Baker kings, rice liquor princesses, and the coffee elite: food nationalism and youth creativity in the construction of Korean ‘taste’ in late 2000s and early 2010s television dramas

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Baker Kings, Rice Liquor Princesses, and the Coffee Elite: Food Nationalism and Youth Creativity in the Construction of Korean "Taste" in Late 2000s and Early 2010s Television Dramas

Bonnie Tilland

A significant number of South Korean television dramas from the late 2000s and early 2010s feature a creative youth gourmet who develops their taste (*immat* 입맛) for their self-development and for national honor. This article examines three such dramas—*Coffee Prince* (*K'ŏp'i p'ŭrinsŭ il-ho chŏm* 커피프린스 1호점, 2007), *Bread, Love and Dreams* (*Cheppang wang Kim T'akku* 제빵왕 김탁구, 2010), and *Cinderella's Sister* (*Sinderella ŏnni* 신데렐라 언니, 2010). While by the mid-2010s reality and variety programs were more likely to feature young cooks and tastemakers than television dramas, youth on screen in the rapidly globalizing 2000s and early 2010s grappled with tensions between cosmopolitan and national consumption. The article further explores the dichotomy between rote learning and duty on the one hand, and creativity on the other, arguing that the focus on creativity connects to educational reforms and broader social policies of the time.

Keywords: taste, Korean cuisine, globalization, youth, television dramas

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In the late 2000s, South Korea was producing more TV dramas than ever before, and one could hardly go a day without encountering the ancient Koguryŏ 高句麗 royalty of *Chumong* 朱蒙 or the well-groomed baristas-in-love of *Coffee Prince* (*K'ŏp'i p'ŭrinsŭ il-ho chŏm* 커피프린스 1호점), whether on the subway, on billboards and screens in public spaces, or a cell phone ring tone. While much attention has been paid in the last two decades to *Hallyu* 韓流, or the "Korean Wave" of popular culture across Asia, and even farther-flung countries, of at least equal importance are the ways these cultural products, particularly television dramas, present multiple affective codes to domestic Korean consumers and align with their framing of the world through their senses. Without overstating the importance of the affective power of these moments on screen – for they are only small moments in any viewer's daily life – these visual and aural representations of national memories and emotions, contemporary issues, and tastes and smells both address and inspire cosmopolitan and national desires.

The most successful television dramas in South Korea in the new millennium have been a skillful combination of familial affection and longing, icons of sex appeal, and emotional desirability in the figures of the lead characters. Aspirations to the lifestyles and sensibilities promoted in these dramas cannot be understood outside of the social shifts since the 1997 financial crisis and subsequent intensification of neoliberal logic in South Korea. I am especially interested in the appearance on the scene of a particular kind of character, the creative youth gourmet. These characters were ubiquitous from 2005 to 2010 but have gradually declined in the years since 2010.[1] Gourmet dramas, in which young heroes and heroines bursting with creativity master the arts of baking, espresso-making, and even *makkŏlli* 막걸리 (traditional rice liquor) distilling, overlap temporally with the neoliberal micromanaging of cultural industries by the conservative South Korean state under presidents Lee Myung-bak (Yi Myŏngbak 李明博, 2008-2013) and Park Geun-hye (Pak Kŭnhye 朴槿惠, 2013-2016). While the previous Roh Mu-hyun (No Muhyŏn 盧武鉉) and subsequent Moon Jae-in (Mun Chaein 文在寅) administrations were no less neoliberal, the Lee and Park regimes were distinctive in their manipulation of cultural industries even as they censored cultural output.[2] These young creative gourmets, on screen and in real life, are instructive of the construction of "Korean taste" (*Han'gukchŏgin mat* 韓國的인 맛), both in terms of social distinction and viscerally, gustatorily. Taste becomes linked to earlier national fixations on moral consumption versus excessive consumption; youth gourmets are praised when their tastes are seen to benefit the nation, and blamed when their tastes are not appropriately national.[3] Negotiations of labor

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[1] See Antonetta L. Bruno and Somin Chung, "Mŏkpang: Pay Me and I'll Show You How Much I Can Eat for Your Pleasure," *Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema* 9, no. 2 (2017): 155-171. The authors discuss the phenomenon of "eating broadcasts" that became popular in South Korea in the mid-2010s, in which "BJs" (broadcast jockeys) literally perform their taste and the pleasure of eating in front of computer webcams. In addition to the reality and variety show genres, these low-budget internet streams also became a significant outlet for food consumption on screen. Since the early 2010s, television dramas with food themes – so-called "gourmet dramas" 요리드라마 – have yielded to the reality and television genres.

[2] Ju Oak Kim, "Korea's Blacklist Scandal: Governmentality, Culture, and Creativity," *Culture, Theory and Critique* 59, no. 2 (2018): 81-93.

[3] Laura Nelson, *Measured Excess: Status, Gender and Consumer Nationalism in South Korea* (New York: Columbia

around taste, (*immat* 입맛) in the face of ever-greater demands for flexibility and creative production, reveal the workings of capital at a particular moment in the trajectory of South Korea's political economy, as well as resistance to this arrangement of capital and culture.

Food-focused dramas did not end with the beginning of the 2010s. Cooking competitions and rivalries have been quite common: *Immortal Classic* (*Purhu ŭi myŏngjak* 불후의 명작, 2012), *Feast of the Gods* (*Sindŭl ŭi manch'an* 신들의 만찬, 2012), *Master of Revenge* (*Masŭt'ŏ kuksu ŭi sin* 마스터–국수의 신, 2016). Stories centered around rivalries between chefs/other food workers and those in overlapping industries or completely removed industries have also aired regularly *Miss Panda and Mr. Hedgehog* (*P'anda-yang kwa kosŭmdoch'i* 판다양과 고슴도치 – about a pâtissier and café owner, 2012; *Best Chicken* (*Ch'oego ŭi ch'ik'in* 최고의 치킨– about a chicken delivery entrepreneur and the neighborhood sauna owner, 2018; *Eccentric Chef Moon* (*Yubyŏlla! Mun syep'ŭ* 유별나! 문셰프 – about a fashion designer and traditional chef, 2020). The *honbap* 혼밥 (eating alone) social trend has also been reflected in dramas about single people eating alone, and sometimes finding love in the process. Examples include *The Cravings* (*Ch'ulch'urhan yŏja* 출출한 여자), a web drama that began in 2013 and ran for several seasons, *Let's Eat* (*Siksa rŭl hapsida* 식샤를 합시다), which also began in 2013 and likewise had several iterations, and *Drinking Solo* (*Honsul namnyŏ* 혼술남녀, 2016). However, unlike the three dramas I analyze here, for the most part these later dramas are about finding love and/or enjoying food, and do not linger much on the transformative experience of the young character vis-à-vis the culinary art they have chosen. The legacy of the creative youth gourmet lives on, though, in dramas where the young characters possess a particularly refined sense of taste, such as *Fermentation Family* (*Parhyo kajok* 발효가족, 2011), or smell, as in *Dae Jang Geum Is Watching* (*Taejanggŭm i pogo itta* 대장금이 보고 있다, 2018). The energy of this figure has been harnessed in popular reality and variety programs centered around cooking and eating, many of which feature young celebrities learning from chefs, including the various shows in the Paek Chongwŏn 白種元 franchise, like *Please Take Care of My Refrigerator* (*Naengjanggo rŭl put'akhae* 냉장고를 부탁해, 2014-19) and *Cook Representative* (*K'ukka teap'yo* 쿡가대표, 2016). The pure pleasure of watching people eat and hearing commentary on the tastes of others has also been reflected in the abundance of *mŏkpang* 먹방 (eating broadcasts) and *k'ukpang* 쿡방 (cooking broadcasts) on YouTube and AfreecaTV online, live online broadcasts of eating and cooking which date to the early 2010s. The creativity and passion for cooking and tasting of young characters in dramas paved the way for an entire industry of user-generated content.

Much has been written about the explosion of café culture in South Korea and the subsequent negative characterization of the *toenjang nyŏ* 된장녀, or "bean paste girls" – who were criticized for excessively consuming brand-name coffee such as Starbucks that cost more than a simple meal of bean paste stew[4] – and yet cafes are far from the only arena of negotiated subjectivity through taste in the contemporary South Korean urban landscape. This article argues that South Korean gourmet dramas from the late 2000s and early 2010s

University Press), 2000.

[4] See Jee Eun Regina Song, "The Soybean Paste Girl: The Cultural and Gender Politics of Coffee Consumption in Contemporary South Korea," *Journal of Korean Studies* 19, no. 2 (2014): 429-448.

privilege the taste of young South Koreans as part of a package of desirable globalized attributes, tastes that by the mid to late 2010s had already become so taken-for-granted that they primarily appeared in the more quotidian mode of variety programs.[5] Furthermore, gourmet dramas of this period established a dichotomy between duty and rote performance on the one hand, and creativity on the other. This dichotomy between creativity and duty is also found in dramas of this time related to education.[6] It is not a coincidence that late 2000s and early 2010s dramas explored and showcased the creativity of youth, at a time when media figures endlessly debated the perceived lack of creativity of South Korean youth relative to the children of other nations.[7] As South Korea entered the 2010s, the government established various educational reforms designed to nurture creativity, with *insŏng kyoyuk* 人性教育 (character education) programs attempting to correct decades of high-stakes competition based on rote memorization, and so-called "innovation schools" (*hyŏksin hakkyo* 革新學校) focused on experiential education and student-centered learning dating to this time as well. In the next section, I turn to definitions and an understanding of taste as it relates to young South Koreans and anxieties about their creativity in the first decades of the twenty-first century, before providing my analysis of three creative gourmet dramas.

Immat: Appetites and Affect

Young people who aspire to be creative gourmets should cultivate *immat* (literally, "mouth taste"). *Immat* as a word is commonplace, as in having or not having *immat* (*immat itta/ŏpta* 입맛 있다/없다), meaning to have or to lack appetite. One prepares food "according to one's taste/ to taste" (*immat e ttara* 입맛에 따라). Other commonly used words related to "taste" are *migak* 味覺 (the sense of taste) and simply *mat* 맛 (the taste of something one puts in one's mouth). If something is delicious, it "has taste" (*mat i itta* 맛이 있다) and if it is disgusting it "lacks taste" (*mat ŏpta* 맛 없다). The transliteration of the English word "taste" is also used (*t'eisŭt'ŭ* 테이스트), with online usage dictionaries noting that it is particularly used for coffee and wine. Youth who are "cool" (*mŏtchida* 멋지다, with *mŏt* 멋 meaning "aesthetic sense") must taste (*mat ŭl poda* 맛을 보다) widely, and use their immediate experience of taste (*immat*) to guide the development of their sense of taste (*migak*) in creative directions. In this conceptualization,

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[5] See Jennifer Flinn, "Food, Media and Masculinity: How Instructional Cooking Media Reflects New Gendered Realities in South Korea" (Presentation, 1st Biennial Conference on Food and Communication, Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh, Scotland, September 6-7, 2018). Flinn discusses how the eating and cooking in these variety programs fosters a sense of sociality. With the rise of one-person households in Korea and issues such as delayed marriage and childbearing becoming even more fraught in the last decade, viewers crave a different relationship with food and eating on screen than they did with the plucky creative youth in earlier dramas.

[6] Bonnie Tilland, "Transgressive Academic All-Stars and Conventional Teen Idols: School-Age South Koreans and *Hakpumo* (School Parents) Navigating the System," in *Transgression in Korea: Beyond Resistance and Control*, ed. Juhn Y. Ahn (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2018), 165-194.

[7] There are illuminating parallels here with a focus on "the heart" in the education curriculum of recessionary Japan, as described by Andrea Gevurtz Arai, *The Strange Child: Education and the Psychology of Patriotism in Recessionary Japan* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press), 2016.

taste becomes social action, in which the senses are connected to "memory, materiality, and local epistemologies."[8] Taste is also linked to morality, as Mintz explicates in his work on sugar, sweetness and power.[9] Even though food-eating and food-creating on screen is not the kind of everyday that anthropologists typically observe, eating off screen and eating on screen are intimately linked in the media landscape of South Korea in the 2010s and beyond. While I have based most analysis in this article on readings of the media texts in question, I at times reference interviews in which these media texts entered the conversation.

Gourmet Dramas and Creative Youth

The "gourmet drama" is not a strictly Korean genre; it is also popular in Japan. The *ryōri* 料理 (Japanese)/*yori* 料理 (Korean) drama showcases idealized, cathartic, and aestheticized daily life through the lens of "cooking" (*ryōri*/*yori*) and while there are certain parallels in Western fictional television shows set in restaurants, the food itself plays quite a different role in recent East Asian television drama. Even for television dramas that drew viewer complaints for not highlighting the food enough – such as *Coffee Prince*, which I discuss below – the food plays a particular role in terms of memory. Although gourmet dramas have not been studied much in terms of their unique generic codes to date, Jiwon Ahn has written a short piece on this type of drama:

> Ultimately, what is narrated through the story of food in gourmet dramas is the story of the nation itself, the sense of a common national culture and history, and of belonging shared between the show and its viewers through the sharing of a common palate and collective memory around certain food items. Whether the show features an Italian restaurant, French patisserie, or a late night snack joint, identification with the characters through their stories of cooking and eating allows viewers to be positioned as members of the same imagined community in which, say, *omurice* 오무라이스 is meant to evoke similar childhood memories among national viewers.[10]

While it is easy to view Korean television dramas about a pasta restaurant, upscale café, or winery as straightforward cosmopolitan striving, what is left out of such an interpretation is the complex history of both foreign food in Korea and Korean cuisine itself. Take *omurice* in the above example: a combination of "omelet" (*omu* 오무) and "rice" (*raisŭ* 라이스), the dish is fried rice wrapped in a thin layer of omelet and topped with ketchup or Worcestershire sauce. It is classified as "Western-style cuisine" (*yōshoku* 洋食 in Japanese and *yangsik* 洋食 in Korean),

[8] David E. Sutton, "Food and the Senses," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39 (2010): 212.

[9] Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986).

[10] Jiwon Ahn, "Gourmet Drama: A Tasty Case of Narrating the Nation," *Flow: A Critical Forum on Media and Culture* 11, no. 10 (March 26, 2010), http://flowtv.org/2010/03/gourmet-drama-a-tasty-case-of-narrating-the-nationjiwon-ahn-keene-state-college/.

and was introduced to Korea during the Japanese colonial period. In Japan, it is more likely to be found at home or in family restaurants, whereas in Korea it is a staple of *punsik*/*kimbap* 粉食/김밥 shops, fast food eateries selling simple Korean dishes. The national memory a single food item invokes or is meant to invoke differs in the two national contexts, with both countries categorizing it as "Western" but with an added layer of history in the South Korean case due to the entry of the food into Korea from Japan.

Ahn writes further:

> While individually varied in terms of narrative detail, gourmet dramas tend to share the following three textual tropes: a thematic contrast between old and new values, with the former always reaffirmed; a narrative contrast between pre-modern/personal approaches and capitalist/industrialist approaches to food, cooking and service, with the former always rewarded; and both a visual and thematic emphasis on food preparation and eating as an essentially communicative act.[11]

The dramas I investigate as having tapped into concerns over new youth subjectivities and creative potential adhere to the formula Ahn outlines, with the exception of the drama set in the café space, which valorizes the new. In the other two dramas discussed, the personal touch of one enthusiastic young baker or *makkŏlli* maker undoes decades of harm done by industrialized automation in the industry. In all three dramas, labor insecurity is depicted as being keenly felt by the young protagonists, either on the job itself, in the process of training, or in the family business as outside economic conditions act upon it.

I suggest that the space of the Western-style café, which has a relatively short history in South Korea,[12] is presented as a quintessentially postmodern space on the small screen, and the young characters who occupy these spaces find love and achieve their dreams with little or no family interference. The café is the ultimate postmodern youth playground, but other foreign-influenced spaces such as the trendy Italian restaurant also qualify.[13] In contrast, the family *makkŏlli* factory and family-like baking school featured in popular dramas of the

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[11] Ahn, "Gourmet Drama."

[12] As opposed to the *tabang* 茶房 dating back to the colonial period in Korea, which served both coffee, mainly of the instant variety, and alcoholic beverages. While *tabang* were popular gathering places for intellectuals early in the twentieth century and continued to be important spaces for musical performances and student dissident gatherings in the 1970s and 1980s, they have been displaced by international coffee shop chains such as Starbucks, as well as local Korean chains and increasing numbers of independent cafes. Now *tabang* have an unfashionable image, and have a reputation as dimly lit, smoky caverns in which shady business dealings transpire. As old things become fresh again, however, "retro" *tabang* can be spotted. A national low-end café chain that was started in 2006 by Paek Chongwŏn of variety cooking show fame is called *Paik's Coffee* (*Paik tabang* 백다방).

[13] 2010's *Pasta* (P'asŭt'a 파스타) also certainly qualifies as a "creative gourmet" drama, as does the 2005 drama that in many ways kicked off the genre, *My Lovely Samsoon* (*Nae irŭm ŭn Kim Samsun* 내 이름은 김삼순). However, characters in these dramas were on the latter end of youth, in their late 20s. While there is no cut-off age for the creative youth gourmet, the somewhat older age bracket of at least some of the main characters in *Pasta* and *Kim Samsoon* create a different sort of self-awareness for the characters.

2010s are thoroughly *modern* spaces, with family ever-present, even if they are somewhat dysfunctional. The modern spaces and places assume a certain developmentalist logic and nuclear family norms; the postmodern spaces subvert familial and gender norms, even if the subversion is not sustained throughout the whole drama. In one drama, baking is equated with the development of the modern nation, and in another ultimately less popular but highly anticipated drama of the same year, the imagined traditional (*makkŏlli*) is brought into the modern, bringing Korea to the world without forcing the world into Korea. In these spaces, family love is more important than dream fulfillment or self-discovery. I return to the argument that taste is the key sensory and affective element through which youth in their twenties are configured as the saviors of the nation;[14] alternatively, when tastes go bad, youth receive a disproportionate share of the blame. I map out a dual anthropology of food and millennial youth in South Korea, with three possibilities for creative gourmet figures. I link these baker kings, rice liquor princesses, and coffee elite to shifting "foodviews"[15] in South Korea.

Coffee Prince, *Cinderella's Sister,* and *Bread, Love and Dreams* (hereafter referred to in this paper as it was commonly called, *Kim T'akku*) were all aired on major non-cable broadcast stations (MBC and KBS) during the primetime weekday late evening timeslot. All fit loosely into the "trendy drama" (*t'ŭrendi tŭrama* 트렌디 드라마) miniseries category, which generally dictates a format of sixteen to twenty hour-long episodes. *Kim T'akku* was significantly longer than the norm, at thirty episodes, sharing traits with *taeha* 大河 (roman-fleuve) dramas of the 1990s. Aesthetically, it is firmly of its own era, but shares pacing and focus on modern historical themes with classic 1990s *taeha* TV dramas *Eyes of Dawn* (*Yŏmyŏng ŭi nundongja* 여명의 눈동자, MBC, 1991-1992) and *Sandglass* (*Morae sigye* 모래시계, SBS, 1995). Trendy dramas are aimed at a somewhat younger demographic and stand in contrast to daily morning or early evening dramas aimed at housewives, retirees or families, which can much more legitimately be compared to American soap operas. Trendy dramas often eschew straight melodrama in favor of lighter comedic touches and somewhat more complicated plot points. *Coffee Prince* dealt with non-normative sexuality, albeit in a non-direct way, with an ultimately safely heteronormative final turn, and *Cinderella's Sister* retold the classic fairy tale with some interesting gender commentary. Ironically, it was *Kim T'akku*, deemed a typical *makchang* 막장 drama,[16] that achieved the highest viewer ratings of the three, breaking the fifty percent mark in an era when the diversified landscape of cable programming and online downloading had made this a rare feat indeed. It was a frequent point of fascination and frustration: it had a

[14] If teenage South Korean K-pop fans are the saviors of the nation through their promotion of Korean soft power, "creative youth gourmets" in their twenties effectively serve as translators of *immat*, cultural intermediaries who act as ambassadors making Korea more cosmopolitan while spreading Korean food culture through the international connections possessed by their generation. Due to South Korea's high rate of university attendance (around 80%), most of these potential saviors are university graduates, though occasionally a character in a television drama will be only a high school graduate or even a high school dropout.

[15] Sutton, "Food and the Senses," 216.

[16] *Makchang* translates as "dead-end," and is used to refer to television dramas that hit viewers with plot turns out of nowhere, introducing clichéd tropes of amnesia, birth secrets, fatal illnesses, and comas.

plot that many deemed over-the-top and predictable, but it created addicts among all ages and walks of life.[17]

An addictive quality linked to what Foucault, and later Nikolas Rose, termed "technologies of the self"[18] is found in both *Coffee Prince* and *Kim T'akku*, and lacking in *Cinderella's Sister*. Rose writes, "Contemporary individuals are incited to live as if making a *project* of themselves: they are to *work* on their emotional world, their domestic and conjugal arrangements, their relations with employment and their techniques of sexual pleasure, to develop a 'style' of living that will maximize the worth of their existence to themselves."[19] The baristas of *Coffee Prince* and baking king Kim T'akku all embrace a neoliberal ethos of self-striving and self-improvement, though for T'akku, the familial context to self-striving is highlighted more, as *Kim T'akku's* aspirations as a people's (*kungmin* 國民) drama – and not simply a trendy drama like *Coffee Prince*, however popular it was – meant that familial affect and conflict were central drivers of the melodrama. Yun Sŏkchin has noted that while some pre-1997 financial crisis television dramas certainly contained a focus on such neoliberal values of self-sufficiency and self-help, post-crisis dramas are far more likely to make these values central through the figure of the creative youth gourmet who cheerfully perseveres despite an abysmal job market.[20] An ethic of ongoing self-development has also infected historical dramas (*sagŭk* 史劇) since the early 2000s, as drama writers and producers of *sagŭk* have emphasized the unrelenting optimism and perseverance of their heroines.[21] Viewers receive both emotional comfort and motivation from these striving characters, and as Rose observes, mass media plays an important role in producing always "active citizens."[22] The lead character in *Cinderella's Sister*, Ŭncho 은조, strives to become a *makkŏlli* craftswoman, but does not strive appropriately; her striving is out of fear rather than dreams of self-development, and she does not put on a cheerful face while she works toward her goals. The meandering aimlessness of Ŭncho and other characters in the drama ultimately led some to abandon the drama, even as the show's dedicated fans defended its unconventional mood.[23]

In the next section, I explore the café as leisure space in South Korea, looking both at the context of television dramas and at expressions of taste and youth in café spaces. Here,

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[17] Pŭllaek myujel, "'Cheppangwang Kim T'akku' makchang k'odŭ ŭi myohan maeryŏk i ssŭpssŭl," *Pŭllaek myujel ŭi nanjangnant'a* (blog), July 2, 2010, https://tiworker.tistory.com/333.

[18] Michel Foucault, *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, eds. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988).

[19] Nikolas Rose, *Inventing Ourselves: Psychology, Power, and Personhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 157.

[20] Yun Sŏkchin, Kim Samsun kwa Chang Chunhyŏk ŭi tŭrama kongbang (Sŏul: Pungmak'ŭ, 2007).

[21] A cheerful and unrelenting pursuit of self-development is seen more commonly with heroines than with heroes, as pluckiness and spirited stubbornness are depicted as positive feminine traits. Eunwoo Joo, in her discussion of the *sagŭk* about Chosŏn slave society, refers to Taejanggŭm 大長今 as the original "self-developing heroine" of historical dramas. See Eunwoo Joo, "A Historical Imagination of a Neo-Liberal Society: Considerations on the Korean Historical Drama *Chuno*," *The Review of Korean Studies* 14, no. 2 (June 2011): 11–38.

[22] Rose, *Inventing Ourselves*, 164.

[23] Interview between Minju, Insook and Minsook (pseudonyms) and the author in Chŏnju, May 5, 2010.

I link the "cult of coffee"[24] to broader trends of self-development in South Korean society.

The Café as a Performance Space for Self and Couples

The first gourmet drama discussed here, *Coffee Prince*, is also the most heavily researched in international cultural studies circles, due to its queer themes.[25] The story takes place in the new café Coffee Prince, updated from a *tabang*-esque dump called Kŏp'i wangja 커피왕자, also meaning "coffee prince," but rendered in Korean rather than English. The café only employs good-looking young men, and androgynous Ŭnch'an 은찬 is mistaken for a man by the café's playboy manager, the grandson of a *chaebŏl* 財閥 chairwoman,[26] and then decides to keep up appearances in order to keep her job. A pseudo-homosexual romance ensues until Ŭnch'an's true gender is finally revealed. Many viewers both in South Korea and abroad celebrated *Coffee Prince* as a step forward in terms of awareness about LGBTQ rights, even if it ended as a heterosexual romance.[27] I would suggest that gender-bending is more important in the drama than pure issues of sexuality, as the act of gender-bending is a prerequisite for the alternative sociality that develops among the baristas at the café. Ŭnch'an is a variation of the "Candyrellas" (*K'aendirella* 캔디렐라 of trendy dramas past,[28] and *Coffee Prince* takes the brave woman character one step further to "crumble the boundaries of 'social gender' by putting a charmingly androgynous cross-dressing woman in the space of abandoned masculinity."[29] Lavin, in a study of transnational fan discourse around the character of Ŭnch'an, identifies part of her appeal as "performing an eroticism that is not dependent on marriage, procreation, or traditional feminine appropriateness."[30] Unlike the other two dramas, *Kim T'akku* and

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[24] Jee Eun Regina Song, "The Soybean Paste Girl," 429-448.

[25] A search on Google Scholar reveals several English-language articles and book chapters on *Coffee Prince*, among them Sun Jung, "*Chogukjeok* Pan-East Asian Soft Masculinity: Reading *Boys Over Flowers*, *Coffee Prince*, and Shinhwa Fan Fiction," in *Complicated Currents: Media Flows, Soft Power and East Asia*, eds. Daniel Black, Stephen Epstein, and Alison Tokita (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2010), 185-209; and Maud Lavin, "Tomboy in Love: Korean and U.S. Views of Heterosexual Eroticism in the K-Drama *First Shop of Coffee Prince*," *Situations* 8, no. 1 (2015): 45-69. *Kim T'akku* and *Cinderella's Sister* did not generate the same level of global interest.

[26] See this short article for a summary of the complex topic of *chaebŏl* and ongoing *chaebŏl*-society tensions: Iain Marlow, "South Korea's Chaebol Problem," *The Globe and Mail*, April 24, 2015, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/international-business/asian-pacific-business/south-koreas-chaebol-problem/article24116084/.

[27] The *Occupied Territories* blog is among those that considers the drama radical and beneficial for LGBTQ awareness in South Korea. See "A Radical Narrative Disguised as K-Drama: 'Coffee Prince,' Gender, and Sexuality," *Occupied Territories* (blog), April 2, 2012, https://occupiedterritories.tumblr.com/post/20352079019/a-radical-narrative-disguised-as-a-k-drama.

[28] The aforementioned ideal of "pluckiness and spirited stubbornness" follows from an ideal heroine type known as "Candyrella," a term coined in the South Korea media in 2004 to refer to a heroine combining the optimistic personality of Candy, a Japanese *manga* heroine of the 1970s (also popular in South Korea through underground channels, despite a ban on Japanese cultural products) and the serendipitous life turn of Cinderella.

[29] Yun Sŏkchin. Kim Samsun kwa Chang Chunhyŏk ŭi tŭrama kongbang, 21.

[30] Lavin, "Tomboy in Love," 61.

Cinderella's Sister, *Coffee Prince* does not link youth labor and family love with national food and national spirit, but instead shows a marginal space where a group of youth from broken or struggling families create an alternative family space to support one another.[31] The workers at Coffee Prince become cosmopolitan through their creative work with coffee, and in the third space of the café also form an alternative community. Work in the café does not strengthen the nation through factory production or scientifically improve South Korea's international competitiveness, but aids the workers in neoliberal "self-development" (*chagi palchŏn* 自己發展). Certainly, self-development is present in the other two dramas discussed here as well, but is more explicitly extended as an ideal in *Coffee Prince*.

Jee Eun Regina Song's work on café culture and the rise of Starbucks in South Korea illustrates how cafés symbolize both leisurely, romantic spaces and have come to represent the productive self. While there are plenty of parallels with the third place identity of cafes in North America and Europe, Song argues that the way that cafes have become understood as places of expertise is unique to the South Korean case. Cafés in South Korea embody the ideal of the technologies of the self that Rose describes:

> The allure of expertise lies in its promise to reconcile the tensions formed across the soul of the individual who is forced concurrently to inhabit different spheres. For the new experts of the psyche promise that modes of life that appear philosophically opposed – business success and personal growth, image management and authenticity – can be brought into alignment and achieve translatability through the ethics of the autonomous, choosing, psychological self.[32]

Song describes advertising campaigns of the 1970s and 1980s that focused on the romance of coffee, which at the time meant instant coffee. Though coffee was famously first drunk by King Kojong at the turn of the twentieth century, and cafes existed for the elite during the Japanese colonial period, coffee only became a drink for the masses in the 1970s. Producers of television and print ads aimed to romanticize coffee in order to disassociate it from its role as a cheap drink to help stay awake on the factory production line, in the hopes that coffee would be associated with leisurely – and therefore more generous – consumption and domestic life. Song views the introduction of Starbucks in South Korea in the late 1990s as a turning point: "Instead of signaling a longing between heterosexual relationships, coffee narratives of the late 1990s and early 2000s instead offered ways of revitalizing the self in neoliberal South Korea."[33] However, the transition was not absolute, as cafes retained a romantic image while also becoming spaces of individual productivity, and increasingly, female friendship. Looking specifically at Starbucks work culture in South Korea, Song points

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[31] A 2010 drama called *Coffee House* (*K'ŏp'i hausŭ* 커피하우스), about friendships and romances between workers at a café/book store/publishing house, also depicts the young adult children of less-than-cohesive families.

[32] Rose, *Inventing Ourselves*, 157.

[33] Jee Eun Regina Song, "Building an Empire One Cup at a Time: Cultural Meaning and Power of Starbucks Korea," PhD diss. University of California at Davis. 2012.

out that "while hard work and team play are also essential components in the US Starbucks Company, Starbucks Korea makes teamwork integral to employment, hosting programs such as after-work drinking socials and parties, as well as company centered events and anniversary parties."[34] Given the fact that South Korea has long held the dubious distinction of having the longest work hours in the OECD, this is not surprising.[35] Song also notes that "all employees [at Starbucks Korea] go through a rigorous training … that is four times the length and depth of the training process in the U.S."[36] There is a palpable parallel in the productive Starbucks customers who occupy the café space as a "third place"[37] and the baristas who have expertise in making the space pleasant and productive. Many of the baristas Song interviewed reported that they were once satisfied customers and were then inspired to become baristas; this holds true among the women I interviewed during my fieldwork in a provincial city as well, who quite legitimately appreciated the café space as a new kind of space in South Korean society, and were sometimes moved to develop expertise in coffee-making for their own self-development. Unlike the youthful potential of *immat,* these middle-aged women called on their understandings of *sonmat* 손맛*,* literally "hand taste," cultivated through their experiences preparing food for their families.[38]

It is noteworthy that while the gourmet dramas I discuss in subsequent sections, *Kim T'akku* and *Cinderella's Sister*, feature a patriarch who has devoted his life to the family culinary endeavor, *Coffee Prince* features a middle-aged man who has managed his old-fashioned and unpopular café badly, committing to it only half-heartedly as a post-retirement activity after his presumed forced early retirement from a company due to economic downturn. Although my interviewees pointed out that it is much more common for middle-aged women to take the lead in opening cafes once they have finished the domestic work of raising young children[39], the middle-aged male café owner of *Coffee Prince* fits into the intentionally exclusively male workplace of the café.

The drama *Coffee Prince* aired in 2007, roughly a decade after Starbucks and the transnational coffee trend reached South Korea. The opening episodes of the drama highlight the clash of old and new in café culture at the time: Han'gyŏl 한결, the young new owner of

[34] Song, "Building an Empire," 99.

[35] See Catherine Rampell, "South Koreans Put in Most Hours," *Economix* (blog), *New York Times*, May 12, 2010, http://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/05/12/s-koreans-put-in-most-hours/. Although a work hour maximum of 52 hours per week was implemented in summer 2018 to ease social problems related to overwork, this has not automatically resulted in significantly greater work-life balance overall, particularly as there are still exemptions for smaller companies and other special cases.

[36] Song, "Building an Empire," 106.

[37] Following the schema of sociologist Roy Oldenburg, and popularized in Starbucks promotional literature, a "third place" is a place between home (the "first place") and work (the "second place"). Roy Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Community Centers, Beauty Parlors, General Stores, Bars, Hangouts, and How They Get You Through the Day* (New York: Paragon House, 1989).

[38] Interviews between pseudonymed middle-aged, middle-class women and the author, Chŏnju, 2010-2012.

[39] Interviews between Minsook and the author, Chŏnju, 2010-2012. As café culture exploded nation-wide in the early 2010s—after already booming in the Seoul area slightly earlier—cafes became new business opportunities. Minsook opened her own café in 2012.

Coffee Prince, wants to turn the old *tabang* into an aesthetically pleasing space for customers to linger, setting it apart from all the hole-in-the-wall take-out coffee places around Seoul. In the late 2000s, most high-end cafes in Seoul were in elite areas such as Kangnam 江南, with university neighborhoods north of the river such as Sinch'on 新村 and Hongdae 弘大 containing mainly tiny take-out coffee stores or transnational chain cafes. The depiction of the *Coffee Prince* café in the neighborhood of Hongdae, the abbreviated form of Hongik University (Hongik Taehakkyo 弘益大學校), known for its arts programs, led to a boom in independent cafes in that neighborhood, which quickly spread around Seoul and then around the country.[40] Although some viewers complained that the drama did not actually depict enough scenes of coffee culture,[41] fans of the show delighted in the impeccable appearance of the baristas and their manners and enthusiasm when serving customers, close-ups of latte art, the plotline involving the stylish Korean-Japanese waffle-making expert, and the crafty barista doodles that contributed to the unique décor of the store. Above all, fans fixated on the friendship between the baristas, with some viewing the blossoming love between Han'gyŏl and cross-dressing Ŭnch'an as a subset of the intense friendships among café co-workers.[42] Yun Sŏkchin commented shortly after the drama aired that despite the freshness it brought to the trendy drama genre, a difficult reality for youth is also not far below the surface. When working-class Ŭnch'an's "*chaebŏl* royalty" boss and love interest yells at her to quit for some misstep, her eyes fill with tears and she replies, "Is work a game to you? You're always telling me to quit." A working-class acquaintance of Ŭnch'an's, Hwang Minyŏp, is also overjoyed in just getting a position at the café. Yun writes, "While presenting the possibility of reviving the trendy drama genre, *Coffee Prince*, in its appropriate fusing of 'youth' and 'coffee,' depicts the dark reality of dreams and romance restricted by 'youth unemployment' and 'employment insecurity.'"[43] At the end of the drama, Ŭnch'an decides to go abroad, to Italy, to add value to herself in two respects: as a barista who has truly developed transnational taste in coffee, and as a future daughter-in-law who follows through on her dreams with charm, pluckiness, and sacrifice.

Coffee Prince, along with the earlier "gourmet drama" *My Lovely Samsoon* and several other culinary-themed dramas of the 2000s, is still what Lee terms "melodrama focused" (*mello chungsim* 멜로中心), as opposed to a smaller number of dramas that combine a focus on a highlighted occupation and melodrama (*chigŏp +mello* 職業+멜로) or dramas that focus only

[40] Ironically, the drama's main shooting location, the *Coffee Prince* café that was remodeled for filming, got poor reviews online, and the owner was embroiled in a scandal in the early 2010s involving illegal fees charged to Chinese and Japanese tourists for taking photos on the premises. The broadcasting network, MBC, attempted to solve this problem by sponsoring a new café with a similar atmosphere in a nearby neighborhood, next to a secondary filming location – the posh yet artful hilltop house of one of the lead characters.

[41] Interviews with women in Chŏnju, 2010-2012.

[42] Online fan communities and discussion spaces are extensive, but for an example, see Dramabeans.com: TeriYaki, "I'll Take a Refill of Coffee Prince," *Dramabeans* (blog), August 21, 2017, https://www.dramabeans.com/2017/08/revisiting-dramas-ill-take-a-refill-of-coffee-prince/.

[43] Yun Sŏkchin. Kim Samsun kwa Chang Chunhyŏk ŭi tŭrama kongbang, 23.

on occupations (*chigŏp chungsim* 職業中心).[44] Only one drama from the 2000s that Lee classified as "occupation focused" was in the "gourmet drama" category: SBS network's *Sikkaek* 食客 (*Gourmet*) from 2008. The majority of gourmet dramas are a combination of "melodrama" (which Lee seems to be using to mean "romance" in this case) and occupation-focused, or categorized as straight melodrama, such as *Coffee Prince*. Dramas that were occupation-focused and wholly or predominantly lacking a romantic plotline were dramas about hospitals, airports, broadcasting networks, designers, and gangsters.[45] Wang Medina notes a particular concentration of culinary dramas (19), music-related dramas (13), and medical dramas (13), with the next highest category sports dramas (8) in the period 2003–12.[46] Tellingly, the culinary arts, K-pop (broadly defined), and medicine – particularly medical tourism for cosmetic surgery – were all strategic areas for "national branding" in the 2000s and 2010s, and have been internalized by parents and children in the new post-1997 economy as possible futures. Depictions of sports stars on the small screen have also been matched by the success of South Koreans in the Olympics, Asian Games, and World Cup.[47] Wang Medina observes growing anxieties over the costs of private education, and notes the media's role in relieving this anxiety.

> The depiction of service industries in the media, however, puts forth an alternate narrative of professional success at the same time that it provides viewers with the knowledge to consume conspicuously, but also with distinction. Food service, health and wellness, design, tourism, hospitality, personal care, and a broad range of services have at least nominally been elevated to the status of "profession" with an attendant recognition of vocational training and certification as academic credentials.[48]

The media's depiction of the service sector, rife with instability though it is, as an alternative pathway to success and source of fulfillment, finds its target audience: youth entering the workforce and middle-aged women returning to the workforce who are typically well educated and who will approach service work with the same focus and drive as they would

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[44] Yi Wŏn. "2000-nyŏndae chŏnmunjik tŭrama ŭi t'ŭkching kwa palchŏn yangsang," Han'guk k'ont'ench'ŭ hakhoe nonmun munji 12, no. 11 (Nov. 2012): 73.

[45] Other than *Sikkaek* only one or two dramas that Lee (2012) categorizes as occupation-focused are about the creative arts: MBC's *Beethoven Virus* (*Pet'oben pairŏsŭ* 베토벤 바이러스, 2008) and SBS's *Style* (*Sŭt'ail* 스타일, 2009). However, I question whether *Sikkaek* or *Beethoven Virus* are really occupation-focused. Viewers' emotional attachment to *Sikkaek* was due to the family-focused storyline rather than a romance, and *Beethoven Virus,* much like *Coffee Prince*, focused on the family-like space of the orchestra.

[46] Jenny Wang Medina, "The Transformation from Tradition to Brand: 'Global' Korean Culture and the Politics of Inclusion in Late 20th and Early 21st Century South Korea" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2015), 4.

[47] Rachael Miyung Joo has written about Korean male and female sports stars being treated much like pop idols in South Korea, in some cases even becoming television celebrities through "CFs" ("commercial films," know in North America simply as "commercials") and product endorsement campaigns as well as appearances on reality and game shows. See Rachael Miyung Joo, *Transnational Sport: Gender, Media, and Global Korea* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).

[48] Wang Medina, "The Transformation from Tradition to Brand," 26.

academic study.

For youth entering the workplace after university or college, a café barista position is generally temporary. Youth are tasked with tasting widely and then translating these tastes for domestic consumption, but as the tastes of boutique hand-drip coffee and espresso beverages have become familiar to more Koreans, the value of an adventurous *immat* has decreased. Returning to Wang Medina's analysis of *Coffee Prince*, it is clear that expanded culinary options in turn have expanded food service work, but this new field has also been impacted by South Korea's valuing of academic credentials and certificates over direct experience or on-the-job training:

> The parallel trajectory of adulthood and craft specialization in a fetishized service industry here suggests a broadening of possibilities for the Korean protagonists in these dramas to achieve cultural literacy and distinction. At the same time, the fetishization of the knowledge surrounding the object of consumption places it back in the standard educational model of diligent study, rote memorization, intense competition, and academic certification.[49]

Even Ŭnch'an, the drama's hard-working heroine, cannot leverage her developed *immat* and newfound coffee knowledge into a desired and mature *sonmat* without a sojourn in Italy. In contrast, at least in the city where I conducted fieldwork, middle-aged women with coffee dreams can bolster an already demonstrated and trusted *sonmat* with credentials gained at coffee *hagwŏn* 學院, which begin their curriculum with the development of taste and scent (*immat*; *hyanggi* 香氣). The café is a playground for both youth and middle-aged women with the leisure time to enjoy it, and the ideal configuration is still a middle-aged female manager with *sonmat* overseeing youth with cutting-edge *immat*, all of them trained in coffee appreciation and brewing methods. In the next section, I turn to *immat* and *sonmat*, gender and generation, in the space of the Korean bakery (*ppangjip* 빵집).

Baking for the Nation: Adapting *Yangsik*

Kim T'akku aired on KBS2 from June to September 2010, following *Cinderella's Sister* (which aired from March to June 2010). The drama tells the story of the head baker and CEO of the first large-scale Korean bread factory in the 1970s, who had lost hope of having a son after the birth of two daughters, something predicted by his fortune-telling mother. He fathers an illegitimate son with his daughter's nursemaid, leading his wife to conceive a son with her husband's right-hand man in retaliation. The two boys are born within weeks of one another, with the illegitimate son Kim T'akku banished to a life of poverty with his single mother and the other son, Majun 마준, left in the dark about his true parentage. *Kim T'akku* chronicles

[49] Wang Medina, "The Transformation from Tradition to Brand," 18.

the poor son's struggle to return to his father's household, highlighting his love affair with baking as an apprentice in a baking school. The other son grows up materially privileged but emotionally deprived, struggling to overcome the CEO's indifference towards him and forcing himself to learn baking to earn his father's love rather than out of any interest in the profession. The oft-criticized *makchang* elements of the drama involve the widely viewed as dysfunctional families that make up South Korea's elite class – a dysfunction that is a recurring theme in dramas about the *chaebŏl*, Korean business conglomerates, sometimes called the royalty of South Korea, and the unfortunate commoners that get involved in their corrupt and decadent lifestyles, particularly the women who marry into them.

Eventually both T'akku and his half-brother Majun end up as students at the baking school, but their respective successes as bakers are dependent on their symbolic relationship to bread. T'akku grew up hungry in the countryside without knowledge of his illustrious father, and early episodes show him getting in trouble for stealing bread on several occasions. When he later learns of his father and spends a short time in the household, his desire to become a master baker is sparked by spying on his father engaged in the ritual of bread creation. Majun, in contrast, has never been hungry and for him bread only represents the affection withheld by his father; it is an obstacle and nothing more. This symbolic difference allows T'akku to succeed in a baking school contest to make "the world's most filling bread" (sesang esŏ kajang paeburŭn ppang 세상에서 가장 배부른 빵), a bun made of corn and barley. T'akku is credited with the invention of this unique bread, and it is apparently his rusticity and relative deprivation that allow him to dream up this most filling of breads, as corn and barley were historically key ingredients in a Korean countryside that had to supplement its white rice with less-favored grains. It should be noted here that the bread featured in *King of Baking Kim T'akku* is already "Korean" in a way that luxury goods like pasta, wine and coffee are not, having been introduced to Korea in a significantly earlier period.[50]

Part of the charm of *Kim T'akku* is in its setting in the 1970s and 1980s, which some viewers in their 40s and 50s now remember as a time of hardship but also great promise for South Korea. Yun Sŏkchin classifies *Kim T'akku* as a historical drama of the 2000s that "stimulated retro sensibilities."[51] The master baker/CEO father figure is a man of taste and talent, but also a heroic capitalist working to build up the nation. He is a world apart from the bourgeois *chaebŏl* son of another gourmet drama set in the 2000s, *My Lovely Samsoon*, who runs an upscale French restaurant complete with fancy French patisserie. Kim T'akku's father has the ability to create elaborate cakes, but his bread factory is for the common people. Similarly, in the baking school, students from wealthy backgrounds create European-style cakes even in the less cosmopolitan Korea of the 1970s, but T'akku alone makes bread with Korean roots. It is not simply bread that is fetishized in *Kim T'akku*, but specifically Korean

[50] Coffee certainly pre-dates bread – King Kojong's encounter with coffee in 1896 has circulated widely as part of coffeehouse lore – but mass-produced bread of the type that features in *Kim T'akku* was widespread by the 1980s, whereas cafés as seen in *Coffee Prince* only began in the 1990s. Prior to this, instant coffee was the norm.

[51] Yun Sŏkchin. "2000-nyŏndae Han'guk t'ellebijŏn yŏksa tŭrama ŭi changnŭ pyŏnhwa yangsang koch'al 1," *Han'guk kŭgyesul yŏn'gu* 38 (2012): 301-323.

bread. Kim T'akku and his father bake in the service of the nation, with the happy side result of finding true familial love.

Wang Medina also analyzes *Kim T'akku* in her discussion of culinary television dramas, noting the odd melding of factory bread production and artisanal bread craftsmanship, writing, "*Baker King* creates a nostalgic vision of the 1970s and 1980s that compresses authoritarian developmentalism and democratization into a family drama that folds these opposing periods of history into a mass-produced multi-grain bun."[52] The compression of industrial national baking and local bakeries is more than a narrative device in the drama *Kim T'akku*, as many seemingly independent neighborhood bakeries in South Korea today are in fact subsidiaries of the *chaebŏl* SPC Group, the oldest bakery and confectionery company in South Korea. SPC began as Sangmidang 賞美堂 upon Korea's liberation from Japan in 1945, and became Samlip Company (Samnip Sikp'um 三立食品) in 1959. Packaged individually wrapped Samlip cream-filled buns are still sold in convenience stores, along with the Shany (Syani 샤니) brand, another subsidiary acquired in 1972. In terms of franchise stores, Paris Croissant began in 1986, and the somewhat lower-end Paris Baguette in 1988. Paris Baguette has expanded dramatically in the domestic market since its start, and expanded into China in 2004. It even opened a store in Paris in 2014, with the hopes of attracting Asian residents and tourists before gaining broader interest through word of mouth.[53] In addition to Samlip/Shany packaged bread products (the "S" in SPC) and Paris Croissant/Baguette (the "P"), the *chaebŏl* owns an assortment of related companies, including BR Korea (Baskin Robbins and Dunkin' Donuts Korea). Since the 2000s, both Paris Baguette and Paris Croissant have also had in-store espresso bars. Competitors to SPC Group *ppangjip* include Crown Bakery (est. 1988), Ppang Kumt'ŏ 빵굼터 ("the bread baking place," est. 1995), the higher-end Artisee (est. 2004), and Tous les Jours (est. 1997, and owned by the CJ Group, which is related to Samsung (*Samsŏng* 三星 through family connections). The rags-to-riches national family bakery of *Kim T'akku* is an easy stand-in for SPC Group's Samlip Bread, and the on-screen factory is located in North Ch'ungch'ŏng Province (Ch'ungch'ŏngbuk-to 忠淸北道), broadly representing the great swath of land of Ch'ungch'ŏng and Kyŏnggi 京畿 provinces where real-life industrial bakeries were, and are, located, not too far from Seoul.

The filming locations for *Kim T'akku* were in North Ch'ungch'ŏng, but the illegitimate son T'akku grows up with his mother in a small town in Kyŏngsang 慶尙; his Kyŏngsang accent marks him as an outsider when he arrives at his father's mansion and the baking school. As the child of a single mother, he frequently goes hungry, and he gets in trouble for stealing bread from a neighborhood vendor. Through scenes of T'akku sniffing the aroma of baking bread in the air and stealing bread, viewers come to understand him as bread-obsessed, a quality that is at least partially attributed to it being in the blood. Growing up at a time in which rice production was discouraged in favor of millet or barley, T'akku dreams of

[52] Wang Medina, "The Transformation from Tradition to Brand," 49-50.

[53] Donald Kirk, "Mon Dieu, Korea's Paris Baguette Is Now a Real Parisian Boulangerie," *Forbes*, July 23, 2014, http://www.forbes.com/sites/donaldkirk/2014/07/23/mon-dieu-koreas-paris-baguette-is-now-a-real-french-cafe/.

new bread inventions, melding need as represented by barley and corn, with want, namely the global world of bread. In many ways, the drama *Kim T'akku* represents the changing diets of South Koreans, valorizing the local while emphasizing that even local products or industries generally would not have become famous or profitable without the industrial production process. At the end of the drama, T'akku becomes an artisanal baker at P'alpong Ppangjip 팔봉빵집, the kind of bakery name viewers can imagine is based on their city or town's local bakery.

Antti Leppanen's ethnographic research into rice-cake (*ttŏk* 떡) making reveals a tension – but not opposition – between rice and bread, *ttŏkchip* 떡집 and *ppangjip*.[54] The story involves the rise of bread as rice rationing curtailed the production of rice-cake. Bread began to enjoy great popularity while rice-cake languished; however, now that the market has been cornered by large chains such as Paris Baguette, bakers at small independent *ppangjip* are morphing into *ttŏkchip,* capitalizing on the "well-being" trend (*welbing* 웰빙).[55] Even chains like Paris Baguette and Tous les Jours feature many pastries containing *ttŏk*, a kind of hybrid of the two. Bread is seen as somewhat decorative – much like espresso drinks with latte art, but with less of an essence in terms of scent (*hyanggi*) – but requiring more "skills" (*kisul* 技術) of its maker than *ttŏk*.[56] Images of youth extravagantly frosting cakes and shaping exotic French pastries convey aesthetic taste and an implied experiential taste (*immat*), whereas the *ttŏkchip* represents a rusticity that South Koreans have only very recently been in the position to romanticize, having transitioned from a developing to a developed country in a generation. The recent (re)invention of rice and rice-cake as a well-being food has also been aided by a global gluten-free movement. Leppanen demonstrates how perceptions of rice were quite different until just twenty-five years ago:

> During the course of the 1960s, domestic production of rice could not meet the increasing demand, and the government wanted to avoid using foreign hard currencies to import rice. Instead, use of wheat flour, imported with favorable terms or received as aid, and domestically grown barley was promoted and in some cases mandated in "mixed grain and flour food" campaigns and policies [*honbunsik changnyŏ undong* or *chŏngch'aek*].[57]

Tae-Ho Kim traces the rise of *punsik* 粉食 (wheat-based meals), reminding us that even though *punsik* has become shorthand for snack food as part of the many small eateries selling *kimbap* (rice rolls) and other simple foods, its history only dates back to the 1950s and 1960s, when

[54] Antti Leppanen, "The Steamed and the Baked: Bread and Bread-Making in the Identity of Korean Rice Cake Producers" (presentation, American Anthropological Association Meeting, San Francisco, November 14–18, 2012).

[55] As of 2019 and 2020, more "homemade" (*suje* 手製) breads are featured in cafes – bakeries and cafes are becoming less distinguishable.

[56] It should be noted, however, that bread is certainly seen as nutritionally less valuable than rice, and is also often dismissed as "instant" (*insŭt'ant'ŭ* 인스탄트) in a way that rice would not be.

[57] Leppanen, "The Steamed and the Baked."

soup with dough-flakes (*sujebi* 수제비), various noodle soups, and dumplings were introduced into the South Korean everyday diet.[58] In this sense, it can be argued that it is not a simple rice/bread divide at work, but rather a rice/wheat divide.

The drama *Kim T'akku*, which boasted the highest ratings of any Korean television drama of 2010, can in many ways be seen as having successfully gauged the national affective landscape, comprehensively addressing lingering resentment of disruption of established foodways during industrialization, *chaebŏl* domination of bread, and anxiety about the position of bread in Korean cuisine. With this painful distortion of tastes laid to rest through family drama, several dramas since 2010 have picked up where *Kim T'akku* left off, carrying on the fascination with perceived traditional Korean food that 2003's *Taejanggŭm* started, but taking it beyond the royal palace to family businesses, neighborhood shops, and farms.[59]

While it is no exaggeration to say that rice is the staple food of Korean cuisine – without rice (*pap* 밥) there is in fact technically no meal – Leppanen has shown through an analysis of the discourses surrounding rice and bread that bread in South Korea is not quite the other it constitutes in Japanese society.[60] Desire for bread, and the memories called forth when smelling or eating bread, lie somewhere between staple and luxury, due to the trajectory of South Korean industrialization and austerity measures introduced under Park Chung-hee (Pak Chŏnghŭi 朴正熙) that affected both everyday life and rituals such as weddings, funerals, and holidays. Michel de Certeau outlines the meaning of bread and wine in France: "Bread is the symbol of the hardships of life and work; it is the memory of a better standard of living acquired the hard way over the course of previous generations."[61] The parallel to bread in France may be thought of as rice in South Korea, but bread is still far from a distant second; bread is the symbol of a particular kind of hardship, hardship suffered under rapid industrialization.[62] Food historians and food anthropologists remind us that balances in the everyday Korean diet are always in flux, and of course demonstrate regional variation as well. Pettid discusses the balance of rice and other dishes in different regions of Korea,[63] and Pemberton traces wild-gathered food collection as a counterbalance to food globalization, a

[58] Tae-Ho Kim, "The Good, the Bad, and the Foreign: Trajectories of Three Grains in Modern South Korea," in *Moral Foods: The Construction of Nutrition and Health in Modern Asia*, eds. Angela Ki Che Leung and Melissa L. Caldwell (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2019), 137.

[59] Some Korean dramas from the period 2010 to 2014 that highlight local food include: *Parhyo kajok* 발효 가족 (Fermentation Family, 2011), *Kkotminam ramyŏn kage* 꽃미남 라면가게 (Flower Boy Ramen Shop, 2011), *Siksa rŭl hapsida* 식사를 합시다 (Let's Eat, 2013), *Sindŭl ŭi manch'an* 신들의 만찬 (Feast of the Gods, 2012), *Pulhuŭi myŏngjak* (Immortal Classic, 2012), *Tallaedoen, changguk* 달래된, 장국 (Wild Chives and Soybean Soup, 2014), and *Chŏnsŏl ŭi manyŏ* 전설의 마녀 (Legendary Witch, 2014).

[60] Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, *Rice as Self: Japanese Identities through Time* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

[61] Michael de Certeau, Luce Giard, and Pierre Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, vol. 2, *Living and Cooking*, trans. Timothy J. Tomasik (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 1998: 86.

[62] In Levi-Strauss's schema, rice on the Korean Peninsula would have been the "raw" (nature) and the introduction of wheat would have been "cooked" (culture), but this dichotomy falls apart under scrutiny. See Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked: Introduction to a Science of Mythology*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper and Row, 1969).

[63] Michael J. Pettid, *Korean Cuisine: An Illustrated History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 100.

trend which has only continued as local Korean herbs and plants become artisanal as part of a burgeoning traditional foods movement, and not simply rustic.[64] Mun Okp'yo has examined food globalization that is not Western-led, but the natural result of the many marriage migrants from Southeast Asia – since the 2010s, Vietnamese cuisine has enjoyed a particular boom in South Korea.[65] Learning how to make espresso drinks and demonstrating a taste for coffee brings South Korea into a transnational network; adapting bread to match Korean history and aligning it to Korean tastes brings the once-foreign to Korea and domesticates it. As Lupton has noted, "Dietary habits are used to establish and symbolize control over one's body,"[66] and South Korea has also conceived of the national body as something to guard and cultivate from an agricultural and nutritional perspective, as evidenced by eat-local slogans such *sint'o puri* 身土不二 ("the body and land cannot be separated"), adopted by the National Agricultural Cooperative Confederation (Nongŏp Hyŏptong Chohap Chunganghoe 農業協同組合中央會). In the final section of the article, I examine taste, *makkŏlli*, and local food culture, showing *makkŏlli* to be a Korean culinary object that is being re-invented for the world as evidence of the rising global cachet of South Korea.

Re-inventing Makkŏlli: South Korea's New Foodie Culture

The third drama addressed in this article that deals with themes of dysfunctional family and culinary creation is *Cinderella's Sister*, set in the present but in a fairy-tale like space away from the frenetic pace of Seoul. The drama was filmed in rural Kyŏngsang Province but only one of the actors uses a Kyŏngsang dialect. Unlike the cross-dressing female character in *Coffee Prince* or the male hero of *Kim T'akku*, the female lead character in *Cinderella's Sister* is not depicted as plucky and strong, but rather irreversibly wounded by early family-inflicted trauma. Indeed, the hopelessness of the lead character Ŭncho and the generally somber, meandering tone of the drama led much of its audience to give up on the program. The drama did not have nearly the ratings of its successor *Kim T'akku*,[67] but its depiction of a family *makkŏlli* business puts it in the category of gourmet drama, with a focus on youth creativity and national competitiveness.

Makkŏlli, a milky-white or off-white rice-based alcoholic beverage, was a popular drink

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[64] Robert W. Pemberton, "Wild-Gathered Foods as Countercurrents to Dietary Globalisation in South Korea," in *Asian Food: The Global and the Local*, eds. Katarzyna Cwiertka and Boudewijn Walraven (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 76-94.

[65] Mun Okp'yo. "Han'guginŭi siksaenghwal sokŭi tamunhwa silch'ŏn: kukche kyŏrhon kajŏngŭl chungsim ŭro," Hanguk munhwa illyuhak 45, no. 2 (2012): 109-148.

[66] Deborah Lupton, "Food and Emotion" in *The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink*, ed. Carolyn Korsmeye (New York: Berg, 2005), 318.

[67] *Cinderella's Sister* had a decently high rating of 20%, but *Kim Takku* exceeded 36%. See Kim Ayŏn, "P'yŏnggyun sich'ŏngnyul ro pon 2010 tŭrama," *Tonga ilbo*, February 7, 2011, https://www.donga.com/news//article/all/20101216/33323098/1; and "KBS 'Sinderella ŏnni', sich'ŏngnyul 20% tolp'a," *KBS News*, April 30, 2010, https://news.kbs.co.kr/news/view.do?ncd=2089145.

until the late 1960s and early 1970s, when then-president Park Chung-hee effectively crushed the industry with rice rationing.[68] Even before these regulations, however, *makkŏlli* brewers had difficulty under Japanese colonial rule, as the government imposed alcohol tax ordinances. The drink continued to be consumed illicitly in the countryside in subsequent decades by farmers with the means to produce it, but city folk switched to *soju* 燒酒, a potent but cheap liquor, originally potato-based but eventually entirely synthetically produced in mass quantities. *Soju*, cheap and potent, was the drink of choice through the rapid industrialization years, but beer gained in popularity as it began to be imported and then domestically produced in the 1980s. Yoo points out that South Korea's signing of a WTO agreement in 1999 ironically bolstered sales of humble *makkŏlli*, as the "open market policy … levied an equal ad valorem tax on all distilled spirits based on the degree of alcohol content."[69] *Makkŏlli* was cheaper for the consumer with *soju* now bumped into a higher tax bracket, and even after *soju* producers lowered its alcohol content, *makkŏlli* sales continued to rise. Since the late 2000s, *makkŏlli* has enjoyed a boom in popularity, lauded as a traditional Korean and even well-being product. It is a point of pride that *makkŏlli* is now exported to Japan as well, making something traditionally Korean a Korean Wave cultural product in its own right.

In *Kim T'akku*, bread becomes Korean and gives the people hope during a time of national growing pains, and in the runaway hit *Coffee Prince*, young Koreans become cosmopolitan through their espresso art, but in *Cinderella's Sister*, there is no culinary becoming in the same sense, as Ŭncho becomes a master distiller simply by finally giving in to family love, even if it is not blood family.[70] In a retelling of the Cinderella fairy tale, the emotionally wounded teenager Ŭncho comes to live in the spacious traditional house complex that houses the *makkŏlli* factory when her opportunistic and selfish mother marries the kind-hearted *makkŏlli* factory patriarch. Ŭncho's new family members immediately understand her deep psychological wounds, but Ŭncho rejects the affections of her stepfather, and even more firmly rejects the attempts of friendship on the part of her childish stepsister. As she grows older, she instead throws herself into learning the family business, approaching *makkŏlli* production in a wholly scientific and detached way. Scenes of a serious and white-coated Ŭncho in the lab testing recipes, as well as scenes showing interactions with Japanese clients,

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[68] Theodore Jun Yoo, "Shaken or Stirred? Recreating *Makkeoli* for the Twenty-First Century," in *Encounters Old and New in World History: Essays Inspired by Jerry H. Bentley*, eds. Alan Karras and Laura J. Mitchell (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2017), 110.

[69] Yoo, "Shaken or Stirred?" 110.

[70] Yun Sŏkchin has written about a divide in terms of "blood ties" in depictions of family in dramas aimed towards older vs. younger audiences. He argues that older audiences tend to enjoy the hidden power of blood played out on screen, with reunions between long-lost parents and children. This is one explanation for how *Kim T'akku* became popular with such a broad demographic: somewhat older audiences were moved by the fate that bound separated father and son together, and younger audiences enjoyed the non-blood-related, youthful camaraderie of the baking school. *Cinderella's Sister* was popular with a younger demographic, not only because of its young leads, but also because of the deemphasized blood relations. Yun has found that young Koreans tend to attach affective power to the *sikku* 食口, or household member, which requires no blood relation, whereas older Koreans speak of the power of *kajok*/*kajŏng* 家族/家庭, or blood family. Yun Sŏkchin, *Kim Samsun kwa Chang Chunhyŏk ŭi tŭrama kongbang*.

can be interpreted as representing recent Korean systematic attempts to market Korean Wave products, including food. Yet, the young characters do not have to become cosmopolitan to understand this rustic drink – unlike *Coffee Prince's* Ŭnch'an, who goes off to Italy for a barista training course – nor do they have to make the drink more appropriately national, as Kim T'akku does with his bread creations. *Makkŏlli*, like family love, has always been there waiting to be discovered. As with café drink menus or baking, however, there is room for creativity: Ŭncho works to make the family *makkŏlli* recipe appealing for both domestic and international consumers.

Cinderella's Sister plays with the Cinderella fairy tale, taking its place in a long line of television and film adaptations of fairy tales, folk tales, and myths, including recent flipped fairy tales. In this inverted version of Cinderella, the evil, opportunistic stepmother Kangsuk 강숙 brings her daughter Ŭncho into the spacious countryside home of Taesŏng 대성, a widowed *makkŏlli* maker with his own bubbly daughter Hyosŏn 효선. A love triangle forms between the cold and troubled stepsister Ŭncho, the long-time apprentice Kihun 기훈, and childlike Hyosŏn. The triangle is squared by Chungu 중우, the adopted son of one of Ŭncho's mothers' ex-lovers, who tracks Ŭncho down when he comes of age to declare his love for her. In this version of the Cinderella story, the stepsister is unjustly the object of two good men's affections, leaving Cinderella with none. The Cinderella figure Hyosŏn is beautiful and good, but so childlike and naïve that she quickly begins to grate on viewers. The stepsisters eventually form a bond under the benevolent care of father Taesŏng, and his unconditional love even redeems the evil stepmother Kangsuk, who after Taesŏng's death takes her place as the middle-aged woman with *sonmat*, running the family *makkŏlli* business while Ŭncho continues to use her scientifically-informed *immat* to improve the product. Hyosŏn becomes the face of the company, literally – her image appears on the *makkŏlli* bottles, and she has a knack for doing business with Japanese buyers. Although the drama is a decidedly modern retelling, order is restored in a dysfunctional family through a return to filiality, though in a less purely patriarchal manner than in the classic tale.[71] Ŭncho finally accepts Taesŏng's love, Hyosŏn forgives Kangsuk for her transgressions, and Kangsuk finally learns how to be a wife and mother. In fairy tale classification terms, this version of Cinderella, or the Korean tale of *K'ongjwi* 콩쥐 and *Patchwi* 밭쥐 (soy bean and adzuki bean), might be classified as type one, as opposed to the much more morbid type two categories that end not in redemption but rather in Cinderella's, or *K'ongjwi*'s, murder by *P'atchwi*, with *K'ongjwi*'s ghost then chopping *P'atchwi* up and serving her to her unknowing mother as revenge. At times, *Cinderella's Sister* threatens to tread into the morbid, employing subtle nods to generic conventions of horror, as found in the film version of the *Changhwa* and *Hongnyŏn* tale (*Changhwa Hongnyŏn chŏn* 薔花紅蓮傳),[72] and including otherworldly elements, as found in the tale of Princess Pari (Pari

[71] Timothy R. Tangherlini, "Cinderella in Korea: Korean Oikotypes of AaTh 510," *Fabula* 35, nos. 3-4 (1994): 282-304.

[72] 2003's *A Tale of Two Sisters* retold this tale as horror, a tale of two good sisters who are terrorized by a stepmother. In the tale, the older sister is framed by the stepmother before her wedding day, as the stepmother puts a dead, bloody rat in the bed and claims that Changhwa has had a miscarriage, indicating that she has broken premarital

kongju 바리공주), the filial daughter who was murdered but continued to serve her parents from beyond the grave.[73] However, it is in the end a tale of familial and national re-invention. Lacking the plucky Candyrella of the *Coffee Prince* café space or the fetishization of Korean bread of *Kim T'akku*, the rice liquor princesses of *Cinderella's Sister* work only to re-invent their family as functional. In the final episode, Ŭncho laments in a voiceover:

> In the end, do fairytales not suit me? The sweet, beautiful fairytale world … is that something I'm not allowed to have? I'm not trying to conquer space. I'm not trying to save the planet. Not even trying to save the country ….
>
> 결국 동화는 나에게 어울리지 않는 걸까? 말랑말랑하고 달콤하고 나른하고 예쁜 동화속 세상은 나에겐 허락되지 않는 걸까… 내가 우주의 질서를 새로 편성하겠다는 것도 아니고 지구를 구하겠다는 것도 이니고 나라를 구하겠다는 것도 아닌데 ….[74]

The irony in Ŭncho's words here is that in the late 2000s and early 2010s, *makkŏlli* was being repositioned precisely to save the country: the Korean Tourism Organization (KTO) made explicit their mission of making Korean cuisine (*hansik* 韓食) the next crest of the Korean Wave.[75] Now that dramas could no longer replicate the runaway success of the early 2000s with Japanese fans, and even K-pop may have its limits – BTS and Blackpink aside – *hansik* and *makkŏlli* became invested with hope. Global megastars such as BTS have recently promoted Korean cuisine globally as well, demonstrating the ever-expanding borders of South Korean soft power fueled by cosmopolitan youth. If *Coffee Prince* brought the world to South Korea through creative play with coffee culture, and *Kim T'akku* displayed the domestication of bread through patriotic youth creativity, *Cinderella's Sister* brought the quintessentially Korean (*makkŏli*) to the world.

Conclusion: Towards Self-Assured Creativity

What do these young creative gourmets on screen tell us about the development of Korean taste, and how do youth such as these negotiate their labor in a neoliberal national and global environment? Both widely circulating public discourse and my interviews on the topic of youth consumption reveal keen ambivalence: on the one hand, youth are blamed for the disintegration of Korean taste because of their Westernized eating habits from fast food to breakfast toast to expensive espresso drinks, but on the other hand, are heralded as saviors of

chastity norms. The stepmother murders Changhwa and Hongnyŏn commits suicide, and then the ghost sisters seek to have Changhwa's good name restored posthumously.

[73] Clark Sorensen, "The Myth of Princess Pari and the Self Image of Korean Women," *Anthropos* 83, nos. 4-6 (1988): 403–419.

[74] See Girlfriday, "Cinderella's Sister: Episode 20 (Final)," *Dramabeans* (blog), June 7, 2010, http://www.dramabeans.com/2010/06/cinderellas-sister-episode-20-final/.

[75] For example, see Suh-young Yun. "'Hansik Chosen to Draw Foreign Tourists," *The Korea Times*, October 21, 2013, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/culture/2020/05/316_144719.html

the nation who can both promote the Korean national brand by making perceived traditional Korean things more trendy and transforming Koreans into ever more savvy consumers of cosmopolitan goods.[76] Those working on education in South Korea have noted the explosion of the private education industry (*hagwŏn* system) around the time of the economic crisis in the late 1990s, with areas of the most intense insecurity and uncertainty, like English, expanding the most rapidly, and with little state regulation.[77] In the last decade cooking, baking, and barista *hagwŏn* have followed this trend, popping up in urban centers all over the country to offer training in espresso-making, baking, cake-decorating, wine-tasting, and traditional Korean food preparation. Underemployed youth workers can attend various culinary training courses to increase their marketability. Importantly, family businesses such as the traditional liquor factory and bread factory are depicted on screen as places of intense, unconditional familial love, but in real life, family businesses have also been a coping mechanism against economic uncertainty, making the family café, bakery, or restaurant a space of ambivalence.[78]

The migration of culinary content from television dramas to variety and reality programs illustrates that in the battle between duty and creativity, creativity has won. As young celebrities play in kitchen spaces to invent and re-invent traditional and imported flavors, they demonstrate that lines have blurred between traditional, modern, and postmodern tastes – lines that were briefly carved out amidst the explosion of gourmet dramas during the breakneck globalization of the late 2000s and early 2010s. Tellingly, many of these reality programs also feature young celebrities heading to rural areas to tap into the healing properties of rural space and fresh ingredients. A popular film from 2018, *Little Forest* 리틀포레스트 (dir. Im Sullye 林順禮), showcases new directions in youth engagement with food and characterizations of taste. While films have different pacing and promote different viewer experiences than television programs, I close my article with a brief discussion of the film due to its great popularity with viewers in their late teens and twenties, and its synthesis of several of the threads that run through this article. In this film, which is based on a Japanese manga of the same name, a young woman, Haewŏn 해원, returns to her family home in the countryside after experiencing both romantic and professional setbacks in Seoul. Reconnecting with childhood friends, she tells them, "Instant food didn't fill me up. I came back because I was hungry."[79] After seeing Haewŏn despondently prepare instant food in her microwave in Seoul while she crams for the teacher's certification exam – in which she is ultimately not successful – viewers are treated to many scenes in which she prepares sumptuous meals using ingredients

[76] Interviews, Chŏnju, 2010-2012. Interviews were on multiple aspects of parenting and family life, and the topics of youth consumption and youth un/underemployment came up frequently among women with children in that age group. Laura Nelson also discusses the vilification of youth as part of anti-excessive consumption 과소비 campaigns. Nelson, *Measured Excess*.

[77] Interviews, Chŏnju, 2010-2012. See also Nancy Abelmann, Jung-ah Choi, and So Jin Park, eds., *No Alternative?: Experiments in South Korean Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).

[78] See Kyung-Sup Chang on Korean family business. Kyung-Sup Chang, *South Korean under Compressed Modernity: Familial Political Economy in Transition* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

[79] Natalie Ng, "What '*Little Forest*' Gets So Right about Women," *Filmed in Ether*, August 16, 2018, https://www.filmedinether.com/features/little-forest-korean-film-food-women-relationships-essay/.

she has grown and harvested herself. However, there is no fetishization of the traditional here, only a focus on the local. Haewŏn does not make only Korean dishes, but also egg salad sandwiches, *okonomiyaki* お好み焼き, pound cake, pasta, and *crème brûlée*. She recalls that her mother presented *okonomiyaki* and *crème brûlée* as her own inventions, which Haewŏn later realizes to be deceptive, but which at the same time allows her to embrace both Korean cuisine and world cuisine as her own. Haewŏn's mother is notably absent as she has left to pursue her own dreams, but has set the house up for her daughter's modest comfort and success, and filled it with memories. This means that the film also lacks the familial tension that drives *Kim T'akku* and *Cinderella's Sister*. A cup of coffee is not a cosmopolitan contract, but simply the interplay of fresh countryside water and coffee beans ground with care. Baked bread is not domestication of a Western product for the nation, but only a loving creation for a friend. Similarly, *makkŏli* is not a potential extension of South Korean soft power, but just a drink to be enjoyed with friends. Food creation and consumption is part of a radical ecology, separate from capitalist calculations and focused on self-reliance, not self-development.[80]

Little Forest is just one quiet film amidst the relentless noise and movement of television dramas and reality/variety programming. Yet it found great resonance among young South Koreans[81], indicating that creative gourmets are weary of both the tension-filled self-development and nation-building of gourmet dramas and the posturing, meandering play of reality and variety cooking programs. Rather than the performative global and national tastes of *immat*, Haewŏn and her friends cultivate their *sonmat* through non-hurried experiments with cooking and connections with the land, and only then enjoy the fruits of their own labor through a fully realized *immat* – taste for its own pure enjoyment instead of social distinction. Free of familial expectation, rejecting the weight of duty to the nation, and staring clear-eyed at the promises and pitfalls of globalization, the creative youth of *Little Forest* live with the ethos of *sohwakhaeng* 小確幸 – a keyword of the late 2010s meaning "small but certain happiness." Although *chaebŏl* princes still make their appearances – in the 2020 drama *Itaewon Class* (*Iť aewŏn kʾŭllassŭ* 이태원 클라쓰), for example – the kings of baking, rice liquor princesses, and the coffee elite of the late 2000s and early 2010s have in many ways yielded to self-assured culinary creation across dramas, reality and variety programs, and web content such as *mŏkpang* and *kukpang*.

[80] Kim Yonghŭi, "Yŏnghwa 'Rit'ŭl p'oresŭt'ŭ' e nat'anan sigan ŭi ŭimi wa kŭ yŏnghwa hyŏngsikchŏk kuhyŏn e taehan yŏn'gu," *Asia yŏnghwa yŏn'gu* 12, no.1 (March 2019): 87-112.

[81] See Jin-hai Park, "Young Generation chasing 'Small but Certain Happiness,'" *The Korea Times*, March 26, 2018, https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/culture/2019/07/703_246171.html.

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