

Imaginaries of the Asian Modern

*Text & Context at the
Juncture of Nation and Region*

by

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ABSTRACT

In an age of globalization, texts increasingly migrate not only out of their native medium, but their native countries as well. Within the East Asian region, a booming television program trade circulates television texts, both as programs and as formats for re-making within the native culture industry. In this paper, I examine the program *Hana Yori Dango*, a Japanese *manga* turned television program that has been produced in Taiwan, Japan, and recently Korea. In particular, the Korean adaptation called *Boys over Flowers*, which simultaneously caters to a national and export market, exists in cultural and historical tension with the originating authority of the Japanese version. Texts then, in this process of industrial adaptation and cultural indigenization, may be understood as contact zones where asymmetries of historical power battle. Examining the mismatch of Korean form and Japanese narrative in this television melodrama, the narrative traversal of modern spaces, and the reparative capacity of nostalgia in fiction, I expose a contested process of adaptation that defies the easy descriptor of “hybridity.” Reading the text historically and comparatively, I locate not only the cultural specificities and anxieties that mark this program as Korean, but also the phantom of a common, regional imaginary of the Asian modern.

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0 Introduction

Locating Text & Context

When media scholars study the movement of transnational television across the globe, the subject of their concern often lies with the export of American or Western content abroad and the attendant specter of cultural homogenization or outright imperialization. (Bielby 2008; Nederveen Pieterse 2004; Parks and Kumar 2003; Straubhaar and Duarte 2005) Global flows, however, do not just proceed from America to "the rest," but in all different directions. Western scholars have only just begun to examine the vibrant channels of media exchange around the world and to understand their implications. (Desai 2004; Global Bollywood 2008; Global Bollywood: Travels of Hindi Song and Dance 2008; Thomas 2005) In particular, as both a fan, consumer, and scholar of transnational television, I focus on the flow of programmatic adaptation within the East Asian region. When, where, and why transnational texts are (re)produced intrigues me, especially against the context of national regulation and program trade. For this thesis, I focus on the Korean adaptation of an internationally popular Japanese *manga* series *Hana Yori Dango*, called *Boys Over Flowers*. Considering the history of colonization and suppression between Japan and Korea, any adaptation that occurs between the two cultural contexts must be examined against this tension.

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Hana Yori Dango presents a particularly intriguing case study because of the number of media reproductions it has undergone. *Hana Yori Dango* -- written by writer/artist Yoko Kamio -- was a serial comic book series published in the *shojo* magazine *Margaret*, whose primary buying demographic is adolescent girls. It ran from October 1992 to September 2003, and the chapters were compiled and republished as 37 separate *tankoban* volumes, which are roughly equivalent to American trade paperback volumes of ongoing comic books. As of 2006, *Hana Yori Dango* was the bestselling *shojo manga* of all time based on sales numbers in Japan, selling roughly 54 million units since its appeared. (Historic Shoujo Manga Circulation Numbers | ComiPress) As with most popular *manga*, *Hana Yori Dango* was eventually adapted to a fifty-one episode serial anime show by Toei Animation studies and broadcast through Asahi Broadcasting Corporation from September 1996 to August 1997. With the advent of video compression and rampant Internet piracy, scans of the 37 volumes of *manga* and all 51 episodes of the *anime* are now available online for download or video streaming, complete with translated subtitles.¹

Given the historically positive Japanese relationship with Taiwan after the island was colonized, (Ching 2000a) it comes as no surprise that the first television adaptation of *Hana Yori Dango* occurred here. With the relatively open relations between the two island territories, *Hana Yori Dango* was readily available to Taiwanese readers, and Japanese *manga* continue to dominate the comics industry in Taiwan. (Chen 2008) In 2001, Taiwan aired the first broadcast of *Meteor Garden* – the Chinese title for *Hana Yori Dango* – on the Chinese Television System (CTS), a quasi-public, free-to-air, national broadcast station, which has since incorporated into the public Taiwan Broadcasting System (TBS). *Meteor Garden* was the first of CTS's Japanese *manga* adaptation series in

¹ Example sites include OneManga.com and Crunchyroll.com.

the early part of the decade, and is now regarded as “Taiwan's drama authority” for its long history as the producer and exporter of regionally popular drama series. *Meteor Garden* became popular not only at home, but internationally as well, causing extreme controversy in mainland China for its divisive class themes (Bezlova 2002) and peaking at 73.0% national ratings during its first broadcast in Manila. (Bike of jerryskingdom.tk 2007) Since then, two more seasons of *Meteor Garden* were produced to conclude the lengthy *manga* plot line and likely capitalize on the success of the first season.

Following the smashing success of *Meteor Garden* through out East and Southeast Asia, the Japanese commercial broadcaster –Tokyo Broadcasting System (TBS) – released its own version in 2005, filmed and funded in-house through a series of lucrative endorsements and the capital of its combined newspaper and radio affiliates. Comprising nine episodes, the series ran for one television season or three months, averaging 19.5% ratings, an impressive feat considering Japan's highly fragmented television context. (*Hana Yori Dango*) In the previous decade, Japan become the most well-regarded producer of television in the region for the slick packaging and cosmopolitan fantasy of its dramas, and the massive popularity and export of its media is commonly called as the Japanese Wave. (Iwabuchi 2004) Due in part to the deregulation of program trade between Japan and the other countries of the region and the expert piracy networks around Asia, *Hana Yori Dango* Japan circulated broadly throughout the countries of Asia and amongst fans of Japanese media in the West. (Moran 2003, 16) Given that *Meteor Garden* had already familiarized Asia with the *Hana Yori Dango* story, this (re)production likely made use of the established popularity of *Meteor Garden*.

It is against this context that Korea stepped into the competition with its version of the now familiar story. In an unusual move, the television program was produced entirely

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outside the structure of the Korea Broadcasting System (KBS), with only nominal supervision of the firm Group Eight through the chosen director. ((KoJa Productions 2008) Most Asian broadcasting networks rely on in-house productions to supply the amount of native language programming necessary, and networks like CTS or TVB became known for their distinctive style of dramas. (S. Lee and Joe 2000) KBS, which is the sole public broadcaster in Korea, also provides programming to its partner networks in countries like the Philippines and Japan. Moreover, the policy of KBS continues to closely represent the national interests of Korea, since the president of KBS is directly appointed to the position by the President of Korea and answers to the Board of Directors, also appointed by the President of South Korea. 37.8% of all revenue for KBS comes from the public Television License Fee and 47.6% from commercial advertisement sales. (K. Kwak and Kitley 2003) Not only does the Korean series exceed the Japanese production in number of episodes, the first season of *Boys Before Flowers* has an enormous production budget that allows for filming on location in Macau and New Caledonia, in addition to an exorbitant costuming budget that allows for individual outfits that cost as much as \$6,000 US. (Coolsmurf 2008; Goodbye BOF, Numbers that Mattered In 'Boys Over Flowers' - AsianFanatics Forum)

In January 2009, the Korea Broadcasting System (KBS) aired the first of 25 episodes on its international cable satellite channel - KBS2. Renamed *Boys Over Flowers*, which is an English translation of *Hana Yori Dango*, it is also known under the Korean translation - 꽃보다 남자 / *Kgotboda Namja*. During the broadcast run, *Boys Over Flowers* garnered the highest ratings of the season, topping out at 35.5%, an unusual feat for the Korean television market. (35.5% Is The New Magic Number For 'Boys Before Flowers' | Hanfever Korean Drama) Its popularity amongst the adolescent and female demographic has launched the careers of its previously unknown actors, pulling in remarkable

numbers of commercial placement contracts and prompting a surge in tourism at the sites of its filming. (Bae and Kwon 2009) As of the writing of this thesis, the television show is translated and subtitled, freely available for streaming or download on the Internet at sites such as Dramafever.com and D-Addicts (a torrent aggregator). *Boys Over Flowers'* Internet popularity appears strong amongst the Asian television fan communities, such as Dramabeans.com and Asianfanatics.net. The first overseas broadcast of the show will be in Japan on April 12, and ratings information is not yet available to measure the international reception of the series.

At present, Korea has emerged as the foremost producer of television in Asia, supplanting Japan as the king of drama exporters. (H. Cho 2005) *Boys Over Flowers* might be read as both a desire to cement Korea's place at the cutting edge of television production in Asia and a simultaneous venture into the truly global market. In the last year, Hollywood obtained a number of licenses to popular Korean films for adaptation, including *My Sassy Girl*, *Oldboy*, and *The Host*. Last month, this trend in global resale hit the television market when NBC announced the licensing of *My Lovely Kim Sam Soon* – a regionally popular Korean drama – for reproduction in the US.² In light of the current notoriety of the Korean media industries, it would be logical for them to position this latest incarnation of *Hana Yori Dango* for global distribution and licensing given the text's proven track record. Indeed, this latest adaptation may not be the last, as rumors of mainland Chinese and Philippine adaptations have surfaced on the Internet.

For a case as contextually complex as *Boys Over Flowers*, a number of different methodological approaches would be appropriate, such as a reception/ethnographic approaches or a material anthropological examination of circulation through the lens of producers, broadcasters, and consumers. For this project, however, I am interested in

² Untranslated article announcing acquisition: <http://news.cyworld.com/view/20081106n03938>

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Boys Over Flowers not as a circulated object, but as a text. Texts bear the traces of cultural anxieties and historical contestations in their forms and narratives, elements which can be variously reinterpreted on their journeys. My thesis is fundamentally motivated by the question of what happens to a text when it “migrates” not only out of its native medium, but out of its national context as well. What can these “migratory” texts teach us about globalization and the various contestations that occur as texts are variously localized and remade through their travels? Much scholarship has been written about media globalization focusing on media as cultural objects and commodities. But what can we learn about global processes if we examine migrant media as a bearer of formal and aesthetic practices? What happens when those foreign aesthetic norms are not just received and interpreted by the new audience, but the formal systems adopted and variously adapted into the new production context? What can *Boys Over Flowers* as a text reveal about the process of cultural and aesthetic adaptation and the inflection that cultural context gives to aesthetic modes? The answer to these particular questions of aesthetics cannot be found in the study of the act of circulation itself, but located in the site of the text where it has been (re)produced. While reception can locate what meanings viewers construct from the text and how they deployed those meanings in their everyday cultural understanding, it can only gesture broadly to the elements of the text that catch and charge the imaginations of its readers. Textual analysis, rooted in an understanding of the cultural and historical context, allows us to delve into that imagination of modern Asia and examine how the continuities or changes to those aesthetic modes shape the textual experience.

Existing scholarship addresses this type of globalization of formal style within film, such as the global impact of classical Hollywood film aesthetics influencing other national cinemas. This sort of global flow has not, however, been as well studied in terms of how foreign national media such as television, comic books, and animation have variously

influenced each other in the absence of American media or even how those other national media have influence American media in return. It is with this question in mind that I have chosen to focus this thesis on *Boys Over Flowers*, which I feel is an especially salient example of these aesthetic global counter flows. The ready acceptance of the *Hana Yori Dango* story across Asia -- despite vastly different political structures and colonial experiences in the last century -- points to the story's resonance with common concerns, dreams, and experiences. That common experience, I believe, is the experience of Asian modernity.

Why Modernity?

Koichi Iwabuchi's work on Taiwanese audience's reception of Japanese dramas indicates a sense of identification with the depictions of women's lives in an urban metropolis. The sense of Japanese-ness seemed immaterial to the audience's use of the material to think through the experience of modern womanhood. (Iwabuchi 2002, 146) Stories of young love in the city, like *Boys Over Flowers*, seems a quintessentially modern kind of story. While the issue of modernity may seem stale to us in the West, who have seen the continuity of our modern times from the Enlightenment onwards, modernity is still a relatively new and uncertain experience in East Asia. Only in Japan has modernization been a long-term project, beginning well before the Meiji Revolution. For the other nations of Asia, like Korea and China, modernization is a recent or ongoing process, making it all the more relevant a discussion. Modernity, at the end of the day, is a struggle to understand what we have become as societies. For Asia especially, modernity is the topic du jour because the experience of compressed dislocation from previous social forms demands reconciliation.

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According to Benko and Strohmayr, "Modernity and post-modernity are not analytical concepts, so they possess no laws; each has merely a set of particular features, the canonical rules of conflicting processes of change." (1997, 1) More than anything else, modernity seems to be an "ambiguous expression" of the crises of civilizations as their order of knowledge is overturned. Modernity, then, is a field of discourse and not itself a theoretical structure. It is the manifestation of an "historical crises of structures." (Benko and Strohmayr 1997, 1) Some might call it a failed concept since its independent existence is arguable. Moreover, there is some danger in deploying the term modernity, because it invites the fallacy of deploying it as an *essence* or ontologically totality without cultural inflection or mediation. (Benko and Strohmayr 1997, 4) The fact of modern life is elusive, shifting, constantly becoming, and thus lacks a homogeneous definition. "Modernity can have no single meaning, since modernity is itself a search for meaning." (Meschonnic 1988) Modernity is not just the global experience of capitalist modernization, but an everyday experience that organizes our ordinary perceptions of historical time. This is why it continues to have value as, if not a concept, then a term of discussion to capture our sense of uncertainty about how we live as moderns. And therein, it also serves to understand the dislocations and ruptures withing texts which migrate from their point of national origin. I use the term modernity in this thesis not as a foregone conclusion, but as a suggestion or a loosely identified experience of dislocation. In the course of writing this thesis, I have been question on whether modernity is the right concept to think through the changes facing Asia, but in the end, modernity is a Western concept that Asia now deploys and with which it struggles. Whether it is the right term, it has become the terms in which the debate has come to be framed. In thinking about modernity, however, we must first root the term in the specific cultural circumstances out of which it grows.

Modernity on the Margins

Tani E. Barlow begins her seminal introduction to the volume *Formations of Colonial Modernity in East Asia* with the following quote: "Colonialism and modernity are indivisible features of the history of industrial capitalism." (Barlow 1997, 1) While she never returns to explain this premise in the book, or to explain why the usual (Western) conception of modernity is inadequate to the task of examining post-colonial states, Barlow does go on to define a new interdisciplinary approach to the study of recent history in Asia. Arguing for the innovation of the conjoined term "colonial" and "modernity," Barlow dissects the failure of existing disciplinary language in Asian area studies to actively uncover the relations of power implicated in the diffusionist, Euro-centric model of modernity as well as subaltern studies' inadequacy to addressing the complex colonial conditions in non-Indian states, such as Japan and its colonization of Taiwan, Korea, and Manchuria.

Building upon the very situated and granular work done in this volume, Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar takes up the task of explaining how Western modernity fails as an explanatory model, including the attendant assumptions of power that prefigure that move. (Gaonkar 2001) The two strands of Western modernity - the societal modernization of key institutions as well as the cultural modernity in the arts that rose in opposition to it - have in common an "inexorable logic" that presupposes that modernity *must* unfold as in the West. While the key elements that define Western modernity do indeed surface in post-colonial states, they are reticulated, or formed together, in radically different configurations as a response to not only local culture or politics, but to the history of colonialism itself.

While Gaonkar enumerates the reasons for Western modernity's ill fit as a theoretical

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strategy for studying post-colonial states, he does not explain why this model of scholarship inherently reconstitutes Western power over conceptions of the Asian modern. It is not only that colonialism is deeply implicated in the foundations of industrial capital in East Asia, but that Western modernity cannot be allowed to assert its continuing hegemony over scholarship lest its teleology erase the colonial relations that engendered the rise of these "alternative" modernities to begin with. It is out of this dialogue that corrective, or at least reactive, definitions of modernity emerge in an attempt to decenter modernity and theorize the experiences of the former East Asian colonies.

The term modernity – and its related grammatical and theoretical configuration of the modern – has itself a long and contested history, the sum of which is contradictory and muddled. “At its simplest, modernity is a shorthand term for modern society or industrial civilization,” and the “modern” is its image. (Giddens and Pierson 1998, 94) At the heart of industrial civilization, for sociologist Anthony Giddens, lies the expansive thrust of capital and its extensive market-driven systems. Industrialization, although enabled by capitalism, owes its existence to the rise of rationalization and specialization, a separate phenomenon altogether and perhaps not by itself a sufficient enabling factor in the rise of what we understand to be modernity. The hegemony of capitalism coincides with the concept of nation, which organizes and roots the “imagined community” across time and space to a bounded territory. Again, while a characteristic of modernity, it is by itself only an aspect of the whole phenomenon. But what elements constitute the necessary or sufficient conditions of modernity is not the domain of this paper. Rather, it is what modernity is seen to *do*, and the subsequent representation thereof, that I am interested.

Susan Friedman avoids defining modernity in favor of describing the broadest terms of

its effects. (Friedman 2001) Modernity, as seen by Friedman and other scholars, first and foremost conceptually hinges on rupture. Historically, modernity is a moment wherein a convergence of economic, political, and social conditions cohere to produce a very sharp rupture from the past across most, if not all, dimensions of society. The momentum of this rupture marks it from more gradual transformations in history, especially as it simultaneously alters all the key social institutions of a society - economic, political, religious, social/familial, sexual, gendered, aesthetic, and technological. The resulting cultural reaction to the new state of modernity can take on utopic or dystopic dimensions depending on the conditions of rupture. The resulting configuration of modernity is associated with the proliferation of cultural contact zones, a result of conquest, migration, or trade, and the rise of hybrid cultural practices and porous borders that further enable modernity. (Friedman 2006) Within modernity itself exists a series of oppositions resulting from the event of rupture, the primary one being the relational concepts of "modernity" and the invented "tradition" from which it distances itself. Between these relational concepts is Nietzsche's "ruthless forgetting of the past" that attempts to obscure remaining continuities that often point to violent histories resulting from radical asymmetries of power.

The breadth of Friedman's definition results from an effort to decenter and displace frames of modernity generated in a purely Western context, which becomes especially important for the study of post-colonial modernities. The broadness of her definition avoids the imposition of the telos of Western modernity on colonial contexts that result in re-inscriptions of current hierarchies (center/periphery; East/West; premodern/modern/postmodern). The result, however, loses specificity and materiality without Giddens' theoretical grounding in the institutional effects of capitalism and risks diluting the term modernity by opening the frame of debate too far. While China developed rationalizing and specialist systems of production well before the West – such

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as interchangeable parts for arrows and standardized axle widths – the technological developments of the Chin and the urbanization of the Tang Dynasties are a qualitatively different reorganization of social ties across time and space from what we call modernity today. On the other hand, that rationalization of production, urbanization, bureaucracy, mass printing and other features of modernity developed so early and at various times across Asia already destabilizes the spatial and temporal telos of Western modernity. What this ultimately means, perhaps, is that modernity, capitalism, and colonialism especially, must be further disentangled from one another before the discourse of “colonial modernity” is capable of more than simply positioning itself against the West.

Especially problematic in this field of study is the recurrent notion that non-Western modernities are mimicries, which plays into discourses of Western exceptionalism and reinforces the myth of diffusion from the European or American center to the Asian periphery. It underscores the need to recognize that if modernity were allowed to discursively emerge *before* colonialism and not *out* of its enabling of industrial capital, the subsequent asymmetry in power becomes naturalize through the imperative to expand, export, and extinguish. Friedman and other scholars like Dilip Gaonkar resist notions of a portable or "acultural" model of the modern that presumes an ontological wholeness of modernity, one that through its standardized form enculturates other nations into a telos of progressiveness and advancement. (McCarthy 2001, 172) In response, these scholars propose a specifically cultural or situated model of understanding post-colonial modernity that grows out of particular historical locations. That is to say, a Korean modernity will be different from a Japanese modernity, neither of which follow the path of presumed Westernization in spite of the heavy hand of American imperialism in both contexts. Indeed, no modernity stands alone, but each is enmeshed in a historical web of unequal power relations that mutually inform, and in some cases, mutual constitute each others' identities. Deploying a variety of adjectives

like "multiple," "early," "alternative," "polycentric," and "conjunctural," this body of criticism assumes the distinctive and yet affiliated formations of non-Western modernities that while all individual, do share common experiences of displacement, hope, anomie, liberation and other myriad contradictions.

Susan Friedman invokes the term *indigenization* to describe how a culture adapts an object or practice from another cultural context and transform it into something native or indigenous. (Friedman 2006) Not only does *indigenization* imply an affinity to the imported practice, since practices usually cannot flourish in hostile contexts, but that the adaptation may erase the history of its travel through the act of re-making.

Indigenization, and its relationship to the language of adaptation, suggests a fundamentally transformative process that reconfigures the imported practice into something different. Friedman applies this idea of *indigenization* to the condition of colonial modernities. Gaonkar explains a similar notion of *creative adaptation*, which has similarities to *indigenization*. (Gaonkar 2001) In any circumstance, it is foolish to think that a culture has a choice over which features of modernity it is offered for adaptation. Conditions that initiate modernity did not emerge from or struggle out of Asian national contexts. Rather, these conditions were forced upon the colonies of Asia by an outside, colonizing force. But through the involuntary introduction of these conditions, the colony was forced to *make itself modern*, rather than passively allow itself to be made modern. Gaonkar's emphasis on adaptation foregrounds the process of modernizing as active, deliberate, and purposeful. With *indigenization*, Friedman provides an analogy for the adaptation of modernity itself that both captures the historical conditions through which modernity arrived in Asia, but also that history's slow erasure. (Because modernity is founded upon the idea of a rupture from the past that distances itself from the conditions that enabled it.)

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Where this discourse of the post-colonial modern intersects with my examination of *Hana Yori Dango* is at all levels of the notion of “adaptation.” A historical field wherein the discourse of modernity turns on these metaphors of mimicry and adaptation renders the separation of the act of media re/making from the discursive violence of the colonial past impossible. To consider the idea of media adaptation and re/making between Japan and Korea automatically entangles us in the “conjunctural” or relational webs of modernity between these two countries, one whose industrial foundations are one and the same as colonialism. To analyze this transmedial and transnational adaptation is to confront the material and discursive relations of a situated Korean/Japanese colonial modernity.

In particular, I am interested in reading the resonances of *Boys Over Flowers* explicitly as a Korean adaptation of the *manga* and television show *Hana Yori Dango* against the historical and cultural discourse of Korean modernity as itself and an adaptation of yet another adaptation – Japanese modernity. Or rather, I am interested in the phantoms of this accusation in the context of this story, and to examine how this adaptation emerges out of the particular context of Korean production norms. What moves does this text make to both distance itself from that doubled consciousness of Japan and Japan's discursively authoritative version? And where does it affiliate itself with its predecessor? Because without a doubt, this text positions itself in proximity to the Japanese television show through various visual and generic strategies that go above and beyond the continuity of narrative to make it the successor of the Japanese version. For a number of reasons, ideological and material, the specter of *Hana Yori Dango* both enables and haunts *Boys Over Flowers*, much in the way that Japan's colonization furthers and plagues the modernity of both Korean states.

Of the various lenses through which to read *Boys Over Flowers*, I am drawn in particular

to the imagination of cultural modernity as it is read through this television series. In this case, I do not use cultural modernity to refer to an artistic movement that articulates its experience of societal modernization, such as Korean national literature (roughly equivalent to Western high modernism). I am more interested in a more popular understanding of modernity as it manifests in the most widely distributed mass media for several reasons. Mass media represents a different, and potentially more interesting as well as theoretically hairy, location of negotiation than the literatures of the Korean enlightenment or the *minjung* student movement because of its pervasive presence both in and outside of Korea. The modernist novels of Korea, which tackled the dissolution of gender roles, the violence of modernization, and the ongoing struggle to decolonize, struggle saliently and explicitly with conditions of colonial modernity. The relatively low literacy rates among the marginal classes of previous decades, however, kept them from being read by the very people they were being written about – the common workers and women. Moreover, they were not all written in vernacular Korean until the first phase of Korean “realism” in the 1920s and never enjoyed a level of popularity that would bring it into significant contact with the population, unlike cinematic melodramas after the Korean War. Moreover, Korean modernism stylistically works through realism, rather than the brand of formal disruption and aesthetic alienation for which Western modernisms are known. Korean literature and popular cinema both tackle the social milieu and its injustices as its primary subject, but the former deploys stylistic realism and the latter melodrama. This results in vastly different treatments of the same phenomena, and it is melodrama's universal appeal as a distinctly modern form that I am interested.

Boys Over Flowers, on the other hand, is serial television made for the female and adolescent domestic market and globally oriented in its distribution. It has some of the highest ratings ever seen on Korean domestic television and is a successor of the golden

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age of cinematic melodrama. Popular both at home and abroad, *Boys Over Flowers* is distributed by the governmentally owned Korea Broadcast System on KBS2, the drama and entertainment cable satellite feed. In addition to satellite footprints, *Boys Over Flowers* has also been bought for local broadcast on terrestrial network television in Japan, Singapore, the Philippines, and Taiwan. This does not count the parallel piracy ring distributing physically through DVDs and the online fan networks that upload *Boys Over Flowers* for streaming and download. Moreover, the Korean government has taken proactive measures to bolster the Renaissance of its film industry and the rising popularity of its musical and television exports by creating and appointing a Minister of Culture whose plans include long-term promotion of Korean culture abroad. (Chung 2008) Whatever struggles with modernization occur in this text are doing so on a transnational broadcasting stage, giving it the opportunity to comment, critique, and imagine across potentially diverse and diversely interested spaces.

Japan, in contrast, has been a historically motivated exporter of material goods, but its distribution of so-called “cultural” products like drama and *anime* was hampered by accusations over continued cultural imperialism in Asia. (Otmazgin 2003) Whether due to its historically poor relationship to Asia or to a general lack of interest in the foreign market, Japanese governmental concern over the circulation of its cultural goods has always lagged behind the phenomenon itself. Japanese producers of television drama, while pleased by the popularity of their work abroad, are simultaneously confused. Perhaps due in part to the ethno-nationalist discourse of Japan, producers do not understand the appeal of their work to non-Japanese audiences. The popularity of *Hana Yori Dango* abroad was due in no small part by the work of its fans whose online distributions and piracy helped increase the audiences whose domestic networks had not yet purchased the program for domestic broadcast.

I concentrate primarily on *Boys Over Flowers* rather than *Hana Yori Dango* not only because of the resonances across text and context, but also because of Korea's rise as a center of cultural production. As a nation that explicitly and systematically exports its cultural commodities and forms national policy around this fact, Korea's awareness of the global and regional put its products at the nexus between global, or more accurately in this case regional, and local. Korea's television industry produces both for its domestic market as well as truly transnational markets. As such, what can *Boys Over Flowers* tell us about not only the Korean cultural modern, but perhaps an emergent pan-Asian modernity? I am interested in this text as a particular enunciation of a Korean cultural modernity and how that can in turn be read with the Japanese version (by an implicitly transnational audience) to compose a kind of an imagined, transnational Asian modern.

Margaret Hillenbrand, in a book that comparatively reads the anxieties towards the modern in Japanese and Taiwanese colonial literature of the 1960s, suggests the possibility of this transnational modernity, or at least the hints of it as media increasingly circulates through the East Asian region. (Hillenbrand 2007, 10) Hillenbrand articulates an explicitly regionalist orientation to mediate the prevailing Occident-Orient dynamic that undergirds much comparative work in Asian area studies. By locating herself in the relations between two Asian nations-states, Hillenbrand defers the presence of the West outside of the frame of her inquiry. While Hillenbrand uses regionalism as a methodological strategy, economist Leo Ching regards the rise of regionalism as a necessary and complementary step to globalization. (Ching 2000b) As the modernist project of the nation begins to be dis/located by the flow of regional media, Ching regards the discursive re-territorialization along the borders of the region, which hinges on the articulation of difference from other similarly supranational categories, as that very space where abstract capital contends with particular nations. The regional for Ching, however, is a temporary, contingent, and ultimately untenable mediator in the

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inexorably globalizing logic of capital. Ching and Hillenbrand both gesture towards an imaginary of the regional that is rooted in the reality of what Thomas calls the “regional image market,” which may form out of the articulation of the diverse histories of member states and their similarly, yet individual, colonial modernities.

Boys Over Flowers, which has been re/made across Japan and its ex-colonies of Taiwan and Korea, stands at the juncture of this regional/national imaginary as a text that is both transmedial and transnational in character. It looks both inward to the Korean nation and outward to the regional market. It is an act of indigenization and a deeply contingent pastiche that depends upon a transnational media knowledge-base. It gazes at once East and West, forwards and backwards. It is fantasy and longing, which themselves become the resistance to things that it cannot articulate. It is in all its oppositions fundamentally of the modern that can only be spoken through a peculiarly fragmented and colonial pan-Asian subjectivity, and as such is entirely imagined and imaginary.

Thesis Chapters

In the following chapters of the thesis, I will take up a few key issues concerning *Boys Over Flowers* in the genre of melodrama, the construction of social spaces, and the aesthetic lens of nostalgia in Korean television.

1 Melodrama: Genre as Continuity and Rupture

The first chapter concerns the tension in *Boys Over Flowers* between the narrative, which grows out of a Japanese genre that celebrates feminine agency, and the form of Korean melodrama, which tends to emphasize the suffering that occurs

when women lack agency. This chapter delves into the process of indigenization as an alternative to the term hybrid.

2 Space: Traversal in Narrative

Chapter two examines the narrative spaces of *Boys Over Flowers* and the agency of characters who cross without authorization into controlled social spaces. This chapter deals with the nature of traversal as the other mode of the camera and its links to thematic and literal tourism through uniquely modern spaces.

3 Nostalgia: Temporalities of Colonial Modernity

The final chapter investigates the temporal dimensions of modernity through the aesthetics of nostalgia and the expressions of loss as understood in colonial modernity. It theorizes alternate modes of nostalgic longing as understood through the temporal disruptions created by photography and trauma.

Japanese and Korean Modernization in Brief

Modernity struggles with the loss of its history, and so it behooves us to understand, even if in brief, the nature of this history. In the subsequent chapters, I will refer to and read the text against the historical context of Japan and Korea and their relationship as colonizer and colonized. It would serve us well to revisit the transition of these two countries from pre-modern times into their current social and cultural configurations. In particular, I want to trace the development of Japanese industrialization and militarization, which would eventually shape the way these the former was instituted in

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Korea under colonial rule. The circumstances of their colonial relationship would go on to enable the dictatorships and state-suppression that continue to haunt Korea today. What follows is a very loose account of Japanese and Korean modernization based upon my earlier work with the primary intellectual accounts from Japanese intellectuals and secondary reading into the Korean colonial period.

It can easily be argued that, as traumatic as the early half of the 20th century was for the Japanese, it was not nearly so difficult as Korea or China. Japan was, by the time Admiral Perry's black ships arrived, in a recognizably pre-modern period under the Tokugawa shogunate. Historical accounts of Edo (which would later become Tokyo) described a blossoming bourgeois culture, the rise of mass printing, and literatures that were beginning to problematize the tension of relational versus individual subjectivity. A form of practical secularism persisted despite the existence of an official state religion, rampant urbanization was occurring in commercial centers like Edo and Yokohama, and increasingly sophisticated channels of national trade had been established. Edo bears many similarities to the Renaissance of Europe, which is generally understood to be the pre-modern period of European modernity before the rise of the Enlightenment. Japan's leap to rationalist, scientific thinking, massive industrialization, and state-guided capitalism was, in some ways, both a small and large step. Written accounts by intellectuals and politicians of this period showed an enthusiasm for the modern and a wholesale embrace of the Western. This subsequent move to industrialization by Japan after contact with the US was not so much a result of cultural proximity, however, as it was an act of self-preservation. To eventually shake off the bonds of US imperialism, the Japanese needed to become as modern as the Western nations. While Japan did not have a choice in the matter, *per se*, the Japanese government had already seen the circumstances of the Chinese under Britain. Given the timing of US imperialism, this critical "breathing room" permitted the Meiji government to formulate an active

strategy of adoption and adaptation, an opportunity denied Korea.

As Japanese industrialization proceeded at full steam, the Japanese pored over every aspect of Western modernity they could acquire with the help of the American government. From Western literature to fashion to industry, the Japanese began adopting and testing the cultural values of Europe to see which of these cultural dimensions lead to the success of the West. The accounts seem a bit comical at first, but were part of a very deliberate and systematic investigation. It did not immediately lead to cultural adoption of Western thought paradigms, however, which would come later during the early 20th century. At the end of the day, the Japanese were really only in it for the guns, as it were. But with the guns, came massive coal mining, development of steel, and the rationalization and specialization necessary to assemble them efficiently. The engines of war, in effect, helped to trigger the shift from agrarianism into industrialization.

Slow militarization built up to the first the confrontation with China at the turn of the century, which was a testing ground for Japan's industrial might, and then the seminal event that would commit Japan to its path of imperialism – the Russo-Japanese War. For the first time ever, a non-Western state defeated one of the historical powerhouses of Europe. It inaugurated a new era for Japan and the ability to renegotiate the unequal treaties with the West that marked it as subject and subjugated. It is in this period after the Russo-Japanese War that an American military advisor circulated the theory of “Korea as the knife pointed at Japan's heart.” This military memo eventually made its way back to the ruling government of Japan, who took it very seriously. The adoption of this stance lead Japan, who was already in a territorially acquisitive mood, to set its sights on obtaining outposts on the mainland, starting with Korea and Manchuria. A combination of reasons lead the government to believe that expansion was necessary

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for national security, among them a desire to become equal to the West through acquisition of its own colonies, and conquest of the mainland began in earnest. This is where I will continue with the history of Korea.

Korea was, prior to colonization by Japan, continuously in the sphere of influence of China, the decaying monolith of Asia. The relationship was, for the most part, cordial and beneficiary. Korea remained primarily agrarian and pre-industrial society before the Japanese Annexation despite early inventions of the metal printing press, standardization of the alphabet, and other advancements in seafaring technology. The strongly Confucian aristocracy and landed gentry saw a threat in the encroachment of Western nations on the Asian continent and fearful of revolution and uprising should the current social order become unstable, clamped down on any perceived social change. Any attempt at economic modernization was stifled by a reactive, conservative government and stymied by closed borders, a response to fears of Western imperialism.

Nonetheless, the Hermit Kingdom eventually fell under the sway of Japan after the assassination of its emperor. Japanese colonial policy beginning in 1910 was brutal, violent, and openly exploited Korea for its resources and perceived strategic position in Asia. A form of colonial mercantilism developed under the colonial governor, which led to the building of internal transportation systems in Korea to ready the Japanese army at any moment for a ground war in China. Eventually, the Japanese government pushed to develop an industrial base of heavy industry to keep the production of wartime goods near the mines and resources. Indeed, as the factories began to grow, mass displacement of Korean rural farmers to the city took place. The factories were built in urban areas, concentrating the needed workforce into the same location, leading to mass urbanization. Contributing to the displacement of rural peoples to urban areas was the Japanese government's policy of awarding valuable farming land in the country to

Japanese citizens by seizing Korean property. The combination of these colonial programs would later constitute the foundations of subsequent modernization in Korea.

At the same time, an organized program of cultural suppression was enacted towards the end of colonial rule, leading to the destruction of many historical records and a general decline in awareness of Korean history. The Japanese forced an entire generation of Koreans to speak, write, and learn in Japanese, giving them Japanese surnames, and even importing a number of Koreans over to work in Japanese factories. Symbolically, the Japanese even attempted to erase the aristocratic legacy of Korea by absorbing them into the Japanese gentry through intermarriage, an disappearance by blood. During the war, Japan instituted the infamous “comfort women” system of sexual slavery, initiating a the institutionalization of compulsory heterosexuality in both Japanese and Korean society. (McLelland 2005, 15) Speakin generally, the Japanese colonial period was dominated by criminal levels of cruelty and the government of Japan has been resistant to taking responsibility for its past.

After the brutal colonial period, the defeat of the Japanese resulted in the division of Korea into northern and southern states, each under the influence of the Soviet Union and America respectively. The tensions between the two states escalated over a very short period while both sides built up their industrial bases. The invasion of South Korea by North Korea triggered the Korean War, which interrupted modernization for 3 years, after which massive rebuilding took place because urban fighting had devastated all the urban centers. The war caused massive displacement of Korean people, evacuating them from the cities and resulting in terrible casualties amongst civilians. Subsequently, under two dictatorships, a program of state-guided modernization rebuilt the country to its current state. During the incredibly compressed latter modernization period, civil liberties and human rights were sacrificed by the government to achieve the shortest

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period of industrialization ever witnessed in history. In response, a grassroots, proletarian student movement fought from 1960 to 1980 against the Korean dictators and the unnecessary sacrifices for modernization. These revolts and protests were brutally suppressed, but did not stamp out what is called today the *minjung* movement. After years of violent protests, fiercely suppressed dissent, and persistent civil rights abuses, the government finally voted into office a popularly elected president in 1987, moving Korea at long last into a less violent and more democratic phase of governance.

As will become clear in the following chapters, the incredibly density of traumatic experience has fundamentally shaped the way Korean modernity developed. The concerns of modern life in Korea have everything to do with Korea's literal and rupture from its past by outside forces. And the metaphorical loss of historicity that many scholars identify in regards to Western modernization did not occur as a deliberate rejection of Korea's own history. That history was taken. To understand how aesthetics of loss have come to dominate even the utopian fantasies of Korea, we must understand the unthinkable dimensions of loss incurred by the Korean peoples and its impact on their cultural memory.

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Genre as Continuity and Rupture

Boys Over Flowers, one of the most highly anticipated Korean television dramas of the winter season, engendered much fan commentary in the transnational online communities and blog sites. Well before production began, the English language fan sites were already speculating over which of the *manga*'s sub-plots would be used, how the generic norms of Korean dramas would inflect the Japanese *shojo* narrative, and the effect of casting popular boy band members in key roles as opposed to unknown actors. The furor both in the Korean press and the online community reached a fever pitch shortly after the drama aired and soon after began to decline.

Boys Over Flowers, unfortunately, did not live up to its potential. Despite overtaking another established, critically acclaimed television serial drama in the ratings game and launching the careers of several actors, the show faced a great deal of critical fan commentary in the English language blogosphere. In particular, I noticed the consistent popular frustration regarding the lack of fighting spirit and feminine agency in the main female protagonist – a character named Geum Jan Di. A well-known blogger of Korean

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television dramas writing under the pseudonym Javabeans sums it up thusly:

Meanwhile, Jan-di has been the poster child for passivity. WE know she loves Jun-pyo, but she sure as hell doesn't let anyone else know that. As some commenter said, perhaps she's not in a place to demand a relationship with him, but if she hides all her feelings and mopes privately, well, that's just wallowing in one's self-pity. ***She tends to just accept whatever happens to her***, and that frustrates me.
[Emphasis mine.]

Taken alone, Javabeans' criticism of feminine agency in *Boys Over Flowers* may be explained away as the imposition of Western cultural values on a non-Western text. Koreans themselves find the portrayal of the Geum Jan Di equally problematic. In a recent survey conducted on college students – the average age of the viewing demographic – the respondents overwhelmingly pointed to the problematic weakness of the main character, framing it as “passive.” Indeed, the opinions in the survey seem to dismiss the show as merely a drama of social class and revoltingly consumerist. While Javabeans' opinion could easily be dismissed as either part of typical fan behavior regarding the “proper” adaptation of their favorite texts or a Western reading of an Asian show, the survey of Korean students shows an agreement in both transnational and national audiences. This convergence of opinion points to a discrepancy in the text more fundamental than narrative or themes.

The focus on female agency points to what I suspect is actually a systematic shifting of the narrative to accommodate the generic form of Korean drama. In this instance, I would argue that the frictions resulting from the transnational and transmedial adaptation of this Japanese text to a Korean context are rooted in the historical development of the melodramatic form in Korea and its intimate and fundamental relationship to the figure of women as sites of national contest. Moreover, the Korean

melodrama form conflicts with the strategies employed by *Hana Yori Dango* as a *shojo* narrative, a genre and style which grew out of Japanese women's negotiation with restrictive gender expectations and limited social roles. My aim in this chapter is to show how melodrama and its generic norms are bound up in the broader national crisis of compressed modernization by tracing the history of the melodramatic form through adaptations of the "Legend of Chun'hyang," and Chun'hyang's generic and cultural relationship to the Geum Jan Di. In *Boys Over Flowers*, genre becomes both a stylistic framing of the narrative and a lens through which to observe the collision between nation, region, colonial history, and the contest over the meanings of incipient womanhood.

While the thrust of my textual work is by no means reception-based, it would be equally disingenuous to obscure my own membership in the transnational, online fan community around Korean dramas. My knowledge and expectations of television drama is grounded not only in consumption of the television serials, but in the discussions within the fan communities regarding both textual exemplars and textual transgressors of narrative and generic norms. In this case, the popular commentary on the heroine and her actions within the story pointed me towards an avenue of inquiry and helped to focus on the systematic and thematic shifts in the narrative adaptation of *Hana Yori Dango*. I frequented discussion boards such as Soompi and D-Addicts, but some of the most informative commentary took place on a website called Dramabeans: Deconstructing K-dramas. Javabeans, the female, second generation Korean-American site owner, created this website specifically in an effort to encourage the growth of a community with whom she could discuss her love of Korean television. To this end, Dramabeans is structured around blog posts that translate or summarize key Korean entertainment news articles and Javabeans' synopses and commentary on Korean drama episodes as the series air. The series that she elects to discuss are chosen according to

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personal taste and, implicitly, selected from the airing dramas which are actively translated into English by fan translators and available to the community at large.³ The nature of her blog creates, enables, and subtly structures the responses to each episode to specifically solicit discussions of the text. And their opinions, as a transnational audience⁴ with special competencies in reading texts across different aesthetic contexts and (national) industry norms, reflect consistent reactions.⁵ In the next section, I will examine a few key differences that will help to illuminate the systematic and extensive nature of these subtle narrative shifts.

Where Difference Lies

Boys Over Flowers is essentially a story about adolescent love blossoming between a spoiled upper class boy – Gu Jun Pyo – and a plucky lower class girl – Geum Jan Di. The story follows them from their first meeting at school through the various difficulties in their relationship, which result from class incompatibilities, misunderstandings caused by other people, and interference from Gu Jun Pyo's family. Adapted from the *manga Hana Yori Dango*, which translates to *Boys Over Flowers* in English, the story is a classic example of the *shojo*, or girl's, genre. To understand how exactly *Boys Over Flowers* differs in both spirit and substance from its *shojo* predecessor, it is important to understand the work done by the genre of *shojo* itself. *Shojo* contains many niche

3 Information about Javabeans was taken from an interview conducted by Xiaochang Li for her thesis, which she generously made available to me (as I was present for the interview and also submitted questions to her informant).

4 The website traffic shows a large number of visits from America and a smaller, but substantial audience in Asian countries, primarily from English-fluent places like the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, etc. Surprisingly, the country providing the third most numerous hits is Iran. From anecdotal evidence, Iran imports a great deal of *anime* from Japan, and my own friendship with an Iranian classmate developed over shared memories of favorite *anime* series.

5 The vast majority of the discussants routinely made overt or implicit comparisons to the preceding iterations of *Hana Yori Dango*. A very small number prefaced their comments with their ignorance of the previous versions.

subgenres, but the majority feature female adolescents in modern day Japan, struggling to follow their dreams despite being caught in their conflicting sense of obligation to the people around them. This genre remains a subject of great interest to scholars across the spectrum of the humanities because it is both written by and for women. (Orbaugh 2003; Treat 1996; Choo 2008) The production cycle of *manga* makes it possible for former fans to easily enter the professional market and respond to the work that inspired them such that the subject matter of the genre remains continually relevant to the readership. (Kinsella 2000)

Most *shojo* narrative revolves around the border crisis when *shojo* heroines symbolically cross out of girlhood – the heroine's first love. The space invoked by *shojo* is one that is fundamentally fantastic in its axiomatic organization around the immanence of feminine will. Stylistically, *shojo manga* and television is marked by an airy, beautiful visuals and a quality of nostalgia for youth that sets the space of *shojo* fantasy outside the flow of normal time.

Only through the decoupling of this *shojo* space from the linear pace of time, allowing the elastic stretch of this adolescent transition, can *shojo* effect a space of female agency through both action and emotion, where the emotional excess of melodrama effects the course of events. (Li 2007) Within this *shojo* fantasy, the heroine's emotions become powerful enough to enact her will on the narrative and possesses the capacity to redeem those who stand against her, recuperating them into the purity of her vision of the world as it should be. Above all, *shojo* narratives focus on the choices and actions that girls make to negotiate their transitions out of the safety of liminal adolescence into the more defined states of adulthood. (Robertson 1998) The *shojo* heroine is always, in one way or another, active, agentive, and engaged against both the villains of her narrative and the social ills that created them. Out of this generic context comes Hana

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Figure 1: Spaces of adolescent fantasy



Figure 2: *Shojo* in search of lost time

Yori Dango, one in a long tradition of star-crossed love stories that owe as much to Hollywood as to *bunraku* theater (which had its genesis in domestic and social melodrama).

Returning to the Korean adaptation, I will present several instances to illustrate where the adaptation has turned the narrative and generic style of *Hana Yori Dango* on its side to produce an indigenized text whose frictions erupt from the mismatch of the agentive thrust of Japanese *shojo* narrative with the form of Korea's melodramatic spectacles of suffering. The strategies employed include additional material unique to the Korean adaptation, excess signification of certain narrative events, and the literal and symbolic deferral of enunciation to other characters and figures in the story.

Boys Over Flowers begins very differently than any of the previous versions of this story. Geum Jan Di, a typical high school student, delivers dry cleaning around the city for her parents' store. One such customer is a male student at Shinhwa High School, an institution so exclusive that only the richest of the rich may attend. Unbeknownst to Jan Di, her customer has been chosen as the target of school-wide bullying by the four most popular boys in school (the Flower Four, or the F4). While Jan Di wanders through the opulent cafeteria and around the well-appointed campus looking for her customer, said customer is shown being beaten bloody and fleeing for his life from mobs of students wielding sports equipment as weapons. When Jan Di finally locates her customer, he is standing on the roof of a school building about to throw himself off, unable to withstand the hellish, systematic bullying incurred from crossing the F4. Jan Di saves his life and becomes a media darling, the image of her dramatically grabbing the boy's shirt splashed across the Internet. In the ensuing public relations disaster, a massive grassroots protest rises up against the Shinhwa Corporation – the multinational company that owns Shinhwa High School – for the real and symbolic excesses of the rich.

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At the insistence of the President of Korea, the Shinhwa Corporation extends a scholarship to Geum Jan Di to quell public anger at the increasingly asymmetric gains of modernization. Resistant to attending school with such morally bankrupt students, Jan Di finally, and sullenly, acquiesces under pressure from her family.

What struck me in my second viewing of the show was that the very terms under which Jan Di arrives at Shinhwa High School were determined by institutional forces outside of control. Proletarian anger, new media and online networks, multinational corporations, the Korean government, and even family – these social structures and phenomenon channel and shape all of Geum Jan Di's actions subsequent to her one accidental, but fateful choice – to save the young man. This innocent and heroic decision sets into motion the creaking gears of much larger discursive forces that will find her dreams eventually trapped between contradictory obligations to her family and her lover.

This stands in contrast to our introduction to the protagonist in all the preceding versions. Shan Cai and Makino Tsukushi, the Taiwanese and Japanese heroines respectively, begin their stories already at their prestigious institutions, having attended school for more than a year. These shows immediately establish the protagonist's active desire to be part of and benefit from the privileges afforded by membership in these corrupt institutions. The emphasis in the preceding versions concerned the protagonist's struggle to reconcile her sense of self as a just person, especially as her silence becomes tacit assent to social abuses, which is implicitly the price of her ambitions. While Geum Jan Di's disgust with the bullying at Shinhwa High School thus remains uncompromisable and, in a way, stands in more totally as a proletarian critique of the immoral excesses enabled by global capital, Jan Di's agency is immediately and permanently deferred in the terms of this narrative, never to be fully recovered until the very end of the series.

Although the visual and aural stylings of *Boys Over Flowers* maintains the air of breezy fantasy and occasionally absurd comedy associated with these kinds of female-targeted romantic shows, the safety of that fantasy is unexpectedly ruptured by the stark and brutal school violence. While punches are thrown and many fights break out between the characters in the preceding versions, they often occur in either long shots that keep the violence at bay or shot up close in beautifully lit, slow motion tableaux that aestheticize the brutality into a kind of balletic dance of masculine melancholia (Figure 3).

Boys Over Flowers, however, creates an ugly, frenetic energy in the mise-en-scene that evokes a much more unstable and frightening atmosphere. When the mob of students attacks the male victim, the scene cuts quickly between a series of closely cropped shots whose frames literally and figuratively dismember the twisted, entangled bodies of the students (Figure 4). This results in a sense of jagged, brutal action and a feeling of shaky vision, as if the camera was running alongside the fleeing boy. The lyrical, nostalgic fantasy of the rest of the series becomes precarious when set against the stark visual style of these unexpectedly violent moments, disrupting the normally safe boundaries of the *shojo* space.

The differences between *Boys Over Flowers* and the preceding televisual versions manifests also in a visual preoccupation with spectacles of suffering and lingering over emotional excess and countenances wracked with emotion. Throughout the series, trickery and circumstance repeatedly draw the protagonist Geum Jan Di into difficult situations not of her own making. These conflicts consistently result in bodily harm, such that Jan Di must be carried away in the arms of a man.

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Figure 3: *Hana Yori Dango*, balletic combat



Figure 4: *Boys Over Flowers*, dismembering violence



Figure 5: Jan Di bullied to unconsciousness



Figure 6: Jan Di rescued from drowning (despite being a competitive swimmer)



Figure 7: Jan Di unconscious from smoke inhalation

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Over and over, the television series presents hyperbolic scenes of feminine suffering, lingering over the dramatic tableau of injustice and inequity (see Figures 5-7). Moreover, *Boys Over Flowers* almost never portrays Geum Jan Di escaping from these dire situations of her own agency, but only through the intervention of a man. Nor is Geum Jan Di ever portrayed resisting or preserving herself from harm except under the threat of assault to her sexuality, or more importantly, her girlish *purity*. Short of rapine and slavery, the narrative never allows the protagonist to be in a position of agentive opposition, which speaks to the frustration of the audience with Jan Di's real and perceived passivity.

In contrast, the protagonists of the Taiwanese and Japanese versions routinely fight back against their captors and actively taunt, insult, and physically assault the bullies who attempt to cow them. Shan Cai takes vengeance upon her female tormentors by exposing their cruel natures to potential suitors and Makino Tsukishi fights back against bullies using what weapons are at hand – mops, fly swatters, and even her fists. The events in the Taiwanese and Japanese adaptations seldom escalate the violence to the point where the protagonists are immobilized by injury and suffering, and do so without the same level of melodramatic excess found in *Boys Over Flowers*. Indeed, even when overwhelmed, the protagonists of these earlier versions are never visually and narratively stripped of agency through the symbolic and physical loss of consciousness.

As *Boys Over Flowers* progresses, the formerly garrulous Geum Jan Di becomes increasingly weighed down by her difficult emotional circumstances, falling into a kind of quiet, melancholic haze. The passivity that Jan Di is charged with by Javabeans and other bloggers refers as much to her physical inaction as Jan Di's emotional silence regarding her feelings for the love interest, Gu Jun Pyo. Despite several passionate displays of his feelings, Gu Jun Pyo's declarations are met with ambivalence and a worrying lack of

response from Geum Jan Di, whose reasons remain opaque both to the viewer and her ardent suitor. Through conversations with others, the story reveals Jan Di's hesitance to trust Gu Jun Pyo, her warring feelings of affection for his friend Ji Hoo, and her own doubts over whether a poor girl could possibly bridge the gap between their respective experiences. As a consequence, Geum Jan Di takes to avoiding her suitor, unable to either resolve her own confusion or answer Gu Jun Pyo's emotional demands. These accumulated silences become a pattern that, for some viewers, evidenced a deferral of both responsibility and agency. Within a love story, what greater agency is there but the declaration of one's love?

Geum Jan Di's continuing enunciative passivity continues in a key moment when she fails to declare herself. In episode 10, Madam Kang – Gu Jun Pyo's mother – visits Geum Jan Di's family and offers them a huge sum of money to break off her relationship with Jun Pyo. During that conversation, Madam Kang compares Jan Di to a weed, one that must be removed to nurture the grass in the well-manicured lawn that is her son. This scene, while not remarkable on its own, becomes more interesting when compared to the language of the Japanese *manga* and television show. Makino Tsukushi, whose name refers to a pretty weed, routinely declares that though she is nothing more than a common weed compared to the members of the Flower Four, like her namesake, she is tough, stubborn, and persistent. This becomes her rallying cry and her active and continuous re-framing of both her class and her identity vis-a-vis the delicate “flowers” of the upper class. The motif of weed, and Makino Tsukushi's constant verbal invocation of it, is both the enunciation of the poetics of her character and an active seizure of the terms of the battle.

The example of Makino Tsukushi, however, serves not just as a comparison. It points to the nature of emotion in romantic stories of this type, whereby verbal declarations take

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on the weight of actions and represent the battle over the framing of the narrative itself. That the metaphor of weed is first used and framed by Madam Kang – which is deployed a second time by Jan Di's mother to express her daughter's resilience – unfortunately undermines the power of the metaphor in its later uses. At no point does Jan Di ever attempt to invoke the weed metaphor despite the fact that her Korean name was deliberately chosen to also be a pretty weed, nor does she through a similar means ever enunciate the terms of her identity. In a way, both Jan Di's silence in respect to her feelings and to the terms of her subjectivity set her existence primarily in relation to the people around her and through the obligations and affections she has toward each. This orientation of herself towards others is only disrupted when Geum Jan Di finally breaks into frustrated tears and heartbreak over the persistence of her feelings towards Gu Jun Pyo despite all her best attempts to suppress them. Only in this moment does Jan Di recover her voice and her agency over the events of the series.

Women and Korean Melodrama

The changes made to *Boys Over Flowers* in the process of indigenization proceeds according to the structuring logic of Korean melodrama as a coherent, well-developed form, one which has occupied different relationships to the national imagination. Indeed, melodrama has at various times in history slowly implicated women in the contestations over the meaning of nation, transformed in response to the crisis of modernization, and finally come to speak to and for modern subjectivities defined through love. To best understand the relationship of *Boys Over Flowers* to melodrama as a genre, I will trace the history of this form through multiple adaptations of another story – the *Legend of Chun'hyang*. The figure of Chun'hyang reappears and, more importantly, helps to establish and define the expectations of the melodramatic form in each new medium, from oral storytelling to satellite television in the age of the Korean

Wave.

P'ansori – Oral Storytelling

The *Legend of Chun'hyang* remains the most famous of Korea's love stories and one of a handful of *p'ansori* narratives that survive to this day. *P'ansori* is a form of Korean storytelling that is both sung and performed with percussive accompaniment, much like the musical performances of what we in the West classically understand to be the root of melodrama. (Um 2001, 1192) In novels and cinema, *p'ansori* and its waning practices symbolize lost tradition, one of many victims of colonialism and the subsequent drive towards modernization. (H. J. Kwak 2003, 100) Both rooted in and representing the Korean foundations of melodrama, the *Legend of Chun'hyang* emerges from a long tradition of Confucian ethical fables. (Jager 1998, 280)

Chun'hyang, the poor, but beautiful daughter of a common singer marries the son of a rich, respected family. Shortly after their marriage, the son leaves his wife at home to travel to the capital and work for the government. During this time, Chun'hyang comes to the attention of an evil governor who desires her for a concubine. Chun'hyang, a paragon of Confucian femininity, refuses. Despite great adversity and even imprisonment for her resistance, Chun'hyang remains loyal to her absent husband. Eventually, her husband returns in disguise and rescues her from the clutches of the evil governor, meting out justice as an agent of the emperor. Chun'hyang, reunited with her husband and virtue intact, lives happily ever after.

The tropes that exist in the melodramatic tradition of Korea today have their roots in these “traditional” Confucian stories – the suffering of women, absent male authority, ruinous oppression from figures representing institutional power, and resistance in the

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form of endurance and steadfastness. In the oral Confucian tradition, these narrative tropes organize around principles of loyalty and obligation. (Barlow 1994) Chun'hyang's resistance to the governor is not framed as love, but as *obligation*. A woman's Confucian identity does not exist independently of the strictly relational roles she inhabits. Rather, her identity is fundamentally constituted of those relations and her existence as a social entity depends upon upholding the hegemony of these relational categories.

Print – the Modernist Novel

The *Legend of Chun'hyang* reappears in print later as the first Korean modernist novel – *Mujong* – in 1917, which adapts this famous story from a fable of feminine loyalty to a tale of burgeoning modern consciousness. (A. S. Lee 2005) In this novel, the Chun'hyang figure is never actually rescued by her husband, but left to dishonor and ruin. She is later saved, not by a man, but by another woman – the modern woman. The character of the modern woman, whose rejection of Confucian moral values and embrace of modern subjectivity, allows her to usurp the role of the absent male, who stands in for the failure of traditional Confucian society against colonialism. Through the guidance of the modern woman, Chun'hyang learns to put aside her longing for her absent husband and replace that with a new allegiance to the nation of Korea and the freedoms of an independent existence as a modern subject. (Shin 2001, 278)

Sheila Miyoshi Jager traces this modernist adaptation as the outgrowth of an intellectual movement during the Korean Enlightenment to appropriate and re-purpose the figure of womanhood in the name of nationalism. Exposure to foreign missionaries during this time period lead to the adoption of the idea of woman as an ontological category, one whose inception would allow men to explore the abuses Korea suffered under the colonial regime through the metaphor of the oppression of women under men. (Jager

1998, 123) Just as woman had come to exist in and of herself as a “natural” entity whose sovereign existence suffered under the systemic oppression of another, so too had Korea come into its sovereign existence as a nation. This awakening to modernity and modern subjectivity became the terms through which Korean intellectuals could reject the flaccid Confucian tradition that led to colonization and take the international stage as a fully constituted national entity. (Hwang 2000) Thus, women became intrinsically and purposefully positioned as a site of national contestation, a phenomenon that occurred across the Asian continent with the rise of nationalism. (Liu 1994) The tropes of suffering women, endurance and resistance, masculine tradition in absentia, and institutional oppression were stripped of their Confucian history and recycled as an expression of both national and feminine awakening to modernity. The narrative tools of Confucian thinking were thus upended and turned against itself. (Jager 1998, 124)

Film – The Golden Age of Melodrama

Seong Chun'hyang and *Yang-san Province* were the inaugural films of the Korean Golden Age of melodramatic cinema in 1955, touching off a fifteen year period of rich diversity and vibrant film-making during post-war reconstruction and modernization. It is not a coincidence that the story of Chun'hyang resurfaces again at the inception of yet another important social medium. It is during this period that the form of Korean melodrama as we know it cohered. While the tropes of classic women's melodrama remained the same through time, it is in the films of this decade that melodrama truly embraced the dimension of emotional excess for which it has come to be known. (McHugh and Abelmann 2005a, 3)

Peter Brooks, in his book *The Melodramatic Imagination*, argues that melodrama is a fundamentally modern form that emerged in France as an answer to the secularization

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of society. (1995, 21) The poetics of melodrama, like modernity, emerge in the casting of the narrative world into meaningful oppositions, emphatic contrasts, and legible conflict. It "evokes confrontations and choices that are of heightened importance because in them we put our lives -- however trivial and constricted -- on the line." Nancy Abelmann mobilizes Brooks' work to frame how the melodramatic narrative mode entered everyday parlance in the recounting of women's experience living through post-war Korea. (2003, 5) As a mode that rose in response to and as a means of interpreting moments of profound disruption and fundamental overturns in the social order, Abelmann argues that it became the most resonant stylistic lens through which the suffering and confusion of modernization was expressed. (Abelmann 2005, 46-49)

Melodrama became the mode of Korean narrative modernity because of the resonance of its emotional excess with the horrific suffering endured by the Korean people. (McHugh and Abelmann 2005b, 3-4) Vicious colonialism, loss of the "traditional," forced partition of the peninsula, sudden war, and brutally compressed modernization under the guidance of a repressive dictatorship – melodrama provided a style that could express the emotional truths of this historical reality. (McHugh and Abelmann 2005b, 5-7) The excess of emotion, laid over the tropes of feminine oppression inherited from Confucianism, transformed into a cinema of suffering, a kind of spectacle of the helplessness of the Korean people against events larger than themselves. Kathleen McHugh and Nancy Abelmann admit that while difficult to disentangle the influence of American cinema in this period from subsequent Korean adaptation, the Korean use of the form differs significantly from Hollywood's romantic idealization. Melodrama, as indigenized by Korean film makers, served as a cinema of social realism, a mirror to the Korean experience of social unrest, victimization, injustice, trauma, and loss. (2005b, 4) *Seong Chun'hyang*, as the first of Golden Age cinema, became one of many stories of national crisis.

Television – the Korean Wave

The *Legend of Chun'hang* once again resurfaced at the forefront of the next Korean media sensation – the Korean Wave. This mass export of popular television and music to the Asian region at the turn of the century marked Korea's ascendancy as a center of production and a powerhouse of image-making. Now past the brutality of Korea's forty years of compressed modernization, the nation was now entering a more peaceful period under the rule of law and popular democracy. Here emerged another notable retelling of the old Confucian fable – *Delightful Girl Chun'hyang* – a popular television show that helped to create the prototype for a new female character type – the “sassy girl.” This character broke from the tradition of quietly suffering, dignified heroines of the past to mark herself as an energetic and cheerful counterpoint to her predecessors. While still subjected to the same narratives of suffering and institutional oppression as other female characters, the sassy girl resists with pluck and determination. As strange as it may sound, the sassy girl's narrative is about a more hopeful brand of suffering, one filled with the confidence and bubbling possibility of modernity and the freedoms in her reach.

Of interest here is the transformation of a formerly adult story into a narrative of adolescent love. The characters are now in high school and the melodrama revolves around the emotional difficulties of a love quadrangle that includes an ex-girlfriend in addition to the character of the evil governor. In particular, love comes to replace the notions of Confucian loyalty, social responsibility to the nation and modernity, and suffering as the central motif of the narrative. Haiyan Lee sees the narrative pursuit “of free love against the claims of kinship and community” as the most common signifier of

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“an individual's coming of age and acquisition of subjecthood,” and part of a slowly changing orientation towards the life of emotions as the most privileged site of private subjectivity against the machine-based society of the public sphere. (H. Lee 2008, 266) Love, above all, Lee argues, is bound up in the humanist notion of ontological subjecthood that marks the modern woman apart from her Confucian predecessor. The love melodrama, then, is the latest iteration of the melodramatic form's discourse with modernity as it wrestles with the privileged moment of social and subjective transition.

A Melodrama for Modern Times

This loose historical progression of the melodramatic form, I think, illustrates the ways in which *Boys Over Flowers* arrived at the criticism by fans for its preoccupation with spectacles of suffering and feminine “passivity.” *Boys Over Flowers* and *Delightful Girl Chun'hyang* were both directed by the same man – Jun Ki Sang – and featured a cameo role for the actress that played Chun'hyang as an ex-girlfriend in the *Boys Over Flowers* love quadrangle. More important than these surface connections, however, are the deep structures of melodrama that came into conflict with the expectations of the narrative by fans who had previous exposure to the Taiwanese and Japanese versions. It can be understood why the *Hana Yori Dango* story was chosen to adapt for reasons that go beyond Korean competitiveness with Japan.

The narrative bears great resemblance to the legend of Chun'hyang – the characters of the poor girl and rich boy, repeated attempts by individuals representing larger institutional forces to separate them, continuous suffering and trouble caused to the protagonist and her family, and the circumstantial mitigation of masculine power. These tropes align almost perfectly with the long continuity of the Chun'hyang story prototype in Korean melodrama. Formally, however, they transformed in the process of adaptation,

which mobilized them to very different ends. In a *shojo* narrative that explicitly frames Jan Di as an assertive female protagonist, *Boys Over Flowers* undermines her brassy attitude through various physical and emotional victimizations to enhance affect. Rather than allowing Jan Di to act on her own behalf, the absent male authority and the strength of the modern women around Jan Di intervene to save her. Indeed, Jan Di is so classically virtuous that her most active moments occur only when she defends others from victimization – avenging her best friend after a boy humiliates her and heroically giving up her relationship with Gu Jun Pyo to save her family from further attack by Madam Kang. The romantic fantasy space portrayed in the beginning of the drama, rather than enabling Jan Di to speak forth her innermost desires and effect the terms of her happy ending, follows the conventions of melodrama to silence her, placing her in untenable positions so that she might gracefully resist through endurance.

The circumstances of Jan Di's entry into Shinhwa High School and the intrusion of violence into the safe space of the *shojo* narrative seem to be efforts to rationalize some of the less believable aspects of the story. Melodrama, in other Korean dramas, have a claim of realism. They deal with circumstances that face people everyday – divorce, loss of jobs and income, estrangement from one's family, ill health, and lost loves – albeit in hyperbolic emotional terms. *Boys Over Flowers*, by attempting to rationalize an explicitly fantastic space, disrupts the cheerful and occasionally absurd air established at the beginning of the drama. In doing so, it revokes the suspension of disbelief and the very terms of the drama as a romantic fantasy. Suddenly, it becomes impossible to ignore the instances of excessive victimization or to find Jan Di's constant rescue remotely pleasurable because the text now asks the reader to look for a closer logical relationship to reality. In a text where, just an episode prior, Jan Di was nearly gang raped in an empty locker room after school, her subsequent fantasy rescues appear facile and irritating, because the former instance asks the viewer to adhere to very different

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expectations than the latter instance.

Melodrama, however, has changed with the times. It no longer directly confronts the traumas of the preceding moment, although it continues to be entangled with the experiences of the modern present - love in modern times, family, adulthood, etc. As Korea moves on from the industrial nightmare of its compressed modernization period, the boundary between reality and the text are solidifying such that the space of the text is ever more marked as a space of fantasy. In previous decades, it seemed that melodrama served as an utterance to a proximate, lived historical trauma. In a fashion, the "real" and the "ordinary" in lived experience was itself already so extraordinary in its cruelty that melodrama became less a style and more a resonance. In contrast, Hollywood removed the sense of locality and political rootedness from its mythic films, seeking out larger regional markets for its films. South Korean melodrama, however, was deeply rooted in the political and historical context.

All the missteps seem to point to not only a clash between narrative and form, but a fundamental violation of the terms of genre. Each genre, through repetition, exposure, and habituation, is afforded a form of poetic license by its audience. We know, after understanding the conventions of genre, that certain narrative tropes will usually take place in the story. Detectives will always catch the bad guy, cowboys wear white hats, and the boy and girl will fall in love at the end of the movie. We associate the aesthetic construction of each genre with a particular relationship to the portrayal of reality. Where the indigenization of *Boys Over Flowers* fails is the inconsistent system of its values and the borders of its very "world." The indigenization process seems to have lost its stable reference point.

In the end, *Boys Over Flowers* demonstrates that indigenization does not lead to

hybridity, on a micro or macro scale. The meeting of cultural forces in the contact zone of text never yields perfect and smoothly uncontested fusions. Instead, the products of these collisions are like colloidal suspensions whose component parts are inconsistently distributed across asymmetric gradients of power. These border texts, standing between region and nation yield deeply fragmented visions of the modern, dislocated content wearing uncomfortable skins. Hybridity no longer serves to describe the frictive forces that join at the juncture of text and context. Continuity on one side becomes the place of rupture on the other. The tension of remaining narratively recognizable and the necessary de-familiarization of adaptation creates deep currents of uneasiness in the story.

Above all, the power of form is revealed in this reading of *Boys Over Flowers* as a uniquely Korean melodrama. Form is the product of iterative social transformation, inflected by economic and material circumstances, to meet the needs of the cultural imagination. Form is deeply political, especially melodrama, which has continuously served in various capacities as the lens of Korean modernity. Form can undermine and change the reading of a narrative in ways that is not accounted for in theories of adaptation – narrative and otherwise. Is *Boys Over Flowers* still the same narrative as *Hana Yori Dango*? It is now affectively and thematically different than before, and yet bears the same features in subtly altered configurations. Perhaps this is not the question that needs to be asked when thinking through the process of adaptation. Indeed, if difference is where we constitute the meanings of culture, then it may be in difference that we also understand narrative. *Boys Over Flowers*, despite its dependence on the preexisting familiarity with its predecessors, is very much its own creature, albeit a melancholic one. But nonetheless, *Boys Over Flowers* is still part of the same breed of nostalgia that exists across the Asian region.

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Transit & Love in the Non-Place

A place is dead if the physique does not support the work of imagination, if the mind cannot engage with the experience located there, or if the local energy fails to evoke ideas, images, or feelings. (Walter 1988, 204)

Boys Over Flowers far exceeds the Taiwanese and Japanese television adaptations of the *Hana Yori Dango* manga in terms of the lavish location shoots and filming in exotic countries. New Caledonia, Macau, Jeju Island -- the series visually and narratively captures not only the fashion and lifestyle of the rich, but also their mobility in a still spacious world. From windswept fields of yellow flowers to sleek glass and steel interiors, the imaginary of the Asian modern in *Boys Over Flowers* appears like colorful, displaced fragments of urban and exotic, sutured together by images of transit. The visual hyperbole of the spaces of modernity, as visualized in this text, evokes a sense of romance. Yet the spaces never quite attain a sense of place, lending the romantic air of the drama an air of abstraction and a simultaneous feeling of dislocation.

In this chapter, I examine the imagination of space as it unfolds in *Boys Over Flowers* in

terms of traversal. Space, whether differentiated or uniform, can only be experienced by movement into and through its boundaries. But to traverse space is also to be acted upon by the logic and power of that space, what Foucault calls the "disciplinary" social nature of spaces. (Foucault 1995, 170) To understand what ideologies shape and channel the scope of human action in any social space, we must study the representations of spaces in *Boys Over Flowers*, but also understand *Boys Over Flowers* as a representational space. (Lefebvre 1992, 33) As a space constituted of symbols, which ultimately produce more symbols (rather than actions on spaces) the text shapes our imagination of these spaces, if not directly governing our movement through them. But *Boys Over Flowers*, and any televisual text for that matter, nonetheless engages in spatial terms and a form of spatial practice that de Certeau calls the "spatial stor[y]." de Certeau asserts that "every story is a travel story." Narratives "traverse and organize places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them." (Certeau 2002, 115) The act of narrating becomes the act of navigating metaphorical spaces, and in televisual media literally engage the camera in a motion of traversal that implicates the viewer in that action.

de Certeau distinguishes two modes of spatialization. One conducted through the action of mapping the terrain of the modern via, for example, aerial establishing shots that gaze down and ascertain the details of the landscape, and the second through touring the space of that modernity with the characters. The motion of touring, he argues, becomes a spatialization of motion or action. Cinematically, the camera actualizes the space only once a character moves through it. (Certeau 2002, 119) Not only is traversal a necessity to distinguish space, but the act of traversing has become itself the spatial praxis of the modern. Movement between spaces, according to Andrew Thacker, has become a key feature of Western modernism. (Thacker 2003, 8) The motif of transportation becomes the primary metaphor of this border-crossing experience in

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modernity and now dominates the way we think about spaces. This border-crossing refers as much to commercial and human traffic as it does to social mobility. As I will demonstrate in this chapter, traversal of spaces is closely linked to tourism as the mode of cinematic site-seeing, (Bruno 1997) which acts out certain ideologies of social class and modernity in *Boys Over Flowers*. Moreover, it is in these spaces built specifically for spatial traversal -- what some scholars call networks of non-place (Auge 2009) -- that *Boys Over Flowers* acts out the drama of visible border-crossings.

Spaces of Transit - Bodies out of Place

According to Andrew Thacker, we live in seemingly spacious times. (2003, 1) Although the world grew smaller in some way with the inception of communications technologies and networks that easily move material quickly from one geographic node to another, these avenues of transportation opened new spaces to those who possess the means to take them. In scholarship, however, time has been the dimension of most interest to scholars of modernity and modernist literatures. (Agacinski and Gladding 2003; Boym 2002; G. M. Cho 2008; Martin-Jones 2007) Space too represents and is represented in text. Indeed, spatial metaphors litter the language of modernity, such as "center-periphery," "margins," and our endless fascination with images of cities and urban phantasmagoria. Space as a lens of critical inquiry presumes that space is neither dead nor empty, but alive and social. The relations between spaces mediate relations of power, such as that between the metropole and the rural periphery, or the colonial nation and its colonized satellites. Contest over space and its boundaries, in the twentieth century, has been an historical fact.

Henri Lefebvre's great contribution to the study of space was to emphasize space as a node of social relations. Physical space held meaning in his conception only insofar as it

shaped or facilitated the way people related to one another. "Social space is a social product." (1992, 27) Lefebvre's distinction between the representation of space and representational spaces encourages us to study the ideologies that constitute spaces, but not to mistake one for the other. Representations of spaces -- like maps, architectural schema, land surveys -- shape how we interact with and effect changes upon the material landscape of the real world. (Lefebvre 1992, 33) Representational spaces, such as television, are symbolic in nature and whose nature is to reproduce more symbols. It is in the representational space's ability to capture not only attitudes about space, but the cultural anxieties that characterize the sanctioned or unsanctioned crossing of people and materials into social spaces that I am interested for this chapter.

Take, for example, the circumstances under which Geum Jan Di first enters Shinhwa High School. In order to access the premises to deliver dry cleaning for her family's business, Jan Di must cross through a security gate, which regulates the borders of this privileged space. As essentially service staff, however, her entry goes unchallenged and Jan Di easily gains access to the campus. Her initial penetration of Shinhwa High School depends upon the invisibility of certain classes of labor, and thus certain classes of bodies, in the institutional workings of the campus. But as soon as Jan Di intervenes on the normative social relations occurring within the space of Shinhwa High School, she - through the assistance of networks of digital media - becomes visible as a body that did not belong, exposing the relations of social power within that exclusive space. Once she becomes a student of that school, Jan Di's sudden visibility in the upper class space becomes an intrusion, a kind of contamination. In an early scene, one of the female students sprays Jan Di with perfume to disguise her "smell," as a metaphorical disappearing of the "odored" trace of her presence.

The destabilization of the boundaries of social spaces when unauthorized crossings

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occur exposes the invisible workings of power and authority of space, allowing us to see and examine the contestation over boundaries. We build environments to reflect the way we understand spaces to function and to reify the myth of functionality itself, which disguises the social nature of how discourse disciplines our movements in social space. Space is not static, but a complex or node through which run multiple relations, like the wires for electricity or pipes for water and sewage in and out of a house. (Lefebvre 1992, 93) Lefebvre locates social spaces in the context of their wider histories and societies, emphasizing the need to connect the representational spaces in texts to their material spaces (and places) and attend to the political and ideological meanings embodied in those representations of space. In every space exists a relations of power.

Particular types of spaces, however, produce particular kinds of power. Space is both produced by society and contributes to the shaping of social production itself. Each space encourages different types of interactions and social transactions to take space within the logic of its boundaries. Among the varieties of spaces that occur in modernity or hypermodernity, the so-called "non-places" have proliferated with the greatest speed. Marc Augé (2009) defines these places as the opposite of the anthropological place. "If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place." (Auge 2009, 79) They are spaces through which people simply move, leaving no mark and making no change, but whose logics simultaneously impose specific forms of behavior. Take, for example, a non-place of increasing importance in today's society - the airport. Within the airport, one could even break down multiple internal spaces such as the security line. Within the mechanism of these so-called non-places, individuals become operators, reduced to certain rhythms and functions as we pass through the literal and metaphorical conveyor belt of the security screening process. But the alienating mechanism of non-space cannot completely overtake place, because

"place and non-place are rather like opposed polarities: the first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed; they are like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly rewritten." (Auge 2009, 79)

The politics of the so-called "non-place" implicitly critique these conduits of global travel from the position of power and privilege. The dizzying alienation experienced in the non-place exists primarily for the privileged traveler, rather than those whose labor enables its existence. Indeed, non-places cannot categorically exist, for every location or institution is placed somehow in the geography of the world. The alienation of the "non-place" describes a particular experience of the privileged traveler as they move from one destination to another, displaced from their familiar environs. But for all others who labor in the non-place, politically support the existence of the non-place as a income stream for the community, and live by and around these non-places – non-places, like the airport, are very real and located institutional spaces that are part of established power relations. (Sharma 2009) To deploy the term non-place is to play into a dynamic of power that erases or obscures the discursive and material labor of that space. So why do I use the term here? In this particular case, non-place evokes a particular dynamic of power *within the narrative*. That is to say, the non-places in *Boys Over Flowers* are not only narratively constructed as such, but represent a liminal space that is not assigned to or signified as belonging to either of the two protagonists. Moreover, the experience of these non-places in the narrative are through the eyes of Jan Di, who is a new traveler through the lavish and dizzying world of the affluent and mobile. The interplay of the romance narrative with a series of non-places becomes important to understanding the cartography of power relations in *Boys Over Flowers*.

As non-place proliferates in modern societies, Benko and Strohmayr call for a "geography of nowhere." If a place is a "milieu," then the non-place is indeed a "mi-

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lieu," or a hybrid creature that is at once both placed and un-placed. (Benko and Strohmayer 1997, 23) These spaces lack symbols of identity or relationship to its history. They are often corridors to destinations - public transportation, hallways, streets - or merely temporary, anonymous, each looking as strangely familiar as the last no matter where one travels - resorts, hotel rooms, chain restaurants. These non-places are the product of the late 20th century, created by speedy transport, globalized trade, increasing circulation, and new forms of consumerism. These non-places point to the principle of continuous becoming, of transition and change, and mobility in modernity. As I will discuss further in this chapter, the non-place - airports, interiors of transportation vehicles, highways, bridges, hotel rooms - becomes the backdrop of several scenes of emotional upheaval in *Boys Over Flowers*. Indeed, the number of non-places increasingly outnumber the places depicted as the series progresses, mirroring the sense of uncertainty and confusion in the romantic relationship between Jan Di and Jun Pyo. But the depiction of these non-places also speaks to the imagination of the spatiality of modernity, both increasingly connected and yet increasingly fragmented, anonymous, and unreal.

These non-places, however, do not fall outside the zone of continuing biopolitics, governed as much by commerce as the patrol of national boundaries. (Castells 1996) The non-place was, in many ways, created to serve as the placeless meeting grounds of global capitalism to allow the spatio-temporal connections necessary for business. When capital no longer has connections to places (i.e. a dry cleaner is bound to a local service area versus a multinational corporation whose products are disconnected from the place in which they were produced), the exclusive non-place of the airport hotel becomes increasingly important precisely because it remains contiguous with the network of displacement and untouched by the specter of urban humanity. (Benko and Strohmayer 1997, 28) In *Boys Over Flowers*, Madam Kang forces Gu Jun Pyo to abandon Geum Jan Di

and marry the daughter of another wealthy multinational corporation in order to facilitate a business relationship between the Shinhwa Corporation and the JK Group.⁶ Their wedding takes place in a luxury resort on Jeju Island,⁷ which merges the function of both business and tourism in the dislocating logic of the non-place. Gu Jun Pyo's wedding effectively has *become* business, and the business of the multinational corporation has been dislocated from any recognizable place.

What strikes me as the implicit fear of the non-place lies not so much in its automation and sense of isolation, which are necessary to modern business, but in the way it empties place from space. In that emptying exists and undercurrent of disembodiment, suggesting a subtle evacuation of our inhabitation of not only that place, but of the assumed sovereignty of our very bodies. The anxiety in the scholarship fixates literally and figuratively on disembodiment in non-place. ". . . the supermodern condition is one of radical disembodiment as a political ideal. Perhaps the most frightening aspect of Augé's non-place theory is that these sites are fundamentally sites of solitude, in which the way to be is to talk to no one or to exchange only previously agreed-upon digests of individuality: boarding passes, screen names, or debit cards." (Cherbuliez 2005, 242) Not only are our bodies herded along by the impersonal channels of the non-place, our ability to constitute space itself as space through social relations comes under attack. We become adrift both in body and spirit, delocalized and dehumanized from our history and context. It is in one of these alienating non-spaces that a major emotional and narrative milestone is reached in *Boys Over Flowers*, and in the next section I will explore what the transgressions of spatial discipline reveal about the social and affective

⁶ In reality, this does not make sense. *Chaebols* are corporations whose leadership remains under the power of the original founder and/or his heirs. They do not, however, conduct business relationships through marriage like feudal aristocracy. This conceit appears in some drama and suggests an ongoing fascination with the concept of an aristocracy, which I do not have room to address here.

⁷ Jeju Island also participated in the April 3rd Uprisings, which resulted in a brutal massacre of some 30,000 people. The resort and its disconnect from the history of Jeju Island as an autonomous ruling province adds to the tension of fantasy and material history in every setting of this drama.

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relations between the characters.

Meeting in the Middle

In episode 10, Gu Jun Pyo's mother -- Shinhwa CEO Madam Kang -- discovers his secret relationship Guem Jan Di when she sees them out on a date together on Valentine's Day. Madam Kang subsequently approaches Geum Jan Di's family, attempting to buy them off with a large sum of cash if Jan Di will end her romance with Jun Pyo. Jan Di's mother rebuffs Madam Kang, pouring salt her on head and chasing Jun Pyo's mother from their house in a fit of pique after Madam Kang calls Jan Di a "weed" that must be removed to further Jun Pyo's growth. The next morning, the Geum family discovers that Madam Kang has effectively bankrupted their dry cleaning business through her vast corporate connections and made it all but impossible for them to reestablish their business elsewhere. To survive in urban Seoul, Jan Di and her family make ends meet by taking up odd jobs and selling food by the side of the road. The emotional and narrative significance of the scene I will examine lies in its melodramatic clarification of the terms of Jan Di and Jun Pyo's relationship. At this point, the protagonist Geum Jan Di has been in an established romance with Gu Jun Pyo for several weeks, but has neither verbalized nor expressed her growing affection for him. Every one of Jun Pyo's attempts to kiss her have been awkwardly rebuffed, building up tension and expectation for the moment that Jan Di relents, signalling her acceptance of Jun Pyo's feelings. What's more, this milestone of their tumultuous relationship occurs in the middle of one of the most common and recognizable non-places around the modern world -- the freeway at rush hour traffic. Keep in mind that this scene *does not exist in any other version of the Hana Yori Dango textual universe*. The anxieties of bodies out of place in this scene are purely a Korea invention and speak forcefully to the relationship of Korea to its modern spaces.



Figure 8: Rush hour traffic on the Korean freeway



Figure 9: The Geum family prepares to do business

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The sequence begins with an elevated shot looking down at cars packed bumper to bumper on a large, three-lane freeway (Figure 8). The flow of traffic moves slowly but surely in the late afternoon -- cars, bridges, and miles of crisscrossing freeway disappearing into the horizon. The camera cuts to the side of the highway where Jan Di and her family huddle in front of their battered white van, discussing how best to advertise their wares to the passengers in the cars (Figure 9). They stand close together, bundled up against the winter cold, the stairs of an overpass rising behind them, haloed by the setting sun. Each member of the family takes a turn rehearsing their battle cry with zest and enthusiasm: "Rice cakes and hot coffee! 3,000 won!" Geum Jan Di's father notes the absurdity of the situation -- selling dried squid and rice cakes on the side of a freeway as he gazes out at the passing traffic, wearing a makeshift billboard cut from a cardboard box and decorated with black marker (Figure 9). This comment is the first indication of discontent with the situation, but the moment is lost in the flow of the scene as Jan Di, her brother, and father sally forth to sell their food.

Several shots follow, showing the trio roaming amongst the cars, waving the packets of rice crackers with enthusiasm as plucky and determined music play in the background (Figure 10 & 11). The three begin to smile and laugh, starting to enjoy the rhythm of the sale in spite of their dire situation. They skip and dance around the unmoving cars, waving the bags of crackers like pom-poms. The images convey a festive mood in the grim afternoon commute home, and their freedom is portrayed as a cheerful counterpoint to the passengers in the anonymous vehicles, gridlocked and immobile inside their relative affluence.

But Jan Di's mother alone among the family members cannot participate in this festive atmosphere. The camera cuts away to find the family matriarch, who earlier berated all her husband and children to be energetic and happy, hiding behind tree, unable to call



Figure 10: Jan Di enters the space of the freeway as an unauthorized body



Figure 11: The Geum family resorts to peddling food after their business is ruined

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Figure 12: Jan Di's mother - shamed by their plight



Figure 13: Madam Kang - the instigator of social shaming

out for shame. The shot lingers up close to her mother's face as she is physically defeated in her effort to speak the words "Rice crackers!" Suddenly, the context of their labor comes into focus as the one grounded member of the family succumbs and is silenced by the weight of shame that the others cannot or do not express. In contrast to her husband and children's gleeful and unabashed labor, the mother's display of shame disrupts the can-do attitude, and foreshadows the coming humiliation that Jan Di will suffer.

As it happens, Gu Jun Pyo and his mother pass by the food stand in their chauffeured car on the freeway. The point of view shifts from Jan Di and her family to Jun Pyo in the confines of his car. The camera moves inside the interior the luxury vehicle, black, sleek and anonymous on the outside and plushly antiseptic on the inside. Madam Kang stands out vividly against the black leather upholstery in her fuchsia suit and neatly coiffed hair, cool and unaffected by Jun Pyo's sullen whining. His mother has insisted that he attend an important business meeting with her as the heir of the Shinhwa Corporation. As the car nears the overpass under which the Geum family has set up their food stand, Madam Kang unexpectedly instructs her secretary to purchase her a bag of rice crackers. Jun Pyo turns to her in disgust, ridiculing the great Madam Kang for doing something so lowly. At this point, it quickly becomes obvious that she is the engineer behind the "chance" meeting on the freeway, and Jun Pyo has unwittingly fallen accomplice to Madam Kang's incipient shaming of Jan Di. The secretary obediently rolls down the window and calls to Jan Di, who gleefully rushes over to hand him a package of rice crackers. The camera captures her reaction, framed in the car window, as the cheerful words "2,000 won, please," die away in her throat. Jan Di's face freezes as she realizes that Jun Pyo is sitting in the back seat. The camera cuts back and forth between their shocked faces, and she backs away slowly, the crisp bills in her hand. Jan Di has not told Jun Pyo of what his mother did to her family, and the blood drains from his face as

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realizes what has just happened.

Jun Pyo moves to get out of the car, but Madam Kang seizes his hand. The camera closes in on Madam Kang's well-manicured hand, covering Jun Pyo's, curled to clasp his palm loosely the way any mother might hold the hand of their child. Cutting away to Jun Pyo's angry, thwarted face, we see that the casual affection of this gesture for all its cruelty and power. Despite her civility, Madam Kang's gentle grip on Jun Pyo's hand might well have the physical weight of steel handcuffs. Jun Pyo the adolescent boy has not yet escaped his mother and her power as both his parent and the most powerful woman in Korea. The traffic begins to move, and the car moves away from Jan Di, Jun Pyo still trapped inside the car, fuming and desperate. Jan Di is left standing in the middle of the road, forlorn and humiliated.

For the first time, the couple is truly confronted by Jan Di's social status and the nature of her labor, and the social distance between them comes into physical focus -- Jan Di outside on the road and Jun Pyo inside his car. The scene cuts back and forth between Jan Di and Jun Pyo inside the car, her sadness against his increasingly agitation. Jun Pyo's fury reaches its peak as his mother snidely tells her secretary to throw the rice crackers away, belittling the Guem family for selling food in such a dusty, dirty and inappropriate place. At last, Jun Pyo can bear no more and he rips his hand away out his mother's, to her great shock, and dramatically throws the car door open as he gets out. The scene segues into a wide shot of Jun Pyo walking back down the freeway towards the camera, the setting sun limning his tall figure and the scene shifts into slow motion.

It comes as no surprise when the wide, level camera pulls into a tight, full-body shot of Jun Pyo pulling Jan Di into a kiss. The tableau of their two bodies meeting is silhouetted against the setting sun, and they are just two dark shadows against the golden sky. The



Figure 14: Freeway kiss sequence - 1



Figure 15: Freeway kiss sequence - 2



Figure 16: Freeway kissing sequence - 3



Figure 17: Freeway kissing sequence - 4

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full body shot transitions into a close up of their kiss in profile as the scene ends, fulfilling the affective promise the series makes after all its deferrals of romantic fulfillment (Figures 14-17). The kiss satisfies all the melodramatic energies of the story in Jun Pyo's rebellion against the encompassing power of his mother and Jan Di's final acceptance of Jun Pyo's feelings. For the first time, these two adolescent lovers each lay aside their privileges and reticence, respectively, and consummate their first kiss under the approving eye of Jan Di's family. The denouement of this scene finds Jan Di and Jun Pyo walking along the overpass as the sunsets, and Jun Pyo asks Jan Di never to run away from him again and to allow him to help her in the future. Jan Di demurs on the second point, asking him to stand aside and do nothing if he wishes to remain her boyfriend, presumably for reasons of pride. But Jan Di relents on the first point, promising only that she will not allow Madam Kang to drive a wedge between them. Jun Pyo, pleased, warns her that it will only become harder from here on out and to prepare herself for anything.

The dark silhouette against the flaming sky, the setup for humiliation of one partner by a powerful antagonist, the rebellion of the young boy against the symbol of his mother's control - both the visual and narrative dimensions of this sequence fall into generic and heteronormative expectations for melodrama. What makes this sequence significant to the spatial story of *Boys Over Flowers* lies in the enactment of power in the social spaces of this scene, especially insofar as who is seen to transgress the accepted disciplining terms of the space. Classic Hollywood movies, according to Mark Garrett Cooper, create a series of heterogeneous spaces that separate the two protagonists from one another. As the movie progresses, the spaces come closer and closer to one another until the spatial trajectory of the film brings them together in a final homogeneous space. That is to say, both protagonists meet in a neutral space that belongs to neither one nor the other, a public space of sorts. (Cooper 2003, 151) *Boys Over Flowers* follows this spatial

logic, but the meeting place occurs in a non-place rather than a public space. Indeed, every instance of emotional confrontation between Jan Di and Jun Pyo occurs in a non-place of one type or another. The pair spend their first date in a cable car suspended over the air and break up for the first time on a bridge over a man-made canal inside a casino in Macao. Their eventual reunion occurs in a hotel room after Gu Jun Pyo's wedding fails to take place, before they separate for the second time in a transportation terminal as Jan Di boards a bus to see her family. This scene represents the only time when Jan Di and Jun Pyo ever stand on equal terms and in a truly neutral space, which is surprising given that romances tend to save this narrative high point for the conclusion of the story. The non-place is the homogeneous space of which Cooper writes, one that facilitates the bodying forth of excess emotion characterizing the melodramatic mode. Both the numbing familiarity and relative neutrality of these spaces come to serve its role in the trajectory of narrative spaces in *Boys Over Flowers*.

Leading up to this scene, Jan Di and Jun Pyo have only ever interacted with one another in their respective "worlds" or places. Jun Pyo has only entered Jan Di's space twice -- that of her home, and she did not invite him on either occasion. The majority of their interactions occurred in spaces where Jun Pyo overwhelmingly possess the asymmetry of power. Indeed, on several occasions Jun Pyo physically forced or tricked Jan Di into entering spaces that she did not wish to go, such as her first visit to his home or a weekend trip to New Caledonia. Only Jun Pyo has access to these places, resulting in his ability to control when Jan Di could come and go. The space of Shinhwa High School literally belongs to Jun Pyo's family. Jun Pyo's luxurious Italian villa, the lavish ballrooms in which the students throw parties, the interiors of expensive machines like private airplanes and helicopters - all are associated with or owned by Jun Pyo. The Geum family's dingy little apartment above the dry cleaning store, Jan Di's after school job at the porridge shop, and certain public "commoner" locations like the ice skating rink and

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the sky rail car - constitute Jan Di's world. Surprisingly, Jun Pyo never sets foot in any of the public locations without Jan Di's intervention. By their nature, anyone might access these public facilities, and Jun Pyo's world is constituted of a series of gated communities and other exclusive spaces. Only Jan Di's presence in these unregulated spaces provides enough incentive for Jun Pyo to cross over into a space that he must necessarily share with others. Even in Shinhwa High School, Jun Pyo and his friends possess their own private classroom and lounge so that they need not mingle with the other wealthy children. The narrative spatial segregation appears most severe in Jun Pyo's case.

The other three members of the F4 (affectionately called the F3 by fans) pass through Jan Di's "commoner" spaces several times, especially her place of work. The text depicts these characters as generally more democratic figures than Gu Jun Pyo. Yoon Ji Hoo, in particular, is literally a democratic figure, because he is the grandson of an ex-president of the Republic of Korea. Soo Yi Jung's family owns a museum and most of the historical treasures of Korea. The institution of the museum constructs certain relations of power and a hierarchy that privileges some types of knowledge and taste over others, but its mission tends towards a bourgeois liberalism that is less violently exclusive than Jun Pyo's aristocratic hauteur. And Woo Bin is the son of a gangster and inheritor of the largest construction and real estate development firm in Korea. Crime, of course, is equal democratic in its opportunism. The F3 pass in and out of public spaces with aplomb, seeming more comfortable and free in their access to the world. In comparison, Gu Jun Pyo's segregation from common spaces becomes confining and restrictive.

Indeed, during the half of the sequence focused on Jun Pyo, his entire environment confines him. His mother physically and symbolically restrains him. The traffic immobilizes him. Jun Pyo's very mobility, the symbol of his affluence and social status, has been

slowed and arrested by circumstance beyond his control during one of the few occasions that he is forced to depart from his well-controlled, exclusive spaces. "Significantly, this spatial indeterminacy is the condition of "those who have the means: the experience of alienation is in fact inherent to the 'haves' of the communications revolution as much -- albeit in different ways -- as the 'have-nots.'" (Silverman 1999, 92) Suddenly, Jun Pyo's riches have turned on him, leaving him to suffer in sameness alongside the common folk. The space of the vehicle acts as a place without place through its familiarity, like an island of lived space that can be transported with you that also serves to transport you. (Foucault 1995) Yet this heterotopic space is unexpectedly subject to the social discipline of the freeway. In total contrast, amid the anonymous sea of people contained inside their cars, the Geum family remains free to prance and frolic between the vehicles. Their unexpected mobility, weaving and in around the driver's relative immobility, reverses the privileges that normally characterize this non-place. The drivers are caught in a limbo space in a limbo time, a reversal that nonetheless occurs with ritual regularity, the promised speed of this social architecture is caught by frustrating stillness. In this space of anonymity and isolation, the space is suddenly riven by the presence of the Geum family in all their alarming embodiment, an intrusion not sanctioned by law or practice to exist in this space.

Madam Kang's criticism of the Geum family -- the absurdity of their food stand on the side of a freeway -- indicates not just a disdain for petty entrepreneurs or the dismissal of their labor, but ridicule for lacking so utterly in social grace as to introduce a social transaction into a space not "properly" disciplined for that purpose. We socially construct the space of the highway as one remanded to the function of transit. The narrative of the highway is exclusively of transit. The spatial logic of this non-place bears out its function for the most part: the linearity of its path, the medians and dividers to separate the flows of traffic, the presence of guardrails or curbs to visually and physically

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separate the space of the freeway from the space of its surrounding environment, the signposts that determine a different speed from urban thoroughfares, and, most importantly, the controlled entry and exit from the space via special ramps that are spaced far enough apart that it precludes easy and constant access to the exclusive flow of the freeway. The Geum family acts counter to the socially understood logic of this non-place by introducing a human element - unbounded from the confines of a motor vehicle, no less -- into the non-place.

The non-place, as Augé observes, actively precludes human relations. The speed of the motor vehicles zooming down the freeway lanes enforces the anonymity and distance characteristic of non-place as conveniently as does the aluminum and glass boundaries of the car itself. Only when the isolating mechanisms of the non-place give way, such as those occasions when we briefly meet the gaze of another driver through the windows of our car, does the mythology of functionality in non-places surface. The peculiar circumstance of gridlock at rush hour already introduces contradiction to the logic of the freeways mobility and exposes this space to further confusion. The enforced stillness of the vehicles, the density of cars passing the Geum family's truck, and the intrusion of the human body into the space of the road forces social encounters in ways not mediated by the anonymous facade of another vehicle. The shock of that embodiedness in a non-place, both as the presence of bodies and the ability of the body's actions to construct new and divergent social transactions, contravenes and destabilizes the ideology of function that characterizes these modern spaces. The transaction of commerce enacted in the space of the freeway, in the end, was not the challenge to the social meaning of this non-place, since the business sector routinely makes use of these structures for its own profit. It was the denaturalizing effect of bodies out of place that upset the order and discipline of mobility that in many ways marks the domain of the affluent.

Dimendberg theorizes the modern freeway as symbolic of the modern (Western) conception of space and how man acts upon the landscape of the nation. "Frequently imagined as a spatial superconductor for transporting vehicular traffic in an unimpeded, frictionless flow, the motorway has become the most extravagantly romanticized structure of the late twentieth-century built environment." (Dimendberg 1995, 93) The symbol of the freeway provides the necessary neutral space, a site that cuts across both common and elite "worlds" in unexpected ways. This non-place, while not egalitarian per se, belongs to neither Jun Pyo nor Jan Di. A space in progress and a passage of non-place, both commoner and prince alike must adhere to the laws of traffic. No matter the individual's social class, to enter the space of the freeway is to have one's mobility arrested according to the rhythms of urban living. The freeway is at once bounded by the concrete lane dividers and yet the visual portrayal of the freeway dwindling into the vanishing point on the horizon constructs it as a boundless space. The roads and highways that connect urban and rural nodes seem capable of going almost anywhere, even beyond the boundaries of the nation.

Moreover, the non-place of the freeway is a fundamentally mixed space - used for commerce, pleasure and mundane purposes. It is a space of display, through one's vehicle as well as a space of disciplined behavior. The freeway becomes occasionally a space of camaraderie and more often one of antagonism. It is the point of entry and exit from the city, where spaces diverge. The freeway possess its own laws and sovereignty granted by the state. It is both communal and heterogeneous, each person isolated in their own vehicle and yet brought together in the same space. In all its social contradictions, the freeway becomes a space that enables Jan Di and Jun Pyo to meet on equal terms. Indeed, that meeting *must* take place on the freeway. Not the airport, which remains unaffordable to the very poor. Nor in a sky rail car, which is purely a tourist space. Jan Di and Jun Pyo's confrontation *must* take place on the freeway, directly

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in the middle of traffic, amidst the sea of humanity locked away in their individual vehicles. It must occur on that pavement, in the middle of the lanes of traffic, when they are finally standing in the interstitial spaces of each vehicular unit that defines the atomization of the freeway. It can only be there, because that is the only time when they are literally *in between*.

Thus, when Jun Pyo leaves the confines of the car, he departs a space where his mother's power physically manifests and enters a visually and conceptually liminal space. He crosses the border from one space to another, asserting himself by this border-crossing in defiance of his mother. He meets Jan Di in the middle and the kiss is an *embodied* act. It is social, relational, communicative, able to occur only at the juncture where two bodies meet in space. The kiss forces a re-embodiment usually deprived from individuals in non-place. Moreover, the kiss requires a deliberate collaboration with Jan Di, and only together can they revolt against the disembodying of the non-place in the an embodied act that stands in for the most embodied (heteronormative) act that can occur in a space - reproduction. The indeterminacy of the space of the freeway, the sense of its in between-ness, resonates with the narrative of adolescence. Indeed, the kiss occurs at sunset, an in between time that enables strange reversals such as arresting the mobility and motion of the wealthy, catching them in exactly the manner that distinguishes the rich from everyone else. Traversal constitutes the most fundamental spatial logic of *Boys Over Flowers* as a modern adolescent love story: crossing into adulthood, traversing through forbidden social spaces, mobility becomes the spatial poetics of modernity. The freeway represents passage, a space of constant becoming, of going and coming and unending process.

On the Road

Despite understanding what the space of the freeway adds to the interplay of power and love in this scene of *Boys Over Flowers*, the choice of the freeway remains generically odd. Romances and romantic comedies tend to place the scene of reconciliation in a public place, ushering the protagonists out of their respective places and habits of thinking to a single homogenous place, such as rural environs or public, urban locales. These two types of public locations play into thematic and visual modes of nostalgia that lend themselves to love scenes, but the freeway represents romantic notions of freedom rather than passionate love. Moreover, this scene on the freeway exists in *no other* version of the *Hana Yori Dango* textual universe. This scene and its emotional and affective function in the narrative simply have no analog. The Korean adaptation is the only version where the protagonist's family runs a business, resulting in this scene, whose function is to both force the protagonists to come to terms with their class differences and finally commit to one another. The class differences in the preceding version, including the *manga*, remain peripheral to the narrative, and the protagonist accepts her lover's feelings in a later scene that the Korean version deploys to different emotional ends than the other versions. This scene on the freeway is purely a Korean creation, and in it, I believe we can understand the uniqueness of the freeway as a space to Korea through its function in the *Boys Over Flowers* spatial story.

The freeway system of Korea is part of a very recent push towards modernization, existing only since the mid-1980s. Before this period, the urban landscape of Korea was leveled by the Korean War and in the subsequent re-building, has faced a constant overturn of the urban environment. "Since the late 1960s, the entire south Korean urbanscape has been quite literally under construction: torn down, rebuilt, extended,

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elaborated, reconfigured. Anyone who has lived in Korea in these years will have encountered that condition of modernity where, in Marshal Berman's apt citation of Marx, "All that is solid melts into air." (Kendall 2001, 1) In Seoul, even the roadways are not permanent, as the recent removal of the highway covering the river in 2003 shows.

The existence of the modern Korean highway system is the end result of a nationalist industrial plan whose roots lie in the post-war period. As part of a nationalist plan to build the industrial base of Korea, the government encouraged the development of several key sectors of the economy to enter the international export market, one of which was the automobile industry. Through a series of legal and financial incentives that effectively forced the Korean populace to bear the costs of financing cheap exports abroad, the government sought to establish South Korea as a manufacturing powerhouse by favoring and protecting certain *chaebols*, like Daewoo and Hyundai. In order, however, to truly market-test their car models, these manufacturers needed to create a domestic market for cars, which would also help to absorb any excess stock left unsold to the foreign market. (Nelson 2000, 25) To encourage and essentially help create a domestic market for cars, the government collaborated with the *chaebols* by rapidly expanding roadways, parking garages, bridges, and other assorted infrastructure. (Nelson 2000, 96)

In 1985, there was estimated to be only one car for every 100 people in the Republic of Korea, compared to 1 for every 50 people in Taiwan. (Nelson 2000, 95) By the early part of this decade, the Korean urban landscape had radically changed. As part of a nationalist campaign that posed the consumption habits of individual Koreans as political choices, the trifecta of finance, government, and business laid the groundwork for what would become the car culture in Korea. ". . . [A]ll the vicissitudes of the Korean automobile industry should not obscure the fact that Korea has emerged as the world's

fifth largest automobile manufacturer with a production of 2.7 million cars in 2003, and that it is well on its way toward being a country with universal automobile ownership." (Volti 2006, 148) Indeed, Rudi Volti observes that "in the case of Korea, the expansion of the car population was almost entirely due to the expansion of the domestic industry, which for a number of years was completely insulated from foreign competition by government policies."

The act of consumption become a process of national identification, allowing individual consumers the sense of weighing their family's needs against a protectionist, "buy Korean" stance. (Nelson 2000, 25) In this time period, consumption came to stand in for and symbolize the increasing class differences in Korean society. (Koo 2007, 1) The effects of this increasing polarization in a state that, until recently, had been relatively egalitarian through the leveling effects of the Korean War, land reform, and abolition of the old status system with slavery, can easily be felt in the social class focus of a narrative like *Boys Over Flowers*. (Koo 2007, 3) Consumption was always the mode of distinguishing class, but the differences did not become aggravated until the opening of the domestic market to a wider variety of luxury goods that increased the gap of consumption behaviors. (Koo 2007, 8) The changes in the 1980s finally materialized the differences that had always been accumulating between the social classes of Korea. (Nelson 2000, 27) It is this environment that cars became a part of both individual achievement and national development, and the culture of cars and highway systems rose to represent the affluence through mobility.

The freeway kissing scene, when understood against this history of modernization, becomes a purposeful act of narrative and spatial reconciliation. The social rift between those who profited from modernization - the *chaebol* as represented by Gu Jun Pyo and Madam Kang - and those who bore the burden of making those riches - the Geum family

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- narratively meet in the anonymous non-place of the freeway. Between the shiny sea of vehicles in rush hour traffic that represent Korean modern nationalism at its simultaneous best and worst, the freeway becomes a hyper-signified space, the locus of where modernity turns humans into automatons through the new trifecta of consumption, urbanization, and mobility. That the love scene between the emblems of class friction meet in one of the most alienating spaces of modernity to make the most fundamental emotional connection of modern life is nothing less than an act of social healing. It is as if modernity, in a strange reversal, creates the capacity to heal its fundamental ruptures through unexpected capacities of affect that grow out of spaces of alienation.

The freeway, as a space unique to modernity, becomes the only space in the narrative that may be able to effect the healing of social rifts symbolically caused by the very forces that enabled its creation. While this space narratively existed to bring the protagonists together, it could not protect them from the institutional forces that threaten tear them apart. Discursively a space of becoming and deferral, the freeway does not possess the symbolic power to protect, merely to enable. But that enabling clearly played a crucial part in the process of reconciliation. Indeed, the quality of spaces that allow the actors within them to enact alternative narrative scripts - such as turning the freeway indirect to direct commerce zone or to subvert the strange, liminal crisis of rush hour traffic into a stolen moment of freedom - renders even more confusing the uncertain narrative quality of the non-place. Perhaps it is only in total confusion that spaces finally give up their power to discipline, and only in human enactment of alternative narrative possibilities in these spaces that we as societies come to restructure and take back the meanings of our modern spaces.

3 Nostalgia

Temporalities of Colonial Modernity

In this chapter, I examine how the aesthetics of temporality frame the visual and affective air of nostalgia in *Boys Over Flowers*, and how these temporalities construct memory in the space of urban modernity. I intend to closely read a particularly telling scene in *Boys Over Flowers* and consider the staging and consumption of nostalgia in photography as a simulacrum of memory, and how nostalgia reads in a Korean text as an aesthetic characteristic of late modernity. The nature of this staging, done in the context of wedding photography, becomes the imagination of alternate present through the use of nostalgia as a form of temporal longing, but not for a relation to the past, but a relation to the present/future. In this discussion, I also address the cultural specificity of nostalgias, and their dependencies on cultural conceptions of time. Nostalgia as we understand it in the West cannot capture Asia's particular relationship to the production of its past. To discuss the nature of nostalgia and memory in *Boys Over Flowers*, we must once again return to the "original" genre of *shojo* to discuss temporality as an avenue of resistance. The nature of temporal deferral characteristic of *shojo* as an adolescent aesthetic becomes an integral part of nostalgia and fantasy in *Boys Over Flowers*.

Shojo and Temporal Slippage

Shojo is, at its heart, an ambivalent and resistant genre that narratively and stylistically defers incipient womanhood – and its attendant responsibilities – by maintaining the open-ended possibility of adolescence. (Le 2004) In Japan, the life course of women is tightly regulated by social expectation, their lives shifting to completely revolve around their children and the home as soon as they marry. (Ogasawara 1998) As a consequence of the burdens placed on them later in life, children, girls especially, are indulged as both consumers and social agents until they shift into the role of economic and biological producers. (Treat 1996, 282) As such, girls materially and symbolically become sites of capitalist nationhood – especially in the hyper-feminized yet de-sexualized adolescence constructed in and by *shojo*. (Robertson 1998) The discourse of *shojo* as girlhood stretched beyond its “natural” biological and social limits becomes a rhetorical strategy to hold on to the space of possibility denied to adult women. This is *shojo*'s first and fundamental dimension of resistance.

Shojo itself becomes a space out of time in these *manga*. The art style evokes elements of fantasy, a revocation of place, such that only signified space remains. (Li 2007) *Manga*, in contrast to Western comic books, depend upon a very different relation to time. The gutters between the panels of Western comics compress time, collapsing events and even geographies together by the juxtaposition of panels side by side. (McCloud 1993)

In contrast, the Japanese *manga* operates on cinematic decompression of tightly wound comic book time to the elasticity of cinematic time. (Schodt 1996) Notice the difference in the two images (Figures 18 & 19). On the left, the character Magneto experiences a different and ambiguous elapse of time between each box. Between the first and

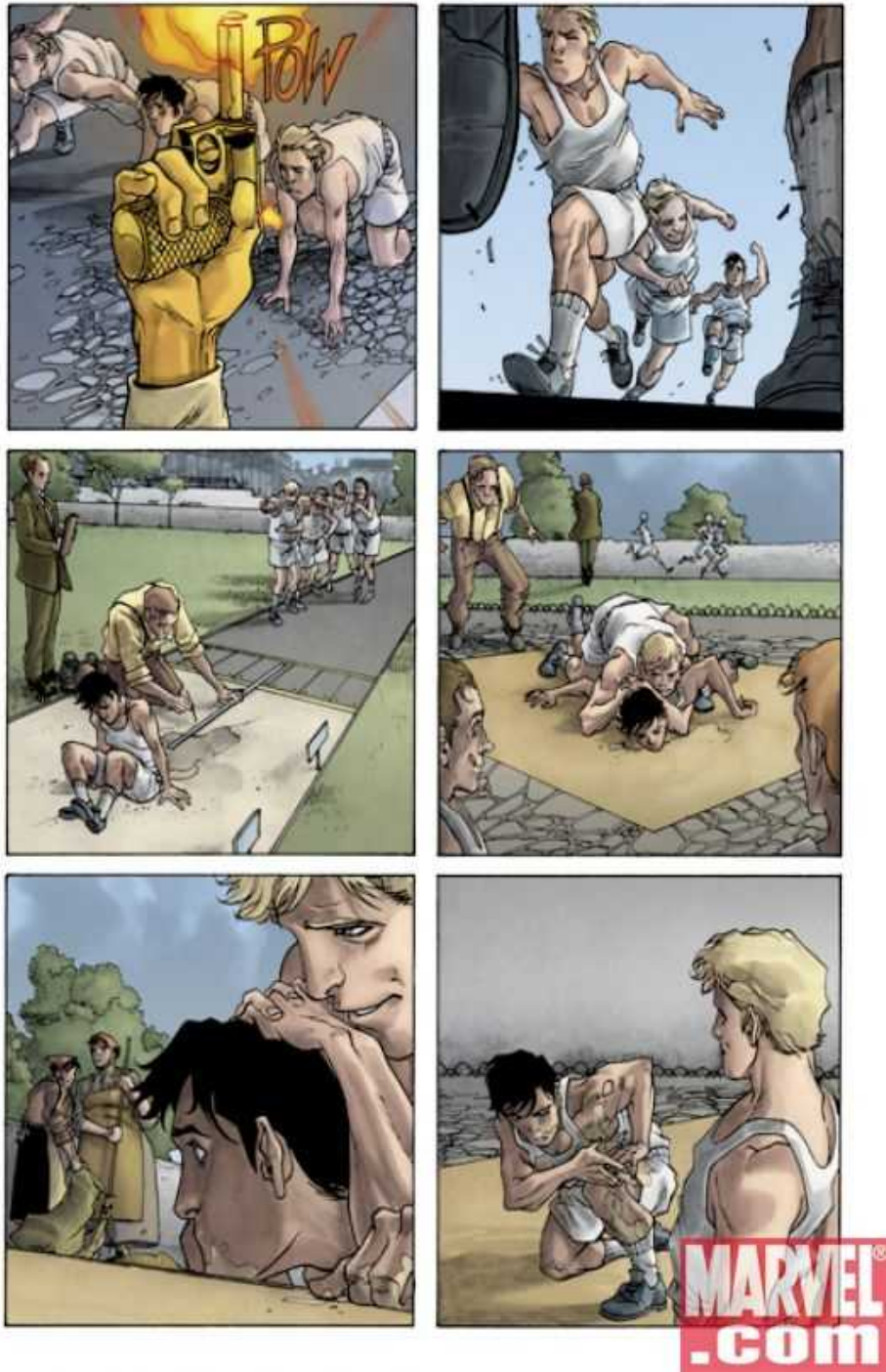


Figure 18: *X-Men - Magneto Testament*, Issue 1, p.3

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Figure 19: *Hana Yori Dango*, Chapter 238, p. 4

second, mere seconds pass after the gun is shot and the student athletes race towards the finish line (Figure 18). Yet the second box transitions from the race to a track activity – the long jump – indicating substantially more time has occurred. But in all cases, the time occurs in the gutters of the panels, excluding time from the interior of the boxes. Time elapsing within a box necessarily requires text, to force the eye to literally traverse the space of the page.

In contrast the second image from *Hana Yori Dango*, when read in the proper fashion from right to left, top to bottom, the middle, L-shaped box reveals the counter-logic of *manga* (Figure 19). After Makino freezes, the middle panel reveals the hesitant turn of her head from her mother's vantage point. But this occurs in the exact same delineated space as the slow motion “montage” of Makino's mother leaping for Makino from Makino's vantage point. Rather than time elapsing, *manga* often zooms into and stretches out a single moment, studying it with the interest of a poet or scientist. Notice that within the *very same panel*, the multiple iterations of Makino's mother appears, dissecting her movements side-by-side like the individual frames of a movie. This “slow motion” cinematic technique literally fragments and accumulates the flow of time to examine its components like a piece of modernist art.

In *shojo manga*, gutters often disappear, disintegrating and yielding the logic of panels to the imperatives of composition and design. The pages are filled with attenuated lines, misty ink washes, and uncertain frames where picture and text bleed into one another, each becoming the architectural element of the other. Notice in this page, following the text boxes across from right to left, the eye also traverses the top and bottom pictures. Within the logic of *shojo manga*, cinema rules. As such, the profile of Makino's face is not physically above the top-down shot of her lying in bed. The literal passage of one's eye down the illustration evokes the metaphorical passage of time, as if implying a

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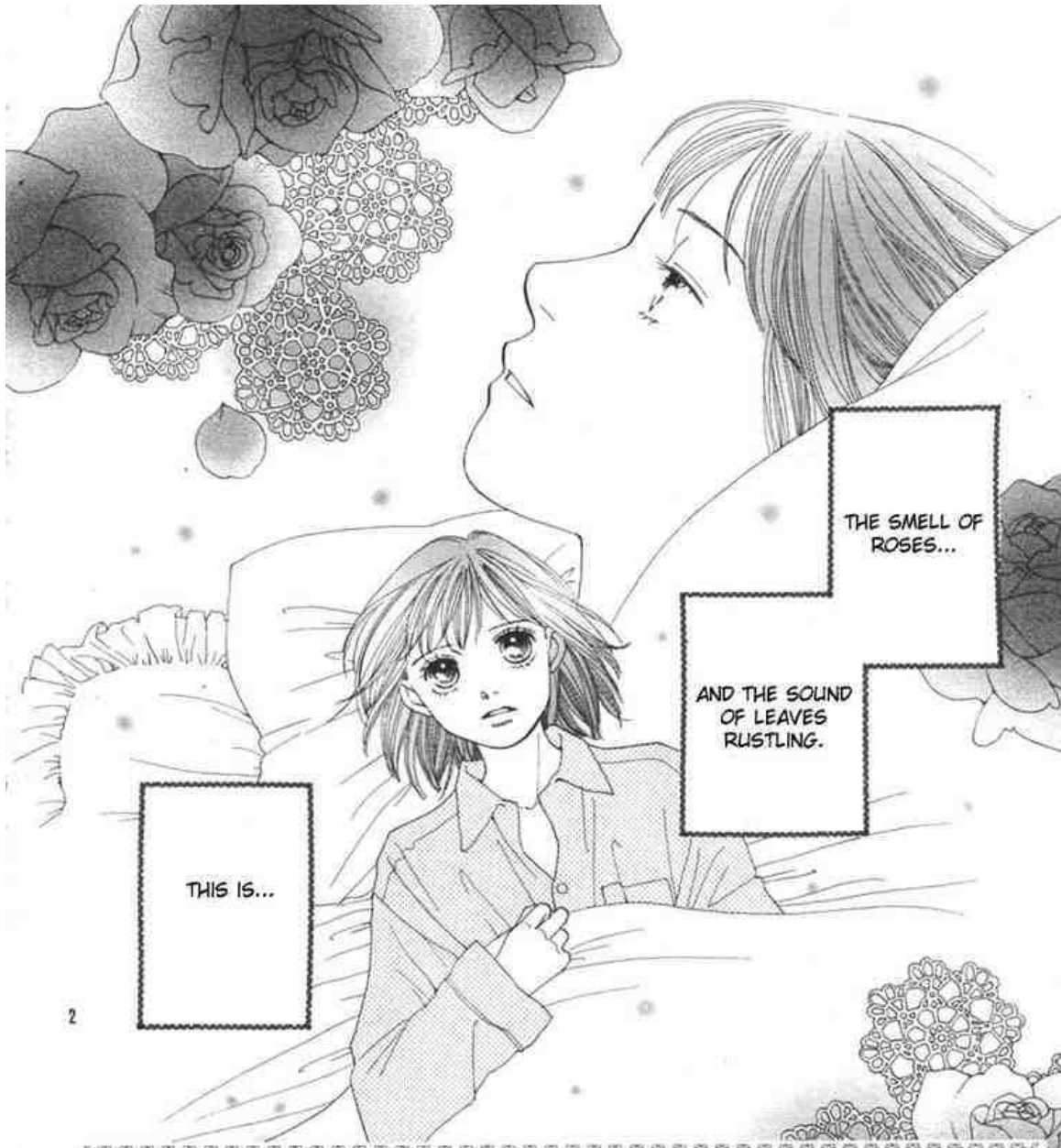


Figure 20: Uncertain *shojo* spaces, flowers signify interiority

bleeding transition between movie images. Notice also the lack of detail in the space. The background is pale and filled with flowers (Figure 20). The disappearance of place itself leaves the viewer in an uncertain space, neither here nor there, but somewhere and sometime in between. The space of *shojo*, littered with flowers and sparkling light becomes a space of constant interiority. The flowers, a symbol of affective longing, manifesting the inner mind that is being spoken through the dialogue boxes across the page. The boundaries between interior and exterior, past and present, all fade away through the formal conventions of visual *manga* narrative.

The slippages encompass not only the uncertainty of enunciation but the authority of gender roles, sexual fantasy, and the unfolding of time and space itself into a nonlinear borderlands between infancy and womanhood. The fantastic becomes a fundamental strategy of the genre of *shojo*, even when the fantastic never occurs in narrative events. *Shojo* effects the suspension of the modern social order in both its portrayal of the desired real and the heightened affective spaces wherein possibility, safety, and feminine agency, above all, determines the course of events amidst nostalgia for other modernities. It is feminine will that created *shojo* spaces, and feminine agency, desire, and pleasure that is the axiomatic truth of the *shojo* genre.

Most *shojo* narrative revolves around the border crisis when *shojo* heroines symbolically cross out of girlhood – the heroine's first love. The threat of sexual awakening and transition into social adulthood, the thematic core of *shojo* narrative, constitute the dialectical complement that is invoked in the same breath as the creation of the *shojo* fantasy space. In this scene, Makino and Doumyoji are about to consummate their relationship for the first time. Notice the attenuated quality of the line, disappearing such that it is no longer capable of containing the middle panel from sliding into bottom panel (Figure 21). Their bodies literally transgress the uncertain boundaries that are

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Figure 21: *Hana Yori Dango*, Chapter 236, p.23

meant to contain them, such that they cross over into the bottom panel where their bodies meet for the first time in an act of sexual awakening. Makino and Doumyoji visually and metaphorically cross over into adulthood through the act of sex.

Shojo is thus unable to break from hegemony and exists in the interstices of its states, only constituted in the negative and always ever becoming. Part of *shojo*'s transnational appeal may lie in its lack of national referents, a space marked only in its portrayal of universality. *Shojo* becomes an endless series of high school classrooms, after-school jobs, and street cafés where young love's primacy amongst all modern emotions structures the melodramatic logic of the universe.

Shojo's aesthetic of indeterminacy and uncertainty resonates well with Korean melodrama's sensibilities. The nostalgia that suffuses melodrama and the uncertain nostalgia of *shojo* are both quintessentially modern aesthetics. Like adolescence itself, the aesthetic forms of *shojo* and nostalgia obsess over enunciation and the affective qualities of time. Nostalgia springs from the sense of void or loss, displacement of all kinds encompassed under its umbrella. Like modernity, nostalgia enacts melancholy over the loss of a past place and time. Exported globally by transnational cinema, nostalgia has come to be naturalized as one of the essential sensibilities of late modernity. (Desai 2004) The uncertainty evoked by these pair of terms captures in a way impossible with other aesthetic forms the condition of decolonization -- a fundamental indeterminacy which is the prevailing condition of Asian modernity. (Friedman 2001)

Staging Pasts, Consuming Nostalgia

The following scene that I will examine is, like the previous scene in Chapter 2, entirely

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unique to *Boys Over Flowers* with no analog to any other version of *Hana Yori Dango*. In the same way, this scene points to underlying tensions and stylistic concerns that may point to uniquely Korean experiences of modernity and its expression through textual styles.

The primary relationship in *Boys Over Flowers* is the romance blossoming between poor girl Geum Jan Di and rich boy Gu Jun Pyo. Gu Jun Pyo, however, has a love rival in the form of his best friend from childhood, Yoon Ji Hoo. Ji Hoo shows an interest in Geum Jan Di from the very beginning, noticing her around school before she ever crosses paths with Gu Jun Pyo. As a consequence, Ji Hoo is present to save Jan Di from attempted rape by a gang of male students sent by Gu Jun Pyo to "scare her," earning Jan Di's eternal gratitude and friendship, if not her love. Their friendship persists through the series, Ji Hoo standing witness to all Jan Di's troubles and intervening where he is able.

The week before Gu Jun Pyo's arranged marriage to the daughter of another elite corporation, Geum Jan Di and Yoon Ji Hoo spend an afternoon at a park by the beach. They each were tricked into the meeting by Yoon Ji Hoo's grandfather -- an ex-president of Korea and the doctor running the clinic where Geum Jan Di volunteers -- who tells them both to be present at a certain pier that afternoon. They both find the awkward matchmaking humorous, and decide to explore the beach park together.

The pair happen upon a wedding photo shoot on the beach, surrounded by a milling crowd of excited onlookers. The photo shoot, it turns out, is a promotional contest with prizes for the couples whose photos are judged most cute by the crowd (Figure 22). Seeing Jan Di's interest in the prizes, Ji Hoo suggests that they enter for fun. During the shoot, the onlookers demand that they kiss for authenticity, and Jan Di awkwardly pecks a surprised Ji Hoo on the cheek. They are the most handsome couple by far and win the



Figure 22: Jan Di and Ji Hoo enter a promotional wedding photo contest at the beach



Figure 23: Jan Di and Ji Hoo win the contest

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Figure 24: Jan Di moves to give Ji Hoo a peck on the cheek at the request of the onlookers



Figure 25: Ji Hoo studies the winning photo of his fantasy wedding to Jan Di

popularity contest by a large margin (Figure 23-24).

Later that evening, Ji Hoo sits alone in his dimly lit room looking at the photos taken that afternoon (Figure 25). He smiles with bittersweet longing at the pictures of himself and Jan Di smiling, the perfect couple. The photos, although taken that day with digital photographic equipment, seem already aged and sepia-toned in the light of Ji Hoo's desk lamp, as if a life time had already elapsed. Taking out his mother's wedding ring, which his grandfather had entrusted to him earlier in the episode so that he might present it to a girl that he loves, Ji Hoo contemplates it before setting it down next to the photos.

Visually, the scene evokes a sense of temporal indeterminacy and nostalgic agrarian-ness. Low, pale clouds cover the horizon, creating a diffuse, even light that removes a sense of time. The quality of light filtered through the cloud cover could indicate either mid-morning or late afternoon, leaving the scene in temporal limbo. The beach marks itself as a place only insofar as it is not the familiar urban setting of the series, asserting itself as emphatically natural and picturesque. The sandy boardwalk that they traverse could be on any stretch of Asian coastline, dotted by windswept pine trees that usually evoke melancholy or thwarted love in some, if not all, East Asian literatures. Even the interruption of the tranquil beach walk by the hyper-consumerist promotional contest, in its symbolic consumption of this environment as a background to wedding photography, serves to further remark upon the nostalgic, timeless quality of this beach. In the final scene with Ji Hoo at his home, the dim, half-lighting in the large, empty house composes an air of serene, nostalgic contemplation, especially with the use of the lone desk lamp that casts a yellowing, aging glow on the photos.

Nostalgia mediates several important and unexpected resonances in this scene, which turn on the role of nostalgia as a stylized mode of longing for things lost and its ability to

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re-author alternative visions of the present/future. (Santesso 2006) The term nostalgia began as a pathology observed in soldiers during World War 1. The diagnosis defined it as pain from yearning for return to one's homeland. This conceptually linked spatial displacement to the experience of loss. Over time, however, the definition changed, evolving to characterize not just spatial but temporal longing. (Boym 2002) The pathological character of nostalgia, as a consequence, slowly gave way to more psychological uses. The concept has only recently been constructed as a universal experience, such as in Marcel Proust's work.

Jigna Desai calls nostalgia a "structure of feeling" that is naturalized into a sense of universalism. (Desai 2004, 143) I am hesitant to use Desai's framing of nostalgia as a structure of feeling (as defined by Raymond Williams). Rather than make claims about the psychological or sociological conditions of times defined by very different relations to temporality, I would suggest making more proximate claims about the development of universalist nostalgia as a textual strategy. For this, I refer to Paul Grainge's distinction between an nostalgic mood (psychological) and an nostalgic mode (stylistic and cultural).⁸ (2002) For example, Aaron Santesso frames nostalgia as a set of poetic tropes found in English poetry that came to be recognized as "an impersonal, highly literary mode of idealization responding first and foremost to the concerns of the present." (Santesso 2006, 13) In his book, *A Careful Longing*, Santesso traces how these literary motifs came to be recognized as a mode of writing about feeling and how it has come to represent a collective experience. (2006, 24) It may be that through the increasing circulation of film and fiction, the universalist strain of bittersweet longing that we understand to be nostalgia was actively taken up as a narrative strategy and purposefully deployed by creative producers across the world who recognized its similar affective

⁸ Grainge does not suggest that mode is an "empty" style, although it is problematic construction

quality to their own literatures. Indeed, aesthetics of longing have existed for centuries as coherent stylistic modes in ancient Chinese and Japanese literature. This approach more explicitly favors a model of indigenization, because as I will discuss later, nostalgia is not everywhere the same.

In its simplest terms, nostalgia concerns itself with the affective dimension of loss -- in this case, the melancholy felt after loss and the yearning for what cannot be recovered, be it across time or space. Baudrillard further defines it as being part of a very modernist condition, because nostalgia concerns itself thematically with a loss of historicity or memory. The modern subject is unmoored by the rupture with "tradition" and is cast adrift. (Baudrillard 1994, 44) In particular, nostalgia seems to surface aggressively once the social imagination loses faith in the telos of progress, turning away from the failed promise of a better future towards the irrecoverable past lost to the march of linear time. (Pickering and Keightley 2006, 920) These expressions of nostalgia yearn for what is now no longer possible because of decisions made in an earlier moment, a regret over how the present has come to be. Texts deploy nostalgia in an attempt to maintain historical continuity and stability against the intense velocity and vertigo of modernity that Todd Gitlin calls an "historical acceleration." (Lowenthal, 1989: 21; 1980: 233). The constant production and reproduction of historical events through the mediated image become part of this vertiginous experience, amplifying the experience of dislocation through myriad orientations towards loss.

The aesthetic work accomplished through nostalgia is not always regarded positively. Jameson's criticism of nostalgia concerns the way in which it "restructure(s) the whole issue of pastiche and project(s) it onto a collective and social level, where the desperate attempt to appropriate a missing past is now refracted through the iron law of fashion change and the emergent ideology of the generation." (Jameson 1991, 18) Nostalgic

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fictions, according to Jameson, are inauthentic images because they are actually "celebrations of the imaginary style of a real past." ((1991, 85) The underlying fear of nostalgia as a literary tactic, however, seems to be in the flattening of historical time into a series of presents, causing a form of historical amnesia. In nostalgia's defense, the departure from historical reality emerges as a tactical response to the increasing dislocation of the modern subject from a sense of history, because not all historical conditions are equally recoverable. As I will show in my close reading, fantastic narrativization may be the only available intervention on certain types of cultural traumas, and no attention to lived experience can effect the reconciliation of the modern subject to her lost history.

Later scholars of nostalgia resist this pessimism, asserting that nostalgia need not be an amnesiac condition with regard to the past. Rey Chow suggests that nostalgia, as he observes its workings in Asian cinema today, attempts to (re)collect the past through artifacts and tropes that effectively compress forms of historical experience. The resulting mosaic produces not history but "fantasies of time." (Chow 2001, 211) Rather than locating nostalgia as a feeling produced by things lost to the past, a linear and teleological framing of affect, "can we attempt the reverse? Perhaps nostalgia is a feeling looking for an object," and not an object that triggers feelings? Chow's provocative intervention, I believe, illuminates the stagings of alternate time made possible by nostalgia through the mediated image in *Boys Over Flowers*.

The use of the wedding motif in the photo shoot creates layers of embedded consumption and production of nostalgia. The shoot itself is a promotional contest, ostensibly to sell the wedding industry as a consumer experience. Weddings, read emblematically in the wedding photo, are a practice of preemptive nostalgia. They are the staging and production of events in anticipation of memory. The discourse of the

wedding industry may speak to creating an experience, but the implication is that the experience becomes memory and, in particular, memory for sentimental consumption. The preservation of the wedding dress, the extensive picture-taking, and the giving and receiving of mementos serve to memorialize and anchor the production of gendered nostalgia. The wedding industry not only invokes nostalgia in reflection upon the event, but in the actual production of the event as it occurs.

At the photo shoot itself, Jan Di and Ji Hoo posed in front of a crowd of onlookers who demanded that they kiss. Whether or not the crowd knew they were a couple is immaterial. The chanting of "Kiss, kiss, kiss!" was a demand to perform sentimental acts for the consumption of the onlookers, to complete the affective script which would be mobilized immediately into a nostalgic narrative discussed over coffee or tea. The onlookers present understood their participation as a form of vicariousness or viewership, much like watching a drama on television. Nostalgia is much as a desire to re-enchant as it is a reaction to disenchantment. (Pickering and Keightley 2006, 936) Nostalgia functions as part of a social web of diverse rememberings. Susan Stewart argues that "nostalgia is enamored of distance, not of the referent itself," which describes the relation of the onlookers to the photographed couple. (Stewart 1993) Their investment lies precisely in the gap between themselves as outsiders and the nostalgic turn of this staging of heterosexual fantasy.

The images produced by this contest themselves become a site of nostalgic consumption. The services of a wedding photographer are to strategically stage memory on behalf of the wedded couple. The half-posed, half-candid nature of wedding photography hinges on the image as an artifact, one upon whom nostalgia can be attached. But Ji Hoo's treasured photographs are not of a real event, nor the anticipation of a real event. At this point in the *Boys Over Flowers* narrative, the wedding photos

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suggest a moment of uncertainty in regard to the future. With the primary competition for Jan Di's affections about to wed another woman, Ji Hoo's future with Jan Di suddenly seems open-ended. In the light of Ji Hoo's desk lamp, however, the photos already appear sepia-toned, as if cast into a time past rather than taken that very afternoon. The photographs themselves symbolically foreclose the possibility of the image being realized. Nostalgia's primary affective axis is longing for things lost. The imagery and its affective evocations already tell us through the terms of loss that this alternate present/future was always already irretrievable.

The discourse of image in the age of digital photography adds another peculiar resonance to the staging of memory. The photos taken during the wedding photoshoot are immediately available for viewing, indicating the use of a digital camera that can print the images as needed. As a recording device, the digital camera possess no "original" print on film. This was a source of great anxiety for artists who worked with film, and much academic discourse mulled over the malleable image that seemed far less tethered to its referent than before. The image breaks down to binary code, having had a different interaction with light bouncing off the referent and imprinting itself upon the internal sensors of the digital camera rather than through the chemical process of film. The traces of the event witnessed by the camera do not persist as we understand things to materially persist, adding another dimension to the staging of the wedding. In Roland Barthe's rumination on the nature of the photograph, he asserts that "the photograph does not necessarily say what is no longer, but only and for certain what has been." He tempers that statement, however, admitting that the reality of photographs remains entirely contingent, authenticating only presence and nothing more. (Barthes 1982) Despite the materiality of the printed artifact, the photo deceives through the apparent firmness of photography's enunciation. "What has been" is really the production of a circumstance that followed the codes and symbols of a genre of portraiture. The

instability of meaning or narrative in the photographs interlocks with the instability, perhaps, of their medium. Susan Stewart calls nostalgia "the repetition that mourns the inauthenticity of all repetitions and denies the repetition's capacity to define identity." (1993)

Ji Hoo's consumption of nostalgia, of staged memory -- what meanings can we read from this moment? I would suggest that Ji Hoo's longing for Jan Di and the past-that-could-have-been gestures to the encompassing aesthetic of *Boys Over Flowers*. Adolescent dramas tend to celebrate a longing for a better and more beautiful past, focusing on the moment where youth crosses into adulthood through the emotional crucible of first love. Andrew Wernick identifies a kind of homesickness in this tendency, a yearning not for place, but time, especially "in nostalgia for youth, as if time and place were interchangeable, and time itself a succession of irrecoverable homes." (Wernick 1997, 219) This assertion becomes even more provocative when considered in an Asian or post-colonial context. Colonialism, some Korean scholars suggest, erased or obscured the specificity of Korean history, alienating tradition from living memory, leaving Korean citizens strangers to their past. (H. J. Kwak 2003, 102; G. M. Cho 2008, 5) While remaining in the same space, the lived experience is lost to war, the dislocation of urbanization, and the rush to modernize. The compressed modernization period transformed the social and material landscape such that the memory of place fades, leaving only time as the inheritor of memory. Robert Hemming argues that, like trauma, nostalgia operates from "the same liminal space between memory and forgetting," rooted usually in the experience of surviving war. (2008, 3) But where memory fails to console and forgetting cannot fade the cultural legacy of trauma, nostalgia may serve the reparative role of continuity for Korea's amnesia.

Rey Chow identifies a similar tendency in Hong Kong cinematic nostalgia to long for

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temporalities rather than places like classical Western notions of the term. The difficulty of applying Western models of nostalgia to the context of Hong Kong - and arguably any Asian nation - is with the "constant disruption of their physical and architectural environments and thus their sense of stability of place." (Chow 2001, 208) The destruction of "original" historic places, the constant overturn of urban structure and new construction discourages the acquisition of the sense of permanence in place that produces nostalgia. But through the intervention of mediated images, nostalgia comes to serve a different purpose. Nostalgia has transformed into an active "manipulation of temporality" rather than just projecting loss upon spaces. (Chow 2001, 210)

The modern history of Korea is, by any definition, the result of continuous traumas overlapping one another. A peculiar foreshortening of historical vision occurs as a result. It becomes almost impossible to think past the "hole" or intangible blockage represented by the source of trauma and the subject identity is foreshortened by the looming horizon of the recent trauma. (G. M. Cho 2008, 5) Historical continuity becomes emotionally and intellectually unthinkable, because the absence of the past as such forces it into and allows it to act upon the present. Trauma is not experienced as it occurs, but in another time and place, a condition that refuses to be bounded by the linearity of time, but persists in an adjacent temporality. Nostalgia, as a temporally resistant and nonlinear strategy, offers a response to the silencing effect of trauma on history. I would suggest that the only remaining recourse for this traumatic foreshortening of historical sight is through re-narrating and re-mythifying Korea through the pastiche continuity of nostalgia.

Modernity then, like the photographs Ji Hoo cherishes, stage and re-stage memory to pave over the void of cultural memory lost to trauma and colonial history. Bachelard says that the poetic image is not "an echo of the past." Rather, "through the brilliance of

image, the distant past resounds with echoes." (Bachelard, Jolas, and Stilgoe 1994, xvi) But in this case, the past constructed by these photos never existed, just as the Korean past is irrecoverable. The past for which Ji Hoo longs is a composite fantasy that reveals a vision of a desired present, a rewriting of his history with Jan Di. And so too can nostalgia attempt the re-authoring of historical narrative. Daphne Berdahl argues that the production of nostalgia is ultimately "about the production of the present rather than the reproduction of the past," but concerns the past because without which the organization of the present in linear time fails. (Berdahl 1999) The image in the photo, which captures an illusion of love that never existed, becomes a simulacrum of the absent original for which Ji Hoo pines. So too is nostalgia the reproduction that lacks the authority to become identity.

Finally, it is not a coincidence that the mechanism of love serves as the foundations of the nostalgia for an alternate present (and the implicit pasts that created it as well as the future that it brings). Both modernity and nostalgia articulate themselves through this emotion, because the threads of "love and nostalgia cannot be separated . . . in both love and nostalgia a wave of presence swirls around with a wave of loss." (Harper 1996) For if rupture is the poetics of modernity, then "the experience of loss is endemic" to its condition. (Pickering and Keightley 2006, 920) Nostalgia, as the aesthetic of loss and longing, comes to serve both melancholic (longing for love) and utopian (celebrations of happy times) expressions. Adolescent heartbreak, historical trauma, and the yearning to both remember and rewrite both transform and are transformed by the pathos of nostalgia.

Nostalgia Reconsidered for Colonial Modernity

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In a Western context, and to a certain extent in late modernities like Japan, the loss of faith in the promise of progress manifests its disenchantment through fictional nostalgia and longing for youth. Youth suggests a metaphorical return to a future/past when more possibility lay on the horizon, standing in for the lost home, an irrecoverable time associated with how the present might have been. But with colonial modernities, a dimension of trauma and unwilling amnesia complicates the act of longing. The dislocation of the modern subject from the collective past is not a metaphor to describe an active rejection of some constructed notion of tradition. The external circumstance of colonization, war, and state-led modernization in Korea caused very real material and cultural ruptures. The Japanese colonial regime forced the Korean populace to speak a different language and attempted to destroy historical artifacts linked to Korea's past. The Korean War is regarded by Korean-American second generation children as a "lost" war, the incredible dislocation and brutality shrouded in a cloak of silence that serves only to further haunt its descendants. (G. M. Cho 2008, 5) This condition of loss differs substantially from the type of loss that we think of as nostalgia, which is an aesthetic expression of bittersweet longing. In colonial modernities, nostalgia can act as a tool to negotiate with not just loss but collective trauma.

The concept of modernity is time dependent. The fundamental rupture that separates the modern from the premodern or traditional order operates on a temporal axis, not a spatial one. Yet, in all the discussions of "multiple," "decentered," or "colonial" modernities, space becomes the predominant mode of discourse. The scholarship on these "alternative" modernities primarily strive to justify and identify the existence of distinct modernities across different locations. (Lau 2003; Friedman 2001; Gaonkar 2001) Ozyurek calls for a temporally-rooted discussion of modernity that moves beyond simply asserting the existence of each of these iterations of modernity and to really engage in how these modernities enact time. (2006, 20) In his study of Turkish political

nostalgia, he roots his analysis of political discourse on modernity in history, but does not offer an alternative model of temporal analysis. In their 2006 article, Pickering and Keightly pose the concept of nostalgia as one constituted by very contrary impulses that can be variously mobilized for social critique. (2006, 1) The multiple nature of nostalgia indicates a wide variety of deployments, indicating a potentially powerful tool with which to reflect upon one's present through the continual reconstruction of the past. While Pickering and Keightly set the stage to think through nostalgia as potentially more than simple, deterministic longings for either space or time, their meta-criticism is based in neither text nor lived experience, leaving the theoretical work incomplete. That is - their criticism does not offer formulation of how nostalgia might act.

I cannot offer a complete answer to this theoretical question, but the play of time in *Boys Over Flowers* suggests that nostalgia can only be understood through the nature of modern temporality. David Lowenthal identifies certain pre-conditions for nostalgia to exist, the most important of which is the existence of linear rather than cyclical time. (Lowenthal 1989) That is to say, cyclical time connotes a social order organized around yearly agrarian cycles and/or the repetition of religious ritual. In Japan, the state religion of Shinto combines both, rooting its worship in the natural, agrarian order. Linear time, in contrast, is a modern (i.e. secular) conception of time, not tied to agrarian cycles. "The present is situated in the middle of a history envisaged in its totality." (Agacinski and Gladding 2003, 66) As Agacinzki and Gladding see it, the present time cannot exist in its own terms, but merely as the space defined by the past on one side and the future on the other. (2003, 15) Until an open-ended future capable of being acted upon became a fundamental part of how humans understood temporality, modern linear time could not exist. The linear time of which Agacinzki and Gladding speak is both our human experience of time – which is the impossibility of recovering the past, a condition that has always existed – and historical time. It is really on the level of historical linearity that

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they make their argument, the discovery of an historical time that proceeds forward with a sense of destination. Historical time became irrecoverable as humans marched ever forward in their modern progress, because the past could never be revisited and the future never completely apprehended. (Agacinski and Gladding 2003, 66) This linear historical time, then, becomes the site of nostalgia's work. Kozberg observes that "the idea of nostalgia resides in the realm of the contradictory: it suggests an inability to reconcile linear temporality, an impregnation of the present with the past." Most importantly, this urgency to regain the past enables the re-authoring of the past in the present. (Kozberg 2009, 7)

In a sense, linearity has always been part of the Western experience, at least since the dominance of Christianity over Europe. In the Christian conception, humanity and history itself proceeds from the moment of Christ's birth, moving with deliberation towards the time of salvation. But the linearity of Christian time bears also the undying quality of mythic time. It has only been since the Enlightenment that the loss of that mythic quality to historical time that we have experienced a "speeding up" of sorts, that truly makes known the linear quality of modernity. Indeed, one might call this new linearity a capitalist time. The west and the chronology of its marketplace appear all over the world, organizing and reorganizing the local context through a culturally Western "temporal architecture." (Agacinski and Gladding 2003) In particular, time's monetization requires that the actions taken within its subdivisions be profitable, productive, or useful. Resistance to commodified time exists only through a form of temporal gift economy, a "giving" of one's time. Even so, the use of this language -- "gifts" -- connotes a form of value, which is not necessarily a purely social value disconnected from money. It is couched via the monetary language, and may not be totally free of the hegemony of capital exchange.

Western models of nostalgia make implicit claims to the primacy of a Western temporal order. The past dialogically remains in the past by the violent rupture of modernity from the tradition that it constructed for that purpose, and nostalgia's current function is to recall that past as a critique of the present. But the fit of this Western model of time on an Asian context is, at best, an uneasy and uncomfortable one. The relation of Asia to its past differs to our conception of time. The most cogent example of cyclical time that I can cite is of the ritual re-building of the Ise Shrine to the sun goddess Amaterasu in Ise, Japan. Since 678 CE, Shinto priests have rebuilt the shrine at Ise completely from the ground up every 20 years. The precepts of this religious practice honor the cycles of renewal and decay in nature, mimicking the natural process by disallowing any preservation of the architecture. In the time between re-buildings, the next generation of builders must be taught the skills necessary to continue the practice. For Shinto, the shrine, no matter how many times it is rebuilt, remains the same shrine. The architecture's authenticity is not in its materiality, but in its practice. Thus, the shrines maintain a newness through their re-building and can only exist as lived practice. Were they ever to become a relic, to fall out of this newness, the nature of their construction would condemn the shrine complex to complete and irreversible loss. (Taut 1937, 139) So too does this sensibility of cyclical renewal apply to Shinto festivals, which are practiced in local communities across Japan even in the present day. (Totman 1995, 443)

My argument here is that the model of linear historical time that we may assume is part and parcel of modernity may coexist with other temporalities in unexpected ways. While modern linear time likely predominates in industrialized societies like Japan and Korea, the example of Shinto religious festivals and shrine building in Japan points to a continuity of ritual, agrarian or mythic temporality in modern society. Certainly, the same could be said for Western nations who possess large demographics that follow religious practice, but the relation of Japanese religion, for example, relates to official

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government sanctioned time. Through ritualistic practices, Asian societies like Japan produce and reproduce their continuities with the past, maintaining these linkages and changing their meanings into the present. The past as an active practice and performance complicates the discourse of time as linear and irretrievable, moderating and perhaps transforming the tenor of loss. Moreover, Shinto's position as a state religion has to do with nationalist discourse, implicating national time in the regular performance of non-linear rituals. Nationalism's use of nostalgia especially strengthens these links of continuity, forging bonds and abstract connections between the individual and the nation, "between personal and collective memory." (Boym 2002)

Returning for a moment to my reading of the wedding photography scene in *Boys Over Flowers*, we may also consider how the act and technology of photography itself disrupts the linear temporality of modern time. Roland Barthes calls photography an act of resurrection. (Barthes 1982) These photos, as a site of personal memory, has what Barthes views as the power to disrupt the dominant narrative of *Boys Over Flowers*, to use the mechanism of image to momentarily overturn the inevitability of Jan Di and Jun Pyo's dyadic romance. These resurrections and momentary ruptures that veer into dead-end narrative forks "make history reveal what it was not able to say," exposing Ji Hoo's desires and giving some force to his imagination of the future/past. (Marks 2000, 29) Judy Agacinzki and Jody Gladding remind us, however, that "only images, not the ambient world in which we live, have borders. The reality of the present is as impossible to frame as are the contours of a place through ordinary means of perception." (Agacinski and Gladding 2003, 5) And so too does image fail to extend beyond the individual (re)collections of the photos Ji Hoo ruminates upon. Nostalgia has not the power to overturn, perhaps, because its role in framing time and space enforces a sited or boundedness to its work. Nonetheless, it may deflect, distort, or interpolate the workings of different temporalities or even atemporal spatialities like *shojo* into our

experience of time.

Lastly, we must also revisit what Boreth Ly calls the persistent temporality of trauma. In his 2008 paper, Ly discusses the atemporal quality of traumatic events and his inability to escape or overcome the psychic pain of surviving the killing fields after Pol Pot's evacuation of the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh. Trauma, for Ly, exists as a parallel space, where the forgetting becomes impossible and yet eludes reconciliation to memory. (Caruth 1995; Ly 2008) Indeed, trauma persists not only in those who experienced events of terrible brutality and dislocation, but also in their offspring. (G. M. Cho 2008, 5) The resonant trauma, appropriately called "hauntings," become part of a cultural legacy and collective memory. (Abraham, Torok, and Derrida 2005) Just as photography resurrects, image has the power to haunt and disrupt the linearity of time. Nostalgia, for Svetlana Boym, is "not merely an artistic device but a strategy of survival, a way of making sense of the impossibility of homecoming." When even the concept of past/home is devastated by the unthinkability of trauma, time itself cannot exist as we understand it in the west.

If multiple temporalities coexist in an interlocking fabric of modern time, it necessarily requires a different model for the operation of nostalgia in Asia. Esra Ozyurek offers the term "nostalgic modernity" to describe the "discursive and sentimental condition" of performances of temporal longing that privatizes political ideology. (2006) The past, which does not remain in the past, but is ritually reenacted in the present, gives a different valence to the tenor of longing for better times. "Nostalgic modernity," however, strikes me as lacking the critical edge to understand the multiplex temporal order of colonial modernities. Nostalgia as a descriptor of modernity places the constant (re)making of history at the center of defining an already unmoored state, but nostalgia is a reaction to rather than constitutive of modernity. Neither does the term account for

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the multiplicity of temporal dimensions experienced in colonial modernity. These temporalities - traumatic, photographic, ritual, mythic - exists distinctly and yet together, bleeding together at the edges of our perception. But they are not fused, hybrid, or blended. Their individual capacities assert themselves variously over our experience of time, which exists as an atomic elapse of space.

How we conceive of nostalgia, and implicitly our relation to time, mediates the ability of our past to have a transactional role in constructing the present. Moreover, nostalgia has great cultural specificity and cannot be lumped into a Western or American conception of sentiment. (Tacchi 2003) Ma suggests that cultural memory as negotiated between text and contextual reading is never straightforward or monolithic. (Ma 2001) Capitalism tends to flatten the rhythms of life and cultural practice into a linear progression, homogenizing what might otherwise be a heterogeneous temporal order. (Gupta 1994) As a consequence, a sited and cultural understanding of nostalgia - and the awareness of its temporality - may assist in the teasing apart the particular expressions of nostalgia that occur across the spectrum of global imagination.

4 Conclusion

Going Transnational

Hana Yori Dango as Format

As a case study, the *Hana Yori Dango* textual universe serves as a model of the complex processes of transnational media and illuminates some of the processes of cultural adaptation as they take place within their historical and regional contexts. If nothing else, I hope the limited scope of this thesis has exposed some of the implications of textual adaptation across national boundaries. The story, however, does not stop with the trifecta of Taiwan, Japan, and Korea. Early in 2009, China announced that not only would it produce its own version of the *Hana Yori Dango* story, but that had already chosen the cast and gone into production. (Staff 2009) This move, however, adds a new wrinkle to the analytical frame, which is the problem of international piracy and copyright. Group 8, the production company behind *Boys Over Flowers*, signed an exclusive contract with Shueisha Publishing that disallowed the licensing of any new television versions of this story for another 2 years. The contract displays a real

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understanding of the *Hana Yori Dango* phenomenon and a concern over the ability of subsequent versions to dilute the status of the Korean version should multiple iterations of the show emerge all at once.

The Korean outcry against China's production has been harsh, calling the Chinese version "fake" and "copycats." (Staff 2009) The Chinese production company defends itself through a formal argument surprisingly. They argue that their production will be different because it follows the format of an "inspirational drama," a term completely unfamiliar to drama fans on the transnational Internet forums. Despite sharing some of the same story elements and characters, the company argues that their version will be "a completely different story," which sidesteps the legal status of their production. Their argument points at many of the same questions raised by scholars on the status of narrative as it is made and re-made - at what point does *Hana Yori Dango* simply cease to be the same story if it has aesthetically and affectively transformed?

The show will be broadcast this summer, running at 35 episodes - the longest version yet - and will be called *Meteor Rain*. The name is an iteration of the famous Taiwanese *Meteor Garden*, which positions the mainland version explicitly in relation to its Taiwanese predecessor rather than the Japanese or Korean versions. This move clearly speaks to the political and cultural tensions between the mainland and Taiwan, and points to changes taking place within the cultural behemoth that is the People's Republic of China. Mainland China, which has the most highly regulated television industry, has only marginally relaxed its regulatory grip in the last decade. While opening itself to the importation of selected television dramas from all over Asia, its productions have never been popular outside of the country. Regarded as having low production values and excessive ideological messages by Taiwanese viewers, Chinese contemporary dramas are an insignificant part of the country's media export. The announcement of this remake

came as a major surprise given China's longstanding lack of production sophistication, capital, and previous banning of *Meteor Garden* (the Taiwanese version) due to its promotion of class antipathy (through its poor-girl-meets-rich-boy storyline) and valorization of consumerist attitudes. This ban did not, of course, stop the famous Guangdong pirates, who taped the drama series from spillover Taiwanese satellite broadcast and distributed it illegally within the country. (Wang 180)

This news indicates the rise of yet another player in the Asian drama market, forecasting the global ambitions of the mainland Chinese television industry. What may prove a stumbling block for China is its unwillingness to "play ball" where copyright is concerned. Without the legal structure of transnational adaptation in place, can we call still *Hana Yori Dango* a format? Like *Ugly Betty* and *America's Most Wanted*, *Hana Yori Dango* has been sold to and adapted in three separate national settings. China will be the fourth, but doing so without the legal rights and potentially shifting the story to suit its ideological purposes. Rumors have surfaced on the Internet recently of a Philippines adaptation as well, which may contain some substance as the Philippine industry recently (legally) adapted several Korean dramas for their television broadcast. Does the term format truly even capture the transnational story of *Hana Yori Dango's* travels? As common as the poor-girl-meets-rich-boy trope may be, the brand value of this narrative lies in the specificity of the Flower Four, a band of handsome, wealthy sons who eventually turn their institutional powers to defend innocents against further institutional abuses. I suspect that this particular motif resonates deeply across the regional experience of the Asian modern and is what marks the *Hana Yori Dango* story universe as a uniquely Asian story.

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Televisual Tourism

The flow of media through the global landscape cannot but effect changes in the discursive terrain through which it passes. Returning briefly to the first of de Certeau's distinctions of spatial theory, I will make one last point regarding representations of space as opposed to representational spaces. To portray the fantastic lifestyle of the rich and privileged in *Boys Over Flowers*, the producers filmed in both lavish Korean locations as well as exotic, distant locales. The experience of viewing the television series imparts a feeling of touristic voyeurism. Guiliana Bruno identifies a "site-seeing" quality to cinema, a panorama of travel that takes literal form in *Boys Over Flowers*. (1997) By moving from a language of cinematic "voyeur" to cinematic "voyageur," Bruno locates the camera's unique ability to traverse spaces. "An architectural ensemble is read as it is traversed. This is also the case for the cinematic spectacle, for film is read as it is traversed, and is readable insofar as it is traversable." For the viewer, "the camera becomes the vehicle: it becomes, literally, a spectatorial means of transportation." (Bruno 1997, 14) As a passenger of the cinematic eye, we become not just audience, but traveler, companions on Jan Di's traversal of social spaces in which she never dreamed of entering. Together, the audience tours with the same spectacular eye and Orientalizing gaze that consumes the exoticism of places like Macao and New Caledonia. "Film creates space for viewing, perusing, and wandering about. As in all forms of journey, space is physically consumed as a vast commodity. In film, architectural space becomes framed for viewing and offers itself for consumption as traveled space--for further traveling. Attracted to vistas, the spectator turns into a visitor. The film "viewer" is a practitioner of viewing space--a tourist. " (Bruno 1997, 18)

"[T]he only products of representational spaces are symbolic works," according to de

Certeau. The symbolic work of *Boys Over Flowers* is to render and represent the spaces of modernity, but it actually *enacts* power upon the landscape of the material world. *Boys Over Flower's* popular promote the popularity of these tourist destinations, increasing traffic and creating a form of vicarious participation. Indeed, the touristic capacity of cinematic movement as expressed through the filming of actual tourist locations has inspired an entire cottage industry of Korean tourism based upon a fannish relationship to the text. (Hirata 2008) Viewers go to these places to *be* and *be embodied* in the same spaces where the television series was filmed. In this sense, *Boys Over Flowers* is not just a representational space, it represents space. The show, as much as it is implicated in the production of the national imagination to the world, also becomes party to the shaping of the social practice of world spaces. *Boys Over Flowers* has its own page on the official English language site for the Office of Korea Tourism that explains the industry of drama tours, and details information on each of the filming locations and contact information should you wish to visit.⁹ The televisual tourism of *Boys Over Flowers* is both literal and metaphorical. The literal tourism later produces a physical tourism that becomes metaphorical again in the imaginative performance. Indeed, the industry of drama tourism in Korea seems an especially female and Japanese phenomenon nowadays, as opposed to the early Japanese colonial tourism of Korea (which likely reenacted colonial power dynamics) and the later sex tourism popular with Japanese men in the 1970s and 80s. (Hirata 2008, 148) Despite the "feminization" of tourism to Korea, mediated by the transnational availability of Korean drama on Japanese television, has the dynamic of consumer/consumed changed between the former colonizer and colonized? Have the Japanese been reduced to merely consumers of the powerhouse of Korean media? On the one hand, Korea and images of Korea remain the object consumed by Japan, but with the crucial difference that Koreans now control the means of production, therein allowing it to shape its export brand. On the

⁹ http://english.visitkorea.or.kr/enu/SI/CU_EN_8_5_1_50.jsp [Accessed April 27, 2009]

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other hand, consumption occasionally reifies asymmetries of power, such as with Japanese connoisseurship of Korean ceramic art. The discourse around the consumption of Korean pottery serves to further displace Korea to the barbaric, Oriental periphery, allowing the Japanese to perform tasteful nostalgias for an "Asian" past. (Brandt 2000) Issues of consumption and their relation to discursive cartographies of Asia bear further investigation, especially as mainland China, Thailand, and the Philippines become increasingly robust centers of media production. The relation of centers and peripheries will be challenged and what language will we need to explore the means and meanings of media globalization? Will regionalization become a meaningful counterbalance to the discursive emptying of the global? Or can we find a way to continue being "national" as the imagined nation overflows its geographic bounds?

Regional Rituals

While the literature on remaking cinema does not account for the transnational nature of *Hana Yori Dango* in all its versions, it does address the pleasures and tensions of repetition. (Zanger 2007) As an industrial, textual, and critical endeavor, textual remaking uses a language of disciplined cinematic gaze, yet never directly addressing different industrial and national production practices or shifts in historical reading frames. (Verevis 2006) What does it mean for a text to be made over and over again across different countries for audiences that have ready access to other version from other countries (and can be assumed to be familiar with them)? James Carey proposes a ritual view of communication, which poses the consumption of media as a form of social reaffirmation of community values. "A ritual view of communication is directed not toward the extension of messages in space but toward the maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared beliefs."

(Carey 2008, 15) Return, repetition, reaffirmation and performance of the social cosmos -- Carey's idea of ritual takes on an even greater resonance in the unstable historical time of modern Asia, where the past makes itself in the present.

If the story of *Hana Yori Dango* can indeed be understood as the locus of a regional media ritual, then we must ask what discourse is being ritually affirmed, argued, and contested. *Hana Yori Dango* turns on a simple and pervasive story trope about a young woman falling in love above her social station. It seems that this narrative could belong to any nation and yet it remains definitively Asian in its inflection. This narrative, in any of its iterations, will never be mistaken for a Western tale. I would suggest that, across all the versions, the single consistent thing shared is the imaginary of the Asian modern. Moreover, the *Hana Yori Dango* textual system dramatizes this imaginary through the experience of girlhood. Women, the idea of womanhood, and the displacement of women's bodies have been deeply implicated in the project of modernity across almost all the nations of Asia, becoming a touchstone of modern experience in the transnational traffic of images (and bodies). Whether a site of anxiety, a return to comfort, or a way to construct and reconstruct the past, the repetitions of girls as simultaneously agents and spectacles remain deeply embedded in the way we think through modernity. And as the mode of production falls into the hands of the formerly silenced groups, the imagination of unfolding modernity will surely shift to reflect the makers of these images. Tracing the story of *Hana Yori Dango* across time and space merely catches this ongoing process at a moment in time as the structural power of the Asian region begins to turn over yet again.

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