

Atmospheric Instability: Melodramatic Collision of Gender, Tradition, and Communication in *Forecasting Love and Weather*

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Abstract

Forecasting Love and Weather (FLW), an internationally co-produced romantic drama, follows the lives of fictional employees at the Korean Meteorological Administration (KMA), delving into both the challenges of workplace dynamics and the intricacies of personal relationships. As a melodrama, FLW highlights ideological conflicts, particularly in the realms of marriage and family, set against the backdrop of modern societal values. The series portrays how female characters navigate and resist gender biases and malicious comments in their professional lives, while also challenging the traditional association of the public sphere with masculinity and the private sphere with femininity. Through its exploration of the blurred boundaries between personal and professional spaces, FLW reveals deeper ideological contradictions. This study analyzes the communication styles and decision-making processes situated in the broader framework of melodrama as depicted in the show, both at the organizational and interpersonal levels, to understand how they reflect the issues of gender dynamics and workplace relationships in contemporary society. Ultimately, this research aims to unpack how FLW, through the lens of international co-production and melodramatic genre, presents the collision between traditional values and modernity, particularly in its representation of women in the workplace and its portrayal of "soft" characteristics in male characters.

Keywords: melodrama, representation of women, modernity in K-drama, media and ideology

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Introduction

Forecasting Love and Weather (hereafter *FLW*) is a romantic drama co-produced by Joongang Newspaper's general channel, Joongang Tongyang Broadcasting Company (JTBC) and Netflix. *FLW* narrates the lives of those working at the headquarters of the Korean Meteorological Administration (KMA), exploring the challenges they encounter and the complexities of workplace relationships. As an indispensable public service institution in South Korea, KMA is committed to delivering timely and precise weather information, according to the current administrator, Yoo Hee-Dong (KMA, 2023). At the core of KMA's mission as a governmental service lies the ethos of "Watching the Sky Friendly, Serving the People Faithfully [*sic*]," which resonates throughout the narrative of *FLW*, setting in the fictionalized National Meteorological Center in Seoul (KMA, 2023). The recurring slogan "Innovative weather services a stepping stone to public safety" in *FLW* emphasizes the shared sense of responsibility in protecting the well-being of the public through reliable weather forecasting.

This program revolves around the lives of four central characters: Jin Hu-kyung, Lee Shi-woo, Han Gi-jun, and Chae Yoo-jin. As a melodrama, this program depicts ideological conflicts present the collisions between traditional and modern values in Korean society and also in representations of Korean women in the workplace. Meanwhile, it illustrates how female characters defend themselves when confronted with malicious comments and biased gender stereotypes in the workplace. The interplay between the private and public spheres highlights ideological contradictions throughout the serial, challenging the notion that the public sphere always symbolizes masculinity and the private sphere represents femininity.

Therefore, this paper seeks to examine how *FLW*, under the context of international co-production and with a particular relationship to genre, depicts the ideological conflicts stemming from the collision between traditional values and modernity, particularly in the representation of women in the workplace and the embodiment of "soft" characteristics to male characters. In addition, as this show places emphasis on diverse communication styles and the decision-making processes within both organizational and interpersonal dimensions, this paper aims to understand the various communication strategies employed in the public/private dichotomy to unravel their broader implications.

The History and Globalization of Korean Drama

Since its inception in 1984, Korean television has served as a tool for the state to assert political control and promote dominant ideologies (Kim, 2005). Although state influence has gradually declined with the rise of major media corporations, early Korean dramas were still shaped by male-dominated narratives and limited female representation. As Kim (2005) notes, women held few leadership roles in the media industry and were often portrayed in domestic roles, reflecting the enduring influence of Confucianism, which reinforces hierarchical gender norms (Shim, 1984). Following the 1997 Asian financial crisis, Korea shifted its modernization strategy toward exporting popular culture, with government support fueling the global rise of K-dramas (Kim, 2013; Noh, 2022). This state-business partnership mirrors *FLW*'s narrative structure, where private relationships play out in public settings. The cultural liberalization across Asia further accelerated the Korean Wave or *Hallyu* (Kim, 2013).

Despite global success, many dramas continued to portray women as sacrificing their careers for love or suppressing ambition to protect fragile male egos, rooted in traditional gender

expectations. However, co-productions with platforms like Netflix have shifted these dynamics. As Noh (2022) asserted, modern K-dramas often center on romance and melodrama, using emotional intensity and ideological conflict to appeal to global audiences. The rise of “soft masculinity” (Murell, 2019) and more complex gender portrayals reflects broader cultural shifts, both in Korea and internationally. These themes are central to *FLW*, which we now explore through the lens of melodrama in Korean television.

The Melodrama Genre

Peter Brooks’ work, *The Melodramatic Imagination* (1976), has provided a platform for literary debates and studies related to melodrama. While Brooks (1976) acknowledged common features of melodrama such as “the indulgence of strong emotionalism; moral polarization and schematization; extreme states of being, situations, action; overt villainy, persecution of the good, and final reward of virtue; inflated and extravagant expression; dark plottings, suspense, breathtaking peripety”¹ (pp. 11–12), the unique strength of melodrama lies in its capacity to depict intense emotionalism and the representational effects of ethical and ideological conflicts. Additionally, the characteristic trait of soap opera, which has been widely adopted in the continuing serial, is *excess*. Importantly, melodrama has developed into a transnational phenomenon, with its narrative strategy appealing to global audiences (Slifkin, 2014). According to Slifkin (2014), melodrama not only addresses personal wounds but also holds the potential to engage with public and political matters. Meaning, there is an inversion of bringing the private matters into the public sphere.

Despite early criticism, melodrama has not only persisted but evolved alongside shifts from the industrial to the information era. Castells’ (1997) concept of the Network Society illustrates how capitalism, powered by information technologies, now revolves around the exchange of information rather than physical production. Information has become abundant and commodified, altering global media production and consumption (Castells, 1997; Freeman & Louca, 2002). This transformation, emerging in the 1970s amid global economic liberalization, influenced television’s evolution. Rather than replacing melodrama, TV absorbed and capitalized on it, turning viewers into passive consumers drawn to its emotional appeal (Joyrich, 1988). Once associated with feminine domesticity, melodrama has expanded to broader audiences through both daytime and prime-time formats.

TV melodrama simplifies complex realities into relatable narratives, using visual metaphors, rhythmic music, and ideological tension. In the streaming era, it retains serialized structures but shifts focus away from domestic drama, challenging traditional gender roles. In *FLW*, for example, tasks once confined to the private sphere, like emotional support and care, appear in public settings, reflecting broader labor shifts and the growing role of women in the workplace.

Ideological Conflicts: The Fusion Between Tradition and Modernity in Korea

As scholars have asserted about the current complex and somewhat ambivalent nature of Korean society, shaped by the interplay of Confucian values and forces of modernity. This transformation can be traced back to the early interactions with Western ideologies, including the spread of Catholicism and the establishment of women’s schools (Kim, 2005; Shim,

¹ “Breathtaking peripety” from *The Melodramatic Imagination* (Brooks, 1976) refers to a sudden and dramatic reversal of fortune or significant turning point of the plot in the narrative.

1984). Hence, the close contact with Western ideologies has propelled Korean society toward modernization, particularly in the context of women's self-realization and pursuit of independence.

Despite rapid economic development in Korea, persistent gender inequalities continue to thrive within the framework of patriarchal society (Kim, 2013). This phenomenon finds its roots in the enduring influence of Confucianism, which extends beyond moral principles and deeply permeates the political, social, and economic sectors (Kim, 2005). As a result of this inherently male-centric culture, women's presence and influence within media-related governmental committees remain minimum and the repressive narrative of women's representations has shown little sign of change (Kim, 2005; Kim, 2013).

The common conventional approaches in constructing women's images reveal a stark gender imbalance, including the number of women on screen in fewer numbers with less important roles (Kim, 2005). The persistent reinforcement of traditional gender roles is equally striking, as men are often associated with paid work while women are confined to domestic spaces. Women's on-screen presence is predominantly restricted to discussion of personal and family matters, while men engage in non-personal social affairs to make them more professional and prestige. This dichotomy reflects the assigned roles of females and males in society corresponding with the societal expectations for private and public matters. Even as more working women make their appearance in television drama, the depictions are often seriously distorted to portray them as unfeminine and selfish as punishments for their competence and unmarried status. This gender disparity extends to character traits, with male figured presented as reasonable, independent, strong, and dominant, while female characters are presented as emotional, depended, weak, and obedient (Kim, 2005).

The enlightenment period in the 1920s marked the beginning of a transformative awakening among modern Korean women (Shim, 1984). Education played a pivotal role in this modernization. The establishment of Ewha Haktang, the first women's school in the late 19th Century, signified the advent of modern education for Korean women. With rising demand for education, similar schools were funded in major cities across the country, introducing new lifestyles and democratic ideas to young women while fostering critical perspectives on gender inequality (Shim, 1984). In the complex interplay of tradition and modernity, women began to recognize the enduring constraints imposed by patriarchal society, questioning the pervious internalization of the self-sacrifice values rooted in traditional Confucianism.

This coexistence becomes more apparent when examining the contributions of female playwrights. Not until the 1960s did female playwrights begin to emerge (Shim, 1984). One notable figure was Kim Cha-rim, the first professional female writer to address women's issues from a distinct female viewpoint, aiming to provide role models for younger generations (Shim, 1984). Despite her efforts to champion independence and sexual freedom for women, her works often depicted a conflict between the pursuit of self-fulfillment and the restrictions on traditional gender roles. This portrayal resonated with the prevailing practice among male writers in which determined women who assert independence came at a high price (Shim, 1984). In essence, Kim Cha-rim struggled to create a female character who transcends the gender expectation and achieved personal fulfillment in the confines of this patriarchal society. According to Kim (Shim, 1984, p. 217), this was due to "there was no such model in real life".

The lack of real-life representation of independent women in Korean was in contrast with the delineation of female characters by American female playwright at the same period. Megan Terry proposed the notion of strong women as “a creative person who makes decisions and is independent and self-actualizing” (Shim, 1984, p. 165). While it is true that women in Korea historically faced sex-segregation, low employment status, and the societal pressure to marry, the increasing participation of younger women in education and the economy has led to a growing awareness of deeply entrenched biases and gender expectations. These women aspire to pursue individualized lifestyle, which is particularly evident in their changing attitudes toward marriage and the increasing divorce rate. This shift reflects the growing empowerment of women to finally make decisions about their own lives (Kim, 2005).

Nonetheless, media representations of working women continue to face similar challenges as those seen in 1960s playwrights. In Japanese television dramas, for example, a particular model of womanhood portrays women as having to make certain sacrifices to achieve independence (Cho et al., 2015). The emergence of *josei* drama, a genre aimed at women, exemplifies a new frontier in women's on-screen representation. However, it often fails to respect the boundary between a professional woman's public and private life, attributing the romantic failure to women's ambitious in the workplace (Cho et al., 2015). This representation mirrors the everyday dilemma faced by women in Japan who must choose between their career and their family. Japanese women are not the only group that needs to confront this situation; this dichotomous choice between family and workplace is a global issue, particularly in Asian countries like Korea, China, and Japan. In Korea, for example, women's economic activity rate drops from 55.5 percent to 27.7 percent after marriage, and more than half of women exit the labor market after getting married (Kim, 2005). *FLW* dramatizes this social issue by putting its female characters in dilemma of dealing with implicit workplace discrimination and taking on the role of being a wife and a mother to balance family dynamics. However, *FLW* does not merely align with the stereotypical depictions of working women, making it worth examining how the representations of female characters subvert the conventional standards.

The concept of soft masculinity, as a social construct that challenges dominant masculine ideologies, reflects shifting gender roles and serves as a subtle form of rebellion among younger Koreans (Murell, 2019). Closely tied to the rise of the new middle class and the changing role of women, soft masculinity emerges as both a product of and response to evolving family structures and gender norms in Korea (Jung, 2011). Unlike hegemonic masculinity often associated with patriarchy, soft masculinity—blending traditional Korean ideals, Japan's “pretty boy” image, and global metrosexuality—offers a more emotionally expressive, relational model of manhood (Ainslie, 2017; Jung, 2011). As portrayed in *Winter Sonata* (2002), this form emphasizes tenderness, purity, and politeness, extending beyond physical appearance. In *FLW*, male leads Shi-woo and Gi-jun similarly embody these traits through their caring behavior toward women, illustrating that softness does not equate to weakness. The following section applies these theoretical foundations to analyze key incidents in *FLW*.

“No Way of Knowing Until You Confront”

The essence of effective communication depends on the cultivation of mutual respect among communicators transcending defined physical attributes and societal norms. Historically, the public sphere was intricately tied to the ruler during the medieval period (Habermas, 1974). However, as structures of power disintegrated, the “bourgeois public sphere” emerged. This

transformation involved private individuals coming together in a public body to engage in rational critical discourse about matters of public interests (Habermas, 1974). This dissolution of boundaries between private and public corresponds with advocating for the equal relationship between males and females. Therefore, in the ideal public sphere serves crucial functions by providing an open and inclusive arena for debate, a particular democratic communication style that has been supported by Habermas (1974). In this rational force of argument, there are four associated features:

- (i) that nobody who could make a relevant contribution may be excluded; (ii) that all participants are granted an equal opportunity to make contributions; (iii) that the participants must mean what they say; and (iv) that communication must be freed from external and internal coercion so that the “yes” or “no” stances that participants adopt on criticizable validity claims are motivated solely by the rational force of the better reasons. (Habermas, 1998)

This idealized communication and its associated practices are showcased in *FLW* but are confined to the characters’ professional lives. The program demonstrates that the commitment seen in *FLW*, which resonates with the core value of KMA in safeguarding public safety and well-being, can only be realized through the establishment of a democratic atmosphere among characters during their interactions and discussion in workplace.

In the first episode, for instance, following an unsuccessful hail prediction, a heightened concern permeates the atmosphere as Shi-woo raised the question of a potential storm. In the debate between Dong-han, the director in the Gangwon Office, and Shi-woo, the weather reporter at the Metro Office, everyone is encouraged to contribute sound reasoning before reaching a final decision. In the face of compelling arguments on both sides portrayed through the spilt screen in equal division, Hu-kyung chooses to follow the concrete data, deciding against issuing a storm advisory.

Figure 1

Episode 1, Titled “Signal”, Captures the Moment Where Hu-Kyung Has the Decision-Making Power, Debating Between Two Contrasting Arguments



However, she emphasizes the need to keep monitoring the elusive data to make the correct decision. Notably, even as Shi-woo collaborates with Seok-ho, Hu-kyung’s coworker in a relatively managerial position, to send the storm advisory without permission, this incident demonstrates the ideal public sphere for debate and also highlights the conservative, rational, and data-driven leadership style of Hu-kyung.

Despite the normative perception of government work as hierarchical and characterized by top-down management, *FLW* presents a working environment with open and efficient communicational practices. Characters engage in group discussions, share crucial weather-related information, and collectively make decisions. However, a discernable contrast emerges in their personal lives, marked by conflicts, infidelity, secrecy, misunderstandings, and disagreements. This discrepancy also represents the characters' shift from rationality in their professional endeavors to irrationality in their personal lives.

Unpredictable Weather and Dramatic Love

Melodrama relies on dramatic twists—coincidences, revelations, and last-minute rescues—to sustain emotional intensity (Neale, 1986). *FLW* incorporates these elements through key turning points such as the initial cheating incident, Hu-kyung's secret cohabitation, and multiple relationship crises. Episode titles, framed as weather puns, thematically link personal turmoil to workplace dynamics, blurring boundaries between public and private life. This narrative structure both preserves melodrama's unpredictability and challenges traditional dichotomies.

The series opens with Hu-kyung preparing for her wedding while Gi-jun remains emotionally absent, reinforcing gendered expectations that women manage private matters. Her mother's criticism of Gi-jun's passivity reveals dissatisfaction with Hu-kyung's independence, highlighting societal pressure to conform to traditional marital roles. Their engagement, shaped by miscommunication and external coercion, foreshadows relational breakdown and family conflict. Gi-jun's emotional withholding contrasts with idealized open communication, setting the stage for a generational clash over marriage, work, and identity.

Figure 2

Episode 1, Title "Signal", Depicts the Scene Where Hu-Kyung and Her Families Are in the Wedding Shop



Note. Hu-kyung is interrupted and apparently dissatisfied by her mother's complaints toward Gi-jun.

In her formal attire, Hu-kyung embodies the image of a strong, self-actualized woman who is decisive, independent, and logical. When consulted by a coworker about reporting a potential hailstorm, she argues against it using concrete data. However, the juxtaposition of this rational decision-making with scenes of her preparing for her wedding and caring for her unwell fiancé subtly implies that the storm's misprediction is unfairly blamed on her because she is a working woman.

The episode title “Signal” carries dual meaning: the missed meteorological signal and the overlooked signs of infidelity in Hu-kyung’s personal life. Director Ko, head of the Seoul forecast office, fosters open dialogue and collective reasoning—aligning with Habermas’s model of ideal communication. Recognizing Hu-kyung’s potential, he appoints her as team leader after the previous director’s heart attack. Her eventual decision, informed by both rational data and a weather reporter’s intuitive testimony, reflects a communicative environment where reason and expertise are equally valued.

Figure 3

Episode 1, Titled “Signal”, Captures the Moment Where Forecasting Teams Engage in Group Meeting, Deliberating on Whether to Issue a Rainstorm Advisory



In this decisive moment, the screen composition foreshadows Hu-kyung’s leadership style. Director Ko is positioned in the center, facing the screen divided into three parts: the central discussion area, the left side featuring rational arguments supported by Dong-han, and the right side showcasing intuitive reasoning led by Shi-woo. Hu-kyung is seated directly facing the left part of the screen, emphasizing her innate characteristic as a rational working woman. As expected, she chooses to follow the rigid formula again, making the decision based on numbers and refusing to issue a rainstorm alarm.

Confronted with harsh rejection, Shi-woo turns to Seok-ho, Hu-kyung’s coworker responsible for issuing weather alerts. By invoking the past failure to predict hail, Shi-woo persuades Seok-ho to override Hu-kyung’s decision and send the advisory—an act that challenges her authority and reflects the lack of respect from male colleagues. Shi-woo’s emotional response, marked by vulnerability and sensitivity, embodies traits of “soft” masculinity, contrasting with traditional ideals of male stoicism. His phone confrontation with Hu-kyung further reveals his disregard for her leadership, mocking her wedding preparations and implicitly reinforcing gender bias by framing personal commitments as distractions from professional responsibilities. Yet despite his earlier defiance, Shi-woo later redeems himself by securing a forecaster position under Hu-kyung’s team at the headquarters.

Meanwhile, Hu-kyung returns home, exhausted, only to discover Gi-jun’s infidelity—explaining his distant behavior and wedding delays. The twist deepens when it’s revealed that he cheated with Yoo-jin, Shi-woo’s girlfriend, merging professional and personal betrayals. Yoo-jin’s intrusion and Shi-woo’s disrespectful remarks signal the collapse of boundaries between Hu-kyung’s work and domestic life, heightening the melodramatic tension. As these entangled characters now share a workplace, the stage is set for further emotional and relational upheaval.

This opening episode is rich in utilizing unexpected events to bring all the main characters together and sets the stage to blur the boundary between the private and the public in the beginning by showing the entanglements among characters. More importantly, as Hu-kyung's personal affairs are intruded upon, the distinction between workplace and domestic matters begins to erode, providing the space for the program to explore the interconnectedness between these two realms. As this show develops, it becomes clear that private matters can only be resolved by adopting the democratic communication styles through making the problems more visible and seeking the suggestions of others. The melodramatic elements further create a space for conflicts to emerge and evolve, encompassing communication problems, marriage issues, and gender stereotypes.

“Life is a Sequence of Unexpected Events”

The secret relationship between Hu-kyung and Shi-woo blurs the lines between personal and professional life, illustrated through discreet exchanges and hidden affections at work. Their need for secrecy, however, hampers open communication, making it difficult to share genuine feelings or concerns. This becomes evident when Shi-woo's father unexpectedly appears at their workplace seeking financial help, thrusting their private relationship into public view and straining their connection. Simultaneously, Hu-kyung faces mounting pressure from her mother, who is intent on arranging a marriage for her. These familial intrusions and contrasting backgrounds underscore the traditional societal expectations placed on the younger generation, casting their love as unattainable and steeped in hesitation – a hallmark of melodrama.

Yet melodrama thrives on unpredictable twists that continuously pull the couple back together. After learning that Dong-han has taken refuge at KMA to escape family conflict, Shi-woo follows suit, preserving his pride by avoiding Hu-kyung's offer to live with her. This leads to unintended consequences when a director criticizes Hu-kyung for mismanaging her team, as the night-duty room is now unavailable. The narrative lightens as Hu-kyung discovers Shi-woo and Dong-han sleeping in their cars, a moment made humorous by the ironic soundtrack and Shi-woo's earlier lie about housing. This convergence of events reflects melodrama's charm—where even conflict-laden situations offer moments of awkward intimacy and unexpected connection.

Figure 4

Episode 7, Titled “Ozen Warning”, Captures the Moment When Hu-Kyung Discovers Shi-Woo and Dong-Han at the Parking Lot



Note. The cinematography skillfully composes the shot, placing Dong-han in foreground with a subtle out-of-focus effect, while Shi-woo and Hu-kyung remain in the background, all within the same frame.

Dong-han reveals that Shi-woo had been living in his car after being evicted, highlighting his financial struggles. In response, Hu-kyung decisively invites them to live in her apartment, prioritizing efficiency and asserting her authority. This unexpected turn reflects the melodramatic tone of the series while also subverting traditional norms—portraying Hu-kyung as an independent woman who challenges expectations around gender and pre-marital cohabitation.

The mini climax of the program occurs when all central characters are gathered in the same moment with various intentions in Hu-kyung's apartment, effectively serving as a midpoint for the narrative. Feeling incredulous, Hu-kyung's inner thoughts were expressed through her voice-over, acknowledging the unpredictability of life with the phrase "life is a sequence of unexpected events".

Figure 5

Episode 7, Titled "Ozen Warning", Depicts the Mini Climax in Which All Main Characters Have Gathered in Front of Hu-Kyung's Apartment



Note. This scene symbolizes the intrusion into the private sphere, as evidenced by the casual outfits of most characters contrasted with the intruder, Gi-jun, who is in his formal attire. This again blurs the boundaries between home and work, highlighting the interconnectedness of their lives beyond the boundary of the office.

This serves as a self-reflexive recognition of the genre within this program. Viewers are supposed to believe a series of contrivances including how Gi-jun coincidentally ends up drunk on the very day Hu-kyung decides to invite both Shi-woo and Dong-han to live together. They are also expected to accept the unlikely scenario of Seok-ho, Hu-kyung's coworker, happens to be her downstairs neighbor. Additionally, the narrative unfolds the disbelieves as Gi-jun appears in front of HU-kyung's apartment just as Dong-han finishes grooming, Seok-ho returns the side dishes, and Shi-woo steps out of the elevator in the same tense and dramatic moment. Those convergence and the feeling of excessive coincides are exactly the characteristic traits that compose the soap opera. The intricate timing of these events also amplifies the melodramatic nature of the scene, emphasizing the unexpected twists and turns that characterize the lives of the characters in *FLW*.

Variation Zone: Grow Stronger or Fall Apart

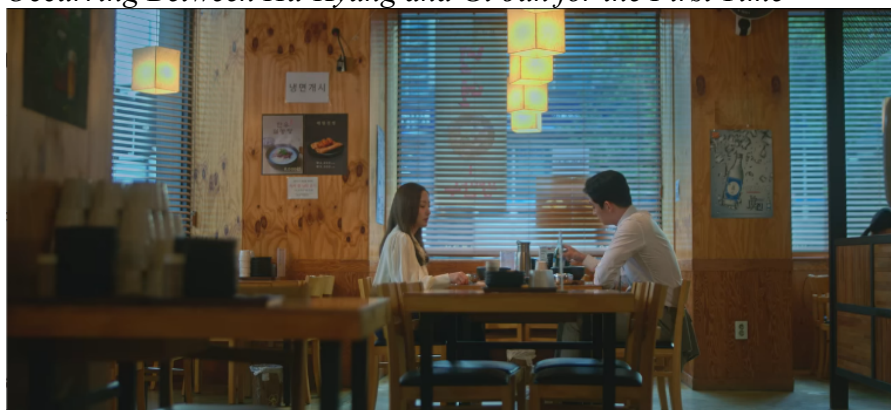
Before the final reunion and happy ending, a series of relationship crises heightens the melodramatic tension. When Hu-kyung assigns Shi-woo to the Jeju Typhoon Center to gain distance and reevaluate their relationship, an unexpected incident lands him in the hospital which was witnessed by Yoo-jin, his former lover, whose presence adds further misunderstanding. The situation escalates when Shi-woo's father storms into KMA, publicly

confronting Hu-kyung and exposing their relationship. His aggressive behavior, rooted in traditional masculinity, starkly contrasts with Hu-kyung's modern independence and symbolizes the ongoing clash between patriarchal dominance and female autonomy. Despite her professional status, Hu-kyung is silenced, revealing how traditional power still suppresses women's voices in moments of conflict.

Ironically, this confrontation becomes a catalyst for growth. Hu-kyung and Gi-jun, now distanced from their failed engagement, begin to connect honestly as friends. Their open dialogue reflects a core theme of *FLW*: resolving ideological conflict through transparency and mutual understanding. Gi-jun confronts his past failures, while Hu-kyung acknowledges her emotional blind spots. In doing so, they foster genuine communication—an overdue but meaningful shift in both their personal lives and evolving identities.

Figure 6

Episode 12, Titled "Variation Area", Reveals the Candid and Open Communication Occurring Between Hu-Kyung and Gi-Jun for the First Time



Reconciliation: Forming the Ideal Public Sphere

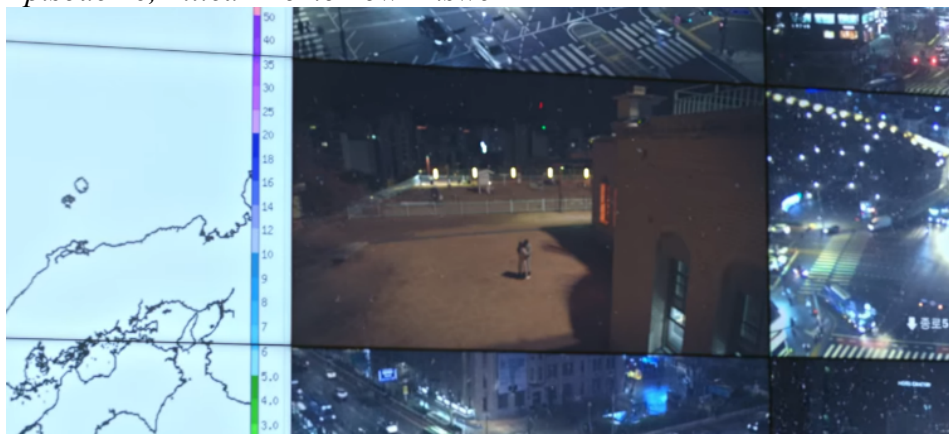
Ultimately, the program concludes with all couples overcoming their previous obstacles, leading to happy endings. The most significant resolution lies in the relationship between Shi-woo and Hu-kyung. In the final moments, they share a tacit understanding, waiting for each other at the same place while the snow falls, which is an implicit reflection of their successful professional work and the completion of their reunion in the private sphere. As they candidly confess their feelings and share a kiss, they also appear in the weather forecasting monitors, symbolizing again the changing era by blurring the conventional separate boundaries.

Figure 7

Episode 16, Titled “Tomorrow Answer”, Captures the Ultimate Reunion and Happy Ending Between Hu-Kyung and Shi-Woo Amidst a Snowfall, Which Implies the Successful Workplace Collaboration in Predicting the Snowy Weather

**Figure 8**

Episode 16, Titled “Tomorrow Answer”



Note: This scene is filmed from the monitor in the weather forecast station, which depicts the precise moment of their reunion, erasing the boundaries between one’s private and public lives.

The concluding scene, just before Hu-kyung and Shi-woo meet each other’s parent, is portrayed in slow motion. This cinematic choice emphasizes the achievement of their ideal environment, where forecasters, workers, and directors engage in meaningful discussions and debates to reach the common goal – providing the most accurate weather prediction. Hu-kyung, who initially started as the inexperienced youngest female leader, undergoes a transformative journey, culminating in her confident declaration, “I’ll tell you tomorrow’s forecast.” This symbolizes not only her ultimate maturity but also the resilience of women in the workplace, earning deserved respect from coworkers and fostering a content relationship.

Figure 9

Episode 16, Titled “Tomorrow’s Answer”, One of the Concluding Scenes Which Captures the Ultimate Maturity and Confidence of Hu-Kyung



Note. This is the direct address where Hu-kyung looks directly into the camera, speaking not just to herself, but to viewers across the nation as an empowered woman. “Tomorrow’s forecast” extends beyond weather predictions in this program; instead, it symbolizes the future empowerment and growing independence of women.

Conclusion

In conclusion, *FLW* challenges traditional gender roles in Korean society and redefines melodrama by blending workplace dynamics with intimate personal narratives. Hu-kyung’s transformation exemplifies the rise of strong, self-actualized women, echoing Megan Terry’s concept of female empowerment. At the same time, the show explores contradictions in family, marriage, and gender expectations, portraying characters who defy societal norms. Its emphasis on ethical communication and information transparency reflects the blurring of public and private spheres in today’s information society, suggesting that open dialogue is key to resolving personal conflicts. Marriage remains a central theme, offering a lens into evolving expectations in Korean culture. The contrast between Shi-woo’s soft masculinity and Hu-kyung’s assertiveness subverts traditional gender dynamics, while the failure and later reconciliation of Gi-jun and Yoo-jin highlight the growing value of equity in relationships. Rather than reducing characters to binaries – rational vs. emotional or strong vs. weak – *FLW* follows their journeys as they seek balance and understanding in complex interpersonal contexts.

By intertwining personal struggles with professional growth, the show demonstrates that resolving private conflicts often depends on stability in public roles. Characters like Donghan and Hu-kyung find resolution through open communication, mirroring the inclusive and deliberative spirit of their workplace. In this way, *FLW* constructs a “public sphere” within personal lives, where candid dialogue becomes a tool for emotional reconciliation. Ultimately, *FLW* contributes meaningfully to contemporary discourse on gender, relationships, and social change in South Korea, offering a nuanced and progressive representation of women and modern life on Korean television.

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