KYUNG HYUN KIM and YOUNGMIN CHOE (eds):
The Korean Popular Culture Reader.
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We are in the midst of a Korean Wave. A rush of publications exploring it is imminent, and this is one of the first. Cautiously, its editors avoid signalling what may be a contemporary fad in the title, and a number of chapters take us back to the early twentieth century and to what was then a rising sense of nationalism in sport, literature and music. Indeed, the preface by Youngmin Choe argues that understanding the socio-political dynamics of popular culture within the history of colonial modernity allows an appreciation of Korean Wave today, and many area studies scholars would agree. The language of popular culture today, though, comes from elsewhere: transnational consumption, the global/local interface, social democracy and youth rebellion. It is questionable how colonial modernity impacts on, say, Girls Generation or 2NE1, or films such as "Old Boy". An introduction by Kyung Hyun Kim introduces more familiar territory, aligning the volume with cultural studies scholarship: soft power, branding, "Gangnam Style" and Homi Bhabha's transnational and translational. Kim also, usefully, introduces the volume as a critique of the intra-Asian cultural flow model made popular in the publications of Chua Beng Huat and Koichi Iwabuchi.

The volume negotiates tensions between the past and present, as well as between today's South and North Korea. This, though, is a large task, and the result is an assortment of chapters, each focused on one specific element, collated into five broad sections: "Click and scroll" (literature, the Internet, gaming), "Lights, camera, action!" (film, in both South and North Korea), "Gold, silver, and bronze" (sport), "Strut, move, and shake" (pop music), "Food and travel". What a pity no catchy title was found for the fifth section ("Greet, eat, meet"?), which offers a diversity of topics in its three chapters. The first, by Olga Fedorenko, discusses advertising and marketing, observations about sexism punctuating what is primarily an account of recent domestic campaigns. The second, by Katarzyna Cwiertka, reflects on the campaign to globalize Korean food, beginning with the so-called "kimch'i wars" of the 1990s. And the third, by Sohl Lee, explores a recent photobook about North Korea, allowing much space for personal reflection on the "catastrophe" she considers is unfolding in the strange and anachronistic northern state. If Choe's preface had been followed, Cwiertka might have been expected to explore the campaigns to promote Korean food that followed the end of Japanese colonial control and Fedorenko would have needed to dispense with the theories of Stuart Hall and Wolfgang Haug to explore South Korea prior to the recent explosion of consumerism.

The volume is a patchwork quilt of excellent articles, but this reviewer wants more from a volume that announces itself as a reader. In the first section, we have a closely argued discussion of the emergence of romance as a theme in colonial-era literature by Bodurae Kwon, juxtaposed with a consideration of postwar comics, and in particular the 1960s and 1970s output of Ko Woo-young and Hur Young-man, by Kyu Hyun Kim. Next comes Inkyu Kang's account of South Korea's eponymous "PC Bangs", which grew with the economic crisis of the late 1990s, providing places in which boy and girl gamers could form liaisons in the love seats of their favourite smoky den, followed by an exploration by Regina Yung Lee of Internet sites that give storylines and commentaries for Korean TV

dramas. The second pair illustrate the problem: the first usefully identifies why console gaming never gained traction in Korea, while the second essentially describes a mechanism for generating fandom. Both are too narrowly focused to connect with each other, and this restricts their usefulness in academic teaching. Much the same is true of the second section, where two views of what film stars are, by Steven Chung and Kelly Jeong, are juxtaposed with a nuanced account of heroes in North Korean films by Travis Workman. Workman, defending a consideration of mass (*taejung*) culture as the substitute for popular culture in North Korea, provides a useful counterpart to the recent attention given to female heroines (in, e.g., Suk-Young Kim, *Illusive Utopia: Theater, Film, and Everyday Performance in North Korea* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010) and Heonik Kwon and Byung-Ho Chung, *North Korea: Beyond Charismatic Politics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2012)).

Likewise, sport is covered by two very divergent accounts. The first, by Jung Hwan Cheon, writes a story built from newspaper accounts about Korea's fabled marathon winner at the 1936 Berlin Olympics, Sohn Kee-Chung, who competed as part of the Japanese team because of Korea's colonized status. The second, by Rachel Miyung Joo, offers a feminist critique of gender inequality in a discussion of two recent female sports stars, the golfer Se Ri Park who won two of the four major LPGA tournaments in 1998, and the figure-skating gold medalist at the 2010 Winter Olympics, Kim Yuna. The section on music provides better consistency and coverage, neatly supplementing earlier published materials. First, Min-Jung Son offers an overview of the rise of popular music during and after the colonial period, using much from her previous accounts but sometimes omitting references to the other literature she has used. Second, Hyunjoon Shin and Pil Ho Kim explore group rock from the 1960s onwards, both mainstream and underground, based partly on interviews with and the memories of the legendary guitarist Shin Joong Hyun. Third, Roald Maliangkay situates the 1990s rise of the individual through Korea's first rap star, Seo Taiji. Finally, Stephen Epstein with James Turnbull watch their way through 100 videos as they argue that the claimed empowerment of women in recent girl groups is illusory.

Throughout, there is evidence of hasty compilation: incomplete references (those on page 253 are simply left as "xxx"), some careless copy editing, and tolerance for a number of different romanization systems. This is arguably not surprising in a volume that seeks to explore the very contemporary phenomenon of Korean Wave, although the uneasy negotiations sought between past and present, and North and South, leave me feeling that the sum of the volume remains less than its parts.

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The Korean Wave: Korean Media Go Global.
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We stand at an exciting time – at least for those of us who profess an interest in Korea, but perhaps, too, for those of us who want to see Western cultural domination challenged. Today, the Korean Wave that sputtered into life with exports of