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Madeline Rolands April 7, 2022

South Korean and American Television Formats:

Exploring American Format Adaptations of South Korean Dramas

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Abstract

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This thesis explores the ways in which American format adaptations of South Korean dramas can tell the same story in different ways. Focusing on how different aspects of both the American and South Korean television industries and the structure of their drama forms impact the understanding of the stories being told. Along with these industrial differences, the ways in which each industry deals with issues of temporality and aesthetics is considered as well. The differences in production, exhibition, and form all interact to create a new iteration of one story, allowing each American format adaptation to be read and understood separately from the original South Korean drama. The thesis considers aspects such as authorship, regarding who writes and directs for television productions in each country, the exhibition process, use of previews versus recaps, the formation of a season as well as the series as a whole, different storytelling devices that each industry uses and how they are used within their respective dramas and the visual and sound aesthetics of each country's television productions. By exploring these aspects of drama form, the American and South Korean drama forms are differentiated and a unique perspective of how platforms such as Netflix blend the style of South Korean dramas with the structure of American television exhibition is provided.

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I started my K-Drama journey ten years ago at the age of twelve with *Dream High*, a story about six students at an arts-based high school in South Korea who work to find success in K-Pop. I eagerly consumed the episodes on Netflix one summer afternoon. This experience showed me a whole world of South Korean television that I could explore. I was interested in the ways in which South Korean dramas showed character development over the course of a single season, and how the stories came to a conclusion at the end of the season. I was attracted to South Korean television because I could explore multiple stories and feel fulfilled at the end without having to watch multiple seasons. A decade later, my favorite type of TV is South Korean drama and I'm far from the only fan in the United States or the world.

South Korean (hereafter Korean) culture and media is exploding around the globe, from K-Pop bands like BTS and Blackpink selling out arenas in the United States to Korean dramas like *Squid Game* becoming worldwide sensations on streaming platforms such as Netflix. This spread of Korean culture outside of the nation's boundaries, known as the Korean Wave or *Hallyu* Wave, began in 1997 with the growth of Korean television into the global market. The first dramas to become popular outside of Korea were *What Is Love All About* (1997) and *Stars in My Heart* (1997) (Jin 23). Korean dramas have become even more popular in the 2020s with shows like *Squid Game* and *All of Us Are Dead* consistently ranking in the top 10 shows on Netflix (*Netflix Top 10 - Global*).

Although they are similar to American prime-time broadcast dramas, Korean dramas are born from a much different production process. The term Korean drama references the breadth of

scripted programs created for Korean television, ranging in genre from horror to comedy to romance. Regardless of genre, Korean dramas have a melodramatic nature which aligns them with the melodrama genre overall. Korean dramas tend to tell a complete story in the span of a single season, bringing the plot to a satisfying conclusion by the final episode. Most do not return for subsequent seasons. Individual episodes often have a runtime of an hour or more. Most importantly they represent the vision of a single creator.

Since the start of the Korean Wave, the reach of Korean dramas has stretched into other East Asian markets including China and Japan, and then into Western countries like France, England, and the United States. The reach to Western countries was aided by the advent of streaming platforms with services like Netflix and Hulu adding Korean titles and streamers like Viki which are dedicated to Korean and other East Asian content. With the number of streaming services driving a need for ever more content, Korean dramas have been mined for format adaptations created for American audiences and original series on streaming platforms for international audiences. During the past ten years, Korean formats have been used to give birth to scripted dramas like *The Good Doctor* on ABC and reality-style game shows like Fox's *Masked Singer* based on the Korean program *King of Masked Singer*. The format adaptation process flows both ways with Korean dramas being created from the format of an American show. The first Korean format adaptation of an American drama was the show *The Good Wife*, the title of both the American and Korean drama, in 2016. This process isn't specific to Korean and American shows but happens all over the world. There have been several popular American format adaptations of telenovelas, including the American shows *Ugly Betty* and *Jane the Virgin*. Even with the melodramatic nature of Korean dramas being compared to American soap operas and telenovelas and other countries being looked at for format adaptation, I focus on American

format adaptations of Korean shows to showcase how each country's structure of prime-time dramas impacts storytelling, which is influencing the way streaming services, particularly Netflix, are structuring their own original Korean series.

This thesis explores how differences in the Korean and U.S. broadcast television industries and television aesthetics impact the presentation of American format adaptations of Korean dramas. I focus on how the Korean drama *God's Gift – 14 Days* became the ABC limited series *Somewhere Between* and the distinctions between *Good Doctor* on Korean television and *The Good Doctor* on American broadcast television. These two shows are the only two fully produced American format adaptations of Korean dramas as of spring 2022. I'm using these two shows to highlight the television structure of prime-time broadcast drama in each respective country and how streaming platforms like Netflix have combined the two structures to create a hybrid drama form. The dissection of these drama forms as a framework for understanding the streaming hybrid form is an important step in understanding the global appeal of Korean dramas and how they have evolved to service a global audience.

Format, Adaptation, Remake, and 'Format Adaptation'

First, in order to understand the context of the conception of these two shows, a brief introduction to format television and terms used throughout this thesis is necessary. Because the two American shows discussed in this thesis are formats of the original Korean dramas, *God's Gift - 14 Days* and *Good Doctor*, they are mentioned in the opening credits of the American show as source material. But what does a format entail? How does being a format impact the production of these two shows?

A format is the consistent elements of a program that lead to variation within the individual episodes contained under the program title (Moran, "Television Formats in the World/the World of Television Formats" 5). A format allows for a limited number of changes to be made to the elements that make up the body of the show and the unique elements that make a particular show different from other shows. A format is sold under a format license, allowing for the recreation of the original show, and includes the format package. The format package contains the program/format Bible, paper format (list of elements), and helpful production knowledge that aids in the production of the format, including scripts for scripted shows (Moran and Malbon 23–25). In addition to these items, sometimes the original rights holder acts as a consultant to answer questions that arise during the new production and to approve changes to the format during the production process.

An important distinction is the difference between a format and a copy. A direct copy of a show or the show's concept is an act of copyright infringement. The format license allows for the use of the elements of a show that make up its main concept and also allows for some alterations while still maintaining the original concept of the show. In fact, the standard format licensing deal only lasts for three years and must be renewed every three years if the formatted show continues to air past the initial three-year contract (Moran and Malbon 68). This time limit is in place so that if a broadcaster buys the rights to a format but does not develop the show, the creator of the format does not lose out on potential profits and can then take the license to other buyers.

The terms remake and adaptation have been used interchangeably within the television industry, specifically the American industry, to discuss shows made through the format process. I set out to provide a new term, 'format adaptation', to accurately describe scripted formats as

distinguished from unscripted format adaptations. In order to clearly outline the dimensions of these terms I offer these definitions. The term remake describes a media object that is a redo or retelling of a previous media object within the same cultural industry. Remakes must be contained to a singular cultural context or industry because when a remake is presented to a culture without the established background of the original media object the effects of the remake are diminished, and the resulting media object has the potential to be assumed as new original content. Thus, a reference must exist within the culture in order for a media object to be considered a remake. The term remake also holds the underlying meaning that the media object being remade must be remade into the same type of media object, such as movies into movies. An adaptation, on the other hand, describes a media object that derives its content from a media object of a different form. This can look like a book being adapted into a movie or a television show being adapted into a video game. A jump from one media form to another must occur in order to call something an adaptation.

A format is separate from a remake and an adaptation. A format entails a collection of the elements of a show that make it distinct from other shows. A format package contains a list of these elements, production knowledge, and scripts so that format rights for a show can be bought and the show can be (re)produced, essentially providing the new production team with a guide for how to make the show. Unscripted formats are easily defined by the word format as the elements that make the show work are contained in the elements provided by the production guide. But a scripted format has an additional production layer that is not prevalent in unscripted formats. The scripts are provided as part of the format package for scripted formats. The process of having to contextualize the story contained in the scripts to another culture goes beyond

having to contextualize the elements of a show to a new culture. The process of contextualizing scripts is a much more intensive process.

I argue that scripted formats are unable to be considered remakes because they jump across cultural contexts, therefore missing the necessary prior understanding of culture needed to be considered a remake. The necessary cultural context needed to properly understand the remake may be lacking in the new culture. Scripted formats also cannot be contained by the definition of adaptation as there is a lack of transition across media forms. A television show is still a television show even as it crosses borders. I aim to make a distinction between scripted and unscripted formats through the use of the term format adaptation.

Due to the nature of the transition required for scripts to cross cultural contexts, rather than media forms, there is an added step of translation and alteration to make the scripts fit a new cultural context before production can start. The scripted nature could be seen as a way to derive the format to a written media object that is translated, both into a new language and cultural context, and from this written medium, a television show is adapted. Even with this derivation to a written medium, the scripted format has the added layer of being sold as a format package, making it different from a direct adaptation. For these reasons I propose the use of the term format adaptation to describe the unique process a scripted format goes through. I will be using this term throughout my thesis in order to discuss *The Good Doctor* and *Somewhere Between*.

This thesis uses an exploration of certain aspects of the production process and presentation of American format adaptations and how they differ from the original Korean drama as a framework to provide an explanation for how these two shows can appear to be separate entities. This separation of the format adaptation from the original leads to the ability of such

format adaptations to be read as new original content by audience members. Using these format adaptations as an example, I will be exploring the ways in which the same story is presented differently providing insight into how culture impacts television forms and storytelling. With the increased interest in Korean media on streaming platforms, specifically, Netflix which has created several original Korean dramas, focusing on previous format adaptations as a template can give insight into how streaming services alter the original Korean drama form. These alterations target a global audience by blending the Korean drama form with aspects of the American drama form. The format adaptations of *The Good Doctor* and *Somewhere Between* act as proof of the malleability of the Korean drama form to suit multiple audiences.

Chapters

The thesis is split into three sections breaking down the aspects of the Korean and U.S. television industries that impact the production of dramas. It examines the narrative elements used to tell stories in each country, and finally, moves to a discussion of how streaming services have altered the Korean drama form to serve a global audience. The first two chapters use a comparison of American format adaptations with the original Korean dramas they are based on as evidence of how each industry is structurally different. Using the description of these structures as background, the third chapter goes beyond broadcast television and describes how streaming has been utilizing these drama structures to create a hybrid drama form.

The first chapter explores the industrial impact on the presentation of shows, giving a brief overview of the history of the Korean industry and the differences between the two industries regarding production and exhibition. I focus on the Korean dramas *God's Gift – 14 Days* and *Good Doctor* to showcase how their presentation on Korean television becomes altered

when the shows go through a format adaptation to become the American television shows *Somewhere Between* and *The Good Doctor* respectively. Using this as a basis, I explore how production and exhibition differences, such as authorship and airing schedule, lead to unique viewings of the same story.

The second chapter explores the creative aspect of Korean and American dramas. First, I focus on several narrative devices, including temporality in the form of narrative timeline and flashbacks, cliffhangers, previews, recaps, and endings. A deeper look at each of these narrative elements allows for a greater understanding of how Korean dramas approach storytelling differently than American dramas do typically. A secondary focus is the aesthetic tone of the dramas. I look at the visual and musical aesthetics that create the tone for each of the shows dissected in this thesis. This deep dive into the narrative setup and aesthetic tone of Korean and American dramas provides an outline for the drama form in each country which becomes important in the discussion contained in the third chapter.

The third chapter explores the rise in popularity of Korean dramas through the impact of streaming platforms such as Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime, Dramafever, and Viki. I look at how Netflix original Korean television shows have attempted to combine the Korean and American drama forms to create a hybrid form that best suits the platform. A review of the history of Korean content on the platform provides an overview of the development of the hybrid Korean drama form which has led to the success of several Korean original dramas, most recently *Squid Game* (2021).

The conclusion of this thesis ties together the three areas of examination: industrial production and exhibition practices, creative elements in the form of narrative devices and

aesthetics, and the growth of Korean content on streaming platforms to form an overall picture of the development of a hybrid Korean drama form suiting streaming platforms. I use this discussion of the evolving Korean drama form to explore what the future of Korean format adaptations on American television networks and original content on streaming platforms may look like with particular consideration for the expanded access to Korean dramas through new streaming platforms such as Disney+.

Chapter 1: Production Process and Exhibition

In this chapter, I explore how the differences in the production process in the Korean and U.S. broadcast television industries impacts viewers' understanding of a show. I focus on the derivation of authorship, series models, and series drives that are commonly used in each industry. Examples of series models and series drives provide a basis for the discussion in chapter two about the usage of narrative devices. The discussion of exhibition included in this chapter focuses on the release of dramas and season setup, featuring discussion of season length, episode length, and release schedule on broadcast networks. Before getting into these topics, I provide a brief background of television in Korea and how it was initially influenced by American television.

Television in Korea

Television technology was brought to Korea with the introduction of American-made RCA monitors in 1956 (Lee 38). The initial creation of a Korean television industry was delayed by both the Japanese occupation, from 1910-1945, in which the Japanese Colonial Government used the medium as a tool to spread propaganda, and the Korean War, which lasted from 1950-1953 (Kwak, *Television in Transition in East Asia* 55). During this time, these television sets had access to American and Japanese television programming. A truly Korean industry was not created until 1961. During the 1960s and 1970s, broadcasters were strongly controlled by the Korean government. The government continues to hold power over the Korean television industry to this day, although much less than at the beginning.

There are two major public broadcasting stations, the Korean Broadcasting System (KBS) and the Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation (MBC). KBS was the first Korean broadcasting company to be created (Kwak, *Television in Transition in East Asia*). These two stations became the only public stations due to a set of mergers that took place in 1980. The first commercial station, the Seoul Broadcasting System (SBS), was created in 1991. These three stations (KBS, MBC, and SBS) remain the top stations in Korea. Cable television was introduced in the 1990s followed by satellite television networks in 2002 (Chua et al.). Korean public broadcasting stations and commercial stations offer similar programming as they compete for viewership.

Original content was scarce at the advent of the Korean broadcasting system. During the 1960s there was a reliance on foreign, mainly American and Japanese, programs to be aired, especially during the prime-time slot (Keane, *New Television, Globalisation, and the East Asian Cultural Imagination* 36). As the broadcasting system developed, the Korean government strived to create original content to limit the amount of foreign content. Korean officials believed exposure to Japanese and American content would erode native Korean culture. In order to strengthen Korean national identity, Korean-created content was emphasized. Original content came in the form of many genres, such as news, variety, informational, and drama. Of these genres, drama was the most popular (Lee and Joe 137).

Due to its popularity, dramas were the most focused on genre of television production among the three major broadcasting stations (KBS, MBC, and SBS). Much focus and care were put into the production value of dramas. Dramas are one of the reasons why Korean audiences still choose to watch local content. Meanwhile, television viewers in other countries are opting for streaming services over local television options, also known as cord-cutting (Kwak,

Television in Transition in East Asia 155). Korean dramas eventually became one of the nation's biggest exports, including the export of completed dramas to streaming platforms and the sale of format rights.

In regard to scripted format adaptations of Korean dramas, there have only been two thus far with news of more in the works being reported throughout the 2010s and into the 2020s. The American network ABC has been the only network to complete production on a Korean format adaptation. ABC first attempted a format adaptation with the Korean drama *God's Gift – 14 Days* which originally aired in 2014 on SBS. *God's Gift – 14 Days* follows a mother as she is sent back in time to save her daughter from being killed, at the time ABC was airing other dramas that centered around motherhood and the format adaptation *Somewhere Between* fit into ABC's network image of caring for family. The American format adaptation, entitled *Somewhere Between*, aired as a limited series in 2017. ABC made a second attempt at format adaptation with the purchase of the format license for the Korean drama *My Love from The Star*, which is the story of an alien being stranded on Earth and falling in love with his neighbor who is a famous actress. This attempt never made it past the preseason screening process and the pilot was never aired. ABC found success with a third attempt, the show *Good Doctor* (KRN). This show follows an autistic man and his journey working as a pediatric surgeon in a hospital. Korean Actor Daniel Dae Kim's production company 3AD initially had a challenging time selling the format adaptation but, *The Good Doctor* (US) has been ABC's most successful format adaptation to date (Thorne). The show ranked as ABC's number one drama for the 2017 fall season and is currently airing its fifth season as of 2022 (Ju 104). ABC has proven their interest in scripted Korean content over other American broadcast networks through their multiple attempts at format adaptation. Kim has stated "... [Korean cinema and television] are becoming

not only the most sought-after IP but also the most imitated, which, as they say, is the greatest form of flattery," displaying the potential for both format adaptations of Korean dramas and the distribution of Korean series (Thorne). As Korean content continues growing in popularity, other American television producers are looking toward Korea for potential formats.

Production Processes

The production processes of each industry and show structure leads to an overall tone difference. Korean dramas have a more cinematic, solo, quality to them while American dramas are more collaborative. The show structure and series drive also creates an altered consumption of media for audiences.

The first point of distinction is the difference in authorship between American television shows and Korean dramas. Korean dramas tend to be the creative vision of a single writer who is responsible for scripting each episode of the series. American television shows are more collaborative, with a showrunner who oversees a staff of writers, called the writers' room. Similarly, every episode of a Korean drama is directed by a single person. This process of one writer and one director adds to the cinematic storytelling nature of Korean dramas. American shows often have different directors for every episode resulting in more than one director for a single season. Some directors may return and direct several episodes but rarely a whole season of a television show.

The fact that Korean dramas only have one screenwriter and one director attached to a project creates a cinematic sense of authorship. The teaming of a single screenwriter and single director is more like a Hollywood film production than American television production. Having a single writer keeps the narrative tone of a show intact and having a single director keeps the

visual tone of a show intact. But in American television, multiple writers and multiple directors can result in subtle variations in narrative and visual style from episode to episode. The American showrunner is responsible for maintaining the consistency of the tone throughout the show. Showrunners can come from many backgrounds; they could be the initial screenwriter of the show or the person who fledged out the idea but does not write the scripts, although most showrunners have worked as a television writer before becoming a showrunner (Levy 22). The Korean television industry does not have a role similar to the showrunner as that responsibility falls onto the screenwriter and director collectively.

Another element that is different between the two industries is the story engine, or the way in which the plot of the story drives the show. The procedural, one of the most popular story engines on American television, can be used in many different types of career-focused stories. One example is the legal procedural which focuses on lawyers or law enforcement and the cases they cover in each episode. There are other procedurals that are based in a career and the episodes are driven by things that happen while on the job. I focus on the medical procedural which portrays doctors and the patients they help in each episode. The American medical procedural functions on a case-of-the-week formula in which a patient is introduced and cured in the span of a single episode. The seasonal arc of the show is driven by the relationships between the main cast of characters. This procedural story engine is not as present in Korean medical dramas.

Korean medical dramas do not rely on a singular case or patient to drive the story of a single episode, rather the content of a single episode is used to drive the overall plot forward. Most often there may be a case or patient that carries over several episodes and drives the plot for those few episodes, but the case or patient always works into the larger storyline and pushes

the plot forward to develop a seasonal arc. Because Korean dramas tell stories within a single season, there is no room for filler episodes as the content of the story must be told within the limited time frame of sixteen episodes. Most of the time a singular case or patient spans two or more episodes. This is certainly true for *Good Doctor* (KRN).

The original Korean drama *Good Doctor* (KRN) functions on a pattern of introducing cases and taking several episodes to resolve the storyline. An episode within the drama, particularly the middle portion of the drama, starts by finishing off a previously introduced case. The doctors work together to solve the issue and their relationships develop during this portion of the episode. A new case is not introduced until the end of an episode. Usually, an emergency case is brought in from the emergency room and the episode ends just as the doctors are being faced with a challenge in the case. Other times if the case itself spans the length of many episodes, the case may be introduced closer to the beginning of the episode and a challenge regarding the case will arise at the end, leaving the solution to be shown in the next episode.

The Good Doctor (US) functions in a similar way, which is using a procedural nature, but each episode sees the solution of the case presented at the beginning of the episode. Just as an emergency patient tail-ends an episode of the Korean drama, an emergency patient would be revealed at the start of an episode in the American show. The American drama also takes this 'case-of-the-week' formula another step further and presents two cases of the week, or two narrative storylines, within a singular episode. The ensemble cast is split into two groups and each take on a case/patient that is then solved/cured by the end of the episode. The procedural formula works well within the episodic narrative nature of American television, where narratives are presented and conclude in the same episode. Procedural narratives also support the 'infinite model' that American television uses to judge success and failure, more seasons more success.

The ‘infinite model’ of storytelling can be derived from early television airing practices. The existence of reruns and the desire for viewers to be able to jump into the narrative of a show at any point within the season created the necessity for an ‘infinite model’. The latter is important because audiences may start watching the show somewhere in the middle of a season, meaning they would be missing out on relevant narrative. To avoid creating confused viewers, American shows started using an episodic, or self-contained, structure that was capable of utilizing the same characters to tell stories over many seasons. The ‘infinite model’ thus perpetuates the need for episodic narratives.

These narratives are able to be contained within a single episode. Episodic narratives are less common nowadays on American television as serial narratives have become more popular but shows that utilize a procedural construct continue to utilize an episodic narrative in their storytelling. There are four reasons why procedurals work well for creating prime-time dramas. As set out by Bob Levy, they allow for an infinite number of cases or stories; they run on life-and-death stakes, present situations that introduce a level of moral complexity, and they have a central conflict that drives the show (73–75). Each episode has a case that the characters try to solve, shown once more in the previous example of *The Good Doctor* (US) running on a case-of-the-week formula, each week a new patient or two is introduced to the ensemble cast and they work to cure the patient by the end of the episode.

This type of episodic narrative is less common among Korean dramas. Korean dramas focus more on a cohesive story and the ways in which they can fit that story into the limited number of episodes within the series. This inherently makes it harder for viewers to jump into the story midseason and understand exactly what is going on. Previous viewing of the past episodes is necessary to understand the full context of everything happening in the narrative.

However, there are ways in which Korean dramas provide information from previous episodes to viewers so that they feel like they understand the current context even when they jump into the story mid-season. One way they do this is by the inclusion of flashbacks.

Flashbacks not only function as a storytelling device that reveals character background and other relevant information from before the start of the events in the show, but they sometimes recap previous events that happened within the runtime of the show. This happens mostly with romantic scenes when characters remember the good times they had with their love interest. A flashback of all of the good moments is shown, representing the internal thought processes of the characters. These flashbacks give viewers a reminder or reveal to viewers important events that happened within the run of the show. I go more in-depth with the usage of flashbacks in Korean dramas, using examples from *God's Gift* and *Good Doctor* (KRN), in chapter two.

Exhibition

The production process provides an episodic structure in which the narrative is presented. The seasonal length of American and Korean broadcast dramas differs, as does episode length. These differences provide content to audiences in separate structures, thus impacting the consumption of shows, including narrative flow and airing schedules.

The Korean drama form is typically limited to a single season consisting of sixteen to twenty-four episodes. Each episode has a runtime of sixty to ninety minutes. American dramas have multiple seasons consisting of thirteen to twenty episodes each with a runtime of forty-five minutes. The specific Korean form allows for a story to be told through sixteen hour-long episodes and be told to completion within that time frame. Very rarely does a Korean drama

have more than one season. If there is another season it tends to be an installment season featuring the same characters from the first season but telling a completely new story that can be viewed on its own separate from the first season.

An example of this type of second season is the Korean drama *Hello, My Twenties!* which featured a new actress in the role of the main character. This switch makes the character feel new even to viewers of the first season. An introduction of new storylines unrelated to those in the first season also makes the show feel separate from the first season even though the same secondary characters remain, forming the main cohort of characters. Another way a Korean drama may have a second season is in an anthology-style series, such as the *Reply* series. The *Reply* series features a collection of individual dramas that focus on a specific era, basing the story on a sense of nostalgia from that time period. The dramas in this series have their own stories but are connected by the nostalgic element derived from the setting of the story within a specific time period. Shows in this series include *Reply 1997*, the first installment, *Reply 1994*, and *Reply 1988*. Only recently, due mainly to the increased foreign interest in Korean dramas, do some dramas have a direct second season that continues the story of the previous season. The Korean dramas *Hospital Playlist* and *Penthouse* are examples of this kind of continuation.

This season setup is much different from the typical American season setup. American dramas tend to run for as many seasons as possible before cancellation. A prime example of this is *The Good Doctor* (US) format adaptation. The original Korean drama only ran for one season having a total of twenty episodes, but the American format adaptation is currently on its fifth season of the show. The nature of having to write a set story in such a way that allows for a continuation rather than using the original ending can make the two shows feel different from each other even if they are telling the same initial story.

American scripted dramas tend to create as much content with the characters of a show as possible, sometimes without working towards an overall end goal for the story. This open-ended nature of American dramas leads to the story losing its original driving force or plot and simply creating stories for the characters to act within without painting much of a larger picture. For example, *The Good Doctor* utilizes the original plot of the Korean drama for the first season but as the show continues past the initial plotline the show is driven more by the procedural story engine. The relationships between the characters becomes the overarching element bridging the seasons, rather than a larger political conflict within the hospital structure as is done in the original Korean drama.

Not only is the number of episodes within a season a major aspect that differentiates American and Korean dramas, but also the timeline in which they are being presented alters the way in which a show is consumed. American prime-time broadcast dramas are generally aired once a week, meaning viewers have to wait a full week before they are exposed to new content.

Korean dramas function on a different timeline. Korean dramas are aired twice per week, meaning that during the week a new episode will air on two consecutive days, such as a Friday-Saturday airing schedule. Therefore, the amount of content that Korean dramas give viewers within a singular week is twice as much as American broadcast dramas.

This consecutive airing of the episodes also connects the episodes narratively. Typically, a Korean drama has a plot point that spans over the course of two episodes that each run for a full hour. Thus, the first episode of the week tends to end in a cliffhanger that gets immediately resolved the next day through the consecutive episode. This consecutive episode tends to also end in a cliffhanger that will then connect to the first of the next week's episodes. This pattern

repeats for the eight to twelve weeks in which the show airs, depending on the number of episodes in the series. This type of content dissemination gives the audience a shorter time frame in which to process the previous week's episodes and a shorter wait time for new content.

Even with their weekly airing schedule sometimes American shows take a midseason break. For example, *The Good Doctor* (US) took a long break in the middle of season five, the current season. The show took a break starting in November 2021 that didn't end until February of the next year, essentially taking a three-month break over the winter holidays. It is common for shows to take a break during the holidays (Kelly 105). American dramas also take breaks between seasons. These breaks can last anywhere between three to six months. Thus, audiences are deprived of content for several months before being satiated by the return of the show.

Korean dramas don't tend to take months-long breaks in airing time, the entire season is aired in one go with a frequency of two episodes per week for a period of eight to twelve weeks until all of the episodes have been aired. Korean dramas do take breaks for special events and holidays, but only during the weeks in which those events interfere with the airing schedule. For example, early in 2022 shows that aired in February were interrupted by the airing of the Olympics and thus had to skip airing episodes, some for several weeks, when the schedule of the Olympics overlapped with their own airing schedule.

Not only does the industrial production process provide an episodic formula that each industry follows, but the airing schedule determines how much content viewers receive within a week. The different broadcast schedules creates a unique viewing experience in and of itself. A good example of the direct alterations to the viewing experience can be seen in the format adaptation *Somewhere Between*. *Somewhere Between* keeps many of the same plot events that

occur in the original drama *God's Gift*, but the airing schedule results in a separate schedule of dissemination of clues that are presented with each episode. The airing of *God's Gift* provides two episodes worth of clues per week, and the clues presented in the first episode of the week are directly related to the events that occur in the second episode of the week. *Somewhere Between* only presents the clues in a frequency of one episode per week. Thus, the same story is essentially being distributed at different rates due to the nature of the industry in which it is airing, ultimately creating an altered viewing experience.

These aspects of production affect the consumption of television in each country, but outside of the structural elements, there are narrative and aesthetic differences as well. These narrative and aesthetic differences make up the episodic interior that defines each drama form and areas of experimentation in the hybrid streaming form.

Chapter 2: The Creative

This chapter focuses on both the narrative devices that are used throughout *God's Gift*, *Somewhere Between*, *Good Doctor* (KRN), and *The Good Doctor* (US) and the aesthetics that are used to create the tone of each show. First, I highlight how narrative devices such as the recap and preview distinguish the Korean broadcast drama form from the American broadcast form even further as well as devices that deal with the temporal alignment of a show like timelines and flashbacks. I also talk about the usage of cliffhangers and the ultimate conclusion of a television series, the ending. Second, I showcase two elements that work to create an overall aesthetic tone for a television show, the visual and musical features contained within the show itself. These elements create a cohesive whole of a show and can be altered to create something outside of each country's strict broadcast drama forms.

Timeline

In this section, I use *God's Gift* and *Somewhere Between* as examples of how the same story is told but over the course of differing lengths of time. I also discuss how *Good Doctor* (KRN) and *The Good Doctor* (US) utilize story time to set up a timed conflict that plays out over differing episodic lengths. The timeline focuses on the pacing of the overarching narrative which is important as an aspect of Korean dramas as the narrative concludes and must be paced accordingly. American shows have their own pacing that accommodates for multiples seasons and narratives that continue into more than one season.

The shows *God's Gift* and *Somewhere Between* both tell the story of a mother who travels back in time to save her daughter from being murdered. Despite the American show

following the original story closely, certain aspects such as character distinctions and changes in the timeline, make the show stand on its own, apart from the original Korean drama.

Specifically, the alteration in timeline created an overall sense of desperation that does not come until the second half of the original show. The original show, *God's Gift*, functions on a timeline of two weeks. The main protagonist, Soo-Hyun (Bo-Young Lee) is sent back in time to two weeks before the death of her daughter Saet-Byul (Yoo-Bin Kim). Soo-Hyun works alongside a man, Dong-Chan (Seung-Woo Cho) who was also sent back in time. Over the course of the two weeks, Soo-Hyun and Dong-Chan work together to catch a serial killer and unwrap the mystery of who is going to kidnap and kill Saet-Byul. The show uses intertitles describing the amount of time left before Saet-Byul's death in order to build tension.

Somewhere Between utilizes this same story set-up. The main protagonist Laura (Paula Patton) is sent back in time to one week before her daughter Serena (Aria Birch) is murdered. Laura works alongside fellow time-traveler Nico (Devon Sawa) to figure out who will end up kidnapping and killing Serena. Although both stories have the same set-up and *Somewhere Between* retains most of the story elements from the original Korean drama, the timeline in which the shows run are distinct and the ways in which tension is built is different. For instance, *Somewhere Between* does not use intertitles to define the deadline nature of the narrative situation. *Somewhere Between* covers the same material in half the time that *God's Gift* does.

In order to maintain this shortened timeline, *Somewhere Between* cuts out several of the storylines that *God's Gift* uses to create a series of twists that deepen the story. One of the major storylines that *Somewhere Between* both alters and takes out is the connection of a famous singer to the murderer. In *God's Gift*, Saet-Byul is a fan of the band Snake, specifically the lead singer

of the band, Tae-Oh (Min-Woo No). Tae-Oh becomes a suspect in the kidnapping but is proven innocent when it is revealed that his brother is connected to Soo-Hyun and Dong-Chan's investigation which is being guided by a photo containing the possible killer of Dong-Chan's fiancé.

In *Somewhere Between*, Serena is a big fan of the singer Jesse (Drew Ray Tanner), but in the first episode of *Somewhere Between* Jesse dies in a car accident. It is later revealed that Jesse was involved in the incident that resulted in the death of Nico's fiancé. Rather than presenting the singer as a suspect, *Somewhere Between* cuts out this plot point allowing for the story to move faster and to come upon other clues sooner than in *God's Gift*.

Another important storyline that is altered in *Somewhere Between* is Dong-Chan's connection to the case that Soo-Hyun is investigating. The alteration of this storyline acts as a way to advance the story, allowing the timeline to be condensed even further. In *God's Gift,* Dong-Chan's connection to the case is revealed slowly, culminating with a big reveal in episode ten. Over the course of the show, Soo-Hyun learns about the connection between Dong-Chan and her family, but it isn't until she goes with Dong-Chan to his hometown to investigate that she finds out that Dong-Chan's brother is in jail for the murder of Dong-Chan's fiancé and that her husband was the prosecutor working on Dong-Chan's brother's case. The connection entangles Soo-Hyun's family even further because the death of her daughter is what starts the chain of events that ends with Dong-Chan's brother's death.

In *Somewhere Between*, Laura discovers this connection much sooner. One of the first things Laura does when she awakes after traveling back in time is to go to the shop where a mysterious woman prophesied to her about how to save her child. Laura realizes that Nico is

related to this mysterious woman after seeing a picture of him with his fiancé and her mother from the site of the shop. Laura then sees articles about Nico's fiancé's death. Nico even outright tells Laura about his connection to her through her husband. Laura isn't fazed by this information and instead guilts Nico into helping her save Serena in the second episode.

More than just this one interaction is altered in the dynamic of these two leading characters. In *Somewhere Between*, Laura is aware of Nico's secrets and still recruits him to help her. By the end of the show, an explicit romance has grown from the development of their relationship, in the last episode Laura and Nico kiss. In *God's Gift,* a relationship between Dong-Chan and Soo-Hyun is only alluded to through the dialogue of other characters, including some of the police officers musing about why Soo-Hyun is out doing something crazy with a man that isn't her husband rather than staying at home and waiting for more information after her daughter was kidnapped.

Overall, *Somewhere Between* shortens the timeframe in which Laura and Nico have to save Serena, collapsing all of the events from *God's Gift* which occur over the span of fourteen days and instead has them occur over seven days. In order to confine the events to half the time frame, *Somewhere Between* has to cut out events and collapse others. Even though the events in *Somewhere Between* resemble the events in *God's Gift*, the alterations to them increase the tension behind every action. The quicker pace of the show builds more tension, and the different timelines provide different levels of intensity throughout both shows.

As for *Good Doctor* (KRN) and *The Good Doctor* (US), the timeline in which the shows occur differs. *Good Doctor* (KRN) covers three months in the span of twenty episodes. The thing to note about the timeline of *Good Doctor* (KRN) is that in the first episode, the director of the

hospital Woo-Seok (Ho-Jin Cheon) convinces the board to hire Si-On (Joo Won) despite his autism, so long as Si-On can prove himself in six months. If Si-On fails, Woo-Seok would step down as the director of the hospital willingly. Because of this promise, Si-On has a deadline by which to prove himself and stay at the hospital. Despite this deadline, after only three months the doctors give positive feedback on Si-On's work at the hospital, allowing him to stay. This same promise is made by the president Dr. Aaron Glassman (Richard Schiff) in *The Good Doctor* (US), but the first season covers an indistinct amount of time and the promise flows into the continuing seasons. Also, by the end of *Good Doctor* (KRN) the director continues to maintain his role but by the end of the first season of *The Good Doctor* (US), Dr. Glassman has voluntarily stepped down from his role as president of the hospital due to his brain tumor.

Both *Good Doctor* (KRN) and *The Good Doctor* (US) set up their timelines in the form of a deadline leading to a big event. But because of the ways in which these television shows function based on the conventions of television in each country, the deadline works in different ways. Because Korean dramas themselves end after a certain number of episodes, the deadline has to occur sometime within the span of those episodes. American dramas on the other hand try to continue over many seasons for as many episodes as possible. Because there is no set number of episodes for this deadline to occur in, it could take many seasons before this deadline is reached.

Even with this deadline, *Good Doctor* (KRN) tells the story in a non-linear fashion. For example, the characters will be talking about an event that had occurred or a discussion they had with another character, and rather than that conversation just playing through, the characters are shown telling another character about this occurrence, which is then played out as a sort of flashback. For example, in episode ten, the pediatric surgery department lead surgeon Do-Han

(Sang-Wook Joo) and resident Yoon-Seo (Chae-Won Moon) to hear from Si-On about how he was able to convince a pregnant woman to do the required surgery. Although they are talking in Do-Han's office, the show flashes to the moment when Si-On talks to the woman. It isn't until Do-Han and Yoon-Seo ask Si-On about the woman that his conversation with her is fully played out.

This narrative style is distinctly different from that of *The Good Doctor* (US) and many other American prime-time dramas which tend to be told in a linear fashion, unless the show is engaging such storytelling elements as part of the narrative construction such as *Lost* which interweaves multiple timelines into the construction of its narrative. *The Good Doctor* (US) consistently shows the real-time events and conversations between doctors and patients. The only shift in perspective is done by following the characters and not during a discussion between the characters. For example, *The Good Doctor* (US) runs on a case-of-the-week format, as previously mentioned, so the cases presented in each episode are concluded by the end of the episode. There are a total of four to six doctors that the show follows at once, each week the group of doctors is split in half to work on separate cases. This division between the characters allows for two stories or two cases to be dealt with in the span of a singular episode.

One example of how the group is split up is in episode three when Claire (Antonia Thomas) and Shaun (Freddie Highmore) are split from the rest of the group to travel to San Francisco to pick up a donor liver for their patient. While they are away on their own mission, the other doctors are working together on another patient's case. These two patients are combined into one episode, allowing for the point-of-view to transition between groups of doctors.

Overall, *Good Doctor* (KRN) and *The Good Doctor* (US) set their stories up on a deadline. The Korean show concludes the story half-way through the deadline, never reaching its limit. The American show continuously presents a case-of-the-week style narrative without placing too much importance on the previous deadline. By the end of the first season, the bargaining chip attached to the deadline (the president's position) is given up regardless of the bet and thus removes a need for the deadline in one capacity. The issue of Shaun's fit for the hospital is still up in the air, but the pressure on the president's position is removed when Dr. Glassman steps down from his position to treat his illness, allowing Dr. Andrews (Hill Harper) who is vying for the position to step in as president, just as he's always wanted.

Flashbacks

There is one storytelling device that distinguishes Korean dramas from American dramas both in the extent to which it is used and for what purpose it is used. That device is the flashback. The flashback is simple. It is a scene that depicts a previous occurrence within the story world. It could be showing something that has not been shown before or a recurring scene from earlier in the show. Flashbacks are used more often in Korean dramas and repeat previously aired scenes which is not typically done in American dramas, making them a distinct narrative element of the Korean drama form. American dramas may use flashbacks, but this is more of a stylistic choice rather than a recurring narrative element used throughout the industry.

American dramas rely on actors' portrayal of the character and audience memory of previous episodes to infer the thoughts and feelings of characters, the character interiority (Mittell), while Korean dramas utilize flashbacks, even from within the same episode, to show audiences exactly what the character is thinking about before showing their emotional reaction.

This flashback nature provides context for the characters' actions and is straightforward with no room for misinterpretation as to what is driving a character's actions.

Flashbacks in *God's Gift* are used for multiple reasons. The main usage is to show the backward flow of time. *God's Gift* inherently uses flashbacks to build upon the time travel narrative it has set up. Soo-Hyun commits suicide after her daughter's death but is inexplicably sent back in time. When Soo-Hyun awakes after traveling back in time, she comes to the realization that time is repeating itself only after going through her day. Flashbacks from the previous two episodes come up when events repeat themselves, replaying the day Soo-Hyun lived through previously. She ultimately comes to the conclusion that she has traveled through time after finding the polaroid she received from the mysterious tea shop and sees that Saet-Byul is missing from the image.

In *Somewhere Between*, these flashbacks all occur within the first episode. Rather than remembering about the polaroid, Laura finds it on the floor. Serena's picture is erased from the polaroid.

These types of flashbacks serve the same purpose in both *God's Gift* and *Somewhere Between*, but *Somewhere Between* uses fewer flashbacks in total, only using them when divulging information about Nico's past and his fiancé's murder or helping fuel the sense of time repeating itself. On the other hand, flashbacks are continually used throughout *God's Gift* to remind viewers of key pieces of information regarding the search for Saet-Byul's kidnapper. As the show jumps from culprit to culprit, pieces of information get pushed to the back of viewers' memories, and the flashbacks allow viewers to remind themselves of what exactly the show is referencing. For example, in episode thirteen, Soo-Hyun goes to a meeting at the house of the

Korean president. While there, she takes notice of the pattern on the president's ring. This pattern may not be easily recognizable to audience members, a quick flashback of the pattern Saet-Byul drew on the wall of the shed she was kept in is shown to match the pattern on the president's ring. This pattern has not been mentioned in depth since the first episode. Thus, this particular clue has been out of the audience's minds for twelve episodes, requiring the flashback to remind viewers what clue Soo-Hyun discovers. This type of flashback is used many times throughout *God's Gift*. *Somewhere Between* does not utilize this style of flashback and instead uses a 'previously on…' segment at the beginning of each episode that serves as a way to remind viewers of important details from preceding episodes that are relevant to the storylines presented in the upcoming episode (Mittell 187).

The conventions of this narrative storytelling device alter the way in which it is utilized throughout these shows. American dramas tend to be forward focused and even with the usage of flashbacks in *Somewhere Between*, the focus is on the current mystery and solving the case. Viewers are left to their own devices to remember key pieces of information and clues that lead Laura and Nico to the next culprit. *God's Gift* actively feeds viewers with relevant information, keying them in on the thought process and trajectory of Soo-Hyun and Dong-Chan's search.

Good Doctor (KRN) utilizes flashbacks in a different way than *God's Gift*. *Good Doctor* (KRN) uses flashbacks to provide backstory for Si-On's character, telling viewers the tragedy of his brother and pet rabbit in the first episode. This background flashback reoccurs multiple times throughout the show as Si-On remembers aspects of his life that he has previously forgotten. This saves him from the knowledge of painful memories he grew up with. The act of meeting his mother and father who he had forgotten causes these memories to resurface.

The Good Doctor (US) uses these same memories as flashbacks in the first episode of the show, following very closely to the flashbacks used in the first episode of *Good Doctor* (KRN). In general, the first episode of *The Good Doctor* (US) very closely resembles the first episode of *Good Doctor* (KRN) with a few alterations. This is the only episode to be replicated so closely both in narration and visuals. The initial flashbacks are something that marks this connection to the original and also some slight deviations away from it. The first flashback in the show depicts a moment when Shaun's brother saves him from being bullied.

This scene is reminiscent of the first flashback in the original Korean drama. Although, the flashback in the Korean drama goes on for an extended period of time and presents the majority of Si-On's backstory through this extended flashback sequence. This sequence depicts Si-On's brother saving him from bullies, the death of Si-On's rabbit, Si-On meeting Woo-Seok, and eventually Si-On's brother's death. The second flashback in the episode is actually shown from Woo-Seok's perspective and shows a montage of Si-On learning about the human body, showcasing his savant abilities. The first flashback in the original Korean drama lasts much longer than any of the flashbacks in the first episode of the American drama. Rather than splitting up the information provided by the flashback across multiple flashbacks throughout the episode, *Good Doctor* (KRN) places it all in one flashback at the beginning of the episode. The show also has flashbacks from two different perspectives. First, the flashback is shown from Si-On's point-of-view, showing his relationship with his older brother and his parents. The next flashback that is shown is from the perspective of the hospital director Woo-Seok, giving context for how Woo-Seok views Si-On and how their relationship was built. The direct correlation of this flashback to the current situation Woo-Seok is in helps audience members understand Woo-Seok's drive to have Si-On hired at the hospital. *The Good Doctor* (US) doesn't use flashbacks

from other perspectives, only from Shaun. This leads to a lack of deeper understanding as to how close Shaun is to Dr. Glassman, and why Dr. Glassman is so adamant about hiring Shaun. Audiences understand the connection between the characters but never experience Dr. Glassman's own perspective on Shaun.

The American show does not continue to use flashbacks as often, dropping the usage of flashbacks halfway through the first season and sparingly using them in subsequent seasons. The show uses the element of telling Shaun's backstory through flashbacks in the first few episodes as a way to build up Shaun's character, similar to how they are used in *Good Doctor* (KRN). As the show continues, these flashbacks are centered around memories that are relevant to the current patients that Shaun is working with in the hospital and the life lessons he is learning while working there. For example, in the second episode, Shaun is learning about sarcasm and how to lie for a good purpose. There is a set of flashbacks that run throughout the episode showing Shaun's brother lying so that they can raise money for themselves and the process of his brother trying to teach Shaun to lie, doing so unsuccessfully. Ultimately Shaun's brother teaches him to stand up for himself and not be afraid.

The lessons Shaun learned during the moments in the flashbacks are directly reflected in the current situation Shaun is facing, learning about sarcasm and how to stand up for his diagnoses despite what the other doctors are telling him. This specific flashback isn't present in the original Korean drama. This acts as an example of how *The Good Doctor* (US) takes the initial premise of the Korean drama and uses the storytelling element of flashbacks in its own way. Incorporating the present with the past before ultimately sticking with the present.

By linking the ongoing story to the backstory, there is an understanding of how the events that Shaun is going through remind him of his past. Shaun also holds the memories of his abusive father and mother, differing from Si-On whose mind acted to protect himself from these damaging memories by erasing them. *Good Doctor* (KRN) uses flashbacks within their narrative timeline to alter the sequence of storytelling. As previously mentioned, the forward looking narrative of American dramas leads to the dismissal of flashbacks from *The Good Doctor*'s (US) storytelling repertoire except for special occasions.

Recaps

Rather than flashbacks, American dramas give viewers a recap at the beginning of episodes to present previously shown information within a show. This recap, or the 'previously on…' section, acts as a source of contextualizing the current episodes' plot points. "These recaps are generally crafted by series producers, who choose key moments that they believe relevant for refreshing viewers' memories for upcoming storylines and enabling new viewers to join the series midstream," (Mittell 187). The 'previously on…' section alerts viewers to key plots points from previous episodes that will be brought back up in the upcoming content of the episode. This can be as simple as a reintroduction to a character that hasn't been shown for a few episodes and as complicated as reminding viewers of a key point of tension, such as the knowledge of a murder or other heinous crime. Given how many episodes an American drama can have with its never-ending season model, there could be one episode in which context needs to be provided or hundreds of episodes to pick and choose from regarding what points are needed to provide context for the current episode. The 'previously on…' segment in American dramas can bring up plot points that were put in place in previous episodes. These previous episodes could have aired just the week before or months prior. Jason Mittell mentions several examples of shows that

bring up plot points from as far back as eleven to eighteen months prior to the 'previously on…' reminder (189).

Alternatively, Korean dramas have a more limited run and less airtime between episodes that allows for more plot information to be readily recalled, negating the need for a 'previously on' segment and instead focusing on the anticipation of the next episode with a preview at the end of the current episode.

Korean dramas do not feature a 'previously on…' segment at the beginning of their episodes, but they also do not rely on the audience to remember exactly how the previous episode ended. Korean dramas, typically although this can be altered depending on the stylistic choices being made within the drama, begin with a repeat of the final scene from the previous episode. This repeated scene is not just the same one from the episode prior but may be used to provide another character's point-of-view of the scene or simply just shortened so that the current episode can continue. This repeated scene serves the same function as the 'previously on…' segment in American dramas but has the opportunity to provide more context or new content by presenting the same information from another character's point-of-view. By presenting the scene this way, the viewer can learn more about the inner workings of another character or how that character thought of the scene rather than the character that was the focus of the scene in the previous episode.

Cliffhangers

Another element of the narrative formula that is used differently between American and Korean dramas is the cliffhanger. Cliffhangers are mostly used in thrillers among American dramas. They are also used at the end of a season to create a link between the upcoming season

and the season that just finished airing. This connection between seasons acts as a way to keep viewers intrigued and willing to come back to the show after waiting several months for the next season to air. Typically, there is a three-to-six-month gap between seasons on American television. This long hiatus between seasons is a period in which a show can lose viewers. The season ending cliffhanger is what keeps viewers interested in the show and ready to watch it once it starts airing again after the hiatus period.

Cliffhangers in Korean dramas are used in a similar but slightly different manner than this. Cliffhangers are used to keep viewers interested in the show and wanting to come back to it, but the length of the break is not nearly as long. Cliffhangers are common among all genres of Korean drama and are used at the end of almost every episode or every other episode. Cliffhangers are thus used to keep viewers interested in the show between episodes and between weeks of airing. These cliffhangers also keep viewers invested in the show across extended periods of time between episodes during special events such as holidays and athletic events that interrupt the standard airing schedule.

The way in which American and Korean dramas create excitement for the upcoming episodes of a show is also very different and creates a different sense of excitement, also on a varying timeline. Korean dramas build anticipation for the next episode by leaving the current episode on a cliffhanger. This happens so often that the cliffhanger ending followed by the rolling of credits, complete with freeze-frame image, the drama's soundtrack, and a panel of sponsors on the bottom of the screen, has become a parody on Korean television. This setup is used to make a joke when something exciting happens in a sitcom or variety show, say a celebrity falling down (cue the freeze frame). This ending style is so ingrained in Korean culture that it is easily understood by viewers in capacities other than a Korean drama. On the other

hand, cliffhangers in American dramas tend to be utilized more during the season finale of a series to build anticipation for the upcoming season which requires a longer wait time than a new episode.

Previews

After the credits roll, Korean dramas feature a preview of the next episode which builds the mystery and excitement of 'what happens next'. These previews also allow the viewers to know what types of issues are going to be brought up in the next episode and create more tension within the plot of the ongoing drama.

Not every episode has a preview at the end of it though. When a Korean drama reaches the peak of the plot and a particularly interesting twist has just unfolded, the credits roll, and the episode finishes without a preview. The previous pattern of credits and preview is broken and leaves the viewer even more invested to find out 'what happens next' as they are left in the dark, and the only way to know what happens next is to tune into the next episode.

American dramas, on the other hand, build anticipation through teaser trailers that air throughout the week leading up to the next episode. American dramas can leave viewers with an open-ended scene to close out the episode, making them wonder 'what happens next' or give a complete whole ending to the story presented in the episode.

Regardless of the type of ending an episode is left on, typically the day after the episode airs a trailer for the upcoming episode is released. Sometimes one is played right after the end of an episode. But when that episode is released to streaming platforms, the preview is not included in the run time of the episode.

Korean dramas are uploaded to streaming platforms with this preview attached at the end of the episode. This trailer acts just as the preview does in Korean dramas on Korean networks, to build anticipation for 'what comes next' by presenting viewers with points of tension that will be explored in the upcoming episode. The trailer itself is aired on television and put up online for viewers to see and replay at will. Although these trailers are provided for viewers, not every audience member is going to watch the trailer, whether that be from the inability to access it or just pure chance of missing it. For those audience members that do not see the trailer, their sense of continued interest in the show and anticipation for the next episode lies in how much the ending of the previous episode has made them invested in the show world.

Endings

Endings are a very important part of television; they are the last thing audiences see before something new arrives. There are so many different types of endings that a show could have: a cliffhanger, an open-ended conclusion, and a happy ending. But there is one key distinction between the endings of American dramas from Korean ones, how many episodes it takes until a show actually ends. American dramas thrive in a never-ending model that desires to create as much content out of a singular title before fully coming to a conclusion. In order for this model to work there has to be a door left open. Season endings are those doors. An exception to this model is the limited series which aims to conclude the show within a set number of episodes, functioning more like a Korean drama does on a regular basis. I provide an example of the exception to the rule in the discussion of the ending of *Somewhere Between* which was aired as a limited series.

Mittell offers a set of ending techniques that are prevalent among American dramas, stating that, “actual finales are quite rare for American television series, with a range of other, much more common techniques of ending,” (319). The common techniques in order of prevalence are stoppage, wrap-up, conclusion, cessation, resurrection, and finally the finale (319–22).

Stoppage, the most prevalent ending type, is when a series comes to an unplanned ending occurring from the network canceling the show, typically midseason. The wrap-up is when a series ending gives a natural stopping point but does not fully act as a series ending. The conclusion is when an episode is written as an ending, whether that ending has been planned in advance or was sprung upon the production team. “Conclusions offer a sense of finality and resolution, following the centuries-old assumption that well-crafted stories need to end; however, such resolutions are comparatively rare for American television; the industry equates success with an infinite middle and relegates endings to failures,” (Mittell 321). Cessation is a stoppage or wrap-up without necessarily confirming the end of a series. Resurrection is when a finished series returns to television or in another medium. Finale is an ending to a series that is both planned and finalizes the events of the series prior to that episode.

American dramas tend to end their seasons on a cliffhanger, with one big final twist, new relationship, or new mystery to keep the audience engaged and anticipating the next season. Korean dramas on the other hand function as a singular season story, self-contained and fully concluded by the end. While the endings of Korean dramas may have an air of mystery about them, or end in an open-ended manner such as the ending of *God’s Gift*, which will be discussed in full later in this chapter, they do come to an end. The story world that was built and the

characters that lived in it have finished telling their story, most of the time. As previously mentioned, it is rare for a Korean drama to have a second season.

The ending of *God's Gift* and the ending of *Somewhere Between*, despite being the same story and both fitting into the category of finale, are much different from one another. The ending of *God's Gift* is left up to the audience to interpret. Dong-Chan realizes that in the original timeline he was made to drown Saet-Byul in the stead of the president's son. This realization makes the story come full circle as Soo-Hyun races to save her daughter, Dong-Chan wakes up from his drugged stupor enough to stop himself from drowning Saet-Byul. But as the drama has been reminding viewers throughout the episodes of the mystical nature of the time jump, he remembers the saying that the ghost of his mother-in-law told Soo-Hyun, "One of the two must disappear for this to end," (God's Gift Ep. 1 Viki Translations). This phrase sets him on the path of suicide as he believes that his own death is what will save Saet-Byul. The audience never actually witnesses Dong-Chan drown himself. Just before we see him walk far enough into the lake there is a jump forward in time in which Soo-Hyun and Saet-Byul are shown walking along the edge of the lake. Dong-Chan is nowhere in sight in this flash-forward and is presumed to be dead. But the ending is actually left up to the interpretation of the viewers, giving them the freedom to believe that just as Soo-Hyun made it in time to save Saet-Byul, she was also able to save Dong-Chan.

The ending of *Somewhere Between* differs slightly from this as Nico was never made to kill Serena. Laura and Nico arrive at the lake in order to save Serena. At the lake, Serena is fighting with the governor's son. The governor's son pushes Serena out of the way, reaching for the gun he dropped. Just as the governor's son is about to shoot Serena, Nico jumps in front of the bullet. The force pushes both Serena and Nico into the lake. Laura jumps in to save them

both. Once at the surface of the lake, Nico says that if the power of the universe needs to take his life in order to save Serena's he is gladly willing to give up his life. But, as luck would have it, an ambulance is on the way. The flash-forward scene at the very end of *Somewhere Between* features Serena, Laura, Nico's brother, mother, niece, and Nico himself. Nico survives the ending and is explicitly shown in the flash-forward ultimately concluding the story of the show.

The American show decided to make audiences aware that Nico survived the end of the show and make it clear that Nico and Laura end up in a relationship together. The Korean drama leaves the ending on a more open-ended note, Dong-Chan is neither confirmed to be dead nor alive and never explicitly starts a relationship with Soo-Hyun. Both *Somewhere Between* and *God's Gift* utilize a finale style ending as both shows end with a singular season. *Somewhere Between* is an example of how a Korean scripted format can be used to make a limited series for American audiences.

The Good Doctor (US) utilizes a different style of ending, focusing on the infinite model of storytelling that most American dramas function within. Each season of *The Good Doctor* (US) has a cliffhanger that leads into the upcoming season. For example, the end of the first season leaves the audience with questions about Dr. Glassman and Shaun's positions at the hospital. Dr. Glassman is revealed to have cancer, Shaun made a mistake during a surgery that could lead to both him and Dr. Glassman losing their jobs, but he decides to own up to his mistake anyway. This leaves viewers wondering what will happen to Shaun and Dr. Glassman in the second season. The second, third, and fourth seasons all end with revelations of newly formed relationships being made or steps being taken to deepen a relationship, such as the season four ending where Shaun and Lea become engaged. These season endings all fit within the category of wrap-ups. These final episodes are the wrap-up for the season they are aired in but

leave room for another season to continue the story or for that episode to act as a concluding episode if necessary. So far, those episodes have not had to act as the ending of the series as it has been renewed for more seasons. At the time of this writing, season five has yet to finish airing and a sixth season has not been confirmed. Only time will tell which of these ending types will be used in the final episode of season five.

Good Doctor (KRN) gives a much different perspective on endings compared to its format adaptation. Given that the series comprises twenty episodes and fully ends by the end of the final episode, it fits neatly into the finale category, just as most other Korean dramas do. The finale of *Good Doctor* (KRN) wraps up loose ends that have been created throughout the show. The antagonist is defeated, and the hospital is saved from becoming a private children's hospital. Si-On receives stellar reviews from his peers and is allowed to keep his position as a member of the hospital staff, a time jump at the end of the episode even shows Si-On reprimanding a new resident. Si-On and Yoon-Seo start dating, the secondary couple rekindles their relationship, everyone is happy at the end of the final episode and the loose ends are tied up in a nice bow.

Aesthetic Tone

Not only do these narrative devices alter the presentations of these shows, but the visual and aural aspects of these shows distinguish them from one another. The visual qualities of these shows can dictate the mood surrounding the show. The types of sets that are used, the color palettes being used in set design and costume design can all be influential in how the show evokes certain feelings from the viewers. The music used in these shows plays a part in guiding the emotions of the audience and ultimately sets a tone for the show as well.

Visual Tone

The visual elements of any television show are important in creating an overall mood and tone for the show. Aspects such as set design, color scheme, and overall mise-en-scène interact to create a cohesive look for a particular show. Regarding colors, there is a cultural element as to why certain colors are chosen over others. There is an overall color preference difference between Eastern and Western cultures, with Eastern societies having a particular preference for the color white (Park and Guerin; Saito). The color white has ties to traditional ceremonies in Korean culture, including birth and death, and remains one of the most preferred colors in Korea along with other natural colors (Geum and Jung). Artists Key-Sook Geum and Hyun Jung pointed out in their chapter on color in Korean culture that grayish and dull-brown toned colors became popular through Western movies and magazines and that the color black became popular due to Westernization, even coming to represent Westernization and modernism. They also point out that black has long been popular in Western societies dating back to industrialization (Geum and Jung 136–37). Given these differences, there is an obvious preference in Korean culture for lighter and brighter colors compared to America, this preference is translated into television set design and color scheme.

The set of *Good Doctor* (KRN) and *The Good Doctor* (US) helps align the shows with the focus of the story. Even though both shows center around an autistic doctor and his journey working in a large hospital, the setting of these shows lead to an important distinction of what overarching theme the story is focused on. The Korean drama places importance on healing and caring for children while the American show focuses mainly on the adult members of the hospital staff and the relationships that develop between them. The set of the Korean drama *Good Doctor* (KRN) is brightly colored, set in a modern children's wing of a large hospital. The

fact that the show is set in the children's wing of the hospital requires the set to function as a place suitable for children. Therefore, the colors of the set are brightly colored, using such colors as blue, green, and yellow so as to appeal to children.

The two best locales that show off this distinction between *Good Doctor* (KRN) and *The Good Doctor*'s (US) set design and color scheme are the nurse's station and the operating room. Looking at these locales in both shows, a clear example of how set design can set the mood of a show with a single location appears. The nurses' station in *Good Doctor* (KRN) features a desk with a white top and green base, which is illuminated by a set of lights under the lip of the desktop. The background walls are cream in color with a dark wood-paneled wall to one side of the desk area. The spaces around the desk are filled with office supplies, using colors such as light blue and yellow to pop amongst the background. All of these colorful belongings and furniture pieces help to build the area of the children's wing and the show's focus on the importance of children.

The nurse's station in *The Good Doctor* (US) has a much different appeal that promotes a different feeling when viewing it. There are two nurses' stations worth mentioning that are used as sets for the show. The first is the general usage nurses' station, one that is located in the hallways and not in a specific wing of the hospital. This nurses' station features a desk area that is minimally decorated, the largest decoration in sight is a vase of yellow and white flowers. The flowers sit atop a dark wooden desk with metal desktops. The side of the desk is covered in an abstract blue picture. The other colors of notice are that of a green picture hanging behind the desk and a built-in bright orange archway. The walls behind the desk are that of unfinished concrete. Despite all of the colorful décor, the concrete walls severely dampen the mood of the

set design, creating a serious atmosphere that is brightened only by the pops of color decorating the space.

The second nurses' station to take notice of is the emergency room station. This station is set within the confines of the emergency room at the hospital. The desk area here is livelier than the previous station mentioned. There are more nurses going in and out of this station, and more computers on the desks. The desks themselves are large orange desktops being supported by white metal bases with underlighting at the bottom of them. The station itself is lighted by a row of overhead lights. There is an operating room schedule whiteboard on one wall of the station. The back wall of the station is covered in gray cabinetry. The walls of the station and emergency room are painted a muted blue color with a large orange stripe at the top of the wall. The paint on the wall matches the colors used for the desk area, despite the location being in the emergency room, the color scheme is brighter than other areas of the hospital.

Overall, the set design of *Good Doctor* (KRN) features brighter colors and suits the setting of a children's wing in a hospital. The set design of *The Good Doctor* (US) features darker colors with accents of bright colors, more well suited for general operations. These set designs represent the context of the story being told within the show and the preferences of the cultures they are servicing. The Korean drama is centered around saving children so that they can continue living and achieve their dreams. The child focused nature of the show is represented by the set design and color scheme being utilized. The American show is centered around the fast-paced nature of working in a large hospital as a general surgeon and all of the many scenarios a surgeon might face. This focus is expressed through the muted color palette and minimalist set design. The bright colors in *Good Doctor* (KRN) reflect the preference for the color white and other vivid colors, especially because the color white represents cleanliness and purity (Saito 46).

The Korean drama also features an interesting visual element that is not present in the American show. As the doctors in the show discuss the different diagnoses of patients and use medical terms to describe their actions, pop-ups appear on the screen with definitions of these terms. These pop-ups function as a way to inform audience members about the medical terminology being used of which they may not be familiar. This insight helps audiences understand what is going on in the show and have a clearer picture of what exactly it is that the doctors are doing. The American show does not use any sort of pop-ups explaining medical terminology, the show just uses the terminology and continues.

Compared to *Good Doctor* (KRN), *God's Gift* is a much darker show, not just in terms of content but also visually. *God's Gift* plays into the darker nature of the content by using a darker aesthetic compared to other Korean dramas. Although, compared to *Somewhere Between*, *God's Gift* still manages to hold a lighter tone. One key scene helps portray how the same event from *God's Gift* is played out in *Somewhere Between* with a much more muted aesthetic tone.

The key scene being compared is the death of the policeman who is working for the bad guy while also helping the duo. In *God's Gift*, the policeman is Woo-Jin Hyun (Gyu-Woon Jung), Soo-Hyun's ex-boyfriend and Dong-Chan's ex-partner. In episode fourteen, Woo-Jin sacrifices himself to help Soo-Hyun and Dong-Chan, letting them go knowing that the bad guys would come after him. He lets them off on the side of the road before being surrounded by the bad guy's henchmen. He fails to fight off the hoard of men and gets hit in the head. The road on which he fights the men is lined with cherry blossom trees with the leaves falling. The final shot of Woo-Jin as he dies is his own view of the cherry blossom trees. He's surrounded by the henchmen, forming a circle around his body in the middle of the road with cherry blossom petals covering the ground. The scene is filled with black; black cars, men in black suits, the asphalt of

the road, with few hints of color coming from the yellow lines on the road and the contrasting white-pink of the cherry blossom petals. The headlights from the cars provide a spotlight for the scene of Woo-Jin's death.

Comparatively, *Somewhere Between* presents this same event in a much more intimate setting and with a more muted color scheme. The character identification isn't the exact same either. The role of Woo-Jin is shifted onto Nico's friend from the force Glenn (Daniel Bacon). His death occurs in the seventh episode. The scene takes place in Glenn's apartment after Nico comes to confront him about betraying him and Laura. The apartment is filled with brown furniture against white walls. The brightest colors used in the scene come from the blue in both Glenn and Nico's shirts. Glenn admits to Nico that he betrayed him and how guilty it makes him feel. Ultimately his guilt overtakes him, and he slits his own throat and falls into Nico's arms. The light coming in from the window spotlights them as Glenn dies in Nico's embrace.

This scene is just one example of how *Somewhere Between* portrays the events in *God's Gift* in a visually different way, accommodating the culture the show is presented to. The aesthetic choices of each show lead to a drastic difference in the visual tone. *God's Gift* plays out on a much grander, cinematic scale than *Somewhere Between*. *Somewhere Between* revels in the intimate settings and muted color palettes to create a show that feels much different from the original. The shows serve their respective audiences through the coloring as well, with brighter colors being used in the Korean show and shades of brown accompanied by a feature color in the American show.

Musical Tone

Another intrinsic element of Korean dramas is the soundtrack that gets produced alongside the drama. Each Korean drama has a soundtrack that is commissioned, composed of famous singers who write or perform songs that get used specifically for the drama. These songs get used during moments of tension. These songs are used both in their instrumental form and lyrical form throughout the show. Typically, the songs on this soundtrack are released a few at a time on online music streaming platforms, such as Spotify in the U.S. and Melon a popular app in Korea, week after week as the drama airs and in accordance with which song is being used in the drama during that week. A full album is released at the end of the drama with all of the previously released songs (Keller 97). These soundtracks act as part of the Korean star system that is utilized in Korean drama production to draw an audience. Soundtracks can draw audiences to a Korean drama simply through the artists who sing the songs and general interest in the music. Fans of the artists watch Korean dramas to see how their favorite artist's song gets used within the drama. There are some songs that do not get used more than a few times within the show but are still released in the same manner and are featured on the final album. These songs act as a repetitive element that calls back emotions from the previous scenes in which it was used, a leitmotif of sorts.

For example, the OST (soundtrack) for *Good Doctor* (KRN) was released in six parts. The songs "Miracle" by Young Hyun Lee and "I'm in Love" by 2Bic are played during the romantic moments between Si-On and Yoon-Seo. These songs inherently carry with them all of the emotional tension that has been built up between the two characters throughout the entire drama, ultimately acting as love songs that depict the love story of the two main characters. Keller suggests: "Nearly every romantic K-drama in recent years has one or two early

established songs which accompany the couple through their courtship" (104–05). Anytime these songs are played, viewers are reminded of the emotion depicted in previous scenes where the song was used and imbue the emotion from those scenes into the current scene. This leitmotif action creates a connection of the song with the main couple through this repeated pairing so that when audiences hear the song at any point throughout the drama, they know something romantic is about to happen.

The second song, "I'm in Love," is used in the same way as "Miracle" but only starts appearing after episode eight. This song marks the start of Si-On truly understanding his feelings for Yoon-Seo. Previously in the episode, Si-On receives love advice from a teenage patient who helps him make sense of his hiccupping. He finally understands that the hiccups mean he likes Yoon-Seo. The song plays during the moment when Si-On returns back to his apartment. He finds Yoon-Seo asleep in his bed, he sits by her side and confesses his feelings to his brother. In a voice-over, Si-On states that he finally understands what it means to like someone. By using it during moments like this, the song becomes linked to the romance between Si-On and Yoon-Seo and eventually comes to represent the development of their relationship.

There is no such song in *The Good Doctor* (US). American dramas do not tend to commission lyrical soundtracks to their dramas. A popular show may have a single song that gets produced to accompany the airing of the show, especially if the drama is centered around music, but typically American dramas rely on subtle instrumental cues and up-and-coming artists' music in the show. *The Good Doctor* (US) has an instrumental theme that acts as the theme song for the entire show. This simple theme is used in the introduction of every episode. It is a simple piano supported by drums and orchestral beat that creates an inspirational tone that carries throughout the show. Later in the show, it also starts using lyrical music at the end of episodes.

This short instrumental gets used throughout the first episode, sometimes as is and sometimes slowed down to build up the emotion in the scene. An extended version of the short instrumental is the first sound featured in the first episode, relying heavily on the sound of strings and drums to drive the beat forward. During the first flashback when Shaun remembers his brother saving him from bullies, the score slows from an upbeat pace to a much more pared-down string refrain that represents the emotions Shaun is feeling in the flashback. The score builds with the addition of piano when Shaun's brother rushes in to save him, shifting from sad to inspired. This slow string build or calm piano, drawing from the intro theme, is used during the other flashbacks throughout the episode. Acting in direct correlation with the first flashback, the second to last flashback of the episode when Shaun recalls his brother's death the theme from the first flashback plays in reverse order. Starting with the upbeat, inspirational tune that turns into the slower, sadder tune as his brother falls to his death. This theme thus connects the emotions that Shaun has regarding memories of his brother, holding all of the emotions that Shaun has about his brother in this instrumental score that when played in reverse order brings back the emotions tied from the previous flashbacks, making Shaun's brother's death that much more sad.

During moments of high tension, the intense drumbeat from the very beginning of the intro theme is played. One such moment is when Shaun is stopped by airport security while trying to secure a knife in order to save a young boy's life. The moment the guards tackle him the mother walks up saying that Shaun is trying to save her son's life and the drums build behind this action. After Shaun performs surgery and saves the young boy's life, a version of the slowed-down intro is played, leaning into the sentimental moment, and heightening the emotions of the characters. Another example of the drum motif being used in tense situations is during

moments where something inevitably goes wrong in the operating room and there is a sense of rushing to fix the issue in order to save the patient. This drum motif is also used during the build-up to a commercial break; the beat steadily continues until it reaches an abrupt stopping point just as the show goes to commercial.

As the show continues to release episodes and moves into subsequent seasons it begins using lyrical songs to help build emotion. The usage of lyrical (or pop as Keller refers to it) music is done at the end of an episode heightening the emotion being drawn from the final scene. Such lyrical songs increase the momentum of the episode ending, both heightening the emotions and actions of the story. Out of all the shows mentioned in this thesis, the one that utilizes this type of music the most is *The Good Doctor* (US).

For example, the first episode to use a lyrical song during the final scene is the second episode of the first season. The song "Take Care" by Beach House plays over the final scene of the episode in which Dr. Glassman tells Shaun to take credit for a save that he made, teaching him that taking credit is what will advance his career. The song marks the first time that Shaun feels like he is doing something worthwhile at the hospital. The lyrics reflect this state, "I'll take care of you." This style of musical ending is used for the majority of the first season, featuring in two-thirds of the episodes. The other episodes in the first season all feature an instrumental score playing behind the scenes, typically accompanying scenes that present an important turning point in the story. Later seasons feature episodes with no musical element in the background of the final scene, this denotes important plot points or highly tense situations that occur within the final scene of the episode. The lack of music allows the viewer's entire focus to be on the dialogue, what is happening in the scene, and the interactions between the characters. More

instrumental musical scores are used in the final scenes in later seasons as well, noting a shift in tone to having more important plot points occurring at the end of an episode.

The Korean drama *God's Gift*, despite being a very different genre than *Good Doctor* (KRN), *God's Gift* is a thriller while *Good Doctor* (KRN) is a romance, still has a soundtrack that accompanies it. The *God's Gift* OST has a total of four songs. One of the songs on the soundtrack comes from a fellow band member of one of the cast members. Baro, from K-pop group B1A4, plays Dong-Chan's nephew and Saet-Byul's friend Young-Gyu. Baro's groupmate Sandeul recorded one of the songs on the drama's soundtrack. Having K-Pop idols sing songs for drama soundtracks is very common, especially if the idol is acting in the drama. Some actors even sing for the soundtrack without having a musical career alongside their acting career. For example, Joo Won who played Si-On in *Good Doctor* (KRN) sang one of the songs for the show's soundtrack. This is another aspect of the Korean star system where singers can become actors and actors can become singers. Korean dramas can attract audience members through the popularity of the actors that are cast in the show, television actors are just as popular as K-pop idols and film actors. Famous television actors or famous Korean idols or singers can bring in fans that would not typically watch the drama otherwise.

God's Gift uses both diegetic and non-diegetic music. The diegetic music comes from music played in locales featured in the drama, such as the clubs that Soo-Hyun and Dong-Chan go to looking for a murder victim. Diegetic music also comes from characters singing, for example, there is the song that Saet-Byul's favorite artist Snake has released that is played several times throughout the show, both coming from being played on television and from being played live at a concert. Another song is one Dong-Chan sings to Saet-Byul while looking out at the lake when they travel to his hometown. Dong-Chan plays this song for his fiancé as well in a

flashback. The non-diegetic music is provided by an instrumental score that runs throughout the series. This instrumental score helps create the tense mood that sets the tone for the show. The musical score also brightens the mood during more comedic moments in the drama, lightening the tone of the show.

Compared to *God's Gift*, the limited series nature of *Somewhere Between* uses significantly less lyrical music. *Somewhere Between* even uses less lyrical music than *The Good Doctor* (US). The usage of lyrical music is much different from how it is used in *The Good Doctor* (US). *Somewhere Between* uses less lyrical music and instead features an instrumental score. The mystery-thriller genre relies heavily on the inclusion of instrumental scores to help build tension, especially at the end of episodes. The end of an episode is an opportunity for new information to be given to the audience, making them rethink the clues that they've already been given. The instrumental score plays up the importance of the information being presented in the final scene and allows audiences to pay attention to the details of the scene, similar to how instrumental scores are used in *The Good Doctor* (US).

The aspects focused on in this chapter build up the narrative elements and stylistic elements that create the Korean and American drama form. Although similar, certain elements such as flashbacks and previews rather than recaps separate the Korean drama structure. Even though the American and Korean broadcast forms have distinct differences, the growth of Korean content on streaming platforms like Netflix is resulting in a hybrid drama form, combining elements from each country.

Chapter 3: Streaming Worldwide

The description of broadcast drama forms in America and Korea set up in the first two chapters provides a framework for how these drama forms are being altered by streaming platforms. Streaming platforms are investing in Korean content because of its growing popularity through purchasing distribution rights and creating their own original series. Even though these platforms are creating new original Korean dramas, they are not following strictly the broadcast structure and instead are creating a hybrid drama form by combining elements of the Korean broadcast form and the American broadcast form. This chapter provides background for the growth of interest in Korean content, the history of Korean dramas on Netflix, the leader in original Korean content among American streaming companies, and explores how Netflix's hybrid Korean drama form is being utilized by other streaming platforms.

Korean Wave

The rise in popularity of Korean culture, specifically in the form of media such as television, music, and film, is known as the Korean Wave or *Hallyu*, which started with Korean dramas in 1997. There are two distinct eras of the Korean Wave as set out by scholar Dal Yong Jin. The first era spans from 1997 to 2007 and is centered around the increase in popularity of Korean dramas in East and Southeast Asian countries. Specifically, Japan, Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore, Hong Kong, and China. The first internationally popular dramas are *What Is Love All About* (1997) and *Stars in My Heart* (1997). These dramas specifically became popular in East and Southeast Asia (Jin 23). There were three other dramas that became extremely popular, further increasing interest in Korean media around the world, *Autumn Fairy Tale* (2000), *Winter Sonata* (2002) (which became so popular in Japan that the lead actor earned a special nickname

from his Japanese fans), and *Jewel in the Palace* which was especially popular in China (Jin 23–24). The second era began in 2008 and has continued to the present day. This era is motivated by the increase in popularity of Korean pop music (K-Pop) and the overall spread of interest in Korean media in Western countries. Korean dramas have been at the forefront of the Korean Wave since the very beginning and have continued to be popular since.

Netflix History

Korean dramas were first made readily accessible to American audiences in 2012 when Netflix put their first Korean dramas on the platform. Since then, Korean dramas have been made accessible through many streaming platforms including Hulu (in collaboration with Viki). There has also been an introduction of streaming services dedicated solely to Korean dramas. The most notable of which is Viki and formerly DramaFever. In this section I detail the history of Korean dramas on the platform Netflix, showcasing the growth of Netflix original Korean dramas and the expansion of the streaming drama form onto other streaming platforms.

Korean dramas were first made available on the platform in 2012, yet it was not until 2019 that Netflix began creating original Korean shows and movies. Netflix's first achievement regarding Korean content was simulcasting. In 2017, Netflix simulcast its first Korean series, *Man to Man*. The show streamed globally at the same time it aired on JTBC in Korea. The distribution of the show was altered for Korea and the U.S. In Korea, the series was made available on the platform one hour after it aired. In the U.S., the show was released in two eight-episode parts ("About Netflix - Netflix Simulcasts New Korean Original Series MAN x MAN by JTBC in Over 20 Languages Globally").

Following this achievement, Netflix announced its first fully original Korean drama would be released in 2019, with an originally planned release for 2018. Netflix's first Korean original series *Love Alarm* is a drama based on a webtoon of the same name. The story is centered around an app that allows users to find out if someone within ten meters of them has romantic feelings for them ("About Netflix - Love Alarm Set to Become Netflix First Korean Original Series"). The drama consisted of eight episodes in the first season. The second season was released in 2021 and consisted of six episodes ("About Netflix - Netflix Original Series 'Love Alarm S2' Confirmed for March 12 Release").

Netflix continued with the production of its second original Korean drama *Kingdom*. *Kingdom* presents a completely different genre of Korean drama than *Love Alarm*. *Kingdom* is a combination of a historical period drama and zombie action-thriller ("About Netflix - Two of Korea's Top Storytellers Unite for Kingdom - A New Netflix Original Series"). The show aired in 2019 with a total of six episodes in the first season, six episodes in a second season that aired in 2020, and a prequel film that aired in 2021. This drama became one of Netflix's first internationally popular pieces of Korean media.

Following *Love Alarm* and *Kingdom*, the year 2019 also marked the year in which Netflix made exclusive streaming contracts with two Korean companies. Both contracts started in 2020 and span over several years. Netflix created a partnership with the Korean companies JTBC and CJ ENM, including CJ ENM's subsidiary Studio Dragon ("About Netflix - JTBC-NETFLIX INK MULTI-YEAR DEAL FOR HIGH-QUALITY KOREAN TV SERIES"; "About Netflix - CJ ENM/STUDIO DRAGON-NETFLIX ANNOUNCE A LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIP"). In 2019, Netflix also announced the creation of ten new original Korean shows and movies, two of which were continuations of the first installment of previously released Korean original dramas

and one of which was the project *Round Six* which would later be entitled *Squid Game* ("About Netflix - Netflix Announces 10+ Original Series Made with Korea Creators at the 2019 Asia TV Drama Conference").

The continued growth of interest in Korean media over those last few years of production and distribution led to further investment in Korean content in 2020 and 2021. In 2021, Netflix invested 500 million USD into Korean content on their platform, citing the popularity of content created since 2016 when the company began working with Korean filmmakers and talent ("About Netflix - Riding the K-Wave, Netflix Spotlights Stories Made in Korea and Watched by the World"). Further investment into Korean shows and movies was made after the popularity of *Squid Game*, which at its release was the most popular original show on the platform. As of the beginning of 2022, Netflix has announced the release of twenty-five new Korean shows and movies, starting with the release of the drama *All of Us Are Dead*, another zombie feature set in a high school, which is receiving its own fair amount of attention from audiences ("About Netflix - The Next Wave"; Brzeski). *All of Us Are Dead* is just the most recent of many popular Korean series on the platform. The popularity of *All of Us Are Dead* has made Korea the first country to have more than one non-English language series place first in Netflix's top ten list in the U.S. (Andreeva, "'All Of Us Are Dead' Hits No. 1 On Netflix In New Milestone For Korean Series"). Interest in Korean content continues to grow and so does the creation of Netflix original Korean dramas and movies.

Streaming Form

Netflix Korean dramas live in their own league of Korean dramas. These shows are a direct extension of the Netflix original series. What makes them special is that they are created to

function on the streaming platform specifically and not made for broadcast television, giving a home to content that wouldn't be made for Korean broadcast television. These shows have half the number of episodes that a typical drama has, going from sixteen episodes to eight or nine episodes a season. The most notable example of these types of dramas is the popular 2021 drama *Squid Game*. Because they act as Netflix originals, all of the episodes for the season are dropped at one time. As of March 2022, *Squid Game* continues to be the platform's most popular non-English television show (*Netflix Top 10 - Global*).

One key example of how Netflix has created a space for content that would be rejected elsewhere is the Netflix original Korean drama *Kingdom*. *Kingdom* is a horror drama, portraying a zombie apocalypse in a historical Korean setting. The show was originally aired in 2019 with a second season airing the following year. This second season functions similarly to how second seasons of American dramas, and previous Netflix original shows, function. That is, it continues the story within the story world and utilizes the same set of characters introduced in the first season to continue the story. The show was so popular that it even has a prequel movie. This prequel movie functions to create an additional layer of depth to the story world that the show has been exploring, but the characters in the film are semi-separate from the original story. The only reason they are not fully separated is that the main character of the prequel movie shows up at the very end of the second season in a brief cameo, alluding to her importance in possible upcoming seasons and signaling the addition of the prequel film's release.

The addition of the first original Korean drama *Love Alarm* provides a pattern of Korean shows receiving the multi-season treatment that most Netflix original dramas receive. *Love Alarm* also has two seasons that feature the same characters moving through the same story world. Other Korean originals on Netflix include *Extracurricular*, which was a part of the first

wave of original Korean content, *Silent Sea*, which was released in December of 2021 just after *Squid Game* gained international popularity, and most recently the zombie drama *All of Us Are Dead*. Netflix also places the title of 'Netflix Original' on Korean dramas that the platform has exclusive streaming rights to but are not entirely or at all financed by Netflix and rather are created as all other Korean dramas are created, for broadcast on Korean television. These dramas are simply aired simultaneously on Netflix at the same time they are aired on their home channels in Korea.

As Korean dramas become available on multiple streaming services and as these streaming services start producing their own Korean dramas, the format of these dramas is being altered. This can already be seen in such Korean dramas as *Kingdom*, *Squid Game*, *The Silent Sea*, and most recently *All of Us Are Dead* among many others. These Korean dramas have all been produced by the streaming platform Netflix and have performed well. What makes these shows different from the average Korean drama is notably their length, both episodic length and serial length. The episodes of these dramas range from thirty minutes to the typical hour. These shows also have about half the episodes that a typical drama has within a single season. Looking at these four shows: *Kingdom* has two seasons with six episodes each and a prequel movie that accompanies the two seasons. *Squid Game* has nine episodes in the first season. *The Silent Sea* has eight episodes in its first season. And *All of Us Are Dead* has the most episodes of all of these shows with twelve episodes in the first season.

Squid Game, *The Silent Sea*, and *All of Us Are Dead* have yet to be confirmed for a second season, although *Squid Game* has been unofficially confirmed for a second and third season by co-CEO Ted Sarandos (White, "'The "Squid Game" Universe Has Just Begun' Netflix's Ted Sarandos Says, Confirming Season 2 Of Korean Smash"). Based on the runtime

and number of episodes, these shows have about half the airtime that a typical Korean drama has, even less if you consider *Kingdom* with six episodes a season.

Because these shows are produced by the American streaming company Netflix, they are created in a similar fashion to other shows produced by the streaming company. This mixture between the American-style production of having multiple seasons and episodes with runtimes less than an hour and the usage of the aesthetics of Korean dramas to tell stories is something other streaming services are starting to emulate.

Other streaming platforms have also started to collect Korean shows and movies. Disney+ has set out to create a series of Asian media ranging from anime to movies to Korean dramas. The first Korean drama released on the platform *Snowdrop* was made available to the Asian region as it aired on Korean television. The show was only made available outside of the region on February 9, 2022. This is not the only Korean drama the platform plans on releasing, with more planned for release through 2023 (Frater, "Disney Unveils Over 20 Series and Films in Asian Local-Language Streaming Push"). Even Apple TV+ has released their own original Korean drama, *Dr. Brain*, which coincided with the platform's release in Korea ("'Dr. Brain' to Premiere Globally on Thursday, November 4 to Coincide with the Apple TV+ Launch in South Korea"). Apple TV+ is releasing a second Korean show on March 25, 2022, *Pachinko* which goes beyond the boundaries of a typical drama and will be told in three languages: Korean, Japanese, and English ("Apple's Highly Anticipated Drama 'Pachinko' Set to Premiere Globally March 25, 2022").

Korean content is becoming an essential category of media on streaming platforms. Korean dramas are also popular as sources of format adaptations. This thesis focused on the only

two currently produced format adaptations of Korean dramas, but in March 2022, there has been news of another format adaptation being ordered to pilot. The new ABC format adaptation *The Company You Keep* is based on the original Korean drama *My Fellow Citizens*. The story centers around the romance between a con man and a detective (Otterson). Not only is ABC working on a third Korean format adaptation, but the CW, Fox, HBO, and Showtime have all been reported to be working on the development of Korean formats. Fox has been working mainly on formatting Korean competition series with *Masked Singer* and *I Can See Your Voice*. In 2020 there was news of Fox collaborating with *This is Us* actor Sterling K. Brown to work on a scripted format adaptation of the Korean drama *Live* (Andreeva, "'Live' Cop Drama From Chris Collins & Sterling K. Brown Based On Korean Format Set At Fox With Penalty"). That same year it was also reported that HBO is working on adapting *Parasite* into a limited series, and Showtime is working on a format adaptation of the Korean drama *Memory* (Thorne). Most recently, within the last year the CW has announced that they are working on a format adaptation of the Korean drama *W: Two Worlds* under the title *Angel City* (White, "Genre-Bending Drama 'Angel City' In The Works At The CW From Craig Plestis, Damon Wayans Jr., Corinne Brinkerhoff, Jen Braeden & Heather Thomason"). The news of these shows reiterates the increased interest in Korean content but also showcases that the interest isn't relegated to streaming services. U.S. broadcast television is utilizing the popularity of Korean content through scripted and non-scripted formats as well.

Ultimately, Korean dramas have had a large impact on the American television market. Not only are scripted format rights of Korean dramas continuing to be bought by American broadcast networks, but streaming platforms are gaining exclusive streaming rights to both new and old Korean content. As should be evident, this hybrid form of Korean and American drama

won’t stay attached to the Netflix platform as other streaming platforms, specifically U.S.-based platforms, begin to fund the creation of their own original Korean dramas. Both streaming platforms and television networks will be searching for dramas and formats that can bridge the American and Korean styles. The hybrid nature of the merging of the Korean and American drama forms allows for each industry to take notes from the other and influence the drama form in each country.

Conclusion

Through this thesis, I have utilized the shows *God's Gift*, *Somewhere Between*, *Good Doctor* (KRN), and *The Good Doctor* (US) to provide case studies for how the American and Korean drama form alter the presentation of a story. By using American format adaptations of Korean dramas, the focus is on the qualities inherent to the industries themselves and less on the actual story being told. These case studies provide examples of how each industry's production practices and exhibition impact the creation and distribution of a show. They also provide insight into the function of different narrative elements as well as the presentation of visual and aural aesthetics.

Given the descriptions presented in this thesis of the American and Korean drama form, there is a clear distinction in how stories function within these drama formulas. But when looking outside of broadcast television, streaming platforms are creating their own hybrid drama form. This hybrid form is most evident on the streaming platform Netflix but is being utilized on other platforms as well. The American production background influences the formation of these hybrid dramas being produced for their respective platforms. The hybrid drama form takes the structural set-up of an American drama, including the number of seasons, season length, and episode length, and merges that with the aesthetic and narrative qualities of the Korean drama.

This hybrid form of drama is becoming increasingly popular globally as streaming services continue to invest in Korean content, as evidenced by Netflix investing 500 million USD and building two studios ("About Netflix - Riding the K-Wave, Netflix Spotlights Stories Made in Korea and Watched by the World"; MacDonald). Ultimately the American and Korean television industries will influence each other and alter the structure of dramas within their

respective countries. Not only is this hybrid form being utilized more, but the creation of American format adaptations of Korean dramas continues as American television companies, both broadcast and streaming, continue to see Korea as a source for new content.

Streaming has had an impact on the Korean drama form, including areas of structure, production, and content. Streaming platforms are encouraging storylines to have an open ending at the end of a season typified by American television in the hopes of continuing the series for more seasons. A famous example of this is the ending of *Squid Game* which ends with the male lead walking onto a plane, leaving the storyline unresolved. This is different from the typical Korean form in which plots are brought to a clear conclusion at the end of a season. Because streaming platforms work on a global scale and serve an international audience, they aren't tied to a singular country's television form but are generally based on the television form in which the streaming platform originates. Therefore, American streaming platforms, such as Netflix, model their original content on the American broadcast television form, with multiple seasons and unresolved endings, while Korean streaming platforms model their original content on the Korean broadcast television form. Creating content for a non-local streaming service allows Korean creators to explore different modes of storytelling that aren't common at the local level.

Streaming platforms also allow Korean creators to explore a wider range of content. The largest area of exploration is being done in violence because Korean broadcasters, especially on public networks, restrict depictions of violence. One key example of this from a show presented in this thesis is *God's Gift*. In a scene featuring a woman involved in an extra-marital affair attempting to take her own life with a screwdriver, the tip of this screwdriver is blurred because the explicit presentation of sharp objects being used in violent acts is not permitted on public networks. Korean creators of shows containing violent or sexual content have found a home for

their projects on streaming platforms. Because streaming platforms allow for topics of greater violence, such as zombies, murderous games, and more sexualized content to be explored by Korean creators these shows finally found a place where they could be developed. While violent and sexual topics have been explored in length in Korean cinema, this level of depiction is new for television narratives. The creator of *Kingdom* has said the show would not have been made had it not been for Netflix because the content was deemed unsuitable for Korean broadcast ("About Netflix - Two of Korea's Top Storytellers Unite for Kingdom - A New Netflix Original Series"; MacDonald). The same situation existed with *Squid Game*.

Along with allowing for more creativity by creating original Korean content, these streaming platforms are investing in quality productions. Netflix has invested more than a billion dollars into Korean content on the platform including building two studios in Korea (MacDonald). The larger audiences culminated by the streaming services warrant the high budget value needed to produce quality television. The investment has attracted creators looking to tell stories on a grander scale. The director of *Kingdom* has stated, "'*Kingdom* presents the opportunity to work on long-form television at its most ambitious and on a truly cinematic scale because of the unparalleled creative freedom that Netflix as a global internet television network provides,'" showcasing the investment Netflix has put into new Korean content ("About Netflix - Two of Korea's Top Storytellers Unite for Kingdom - A New Netflix Original Series")**.**

I have covered many aspects of American and Korean dramas in this thesis, but I haven't discussed everything. The scale of this thesis has limited certain topics from being included in my research and examples. I presented different narrative elements, aesthetic styles, and production components that are specific to American and Korean dramas, but I didn't explore the origins of these areas and how they fit into the culture of each country. Other research could

explore the cultural aspects of how these elements function and how individualist culture impacts television in ways that collectivist cultures don't and vice versa.

I also presented one type of Korean drama, prime-time dramas. The world of Korean drama goes beyond prime-time television. There are web dramas, daily dramas, and specific genres of Korean drama, such as the thriller, medical, and romance genres shown in this thesis, which deserve their own separate attention. Research on these genres of Korean drama can be areas of research on their own. Possibly researching how the drama form presented here is utilized on a smaller scale in web dramas, specific genres, and where they differ. The daily drama could also be researched in relation to American soap operas and Spanish telenovelas, both categories of television that have a strong resemblance to Korean dramas.

I discussed format adaptations, but I solely focused on American format adaptations of Korean dramas. There are many Korean format adaptations of American shows, more than the only two American format adaptations featured here. There are years worth of Korean format adaptations which can be researched in their own regard. I considered using a set of them as a point of comparison to the shows used, but that would push beyond the scope and ability of this thesis. Future research comparing American formats and Korean formats are worth looking further into, possibly incorporating a cultural method into the study. This cultural method of research can be expanded to format adaptations of Korean shows in other countries outside of the United States as well. Also, the focus of this thesis was on scripted formats, there are plenty of non-scripted formats on American television based on Korean variety shows that can be examined and included in the discussion of the expansion of Korean content.

Lastly, further exploration of streaming platforms and how they deal with Korean content is a particular area of interest. Streaming platforms are beginning to do something special with Korean content on a scale that they've never done so before. Korean content will continue to grow on these platforms and following that growth through research will provide some interesting insight into areas not explored in this thesis. A deeper dive into the production processes of streaming dramas and how they compare to broadcast development is just one specific topic that should be covered. Also, a consideration of how each platform treats Korean content should be explored, for example, Netflix has both original and established content but Apple TV+ works on a different business model and only has original content. This is just another area of interest for further research.

Ultimately what I have presented in this thesis is just a start to exploring the impact that streaming will have on the spread of Korean media. Keeping in mind the ways in which streaming has already influenced the Korean drama form, there is further observation to be done as to how this form will continue to evolve with increasing global interest. The hybrid streaming form continues to grow as other streaming services follow Netflix in investing heavily in the creation and distribution of Korean dramas to a worldwide audience. The increased interest in this form among worldwide audiences begins to inform the creation of dramas for broadcast television, which changes in its own right, warranting further observation of broadcast television alongside streaming platforms.

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