Euny Hong, The Birth of Korean Cool (2014)

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Author Bio
Sookwan Hong is an associate professor of marketing at Michigan Technological University. His research focuses on sociocultural and ideological aspects of consumption, which should facilitate our understanding of a variety of consumption practices, consumers’ lived experiences, and stylization of their lives. Currently, he studies alternative sustainable lifestyles in multiple ecovillages in the U.S. and Europe and conducts research on eco-tourism. His research interests also extend to globalization of popular culture. He has published in international journals, such as Journal of Business Research, Marketing Theory, Qualitative Market Research, and Arts and the Market, and regularly presented at prestigious conferences.

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In 'The Birth of Korean Cool' Euny tells a story about South Korea’s rising Hallyu phenomenon. She goes on to expound in details about how South Korea through the export of its K-POP etcetra, has been able to position itself as a country on the globe strategically using a host of government aided measures. Euny delves into the history of the nation, about its oppression, its economic plight and social issues with amazing chutzpah which I give her a lot of credit for. It cannot possibly be easy even in this day and age to come up with a such a candid book about a country and its people and to a

Unlike many of the other Korean culture (and specifically kpop books) reviewed here at TLF, The Birth of Korean Cool isn't academic. Instead, it is

somewhat personal essay — in the style of Oliver Sacks — but more than the story of one person, it is the story of a country that has decided to focus on supplying pop culture to the world. Hong writes the improbable tale of a country that went from banning rock music up until 1978 to being the pop music factory that is K-pop. And Hong explains how hallyu — exported Korean culture — is different than Japanese cultural production. Japanese cultural production is turned internally rather than externally, considering the size of the country allows for cultural production, like music, to be focused on domestic, rather than international audiences.