

Traveling televisual texts: transnational adaptations of “Doctor Foster” into Korea’s “The World of the Married” and the Philippines’ “The Broken Marriage Vow”

Ralph Edward P. Sekito*

[*Abstract*]

Korean dramas, commonly referred to as *Koreanovelas* or K-Dramas in the Philippines, have significantly influenced and reshaped Philippine television culture since the early 2000s. Their impact persists in contemporary television programming, reflecting the transnational flow of media texts across borders. As media content transcends geographical boundaries, local media companies have adopted the practice of producing adaptations of foreign television series for their audiences. This paper examines the adaptation of the Koreanovela *The World of the Married* into the Philippine series *The Broken Marriage Vow*, both of which are adaptations derived from the British show *Doctor Foster*. Through this comparative analysis, I argue that the process of localizing these television shows to suit the preferences of the target audience serves as a tangible manifestation of transnational adaptation. Particularly in an era of globalization, where entertainment is still a thriving enterprise, thus traversing international borders, this phenomenon demonstrates the evolving nature of television content as it adapts and caters to diverse cultural contexts

* Department of Literature, University of Santo Tomas, The Philippines;
rpsekito@ust.edu.ph

let alone a profitable means to generate an ailing entertainment industry, especially in the time of the pandemic.

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I . Introduction

This research examines the television series from Korea, *The World of the Married Couple*, and its Philippine counterpart, *The Broken Marriage Vow*, both adaptations of the British drama *Doctor Foster*. The first part of the paper traces how *Asianovelas* [dramas imported from East Asian countries] found their way to the Philippines and modified the Pinoy televiewer's viewing experience. Through an analysis of thematic elements and characterization present in these adaptations, the study contends that both series exemplify transnational adaptation. I argue then that the adaptation of these dramas highlights commonalities between the audience and the characters portrayed as they draw inspiration from foreign sources and appropriate these shows to cultural sensibilities thus making these shows profitable while striving to overcome any cultural disparities that could hinder the audience's engagement with the narrative (Wells-Lassagne 2017: 115).

1.1. The arrival of *Koreanovelas* (K-Drama) in Philippine television

The Philippines, given its colonial experience, has consistently imported foreign television shows that would cater to their viewer's interests since the inception of television broadcasting. For instance, Filipino television viewers were once enamored by Mexicanovelas (soap opera series that were produced in Mexico) which were dubbed in Tagalog, the country's *lingua franca*, and the most famous of them all is *Marimar*, which was aired in RPN-9 in the late 90s (Lacuata 2023: 65), competing against primetime newscasts. With the entry of canned telenovelas, television networks started to purchase their broadcasting rights and reinvent locally produced soap operas by borrowing some conventions and attributes of these

Mexicanovelas like having “a more compact and engaging plot with a more time-bound seriality” (Sanchez 2022a). This led to the Philippines’ response to the telenovela: the *teleserye* which was birthed at the dawn of the 21st century.

The first few years of the 21st century for television also spelled the beginning of the Asianovela wave. The series that started this craze was Taiwan’s *Meteor Garden*, which aired in ABS-CBN in 2003 and was dubbed in Tagalog. The drama series is a coming-of-age story between two characters who come from different social classes: Shan Chai (Barbie Xu), coming from a middle-class family, and Dao Ming Si (Jerry Yan), heir to a multi-national conglomerate. The show was a great success as it dominated the afternoon block with an audience rating of 24.9% in its initial airing versus 11% of the main competitor, GMA-7 (Sales 2004 & Sison-Buban 2014). The popularity of this series paved the way for local networks [ABS-CBN and GMA in particular] to secure rights and licenses to air these canned TV series from Asian media networks (Aberin et al. 2021: 79).

In response to the overwhelming success of a particular show, GMA-7, a major competitor of ABS-CBN, secured the broadcasting rights for the South Korean drama series *Autumn in My Heart*, the initial installment of the *Endless Love* series. This move marked the onset of Koreanovelas [later referred to as K-Dramas] in the Philippine television landscape, captivating Filipino audiences with Hallyu (Gongora, 2013 & Cruz, 2018). Notably, this was the first Korean drama to occupy a primetime slot on a local channel, paving the way for subsequent K-Dramas to follow suit in the primetime blocks of Philippine networks. Another significant K-drama that resonated with Filipinos was *Dae Jang Geum*, also known as *Jewel in the Palace*, which aired on GMA-7 towards the end of 2005, despite its period/historical genre. Broadcasting this type of drama posed a risk due to potential cultural disparities that might alienate the audience. To mitigate this, the network devised strategies beyond mere language dubbing, such as incorporating a theme song in the local language to alter the drama’s overall perception (Anarcon 2021). Building upon the success of K-Dramas in the primetime slot, both ABS-CBN Channel 2 and GMA-7 integrated these shows into their primetime line-ups. Examples include *Lovers*

in *Paris* (ABS-CBN), featuring Kim Jung-eun, Park Shin-yang, and Lee Dong-gun, and *Stairway to Heaven* (GMA-7), starring Choi Ji-woo, Kwon Sang-woo, Kim Tae-hee, and Shin Hyun-joon (Igno & Cenidoza, 2016). This practice of importing canned Asian dramas since then became a norm in the Philippines. For Hicap (2009), K-dramas offer audiences a distinctive narrative approach compared to traditional Filipino soap operas or *teleseryes*. They present well-defined characters and narratives that span across both physical and emotional dimensions. Furthermore, K-Dramas are more compact and would give a semblance of Western production in terms of its production value.

1.2. Koreanovelas and Philippine *teleserye*: and the beginnings of transnational adaptation

The localization of K-Dramas also began in the mid-2000s, seeing the dubbed K-Dramas' domination and unparalleled success. ABS-CBN and GMA-7 explored the idea of adapting these K-Dramas in the Filipino setting, thus paving the way for GMA-7's *The Heart of Asia* (Anarcon 2021) and ABS-CBN's *The First True Home of Asianovelas* (Hicap 2009). *Ako si Kim Sam Soon*, an adaptation of *My Name is Kim Sam Soon*, a K-Drama that was shown in the same network two years earlier, was the first Philippine adaptation of a K-drama which starred Asia's Songbird Regine Velasquez and Mark Anthony Fernandez (Dimaculangan 2008). This was part of GMA's anniversary offering as the network celebrated its 58th year on the Philippine airwaves. Given her large following earning and her versatility as a singer, actress, and endorser, the network deemed her deserving of the role¹. The adaptation spelled success as it dominated the ratings' game where it garnered a 33.8% audience share compared to *My Girl*, another Philippine K-Drama adaptation starring then-newly launched teen artists Kim Chiu and Gerald Anderson from the rival network (Santiago 2008). This phenomenon shed a new skin on Philippine television, with the emergence of a Hanoyvela where local television networks either adapt a K-Drama

¹ In Waxy Galang's foregrounding study on Regine Velasquez's "gayze" as a gay icon, he propounds that her multimodality as an artist (singer, actress, product endorser) makes her a bankable star let alone her versatility as an artist.

or pattern a local drama series with some conventions borrowed from the former (Cruz 2018).

II. Method

In conducting this comparative analysis, I employed a comprehensive methodology that involved a thorough viewing of all episodes from the two television series, namely *The World of the Married* (TWOTM) and *The Broken Marriage Vow* (TBMV). The primary focus of the study was to elucidate and juxtapose prevalent themes and character portrayals across both narratives. Through a meticulous examination of each episode, particular attention was dedicated to the development of key themes evident in the TV series. Additionally, the researcher rigorously observed and analyzed the characterization of the protagonists, Dr. Ji-Seon-u in TWOTM and Dr. Jill Victorino-Ilustre in TBMV, as central figures within their respective storylines. The viewing process encompassed an in-depth scrutiny of character arcs, interactions, emotional states, and decisions made by the main characters in response to the challenges presented, aiming to discern nuanced differences and similarities in their portrayals and actions. By employing this meticulous approach, the study sought to offer a comprehensive comparative analysis that elucidates the divergent and convergent elements within these two TV series, shedding light on their narrative structures, character developments, and thematic underpinnings. Through this, I will expound on the idea of transnational adaptation where entertainment products, such as television shows, contextualize or culturally appropriate themselves to fit the viewers' taste and culture (Wells-Lassagne 2017: 90).

III. Results

The World of the Married Couple, an adaptation of the British drama series, *Dr. Foster* is a South Korean drama that was aired on JTBC network from March 27 until May 16, 2020, and is considered the highest-rating drama of the year with its final episode reaching an all-time high rating of 28.371% with an average rating of 18.829%

according to the data from Nielsen Korea (Lee 2020). The drama series is an example of *makjang* where extreme, unrealistic, abnormal, or ridiculous situations and usually uses topics like birth secrets, potential incest, adultery, revenge, terminal illnesses, rape, murder, and suicide are used as themes, thus watering the viewers' emotions, the show is aired in late primetime in Korea (Cho 2020). The story is about Ji Seon-u (Kim Hee-ae) and Lee Tae-o's (Park Hae Joon) married life which led to its ruin because of Tae-o's infidelity with Yeon Da Kyung (Han So-Hee).

Despite its shutdown in 2020 due to a Congressional resolution that denied its franchise renewal, ABS-CBN bought the broadcasting rights of this K-drama and aired it in the primetime block. It premiered on June 2020 despite the network's shutdown. According to Anarcon (2020), acquiring the broadcasting rights of *The World of the Married* was not a problem as the network forged a partnership with JTBC, the network that holds the show's broadcasting rights. Also, this was not the first time that ABS-CBN acquired the rights to air the drama series shown on this Korean network as the former has previously aired K-dramas *Gangnam Beauty* and *Flower Crew Dating Agency*. As in Korea, the Filipino-dubbed K-drama spelled success despite being aired at a late timeslot of the primetime block.

Almost two years after airing the "Tagalized" or Tagalog² dramas, ABS-CBN decided to make a Filipino adaptation of *The World of The Married* called *The Broken Marriage Vow* in partnership with Dreamscape (TBMV). It premiered in the first quarter of 2022 where it was top billed by Jodi Sta. Maria, who took on the role of Dr. Jill Ilustre, the local counterpart of Ji Seon-u in the Korean version, while actor and model Zanjoe Marudo portrayed the role of Jill Ilustre's husband, David, or Lee Tae-o in the Korean version. It was Sue Ramirez who played the third-party character of Lexy or Da-Kyung in the show's Korean counterpart (Pineda 2021). Apart from the network's online streaming platforms, the Filipino adaptation was also shown in Viu, an online streaming platform of

² Since these dramas are imported from various parts from Korea, it was originally rendered in Hangeul. To make it palatable to Filipino viewers, local media networks translate these series into Tagalog, the country's most used language or lingua franca. This is done through dubbing.

local and foreign dramas, where viewers can also access advanced episodes (Llemit 2022).

<Table 1> Comparing *The World of the Married* and *The Broken Marriage Vow*

	The World of the Married	The Broken Marriage Vow
No. of episodes and air time	16 episodes, 70 minutes per episode	107 episodes, 30-40 minutes per episode
Character depictions	Seon-u as scheming and rational in dealing with her husband's philandering	Jill Ilustre and the feisty woman trope
Themes explored	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Emancipation from a philandering partner ▶ Divorcee's life ▶ Gender in the workplace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Celebrating the Filipino culture (food, fashion, scenery) ▶ Filipino family relationships ▶ Gossip culture (Marites)

3.1. Characters

3.1.1. Seon-u: the lonely avenger vs. Jill: the fighter woman with a golden heart

Both *The World of the Married* (TWOTM) and *The Broken Marriage Vow* (TBMV) showcase main characters who are physicians, Dr. Ji-Seon-u and Dr. Jill Victorino-Ilustre, respectively, as the narratives unfold from their viewpoints. These stories portray the protagonists endeavoring to salvage their marriages after discovering their husbands'

Infidelities and striving to maintain familial harmony despite their spouses' ongoing affairs. Despite their initial portrayal as dedicated and faithful partners, nurturing mothers, and successful professionals, a more detailed analysis reveals nuanced distinctions between these characters.

In TWOTM, Seon-u confronts the situation alone, employing manipulative tactics seen in the initial episodes and orchestrating a calculated series of actions that result in the downfall of her

husband and his mistress. However, this vengeful pursuit becomes isolating, almost leading to her own ruin later in the series. Despite achieving revenge and shouldering the roles of both mother and father to her son, Seon-u ultimately experiences emptiness, numbness, and indifference, culminating in a moment where she nearly ends her own life by allowing herself to drown in the ocean in Episode 14. Edmund Lee (2020) lauds the show for its "vividly caustic dialogue, melancholic plot twists, and convincing performances," capturing the audience's attention and building anticipation toward the narrative's resolution.

Dr. Jill Ilustre embodies the persona of a resilient woman scorned, referred to as *babaeng palabán* or a scorned but feisty woman (Ducay 2021). Unlike her Korean counterpart, Dr. Ji-Seon-u, who maintains a rational and strategic approach to address her husband's infidelity, Dr. Jill is depicted as giving way to her emotions to drive her quest for vengeance. Initially stunned by her husband's unfaithfulness, Jill pledges to hold accountable not only her husband but also those who have caused her pain. Her determination is succinctly conveyed in Episode 6 through her strong statement, *Ako ang magsasabi kung kailan, saan, at kung paano ko ito tatapusin*. (I will decide when, where, and how this shall end). Furthermore, Episode 7 offers a glimpse into Jill's plan for retribution, foreshadowed by her vision of stabbing Lexie at David's birthday party, culminating in a dramatic confrontation with Lexy's parents during an unexpected and tense dinner at Lexy's household in Episode 31.

In TBMV, being a Philippine adaptation, Dr. Jill's character prominently reflects the Filipino traits of hospitality and compassion, known as *malasakit* in the local context. This attribute is evident in various episodes where Dr. Jill engages in charitable work at a local clinic in Atok, providing free medical care to its residents who lack access to hospital services, endearing her to the local community. This demeanor sets Jill apart from Seon-u, whose character is perceived as sophisticated and well-rounded. Additionally, Dr. Jill assumes a dual role, teaching at a medical school while practicing as a doctor, in contrast to Seon-u who occupies a high-ranking administrative position at the Family Care Hospital alongside her

responsibilities as a family medicine practitioner.

3.1.2. Yi-Rim the cold hearted vs. Carol the advocate

In *TBMV*, Carol Manansala's character (Bianca Manalo) is the local version of Go Yi-rim (Park Sun-young). Both characters are friends of Jill and Seon-u and are full-time housewives after marrying their husbands who are both engaged in numerous affairs that put both of their married lives on the rocks.

Despite some similarities, Carol's characterization can be seen as distinct from Yi-rim's. In the Korean version, Yi-Rim's character becomes cold and distant when she discovers that Seon-u had a one-night stand with her husband. It takes a while for both Seon-u and Yi-Rim to settle their differences. Carol's characterization, on the other hand, is distinct as she still becomes that loyal friend to Jill despite the knowledge of her husband's and friend's one-night affair. She is that friend whom Jill has relied on, especially in times when the latter needed a companion to figure things out for her to solve. Towards the end of the narrative, both characters are emancipated from their tangled married life: Yi-rim broke free of her husband despite trying to save their marriage, while Carol broke free of her marriage from her husband despite being pregnant.

3.2. Underlying Themes

Both series follow a similar premise: the doctor wife discovers a strand of hair on the shawl gifted by her husband, sparking a cascade of doubts regarding their spouses' faithfulness, ultimately culminating in the tumultuous collapse of their marriages. However, both characters forgive their husbands, as they are taunted by society's judgment for being broken family. For Lee Jae-lin (2020), *TWOTM* meticulously focused on Seon-u's state of mind and underscored how familial relations, the very basic unit and fundamental root of one's social fabric, can be precarious. Despite the efforts to salvage the family by giving their husbands a second chance, both series end with the female lead characters losing not only their husbands but also their son, whom they have both protected. It turns out that their protection stifled their children, which led them to be abandoned by their sons after finally

emancipating themselves from a treacherous relationship.

The drama series also mirrored a divorcee's life, which is a highly sensitive topic in Korea today. According to Kim (2020), South Korea has one of the highest divorce rates in OECD³ countries, thus making divorced women face challenges not only in terms of social stigma but also financial hardship, which is why most of them are forced to leave town and start anew somewhere else. This was underscored when Tae-o, after marrying Da Kyung, coerced Seon-u to leave town and even demanded for their son's sole custody. This particular issue was quite controversial as some viewers discussed this in various platforms, especially divorced women who were struck by a chord by this scene. In another vein though, the show was praised as it provided a realistic option for women who were divorced. In the series, Seon-u was wooed by her colleague, Kim Yoon-gi [portrayed by Lee Moo-saeng], who is also a divorcee.

TWOTM also highlights workplace issues concerning gender. For example, Dr. Ji's character as an assistant director of Family Care Hospital may be seen as a strong character on the surface level, but underneath this portrayal is an image of gender discrimination, as she is taken for granted by her immediate supervisor, Kong Ji-cheol [portrayed by Jung Jae-sung]. As Kim (2020) posits, one viewer of the series mentioned that the character of Kong Ji-cheol [portrayed by Jung Jae-sung], Ji Seon-u's immediate supervisor, reminds him of a colleague, to the point that the character was labeled as a "middle-aged sexist pig." Moreover, TWOTM breaks away from the South Korean norm in portraying the masculine. In contrast to the masculine being the head of the household, this role is assumed by Dr. Ji given her financial stability as a professional, while Tae-o, her husband, depends on her to finance his gradually bankrupt film production outfit. As such, the drama series celebrates women being empowered and independent from the male companions they have. In relation to this, the show

³ The OECD, consisting of 37 democratic nations with market-oriented economies, serves as an exceptional platform for collaborative efforts among governments. Their primary goal is to formulate policy guidelines aimed at fostering enduring economic growth while ensuring sustainability.

drew negative feedback in the episode where Seon-u was attacked by a home intruder. For Kim (2020), this moment seemed to trivialize women and children who are victims of violence and abuse.

What also sets apart TWOTM from TBMV is the latter still underscoring its local traditions and cultures, while the former is a subtle manifestation of Korea fantasizing to be British. For instance, in TWOTM, it was underscored that Korean kids would need to spend extra hours after school to learn English given that most of them would want to pursue higher education studies in international schools or universities. There was also an instance where Da Kyung even suggested to Tae-o to send to a British boarding school to secure his bright future. In another instance, instead of showcasing Korean cuisine in Seon-u's household, she would instead cook Western dishes such as roast beef in the first episode of the drama series. These are just some manifestations that Koreans, albeit being an industrialized country compared to the Philippines.

Unlike in TWOTM where the lead characters end up in divorce, which is the dissolution of one's marriage, TBMV used annulment as the recourse and consequence. This change is due to the non-existence of a divorce law in the Philippines, one of the few countries in the world (Wibawa 2018).

with only annulment as a possible recourse.

In contrast to TWOTM, TBMV was made at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was thus an effective way of promoting local color and culture by choosing strategic locations that at some point would bear some semblance in the Korean adaptation and at the same time, promote local wear and local cuisine. It cannot be denied that the hospitality industry was heavily damaged brought about by the long series of lockdowns due to COVID-19. For Manucom (2021), TBMV is a celebration of everything that comprises Filipino culture: food, fashion, and even cuisine! Throughout the show, Philippine fashion was greatly underscored in the costumes of the lead character Jill Ilustre and in some supporting characters such as Nathalie Ilustre, Alexis' mother who

was played by singer-actress Rachel Alejandro, in which she dons a *terno* outfit, which consists of the blouse [*baro* or *camisa*], a folded rectangular piece of fabric worn over the shoulders [*pañuelo* or *fichu*], and a short rectangular cloth [*tapis*] wrapped over top of a long skirt [*saya*]. Jor-el Espina, the show's costume designer, designed Nathalie's wardrobe and his manner of designing is focused on the details, where the colors, textures, and structures are deliberately chosen to make sure that each creation is beautifully unique (Veloso 2022). There is also a conscious effort in Jill Ilustre's clothing to give viewers a taste of local color from her kaftan dress to her handwoven coats and even her accessories. As Veloso (2022) writes, Jill's kaftan dress was designed by Leonora Cabili's *Filip+Inna*, whose design, beadwork, and embroidery are done by indigenous community artisans in the country. In some episodes also, Jill wears coats that were handcrafted by Tausug artisans and took over two months just to complete one outfit.

The Filipino cuisine is also promoted in TBMV. In the first episode, Jill cooked *adobo* for dinner. Adobo, which traces its etymological roots in the Spanish word *adobar* which means marinade, is a popular dish in the Philippines. As De Witt (2010) writes, cooking an *adobo* dish involves meat [usually chicken or pork] which is marinated in soy sauce, vinegar, and other blends of spices such as garlic, bay leaves, and black peppercorns, thus making it easy to prepare cook, which is quite suitable for middle-class families such that of the Ilustre-Victorino household. In the 31st episode, a showcase of Filipino delicacies and food was prepared [local desserts such as *bibingka* or rice cake], but what took center stage is known by the name *cochinillo* (suckling pig). According to Frayer (2013), it is a dish that was inherited by the Filipinos from its Spanish conquistadores. Its difference from the *lechon* that most Filipinos are accustomed to is a young pig is the main ingredient for *cochinillo*, while a full-grown pig is roasted from the former. Moreover, it is not only tiresome to prepare but would also be costly as this dish is only served in important occasions and celebrations. In an interview with the designers by Anarcon (2022), the *cochinillo* is a symbolic representation of Lexy: someone who is young, fresh, and succulent. Coincidentally, the dinner scene opens

with the breaking of the *cochinillo*, a prelude to what will happen to Lexy in the succeeding episodes as she and David are about to taste Jill's scornful wrath because of their adulterous relationship.

To emphasize the Cordillera's setting, the series incorporated the native dish *pinikpikan*. As outlined by Locsin (2006), *pinikpikan*'s roots trace back to pre-colonial religious practices, reflecting its ritualistic nature in both preparation and consumption. Originally utilized for seeking favors, appealing to departed loved ones or *Kabuniyan* [the local deity], or expressing gratitude for answered prayers, the dish evolved with the decline of pre-colonial customs due to colonization. In the series, the traditional method involving the gradual beating of the chicken was replaced by using already dressed chickens obtained from local traders in the area (Locsin 2006: 77). Despite this adaptation, featuring *pinikpikan* in the narrative signals the series' distinctly Filipino identity, providing viewers with something culturally familiar and authentic. Interestingly, this scene coincides with Jill and David's marital discord, seemingly symbolizing Jill's lingering hope for the relationship despite her suspicions about David's infidelity.

The Filipino adaptation strongly emphasizes close family bonds, evident in the relationships portrayed between David, Jill, and Gio throughout the series, even before David's infidelity. Despite David's betrayal, Jill displays immense hospitality towards Marina, David's mother. The show underscores the protective nature of mothers toward their children, showcased through Jill's vigilant protectiveness over Gio following her separation from David. Additionally, instances such as Marina's plea to Jill not to press charges against David after he nearly fatally assaults her in episode 44 highlight this theme. Nathalie's attempt to bribe Jill to leave Baguio further accentuates the lengths parents are willing to go to for the sake of familial peace. Towards the series' conclusion, Lexy decides to end her marriage with David to shield her daughter from the potential harm they might endure by staying with him.

Gossiping or in local parlance, *chismis*, is also embedded throughout the narrative. Be it in the form of online gossip or rumor-mongering, these were highlighted in the show. In the first

few episodes, Sandy, Jill's friend and colleague is a typical example of what is typified as a *Marites* [local term for gossip monger]. It is she from whom David knew Jill's annulment plan even before being served the papers for it. Furthermore, online gossiping, which is quite reminiscent of the current social media climate in the Philippines is highlighted in the series as it is evident how Jill's reputation is greatly affected by online gossip propelled by Enzo (Joem Bascon). According to Puache (2022), the series provides a sneak preview of the negative consequences brought about by spreading false information and rumors to the point of making it viral as it may put a person's reputation at risk, thus very timely with the proliferation of misinformation and disinformation in the country, which makes it quite apt as the Philippines is also dubbed as the world's social media capital.

As mentioned earlier, given that the show was shot and shown at the height of the pandemic, local tourism was actively promoted, as much as how K-Dramas would indirectly promote its unique sites to attract tourists. As such, to be able to rouse some sense of familiarity and similitude to the K-Drama, the provinces of Baguio and the Mountain Provinces, one of the go-to destinations of both local and foreign tourists were highlighted throughout the drama series. In some shooting locations, some scenic spots were used which is an indirect promotion of tourism in the place given that the tourism industry was badly hit by the pandemic. Moreover, in the opening scenes of the pilot episode, the Rice Terraces were momentarily focused before zooming into the action taking place. As Abanes (2022) writes, the interior of each setting is intricately and carefully planned not only to reflect Jill's personality in her familial abode, but to also add a layer of Filipino flair to the series. In both the Ilustre and the Lucero households, the fireplace is "a focal point, the wood-cabin feel, and the pine trees are seen from almost every angle," which is a symbolism of Filipino warmth and hospitality.

IV. Conclusion

With the morphing of the television series format in the wake of

digital technology and the emergence of globalization where entertainment commodities cross national boundaries, transnational adaptations of foreign drama series are a commercial effort “to become available for a specific kind of audience” (Wells-Lassagne 2017: 92). Audiences now enjoy having a distinct positionality on issues that are timely and relevant in their countries. As adaptations of *Doctor Foster*, TWOTM and TBMV retained the original story’s premise with some modifications to cater to the largest possible viewership. These included changes in character portrayals, setting and cultural nuances that may not make sense to local viewers should producers stay *faithful* to the source text. TBMV not only underscored family life after the divorce proceedings, but also celebrated a woman’s independence, while TWOTM gave viewers a glimpse of discrimination of women in the 21st century. It is the cultural applicability of the series that made them palatable to target audiences, given that they underscore sensitivities specific to a certain locale, as television productions “lose their value when they cross borders as foreign viewers do not appreciate the cultural references contained in the ‘original text’” (Wells-Lassagne 2017: 92).

A closing point of reflection perhaps is why local television networks in the Philippines keep on adapting K-dramas in the local teleserye setting since the invasion of Tagalog-dubbed versions in primetime viewing. Given the popularity and the dominance of Korean culture [also collectively known as hallyu], Korea’s cultural products have dramatically influenced not only our televisual experience but have become popular cultural products in the Philippines. The choice of which series should be adapted is quite tricky as there are many factors to be considered. For Aberin et al. (2021), the audience plays a determining factor in whether they can relate to the storyline of the drama to be adapted. In addition, adapting these dramas into the local palette may appear to be uncomplicated but a tricky one as cultural context plays an important role in the adaptation process. It is a challenge for the production team to find out these cultural nuances and “tweak the storyline so that it best matches the plot of the original series while retaining the basic premise and the essence of the story” (96).

The process of adapting a text echoes the complexities

inherent in translation, involving a profound intercultural and intertemporal exchange and a forward means of reappropriating a story from one form, from one culture, or from one period to another (Wells-Lassagne 2017: 22). After all, the adapted text as a product can be compared to a translated text in which there is no literal translation but an intercultural and intertemporal communication where the adapted text retrofits itself in the local palette, thus its journey from one point to another point [in this case, from Britain's *Doctor Foster* to Korea's *The World of the Married* and the Philippines' *The Broken Marriage Vow*]. Adaptation transcends mere linguistic or cultural shifts as it intricately transforms the original content to harmonize with the distinct tastes, societal norms, and contexts of the new audience, illustrating a substantial recognition and alignment with local audience preferences and cultural identity. This adaptation strategy aligns narratives with local sensibilities, incorporating familiar cultural elements, traditions, and societal norms to enhance relatability and connection with Filipino viewers.

Furthermore, this practice reflects the industry's dynamic nature, revealing its adaptability and willingness to innovate. Integrating Filipino cultural elements into storytelling not only expands viewership but also nurtures a deeper bond between the teleserye and its audience, fostering a sense of cultural belonging and appreciation. Additionally, this shift suggests a more sophisticated approach to storytelling and production design, prioritizing cultural authenticity and contextual relevance as the industry appears to be moving beyond the replication of foreign content. It now ventures into emphasizing localized narratives that entertain while also resonating culturally related themes and motifs with the local audience. The teleserye has achieved its originality as it travels from one culture to another by transmuted foreign influences which has relevance to social consciousness, which ultimately leads to the formation of national character. This signifies a mature evolution in the teleserye landscape, as it strives to create (and re-create) narratives that are both entertaining and culturally meaningful to the Filipino audience.

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