial form shows that the serials rooted viewers in emotional identification with the characters and their stories. Across Korean society spectators were fascinated by *Assi* (A Married Lady, 1970-71, 253 episodes), about the life of a virtuous woman and her in-law family, and *Yŏro* (The Path of Life, 1972, 211 episodes) which shared an almost identical story with *Assi* and other home dramas including *Daughter* (1970-71, 300+ episodes) and *Stepmom* (1972, 411 episodes). The television critics were horrified by the overemphasis on emotion in those television dramas, but audiences loved them.

Unlike the original soap operas that were considered material for housewives' time-killing, the emotional function in interpersonal relations in *Assi* and *Yŏro* attracted the interest of spectators nationwide as viewers sought to understand their roles in society and the "proper" function of patriarchy. Both stories showed inept patriarchs who were respected by extraordinarily virtuous wives. Thus, Korean television dramas were effective in conveying the ideology of patriarchy; they embraced and targeted women as well as men. From *ER* (Episodes from Real Stories, 1964-1985), a collection of military police and spycatcher stories, and *EIY* (Episodes of Ilyo-Yuho, 1965-1970), a collection of independent stories about ordinary people's romance and daily conflicts, to *Assi*, *Yŏro*, and *Susa Panjang*, television dramas before the 1990s contained little content inconsistent with dominant social and political ideologies.

Government Intervention

Imports of American television serials, called foreign dramas, were regulated from the time of the *Yushin* (October Constitutional Reform) of the late 1970s. Government regulations for television dramas were

enforced on three major occasions. The 1973 amendment of the broadcasting law pushed post-censorship instead of the previous pre-monitoring. In 1980, the Chun administration temporarily shut down TBC by force to reform its broadcasting for the administration's political goals. At the time of the shutdown of TBC, its competition with public KBS was at its peak. In 1991, the Department of Administration of the Blue House (Executive branch) summoned the owner of MBC to warn against broadcasting *Ddang* (The Earth, 1991) as the government found the new television drama's theme to be a dangerous description of social ills. This disciplinary action cooled down the privately owned MBC's and TBC's rivalry with the Korea Broadcasting System. The Korean government considered television drama to be an object of its discipline along with other political affairs. The booming soap operas and the broadcasting industry rarely deviated from being a well-controlled public tool for leisure under the censorship and discipline of government staff playwrights. So there was little need for the government to be alarmed about soap operas.

However, the government steadily made the point that television dramas aggravated the sense of economic deprivation in the working class by their excessive description of wealth inequality. Moreover, long hair and anti-American sentiment were censored as these also showed people's political anxiety, that is, subversive distrust toward the government. The government, especially in the 70s, had reason for its fear of anti-American sentiment in contemporary society. Long hair and anti-American sentiment were symbols of the American anti-war movement which was critical of the American government. The Korean government remained vigilant regarding the transfer of subversive thoughts from overseas.

1980s-1990

Not all of the television dramas in serial form succeeded in creating deep emotional identification. There were high-impact epic series and miniseries of no more than 16-20 episodes, but these shorter miniseries usually failed to engage viewers as deeply as the long-running serials with their continuous emotional identification and hundreds of episodes.

Soap operas in the 1980s, which inherited the serial form of the 70s

soap operas and content from the national inventory of stories from radio, film, and novels, were diversified but restrained because of the government's censorship. Historical dramas aligned militant heroes and battles for male viewers with moderate politicization. *Kaeguk* (The Rise of The Dynasty, 1983) rationalized the bloody coup of the founding father of the Chosŏn Dynasty, Yi, a general and a governor of the previous dynasty. At the time of its showing, President Chun Doo-hwan was also a general. Chun's coup was indirectly praised through the drama as necessary for the establishment of the new regime.

Pangong (anti-communism) was a never-ending source for television dramas in the 1980s. Politics and its conservative drama code continued to foster politically necessary bigotry against North Korea and lower social classes. Along with politics, economic development was intensely propagandized as Korea dedicated itself to moving up from the condition of a developing country.

Urban and family dramas met their highest moment during this period, but soap operas about tragedy and adultery were restricted. The content mostly illustrated a family's humble life in an urban area and interactions with neighbors. Emotions expressed in romance and family, particularly in melodramas, were compatible with public campaigns for stabilizing society. The longer serials created trustworthy figures that gave spectators models for finding their social role and function through empathy with the characters. Home dramas of the time emphasized social relationships by including a family's neighbors and neighborhood in the stories whereas current home dramas center more narrowly on the main family. A program featuring a family living in the back streets of Seoul was popular. Serials with an urban landscape—or an urbanized rural area as in *Chonwon Ilgi*—were telecast for a long time up until the 2000s. Television dramas like *Susa Panjang* (1971-1989), *Ordinary People* (1982-84, 491 episodes), and *One Rooftop, Three Families* (1986-94) fashioned the social order in Korean society and familial order in multi-faceted families.

1990s-2000

Government intervention ended *Ddang* (The Earth, 1991) by cutting

15 episodes of the 50 episodes in its original plan. Camera obscura in *Ddang* followed three men who met in the same place at the same time: one rich, one middle class, and one poor. The soap opera boldly narrated contemporary political events and the overheated housing market bubble. The government found it problematic because the soap opera juxtaposed scenes of a conglomerate family's party with a peasant's saying, "We don't belong here," claiming that the juxtaposition illustrated the gap between the rich and the poor.⁸ The government feared that the description of the wealth gap would increase political and social anxieties.

The years after democratization in politics were met with an increase in the number of miniseries, soaps and long serials on contemporary history and politics along with new imperatives. After the opening of the Seoul Broadcasting System (SBS) in 1991 and the development of cable television networks, soap operas became the product of the late capitalist wave. The market for miniseries in the 1990s grew so rapidly it put *Yonsokguk* (long-run serials) in peril. Miniseries took prime time slots and starred popular television actors. They featured a hero's mental growth and awareness as a patriarch through romance. The miniseries provided the spectators with an opportunity for deep psychological identification with the hero and heroine. Home dramas from the 90s moved away from societal diagnosis but not from internal family concerns.

In the 1990s-2000s, miniseries in Korea outnumbered long serials and took prime time. However, their rising number did not mean they attracted a higher ratio of viewers than historical dramas and home dramas. Miniseries and the epics in serial form failed to gain large audiences because they could not build the story of patriarchy as long serial soap operas did. The stories of historical dramas and home dramas were stronger than short miniseries because the longer serials had simply more time to develop the plot. For example, in *Air City* (2007), a professional drama about relationships among an airport crew, the characters did not relate in terms of patriarchal values. They were liberated from hierarchy in that the characters did not subordinate themselves to the social system and did not indulge in the usual soap-operas' emotional whirl. Spectators could see a different type of interpersonal relations rather than the female

⁸ *Pangsongsa Saryojip* [Broadcasting History Source Book] Seoul:Pangsong wiwônhoe, 2001. 440

emotional bond within the family or affectionate romantic relationships that we will see in later chapters. This shift in the serial form—that is, the serial form not being used as the long-term opportunity to find one’s “proper” role designated by the society and its ideology--brought some changes to the issue of patriarchal dependency. Even so, most miniseries’ plots suggested the same structure of inept patriarchs and able women, of monogamous patriarchy and one man-one woman romance as long serials did. While repeated emotional identification in long soap operas trains and educates the viewers in patriarchy, the lack of repetitious emotional change in short soap operas does provide the viewers with a catharsis through an explosive climax.

2000s-Present

Pang Hakgi’s *Manhwa* comic strips of the 70s, *Tamo Namsun*, was remade into the historical drama *Damo* (The Lady Inspector, 2003) in which the lady inspector and her senior officers fall in love in the middle of murder cases. Ch’oe Inho’s novel *Sangdo* about a Korean ginseng trade owner’s spirit to overcome the barriers to success in a tough trade market was serialized in *Sangdo* (Morals in Trading Business, 2001-02).⁹ National security agents introduced in *ER* (Episodes from Real Stories, 1964-85) reappear and take a major role in recent television dramas like *Air City* (2007) in which an airport crew’s romance and work are juxtaposed. The novels of the 1940s-50s still provide features in the storylines of present favorite historical dramas. Current home dramas do not deviate in structure from the family dramas in motion pictures and radio dramas of the 60s.

Television dramas after the 2000s mostly consist of *Yonsokguk* (long-run soaps) and miniseries. Home dramas and historical dramas still run during prime time and the favorite plots are repeated; stories of marriage and royal enthronement provide characters in which spectators experience patriarchal rule. Home dramas link the subjects with social change and multiply familial issues instead of expanding themes outside of the family. Historical costume dramas venture into a fantasized technologically

⁹ For *Damo* and *Sangdo*, see the chapters on *Historical Dramas* and *Professional Dramas*. The following chapters suggest ideas on the soap operas in italic titles.

modernized past. Some miniseries soaps of 14-20 hours manifest more experimental and informative content. They reject giving spectators the deep psychological identification and repeated practice that long serials deliver to viewers. The miniseries soaps have more liberating possibilities in the sense that they do not presume patriarchy as a setting. Not all of the miniseries soap operas are experimental. Romance soaps portray the hero's growth at the service of patriarchy. While female characters' emotions and actions take up most of the running time, many soap operas develop the male bond, so there are male heroes who do not rely only on female characters' participation in order to be patriarchs. Powerful matriarchs and inept heroes were a popular theme of home dramas, and recent historical dramas attempt to escape the simple plot of royal enthronement struggles by casting females as heroes, not the protectors of patriarchy.

Government censorship and intervention in television dramas, which was widespread from the 1970s to the early 1990s, turned into encouragement and active support in the late '90s. The government became aware of the economic and cultural value of soap opera exports, and it chose soap operas as an industry to receive government support in the 21st century. The history of television soap operas, especially the long-series format, created a new cultural form through which deep issues of Korean society could be reexamined as the country rapidly transformed into a modern economic power.

2. HISTORICAL DRAMAS

Historical dramas, that is, historical costume dramas, describe the events of dynasties and commoners' lives through a mix of historical facts and imagination.

Broadcast in 1963 on KBS, *Kukt'omali*, a Korean Romeo and Juliet story in the court of a small Korean kingdom, was the first television historical drama. The number of original viewers of this soap opera can only be guessed at because at that time people in towns and villages gathered in front of a communal television to watch the programs. What is clear is that the original viewers of the first television historical drama were familiar with its discourse and plot. From the 1900s Korean audiences read historical novels, listened to radio historical dramas and watched historical dramas in street theaters. These novels, radio dramas, and theater plays are part of the national inventory of stories.

Historical dramas, professional or workplace dramas, and home or domestic dramas are different genres in Korean television drama. This is quite clear because each has its own format and characteristics that make the boundaries firm. While that is true, there is also a certain blurring in the boundaries of television drama genres. Home dramas and professional dramas are mentioned in this chapter about historical dramas because historical dramas are partially about the royal family and are also about groups of professionals in royal households. Therefore, to specify both the differences and similarities of the royal family to the families shown in home dramas, and between the palace staff and modern professionals, I have to introduce home dramas and professional dramas prior to their chapters. The reason I put historical dramas first among the three genres is because historical dramas were the first television dramas, as well as the first modern novels, street theaters, and radio dramas.

Historical costume dramas are not different from professional dramas and home dramas in emotionally involving spectators with the characters and encouraging psychological identification in the mind of the viewers.

Modern emotions are engaged in the intensity of combat or battles for enthronement in the royal family and in the mythic commoners' romance. As in home dramas, linking support for patriarchy with expressive female characters does not disregard the male viewers' emotional connection. Virtue immortalizes the patriarchs who are established by both royal families and hometown romance. Historical dramas add strong gender traits for male viewers, for example, male bonding among warrior heroes in a military garrison. Such themes rarely appear in other television drama genres. The male bond excludes females, and its heroes build a patriarchal society which is not open to women. The army epitomizes patriarchy in the world of men. As male characters are not portrayed to ensure the viewers' emotional connection, or deep psychological identification, the usual male bond in historical dramas does not reach the same state as the continuous and strong emotional female bond presented in other genres. In the extreme circumstance of battles, soap operas endow male characters with emotions, so the male bond in a few historical dramas involving a military calamity show emotional connections that are somewhat similar to the female bonds in home dramas. To give an example, in the historical drama, *The King and I*, the eunuchs in the "Department of Eunuchs" display nostalgic sadness over their lost body part which gives them mythical and saintly glamour when displaying their skills with swords and worldly palace administration.

Historical dramas, *Sagŭk*, are soap operas about Korea's historical past. Directors revive the dynasties' dramatic moments on the screen. Unlike other categories of television dramas, historical dramas are only faintly affected by the global format developed in American and English broadcasting. Historical dramas in Korea manifest unique national points in frame and content. In *Hometown from Folklore* (1977-1989), the legend of horror borrowed the Japanese concepts of specters and phantoms. Even though borrowed, these concepts built the nation's uncanny¹⁰ past as well.

¹⁰ Uncanny or the Uncanny means intense emotions towards an unknown object. The mystic surroundings of the past in costume dramas mix images with viewers' intense emotions regarding their national past. Horror and legends starring monsters and ghosts provoke the Uncanny; the image itself is unambiguous. Historical dramas mainly describe the familial in the structure of the nation and national past. For example, the narrative relies on the family life of a certain past dynasty in detail. Familial emotions mold the pretended and non-historical past into the viewers' mind quite specifically; which one would be more precarious, the specific or the Uncanny? Both would arouse intense emotions. Both are hoaxes, but the matter is concerned with individual construction of the observer's mind - one would deflect her own mechanics on the uncanny objects - and with collective construction of the mind - details roll as déjà vu or prophecy in people's psyche. So the perception of an image with the past is something worn out by previous experience with the historical past at the moment a viewer sees historical

Ethnicity and mystique, the special characteristics of Korean *Sagŭk* distinguish historical dramas from Korean *Sagŭk* films that relied on alternative history and experimental fiction. Televised historical dramas featured ethnicity whereas historical dramas in film presented experiments based on transnational copying and borrowing. Korean *Sagŭk* uses detailed historical evidence with reference to the dynasty's annals and other kinds of official and unofficial historical records. This orientation dominated historical dramas until the 2000s when TV stations labored to produce a fictional alternative history following the global format of historical dramas.

Historical costume dramas reiterate the national inventory of stories. Repeated plots and characters in *Sagŭk* revive the issues of historical novels and legendary heroes' biographies from the 1900s-40s. Prominent writers chose scenes from the historical past of 5000 years ago at the time Koreans met modernity. Most of the plots in the national inventory of stories were broadcast several times in film and on television.

The first type of popular historical drama focused on the heroic deeds of important warriors from Korea's past. Sin Ch'aeho's biographical novels *Ŭljimundŏk* (1908), *Ch'oe Yong* (1908), *Yisunshin chŏn* (1908), *Ch'oedot'ong chŏn* (1909), and Park Ŭnsik's *Yŏngaesomun* (1911) praised the generals who defeated the enemies that invaded the country.¹¹ These generals, the leaders of the national army, with their brilliant military strategies, defeated the enemy's army. The writings about military heroes in history represented the authors' wishes to end the Japanese occupation in Korea. Later, General Yisunshin's story was televised with obvious nationalistic and anti-Japanese sentiment. The broadcast of *Immortal Yisunshin* (2004-05, 104 episodes), in which Yisunshin, the Korean general who defeated Japan's navy, became the guardian deity to protect the sea around the Korean peninsula, was very popular. Its success was unexpected as this historical drama about a battleship was far from stories of court enthronement and commoners' romance, the usual main themes in *Sagŭk*. Yisunshin as a television resource did not receive as much public

dramas. This accumulation that has worn one's consciousness will be explosive and manifested in crisis. Hidden emotions toward the typical Uncanny will find an outlet through an immediate choice of violence.

¹¹ For the narrated nation in literature, see Schmid, Andre. *Korea Between Empires, 1895-1919*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002

attention as the legendary general did in his real life and in people's hearts for centuries. The 2004 success was exceptional in the history of historical dramas.

Another kind of historical drama focused on royal dynasties. There are a few writers to keep in mind in tracing the origin of contemporary dynastic dramas. Kim Tongin's *Those Young* (1928), *Great Suyang* (1932), and *Spring of the Place Unhyŏn* (1933-34) are novels about the kings, queens and their royal relatives in the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910). Those characters became soap opera stars in *Sagŭk*, historical dramas. The typical plots in dynasty dramas included power struggles, battles for enthronement, and twisted romances. The first dynasty soap opera *Kukt'omali* had such a plot. The prince and the princess of warring neighbor countries loved each other like Romeo and Juliet. The princess betrayed her nation by destroying a magic drum which was an alarm to signal a foreign invasion from the prince's country.

Yi Kwangsu is the writer to whom Korean television owes a great debt. He contributed not only the well-chosen historical moments, but also the language, dramatization and penetrating human sentiments that made these dramas successful. His book, *Tragedy of King Tanjong* (written in 1928-29), brought tears to the eyes of Koreans for many years. King Tanjong, the unfortunate 14 year-old nephew of Great Suyang King Sejo, resigned from his throne after Suyang's bloody purge. Tanjong was exiled from the palace, though loyal scholars, even under Suyang's torture, insisted on his legitimate enthronement. The fate of the young king, the cruelty in the purge, the power struggles in the court, and the scholars' allegiance have been considered the most informative scenes in Korean television history. Korean television repeatedly telecast the story under many different titles. Yi's historical novels included *Maui Taeja* (Heir Apparent Maui, 1926-27), *Yisunshin* (1931-32), *The Martyr Yich'adon* (1935), *King Kongmin* (1937), *Kimssibuin Jeon* (Madam Kim, 1940), *King Sejong* (1942), and *King Sejo* (1942).

Park Chonghwa's *Blood on the Royal Robe* (1936) is a violent story about Yŏnsangun who also was called Yŏnsan. His posthumous title as the king was later removed from the annals because of his reign of terror.

Blood on the Royal Robe gave television directors unlimited access to the story of Yönsangun. Yönsan (1494-1506) was the 10th king of Joseon. He ruled the nation well in his earliest years. However, in his adolescence he was told that the tragic death of the deposed Queen Yun, his mother, was carried out under his father's command. The news drove him mad. He murdered a loyal eunuch and beat his grandmother, Queen Dowager Insu. The grandmother Queen Dowager Insu was the revered elder of the royal court from whom Yönsan, the king, begged for advice after his father died. This insane king was finally dethroned by his subjects and died of disease in exile soon after his banishment. This story was popular because of its insight into the human psyche through its portrayal of the characters.

Korean spectators love royal family tragedies. Hong Myunghee's *Imkkukjung* (1928) and Lee T'aejun's *Prince Hodong* (1942) novels were also televised. In July of 1963, KBS launched *Kukt'omali*, following the plot of *Prince Hodong* aka Korean Romeo and Juliet as mentioned above. The drama historicized the story of a princess who destroyed the *Chamyöngo*, the nation's magic drum that alerted people of an enemy invasion, in order to protect her lover, enemy Prince Hodong. The love story ends tragically for the princess' family and her nation. It was aired by television stations in 1964 and in 2012. Hong Myunghee's earlier novel, *Imkkukjung*, the tale of a rebellious peasant army and its leader, was on screen in the 1970s and in 1996-97.

Court soaps like the ones described above were the favorites from the beginning of the history of Korean television drama. Other than royal court soaps, there were folk soaps like *Hometown from Folklore* (1977-89) and *Secret Investigator* (1981-84). *Hometown from Folklore* copied Japanese ghost stories in which commoners and petty government staff were frightened to death in each episode. The ghosts were usually women bearing a grudge who captured people who could help them to prove their innocence. *Secret Investigator* followed the format of a secret investigator solving cases in commoners' lives. There are also folk soaps, which are not foreign copies, but are based on premodern literature like *Honggildong*, Korean Robinhood, and *Ch'unhyang*, a class-leaping romance. Korean film makers produced the premodern tales like *Ch'unhyang* in the 1950s which in turn made the stories television's must-see dramas. At present, most

historical dramas do not require the division of court and folk categories. The stations expanded historical dramas to fantasy and alternative history that juxtapose court and folk, premodern and modern and postmodern.

Contemporary novelists contributed to producing a different kind of historical drama. Park Kyungri's *T'oji the Earth* (1987-90, 2004), Park Wanseo's *Mimang* (A Widow, 1996-97), and Ch'oe Inho's *Sangdo* (Morals in the Trading Business, 2001-02), were novels that were broadcast in the format of historical dramas. These television dramas revived the national history of the late 20th century. The Korean capitalist tradition portraying generous merchant groups was revisited also in these series. *T'oji the Earth's* plot was about a *Yangban* literati woman who developed her own business and broke the glass ceiling in modern Korea. *Mimang* similarly described a literati's widow building her own business. These two dramas portrayed women's independence which emerged from broken patriarchal families. *Sangdo* presented a Korean Jinseng merchant who had trade with China. These three soaps showed what Korean venture businesses in the early 2000s were like. The serials also pointed out that the capitalist tradition greatly helped Korea meet modernity with ease. The economic success of merchant groups indicated that the historical transition from pre-modern to modern society was not harmful to the country. The capitalist process assisted the public in recovering from blunders generated by politics as political turbulence and wars gave hardships to the people. The merchants' class paved the way for Korea's reconstruction and industrialization after the Korean War. Strong women industrial leaders were daring examples.

These soap operas examined the origin and ethics of Korean capitalism by representing independent women. Women were given a positive image of leading the transition. If in the previous soap operas female conflicts were limited to exhaustive internal family wars, women in the epic of modernity broke their normative roles, and challenged social regulations. The previous portrayals of queens and royal consorts presented assistant characters of the court, but the modern women merchants were represented as leaders who led reforms. The dramas depicted Korea's modern start.

Merchant women were very different roles for the portrayal of women, but there were independent female roles as villainesses in soap operas as well. They broke the Confucian rules of the dynastic society, and they were full of energy, active and determined like the women business leaders. In 1971, MBC's *Changhibin* was aired. As were many other television dramas, *Changhibin* was written in 1959 by a famous playwright of radio dramas, and in 1961 it was remade into a film as well. It contrasted the virtuous Queen Inhyŏn and villainess Changhibin, a ranking royal consort lady. Spectators were enraged against Changhibin, the royal consort, because she won the king's heart and persuaded him to kill Queen Inhyŏn. Chang's death by poison, the form of the death penalty system in Joseon, provided an unforgettable climax of the drama. Changhibin's and Queen Inhyŏn's lives of conflict in the palace set the standard of virtue and evildoing for the spectators of several generations¹² as the dramas under the same title were repeatedly televised. *Women in History* (1981-82), *Five Hundred Years of the Joseon Dynasty* (1983-90, MBC) to *Jangheebin* (1995, SBS), (2002-03, KBS), *Dong Yi* (2010, MBC) and *Jangokjung* (2013, SBS) gave new interpretations of Changhibin's life, not just as a villainess but as a political scapegoat and a female hero at a time when women's role was confined under Confucian suppression.

In addition to merchant women and villainesses, many historical dramas focused on the lives of women, not only on their struggles and tragedies, but also sometimes on their triumphs. TBC's omnibus edition *Five Hundred Years of the Yi Dynasty and Women* (1972-1979) was a collection of fourteen historical dramas about the women who lived in the era of the Joseon Dynasty. *Samokok* (Missing the Late Mother, 1972) featured the tyranny of Yŏnsangun, Joseon's 10th king. Park Chonghwa's novel *Blood on the Royal Robe* (1936) was filmed as *Yŏnsangun* (1961) by Shin Sangok, a film director whose alternative readings and experiments were unprecedented, as well as *Samokok*, the 1972 soap opera which borrowed plots and characters from the 1961 film. The drama, *Queen Inmok* (1974), drew the character of the dethroned queen whose son was killed by his half-brother. *Imprisoned Lady* (1976) told the story of a lady who was hidden in a separate hall because her face was ugly. Later in the

¹²Newcomb, Horace. 1987. 455-470

story she triumphed by making her husband a successful officer through her magic and she turned into a beautiful woman. The soap opera's director, Kim Chaehyŏng, started his career with the first Korean television historical drama *Kukt'omali* in 1963. From the success of *Five Hundred Years of Yi Dynasty and Women*, Kim stabilized and expanded his career in the division of historical dramas. He directed drama-making in that division for more than forty years. Kim established *Sagŭk* and court stories as a drama genre in Korea, and he also distinguished Korean historical dramas from *Sagŭk* film and theatrical plays. It is said that he made approximately 250 series overall in court and folk soaps, and thus established the present inventory of storylines in historical drama. Mysterious heroines were one of the director's contributions. To give an example, *Yŏnhwa* and *Imprisoned Lady*, one of the episodes from *Five Hundred Years of the Yi Dynasty and Women*, depicted female dominance in family life by showing two affectionate mothers for a mysterious daughter and virtuous wife locked in a separate house because of her ugly face but who later turned into a beautiful woman.

Hometown from Folklore, another omnibus edition of 578 episodes, started in 1977, followed the Japanese image of horror dramas, featuring Korean folklore. The concept of ghosts and hauntings in bloody events came from Japan. Films like *Moonlit Cemetery* (1967) and *Yi Dynasty Ghostlore* (1970) had been adapted from *Yotsuya Ghost Story in Tokkaido* (1959), the Japanese ghost story with female ghosts in white gowns and long unbound black hair. Korean traditional literature and film before the 1960s did not present this kind of female ghost. The grudge-bearing ghosts in white in Korean historical dramas were a Japanese invention that was borrowed by Korean film directors in the 1960s.¹³ Before the borrowing, Shin Sangok's *Lady White Snake* (1960) was based on the Chinese legend of Lady White Snake. The ghost was far from the Japanese-conceptualized female ghosts in his *Yi Dynasty Ghostlore* (1970) and in the series *Hometown from Folklore*. To that extent, *Hometown from Folklore* could be called a collection of Korean, Chinese, and Japanese horror stories though it chose to focus on how frightening the sudden appearance of female ghosts was to the spectators as in the Japanese horror stories.

¹³ August 11, 2009 "Korean Female Ghosts wear White?" *Weekly Kyunghyang*

Hometown from Folklore built a kind of virtual hometown for viewers. The scenes where commoners lived represented Korea's national past. The series was popular and was broadcast for thirteen years. The series resumed from 1996 to 1999, and aired in 2008, 2009, 2013. In total, all episodes added up to 668. Female ghosts were the main characters in the stories depicting Korea's historical towns but there were other characters such as dogs and male victims. As an example, a commoner's wife was taken by high waves to the seashore in *Iudo Island*, a heavenly kingdom where the days passed as our decades. When the wife returned home after a seemingly short stay there, her husband's great grandson told her how long she had been away. The wife screamed a horrible scream and immediately became old and shrank into a skeleton. Although the dramas used the image of Japanese female specters, the Korean ghosts in the historical series blended commoners' lives and villainesses with the lives of the national past.

Sagŭk introduced secret investigators, detectives, and policemen in the 1980s. The early 1980s in Korea saw a wide range of modern and historical police stories including *Susa Panjang*, *113 Investigation Unit*, *Secret Investigator* (1981-84), and *The Police Chief* (1981). Modern police soaps were hardboiled in the tradition starting from *ER*, a collection of professional drama episodes; however, historical police dramas contained bits of humor. *Secret Investigator* depicted the police system of the previous Dynasty. This action comedy was adapted from the cinema that was popular in Korea and Hong Kong from the 1960s. *Secret Investigator* charted each episode of the investigator and his two assistants, probing the misbehavior of district magistrates and local governors and reporting it to the royal court. In each episode, the investigator and his assistants outsmarted the wicked magistrates.

Five Hundred Years of the Joseon Dynasty (aka FYJ MBC, 1983-90,) and KBS 1 TV's historical drama series that aired in the 1980s put multiple royal court-related plot lines in motion. Retraced were the main political incidents in the Joseon Dynasty. KBS's *Kaeguk* and *Ch'udonggung Mama* (1983) both dramatized King T'aejo, the king who was the field marshal of

King Kongmin of Koryŏ (Goryeo in a different transliteration¹⁴) and King T'aejong who was known as Pangwon. King T'aejo's purge of subjects loyal to the Goryeo Dynasty and his establishment of the new dynasty, Joseon, were followed by his son Pangwon's war on his brothers to take over the throne. The competition for the throne featured allegiance and reformation. King T'aejo's betrayal and legitimate reform of the unstable structure may have provided ideological support for former President Chun's coup d'état. The story of King T'aejo and his son was remade in *Dragon's Tear* in 1996 and *Great Geomancy* in 2013. *Dragon's Tear* was one of the greatest hits in the history of historical dramas. The epic was serialized with a great number of characters. The story followed King T'aejo's story and, more importantly, while the historical drama focused on women, as previous historical dramas had, it shifted to militarism and male bonding. The solemn and somber epic received wide critical praise, and its storyline was idealized by the other historical dramas about militant male heroes like *Wanggŏn* (2000-02), *Jumong* (2006), and *Taejoyŏng* (2006-07).

Hanura Hanura in 1988 and *Hanjungnok* of *FYJ* in 1988 portrayed the reign of King Yŏngjo and the tragic death of his son, Crown Prince Sado. *FYJ* on MBC, one of the best broadcasting companies in Korea, usually had a higher number of spectators. KBS tried to stop *FYJ*'s solo run by airing a drama about a similar subject, familial conflict and tragedy in the royal family. The rivalry between the television stations also encouraged the release of a variety of historical dramas. KBS' *Hanura Hanura* won public preference. King Yŏngjo's reign was the longest and the most stable. The tragic irony in the long reigns of King Yŏngjo and King Chŏngjo, Yŏngjo's grandson, was greatly twisted and adjusted to structure the scripts and intensify the emotions. King Yŏngjo locked up his son Crown Prince Sado, Regent and Heir Apparent, in a rice chest for days under the pretext that his mental illness and violent behavior made it necessary. The father King

¹⁴ For the transliteration of the Korean words, McCune-Reischauer Romanization is the general system in scholarly writings. However, methods of transliteration in media vary even though none breaks away from the standard Korean pronunciation. The words that do not conform to the McCune-Reischauer system are from DVDs and printed descriptions of soap operas translated into English before the writing of this doctoral thesis. For example, Koryŏ would be written in certain subtitles as Goryeo, T'aejong Taejong, Pangwon Bangwon, and Joseon Chosŏn or Josun. Similarly, President Chun should be transliterated as President Chŏn in McCune-Reischauer Romanization. But most journals introduce politicians' names in different spellings from the authentic system. Scholars also use the fixed names in the cases of well-known, often-reiterated political and industrial leaders.

starved his successor to death. Television dramas depicted his grandson Chǒngjo, a great king, as the scapegoat of politics by selectively picturing King Yǒngjo's charismatic presence, Sado's tragic death, and King Chǒngjo's death by poisoning. That is, Chǒngjo was described as the victimized grandson who witnessed his father's tragic death.

Sado's death by his father's command was serialized in *P'ach'ǒnmu* (1980), *King and Queen* (1998-2000), *Yi San* (2007), *Painters of the Wind* (2008), and *Warrior Baekdongsoo* (2011). In the 2000s, directors and novelists took steps to change the historical view of King Chǒngjo, and their deviation from the old storyline, from the pitiful grandson to the mature adult king, proved to be favored by audiences. Their television dramas starred him as the passionate monarch who launched many bills and implemented projects, giving the reign more description and more romance than did the previous soap operas.

Tongui Pogam (Encyclopedia of Eastern Medicine, MBC) in 1991, *Hur Jun* in 1999, and *Guam Heojun* in 2013 are the biographical dramas about Hǒjun (1539-1615), Joseon's royal doctor.¹⁵ He was the physician in charge of the royal medical system in the reign of King Sǒnjo, the 14th king. The best of Korean cultural heritage is presented through his successful career in which he overcame the limits of the caste system, and through his publication of the *Encyclopedia of Eastern Medicine*. Hǒjun's story was different from horror folklore and court soaps. It featured people living with illness, an aspect of the palace other than clan politics and evil women. Hǒjun as a drama subject changed the typical framework of historical dramas. He was well known as a self-made man, and what was more appealing to viewers was the emotional tone in the scenes when he healed and cured poor commoners and his royal highnesses by his medication. Viewers were moved to tears in the presence of the doctor's devotion, respect, and knowledge. The soap opera engaged viewers' emotion as other historical dramas with their romance and combat did, but in a different way.

¹⁵ Hur Jun, Heojun, and Hǒjun are different transliterations for the same person. Published titles of television dramas were not revised to the McCune-Reischauer system. See footnote 5.

Historical costume dramas portraying alternative history are called Fusion *Sagŭk*. Lee Pyŏnghun, the director who serialized *Secret Investigator* and *Five Hundred Years of the Joseon Dynasty* (1983-90), established his basic formula for historical dramas from the success of those two series. Eagerness to graft a popular foreign genre onto Korean television resulted in a couple of decades of alternative history, a new type of historical drama, staging a mixture of court soaps and folk soap series like *Jewel in the Palace* (2003), *Yi San* (2007), *Dong Yi* (2010), and *The King's Doctor* (2013). Lee was one of the directors leading the boom focusing on alternative history in Korean historical drama. In alternative-history historical dramas, directors did not follow annals and the dynasty diaries of kings and queens as typical historical dramas did. Instead, kings and queens assisted fantasy characters such as time-traveling modern Koreans and talented commoners as background for stories in which doctors and chefs exhibit their brilliant skills. The quality and content of Fusion *Sagŭk* vary. From 2003, Korean films and television dramas had increasing inventories of Fusion *Sagŭk*.

By fully controlling all time periods of the past, present and future, alternative history dramas including time-slips, that is, soap operas with time travel, show that the present, equipped with technology, rules the past and the future. Viewers watch a modern person using time travel to go back to the past and introduce a new kind of weapon, or medicine which changes the course of history in soap operas such as *The King's Doctor* (2013) and *Queen Inhyŏn's Man* (2012). These soaps imagined that postmodern men instructed premodern men with exotic information on waging war, penicillin, flirting, food, and much more. Alternative history dramas such as *Damo* (2003), *Chuno* (Slave Hunt, 2010), and *Sungkyunkwan Scandal* (2010) do not use time-slips, but these also reproduced historical towns with modern anachronistic historicization. *Damo's* detective lady, whose original work is to inspect crime scenes, has a Hollywood romance in modern language. *Chuno's* slave hunters exercise in modern fitness centers to build muscles. *Sungkyunkwan Scandal's* students in modernized fancy costume act out some fresh Disney school stories.

These high-impact alternative history serials made each episode

movie-film-like with superior production values and fashionable costumes. Airing during the cable television era, time-slips expanded their influence fast. The serials featured modern romance and modern capitalism, using a historical background for getting the audiences' attention. Alternative history soap operas are the extreme examples of historicization¹⁶ through court soaps and folk soaps. In *Queen Inhyŏn's Man* (2012), Heejin, an actress living in the present time falls in love with Bungdo, an elite man who time-leapt three hundred years from Joseon. Bungdo has to learn contemporary language, manners, and everything necessary for basic living in Heejin's time. *Rooftop Prince* (2012) also stages a woman of 2012's Korea and a time-traveling Crown Prince from Joseon. The royal ranking men from the past are taught the basic ABCs as though they are toddlers. The men from the Dynasty learn how to use money and other commodities. So in a way, this puts women in these dramas in a superior position over the men since they know how the modern world works.

Fusion *Sagŭk* soap operas can be seen as a battlefield of capitalist desires and modern arrogance turning the past into our capitalist present with melodramatic imagination. The soap operas project our present into our past with material luxury and emotional excess.

¹⁶ Historicization is a way of organizing historical narratives. So historicization differs from the historical view of writers and directors and even actors. In this dissertation, I suggest that Korean historical dramas are historical narratives organized with modern arrogance. This kind of historicization in soap operas is best represented in time-slips with time travel. One skilled modern man or woman messes up the whole town's history with his or her new knowledge.



<Figure 1. *The King and I*; everything originated from love.>

The King and I (2007)

The King and I, the remake of the Yönsangun¹⁷ story in which, as described above, the king, Yönsan, kills a eunuch in royal service to avenge his mother's murder, is based on the novel *Blood on the Royal Robe* [1936]. It differs from many previous dramas about Yönsangun by accentuating the group of eunuchs, the palace staff in charge of the royal family's personal and public affairs. This is the story of loyalty and devotion to one's ruler and his lineage, and of Kim Chuhsun, a noble person who sacrifices himself first to protect the woman he loves and then to protect the dynasty of which she is a part. Kim Chuhsun is supported and protected by the "Department of Eunuchs." *The King and I* soap opera's purpose is to show eunuchs as men who accepted castration to become loyal servants to the royal family.

The rest of the storyline, including projecting Queen Dowager Insu's

¹⁷ Prince Yoong, and later, the King, were his titles used in the 2007 soap opera. Yönsangun, the posthumous title, was hardly used in the drama script. However, his posthumous title was more commonly used than Prince Yoong and the King. The viewers were familiar with the mad king's tale as part of the national inventory.

matriarchy into the reigns of both King Sungjong and his son Yönsangun, and the figure of deposed Queen Yun (her maiden name was Sohwa), changed little from the novel, *Blood on the Royal Robe*. The group of eunuchs and the two head eunuchs, Jo Chigyum and Kim Chuhsun, protect the reigning kings and the royal family from villains and villainesses but they fail to stop Yönsangun from driving himself and the reign into madness. One third of the series focuses on the young love between King Sungjong, Sohwa, and Kim Chuhsun. Later, the simple plot of romance gets complicated because of the large number of rival groups in the palace and the eunuch school. The television drama is an experiment in distancing soap operas from usual family stories by removing scenes outside of the families and by shifting young romance and the professional eunuchs' bond to the center of concern.

Before Sohwa's royal wedding with King Sungjong, Kim Chuhsun castrates himself and becomes a eunuch because he wants to be close to Sohwa in order to protect her from the hardships to be expected in the palace where queens with no factional support are threatened by other political factions. Despite Kim Chuhsun's efforts, Sohwa, Queen Yun, is deposed by the Queen Dowager Insu and sentenced to death at the end of political turmoil. Kim Chuhsun accepts the request of Sohwa to look after her son Yönsan who inherits the throne. Kim Chuhsun puts all his efforts for many years into nurturing Yönsan to be a sovereign. After Yönsan becomes king, he swears revenge when he sees his mother's vomited blood on the robe she was wearing at the time she was forced to drink poison. In the end, Kim Chuhsun is killed by the crazy King Yönsan when Kim Chuhsun begs him not to seek revenge for his mother's death.

The King and I repeats the enduring features in Korean historical dramas. Later some soap opera stories deviate from historical facts, turning the historical reigns into a stage for modern characters, with concerns of departmental reforms and administrative conflicts. Abu-Lughod argues that soap operas engage viewers with modernity and nationalist sentiment. Korean soap operas transmit the sensibility of nationality as a pattern, far from nationalism, through costume and the portrayal of dynastic virtue. The past is portrayed as a society caught in a maelstrom of purges and power struggles. Traditional Korean court dramas show that

the past dynasties had their own systems that were different from our modern society. *The King and I* is a typical court soap that establishes the reigns under the balance among the king, officials, eunuchs, court maids, and the queen-royal consorts, whereas Fusion *Saguk* and time-slips elevate transnational modernity by projecting incomparable modern superiority into the past.

The King and I has a diverse cast of characters and story lines which is a departure from Korean soap operas' typical linear characters. Korean soap operas usually repeat one story about love, courtship, and marriage; love and courtship involve the hero and the heroine, while marriage engages multiple family characters. In *The King and I*, post-marriage includes villains, villainesses, matriarchs, and patriarchs in addition to the professional group of eunuchs. The eunuchs embody the ideology of patriarchy in their devotion to supporting patriarchs, just as women do in the family home dramas.

Villainesses

In *The King and I*, Sölyöng, the stepdaughter of a satanic senior eunuch, is a gothic villainess. The senior eunuch, a villain threatening the throne and using his stepsons from the eunuch school to take control over the nation, is poisoned to death by his stepdaughter Sölyöng. In the beginning, she disguises herself as a docile assistant carrying out his blueprint, making separate contracts with one of the stepsons in order to enthrone a prince born to the royal consort, Heebin Lady Öm, instead of the Grand Heir. The stepdaughter gives the impression of being weak, but she is good to people more powerful or older than herself in order to manipulate them. Sölyöng's power and ability appeals to royal consorts, and her deadly seductiveness appeals to all. As soon as Sölyöng has enough status and knowledge to not require assistance from the senior eunuch, she kills him. She was born to a family destroyed by the senior

eunuch, so she is incarnated into an avenger. The power of a villainess seems limitless, but Sölyöng, the gothic villainess, meets a violent death in the end. As we will see in the next pages the matriarchs of soap operas always have their power taken away in the end. When the matriarchs are too strong to go back to the patriarchal family, they have to be killed, and so Sölyöng is removed before she gets too strong.

Sölyöng is an example of a powerful seducer, a type of Korean villainesses. The power of this type of villainess lies in her use of deadly objects like poison or magic. By using sweet words, they bind others to themselves. These villainesses rarely appear in soap operas, but once they appear, they are powerful seducers. *Gumiho*, the fox woman with nine tails, is a representative of this type in historical dramas. The fox transforms into a beauty who seduces men at night, and kills them by sucking out their souls. These powerful villainesses such as Sölyöng and *Gumiho* are created by male writers to satisfy the male fantasy of being seduced. However, most of these villainesses are not attractive to spectators. Although the series are popular, critics from varied realms find faults with the characters as male writers do not give them a complex personality that engages viewers. The villainesses get less attention and sympathy than virtuous women imagined by female writers. When we watch soap operas in which villainesses are starred, it is easy to recognize that the villainesses are more one-dimensional characters than virtuous ladies. Their act of seducing is not seductive from the perspective of female viewers and female viewers are uncomfortable with the villainesses' emotional inconsistency and neurosis. Furthermore, the beautiful seducers do not demonstrate greater ability than virtuous women. The virtuous women have the power of guarding the patriarchy, and this is greater than the seduction of magic. As the coaches of patriarchs, the virtuous women instruct viewers concerning their social functions. The virtuous women's guiding power is attractive to the viewers whereas the seductive power of villainesses ends in failure and disaster. And thus, villainesses and their exercise of power are condemned in Korean soap operas.

Different from an active villainess like Sölyöng, less active villainesses in soap operas end up protecting the patriarchy. The royal consorts in *The King and I* are passive villainesses. They act within the family system

creating emotional bonds with women of the royal family while competing for the throne. Their presence as a part of the royal household limits their mobility and keeps them subordinated. There are frequent scenes where the women sit together to discuss plans for succession or who will inherit the kingship. Despite their confinement to the assigned hall of the palace, queen dowagers, the possible matriarchs, are vigilant to defend the Grand Heir's claims to ensure he will be enthroned. They defend the heir apparent from the bloodthirsty ladies who would displace him. Royal consort ladies rely on help from outside of the palace to commit their evil deeds. Unlike other historical dramas in which villains from the family of the consort ladies take part, in *The King and I*, Sölyöng is located outside of the palace so she can move actively, hopping from this place to that place. Although the ladies commit malicious acts (poisoning the Heir Apparent, terminating Queen Yun, using methods of abortion against a lady who could potentially bear an heir to the throne), it is Sölyöng who plans the schemes and provides the means.

There are also virtuous women who are initially misunderstood as villainesses. Their entry into the soap operas is groundbreaking and striking whereas their leaving is praiseworthy and heartwarming to those who support the social system. *The King and I's* Öüludong is introduced as a villainess who repeatedly insists she is rebelling against the dynasty's patriarchy through her adultery with men from all classes, which includes King Sungjong. Personal interrogations by Jo Chigyum, one of the head eunuchs, and King Sungjong reveal that her ex-husband's rejection forced her to live abandoned within the patriarchal system. She rebelled because the patriarchal system had let her down, and this explains her behavior. She shows her sincere loyalty to the king as a subject and she serves both the nation and the family's patriarch. Öüludong in *The King and I* gives up her adventures of seduction and malice, and becomes virtuous. She separates herself from her past of villainous deeds, so her experience of being excluded from the patriarch's guidance is ended when she comes back into the system. In her loyalty, Öüludong chooses to be executed for treason to protect King Sungjong, her lover.

Matriarchs

Matriarch is also an important term to understand in historical dramas. Senior women, grandmothers, mothers, and mothers-in-law play major roles in Korean soap operas, but few of them are true matriarchs. One of the most important tasks for them is to be the speakers for patriarchy as they protect and support the patriarchs' authority. As they cultivate emotional bonds with family members, mothering them and caring for them, they repeatedly explain to the family members what their roles are in the patriarchal culture. Even the patriarchs are expected to follow the rules given by senior women. Patriarchs who reject their proper roles by asserting excessive authority and power instead of respecting their spouses and caring for their children in the expected ways get tamed by the senior women's whip. However, since these senior women eventually leave the position of authority to the patriarchs, they are not matriarchs but powerful women who use their power to maintain patriarchy.

Matriarchs, in contrast, are powerful women who are seized by the passion to rule. Some of them are villainesses; others of them are confined to their places to live with personal dignity. Patriarchal mothers-in-law are rogue matriarchs manipulating the relationship between their sons and their new daughters-in-law to maximize their power to rule the family. We see these rogue matriarchs frequently in home dramas. The personality of these rogue matriarchs is malevolent, changeable, envious, wicked and obsessive in their efforts to separate the newlyweds. Their mind is such that they cannot live without provoking havoc. Rogue matriarchs, favorite characters in home dramas, are extreme contradictions of the patriarchal family because in these stories the fathers do the nurturing instead. Rogue matriarchs' outbursts of emotion, unlike cool-headed and virtuous matriarch-like characters (whose possible ends in the plots also come in the form of retreat, disappearance, and death much like rogue matriarchs) and their exercise of power offer viewers what the usual imperatives of soap opera do not bring to the viewers. Rogue matriarchs' yelling, fighting, and crazy trouble-making give vicarious satisfaction to viewers that the usual virtuous woman characters do not offer: cathartic explosions. Because the rogue characters fundamentally erase societal logic, emancipation for both female and male viewers lies in these temporary

escapes from patriarchy. These dramas elucidate male viewers' anxieties of being ruled by women and female viewers' fears of being subordinated to the social system. Rogue matriarchs do not instill audiences with virtue; they attract them with hysterical explosions and those catastrophes—in a patriarchal sense—give the viewers an imaginative break from patriarchy. The spectators contemplate anti-patriarchal insurrection, and then they revert back to patriarchy calmly as the rogue meets her demise.

Other matriarchs confine themselves to being virtuous women, so they do not threaten the values of patriarchy. Queen Dowager Insu in the drama, *The King and I*, is the matriarch of the Dynasty and of the royal family. Her matriarchy is secure with the task of nurturing her son, King Sungjong, so that he can become the patriarch, but it is ended by the tyranny of her grandson, Yönsangun. Her scheming leads to the failure of two consecutive reigns. King Sungjong, her son, gains patriarchal status in a romance that takes place outside the palace in the absence of Queen Dowager Insu. But he is later subordinated to his mother within the matriarchal palace. He marries his childhood love, Sohwa, and strengthened by the power of love, he persuades the Queen Dowager to choose Sohwa to be the queen. The marriage establishes the king's patriarchal rule, and his wife, Sohwa, now Queen Yun, acknowledges the king as a patriarch. No matter how deep their love is, conflict over the ruling ideology between the patriarch's wife, Queen Yun, and the matriarch, his mother Queen Insu, is inevitable. As Queen Yun's fall from power becomes inevitable—she is deposed by the command of the Queen Dowager—King Sungjong finds another love, Öüludong, who will support his position as the patriarch. Öüludong, a villainess turned virtuous, understands her mission well so she supports the King's rule by her personal charm towards the King, and at the same time she keeps the King out of the matriarch's reach. Unfortunately, both of the King's two beloved women are murdered through palace intrigue. At the time of his death the King expresses his regret, and asks the Grand Heir not to repeat his father's mistakes. However, the Grand Heir, Yönsangun, grows up to be a mad tyrant after he learns how his mother was killed.

The original novel of Yönsangun's story manifests a longing for the Joseon Dynasty as it was before Japanese imperial rule. Korean writers

were attentive to the desire of returning to Korea's national past and living as an independent nation under one patriarch while the country was under Japanese imperialism. In the novels/films of the 1920s-30s, we would read *The King and I* as a confrontation between a tyrant and a matriarch. However, there is more than the confrontation in this soap opera. Queen Dowager Insu and King Yŏnsan are alike in trying to build their own worlds. Insu is a matriarch who embodies patriarchal virtue. The matriarch sustained by patriarchal values is not a transforming and cathartic character like the rogue matriarch. Yŏnsan's violence and abusive exercise of power contrasts with Queen Dowager Insu's patriarchal characteristics. He thrives on madness that seeks cruel revenge with wide-spread purges of all who betray, oppose or criticize him.

The King and I also presents another very different type of matriarchy, one that yields to the patriarchy, but is neither rogue nor patriarch-like. The character Soeginop'a in *The King and I* runs the Dynasty's eunuch school. She is one of the greatest seers in the country, so she earns a humble living for students in the school by working as a soothsayer for the royal family. The castrated children leave their parents and take up residence in the school for eunuchs until they are ready to move to the palace. Soeginop'a, whose extraordinary magical power confines her to the very humble status of a superstitious stranger in Confucian society, is a liberated matriarch. The students venerate her, and they rely on her for emotional bonding and for knowledge of life. Royal women go to her for advice. Although she raises the students to work for the patriarchy, her world constitutes a matriarchy that excludes categorization and hierarchy, but instead rests on listening and empathy. It is a world that is separated from the Confucian patriarchs. Therefore, her matriarchy does not face the same challenges as Queen Dowager Insu faces during her rule. Unlike Queen Dowager Insu, Soeginop'a does not have to deal with power struggles, betrayal, or respecting and nurturing the Confucian patriarchs, King Sungjong and Yŏnsan. The "wise" seer yields her place to Jo Chigyum, one of her school sons when she recognizes that Jo Chigyum is ready to be the patriarch, the head eunuch of the Dynasty. At that point she disappears from the soap opera, leaving the school and all of the contacts she has had in her lifetime. This is not done out of passivity. The seer is a sovereign in her world. Her

disappearance is an act of independence. Her disappearance shows her independence from her magical power, and the act secularizes her. Declaring that Jo Chigyum will educate and take care of the school students, Soeginop'a self-erases her place. Jo Chigyum, through his position, inherits the authority over the eunuch's school. Given that Queen Dowager Insu dies of fury, and that the matriarchs in home dramas are forcibly humbled, Soeginop'a's self-abasement is truly wise, and this wisdom is shown through the act of giving the castrated men back the patriarchal role. A part of the resulting patriarchy is an unwounded matriarchy. The drama's aggrandizing of its hero Jo Chigyum, by the endowment of all abilities and virtue possible for men, is ensured by the inheritance.

Villains and Patriarchs

Patriarchs in historical dramas can be militant and active in constructing their patriarchal rule. In *The King and I*, Jo Chigyum is a militant patriarch even though he is a eunuch who is part of the domestic staff for the royal family. Gentle patriarchs in home dramas, and in historical dramas, are established by female characters. They are emotional, and they care for their children. Different from nurturing patriarchs, militant patriarchs in historical dramas interact with people bravely and strategically. They gain and maintain power by their abilities. Historical dramas are written by male writers, so male characters are explained in great detail, whereas home dramas, more frequently written by female writers, accentuate the power of female characters, giving fewer details to male characters. While both types give patriarchs authority and dignity, historical dramas create the patriarchs by the male bond between the warrior patriarch and his strategic group; home dramas create the patriarch through the female bond of the women in the family. Gentle fathers are expected to be virtuous by the women supporting the patriarchal authority as we will see in the chapter on home dramas, but warrior patriarchs are not restrained or regulated by women and they gain their authority through their power and through their male groups. Men are the major viewers of historical dramas that feature warfare, so the male

bond attracts male viewers' emotional identification as the female bond in home dramas facilitates female viewers' emotional identification. Militant patriarchs are not restrained by virtue or women's control when they are structuring their patriarchal rule. They build the patriarchal system through force within their own male boundaries.

Militant heroes in television dramas became popular from the 1980s. Television dramas like *Kaeguk* (1983), *Dragon's Tear* (1996), and *Wanggŏn* (2000-02) depicted rebellious heroes and their coups, which founded dynasties and nations. The soap operas fascinated male viewers with characters such as Jo Chigyum in *The King and I* in 2007. Warrior heroes can make alliances with villains, and they are not strictly moral regardless of their royal dignity. Unlike the virtuous female bond in home dramas, the male bond carries both vice and virtue, villains and heroes. Jo Chigyum, the head eunuch, works with his stepfather, a villain, until his authority and power are established, and then he cleanses his patriarchy by removing the villain and restoring his own dignity. He does not kill the villain by his own hand. His stepsister, Sŏlyŏng, kills the father villain. Jo Chigyum will do everything on behalf of the Dynasty, killing and betraying friends, but he is so virtuous that his heart is torn by wrongdoing even though it is all for the Dynasty. Jo Chigyum's individualization of virtue does not galvanize the male bond around virtue nor is it confined to virtue. Warrior patriarchs, who are not so different from villains in their life paths, unfetter themselves and the male viewers from feminization and women's control.

Villains have psychological points to consider. Jo Chigyum, the militant hero and head eunuch, raises the issue of male fear of castration while revealing a powerful leader as I mentioned above. Yŏnsangun, the villain and wicked king, also manifests a different kind of liberation for viewers. He is irrationally emotional. He exemplifies the result of male loss of rationality. His longing for his poisoned-to-death mother represents the lost child's longing for the suffering mother, the mother type in which films usually specialize but that is usually rejected in soap operas. This theme is included in the television drama *The King and I* in respect to the story's origin in the 1960s film. However, this does not mean that *The King and I* is different from other soap operas in all aspects. Modern Korean soap operas are a mixture of stories added in the 1920s, '30s, '40s and modern

interpretation. The suffering mother sacrifices herself for her son. Viewers of the fantasies, including the male fantasy of being a lost child longing for his missing mother, want to return to the wholeness and oneness found in mothers.

Loyalty to the Patriarchy

Abu-Lughod¹⁸ explains that melodramatic emotion in Egyptian soap operas imbued the nation's spectators with a sense of modernity including its patterns, habits and products for living. Modern emotion in Korean historical dramas is projected into the national past. The power of modern emotion suffuses multiple layers of times and places. The distant past becomes our past as long as it manifests interpersonal dispositions with which we can identify. The past in historical dramas is not meant to be the actual past. The time and place have to conform to our ideas and our sense of virtue. Romance in historical dramas is made modern by presenting both women's independence and men's caring.

Modern democracy in historical dramas encourages people to move between the dynasties' classes. The national past does not give Korean soap operas a nationalistic tinge. Using the national past to cultivate modern emotions and dispositions was a historical invention—nationalism is one of the modern dispositions, and most original stories for historical dramas were created in a time of enforced Japanese nationalism during the colonial era in the 1910s-40s.¹⁹ During Japan's imperial occupation of Korea, novelists wrote under circumstances in which Korean nationalism could not be uttered because Japanese nationalistic policies shut out the possibilities for Korean nationalism. Instead, writers used historical dramas as an intelligent way to provide a concept of Korean nationality. The fictitious, national past was a lesson that killed two birds with one stone: historical

¹⁸ Abu-Lughod, Lila. *Dramas of Nationhood: The Politics of Television in Egypt*. Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

¹⁹ Modernity of the time included nationalism. Furthermore, however distanced and rationalized from nationalism the novels on Korean nationality are, readers will read them nationalistically when they are also separated from Japanese nationality.

dramas about Korean greatness infused nationwide readers with modernity and transformed the memory of a dynasty that had been ruined by the Japanese into one of pride and familiarity.

Current historical dramas do not accentuate nationalism as an important emotion, probably because of the habit of avoiding Korean nationalism under Japanese imperialism. Strengthening Korean nationalism is also no longer necessary. Soap operas with nationalistic themes amplify emotions between characters, and they replace nationalistic sentiments with interpersonal emotions such as a woman's broken heart at the news of her Resistance fiancé's death. Loyalty to the nation in soap operas is not the emotion used to embody nationalism. Although loyalty to the nation is mentioned by characters in historical dramas, being loyal in historical dramas means personal loyalty, that is, to the head person, not national loyalty. The loyalty paid personally to superiors is not the same as loyalty paid to the national group or nation. Characters in *The King and I* who speak of loyalty to the kings express devotion to the individuals. The emotional identification of viewers reconstitutes the national past with individual sensibility. In other words, it is interpersonal interaction in a familial structure whether the structure is great as in a nation state or small as in a group of eunuchs. It encourages spectators to remain national but not nationalistic. The nation in the soap opera is present but interpersonal relations are dominant over the nation.

Jo Chigyum and Kim Chuhsun, the head eunuchs and the kings' powerful servants, speak for the patriarchy and are driven by their desire to preserve the social order, while the villains and anti-patriarchs try to destroy the social structure. Jo Chigyum, the present head eunuch, and his villain stepfather, the former head eunuch in the Department of Eunuchs, have different ideals. Jo Chigyum would cut his own throat to protect the dynasty, so he accepts all the decisions made by the King even though he foresees that the bloodthirsty king will ruin the Dynasty. Jo Chigyum is so loyal to the King that he devotes his outstanding abilities of intelligence, martial art prowess and human resources to protect the tyrant's rule. At the beginning of the soap opera, Kim Chuhsun was an active character when he loved Sohwa, Queen Yun, to the extent of castrating himself to protect her in the palace, but he later becomes a more passive character.

He forgives the villain who planned to depose the queen, his secret love and his master. He is an incarnation of devotion, but as a eunuch he is not emotionally expressive. Chuhsun's calm and tolerant bearing does not attract viewers' empathy as much as emotionally expressive characters do. Jo Chigyum speaks a lot and acts energetically whereas Kim Chuhsun remains blandly thoughtful in all matters.

The King and I turns Kim Chuhsun into an ideological symbol in the second half of the soap opera. Kim Chuhsun is too loyal in his thoughtful actions to be compared to others. He castrates himself and enters the School of Eunuchs to become a loyal servant of Queen Yun, his adolescent love. As his passionate love is replaced by loyalty, he loses his emotional expressiveness. The soap opera then presents Kim Chuhsun as an administrator who reforms the palace government, turning him into a very different character. He leads the reformation movement among the palace staff administratively and systematically in a reserved manner, explaining that the reformation movement is the way to protect Queen Yun's son, Yönsan. His position as an administrator is less interesting to spectators who are more interested in personal interactions and interpersonal strategies. The young Yönsan, longing for his dead mother, emotionally interacts with Kim Chuhsun as a nurturing father. The King is ruined by his longing to be nurtured. His mother was poisoned by his father, the King, and Kim Chuhsun, the father figure who fostered him, is castrated. The castrated and philosophical eunuch insists that the King's maliciousness harms the social system of the Dynasty. This objective remark disappoints because it is made without accompanying emotions. Unlike Kim Chuhsun, Jo Chigyum has numerous emotional moments; his will to be loyal is expressed overtly with tears and solemnity, and it climaxes in his committing suicide rather than be a traitor to the tyrant. Jo Chigyum's ties to his knight brother and his secret love, a lady-in-waiting, are also emotionally strong.

Kim Chuhsun does not engage viewers' emotions. After he becomes a eunuch, all of his stories, which seem very moving, are told through other characters' narrations. Different from the young Kim Chuhsun, the mature Kim Chuhsun is an insipid character who always stays calm. The spectators do not directly witness his behavior and passion because his

character is not presented in enough detail for emotional identification. In the third and the last part of *The King and I*, Soхва, Queen Yun and King Sungjong, the heroine and the hero of the romance, are dead. Kim Chuhsun is left alive and tries to transform himself into the father figure for their son the Grand Heir who grows up to be a tyrant. Furthermore, he kept King Sungjong's adultery a secret from the deposed queen, remaining loyal to his role in the eunuch system as part of the eunuch staff in the King's hall. He betrays the virtue of personal emotions of devotion to the Queen, and follows ideology for the greater good of the royal family.

Class, as an ideological device in *The King and I*, has blurred boundaries among the eunuchs because of they all belong to the eunuchs' union and all are focused on supporting the King. The portrayal of class shows that historical dramas come from modern writing on the dynasty since class is a modern invention. Korean soap operas use the professional group to mix different classes. As we shall see when we discuss professional dramas, such dramas explore relationships between classes by putting characters from different backgrounds together as a team. Home dramas also depict a family and its in-law families as individual professionals in the various fields. Not all television dramas feature characters of various class backgrounds. Soap operas magnify the lives of the upper class. Nevertheless, there are efforts to televise more classes, and one way to do that is to show a professional group, binding characters from different classes in a shared group task. The eunuch group in *The King and I* aligns different personalities with classes, involving characters ranging from commoners and middlemen to literati. Although the professional group is shown as the upper class, the inner workings of the group bid spectators to see class differences. The group's virtue is demonstrated precisely by the way differences in individuals' backgrounds are fused into the group. The eunuch group is also a union that challenges the patriarchal Dynasty and breaks from the system—one of the democratic reforms that can destroy the Dynasty's patriarchal hierarchy. Their breaking of the structure ties personalities together in virtue and this again provides a union between people. The challenge and the struggle over the throne and royal rule build the patriarchy more firmly. Individuals become firm in their beliefs in social hierarchy. The Department of Eunuchs and Jo Chigyum reform the Department into the palace's Institute of

Guardians. Out of a broken system, Jo Chigyum builds a new patriarchy, one of virtue, and including different classes.

There Is No Male Emotional Bond

The King and I was directed by Kim Jaehyoung, the legendary television producer who produced historical dramas for more than forty-five years. It seems clear that he intended to build male emotional bonds with his choice of the eunuch school as the main center of his soap opera. Because he himself was a founding father of the Korean historical drama and of its patriarchal sphere cultivated by powerful women, in his later years he might have wanted to portray male emotional bonds equal to the emotional bonds²⁰ among women. This was not the male bond conveyed in 1980s historical dramas built around war and armament, but a male bond of feminized emotional exchange. Kim Chuhsun, Jo Chigyum, and their eunuch friends created such a bond for a certain period under their matriarch, Soeginop'a. However, in the last half of the drama, Kim Chuhsun, a key role for feminized emotional exchange, ends up as a petty bureaucrat. In fact, no man in the soap opera holds the power to carry on the male bond that began so ambitiously. And thus, male spectators have to get emotional satisfaction and catharsis from the explosions of the mad tyrant much as Korean males did from the 20s and 30s.

Conclusion

Historical dramas are based on national stories that have been developed from the time when Korea began to be modernized. Novels, films, theatrical musicals, and radio dramas contributed to the plots of the television historical dramas. With this base, viewers do not expect very fresh and new points of view. In fact, the format and content of historical

²⁰ The Chapter on *Home Dramas* considers the female emotional bond. One woman with strong embracing ability is highly likely to get other group members involved in repeated emotional exchanges. The female emotional bond has a comprehensive and multilateral construction.

dramas are repeated many times with few challenges to the well-known traditional stories.

Historical costume dramas seem to portray national and nationalistic ideals. However, by analyzing the dramas we recognize that is not completely true as historical dramas take place at the family level. In the drama, *The King and I*, loyalty to the king is not loyalty to the nation, but to the royal family. The historical costume dramas have shown complex characterization of the men and women who surround the patriarch. The Queen Dowager is seen as a powerful matriarch as she supports her grandson in his struggle for the throne. The royal family's fights among different princes over the throne are accompanied by villainesses who seem to be successful but who either disappear or end in ruin. Virtuous women suffer at the hands of dominating women and men alike. The women, men and eunuch servants are held together in a web of family-like relationships.

In historical dramas portraying military heroes, the male bond excludes any female disruptions, and the heroes build a patriarchal society which is not subjected to women's influence; patriarchy in the world of men is like the army. The usual male bond in historical dramas does not reach the same state as the strong emotional female bond presented in other genres. An emotional male bond is not successfully depicted in the drama, but the trial is priceless. Nevertheless, In historical dramas which male writers are dominating, women characters are not well depicted like males are. Historical dramas also give a stress on the virtues and sacrifices of women. But in the end, the sacrifices of women and the heroic efforts of men all go to strengthen or restore the patriarchal order. The complexities and contradictions of that order are shown, however, in the extraordinary sacrifices it requires from all its participants.

3. PROFESSIONAL DRAMAS

Professional dramas describe working conditions and the ethos of the workplace. In the United States, television dramas featuring professions are called workplace dramas. Professional dramas explore the professional skills, workplaces and circumstances in a few professions including chefs, detectives, politicians, doctors, entrepreneurs, farmers, media employers, and attorneys. The term 'professional drama' is literally translated from the Korean term, *Chonmunjik* (profession) drama. The term conveys the original Korean word in the same way that 'historical drama' is the term translated from *Saguk* (history). Most of the professional dramas are televised in prime time as twice-a-week miniseries. In the professional dramas, in-depth professional knowledge makes the characters powerful figures who seem larger than life. This gives a reasonable background for romance and success. Professions provide the characters a certain status in order to authenticate justice, romance, and success in television dramas. Professional dramas are worthy of analysis because the status personified in the professions reflects Korean societal changes in political ideology, economics, and patriarchy. Probably, male audiences are more attracted to these dramas than to home dramas or historical dramas. However, the professional dramas are not meant to displace the female viewers' domination of the Korean drama market. The producers of television dramas continue to regard women as their key audience.

Unlike historical dramas that are based on national characters, Korean professional dramas shown on national television from the 1990s are international and transnational.²¹ Albert Moran in his introduction to *TV Formats Worldwide* presents the past debates maintaining that TV is global, national and local. Moran insists that program content was traded between nations and stations, for example between BBC and ABC. He claims that

²¹ Historical dramas were also affected obviously by Japanese ghost lore, Hong Kong action comedy, and American role-playing games. American and British costume dramas might have been inspirational resources. Nevertheless, there are two reasons historical dramas are less international than professional dramas: Television drama directors established their own tastes for nearly forty years. And the national inventory of storylines was inherited from the national writers. Most of all, copying in professional dramas led to the production of identical soap operas globally. See footnote 2.

originality in TV programs is a hard-to-achieve luxury since broadcasting means there are a high number of hours to be filled which means that there is not much emphasis on the programs' uniqueness. It is said that transnational copying together with customization of the national relay stations has been persistent in the history of television.²² Exchanges between national programs sustain transnationality,²³ a trait that the television industry achieved early on in comparison with other media which were slow and partially or entirely reluctant to 'copy' something foreign. Although not universally agreed upon, Moran states that television programs can be local, for example, Korea and Japan had local shows, news, and even local versions of soap operas, while accumulating formats and storylines 'copied' from transnational and national programs. This is seen on local TV stations in Korea which also yield their hours to Korean national programs and programs from other nations. A staff member from a local Korean station asserted that local stations are not trash cans for the central station and called for the central station to stop widening the gap between Seoul's rich population and the local poor population by continually transmitting scenes featuring the upper class.²⁴ This complaint shows that local stations had few locally produced programs.

The American series *Mr. District Attorney* (1951-1954) and British *Spycatcher* (1959-1961) are similar to the earliest form of professional television dramas in Korea, a collection of independent episodes which were barely serialized. The Special Forces and Military Police in KBS's *ER* (Episodes from Real Stories, 1964-1985) were popular professional roles in television dramas. *ER* was more like the American *US Steel Hour* (*Theatre Guild On The Air*, 1953-1961), British *Armchair Theatre* (1956-1974), and Canadian *General Motors Theatre* (1953-1961), which were collections of independent non-serialized episodes. *ER* featured spy catchers, detectives, and soldiers advocating national security and anticommunist propaganda.

²² Moran, Albert. *TV Formats Worldwide: Localizing Global Programs*. Bristol: Intellect. 2009. 15

²³ I use the word transnationality to explain that television shared its format and contents globally relatively quickly and with undisputed sharing among nations. Foreign films and theater pieces were more Koreanized and tested. For example, musicals were translated after a lapse of time. *42nd Street* was released 16 years after its first call on Broadway despite the fact that there was nothing new in the Korean version. Books and other media are quickly translated and sold in today's society, and that kind of quick sharing is reminiscent of how television developed explosively in the 60s and the 70s.

²⁴ 1972. "Local stations are not trash cans (of the central)" *Pangsongsa Saryojip* 307-318

The English 007 series movies produced starting in 1962, also supported propaganda and national security. Similarly, *ER*'s episodes featured the 1960s-80s in Korea, and the country's harsh political, economic and social changes of the time were watered down through propaganda. Although *ER* was to be serialized later, the serialized professional dramas started from MBC's *Susa Panjang* (Chief Police Investigator, 1971-1989) and *Chonwon Ilgi* (Country Diary, 1980-2002) which used professions as the subject, not as the background. *Susa Panjang* and *Chonwon Ilgi* reflected the social order and the rapidly rising economy in Korean society. *Susa Panjang*'s detectives handled petty crime and misdemeanor charges in the back streets and alleys of Seoul and focused on teaching petty criminals civic virtue. Through following the daily life of a farming family and village, *Chonwon Ilgi* depicted the rural farmers' growth into the modernized and urbanized agricultural family.

TBC's *Episodes of Ilyo-Yuho (EIY)* and KBS's *ER* in the 1960s equaled the level of quality of the *Theatre* series broadcast in the US, UK, and Canada. Making the pivotal transition from radio to television later than the foreign pioneering TV nations, Korea was efficient in developing television dramas because she imported and adapted other nations' popular formats. Being the earliest professional dramas in Korea, most episodes of *ER* and *EIY* transferred characters of many transnationally acceptable professions into Korean society. The jobs and work shown in dramas ranged from small business to spymasters. *EIY* mostly showed home dramas, and *ER* dramatized the professions relating to national security with the spice of politics. *EIY* also depicted its characters' domestic lives, such as romance between a journalist and a mistress or a widower's conflict with his daughters. *ER*'s serial drama *Now Pyongyang* (1982), which starred real politicians' characters, was much loved by spectators since it described the violence and absurdity in North Korea. Kim Jong Il's leadership was portrayed in that professional drama as nonsensical because North Korea had to be depicted as irrational in *Pangongdŭrama* (anti-communist television dramas). Kim Byungki who played the Kim Jong Il role earned the Korean award for the best actor. *Now Pyongyang* was *Pangong* (anti-communism) set on the North Korean stage, but ordinarily *ER* in the 1970s staged Korean-style James Bonds, spy catchers, and detectives who protected Korea's security. *113 Investigations Unit* (1973-1983), a story of

urban detectives and inspectors, and *Susa Panjang* attested to the preference for detectives and spy workers in the 1970s dramas.

Pangong (anti-communism) was a never-ending source for television dramas in the 1980s. Politics and its conservative drama code continued to foster necessary bigotry against North Korea and the lower social classes. Along with politics, economic development was intensely propagandized as Korea dedicated itself to moving up from the condition of a developing country. Chaebol conglomerates produced national wealth from the increased pool of jobs. The rise of Chaebol was so visible in the 1980s that businessmen became drama heroes no less admired than security agents. *The Millionaire Log* (1982-83) started from the true story of billionaire Kim Kapsun from Gongju. Kim by birth was a *Nobi* slave in a local office, who made a fortune with his own hands and became one of the nation's tycoons. Although he was a pro-Japanese billionaire who profited from peasants' labor and political partnership in the colonial era, crowds stood in line for his funeral ceremony. His success in going from the lowest, poorest class to the richest was much like the success of Korean companies and Korean economic growth after the poverty stemming from the Civil War. Kim's tale also satisfied spectators' need to blame then President Chun administration's heavy reliance on politics. From that time, the lives of Korean millionaires became one of the most frequent background settings for television dramas for the next thirty years.

Political and business dramas dealt with the worlds of politicians and economic leaders in Korea. *The Republic Series* (1989-96), *Ambitious Years* (1990), *Kukhi* (1999), *The Times of Heroes* (2004-05), and *Giant* (2010) focused on the political and social history of Korea, presenting the lives of real politicians and great business owners. *The Republic Series* showed politicians' power struggles based on true stories. *Ambitious Years* was about Hyundai's heavy industry and construction company in Korea; *Kukhi* was about the success of the Crown Bakery Company; *The Times of Heroes* showed the national economic growth called "The Han (River's) Miracle" and relevant entrepreneurs. Finally, *Giant* showed Korean politicians and company owners who led the nation's economic development. Additionally, the miniseries format after the 1990s was effective for professional dramas since producers and playwrights could

show the most impressive and dramatic job scenes in the limited period of 16-24 episodes. The format had no additional characters or extra themes compared to long-running home dramas and historical dramas.

Economic heroes of the 1980s dramas displayed more heroism than their political counterparts. Playwrights emphasized the economic leaders' self-made fortune and workaholic nature while they depicted politicians and security workers as politically savvy. Television dramas split politics and the economy decisively, and they applauded some people's contribution to the country's economic development. The drama, *Ambitious 25 Hours* (1983), recorded the success of Samsung and Hyundai. However, the soap opera was closed upon pressure from the Korean Chamber of Commerce as the present company owners were unwilling to be presented on public television. Another drama, *Hwoui Hwoui* (1988), was a biography of a venture company's owner in the mid-70s. His Chaese Company made a fortune in oil in 1974-79. His business grew from a very small retail store to one of the national trade companies in five years. Years later, spectators mistook *Hwoui Hwoui* as the real story of Yulsan or One, other mid-70s start-up companies that shared industrial histories very similar to that of Chaese. Economic heroes were depicted in less complicated plots than those of political characters. They simply built their businesses and earned a lot of money. In contrast, the political plots were complicated, with conspiracies and dark struggles shadowed by individual interests. The simpler economic plots conveyed the meaning that the economic pie became bigger and promised an economic share for all citizens.

Television dramas influenced politics. One example is the drama *Ambitious Years* that was telecast in 1989. It is said that President Lee Myung Bak (2008-13) and Minister Yu Inch'on (2008-11) established their political power from this drama. They were later elected President and Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism respectively. Yu Inch'on was the television star who played the role of the protagonist, Lee Myung Bak, in *Ambitious Years*. Lee's character in the drama showed loyalty and sacrifice for the Hyundai Company which viewers translated into dedication to Korean industrial development. Spectators in 1989 did not care that Lee's work as depicted in the television drama was fictitious. The television drama was so popular that Lee and Yu became heroes of the Korean

economy. The drama triggered Lee's career transition from a Hyundai man to a politician. There are many other television dramas and TV stars who enjoyed a brief spike in popularity in politics, business and other current affairs in Korea because of the roles they played in dramas.

The 1990s was a time of expanding professional dramas. Dramas like *Pilot* (1993), *Icing* (1996), *Supermodel* (1996), and *Medical Team Brothers* (1997), representing work and romance among pilots, ice hockey players, models, and doctors, were from Hollywood films, and they succeeded in varying the topics in Korean dramas. They were different from *Choŏwŏn Ilgi* and *ER* which were written for educational purposes. Unlike previous business dramas which relied on imaginative tales, the new dramas were more reality-based. For this reason extra professional consultation for each job in those soap operas was required. Professional dramas in the 1990s were something between stories of romance and stories of success. Most of the miniseries targeted the generation of novice workers. Therefore, the storylines were about the career-starters seeking their own way through existing business rules and structures. The soap operas also were broadcast at the time when many invested in venture companies with the sponsorship of the series.

1996's *Mimang* (A Widow), describing a literati's widow building her own business, and 1999's *Kukhi*, portraying the woman CEO of Crown Bakery Company breaking the glass ceiling, revealed the difference between political dramas and business dramas. Basically, business dramas' playwrights wrote the hero's adventurous biography, while political dramas were event-driven documentary-like soap operas. *Mimang* and *Kukhi* both drew spectators into the idea of linear growth of wealth and business. The female business owners took honest steps to accumulate wealth while rising from the bottom to the top of society. They did not give up despite barriers and failures. These two television dramas were professional enough to show Korean tradition and the foundation of commerce built upon good deeds and legal learning. The codes of linear progress and success in business dramas were also represented in *Golden Age* (2000), a soap opera that depicted a banker's growth from the time of Japanese colonial rule to the 1970s. However, *Golden Age* put more energy into issues of Korean ethnicity and confrontation between Korea and Japan.

Soap operas about politics also developed new storylines in the 2000s. *The Republic* series in the 2000s was based on facts in political history. Such serials had a firm root in the long history of radio documentary dramas and films in Korea, and the soap operas became records of political history. In *The Republic* series, broadcast for more than a decade, politicians were described through a series of incidents of selfish conflicts and greed for power within their inner circle. In contrast to business dramas, *The Republic* series led spectators to see Korean political history as a game played by a few politicians. The series did not describe the professional duties of the presidents, congressmen, or admirals portrayed, but rather through numerous incidents described the countless power struggles surrounding them. The politicians were problem solvers reacting to threats and attacks from their opponents who were the source of incessant threats such as murder, money conflicts, eavesdropping, and beatings. The storylines had little connection with the actual historical characters' status. This theme was similar to historical dramas about the struggle for enthronement among the royalty and nobility.

In 2004, a drama, *The Age of Heroes*, ended in the middle of the series allegedly because of an external threat from a business owner who was displeased with the drama exposing family matters on air. Consequently, company owners in television dramas were reduced to background characters. In other words, the tradition of biographical business dramas, that is, long serials in which elements from political and historical dramas were juxtaposed and which portrayed actual industry people with fictionalized drama scripts, had little room to continue. Instead, wealthy people in the miniseries were frequently there to boost the capitalist fantasy since the 2000s. Some main characters were wealthy business owners' progeny who fell in love with someone from a poor family. Other main characters were brave youngsters who, with their sharp insight and sense of justice, were hostile to those who were wealthy but dishonest. Few of the wealthy younger generation were taught about their family business or even expressed interest in their families' professions. In most cases, the businesses existed to give them a life of luxury and an air of superiority. Although this deterioration did not apply to all dramas, the wealthy Chaebol characters came to be decorations, not professionals in professional dramas. Television soap operas about politics turned into

romantic fiction in high-impact miniseries. *City Hall* (2009) examined a congressman's love and success that triumphed over a storm of partisan conflicts and capitalist competition. *ury* and an air of *sTaemul* and *The President* in 2010 also dramatized presidential campaigns, offering the dream of national leadership made up of pure-hearted politicians.

New topics and variations on older topics continued in the soap operas. Doctors, fashion designers and show business workers, lawyers, prosecutors, cooks, bakers, journalists, airport managers, and musicians heralded the era of professional dramas. In the beginning of the 2000s, professional dramas' popularity supplanted that of home dramas and historical dramas. As a result, home dramas and historical dramas soon adopted professional themes, and thus the boundary between the three types of soap operas became difficult to distinguish. The representative hybrid soap operas were *Jewel in the Palace* (2003-04), in which the historical drama developed a professional angle with a focus on the palace staff of chefs and nurses, and *Baker King, Kim Takgu* (2010), a home drama about bakers. In *Jewel in the Palace* a female palace staff member is skillful in cooking, Chinese acupuncture, and in medical body massage. She is beloved by her seniors and the male staff. In *Baker King, Kim Takgu*, a boy grows up to be a skilled baker despite the many hardships surrounding him from his childhood. Both soap operas are known for their authentic professional working scenes such as cooking, baking, massaging, etc. even though, in fact, they are considered to be a historical drama and a home drama respectively.

***City Hall* (2009)**

City Hall gave the most fascinating introduction to city officials and political campaigns among all the miniseries that had been aired up until 2009. This story about a congressman's love and success that triumphed over a storm of partisan conflicts and capitalist competition was very likely paying its respect to *The American President* (1995) from Hollywood. The drama begins by introducing a tenth-level city hall employee, Shin Mirae, and her friend, another petty official in city hall. Shin Mirae was a hot-

blooded political idealist who was losing her ideals and her passion for good government and concentrating her energies on making the best coffee for city hall meetings. Shin Mirae decided to change her life by challenging herself to enter a Miss Herring Beauty Contest held in her seaside city. After winning the Miss Herring title, she then went on to run for mayor of the city. Cho Guk, an intelligent deputy mayor who rebelled against the devious and powerful mayor, worked his way up to become a cool-headed lawmaker and then decided to run for the presidency of the country. After the two become romantically involved, Cho Guk asks Shin Mirae to be a puppet mayor who will help his political career. As the series progresses, Cho Guk wins the National Assembly election and Shin Mirae wins the mayoral election in the city. However, Shin Mirae refuses to be the puppet Cho Guk expected. As their relationship unfolds, Cho Guk becomes willing to give up his powerful and wealthy supporters because of his love for Shin Mirae. The two characters draw out each other's sensitivity for virtue and romance through their love for each other.

Romance and Patriarchy

Shin Mirae is a theatrical production of the dream that the power of romance can support a couple's accomplishments even in the midst of political upheaval. Internal changes in the characters of Shin Mirae, Cho Guk and the people who surround them help to bring about the transformation of Cho Guk into a humane and sensitive politician. The romance between Cho Guk and Shin Mirae changes high politics from an impersonal profession in the remote area of viewers' everyday lives, into a profession worthy of a likeable couple transformation of Cho Guk into a humane and sensitive politician. The romance between Cho Guk and Shin Mirae changes high politics from an impersonal profession in the rh pwealthy political family who supports his political ambition. Shin Mirae is described as one who grew up in the city without any special status or rights, but one who knows the city well. Her mother runs a fish stall in the local market and so Shin Mirae knows who runs which business and the price range in the city's market. Two other major characters are a married couple who are both involved in city politics while holding different political

views which cause difficulties in their personal married life. As a councilwoman, Min Juhwa, the wife, lobbies other officials while ignoring the needs of the common people who live in the city. Her husband supports Shin Mirae's civic-minded endeavors. The characters live in the city of Inju, which is at an impasse because different classes and partisan views are divided by political and personal ambitions.

The plot revolves around the two candidates' election campaigns, Cho Guk who is running for National Assembly and Shin Mirae who is running for mayor of the city, and also the plan of the major political party to move the city hall which will have undesired effects on the common citizens. Shin Mirae's idealistic commitment clashes with the major party's decision to move the city hall and brings her under attack by Cho Guk's father. Cho Guk, a first-time congressman, kneels in front of his father, to profess his love for Shin Mirea and to plead for Shin Mirae's political career. Through kneeling and confessing his love for Shin Mirae, Cho Guk shows he is willing to give up his political career for Shin Mirea's sake. At the same time, he also gives up his wealthy fiancée, Gohae. Meanwhile, Shin Mirae decides to sacrifice her private life and her love for Cho by trying to become a Wonder Woman who has the power to solve every voter's problems and to overturn evil through her own uncompromising politics. Her pledge to work for justice and for a better life for all citizens, and not for the party's interest, gives her the courage to give up her love for Cho.

Shin Mirae tells herself and the world that she is not special; she comes from *Somin*, the working class. In the midst of the many authoritative high-ranking politicians who are also running for mayor, Shin Mirae becomes powerful as she campaigns because she can attract the most citizens to her political rallies. She is one of the common people who are often powerless and cannot exercise their rights or realize their high ideals, but she does win the election and, in the end, as the mayor of the city she is able to bring her ideals to life. Spectators find the joy of renewed hope for their ideals by watching Shin Mirae's story in *City Hall*.

At some points in the series, the romance between Cho Guk and Shin Mirae takes on the quality of tragedy like *Romeo and Juliette*. The couple's circuitous but ardent love unfolding under partisan politics has a

pronounced possibility of ending tragically. The two are willing to throw away all they have for their romance and their political ideals. In *City Hall*, Cho Guk and Shin Mirae seem to be romantic beyond reason throughout the series. The two politicians live for love and the romance works beautifully. In *All About My Romance* (2013) another congressman's love is very different in that the drama keeps the main characters reasonable and cool at all times.

Within the institution of the family Cho Guk usurps the role of patriarch by stopping his father's campaign for the presidency and stepping into his place. The implication that Cho will run for the presidency adds a layer of family institution onto the nation. Family permeates all social groups from political to personal, wealthy capitalists to the economically poor, from the national to the village. It is the subtext that Shin Mirae and Cho Guk could be entangled into the machinations of those groups although they were too conscientious and too idealistic to do so. Emotionally expressive characters act out *City Hall's* romanticization of patriarchy. Virtues like romance, democracy, and independence are made explicit during the series by the unbalanced economic and political background among the characters. *City Hall* offers the patriarchal view through sensitive emotional work. Falling in love matures Cho Guk, the politician, and Shin Mirae, the "independent woman," becomes subordinate in the one-man-one-woman hierarchy.

The Guardian and Settledness

A guardian figure reveals the city as a potential incubator for patriarchy. Shin, the chair of the city council, takes on the role of Cho Guk's guardian in the last episodes. Although the city father does not have many lines or scenes in the drama, he appears to be a native of Inju since he knows the city and respects the place. He is a compassionate and venerated politician who refrains from participating in partisan interests. Although he is shown fishing and idling in Inju's countryside for most of the 20 hour running time, Shin reveals himself to be the city's guardian. His life-long interactions with the citizens and his affection for the city have

qualified him to act as a patriarch, and he is fatherly towards Cho Guk. His own family is not part of the drama. However, he has not been successful in developing the city or helping its citizens to earn a better living. His powerlessness is revealed when he is threatened by the major political parties and a multinational company. At that point Shin acknowledges Cho Guk's potential and gives him his support and hands down his authority to him. As Cho Guk makes claim to becoming the patriarch of the city by launching a development plan for the city, he inherits Shin's authority and interpersonal relationships. Cho Guk's role as a patriarch is established in his romance with Mirae, and it is also inherited from Shin. Similar guardian figures are also seen in historical dramas such as Soeguino²⁵ in *The King and I* who transfers her matriarchal authority to the patriarch-to-be and takes her leave.

Settled places staged in soap operas are fundamental to patriarchy. The citizens of Inju were inactive in the politics of their city and had no expectations for a better life. The drama emphasized the role of women in the city, particularly the women who ran its markets. However, the city was neither matriarchal nor feminine. The women did not show feminine passivity.²⁵ Feminine passivity is a trait that matriarchs and heroines embrace while rogue matriarchs, villainesses, and failed heroines reject it. For women, passivity does not mean being a passive observer. This female passivity enables a man to achieve a patriarchal role through the women being active in supporting and assisting him. Such passivity gives the woman the power of shaping patriarchy and managing it. Shin Mirae's family had no father-figure present; she grew up in a non-patriarchal realm. Through her relationship with Cho Guk, Shin Mirae becomes aware of the effectiveness of cultivating feminine passivity to help both of them succeed in the elections. Women in Inju learn the politics of having feminine passivity and its use in shaping patriarchy. Politics is an institution in which patriarchal values rule. These women change Inju's patriarchal system so it supports the citizens in alliance with Shin Mirae, the mayor. The women characters and Shin Mirae are like the women and courtiers who support dynastic rulers in historical dramas.

²⁵ Radway, 1991. 97, 119-156

After introducing audiences to the city of Inju, the soap opera uses the character of Min Juhwa, Shin Mirae's foil and a married member of the city assembly who belongs to the major party, to uphold the patriarchal family. The drama uses her infertility as a parallel to her failure to persuade the citizens to vote for her party and to her failure to maintain emotional interpersonal relations. As the female foil to Shin Mirae, Min Juhwa maligns Shin Mirae's romance with Cho Guk and threatens the city's stability by opposing the patriarchal authority of Cho Guk. A female foil is not as powerful as a rogue villainess. She is confined to the role of interfering with romance and the heroine's consequent glamour. Thus, Min Juhwa's initial wish for a united, richer city is overlooked and her political ability in negotiations and responsibilities is seen as acting with evil intent. Min Juhwa is tamed into patriarchy in the last episodes with the news that she has conceived a child. Min Juhwa is used to emphasize the stability which originates from patriarchy by juxtaposing her early failure as a villainess and then her happiness as a woman transformed by impending motherhood.

The city is shown to be a patriarchal place, an extension of viewers' patriarchal places, including home and workplace. The characters live in the settled place, so they interact frequently according to the social hierarchy through expressing their emotions. A house in home dramas is a representative settled place for interpersonal relations. If the places are fixed and regular in the characters' surroundings, television drama viewers find a model for their roles in life. We will see that unsettled places destroy patriarchy in *Air City* and *Golden Time*.

***Air City* (2007) and *Golden Time* (2013)**

In the serial, *Air City*, airport employees, Jisung, Dokyung, Myungwoo, Hajoong, and Um, have their own parts to play as they face many airport crises such as an art collection theft, a Korean American's armed confrontation, an airport time bomb alarm, etc. Jisung works for National Security and is seeking revenge for his national security coworker's murder; Dokyung is an airport executive manager; Myungwoo is a doctor in charge

of the airport hospital; and Hajoon is a coworker of Dokyung. Um is in charge of the airport's cleaning crew. *Air City* is 99% composed of work scenes.

In *Golden Hour*, Doctor Choe, his head nurse, and residents Jaein and Minwoo work in the emergency room of a large clinic. *Golden Hour* refers to the small window of time when patients can best be helped by skilled care in the emergency room. The medical staff, patients and their clinical treatment are the main subjects of the soap opera. The story revolves around Doctor Choe's efforts to have the emergency room become a department in the hospital equal to surgery and internal medicine, etc. Personal issues, such as the fact that the head nurse loves Dr. Choe, and Jaein's and Minwoo's inner conflicts as novice workers in the clinic, are not treated as important issues.

Realism and Unsettledness

The most critical problem in professional dramas is presented in *Air City* and *Golden Time*: the professionals presented in the fictional story must show real professional expertise to spectators. Most Korean professional dramas are produced with multi-layers of the unlikely wrappings of romance for the professionals. Without relying on imaginative layers, such as family entanglements, *Air City* (AC) and *Golden Time* (GT) choose to be realistic. Portraying the appearance of professional reality is the most critical and the most difficult level of television production to be achieved. This level is not reached by words but by visuals such as airport workers' simple hand ticketing or a drop of blood passing through a narrow transparent tube during surgery. Spoken jargon is fictional but each motion is real. In this way, professional dramas are effective in achieving realism. In that aspect, professional dramas are different from historical costume dramas which are full of our preconceptions, and from home dramas which structure the plot through dialogue. *Air City* pioneers the sphere of realism. Contrary to *City Hall*, the drama concentrates on the performance of the job rather than on romantic stories about the airport. *Air City* pursues the real professional activities of airport employees which is unusual in the

format of television drama. *Air City* seems to have been used by the government and the airport authorities to show off the perfection of the airport.



<Figure 2. *Air City*>

Other professional dramas also choose realism over romanticization. Soap operas are produced for daily viewing; the viewers' ritual watching of each episode ideally helps them to find meaning in their daily life and provides guidance for their proper function in the social system. The story's content may increase the viewers' sensitivity to their own interpersonal relationships in daily life. For example, one-man-one-woman romances provide viewers with emotionally satisfying models. Artifices presented in soap operas have to be sufficiently engaging to encourage the viewers to continue watching. The most engaging plots are created through emotional interactions among the characters, rather than plots involving an individual character acting alone. When the story is too intellectual, characters don't appear interested in each other, and viewers also lose interest. Some professional dramas stage stories in situations and places that have no emotional meaning for viewers. They also over-emphasize the characters' trustworthiness as professionals and the professional group's sophistication

by presenting them in a hard unemotional light. Forming realistic and professionally capable characters at the expense of emotional interpersonal relationships disappoints viewers who are accustomed to identifying with and finding meaning for their lives in soap operas. *Air City* and *Golden Time* did not interest viewers to the same extent that *City Hall* attracted its audience. All three miniseries had 20 episodes. Research shows that *City Hall* attracted over 20% of the audience while *Air City* and *Golden Time* attracted approximately 10% of the audience.

Air City and *Golden Time* are staged in unusual spaces where people come and go, and both series' plots center around emergencies. These two soap operas have unattached characters who are ready to leave their workplace at any time. *Air City's* airport manager, Dokyung, tells the National Security agent, Jisung, that airports are her home because watching so many departures and arrivals comforts her. The comfort she finds in the airport community is tied to her childhood experience of leaving and abandoning her younger sister when she left the country. *Golden Time's* emergency room is a fluctuating space in the hospital in the sense that the patients who are treated by the doctors and nurses leave quickly either by being admitted to a ward, by being discharged or by dying. The emergency room is even more transient in its interpersonal relationships than *Air City* where the regular characters have offices and co-workers. The characters in both dramas are not given ground to settle down. This difference in settings is in contrast to home dramas, historical dramas and other romantic professional dramas which have plots rooted in a familiar setting. Settledness does not guarantee successful patriarchy, but unsettledness signifies failed patriarchy. That is, patriarchy is successful when patriarchal factors, like the father's authority, are respected by his wife and children or when a one-man-one-woman romance ends with a wedding. Stories of failed patriarchy, as usually seen in professional television dramas, star indecisive characters who have little authority or men and women who avoid romance and relationships.

The reason that professional soaps do not promote patriarchal logic is that the admiration for professional workers is high even without being coated with virtues of patriarchal authority and filial obedience, or with romantic emotions and other layers of illusion. *Air City* is a promotional

product for two Korean governmental institutions, IIAC (Incheon International Airport Corporation) and NIS (National Intelligence Service, the new title of previous KCIA). "To raise the brand value of the airport," the governmental bodies, including customs, police headquarters, Ministry of Justice, and NIS, provided information, the work force, and access to the filming locations to the television drama. Although the drama producers complained that the cooperation of the government was very limited, the five-million Won, 16-hour soap opera benefited from many governmental structures. The actors and staff were given permission to pass into the secured areas and to wear official uniforms. In its draft, *Air City* had to agree to give more attention to a realistic view rather than to romanticization. *Golden Time* does not have a specific promotional background although some medical clinics were publicized. *Golden Time* portrays a competitive professional game among doctors who have superior medical knowledge and skills, leaving little room for familial or romantic ties among the characters. The operating room displays only surgical tools and parts of the human body being operated on. The series is all about diagnosis, medical emergencies, operations, and moving from the emergency room to the operating theater. Intimacy is not featured.

The serial form distinguishes television dramas from other mediums' dramas. In contrast to novels, films, and theatrical plays which have endings, television dramas promise the audience a new next episode. In the case of the long running series, *Choŏnwoŏn Ilgi*, this promise was kept for some twenty years. Introducing a new format, *Air City* and *Golden Time* did not promise that each character would be safe in the next episode. Although the main characters live through to the end of the series, at times minor characters did not come back. Deaths and farewells were faced at certain moments. Home dramas spend months of broadcasting time examining in detail one event in the characters' lives—for example, taking care of a daughter-in-law who broke her arm in *Dear Parents*. However, in professional soap operas there is no hesitation to sound the beep signifying that a patient's heart stopped or to show that a gang member has been killed.

Emotional detachment is the top quality of these professional workers. Jisung, a national security agent, who is stationed at the airport after his

colleague's murder, chases the murderer through the airport. During the pursuit, Jisung has to jump over the security desk breaking airport rules. Dokyung, a newly recruited executive of the airport standing beside the desk with an airport policemen, watches calmly and gives the command, "Arrest him (Jisung)!" allowing the murderer to escape. The airport security law has to be observed. Dokyung is present in the chase scene to show the spectators that even though she is a woman, she is a professional and has authority. Her professional quality keeps the airport's customer service and immigration control well managed. There are airport security procedures that must be followed even if they interfere with another agency's investigation. Jisung is equally proud of his professional responsibilities. The national security agent at times disrupts the entire airport's activities to catch an unknown suspect. He also admonishes a colleague who unprofessionally jokes at work. Other characters exhibit the same professional quality. The airport cleaning and support crews help the airport's commissioners and police officers investigating a drug cartel. Other national security agents and prosecutors cooperate with crews to keep the airport hassle- and crime-free.

The drama does not show the characters sleeping; their work schedule does not give time for rest. The drama is aired to showcase ethics in the work place, not to showcase individual heroes working alone. *Air City* creates an airport world of professionals who are not concerned about romance; they are not tempted to step into romantic relationships despite the indications of romantic attraction among four main characters. Jisung's ex-girlfriend, Myungwoo, is the doctor in charge of patient care and disease control at the airport who is on standby twenty four hours a day. Viewers learn that when she was diagnosed with cancer three years earlier she hid her disease from Jisung and ended their relationship. However, when they meet again at the airport, they do not resume their relationship. Although Jisung and Dokyung work closely together, they maintain a distance between them.

Failed Patriarchy

Just as *Air City* uses characters for their professional service of the airport rather than developing each character's personal life, so *Golden Time* does the same for the clinic's Emergency Room. *Golden Time* is a medical show about technology. It rejects any idea of non-medical storylines. Dr. Choe, the head of the Emergency Room, neglects his own physical and mental needs, but he does not allow a patient to slip through his hands. He does not accept the invitation to an emotional attachment when the head nurse, who has a fiancé tells him that she has liked him for three years. The doctor reminds himself that he has not now, and never will have, any thought for love or wealth, and he does not desire a family. Despite his refusal, the head nurse later leaves her fiancé behind the promise of a comfortable life to continue to work with Dr. Choe in the hospital. Aside from the compassionate feelings that Dr. Choe has for his patients, the characters are not developed to prioritize their personal lives so the interns and residents rarely speak of their emotions or individual issues. They communicate using medical jargon to show their clinical knowledge to spectators. The group's nature is firmly bound in their caring for patients, not in interpersonal moments between the characters.

Patriarchal factors stemming from romance as we saw it in *City Hall* are not found in these dramas. However, in *Air City* and *Golden Time*, despite the fact that the setting in the beginning episodes was not the soil to cultivate patriarchal notions, the airport Chief of NIS and Dr. Choe do turn into fatherly figures towards the end of the series. The NIS Chief ends up revealing his failure as a fatherly figure in three episodes. In *Golden Time*, Dr. Choe intentionally denies the role of patriarch in that he does not assert the absolute patriarchal rule that is usual in medical clinics, and he is ready to give up everything in a struggle against a group of hospital surgeons who oppose his plans to enlarge the scope of the emergency room. He is momentarily fatherly to interns while teaching them and guiding them to think only of saving patients, but he is not inclined to form a bond with the group. He urges them to leave his hospital and relocate in better positions.

Where there is no authoritative patriarchal character, there is a tragic character. Um, the manager of the airport's cleaning department, has lost his family and so he allows Jisung to live in his boarding house, and refers

to him as his son. Um invites two more foreign “sons” to live in his house. His longing for the lost son—longing for what he cannot retrieve—reveals his loss of the patriarchal position. Um nurtures his adopted “sons” because he wants to be nurtured by the presence of a family. Female neighbors and his niece do not help him to build patriarchal authority. His nurturing of men who are outside his family and who will eventually leave the airport is as tragic as his remaining at the airport. He is unwilling to move from the house he lived in with his family and he is unable to leave his airport crew whom he treats as family. The airport and the emergency room are not places that promote romantic or domestic patriarchal values.

In addition to the concept of patriarchy being limited by the absence of father figures, in professional dramas romance is also fleeting and atypical. Korean soap operas usually present spectators with one-man-one-woman romances, and present romance as the most essential plot content. In contrast, romance in *Air City* and *Golden Time* is unexplored and unresolved. *Air City*'s four workers, Jisung, Hajoon, Dokyung, and Myungwoo are too busy with their work to develop their romantic feelings; their relationships are not confined to the romantic plot of typical Korean soap operas but remain professional. As mentioned above, Myungwoo, Jisung's ex-girlfriend, had hidden her cancer, and had left him three years earlier. Jisung, a security agent whose life is in constant peril because of his volatile work as a NIC agent, had looked to Myungwoo for love and stability, but she left him without explanation. Now, the security agent, with two heroines at his side, does not allow himself to fall into the trap of romance. At the same time, Dokyung, a possible new love interest, does not allow herself the emotional ride of a romance. Jisung, Myungwoo, and Dokyung keep their distance from each other emotionally. A fourth character, Hajoon, the airport's manager, would like to cultivate a romantic relationship with Dokyung. No matter how earnestly Hajoon tries to get closer to Dokyung, the airport work itself and the other three characters' interactions among themselves interfere and his efforts are in vain. It is understandable that during the airing in 2007 spectators identified with the romantically inclined Hajoon instead of Jisung and Dokyung, the main characters. Hajoon was expressive, forthright and intimate, so he invited spectators' emotional involvement.

Golden Time shows what happens when a man who is indifferent to romance, and who uses his nurturing ability outside the romantic realm meets a woman who does not present female submissiveness in a soap opera. Romance is possible if the characters are endowed with expressive and passionate emotions—which are the fundamental qualities of beloved characters in soap operas. Romance takes place when male affection meets feminine acquiescence. Patriarchal romance starts from women viewing men as their patriarchs, and their view is heightened by their feminine compliance. A man’s ability to be tender, caring and loving²⁶ is very important in soap operas. The male’s quiet exterior must accentuate his soft interior that will nurture the woman’s feminine passivity. Dr. Choe and the head nurse, and the two residents, Jaein and Minwoo, in *Golden Time*, are worse in romance than the airport’s crews since they are not even given the personality qualities for romance. The soap opera does not have them express their emotions; it also does not put them in situations that would stimulate relationships. As mentioned earlier, in *Golden Time*, Dr. Choe’s emotions are totally devoted to his patients in the ER, and are thereby unavailable for a one-man-one-woman romance. Dr. Choe is indifferent to everything including his personal everyday life; all of his passion goes into his care for his patients. The two residents, Jaein, a young man, and Minwoo, a young woman, do not understand Dr. Choe’s blind devotion to the patients in the emergency room. However, Dr. Choe nurtures them by teaching them his principles about patient care along with the medical skills and knowledge they need for their development. In the beginning of the series, viewers expect the two young resident doctors will become romantically involved as they get to know each other and become more emotionally expressive. Instead, Minwoo inherits Dr. Choe’s commitment to the patients and she also becomes indifferent to everything except developing her surgical skill. The romantic possibility between Jaein and Minwoo disappears as does that between Dr. Choe and the head nurse.

When the three powerful institutions of modern society, medicine, education, and the state justice system constrain their members’ lives, the

²⁶ Radway, 1991. 127-128 To become more feminine is to be able to nurture, and to express tender feelings. Becoming more feminine is a way to draw others’ feminine side with emotional exchange based on the person’s feminine power to embrace others.

professionals neglect other group relationships, such as family and friends, and reduce their unique self to their work and work projects. In television professional dramas this focusing only on the workplace produces self-sufficient characters. Work places change and people are in flux in *Air City*. *Golden Time's* Dr. Choe voluntarily isolates himself, and does not accept familial relationships or a romance with the head nurse who mothers him. Dr. Choe is constantly focused on the drops of blood going into a patient, or the injured parts of a body, and the needs of his patients. Jisung and Dr. Choe, the male heroes, reject any humanized and familial structure in the workplace, and they remain relationship-free and independent instead. The female characters do the same.

Conclusion

Most professional short serial dramas trace and follow the same format as long serials. While entangled with different levels of affection and relationships, the characters are engaged in building and supporting the patriarchal system in national and local politics. *City Hall* is such an example: a young man seeking a seat in the National Assembly becomes involved with a woman who is running for mayor of her city. Shin Mirae, the female protagonist, successfully supports Cho Kuk in winning his election and with his support becomes mayor. Elements of the family structure and male-female relationships permeate Korean social groups from the political to the capitalist systems.

There are other professional dramas which, through their emphasis on professional skills and work place, are not based on the patriarchal family values that are loved by Korean drama producers and viewers. Dramas such as *Air City* and *Golden Time*, actively and intentionally reject the patriarchal culture. For both the men and women in these soap operas, the rejection seems to be liberating. Liberation from the patriarchal system allows the characters to be detached and independent. This development of short miniseries soap operas brought a new phase to Korean television dramas.

4. HOME DRAMAS

Home dramas, family dramas, called domestic dramas in English-speaking countries,²⁷ are included in the genre called home dramas/home drama (in Korean, *Homdŭrama*). The designation of home drama is said to have originated from the Japanese television dramas at the opening of the NHK TV station of Japan. However, the narratives of home dramas were derived from American television dramas, since the imported US television dramas took up considerable on-air time in Korea and Japan for decades.

Ilil weekday and *Chumal* weekend soap operas are about family and patriarchal values. The extended television household has a lineage of grandparents, parents, sons and daughters featured in the leading roles, as well as great-grandchildren. The families of neighbors, relatives, and in-laws support the large family when it comes to important events and incidents. Fathers are usually mediators between family members. Mothers spend time and consummate skill peacemaking in their children's marriages and in husband-wife relationships. Grandparents are the educational center transmitting their lifetime knowledge to the rest of the family. The family order and patriarchal structure have to be upheld. Most of the problems, the focal points for the soap operas' dramas, are triggered either by those who are not obedient to the family structure or those who obsessively impose strict orders on the pretext of upholding the family structure.

Like other genres in television drama, home drama is a genre invented during the development of American television dramas. The popularity of *The Goldbergs* (1949) and *These Are My Children* (1949) influenced the development of home dramas in the history of television dramas for the next decades. The trend of home dramas was picked up by other nations as TV formats became global. A former executive of a Korean broadcasting station in an interview²⁸ about launching *Stepmom* (1972) said that he recommended Kim Suhyŏn, a previously unknown freelance

²⁷ Newcomb, 1987. Modleski, 2008

Allen, Robert C. *Speaking of Soap Operas*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985

Pioneering studies in television and its form of drama hardly call television dramas by any other name but soap opera(s). Genre division in soap operas includes domestic home dramas, workplace dramas, historical dramas, etc.

²⁸ July 12, 2013 "Kim Suhyŏn's Forty Five Years" *Joseon Ilbo*

http://senior.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2013/07/12/2013071200814.html

television playwright, but a good writer of radio home drama, because he recognized the popularity of home dramas in America and Japan. Although he spoke as though home dramas started to gain influence around 1970, home drama was one of the earliest formats in television and radio dramas and in film. In Korea, the 1960s was the heyday for family drama movies that had a setting similar to TV home dramas. *Romance Papa* (1960), *The Stray Bullet* (1961) and *The Coachman* (1961) were the cinematic examples. All three depict a father's joy and despair as the family members experience ups and downs. *The Flintstones* and *Bewitched* in the United States and *Seven Grandsons* (1964-66) in Japan show that the 1960s was an international period of broadcasting home dramas. From 1965 to 1970 Korea's TBC also broadcast shorter format home dramas in the *Episodes of Ilyo-Yuho* (EIY), a show written by Yu Ho, one of the legendary playwrights.

Home dramas had to have many episodes in a long run to describe a family's everyday life. *Assi* (1970-71, 253 episodes), *Yŏro* (1972, 211 episodes), *Stepmom* (1972, 411 episodes), and others were broadcast for a similar length of one or two years with little variation in content. *Assi* was about a virtuous lady's marriage under a cruel mother-in-law. It was similar to *Yŏro's* marriage to a handicapped, mentally-challenged husband in a big family. *Stepmom* depicted a generous stepmom's life path of devotion to the family, at the end of which, after many struggles, she was recognized as a good mother. Home dramas were a mixture of melodrama, comedy, and *shinpa*, a new school of tear-jerking story-telling. The playwrights included Yu Ho and Kim Suhyŏn who wrote home dramas in the 1970s. The goal of the playwrights was to win the spectators' sympathy for the soap opera family which was a dramatic representation of an extended family. As a long run was necessary to build a firm familial hierarchy, these soap operas had to be centered on patriarchal values. A mentally-challenged husband's character could be less patriarchal, but the drama was not so. The daily circumstances were harsher for the handicapped husband's wife, and 'the patriarchal domination' was carried out by her mother-in-law and the large extended family for which the wife had to sacrifice herself. The characters, such as a mentally-challenged husband and a stepmother, showed that patriarchy was so strong that even they were included in the system. In fact, viewers' tears streamed because of

the emphasis on the characters' lack of normality. In the typical structure of the home drama stories, there was a major heartbreak which affected all of the family members, such as the introduction of a young stepmother or the beautiful wife's mentally-challenged husband. As there were large numbers of people in and around the family, there were ceaseless incidents to drive the plot. The characters expressed *Hinoaerak* (happiness, anger, sadness, and joy) and shared *Jung* (affection), and ample emotional relationships and interactions among members in the family. Although there are fewer episodes, this structure is still effective in presenting large households in present day weekend and weekday home dramas.

Spectators in the 1970s and the '80s were exposed to important social themes through soap operas. Na Yŏnsuk from 1979 produced home dramas about poor urban hillside places where internal migrant workers dwelled when they moved from the countryside to Seoul. *Ya Komryeya* (1979-80) and *Taldongne* (1980-81) won the government's praise because the dramas changed the common perception of poor hillside towns which had been bywords for urban failures before the series were telecast. The writer's *Ordinary People* (1982-84, 491 episodes) became popular not only as a popular term but as a soap-opera-defined new social class called "ordinary people." In his 1986 presidential campaign, the former Korean President Roh Tae Woo ran for election with the phrase, "I am an ordinary man, I want to be the president for your, ordinary men's, well-being." *Pot'ong-saram*, the Korean word for *Ordinary People*, had the power of compromising the Conservatives and their populist critics.²⁹ However, the divisive politics of the Noh administration diluted the symbolic power of *Pot'ong-saram*. Koreans from all classes were not included in the policies under his administration in the same way that the soap opera's characters were accepted by their warm-hearted neighbors in *Ordinary People*. This is an extraordinary example of the influence of television dramas on the spectators' political opinions. Home dramas were often top ranked in the number of spectators in nationwide surveys. That was because the playwrights wrote about the daily details of representative and wide-ranging Korean families, and because Korean spectators were looking for a stabilized social formula for their lives.

²⁹ February 23, 1989 *Kyunghyang Shinmun* Lee Chungbok, "When It Will Be, the Era of Ordinary People"

Television dramas also represented the government's efforts to organize social order in urban areas and modernized rural areas. Soap operas portrayed poor and middle class urban side streets as places preserving premodern values like affection between neighbors and nurturing urban manners and social order. Rural areas in soap operas were shown as modernized and clean and advanced in technology. Rural towns were not different from urban towns since they were also shown as maintaining virtue and developing into orderly places. Soap operas like *Chŏnwŏn Ilgi* (1980-2002), and *One Rooftop, Three Families* (1986-94) influenced viewers' thinking about the social and familial order by presenting models of families living in the urban and rural areas in cooperation and harmony with their neighbors. *Chŏnwŏn Ilgi*'s senior figure promoted cooperation and orderly behavior among the town people. *One Rooftop, Three Families*' house was where people living in an urban backstreet reconciled their differences to maintain peace.

Viewers in the 1980s and 1990s watched *Love and Truth* (1984-85), *Seoul Ttukbaegi* (1990-91), *What Is Love* (1991-92), *Love Hanging on the Date Tree* (1990-2007), *Son and Daughter* (1992-93), *The Couple* (1994-98), *Men of The Family Spahouse* (1995-96), *First Love* (1997), and *You and Me* (1997-98). All of these were long-running shows, at least more than a year, that focused on depicting the middle class' daily lives in each episode. These home dramas were broadcast in prime time on weekdays and weekends, and were called *Yŏnsokgŭk*, the primetime full-hour long serial dramas. They included *Ilil Yŏnsokgŭk*, a long-running weekday evening series, and *Chumal Yŏnsokgŭk*, a weekend evening series. The dramas were assigned to the time that spectators' families gathered around the television after dinner at home. The soap operas were one reason Korean families and friends got together at home. It was said that no cars or people were on the street during the hours of popular television dramas. Before the 2000s, these dramas targeted all family members, and some were so popular that they were perceived as a national event. However, after that time, soap operas were written more for women than for men. There was a popular perception that the male audience was supposed to be more interested in the news channels, and that women were more attracted by the emotional stories of the soap operas.

The spectators who were attracted to daily dramas were interested not only in the extended families, but also in the roles that were typified in soap operas. The large household and the characters in dramas never departed from the standardized pattern. They maintained the regularity required in Korea. For example, inviting an extraterritorial alien to the house as in American NBC's *ALF* (1986-1990) was the last thing that could happen in Korean soap operas—*ALF* was popular in Korea, but no similar plots have appeared in Korean soap operas despite the popularity of the American series. *Yŏnsokgŭk* dramas used all kinds of characters in the plots. Structured representation of family and social roles with a wide variety of unique characters was the specialty of long soaps.

The definition and content of home dramas have not changed much even up to the present. The primetime series combine all sorts of stories including comedy, melodrama, docudrama, sitcom, and romance but within a certain regularity. Television stations' investment allowed them to incorporate many ways of attracting viewers in the prime time *Yŏnsokgŭk*. They were quick to close unsuccessful series and to extend the life of popular series. Directors, writers, and actors chosen by the networks were older veterans, popular stars, and newcomers with high potential in the broadcasting field. Thus, few of the *Yŏnsokgŭk* series received low ratings. The series also worked to promote young actors with high potential by introducing new talent to viewers. Long series which ran for more than a year or slightly less became popular shows for their stations and steady sources of income. TBC in the 1970s and MBC in the 1980s were two pillar television stations of *Yŏnsokgŭk* in the history of Korean television dramas. KBS revived its division of series soap opera from the mid-1990s.

Since the mid-2000s, Korean soap operas have been criticized for their absurd storylines, called *Makjang* in Korean. Examples of such plots are: two families with four marriages between them; a stepmother's son married the stepmother's hidden daughter; a playwright, abandoned by her father's remarriage, plays havoc with her father's new wife, an actor, by writing a drama in which the new wife is abused by others; a surrogate mother married her client's brother, her son's uncle. Those serial soap operas weakened public acceptance of the television dramas but drew contrasting reviews. Absurdity in storytelling found enthusiastic acceptance

among a segment of spectators who enjoy watching weird and exciting stories. Some steadfast women fans applauded *Makjang* dramas with their nonsensical storylines while others in Korean society worried about the harm done by the immorality portrayed in the series. The outspoken independent women's voices in this type of drama and plots revolving around women's revenge on their enemies and confrontations between men and women divided social opinion. The earlier home dramas had shown dysfunctional families restored to the values of hierarchy, respect, and unity, but *Makjang Yŏnsokgŭk* serials in the 2000s questioned family values by presenting women's new life possibilities. This mirrored the changes occurring in Korean society. Women spectators have more possibilities and power now than at any other period of Korean history.

The most notable difference in soap opera narratives is that after the late 1990s home dramas placed little weight on the influence of neighbors and society. Current home dramas are staged within the family home and the in-laws homes. Interpersonal relationships in the workplace are given more importance than the order and harmony of the neighborhood or town because the workplace has become a part of family life. Even so, the emphasis on the extra-familial relations is meager. The backstreets of Seoul and rural towns have lost their usefulness as stages, whereas in recent soap operas the family's household contains more roles. Various characters in the family and in the in-law families replace neighbors and town people as central characters. Therefore, home dramas illuminate the move from societal relations to familial and personal relations. It is not that familial relations were not the main theme of earlier home dramas, but the order of the surrounding society and towns was heavily emphasized in the 1980s to the extent that soap operas shed light on the town's people and spotlighted only a few family members. Home dramas have come to focus on each family member in familial interpersonal relationships. These recent home dramas emphasize the emotional identification between viewers and the female characters and the bonding among female characters.

<Figure 3. *Dear Parents*; the An family. >



Dear Parents (2004-05, *Pumonim Chŏn Sangsŏ*)

In the series called, *Dear Parents*, An Gyogam, the father in the drama, is a quiet man. Okhwa, his wife and mother of four, usually speaks for him. As An is mostly silent, his reserve gives flexibility to his caring and nurturing nature. He is a patriarch with feminine qualities in that he comforts family members, takes action for his family at decisive moments, and also writes letters to his late parents as a soliloquy expressing his filial piety. His writing and its narrated emotion is the path the character takes to meet spectators, enabling them to understand his psyche. Okhwa, his wife, takes the typical female role of home dramas, supporting the father's patriarchal position. All concerns about their children are revealed through her conversations as she addresses questions to her husband and their four children. Her emotions are dynamic and expressive in the drama. They range from rage and fear, to comfort and catharsis, all centered on the events in her children's lives. The four children, Sungsil, Jihwan, Junghwan, and Sungmi were raised to be honorable and upright. The soap opera opens with Sungsil's announcement of her divorce. Sungsil's and Changsoo's, her husband's, family will eventually patch the couple's damaged family back together. The other three children go through romance and marriage. Jihwan, the first son, marries Ari, an upper-class woman. Junghwan, the second son, marries Miyun, his close friend. Sungmi, the second daughter, meets an unpleasant boyfriend and breaks

up with him at the end. The An family's endowment of virtue and its established patriarchal values of the father's authority and the children's respect for their parents and others give spectators an understanding of how family should function in Korea. In *Dear Parents*, spectators are given emotional education, for example: reading another's psyche, learning family roles and relationships, and striving to understand others.

Subordination and Anxieties

Fear and anxieties of being excluded from the patriarchal family rule the soap opera. The fear of exclusion encourages female characters to support the patriarchal family structure. So the An family helps Sungsil to restore her marriage and family, a process which lasts for the entire 68 hours the series ran. By starting with Sungsil's losing her temper when her husband is unfaithful, the soap opera articulates the fear and anxiety of being alienated from her husband and excluded from the family. Portraying such fear generates the belief that inclusion in the patriarchal family is the highest value. It implies that all virtues originate from the patriarchal sphere, the family. An, the patriarch in *Dear Parents*, is an established moral figure whose morals, rules, and virtues are eventually taught to the imperfect men such as his unfaithful son-in-law and patriarchs-to-be, his two sons. Women in the family are active participants in and managers of this process by taking on the task of nurturing patriarchs and supporting their dominance.

Working women and women shown at work are important in *Dear Parents* since the television drama shows a view of women's independent authority in a society in which they are usually submissive. While they are commonly viewed as having only a supporting role in the family, women also have important business roles in society and are capable in many spheres. They not only work constantly in the home; many are also breadwinners. Women's ability and knowledge are portrayed in this drama through a variety of roles: working in the family home, being employed in a clothing company, drawing up business contracts, and owning a restaurant. Daughter-in-law Miyun's mother is a restaurant owner who is

confident of her skillful management to earn her family's living. Mothers of the families are diligent workers. Ari's stepmother keeps her home fresh and she fills the kitchen with good food. Sungsil joined a company to gain her financial independence, and she also proves her ability to care for her autistic child. Sungmi and Miyun are also independent career women. However, Sungmi's work in the clothing company and Miyun's work as a playwright are not portrayed as specifically as Okhwa's household chores. Even so, Sungmi's and Miyun's work is talked about more than the men's work in their conversations.

As the soap opera presents relationships and communications among family members in the context of their home life, household chores are prominently displayed. Okhwa educates Ari and Junghwan while preparing boiling water. The task of boiling water is thoroughly portrayed, from bringing a pot to the outside kitchen, starting a fire with wood, putting water in the pot and placing the pot on the fire. Okhwa's dominance in the family is confirmed as she carries out her housewife's tasks.

The soap opera does not take men's work seriously. Although the men are accompanied to the door by family members when they go out to work each morning, they are not shown at their work places. Viewers know the male characters work because they leave the house each day and also through the women's conversations about them. Junghwan, the second son, and his friends are presented at work the most among the male characters because of his dependence on Okhwa for help running his snack stall business. Helping the snack stall is an extended house chore for Okhwa in the soap opera.

These capable, independent working women still find it necessary to appear to subordinate themselves to patriarchal authority within the family as they control the patriarch and guide the young men in their future roles. The women's longing for a perfect, harmonious patriarchal family structure stabilizes and restrains the father and younger men through norms and expectations that direct the male characters' attitudes and behavior. Throughout the program when a male does not conform to the norms, he is reproached, punished, and educated by the women in his family. Even the rake will be transformed as the result of the education he receives.

Thus, the soap opera, *Dear Parents*, like most Korean home dramas, requires the male characters to be ethical. Unethical males are considered unforgivable to the same extent that incompetent female characters are considered sinful. An, the father, Changsoo, the unfaithful husband, and Sungmi's unpleasant boyfriend are all inept in their own ways. However, An is established as an ethical patriarch, whereas his problematic son-in-law, Changsoo, and his daughter's unpleasant boyfriend must continually be educated in morality.

The emotional bond and conversations among the women clarify their role in upholding ethical male authority within the family. Female characters sacrifice their time and effort to nurture the male characters in the patriarchal family even when their power and ability could be used in the workplace. Single women, those who have never married or who are divorced, have a greater degree of social safety if they live with their parents, grandparents or other relatives. To avoid the anxiety of living alone without the protection of the patriarchal family, Gumjoo, An's unmarried sister, is placed in the center of the family's feminine interaction. She is forthright in personality, and earns her own living. Her single life could be pleasant living by herself, but Gumjoo chose to live with her brother's family. She does so because Junghwan, the second son, promised to hold ancestral ceremonies for her after her death, and because the family members provide emotional support for her. The fact that it is in her room where the female characters gather and talk shows that Gumjoo is a very important figure in the plot. She is attentive to and cares about all in the family. It is Gumjoo who draws out the story from Sungsil regarding Changsoo's infidelity and her decision to divorce him while other family members do not recognize the change in her seemingly model marriage. Gumjoo also gives womanly wisdom to Sungmi who is going through an emotional conflict between choosing independence as a single person and getting married. Okhwa and Gumjoo are sisters-in-law and best friends. Each night after dinner, when An retires to his desk to write the letters to his parents, Okhwa and Gumjoo sit in Gumjoo's room, singing and talking with great emotional affability. This gathering place for the female characters shows that the female emotional bond does not interfere with their subjection to patriarchal authority, but calms their anxieties and gives them emotional support so they can live within the system.

Women's place in the patriarchal hierarchy is highlighted in the role of mothers. Patriarchy exploits mother figures to maintain its stability. Mothers consider and discuss all the important and petty concerns about the family's children and relate the patriarchal values of the characters to the viewers. Presenting the mothers' role of maintaining the network of family relationships through conversation and in house chores is one way that viewers are made comfortable with patriarchal values and authority. It seems natural that mothers build networks with all the characters in their daily routine, and their actions are accepted by viewers as the ordinary work of women who maintain the patriarchal family. Viewers are generous. If soap operas provide them with models for finding their role in the patriarchal family they will accept even poorly organized stories.

The mothers' obsession to maintain patriarchal values in the family is accepted by viewers because their listening to their children's problems—commonly their fear and anxieties about abusive or unethical patriarchs—and pacifying their children are virtuous qualities in women. They may be obsessive in maintaining patriarchal authority in the family, but they are not aggressive or masculine figures. Their mother role requires them to be self-sacrificing and to be used to distractions. *Dear Parents'* mother figure, Okhwa, is constantly emotionally exhausted from taking care of her family. However, the female emotional bond among the mother, her daughters, and her sister-in-law helps Okhwa to deal with the emotional fatigue of her labor as the home maker. Her emotional strength makes Okhwa a dominant character in the soap opera. Mothers' obsession with their children is the byproduct of the process through which they give love, order and stability in the family. Women talk among themselves to find meaning in the relationships and events of everyday life in the family and pass on the traditional patriarchal family values. In this way, mothers exercise their power in the family.

Marriage

Marriages in home dramas are discussed constantly in the conversations of women, and their talk reveals fear. Changsoo, Sungsil's

unfaithful husband, is instructed through extensive conversations among the family's women including Okhwa, Sungsil, Gumjoo, and Sungmi and Sungsil's mother-in-law. They all reproach Changsoo for his indifference toward Jun, his autistic child, and praise Sungsil's decisiveness regarding her divorce. However, the fear of being divorced, not belonging to a nuclear family and being a single mother, is stronger than any other consideration, and so in the end, the women advocate for Changsoo to be forgiven and the marriage preserved. The support for Changsoo shows that the women in the family will not give up on him or dismiss him even though he is a flawed father and husband. The thought of divorce brings fear to the entire family. Okhwa and other women in the family try to prevent Sungsil's divorce as they both criticize her husband and also advocate for him. Sungsil's rogue mother-in-law argues that Changsoo will remarry after the divorce whereas Sungsil cannot because virtuous women follow the Confucian tradition of not remarrying. Okhwa and the women in the family do not even consider the possibility of Sungsil remarrying. Their plan is to educate and transform Changsoo into a better man. Dissolving the marriage and leaving Changsoo as he is are unthinkable to these women.

Dear Parents portrays 68 hours of deconstructing the decision to divorce and of restoring a selfish father and husband through virtue. Home dramas with a monogamous patriarchal background do not generally bring the discussion of divorce into the open as *Dear Parents* did in its process of reuniting the married couple. As the process of avoiding divorce is an unusual plot in romance, *Dear Parents'* plot required more firm patriarchal control (in this case the control is in the hands of the women). Avoiding divorce is linked to the repentance of a spoiled man, that is, the transformation of a rake. Regarding the restoration of a spoiled patriarch, as Modleski debates on a rake's transformability, most think that an untransformed rake is an impossible subject of a plot. Most home dramas are centered around parents endeavoring to pair their children with perfect marriage matches. Newly-weds are usually the end product of soap operas, not the resolution of conflicts between a married couple.

What makes the examinations of patriarchy in the stories of An and Changsoo interesting is the history of inept husbands in Korean soap

operas. *Assi* and *Yŏro* both show the incompetence of married males. In fact, *Yŏro*'s husband is mentally-challenged as is *Assi*'s husband. The inept patriarchs featured in Korean home dramas nonetheless possess great personality and high moral standards. Their ineptitude in worldly affairs and their lack of ability for practical management is the other side of their extraordinary personality and morality. This type of incompetent but moral and caring father is still presented in recent home dramas. In *Dear Parents*, to support the family's mission of reforming a rake, Changsoo is described with some good characteristics. His love for his family was sincere even though he could not handle life's challenges, and he began drinking to excess after learning that his son had autism. An, a reticent and quiet father in the soap opera, cares for Changsoo and makes an effort to restore his morality.

The plot involving Changsoo's return to his family invites male viewers' emotional identification. Male characters also find their ability to care for their family in other ways aside from their mothers' instruction. Marriage in soap operas forms male characters into patriarchal heads of their family. The authority Changsoo derives from his marriage gives him independence from his forceful and merciless mother. Changsoo's mother is an overbearing and demanding mother-in-law to Sungsil.

This conflict between a wife and an overbearing mother-in-law is another regular plot of home dramas; the wife and the husband cannot find their place of authority when an arrogant mother-in-law dominates the family. Often newly-weds have a conflict with a domineering mother-in-law in which they must overcome her destructive power to establish their own authority. Changsoo is supported as a father by Sungsil's family, but his mother yells at him and beats him when his infidelity is revealed. His mother scolds him for immaturity, and she blames Sungsil for her inability to maintain a comfortable home for her son. She claims that it is because of Sungsil's failure as a wife that Changsoo became involved in an extramarital relationship. *Dear Parents* shows Changsoo vehemently opposing Sungsil's decision to divorce because he wants to restore his independence from his mother. By Changsoo's return to the family with the support of the solid patriarchal values and teachings of the An family, Sungsil's marriage restores the marital patriarchy, and Changsoo recovers

his independence. Their reunion restores Sungsil's exercise of the emotional strength she needs to handle her husband and children, and restores Changsoo's emotional bond with his family and the viewers.

In the case of the second daughter of the An family, Sungmi, her pre-marital relationship with her unpleasant boyfriend also shows that marriage in soap operas invites the male viewers' emotional interaction. Sungmi admired her sister's perfect marriage (as it seemed before Sungsil's announcement of divorce) to a seemingly devoted husband and her wealthy lifestyle. Sungmi also seeks to find an established man who has morality. As her boyfriend is a spoiled child from a rich family, Sungmi tries to teach him how to live a meaningful life beyond owning an expensive car and buying luxurious items. The boyfriend reveals his inner self to Sungmi and talks about his emotions and his indecisiveness about a husband's role in marriage. Calling her his life consultant, he discusses all issues in his life with Sungmi and asks for her opinion and advice. He is a spoiled child who is in between listening to his mother and wishing to be independent. Like Changsoo, Sungmi's boyfriend actively invites an emotional bond with male viewers, but as a negative model.

The soap opera nurtures individual sensibility about women's role as the one responsible for the marriage. As said earlier, the authority role is actualized in the presence of a perfect patriarchal husband and father who has integrity and cares for his children. Subtle emotional changes and specific events portrayed in Sungsil's divorce, Ari's marrying Jihwan and Sungmi's listening to her boyfriend, facilitate this sensibility. The soap opera does not reject the social norms for a woman, and thus it does not provide a definite status or an actual authority to women. The male patriarchs occupy the concrete authority status whereas women have concealed power. The plots do not challenge the social norms of wives' obeying their husbands, their families' conventions and social norms, even when it is said that women rule the family. However, by nurturing each individual's sensibility, the television drama suggests that women create the atmosphere of home, thereby also creating an emotional bond with the viewers. As most emotions originate from female characters, the viewers come to recognize the emotional power that controls marriage and the family. The soap opera inspires its female viewers to learn how to expand

their roles and social functions through the use of emotional power.

Nurturing Fathers

Nurturing fathers are characteristic in Korean home dramas. The father's emotional power is used to nurture his children, but not his wife or other people outside of the family. Fathers' emotional power for nurturing is limited. The power resides in the father role of male characters, but it is not exercised in their role as husband or in any workplace role. The father's care for his family includes being at home, listening to his children and knowing what is happening in their lives. Such fathers express as much emotional power as the female characters do when mothering. *Dear Parents* portrays the oldest son, Jihwan's, and son-in-law, Changsoo's, emotional growth and their ability to care for others. An is already an authenticated father, skilled in nurturing his children, proven by the emotional power in his soliloquies. Before his wedding Jihwan was considered intelligent, competent and unemotional and was seen as being restrained and impassive. His marriage changes his character in the house so he seems foolish, as he starts to express his emotions in his relationship with Ari, his wife. He follows the route to become a vulnerable, moral, gentle patriarch, changing completely from an impassive intellectual. Changsoo's character shows male development in emotions for nurturing even more clearly than Jihwan. Sungsil wanted to divorce Changsoo because of his lack of care for his autistic son and his infidelity. He grows emotionally mature so that by the end of the soap opera, he is able to communicate with and nurture Jun better than Sungsil.

The difference between women's and men's emotional power lies in the restricted use of emotional nurturing. Female characters use their emotions to bond with other characters, mostly forming strong relationships between women. For the men, their wives and marriages help them to develop the ability to nurture their children, but their emotional power is spent only on their children. Once they become fathers, the men do not use their emotions to bind themselves to other families, friends, and/or their wives. Although there are soap opera scenes of husbands and

wives going on social outings such as meeting friends and attending weddings, the scenes only show them leaving home or the fathers are silent throughout the social occasion. Women find support and wisdom from the bonds they create outside of the patriarchal family. Ari's active exchange with Okhwa and Sungsil highlights Jihwan's lack of communication with family members. Okhwa has active relationships outside of the family, whereas An does not emotionally bond with others outside of the family. Okhwa's frequent and long conversations with her friend contrast with An's outing with colleagues which is mentioned in one sentence at home instead of in a depiction of the actual meeting scene. Changsoo returns to the family and restores his authority as the patriarch by accepting his son, Jun, as Sungsil wanted. An's focusing his concern and nurturing on his family and Changsoo's return to his family reveal that a father's nurturing flows from his role as a traditional patriarch.

Mother's Nurturing

A father's nurturing does not negate the mother's role in the family. Mothers, as they function in patriarchy, are neither aggressors nor victims in soap operas, since they have their functions and authority in the patriarchal family. They have to be self-sacrificing and yielding to the position of the patriarch in the family, as well as be the center of communication outside the family while fathers are socially isolated. The configuration of incompetent father and competent mother in Korean soap operas recovers the history of women expanding their sphere of power; the capable and powerful mother cannot be limited or rejected in her role of mothering children.

Okhwa is not a character who occupies a heavy-handed authoritarian role in the family nor does she have a paternal, man-like position.³⁰ Mothers are sometimes portrayed as masculine figures or as asexual figures. However, even masculine domineering mothers must support the quiet, gentle fathers' patriarchal role. Korean soap operas have a tendency

³⁰ Kaplan, E. Ann. *Motherhood and Representation: The Mother in Popular Culture and Melodrama*, London: Routledge, 1992. 59-75

to erase sexuality from parents, and this is called castrated characters. At any rate, women and men in the dramas merely function as parents not showing their lives as realistic women and men. A nurturing mother is sometimes replaced by a domineering authoritarian presence as a mother-in-law with a cold and scolding personality. In the 1970s a nurturing mother and virtuous wife often suffered under the power of older women when they did not have an emotional bond with female companions such as mature daughters and empathetic sisters-in-law. Grandmothers, mothers, and mothers-in-law in a position of authority are powerful within the family structure. They are portrayed as asexual figures to lessen the difference between senior males and senior females.

Okhwa's and Gumjoo's strong influence come from their emotional bonds within the family. The role of mother in soap operas has changed through history into a powerful woman through emotional bonding so that mother characters like Okhwa actively guide their children, in a way that is close to a traditional fathers' controlling way of guiding them. Okhwa's way of caring for her children shows good judgment, intelligence and wisdom. In Korean soap operas, sometimes mothers are still either dominating or transitional as in Okhwa's role. Ideal and gentle fathers are moral authorities in their families whereas ideal mothers are still changing. That Okhwa does not fall into the role of a powerless female and does not lose her mothering ability is credited to her relationship with the mother-surrogate, Gumjoo, her sister-in-law. *Dear Parents* is unique in presenting both the mother and the mother-surrogate. Okhwa has the feminine power to support her husband in building the patriarchal family structure. Gumjoo, the aunt of the children, creates a caring emotional atmosphere which cannot shape a completely nonhierarchical alignment, but neither does it entirely serve patriarchal thinking. As a catharsis from being burdened by filial duties, emotional bonding creates the realm of female interactions beyond patriarchy. These emotional networks help female characters to maintain the patriarchal family while contrarily, their ability to recuperate themselves in the non-patriarchal sector also proves the limits of patriarchy.

Economic Class and Emotion

Consciousness regarding economic class also adds emotional power to patriarchy. Characters' awareness of and attitude towards class are not easily read in most soap operas. Class distinctions are usually vague and abstract. However, *Dear Parents* divides the classes, facilitating the spectators' reading a character's mind through knowing the character's economic class. Class, like marriage, serves for patriarchal construction as a conceptual device to embody the hierarchical system. The An family is a perfect patriarchy; families belonging to other classes display imperfect patriarchy. The soap opera clearly elucidates the class division it uses. Daughter-in-law, Ari, son-in-law, Changsoo, and Sungmi's unpleasant boyfriend are from the upper class, and the An family is from the middle class. The An children, Jihwan, Sungsil, and Sungmi, were envied by their friends and family for their matches with members of the upper class. The families' upper and middle-class positions are revealed by the properties they own, and the An family members' description of the wealth of their in-law families. The problems in the marriage, and Sungmi's ill-matched relationship, start from the upper class characters' lack of virtue. The An family helps them to develop the virtues proper to patriarchy: Ari was dependent and not very capable, and she is transformed into an independent and skillful person. Changsoo was childish; he had good character when he was with Sungsil and their daughter before his adultery, but he was not free from his mother. With the An family's help he turned into a perfect patriarch with independence from his mother and the emotional strength to care for Jun, his son. Sungmi's boyfriend was also childish, but she failed to change him into a better person. And thus, class disparity is also affected by dependency in the psychological realm.

Soap operas' fundamental function is to contrast the classes, and then to allow the class disparity to illustrate the superiority of the middle class. The An family rejects material greed; their ordinary family scenes take place in the house where they share familial routines and their emotions. Ordinary middle-class family meals, fruit, and drinks are served during long conversations among the An family members while upper-class children are presented sitting in luxurious cafés and driving expensive cars. Their material belongings seem to complement their emotions. As upper-class children are not shown sharing their daily routine with their families. The family of Sungmi's wealthy boyfriend does not appear at all in the

drama. There is little emotional interaction within his family; their luxurious lifestyle conveys the connotation of the absence of emotional interaction. The soap opera is generous to Ari. She is given regular family scenes with her father after marriage while she is being nurtured by the An family. Other television dramas also utilize class difference to show the emotional superiority of the middle-class. Some examples are: in *The King and I*, literati Hanmo is dishonored by commoner Chuhsun as Hanmo rejects patriarchy and morality. In *City Hall*, working class Mirae teaches upper class Gohae, Cho Guk's ex-fiancé, that there are more important things than luxury. Emotional interpersonal relations were not important to Gohae who was more interested in political ambitions than in sustaining her romantic relationship with Cho Guk.

Emotionally compelling soap operas do not require class division, but many Korean soap operas still use upper-class people as an object of nurturing by the middle class. The relations between the nurturing and the nurtured are exploitative in that middle-class children have to help, advise, and teach their upper-class partners while meeting their endless demands in the relationship. The middle class is praised for its dignity and enduring upright manner, but the nurturing party is a unilaterally virtuous giver. Responsibility is imposed on the middle class, and particularly, on the children of the middle class to help the upper class develop emotionally. Failed ('failed' in the sense that the soap operas fail to construct patriarchal relationships through the women characters supporting male authority) soap operas, like *Air City*, do not portray class disparity and do not sharply divide the nurturing characters from those being nurtured. Both female and male characters in failed soap operas, for example, miniseries professional dramas, are independent and successful. In *Air City*, the characters are not learning to have emotional power, and the character Kang's effort to interact with others emotionally is rejected. The absence of class difference may not be the reason for the absence of emotional identification in this case, but most soap operas do link class division to the division between the nurturing and the nurtured. Middle-class people on the nurturing side are rewarded not by their upper-class partners' being transformed, as they do not succeed all the time, but by being given the responsibility of nurturing. Dignity and virtue make them eligible for the responsibility.

If middle-class characters are rewarded by being recognized for their virtue and thus the ability to nurture, soap operas encourage spectators to be attentive to the change in the demeanor of the nurtured as they grow emotionally. *Dear Parents* spotlights Changsoo and Jun. The father and son relationship embodies the utmost responsibility in the soap opera. Their growth in emotional interpersonal relations and their change in taking on the demeanor of the An family is the soap opera's point. Sungsil's restoring the patriarch, her husband, by teaching him to express emotional power succeeds through the mediation and support from her family, whereas Sungmi's lone endeavor to change her unpleasant boyfriend fails. By presenting the family's role in transforming Changsoo, the soap opera imparts patriarchal values to the spectators' consciousness.

However, there is another realm besides nurturing, class, and patriarchy in *Dear Parents*. Junghwan, the An's second son, and Miyun, the daughter of Okhwa's friend, have been close friends from their childhood, having grown up in same the town. Junghwan opens a snack stall, and marries Miyun, who is a playwright. The purpose of their romance is not to generate patriarchal virtue because they are more in need of economic security and a solid economic foundation than in need of emotional nurturing. They do not make special efforts to maintain patriarchy, and their snack stall is not a place for hierarchy. Junghwan and Miyun do not have a longing for patriarchy or desire to change others; neither do they resist patriarchy or reveal specific uneasiness with the system which constitutes the family and society. They have a group of friends who help Junghwan with the snack stall and gather there every night after work. Junghwan builds the snack stall as a separate sphere for his group, his class. The snack stall is an extension of a house kitchen. It is a place for those who do not belong to familial or patriarchal control to gather in a community of equals. It is a place for Junghwan, Miyun, their friends, and customers.

Junghwan and Miyun show spectators an interaction between middle-class children who are not burdened by the task of nurturing emotions or teaching ethics to upper-class children. They go outside of the family boundary, and build a network of friends in their class and follow the routines and practices of their class. Their network of friends and

customers offers moderate emotional exchanges and economic interests even though this is not the main issue of the soap opera. As such, their interactions lack explosive scenes and they gradually grow in emotional closeness. Junghwan and Miyun earn their living and interact with their peer group in the non-familial realm. Junghwan and his friends become angry at a friend who takes care of a former love after her marriage fails, and warn the foolish friend that she will leave him again, so he should not spend his time caring for her. Devotion to love and longing to nurture another that will not be rewarded by marriage are foolish. Junghwan's and Miyun's emotional interactions are accompanied by their cooperation in economic concerns; Junghwan and his friends lend a hand to each other to keep their stall open and help another member of the group as he opens a retail store . Gysik, one of the friends, runs a management company and encourages the friends to work together in minor matters. Their economic exchange is controlled, not excessive, like their moderate and controlled emotional exchange.

Junghwan and Miyun also represent the constancy of the middle class in maintaining their values. Their trust in people who are like them explains Jihwan's rejection of bonding with the upper class and the An family's women's eagerness to assimilate upper-class males into their sense of virtue. The An family is steadfast in maintaining their demeanor. Junghwan and Miyun maintain the social relations of the family within the sphere of their middle-class values and do not cause anxieties within the family. They have the trust of the middle class in society, and their social interactions take place in interpersonal relations with trustworthy people. Junghwan does not relate to the problems that upper-class children give to Sungsil, Jihwan, and Sungmi.

Conclusion

Including the soap operas that were broadcast for nearly twenty years, home dramas are like a strong fort that has never been threatened by other genres or other media in their ratios of viewers and being the object of discussion among people. However, they are not always praised. Home dramas were also the first to be censured by critics and sincere fans

for their unchanging and never-ending stories and at times abrupt skipping to a climax.

Home dramas show various characters within a family. Besides the parents and children, often aunts, grandparents and in-laws become involved in the daily activities. Their shared affection and complex stories, told in an emotionally moving way, present a small segment of Korean society in which viewers live their everyday lives with their own diverse stories. Home dramas are tools used to transmit national and social rules to the viewers' families by providing models of virtuous patriarchal family members for emotional identification.

In home dramas viewers watch complicated issues such as economic class differences and marriage problems with in-laws presented in simple and clear ways through the various characters. The bond between a quiet, unassuming father and a skillful powerful mother whose wisdom guides the family is a frequent plot. The focus of the drama is not on the shortcomings of the patriarchal husband and father, but rather on the importance of the wife and mother who uses her intelligence and wisdom to guide the family while acknowledging her husband's authority. Home dramas also present the virtuous superiority of the middle class with a family from the middle class which rightfully handles all social and relational troubles and teaches its values to the upper class.

Conclusion

Chapter one, covering the history of Korean television dramas, shows that the start of Korean television dramas is the most important period for understanding Korean television because it contained the elements that led to its rapid stabilization. Early Korean television dramas in the 1950s began with foreign influence: production inspiration from the United States, theatrical narratives and content from Japan, and regulative intervention from the national government. Imported American TV shows were more numerous than original Korean dramas until the imports were banned by the government and Korean television dramas gained the audience's interest. Korean television dramas followed Japanese radio programs, which were melodramatic narratives centered on the family. The Korean government directed television dramas to uphold the national interest to the extent that the National Intelligence Agency's staff wrote the script for a television drama. The Korean audience in the early 1950s-70s had enjoyed the inspirational Golden Age of film (1956-65) and radio drama (1965-70) and the audience accepted the new television medium with enthusiasm. Such enthusiasm stabilized television and rapidly established the television drama industry.

The rapid stabilization of television drama diminished the influence of film and radio drama, but did not guarantee that all types of content were welcomed by the viewers. Viewers' favorite stories were written by a few star playwrights. Broadcast stations televised long profitable serials which stayed on the air for a decade or two. The most beloved serials were frequently remade, some even annually.

In the later period, broadcast companies and the audience's more discriminating taste still did not bring many changes in drama forms. Experiments were rare and not widely accepted. The long serial form enables television to dominate viewers' thoughts. The form encourages watching television dramas as part of one's everyday ritual and carries familiar and socially conforming content.

The second chapter starts with an introduction to the early historical dramas. From the time of Korea's stepping into the modern period, approximately 1897, historical dramas, novels and theater provided the basis for reinterpreting Korean history. The premodern signs such as

historical costumes and languages have been reintroduced in the era of television dramas with modern distortions. In order to focus on the characteristics of Korean historical dramas, I chose one historical drama to examine.

The King and I presents interesting characters rooted in the traditional Korean family structure. This soap opera introduces different matriarchs (the regulative queen dowager and the benevolent seer) and shows how they yield their matriarchal power to establish their sons' patriarchy. The soap opera compares the beneficial and harmful forms of patriarchy. The representative harmful patriarch is drawn as a madman who reigns as a tyrant King. The drama includes the eunuchs who serve in the palace with skills of sword fighting and palace administration. The relationship between the Kings and eunuchs is familial. Eunuchs create their own family system within the palace staff and they also serve the King as their father. The story that seems like a tale of nationalistic loyalty of subjects to King is in fact familial in that the national system is the extension of the family. Villains and villainesses are key characters of historical dramas as well. In *The King and I*, written by a male writer, the villainess, even though very powerful, is poorly drawn out as an engaging character. Her overt evil doing, malicious character and the harmful effects of her wickedness do not encourage emotional identification for the female audience. Her immoral compulsiveness prevents her from being a cathartic character for viewers, so she is a mere counterpart for the virtuous women in the drama.

This soap opera is one of the most meaningful dramas among Korean television dramas because the director tried to portray the rare male emotional bond by bringing eunuchs to the front of the story. The eunuchs are caring, sincere and dedicated. Their feminine traits allow them to embrace the male emotional bond in a way which is quite different from the usual male bond of battlefield dramas.

Professional dramas presented in chapter three follow television's global trend. Weekday 15-20 episode serial professional dramas illustrate the Korean myths about the entrepreneurial spirit with true stories of Korean industry.

City Hall, a television serial about Cho Guk, a young man running

for a seat in the National Assembly, and Shin Mirae, a young woman running for mayor of her city, has both political and romantic themes. Cho Kuk lives in the complexity of his own family, pitying his mother who was abandoned by his father, the powerful leader of a political party. Cho Kuk's democratic political views and principles are quite different from his father's political tactics. Cho Kuk breaks from the traditional filial duty and family loyalty to the older generation to live out his own political agenda. In the space of politics, the City Hall and the national Congress, Shin Mirae, the female protagonist, successfully supports Cho Kuk in winning his election. Cho Kuk transforms his new political relationships into family-like relationships and loyalties. His supporters allow him to stop his father's campaign for Presidency by assisting him in building a new political base. The implication that Cho Kuk will later run for the Presidency adds a layer of change in family dynamics onto the nation's political institution. Elements of the family structure permeate Korean social groups from political to capitalist systems.

Unlike *City Hall*, *Air City* and *Golden Time* reject patriarchy and family structure. Jisung, the protagonist in *Air City*, and Dr. Choe, the protagonist in *Golden Time*, have no relationships with family and friends outside their workspace and concentrate all their efforts on their work and projects. Both dramas failed to gain a large audience because they lacked the expected entangled romance and family dynamics. However, this type of professional dramas produced autonomous individuals as role models. *Air City's* Jisung desires to be an anonymous National Intelligence investigator following his own individual career purpose and goals. *Golden Time's* Dr. Choe is voluntarily isolated from family and friends, refusing close relationships. His only concern is saving the lives of those brought to the Emergency Room. The male heroes reject romanticism and familial structures in their workplace. In comparison to the male heroes of other television dramas they remain relatively cold and aloof. This alternative to other soap operas falls outside the usual bounds of patriarchy found in the family structure and society. Most television dramas have aimed at structuring patriarchy with virtuous figures around the heroes and heroines who place themselves on a patriarchal trajectory and act out their customary assigned roles.

The fourth chapter deals with home dramas. Home dramas or

family dramas led the original, almost native, taste of Korean entertainment, from its prototypes at the beginning of the Golden Ages of film and radio to the blossoming of the television era. The typical plot of home dramas begins with introducing each family member within the context of relationships without and outside the nuclear family. In many cases there is an examination of the bond between a quiet unassuming father and a skillful powerful mother whose wisdom guides the family. The focus of the drama is not on the short-coming of the patriarchal husband and father, but rather on the importance of the wife and mother who has the intelligence and wisdom to guide the family while outwardly acknowledging her husband's authority. The biggest hits in the history of Korean television dramas were about the younger generation and in-law relationships between families. Television soap opera stories provide a new context for sons and daughters to navigate the changing social roles between families connected by marriage but no longer living under the same roof.

Because of the popularity of home dramas, the genre is being fused into historical costume dramas and in some professional dramas. Home dramas work well with varied social groups and maintain the interest of their audience over a long period of time with some serials reaching approximately 150-400 hours of telecasting.

Dear Parents, one of the hits of Korean home dramas, is the typical family story full of interesting points to explore. Each of the family members negotiates spaces of anxieties stemming from family problems, infidelity, divorce and class. As a representative family and their in-laws, the central family in the drama demonstrates the needed virtues for building and maintaining a patriarchal family. It is overloaded with virtues that guide the family members towards an unnaturally perfect structure. Its high ideals explain the stress that is given to women as the emotional centers of the families. Diversity of roles in the characters of the Korean home drama is manifested best in the parents: fathers who are quiet and retiring or mentally challenged retire inside the house passively listening to their parents, wives, siblings, sons, and daughters. The fathers' contacts with the outside society such as his work place, the neighborhood and children's in-laws, are given very limited scope in the dramas. Powerful and hard-working mothers are often the breadwinners and problem-solvers of

the family. They regulate the house by their conversations and dialogues on marriage and family roles. They encourage each family member, support their husband's authority and incessantly make sacrifices for the family patriarch. The women in the family, mother, aunts and daughters gather to talk over the day and the various movements in relationships that have occurred. Their pooling of wisdom, and release of emotional difficulties through singing together help them to overcome all their hardships and they renew their power and energy for the next day.

Another trait seen in *Dear Parents* is the virtuous superiority of the middle class. The supposed moral superiority of the middle class is not only a Korean perception but is the universal apparatus for non-traditional society's social stratification of equality. The representational family from the middle class is virtue-endowed, and the family rightfully handles all social and relational troubles and teaches its values to the upper class.

Korean soap operas put considerable stress on the concept of virtuous women. After analyzing historical, professional and home dramas, some questions remain. Why did the great woman seer in *The King and I* yield her authority to the young Jo? Why do the villainesses always have a tragic end instead of success? Can only professional Korean women refuse the patriarchal social system and be liberated from it? Can the powerful mothers portrayed in the dramas be used to rationalize the exploitation of mothers?

To answer these questions, I assert that virtuous women are the substance of Korean soap operas. From its start, Korean television dramas inherited plots and stories from previously developed media such as radio and film which almost solely focused on virtuous women. When villainesses appeared in modern television soap operas, they were used to shine a light on the righteous women who supported patriarchal family values even though they were married to weak men or mentally incompetent husbands. Through such dramas, mothers and wives had models of self-sacrifice and obedience to the rules of Korean patriarchal society for the sake of their families. The virtuous wife sometimes earned a living and maintained her family in the face of various threats such as divorce while her husband was too passive to speak out. However, Korean soap operas did not imaginatively and bravely reverse the roles of men and women. As said

earlier, the strong mother character has a long history in Korean drama world.

Modern short professional dramas of approximately 20 episodes star female professionals who reject the patriarchal culture. They are usually shown as workaholic women who are not dependent on anyone. They have no time for dating, romance or social gatherings. Their profession liberates them from the patriarchal expectation that they will be mothers and wives who will one day take their role in the patriarchal family structure. Such dramas both mirror and encourage the current changes in Korean society.

The largely female audience finds it satisfying to tune into their favorite weekly soap operas to watch virtuous mothers, wives or professional liberated women like themselves playing an important role in the family and society. Their hidden power to guide and protect their families is recognized. The complex cultural foundation of the patriarchal family is dramatized in the context of an increasingly modern society where women seek more equal roles and recognition.

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