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Not Homosexual Enough, But Romantic Enough: “A Girl Masquerading as a Man” Trend in Recent Korean TV Dramas

It is a fairly recent cultural phenomenon that Korean society has had visual representations on homosexuality and other various types of sexualities including transgender and transvestite. One thing very unique about this changed cultural atmosphere is that several Korean trendy dramas that have a female character masquerading as a man have appeared at some point and are all successful without exception. Thus, in this paper, I read the trend of female characters masquerading as a man in recent Korean TV drama as a cultural text. I analyze in what social and cultural contexts these female characters and dramas are getting so popular and what it means. The paper contains three sections. First, I draw a genealogy of “a girl masquerading as a man” trend in Korean TV dramas. Second, I contextualize the trend in terms of “flower man” syndrome and androgyny. Third, I explain the trend in the frame of a rise of “homosexual visibility” in contemporary Korean popular culture. Drawing from the discussions, I demonstrate what it means to have female androgynous characters in recent Korean TV dramas.