TRANSNATIONAL KOREAN STUDIES

PRESENTS

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Vicarious Media: Liveness, Serial Affect, and Fan Mediation in K-pop

FEBRUARY 4, 2019 4:00 - 6:00 PM
RED SHOE ROOM, SUN GOD LOUNGE, PC WEST

In this talk, I survey various forms of spectacular identification with and consumption of K-pop idol celebrity and youth culture, from the performance of K-pop dance choreography to mŏkbang (marathon eating videos) to fan-recorded reactions on video logs to K-pop music videos, to theorize the particular forms of vicarious experience that bind K-pop idols to their fans and fans to each other. I argue that vicarity relies on the ubiquitous reflexivity that defines social media platforms as sites of subject formation via media production and consumption. While meta-media have been a topic of analysis in fiction film and television, as well as reality TV, I argue that social media participation constitutes an immersive, everyday form of meta-media, by which vicarious substitution through the consumption of vlogs/reactions induce acutely affective experiences of identification. Overall, the project asks what vicariousness as a structure of media consumption can teach us about social life, more broadly, in the techno-mediated environments of a global popular culture. Vicarious media seem to suggest a proxy for politics as an expression of collective sentiment—the ways in which media platforms bridge the private and the public through the increasingly complex arena of the social. Yet, traditional modes of political organizing, while perhaps foreign to a fan habitus, remain recognizable in the activities of fan collectives. My goal is thus to articulate how K-pop sheds light on the contradictory impulses for intense individuation—through the atomized personas overdetermined by social media and the vlog form—and the corresponding longing for ideals of collective agency and community that we see across multiple nodes of media consumption.

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