

Celebrity Cinema and Hallyu 2.0

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Abstract

Through their realist cinematic portrayals of the traumatic evolution of Korean socio-political landscapes, Korean directors such as Im Kwon-Taek are synonymous with Korean national Cinema. These directors have raised the country's cultural profile internationally through the film festival circuit. However, with the phenomenal global reach of the "Korean Wave" or Hallyu, film is no longer a singular projection of the image of South Korea. Today, television dramas have overtaken films, flooding television and small mobile screens with attractive faces of Korean celebrities. While several studies have made references to key Korean celebrities, namely Lee Young Ae, Rain and Gianna Jun, there have been fewer efforts to trace these celebrities' trajectories within films and other platforms. This paper will explore how cinema within the Korean Wave phenomenon contributes to the ecology of the Korean Wave and the roles these celebrities play within this eco system.

Keywords: Korean Wave, Hallyu, Korean Cinema, Celebrities, Gianna Jun, Lee Young Ae, Rain, Korean Drama

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Introduction

Through their realist cinematic portrayals of the traumatic evolution of Korean socio-political landscapes, the names of Im Kwon-Taek, Lee Chang Dong and Park Chan-Wook may be synonymous with Korean national Cinema. Featured commonly in the circuits of prestigious international film festivals, reviews and scholarly commentaries, these filmmakers have raised the profile of South Korea's film culture in the global arena significantly. Predominately male with personal experiences with the decades of military dictatorship, the works of these directors are distinguished by their critical social commentaries and brutal screen portrayals of their country. With the ascent and globalization of the Korean media industries following the democratization of the republic from the 1990s, a contrasting cinema culture emerged. Celebrity-centered, metrosexual, multimedia and transnational, these personalities command audiences across platforms of television and cinema, popular music and commercials. Coming from soap operas and romantic comedies as well as from the recording studios, they personify the modern affective and individualized affective desires for, youthful beauty, romance, urbane lifestyles and success.

Making its presence in the circuits of international film festivals, Korean cinema had probably been one medium that has provided a window for the world to look into the society and culture of the republic after the Korean War. With the phenomenal regional and global projection of South Korean popular entertainment beginning from the late 90s in what is termed as "Korean Wave" or *Hallyu*, film alone no longer defined the image of the country. Overshadowing the occasional formal screenings of films in prestigious international festivals, popular music and television dramas and variety programmes flooded both small screens of television sets and micro-screens of smartphones that have made *Hallyu* experience significantly more ubiquitous. Responding to these trends, South Korean artistes have moved between various media platforms of film, popular music and television dramas. With case studies on several artistes like that of Rain, Jun Ji Hyun (Gianna Jun) and Lee Young Ae, this chapter seeks to position the place of the big screen of cinema within the media ecologies of the Korean Wave. While much references have been made on these Hallyu celebrities, there has been less efforts at the scholarly front to trace their trajectories within both the cinescapes in relationship to the broader popular media platform where their presence are being felt more extensively. Rather than an elevated aesthetic-cultural status, the authors argue of a need to measure the position of Korean cinema as a subset of the broader popular cultural ecology where these stated celebrities are integral.

Hot & Cool Media, Dominant & Popular Aesthetics

Of the modern mechanical platforms of popular media of the 20th century, film has often been accorded a more socially privileged and aesthetically elevated status over that of the counterparts of the era of television and radio. Describing film as a "form of syntax without statement" that requiring a "high level of literacy" Marshall McLuhan (1964: 311) distinguishes the big screen as a "high definition" or "hot" medium that requires a learned structured sensory experience of its sequential logic. Television and radio on the other hand, are being considered as part of the low information, "low definition" "cool" medium that requires significant more audience participation in abstracting and deciphering the message flows (Ibid: 25). Layering the sensory media experience with a sociological undercurrent context has been Pierre Bourdieu's framing of appropriating films as part of the larger identification and

acquisition of cultural capital. For him “Popular Aesthetics” of celebrity-led, narrative structures that characterized Hollywood blockbusters are mainly consumed by the working classes. This falls in contrast to the bourgeois “Dominant Aesthetics” of director-defined, experimental and subversive nature of independent cinema that are considered to be more autonomous from political and commercial pressures that shaped productions of more heteronomous nature (Hesmondhalgh, 2006). Film cultures here have therefore developed an established curatorial canon in the institutionalization and archiving of productions as well as a framework for evaluating aesthetic and visual styles (Gerathy, 2003: 30). In turn, this framework has been instrumental in stratifying the field of media productions between the formal aesthetics of art from the commercial realm of entertainment.

Regionalization may not be new for Korean cinema since the participation of its films in the Asian Film Festival in the 1960s centering in non-Communist Asian countries during the Cold War (Lee, 2012). However, its projection intensified significantly from the late 1990s along with the trends of the Korean Wave, or Hallyu that has been characterized by the global popularity of the republic’s entertainment media. Even as the limelight on the director-auteurs of independent cinema brightened, unease have arisen on the marginalization of the autonomous nature of Korean Cinema as filmmakers and artistes became engaged with the heteronomous commercial templates of commercial cookie-cutter blockbuster genres. The local and national it seems, have to be subordinated and truncated for the wider regional and international audiences under such cinematic hybridization and creative cluster evolution that converges film and television (Shin, 2005; Berg, 2014). As the popular rather than critical, the glamorous, the beautiful and the melodious celebrities of Hallyu have superseded the national avant-garde of Korean independent cinema in the cultural representation of the nation.

With negative connotations, contemporary celebrity cultures are regarded as products of the culture industry’s fabrication of assembly-lines of interchangeable stars lacking in both individual authenticity and authority and threatening the development of general cultural literacies (Reiber & Kelly, 2013, p.109-112; Furedi 2010: 493). What is however important here is the need to develop new literacies in mapping Korean Cinema along the discourses of trans-nationality that is increasingly associated with the context of films along the contours of mainstream popular media. A cue can be taken from the global and regional identification of Hong Kong cinema along that of both the celebrities Jackie Chan, Chow Yun-Fatt as well as celebrity auteur-directors like Wong Kar Wai and John Woo (Promkhuntong, 2014). Coming from the politically ambiguous at the final decades of transitions from the British colonial Treaty Port to Mainland China, it was not possible to box Hong Kong productions under the neat categories of the discourses of identity/difference that characterizes National Cinema. Projecting themselves across multiple platforms from commercials to music and television and film, Hong Kong artistes are often double or even triple Pan-Asian transnational personalities, which means that productions are commonly identified along celebrities rather than directors as authors (Weiss 2013: 221-22). Aside from the scrutiny of the text, such would involve tracking the movement of the celebrity-artiste along his/her almost parallel participation in regional and Hollywood film circuits and that of television dramas and popular music.

Citing both historical evidence of influences of directors in addition to critiquing rigid ideological nationalist defensiveness, scholars have urged to transcend the binaries of national and transnational cinema between the ethnocentric and multi-centric (Lee, 2012; Yeh & Davis, 2008). However, there seems to be only a grudging recognition for the trans-media celebrity-artiste moving between commercial blockbusters, television dramas, pop music and even independent films as part of the enlargement of national cinema in Korea. In looking at the changing representation of Korean femininity of the fictionalized character Hwang Jiye across not just different periods, but in films, commercial movies and television drama serials, Hana Lee sees the evidence of the considerations of producers for particularly international audiences of the Korean Wave (2009; 60). Nonetheless, her observation of the emphasis on the saturated visuals and exotic ceremonies of costume dramas to fit the curiosity of the non-Korean audiences (ibid, 61) does not seem to give a more complex ecology of the nature of the affective transnational media context. Distinguished from the critical national cinema (text) as seen in the Table 1, the subsequent sections would draw out the contrasts of the context-based celebrity based transnational Korean cinema.

Critical National Cinema (Text)	Affective Transnational Media (Context)
Auteur-Director	Celebrity Hallyu Star
Folk/Rural (Minjok)	Metrosexual/Urbane
Traditional	(Hollywood) Oriental
Sexual	Romance
Cinema Verite	Blockbuster
Critique	Resolution
Film Festival	Box office
Audience	Fandom
Formality	Familiarity
Reviews	Ratings

Table 1: Critical National Cinema and Affective Transnational Media

A Hallyu celebrity referenced Korean cinematic culture would be one where unlike that of the auteur-director, the big screen is not central to that of the artiste whose prior popularity may have been based from television serials and music videos. Before starring as the protagonist in Park Chan-Wook's art-house film, *Sympathy for Lady Vengeance* in 2005, Lee Young Ae had already participated in close to twenty television dramas and several films. Her lead role in playing the first female court physician who rose from a humble background in the MBS historical drama *Dae Jang Geum (Jewel in the Palace)*, and a United Nations military officer in *JSA* (2000) brought her to celebrity status as a Hallyu star. Like Lee, Jun Ji Hyun's *My Sassy Girl* (2001), patterned along the genres of feisty urban women in romantic comedies became associated with one of the first regional breakthroughs of commercial Korean Cinema. As for the case of Rain, starting off as a singer in a boy band called Fancub, he gained his regional reputation through the platforms of television dramas in *Full House* (2003) as well as the earlier wave of K-pop singers. Rain's musical career started out in 1998 before his acting career took off in 2003 and 2004 after winning the KBS Best Actor Award for his role in *Sang Doo! Let's Go to School* (2003) and *Full House* (2003). He then gained international recognition at the Berlinale when *I'm*

a *Cyborg, But That's OK* (2006) won the Alfred Bauer Prize in 2006. The peak of his acting career coincided with the start of Hallyu in the early 2000s and his collaboration with Park Chan-Wook also aided in Rain's launch to international fame as an actor, especially after Park's success with *JSA: Joint Security Area* (2000), the highest grossing film in Korean film history both nationwide and in Seoul (Parquet, 2001). Table 2 shows the continuous participation of Hallyu celebrities in the film industry and their influence over productions that are filmed by auteur-directors like Park Chan Wook.

	Year	Film Title	Director	Total Admissions (Nationwide)
Lee Young-Ae	2000	공동경비구역 JSA (JSA: Joint Security Area)	Park Chan-Wook	5,800,000
	2005	친절한 금자씨 (Sympathy for Lady Vengeance)	Park Chan-Wook	3,650,000
Rain (Jung Ji-Hoon)	2006	싸이보그지만 괜찮아 (I'm a Cyborg, But That's OK)	Park Chan-Wook	780,000
Gianna Jun (Jun Ji-Hyun)	2001	엽기적인 그녀 (My Sassy Girl)	Kwak Jae-Yong	4,852,845
	2012	도둑들 (The Thieves)	Choi Dong-Hoon	12,983,341
	2013	베를린 (The Berlin File)	Ryu Seung-Wan	7,166,199

Table 2: Lee Young Ae, Rain, Jun Ji Hyun's Blockbusters (Adapted from IMDB and Koreanfilm.org)

In terms of cinematic geo-cultural treatments, the auteur-directors are associated with evoking the concepts of the "Minjok" or folk, whose sense of belonging are linked to the agrarian social fabric where the change and continuity of identities are being reflected. Against the vast scenic landscapes in these productions are often communities and peoples displaying distinctive local customs and cultures against the pressures brought about by modernity. Films set in the historical pasts would often deal with the tragedy of history of the nation through foreign hegemony of the Chinese and Japanese.

In contrast, the *Hallyu* celebrity based cinema productions are given more culturally mobile urbane and metrosexual portrayals that seem comfortable in any futuristic city. Detached from the weight of the past tied to the land, the *Hallyu* celebrity's image is framed along the idealized consumer comfortable with his/her own luxurious surroundings and possessions. The film that typified the urban-mobility of the celebrity in the more dramatic manner has perhaps been the role of Rain as the fighter pilot who swerves the advanced jet fighter smoothly between the towering skyscrapers and open plazas in the city of Seoul in *Return to Base* (2012). Resembling

the style of Hollywood celebrity movie, *Top Gun (1983)*, starred by a younger Tom Cruise, *Return to Base* became a showcase for Rain in tailored green military jumpsuits. Contextually, observers of the *Hallyu* scene would understand immediately the reference of this film with Rain’s enrollment into military service during this period. Contrary to the critique of its pathological aspects in the country’s independent films, *Return to Base* becomes an assertion and valorization of South Korea’s military culture through its reduction to action-movies by *Hallyu* celebrities like Rain.

Just as auteur-directors of national cinema showcase the distinctive agrarian ceremonies and traditions as well as the more tragic historical turning points of the republic’s dynastic pasts, *Hallyu* based celebrities be framed within the context of “oriental splendor”. At the level of the regional audiences familiar with television dramas on Chinese court politics, historical dramas like *Dae Jang Geum* would place emphasis on palace intrigues, spectacular royal assemblies as well as specific court practices. In the case of *Dae Jang Geum*, through Lee Young Ae, the performative aspects of court culinary cuisines and medicines were being showcased. For the Hollywood audience with significantly much less knowledge and traditions in Chosen dynastic cultures, the stereotypical images of the oriental gets invoked as in the case of Jun Ji-Hyun being dressed in a Japanese schoolgirl uniform wielding a samurai sword and Rain predictable Ninja character in *Ninja Assassin (2009)*. For the Asian audiences, Korean-ness is being spectacularized, but for the Western (international), it remains a replica of a vestige of the Hollywood characterization of Japan in the 1980s.

	Year	Film Title	Director	Countries involved in Production
Rain (Jung Ji-Hoon)	2008	Speed Racer	The Wachowski Brothers	USA/ Hollywood
	2009	Ninja Assassin	James McTeige	USA/ Hollywood
Gianna Jun (Jun Ji-Hyun)	2009	Blood: Last Vampire	Chris Nahon	France, Hong Kong, United Kingdom, Argentina
	2011	Snow Flower and the Secret Fan	Wayne Wang	China, USA (Hollywood)

Table 3: Transnational Productions Involving South Korea (Adapted from IMDB)

Differentiating the styles between critical national and the affective transnational are the visual and performative portrayals that comes in terms of the cinematic treatment of the subjects and narratives. A key element in the distinction comes from the emphasis on the paramount affective trait of romance in the often the process courtships leading to the formation of heterosexual bonds and relationships between protagonists. Be it the music videos of Rain, subtle and restraint but enduring affections in historical television dramas in Jun-Ji Hyun’s *Il Mare (2001)* and Lee Young Ae’s *Dae Jang Geum (2003)* or sparks generated in themes of opposite attract

in accidental urban encounters from quarrelling couples in *My Sassy Girl* (2001), *Full House* (2003) and *My Friend from the Stars* (2013), the themes of love runs central.

	Year	K-drama Title	Nationwide Average Viewership Rating (TNmS Korea)
Lee Young-Ae	2003-2004	대장금 (Jewel in the Palace)	57.8%
Gianna Jun	2013-2014	별에서 온 그대 (My Love from the Star)	28.1%
Rain (Jung Ji-Hoon)	2003	상두야, 학교가자! (Sang Doo! Let's Go to School!)	38.4%
	2004	풀하우스 (Full House)	42.0%
	2005	이 죽일 놈의 사랑 (A Love to Kill)	16.4%
	2010	도망자 플랜 (The Fugitive: Plan B)	21.7%
	2014	내겐 너무 사랑스러운 그녀 (My Lovely Girl)	8.2%

Table 4: Television Ratings for Rain, Lee and Jun (Adapted from TnMS Korea)

Based on Table 4, a trend can be observed amongst these stars. Viewership ratings peaked during the start of Hallyu 1.0, with the exception of Gianna Jun in *My Love from the Star* (2013-14) and the drama being her first drama after the spark of Hallyu in 2003. Rain's career followed this trend closely, with dramas during Hallyu 1.0 consistently crossing the 25% positively. However, a drastic drop in viewership ratings between his dramas of 2010 and 2014 were potentially due to his 2-year break from the scene to enlist in the military for 21 months from 2011 to 2013. With the heavy emphasis on romantic comedies and relatively sanitized action genres on the small screens that are widely popular in the region, the televisual and filmic roles become increasingly inseparable for these Hallyu celebrities.

Limited to passionate kisses and hugs instead of the more graphic and explicit sexual encounters typical in the productions of auteur-directors, the sexually filtered theme of romance becomes instrumental in overcoming potential moral taboos in reaching to the broadest regional audiences from diverse social backgrounds. The use of such innocent encounters had been proven to be successful with the example of Kwak Jae-Yong's comic romance, *My Sassy Girl* (2001). The film is a lighthearted romantic comedy that plays heavily on the comedic skewering of gender stereotypes and their traditional roles in society. It came across as a modern take on the traditional male and female gender roles in the genre. The film was one of the highest grossing in Seoul alone on its opening weekend, and spent two weeks at the top of the Hong Kong box office in 2002. It also catapulted Jun Ji-Hyun (Gianna Jun) from an unknown young Korean actress into one of the region's most recognizable stars from the country

(Parquet, 2004). Hence, it can be said that the explicit treatment of sexuality in national cinema underlines the problematization of social and cultural relations and often the otherwise undercurrent violence, domestic and public suffered by the social underbelly. In this respect, unlike the movement towards closure and equilibrium in the affective transnational cinema, national cinema often involves a larger social critique of the hegemonic hierarchies and the accompanying desire to provide a voice for the marginalized and forgotten.

In this respect, in the roles of social commentary, the auteur-director's emphasis would be that of legitimizing Korean films through more informed audiences within the contexts of film festivals. However, the transnational *Hallyu* celebrities would have their emphasis placed on creating and sustaining fandoms that would be both lucrative in box office tickets as well as sustaining their screen and off-screen presence. For Jun, Rain and Lee, the familiarity of their images and ratings across the platforms of television, music and cinema would be as important of the broadsheet and broadcast media reviews for the productions of the country's auteur directors.

Hallyu Cinema as Box Office and Social Media

Differing from the festival screenings and the prestigious awards of the auteur-directors, the presence of the stated Hallyu celebrities are significantly more ubiquitous in both the fashion products on the streetscapes as well as the mediascapes. Unlike the critical reviews in the prestigious film journals and internationally reputable (Western) newspapers of the auteur-directors, the pulse of the Hallyu celebrities can be measured in terms of their ratings, not only on the box-office in the various commercial films across different media platforms of the television, and more recently, that of the social media.

Referring to Table 5, Korean films across various genres (comedy, action, drama, contemporary history etc.) led the market in 2013. A positive trend was noted between 2012 and 2013; seven out of the top ten box office releases in 2012 were Korean films, and in 2013, nine out of ten of the top ten box office releases were Korean films. This dramatic rise of Korean films came from a deliberate move towards "big-budget, high-risk/high-reward business" (Berg, 2014), especially since the success of *Snowpiercer*; achieving critical acclaim across USA and the UK by influential critics and publications (A.O. Scott of The New York Times, Andrew Pulver of The Guardian) and Korea. Such recognition created by the *Hallyu* has made many Korean filmmakers famous around Asia and the world, helping to increase cultural exports and the recognition of talent available in the Korean film market.

Rank	Title	Origin	Screens Nationwide	Revenue Nationwide	Admissions Nationwide
1	Miracle in Cell No. 7	Korea	787	91,429,295,670	12,810,776
2	Snowpiercer	Korea	1,128	66,951,128,500	9,341,747
3	The Face Reader	Korea	1,190	66,004,775,500	9,134,463
4	Iron Man 3	USA	1,381	70,806,191,000	9,001,309
5	The Berlin File	Korea	894	52,354,771,637	7,166,177
6	Secretly Greatly	Korea	1,341	48,735,214,913	6,963,821
7	The Attorney	Korea	923	40,952,697,500	5,686,919
8	Hide and Seek	Korea	779	39,602,987,500	5,604,104
9	The Terror, LIVE	Korea	743	39,834,696,881	5,579,125
10	Cold Eyes	Korea	949	39,371,354,179	5,506,770

Table 5: Box Office Numbers for the Top 10 Films in South Korea (2013)

In Table 5, not only have Korean films occupied neck-to-neck positions with audience attendance and revenue sales with that of global Hollywood. Several of these films have also included the Berlin File that includes Jun as one of the lead cast. Set in Seoul, Macau and Berlin, the spy thriller is presented within the Hollywood blockbuster format that entails the highly stylized gun ballets, acrobatically choreographed fistfights within the iconic landmarks of three cities. Although she is cast as a translator at the North Korean Embassy in Germany, like her previous roles, Jun is seen as the urbane, agile woman who fuses action and romance together seamlessly across different countries. Increasingly, such genres, personified by the images of Jun, are becoming part of not just the efforts by the Korean film industry to appeal to a regional audience as part of its “Kor-Asian” strategies (Lee 2012). It signifies a more ambitious attempts at a broader international stage in which the global Korean, like that of Jun is placed within.

The successes can be noted to be driven by the force of Hallyu through films and dramas (Shin, 2005) and now, driven by social media, forums and the Internet (Jin & Kyong, 2014) that have not just broadcasted the content of the productions, but has also extended the shelf lives of the older productions associated with the Hallyu stars as reflected in the social media fan sites in Table 6 of what would have been more dated productions.

Name of Celebrity	Social Media Platform	Page Title	No. of Subscribers/ Likes
Lee Young Ae	Facebook	Lee Young-Ae (Fan Account)	28, 226 Likes
		Lee Young Ae (Topic Page)	32, 025 Likes
		Jewel in the Palace	192, 795 Likes
		Sympathy for Lady Vengeance (Topic Page)	44, 550 Likes
	Twitter Fan Account	@leeyoungae1971	53 Followers
Gianna Jun	Facebook	Jeon Ji-Hyun (Fan Account)	20, 749 Likes
		Windstruck (Topic Page)	199, 124 Likes
		Il Mare (Topic Page)	23, 412 Likes
		Daisy (Topic Page)	49, 074 Likes
		My Sassy Girl (Topic Page)	557, 853 Likes
		Wang Jhouse- FC Vietnam	6023 Subscribers
	Twitter Hashtags	#giannajun	Fan accounts and tweets mainly from The Philippines
		#mylovefromthe star	Fan accounts and tweets mainly from The Philippines
	Youtube	Wang Jhouse- FC Vietnam	419, 667 Viewers
Jung Ji-Hoon (Rain)	Facebook	Jung Ji-Hoon (Rain) Kpop	2864 Likes
	Twitter	@29rain	361,000 Followers
	Instagram	@rain_oppa	230,000 Followers

Table 6: Hallyu Celebrities and Social Media Platforms

Compared to younger K-pop groups whose latest music videos usually hit an average of a million views on Youtube within a day of the official releases, the social media mentions of the three stated celebrities are significantly modest. And, unlike their younger counterparts, they do not need to depend on constant and carefully manicured postings and images of their daily lives and sentiments in order to secure their presence in the media limelight. Through the platforms of the social media, fans worldwide and regionally to perpetuate their sentiments on their favourite idols. After an episode of My Love from the Star in 2014, netizens took interest in Jun Ji-Hyun's rumoured Yves Saint Laurent (YSL) lipstick shade worn during that episode. Forums with a prominent membership-base in Asia (eg: Soompi, Crunchyroll, Allkpop) took to social media and the Internet to discuss and purchase the lipstick. It was reported that the shade of lipstick was sold out at YSL counters worldwide, and fans took to online auction sites to try to obtain it. In 2015, an online US magazine, Refinery29, noted Jun's popularity and named her the It-Girl of South Korea.

In addition, Jun became the first Asian model to be featured by Gucci in their marketing campaign. Japanese apparel brand Uniqlo also picked Jun to be their model for the 2015 campaign. No longer is she just defined by cinema alone, but a plethora of media and marketing platforms that have been further projected in the era of the social media. Way after the last screenings on the big screens, snippets of their films continue to be reproduced in Youtube channels and contents and images discussed in

Facebook fan pages. Effectively, for Jun, Rain and Lee, coming from an earlier pre-social media generation, their digital presence has been built upon their prior success in the big and small screens instead of the micro-media of Facebook and Twitter.

Conclusion

The blockbuster-ization of Korean national cinema and the corresponding ascend of the first generation of cross-platform Hallyu stars like Rain, Lee Yong Ae and Gianna Jun have reflected significant cultural reconfigurations. It was in the last two decades that both the South Korean auteur-director as well as the Hallyu celebrities have been springboard onto the world-stage as international festivals and fans acknowledge their presences. As their limelight brightens, the contrasting trajectories of both groups in both the elite and popular cultural realms become more apparent. Operating within the contexts of the neo-liberal cultural economy, Korean cinema has been observed to have filtered the organic and experiment narratives for not just the formulae commercial productions, but cine fetishes in world cinema circuits.

Within such circuits, this paper used the more enduring Hallyu celebrities to trace the kinds of narratives, movements and positionings in not just the area of film and cinema. Differing from the focus on the common references of the auteur-director, the scrutiny of the Hallyu celebrities allows for a more diffused and fluid trans-media interpretation of Korean cinema as not just a national project, but a transnational negotiation. Moving between commercial and art house, between the big and small screens, with their personas disseminating into merchandising and the social media, the images of Hallyu celebrities are usually fashioned not only along metrosexual urbaneness. Playing in genres of memorable historical television dramas like *Dae Jang Geum* for Lee Yong Ae, fast paced action dramas as well as romantic comedies for the cases of Rain and Jun, the Hallyu celebrities occupy more culturally malleable and transitory positionalities than their auteur-director counterparts. Not only are their participation considered to be transnational either in terms of projects with Hollywood and the region. With box office sales and admission figures, television ratings and social media indicators, the cultural influences of these Hallyu celebrities operates within not a cinema space, but a circulatory trans-media ecology.

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