



Commodification of Asian Femininities in Cha's *If I had your Face*

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ABSTRACT

The commodifying schemas of beauty politics delve into the process of reshaping the identities of Asian women in Asian fiction. This paper scrutinizes the transformative journey of Kyuri, an enchantingly beautiful and aching plastic salon girl, as depicted in Frances Cha's novel, If I Had Your Face. Set against the backdrop of the vibrant metropolis of Seoul, South Korea, Kyuri's narrative represents the profound yearning of Asian women deeply immersed in the allure and sophistication of glamour and beauty. Employing Naomi Wolf's Beauty Myth, this article examines the multifaceted experiences of the Asian women portrayed in the novel. The consumer-driven beauty industry leads them to commodified xenofeminist futures. In the highly competitive realm of the beauty industry, the quest for physical perfection compels Asian women to undergo transformative facial procedures, seeking unrelenting pursuit of an idealised standard of beauty perpetuated by the glamorous world and media. Repeated surgical interventions for artificial beauty standards ensnare them in a disquieting xenofeminist future that celebrates techno-material and antinatural bodies. In this paradigm, the characters in If I Had Your Face grapple with the unsettling and dehumanising consequences of their pursuit of unrealistic plastic beauty: a dystopic future.



Introduction

This research probes the glitzy temptations confronting traditional and modern Asian women, influencing their Asian femininities in the milieu of East and Southeast Asia. It investigates that consumer-driven beauty politics in these cosmopolitan times is reconstructing and consuming the agency of women, maneuvering them from feminism to xenofeminism: a future of techno-material, anti-natural, and gender-abolished womanhood. The consumer-driven beauty industry orchestrates the commodification of Asian femininities against the backdrop of the glitzy and glamorous world of Asia. They engage various socio-cultural aspects to steer the vulnerable and frail gender called woman. Asian femininities have been projecting a woman, especially a traditional woman, who has been the epitome of a good mother, an obedient daughter, and a loyal wife, ignoring the attributes of a modern, trendy, up-to-date, and techno-woman.

Beauty Politics and Asian Women

In this consumer-driven beauty era, Asian women are commodified by unreal and impossibly symmetrical beauty standards. The prototypes of traditional and modern women confirm the combative role of beauty politics in the milieu of societal and economic factors. The modern woman, or in this paper's context, the postfeminist woman, challenges societal structures, resituates herself in a new world, and reinstates the femininities that are introduced by the fusion of science and technology in these cosmopolitan times. Women residing in cosmopolitan countries like Korea have more access to the glitzy world. Glamour, beauty, and thinness are the commodifying factors for women in Asia. They first get acquainted with the ongoing trends

in the glitzy and fashionist world, get immersed in them, and accept the dystopic results by compromising their self-worth. Frances Cha's *If I Had Your Face* (2020) shows that Asian women are always lured by the fashionable world and accept a xenofeminist future where women are not cherished due to their feminine attributes but by their technologically, ideally, and medically improved appearance in the guise of their self-worth and womanhood. She confirms a shift from feminism to xenofeminism, where the body is infused with technology and antinatural remedies. Automation and digitization, even in the beauty industry, promote machinic and technologically modified appearances modified by cosmetic surgeries, which not only satisfy male doctors financially but also their patriarchal egos.

Women are presented with the idea of impossibly flawless beauty ideals. The consumer-driven beauty business is discussed in relation to arguments about leisure and the body. The monetization of body practices is the expansion of the beauty industry, and women are equally responsible for augmenting and projecting the beauty culture in every society. Though they are the easy target, they celebrate it as well. They, after getting acquainted with the technology and bioculture, do not feel themselves as objects but consider themselves more empowered. As per the views of Davis (1990), beauty has a significant importance in women's lives because it is not only cultural. They already have enough awareness, which gives them blatant exposure to opt for the ways of their choice. So modern women are well aware of the changing trends in the beauty industry, and they choose to become ideally beautiful just because of the celebrities and fashionistas presented to them by the media. This seems to be the enterprise of patriarchy to control women because men want women to be beautiful, and women love to look beautiful to everyone. The chosen novel to investigate the dilemma of Asian women wanting to look ideally and achingly beautiful suggests her unquenching thirst from the title, *If I Had Your Face*, which suggests women's pursuit of getting the other woman's face because that looks more beautiful to them than their own.

Self-beautification and self-adornment have been in practice since women came into being. In Asia, women are extremely conscious of their appearance because of their exposure to western beauty standards, and as a result, they get psychologically and physically commodified. Francis Cha's *If I Had Your Face* (2020) shows the temptation of plastic surgery and its horrific payout through the characters of Kyuri and Sujin, born with plain faces. Devastatingly painful surgeries turned them beautiful and left them permanently numb in their faces. They are subjugated in the name of empowerment, and they accept this, compromising their feminine attributes and projecting a bizarre appearance.

Xenofeminism offers a queer and trans-inclusive communist feminism that focuses on the bodies of women in relation to technology. It does not refuse the queerness and bizarre appearance that women are getting after different technological procedures but repurposes it because biotechnoculture is considered bad and xenofeminists possess and celebrate it. Xenofeminism (XF) is basically a post-third wave trans-feminist school of thought. It was created by an international group known as Laboria Cuboniks with the purpose of resituating and reinstating women in the 21st century. They claim that:

“Our world is dizzy. In our daily lives, an intertwining of abstraction, virtuality, and complexity is introduced with the invasion of new technological media. The xenofeminist manifesto shapes a feminism adapted to these realities, seizing alienation as a lever to generate new worlds”. (Cuboniks, p. 5).

The xenofeminists believe that postfeminism is almost over, and now is the time to celebrate something like tran-feminism: a biotechnoculture, which this research claims is dystopic in nature as it leads to alienation. Because being techno-performative women does not confirm that they are empowered; rather, they are commodified by the consumer capitalist designs of this technologically advanced world. Commodifying schemas of beauty through body image in the entertainment industry promote western beauty standards. In pursuit of these luminous attributes, women undergo different bio-techno procedures that they have to maintain it through various different technological procedures, which lead to physical and psychological hostility. The entertainment industry, an instrument of capitalist culture, first creates the atmosphere and then targets the most vulnerable audience, Asian women in this case, who want to comply with western beauty standards. This paper explores how the commodifying schemas of beauty politics subjugate Asian femininities in Asian fiction, affecting their womanhood, societal roles, and self-worth.

Theoretical Framework

This research is grounded in the ideas of Naomi Wolf who claims that the “beauty myth” is a politics against the advancement of women, making them inadequate without cosmetics. They are constantly under “physical scrutiny” that makes them conscious of their public appearance (Wolf 1990, p. 274). Making women painfully conscious of their appearance is in fact the design of, at first, consumer driven beauty culture and then the patriarchal set-up. Both of them want to commodify and subjugate them. Women are given the luminous beauty standards to just look beautiful because they are considered the best consumers of the beauty

market. In both the ways, women are just commodified, either in the hands of consumer culture or male gaze. Wolf (1990) claims that women are less visually excited and more emotionally stimulated, while men are more visually attracted by women's bodies and less sensitive to their arousal by women's personalities. Men analyse and then pass over women's bodies with their gaze, turning them into commodities and making women feel the accomplishment of being attractive and beautiful. Because men fail to pay attention to the speech of woman on television rather her appearance, such as her size, cosmetics, outfit, and haircut. The beauty business and the media exploit the pressure on women to meet unattainable beauty standards as a distraction and a tool of control. But on the other hand Wolf (1991) claims that beauty myth should be considered to look feminine not to project the antinatural and techno material standards by beauty industry. She stresses that "women must be thin to be attractive; it says they must be thin to be healthy. It does not say women must have long hair, lipstick, high heels, or any other aspect of appearance; it says they must look feminine. Feminine, in turn, means behaving in such a way as to prove one's rank as a female, as opposed to a male. (Wolf, 1991, p. 57) She further claims that the beauty myth has proved to be a nightmare because it robs women of their identity. It also destroys their self-esteem, and further imprisons them in a world of constant struggle and insecurity.

In this consumer driven beauty era, femininity is reduced to ideal beauty standards only. Be it labour or domesticity, women are considered to be the ideal consumers for the beautification of their being and to gain the goods politically and economically. They are the best market commodities because they become easy targets for markets and industries. Wolf (1991) radically criticizes these industries formed to fulfil the economic concerns of capitalist and consumer culture. The beauty myth is a backlash against feminism because it uses the images of ideal women as a commodifying tool to hamper women's advancement. This is validated by the characters named Kyuri and Sujin in Cha's *If I Had Your Face* (2020). Wolf debunks the concept of the beauty myth because it is designed against women's self-esteem. Wolf shows how second-wave feminism demolished the beauty myth, which had succeeded the idea of domesticity. Women who severed their links with the position of housewife in favour of a job and autonomy were tempted by the beauty myth to discover something that spoke to them. Attractiveness grew as a requirement for desirable ladies. A woman cannot feel wanted if she does not feel beautiful, because sexual identity and beauty are intertwined. Wolf (1991) asserts that women won't have any energy left over if they spend all of their time worrying about whether or not men will find them appealing. The "myth of beauty," according to Wolf, is a violent counter-reaction to feminism, which uses images of female beauty as a political weapon against the advancement of women. Among other things, the positioning of feminists as "ugly" and "masculine" has developed a new arena of confrontation against radical feminism. The endless beauty work has taken the place of housework, which was once the familiar and well-known domain of women. Once that happened, millions of images of the beauty ideal circulated. The diet, cosmetics, cosmetic surgery, and porn industries have based their power on capital generated from the unconscious anxieties of women. Economic needs strive to ignore the reality of "real women" and reduce the meaning of femininity to prescribed images of beauty. Wolf (1991) argues that this society is under the strong influence of the PBQ (Professional Beauty Qualification), which is only applicable to women. Women need to be young, attractive, and sophisticated at the workplace, home, or anywhere. In the backdrop of commodified realities, it indicates that even the values at the workplace, home, and every other place has been commodified by the consumer-driven beauty industry (p.101).

Literature Review

If I Had Your Face (2020) has always been of great importance to many critics. Be it a critic, writer, or reviewer, everyone has different views regarding the novel, the culture, and the society that have been addressed by Frances Cha. Some celebrate and appreciate the high-tech Korean culture, and some of them highlight the ill-workings of the misleading temptations of glamorous world immersed in the beauty industry. Some talk about it from different perspectives related to South Asian culture, cosmopolitan societies, and western beauty standards.

South Asia has always been under the influence of western beauty standards, but sometimes its trends appropriate western cultures too. Meenakshi Gigi Durham (2001) talks about how South Asian culture has been appropriated by Western media, paying special attention to nose rings, mehndi, and bindis as South Asian feminine emblems. She draws attention to the ways in which these patterns reflect both current worries about global finance and cultural fusion as well as historical processes of colonialism, supremacy, and exoticization in East-West contacts. Durham focuses on the fact that these fashion trends are often adopted in American popular culture without giving them much consideration, turning them into simple fads among consumers. She also points out that, rather than being connected to South Asian women's bodies, these representations of South Asian femininity are essentially decorations in American culture. She examines how Western media repositions and reconstructs the body of critical problems concerning power, racism, and gender raised by the Indian woman and the coloured female body (Durham, 2001). Durham 2001 has highlighted that it is not only

Asian or South Asian culture that has been commodified, but sometimes it has been adopted by westerners as well. Durham 2001 has discussed the culture from one perspective, but this paper talks about the Asian culture being commodified by western beauty standards only.

A modified face according to the beauty trends wins the heart of the spectaculars. This novel is about the imperative of cosmetic surgeries for young women. The life of a woman with a beautiful face can be improved immeasurably. (Shapiro, 2022) Be it a job, social status, or personal place, a beautiful woman with a modified face is always given considerable attention. Cha (2020) has also presented Asian women, especially Kyuri and Sujin, as obsessed with the idea of getting a improved face according to the rising trends in the beauty industry.

The debut novel by Frances Cha, "If I Had Your Face," is praised by Holly Williams in her review for The Guardian for its stunning portrayal of four women enmeshed in the glitz of South Korean materialism. Williams focuses on South Korea's cultural context, where women under the age of 30 get cosmetic surgery at the highest rate in the world. She makes the point that working towards physical enhancement is not just a matter of vanity but also a strategy for surviving in a competitive job market. Williams considers the setting of South Korean consumerism and beauty standards to be intriguing and relevant for Cha's narrative. Cha has worked as a cultural and travel editor, which provides an informed perspective on the subject matter. (Williams 2020, August 3).

The real life of Korean women is infused with the cosmopolitanism of the highly competitive beauty industry and fashion trends. It is highly admirable to be a fashionista with a face with impossibly alluring and cosmetologized features. Mia Ruso's conversation with Frances Cha provides important details about the author's objectives and writing process for "If I Had Your Face." According to Cha, the novel focuses on real-life Korean women who reject traditional notions of love and seek happiness in other people's traits. Cha's characters' desire for other women's traits as a means of finding happiness helps to emphasise her commitment to portraying authentic Korean culture. She also explains how the title of the book was influenced by her views of Korean women participating in a beauty competition (Ruso, September 21, 20).

The cosmopolitan approach has changed the minds of women since their interaction with it. They find their beings flourishing when they are intertwined with glamorous standards or the world, they are living in. Jung Yun 2020, sanctions that *If I Had Your Face* (2020) is a novel on female power in contemporary Seoul, Korea. In a world with rigid social rules, room salons, wealthy spouses, and unachievable beauty standards, Yun focuses on the setting and story of the novel, which chronicles the lives of four women who are struggling to exist. Yun investigates the novel by claiming the active role of room salons, the trend of wealthy spouses, and the novel for the purpose of beauty politics or commodifying agendas, and also focuses on the story of the novel with a focus on the world of cosmopolitanism. Yun further explores this book. This perspective emphasizes how the book explores the challenges faced by women in a society that places a high priority on success and beauty.

Analysis: *If I Had Your Face*

Frances Cha's debut novel *If I Had Your Face* (2020) unfolds in South Korea, a nation often hailed as the global epicentre of plastic surgery. Here, one in three women opts for surgical enhancements before reaching the age of 30. This novel not only scrutinises the nation's towering standards of beauty and its preoccupation with outward appearances but also delves into other deeply ingrained societal constructs that are formidable to overcome, such as class distinctions, patriarchy, and inequality. This novel, in fact, tells the lives of four women living in modern Seoul, Korea, a highly competitive and unforgivingly judgmental environment. The four main narrators—Kyuri, Miho, Ara, and Wanna—tell their stories from rotating perspectives. Kyuri, the protagonist of the novel, works at a room salon, where wealthy businessmen go to be entertained after hours. Miho, Kyuri's flatmate, is an orphan; Ara, their neighbour, is a hair stylist obsessed with op. Wanna, a little older than these young women, lives in the same cheap building with her husband because this is what they can afford with their combined salaries. They are struggling all the time to survive in a cutting-edge, competitive society where beauty is the only measure to judge a person. Seoul, Korea, is the place where plastic surgery is routine. *If I Had Your Face* (2020) shows women aspiring after glamour for the sake of the economy. Weaving different worlds colliding, particularly the rich with the poor, the disparities between different generations, and the grave inconsistencies between Korea and the West, the novel explores how body-image created by the entertainment industry affects young women in Asia. Plastic surgery is the most insidious aspect of Korean culture. All the popular actors and musicians in the novel are reportedly clients of the Cinderella Clinic, the most prestigious plastic surgery clinic in the country. Because the young female characters grow up with televisions in their homes, they are all indoctrinated into the belief that people must be impossibly symmetrical and beautiful in the traditional sense to have a chance at happiness.

Kyuri, a transmogrified being

Kyuri is the true emblem of Cha (2020) and Wolf's Beauty Myth and the idea that women are robbed of their identities and self-worth, as the beauty myth is a nightmare to them. In her quest to look achingly and elegantly beautiful, she is robbed of her self-esteem and further imprisoned in a world of constant struggle and insecurity to attain artificial and plastic beauty standards. Kyuri works at a room salon, where she is considered among the top 10 percent of the prettiest girls in the industry. She is recognised everywhere for her beauty, although much of it has been augmented or completely altered by plastic surgery. Everyone describes her as awfully beautiful. In fact, she has undergone multiple surgical procedures, and the "stitches on her double eyelids look naturally faint, while her nose is raised, her cheekbones tapered, and her entire jaw realigned and shaved into a slim v-line" (p. 05). Plastic surgery in Seoul is given to very young women. Ara recalls that while in high school, every girl in their class was offered half-priced eyelid surgery by the husband of one of their teachers. This emphasis on beauty has such exacting standards that the other skills and talents of women tend to pale in comparison to their looks. The operations that women continually put themselves through are brutal and unnecessary. The cosmetic surgery is not only limited to Kyuri but to other salon girls too. Ara's flatmate, a twenty-two-year-old woman named Sujin, wishes to become a room salon girl. During her initial appointment, the doctor suggests double eyelid and jaw surgery, along with a cheekbone reduction and liposuction on her chin. Across the hallway resides another pair of roommates: Ara, a hairstylist who is rendered mute by the trauma of a mysterious past event, and Sujin, who aspires to work with Kyuri in a "10 percent" room salon (p. 25).

A beautiful young lady, Kyuri, working in the world of impossible beauty standards and plastic surgery, wants to remodel her plastic surgery after seeing the beautiful face of a K-Pop singer named Candy. Still, she is not happy with her transformation and claims to Candy, "I would live your life so much better than you if I had your face" (p. 28). Although she has had considerable cosmetic surgery to improve her appearance, her life is anything but glamorous. She battles debt and the mental strain of working for a company that requires her to entertain affluent, often violent customers. On the other hand, Kyuri's closest friend, Miho, who shares her apartment complex, is her sole source of comfort. Miho, a visual artist, just returned to Seoul after finishing her studies in New York. She is still attempting to make a name for herself in the competitive art world while dealing with the aftereffects of a failed relationship. She is tormented by her upbringing and tries to blend in. Living in the same building as Kyuri and Miho is silent hairdresser Ara. Due to a childhood tragedy that has rendered her speechless, her solitude and loneliness are worsened by the fact that her mother is incarcerated. A recent immigrant from the nation called Sujin, who is a new resident in the building, captures Ara's attention. Sujin is adamant about getting out of poverty and building a life for herself in the city. As these four ladies deal with the difficulties of living in Seoul, their lives become interwoven. Miho starts to doubt her own creativity and whether she has what it takes to thrive as an artist, while Kyuri becomes more anxious to leave her work and the men who rule her life. Sujin's world draws Ara in, and the two women develop an unexpected bond. As the story progresses, the ladies are compelled to face their own wants and concerns and make challenging decisions about their futures.

Women do not want to get old because becoming old means becoming ugly and hence dead. Kyuri states that the older girls have to try so hard with their hairstyles. She emphasises that "it's really tragic to get old. I look at our madam, and she is just the ugliest creature I have ever seen. I think I would kill myself if I looked at that. Kyuri continues: "Sometimes I just can't stop thinking about how ugly she is. I mean, why doesn't she get surgery? (p.13). Kyuri is not only obsessed with her own appearance but with others' too. And so are Sujin and Ara. Even though women are aware of the aftermath of surgeries, they are accepting it willingly because they believe that either one should look beautiful or die otherwise. Kyuri's cousin still couldn't feel her chin and had a hard time chewing, she said, but she had gotten a job in sales at a top-tier conglomerate" (p. 15). This is the fact that is acknowledged in the world of beauty: the pain of cosmetic procedures is nothing. Sujin, like Kyuri and the cousin of her friend, has had a fairly invasive cosmetic procedure that involves shaving both her upper and lower jaws to give her a more attractive face structure. The procedure is risky and very unpleasant. South Korean women opt to go through these painful operations in order to meet the beauty standards that advance them in the social hierarchy because beauty is a tool in business and entertainment. It makes them visible and prominent in the glamorous and ostentatious world. Working places, offices, and businesses have been so commodified by the power of the beauty industry that it is considered that only beautiful women can run for particular positions, as ugly people have no place.

Kyuri, electrically beautiful and Miho's painfully plastic roommate, "works at Ajax, the most expensive room salon in Nonhyeon, where men bring their clients to discuss business in long, dark rooms with marble tables." (p.2) Kyuri's work at the expensive room salon depicts the woman's willingness to accept subjugation through Wolf's (1990) PBQ (professional beauty qualification) quotient and accept the modern misogynist

attitude of patriarchy. Rich businessmen come to the dark rooms of that salon where women pour liquor, and Kyuri's acceptance of that role and maintenance of beauty confirm that beauty has taken hold of the working place as well. These prominent men pay a night's rent to have girls like Kyuri sit next to them and pour them liquor. Women present themselves to men to be paid high for their self-worth. Women are mere "beauties" in men's culture, so that culture can be kept male. When women in culture show character, they are not desirable, as opposed to the desirable, artless ingenue. Cha, 2020).

Men want to possess a beautiful woman to show their worth. And this is the fact that men like beautiful women, and it is the norm in every culture. Cha's men are rich; they visit dark salon rooms with beautiful girls by their sides to entertain them. On the other hand, men in the form of cosmetologists, i.e., Dr. Shin, perform surgeries on women, subjugating them in a new and different way. They take pride in doing all this and complement the claim by Naomi Wolf that, "What becomes of a man who acquires a beautiful woman, with her "beauty" his sole target? He sabotages himself. He has gained no friend, no ally, and no mutual trust. She knows quite well why she has been chosen. He has succeeded in buying something: the esteem of other men who find such an acquisition impressive" (Wolf, 1991). On the other hand, women's aspirations are driven by only money and beauty because beauty matters, and

"Why does beauty matter? Beauty flies in the face of puritanical utilitarianism. It defies the reductiveness of both the political left and the political right in their efforts to bend it to a mission. Beauty subverts dogma by activating the realm of fantasy and imagination. It reminds us that the enjoyment of mere pleasure is an important element of our humanity. And it knits the mind and body together at a time when they seem all too easily divided". (Brand, 2000, p. 15)

Sujin, a fellow Kyuri, wants to become a part of Kyuri's world because she is driven by the power of money. She knows that display professions have a good amount to pay the women who are beautiful and work there. For this, she is ready to undergo knives and inquires after that from where Kyuri got her eyes done and complains about her surgery on the eyes, which went wrong. "I got mine done back in Cheongju," says Sujin sorrowfully to Kyuri. "What a mistake! I mean, just look at me." She opens her eyes extra wide. And it's true—the fold on her right eyelid has been stitched just a little too high, giving her a sly, slanted look. Unfortunately, the truth is that even apart from her asymmetrical eyelids, Sujin's face is too square for her to ever be considered pretty in the true Korean sense. Her lower jaw also protrudes too much" (Cha 2020, p. 5). Sujin and Kyuri's aspirations, their dissatisfaction with their eyelids, and Kyuri's extensive surgeries and enhancements to attain beauty ideals indicate women's acceptance of commodification.

The unnatural, fake, and excruciatingly plastic Kyuri, a worker in the salon, is a very demanding worker for both men and women. She seems to be the representative of plastic surgeons, and they all enviously admire her beauty. Because, as the book's title indicates, everyone who encounters her wants to look like her. The finest example is Sujin, who is always staring at Kyuri's face and is mesmerized by her artificially enhanced cyber beauty. Kyuri is no longer a natural person because of the many operations he has had. However, the promotion of this artificiality demonstrates how Asian women have turned into commodities for financial security. Her long, voluminous eyelashes are curled into a Her tattooed eye line is framed by her long, feathery eyelashes, and she often uses light treatment on her skin, which is a hazy, skim-milk white. She had already waxed on about the advantages of ceramide supplements and lotus leaf masks for developing neck wrinkles. Surprisingly, her hair, which cascades down her back like a black river, is the one aspect of her that has not been transformed (pp. 5–6).

Kyuri is the best consumer for capitalist ideals and the best agent for the beauty industry because she is a xenofeminist candidate, unnatural, and technomaterial. She seems alien to everyone living around her because she is all plastic, as her roommate Miho passes a comment that she is all plastic except her hair. She has had all of her body parts altered by surgeries, becoming a commodified self with no self-worth, an artificial being to be showcased only to please men and to earn money. These women do not at all want to work on themselves but rather on their appearance.

The surgeon, who conducted a modest cosmetic surgery practice in Cheongju, was the spouse of one of our professors. There is a lengthy waiting list to visit Dr. Shim, the cosmetologist. He really comprehends what females desire to appear like and anticipates beauty trends. Kyuri forewarns Sujin of painful jaw surgery in a similar way to how people forewarn women about eating disorders. The Asian ladies in the book do the same thing: they warn one another of the negative impacts but ultimately choose to take on the task. According to Wolf (1990), the agony women experience in regard to their health is nothing compared to the torment of beauty. They embrace and celebrate the beauty myth, which has poisoned women and taken over society.

Kyuri proclaims that:

"Look, I am not saying I regret having jaw surgery. It was the turning point of my life. And I'm not saying that it won't change your life—in fact, it definitely will. But I still can't say I recommend it.

Also, Dr. Shim's really busy, and that hospital is really expensive. Really expensive, even without the premium. He only takes cash. They say they take cards, but they bait you with such a big discount if you pay cash that you can't. Well, it's going to be the biggest investment of my life, and I've been saving for a while now". (p.11)

Kyuri has undergone all violent beauty procedures because, according to Wolf (1990), society rewards beauty on the outside over health on the inside, and Sujin is also impressed by this attitude of society, which promotes outer beauty over inner beauty. Wolf (1990) accentuates that society and its narrative are not concerned with a woman's health but only her apparent beauty. They should not be harmed by the fixes they get in the guise of their health because the society they are living in is poisoned by the idea of ideal beauty only, which Cha 2020 also proves through the characters of Sujin and Kyuri. That is the reason that Sujin is hell-bent on spending as much as she can on the surgery. In Korea, violence committed by women to enhance their physical beauty is both allowed and revered. Female viewers are urged to willingly consent to cosmetic surgery, which is a sanctioned form of assault. Cosmetic surgery is now illegal under the law. "When women put on a face, they continue to express ideas of naturalness and artifice, authenticity and deception, propriety and danger, modernity and tradition. Making up remains a gesture bound to perceptions of self and body, the intimate and the social—a gesture rooted in women's everyday lives". (Peiss, 1998, p. 270)

Dr. Shim told Sujin that restitching her eyes will not be a problem and that she desperately needs to get both double jaw surgery and square jaw surgery. He'll cut both the upper and lower jaws and relocate them, then shave down both sides so that she will no longer have such a masculine-looking jawline. He also recommends cheekbone reduction and some light chin liposuction. The surgeries will take a total of five to six hours, and she will stay in the hospital for four days (p. 15). Sujin gets agreed upon, and in order to transport Sujin to the hospital Kyuri arrives at the salon early on the day of Sujin's procedures and tells every other girl that she will be leaving work at five o'clock today so she can be there when Sujin awakens from the anesthesia. Women getting infused with the rising surgical trends in the beauty industry focus on not only altering their features but also their body and weight. Wolf (1990) proclaims that a thin young woman who smokes to remain thin is considered ideal, not a heartless old crone. Society is concerned with her appearance alone, not with her health.

Kyuri is the only woman who understands the workings of beauty politics and asserts that she is not sure whether the males are worse or not, and then asserts that males are always worse because they perceive women as performers and women are constantly hell-bent on making them attractive. They take no longer to reach Dr. Shim, a magician who is generating additional income by forcing women to have surgical procedures. He actually makes women beautiful artificially. Women always want to work in display professions after getting beautiful because it makes them visible and financially stable. They afterwards decide to work at a 10% salon, which claims to employ the industry's prettiest "10 percent" of ladies, where the madam doesn't overtly pressurise them to engage in "round 2" sex with customers. Kyuri, moreover, confirms the commodification of women by celebrating the power of brands that make women spend a lot and feel content. She, while sitting on a sofa, has a big Chanel purse that was given to her by the CEO of her gaming company. She is petting it like a dog. But there are other women like Miho who do not subscribe to the false notions of beauty; thus, she is happy to have resisted cosmetic surgery and proclaims that she feels a sense of satisfaction when she says no to having any surgical procedures throughout her life. She seems to be under the influence of some traditional and personal values.

Dobke (2006 states that "Asian aesthetic principles vary in their oriental counterparts. Instead of assuming that all Asians just seek "occidentalization," plastic surgeons should be understanding of various ethnic conceptions of beauty and embrace a variety of values". (Dobke, 2006).

In most cultures, cosmetic surgeries and enhancements are considered unethical but celebrated by women without keeping the results in mind. Medicalization in this field is ethically problematic because cosmetic surgery tends to conflate beauty and health as medical goals of surgery, overemphasising the value of appearance, which can further displace women's control over their own bodies. (Aquino 2017)

Whereas in the world of Cha, surgeries and other beauty concerns and processes make women more conscious of their appearance by their own standards of scrutinization. Women always undergo the "girlfriend gaze" feeling, where they wait for their friends to pass and verify their beauty routines and appearance. Miho is examining Kyuri's skincare routine. She comments positively by saying that everything looks amazing on her. She scrutinises her assortment of various facial masks and bottles. Kyuri begins her routine by putting droplets of serum on her skin with her fingers after pulling her hair back with a fluffy band. She then extracts a little syringe and dispenses a honey-coloured liquid all over her face. Miho inquires about every product Kyuri uses and declares that she constantly spends so much time on skin care, and that always fascinates every woman. Kyuri's lifestyle emphasises that a woman's looks may alter her chances of getting a prominent job

and her willingness to get objectified, which is both marketed and experienced as an agency. (Garner, 2010)

Conclusion

Cha showcases women living in various situations commodified by surgeries, legal violence, girlfriend gaze, and physical scrutiny in the consumer-driven beauty culture obsessed with the glitzy and glamorous world of thinness, artificial beauty standards, and plastic aesthetics. The Asian women in this automation, technomaterial, and transfeminist arena confirm the work of beauty politics against their advancement. Artificial and impossible beauty standards lead women to machines and unnatural aesthetics. It hints at a xenofeminist dystopian future with technomaterial and antinatural bodies. In Kyuri's case, after the repetitive plastic surgeries, she is found dissatisfied and confirms the intriguing work of beauty politics that keeps on endearing every now and then by making Asian women and their femininities commodified. Kyuri, after meeting K-Pop singer Candy, shows her dissatisfaction with her own even surgically modified face and wishes to get the face of Candy. She is constantly bombarded with commercials for beauty goods and procedures that claim to make them idealised representations of femininity. By promoting the idea that a woman's worth and success are intimately correlated with her physical appearance, the beauty industry consumes Asian femininities. Kyuri, who works in a salon where her pay depends on how pretty she is, shows that women have to adhere to restricted and trending beauty standards. Physical scrutiny when women go out in public, with economic aspirations, desire to win the hearts of rich men, temptation to have the face of other women, longing to work at display centres, and the environment in globalised, glamorous cities like Seoul make women go for cosmetic surgeries, a form of legal violence implemented by consumer culture and modern patriarchal setup. In following it, they promote biotechnoculture and welcome the technologically commodified beauty industry as their future, where mechanical, not feminine, painfully plastic beauty is the standard. The stories of the characters in *If I Had Your Face* reflect the complex interplay between beauty ideals, postfeminism, media influence, and the psychological toll of beauty pressures. Through their experiences, the novel offers a critical examination of the challenges, like damage to their self-esteem and disturbed mental state.

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