TRAVIS WORKMAN

POLITICAL MOODS

FILM MELODRAMA AND THE COLD WAR
IN THE TWO KOREAS

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Political Moods

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Political Moods

Film Melodrama and the Cold War in the Two Koreas

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Travis Workman

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Introduction

One of the most powerful myths of the Cold War was that it was a moral struggle between good and evil. On the eve of the Korean War in 1950, US president Harry S. Truman spoke against "atheistic communism," invoking a "final Armageddon foretold in the Bible—that struggle between good and evil, between life and death."[1] In early 1951, North Korean president Kim Il Sung spoke to the Democratic Youth League: "The US imperialists are crafty and insidious. . . . In order to secure profits in the aggressive war, the US robbers unhesitatingly commit any barbarities and evil acts. The enemy will not withdraw meekly."[2] The language of modern warfare is the language of melodrama—political enemies are more than competitors over territorial control; they are a force of evil that must be defeated in order to redeem the innocence, goodness, and sovereignty of the people.[3] Considering the central cultural importance of cinema for mass representation and mobilization in the twentieth century, it is unsurprising that the film cultures of the two Koreas, caught for decades in one of the most violent hot wars of the Cold War era, employed melodrama for political purposes. However, studies of the film cultures of North Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea; DPRK; est. 1948) and South Korea (Republic of Korea; ROK; est. 1948) have often remained caught in a dichotomous perspective themselves, treating the two film industries as noncomparable with one another and two discrete examples of national cinema. One must recognize the social, political, and cultural specificities of North Korea and South Korea, but state socialist modernity and capitalist modernity both belong to a singular modernity defined by industrialization, the nation-state system, and mass culture.[4] The two Koreas provide an opportunity to explore the shared aspects of cinema and mass culture across the Cold War divide.

The analysis of melodrama enables comparison between the state socialist film culture of North Korea and the capitalist film culture of South Korea. As a global cinematic mode of representation, melodrama also allows one to situate them within global film history—including their connections with classical Hollywood,

Soviet socialist realism, Chinese revolutionary realism, Italian neorealism, the European New Waves, and the fascist cinema of the Japanese empire. These comparisons in turn allow for the interpretation of the historical dimension of the film cultures of the two Koreas that moves away from reading films as simple reflections of Cold War state ideologies and national cinema and toward a twofold concern with the history of film form and film conventions (the transnational history of the melodramatic mode) and its multivalent expressions of mass ideologies and historical experiences particular to the Korean twentieth century.

How simple the political language of the Cold War seems in comparison to the complexity of its cinema. The fascinating details of two films from opposite sides of the Cold War suffice to show this. In 1963, Chosŏn Film in North Korea released *Return to the Fatherland* (*Choguk ŭro toraoda*, dir. Min Chŏng-sik), the story of a family from Kaesŏng that is separated by the Korean War. The film shows Pang Wŏn-il's experiences of family separation, clandestine migration, and political awakening, before he becomes a hero of North Korean state building and economic reconstruction. The film begins with a framing scene: it is the opening ceremony for the Kaesŏng Children's Palace in 1961, and Wŏnil, the architect of the palace, sits with his family outside the building and tells them his story. In the late 1940s, when most of Kaesŏng belonged to South Korea, Wŏnil goes to Seoul with his eldest son, In'gil, to study architecture. When the Korean War breaks out in June 1950, he thinks about returning to Kaesŏng, now occupied by North Korea. However, a friend working as a US and South Korean agent uses anticommunist propaganda to convince him to flee south instead. After the UN forces, the Korean People's Army, and the Chinese People's Army reached an armistice agreement in 1953, Kaesŏng became part of North Korea, situated just eight kilometers from the demilitarized zone (DMZ). Stuck in South Korea after the end of the war, Wŏnil and In'gil struggle to survive in the impoverished and exploitative South Korean economy, suffering under the yoke of US occupation. When In'gil tries to scrounge food from a church, a white missionary priest commands his dog to attack and kill him. After avenging In'gil's death by killing the priest, Wŏnil escapes by boat to Japan. In Japan, he encounters resident Korean (*zainichi*) political groups affiliated with North Korea. He completes his ideological transformation to supporting North Korean socialism and he returns to Kaesŏng through a repatriation program. After ten years of separation, Wŏnil reunites with his family, whom we have seen throughout the film adjusting to and eventually prospering within North Korean socialist society. Wŏnil uses his architectural skills and training to design the Kaesŏng Children's Palace, becoming a hero of the postwar reconstruction effort.

In the same year, 1963, *Bloodline* (*Hyŏlmaek*, dir. Kim Su-yong) was released in South Korea. The film is similarly concerned both with families torn apart by colonialism and war and with national reconstruction. It depicts refugees from the North living in a shantytown on the mountain slopes outside Seoul. Based on a play

by Kim Yŏng-su, director Kim Su-yong uses the setting of a small group of houses to re-create a theatrical feel. The inclusion of three families also allows the film to make reference to multiple layers of colonial history. One family is displaced from Hamhŭng province, and the mother tries to teach her daughter the singing style of that northern region. The father of another family worked as a miner in Hokkaido, part of the massive labor migration from colonial Korea to Japan in the last decade of the Japanese empire. His wife presumably died during the Korean War, "twelve years ago." The eldest son of the third family has been studying in Japan, funded by his sister-in-law's factory labor prior to her fatal illness, but he quits school with the quixotic dream of becoming a novelist. Amidst these families' struggles with economic hardship and displacement, a landowner comes to the village demanding payment for property rights, which he likely gained by colluding with Japanese and/or US colonialism. The film presents industrialization, modernization, and national reconstruction as the solution to these social ills—the son and daughter of two of the families run away and join a textile factory, and the story ends with their fathers coming to witness the modern space of the factory and to approve their marriage.

On the one hand, these two films produced on opposite sides of the Cold War divide are emblematic of the dominant national narratives that emerged in the two Koreas following the Korean War. In the aftermath of the destruction of the majority of urban infrastructure by US aerial bombardment, architects, engineers, and industrial workers became protagonists in the reconstruction of the urban spaces of North Korea, including monuments of the socialist state.[5] In South Korea, Park Chung Hee (Pak Chŏng-hŭi) had come to power in 1961 and intensified *chaebol-* and state-led development, beginning with light industries such as textiles.[6] Paramount for this project were the formation of nuclear families and the national mobilization of an industrial working class, as represented in the final scenes of *Bloodline*. In this way, the two films fulfill many of our assumptions about Cold War cinema's expression of dominant political values and ideology in both socialist and capitalist states.

But there is much more to these films than the articulation of Cold War political ideologies. Although contemporary audiences might expect *Return to the Fatherland* to convey a simplistic national narrative of North Korean independence and patriotism, it is a very global and transnational film both stylistically and narratively, and not solely because it belongs culturally to socialist internationalism. As one would expect, the influence of Soviet and Chinese socialist realism is apparent, but the film also contains elements of expressionism, neorealism, Hollywood family dramas, film noir, espionage films, and the musical. Narratively speaking, it shows the complexity of transnational migration and political affiliation in Korea and East Asia in the 1940s and 1950s. The film engages with cultural styles and historical experiences beyond the borders of North Korea, but in ways not entirely determined by the national-international politics of the global communist

movement. It uses the borderland of Kaesŏng as a point of departure, representing urban migration, exile, and shifting sovereignties caused by war and clandestine migration to the former imperial center. The framing scenes showing the opening of the Children's Palace, as well as the frequent crosscuts to Wŏnil's thriving family in North Korea, both convey the ideological message that North Korean patriotism can and will resolve the psychological and social crises represented in the narrative. However, this patriotism is articulated within a pastiche of global cinema styles and a historical tracing of the transnational and translocal connections between Kaesŏng, Seoul, the United States, Pusan, and Japan. For North Korean audiences and for the film as object of our analysis, the excesses of affect, meaning, and historical references appearing in such a harrowing story cannot be expected to remain neatly contained within the frame of patriotism.

Although the ending of *Bloodline* advocates a different version of modernization and development, a capitalist one, it similarly works to reframe and recode the story's intricate social problems into a national narrative. However, the film is equally global and transnational in its style and narrative. In addition to Hollywood family dramas and neorealism, Kim Su-yong's shots and editing also echo the great directors of Japanese cinema, such as Yasujirō Ozu and Kenji Mizoguchi. There are also multiple layers of transnational and translocal connections represented in the lives of the characters. The main characters are refugees from the North, yet they are portrayed sympathetically, without the type of blanket anticommunist suspicion one might expect of a South Korean film of the time. The legacies of the Japanese empire in South Korean society are confronted directly: one of the fathers was a migrant worker in Hokkaido and his position has hardly improved since his return; a son who once venerated Japanese education becomes a hopeless and impoverished writer. US occupation and the founding of the Republic of Korea have yet to lift these families out of poverty, and as refugees, migrants, and stateless people, they suffer under a corrupt and colonial system of private property. When the daughter rejects her mother and the regional traditions of Hamhŭng and enters the factory with her future husband, the modern technology and industrialization of a developing South Korea appear as a resolution to the economic problems of the shantytown and the encumbrances of the cultural and historical past. However, as in *Return to the Fatherland*, the ending of the story remains ambivalent, because only two of the film's many characters represent the future of national development through industrial labor and nuclear families. In the transition to a nationalized society, it appears that many people who exist in the imaginary bloodlines of family and nation will be left behind.

The moral worldviews of Cold War Korean film melodramas are often founded on schematic ideas about the struggle between good and evil, which is part and parcel of Cold War ideology. On the other hand, they are not completely bound to these demands of Cold War national cinemas. How do we account for the interplay between dominant ideology and excesses of affect, meaning, and historical

reflection in Cold War–era films of North Korea and South Korea? The concept of the melodramatic mode, the mode of excess, provides a means of interpreting this interplay.[7] This book engages with analyses of the melodramatic mode in global film and cultural studies, while exploring the local narrative structures and historical experiences that spurred the transformation of traditions and conventions of film melodrama in the context of Cold War Korean film. The primary purpose is to engage comparatively with the concept of melodrama to challenge the dominant myths of Cold War film and cultural history in Korea.

Theodore Hughes identifies the main disavowals enabled by Cold War US occupation, anticommunism, and ethnonationalism in South Korea. Particularly before the 1990s, but even into the present, these disavowals included colonial-period proletarian literature works, the lingering effects of Japanese coloniality (including the mobilization and imperialization of Koreans during WWII), and North Korean cultural production.[8] Meanwhile, in North Korea, until the 1980s there was also a disavowal and even purging of proletarian arts intellectuals and members of other colonial-period Marxist movements (e.g., Soviet and Yan'an factions) that Kim Il Sung and the Korean Workers' Party perceived as threats to their power. The language and culture of North Korean state building tended to ignore criticisms of US occupation and the South Korean state in South Korean film and culture. This language and culture also disavowed the many continuities between the intellectual and cultural discourse of the Japanese empire and North Korean state formation, including the main national ideology since the late 1960s, juche thought (*chuch'e sasang*). A comparative history of film melodrama, including both films and film theory, provides a starting point for challenging some of these blind spots, because it can address how melodramatic mimesis enabled these disavowals but also engaged audiences through the recognition and representation of the psychosocial complexity of their everyday experiences of history.

Melodrama provides a means of comparison inclusive of North Korean cultural production and the lingering effects of Japanese coloniality. Although the culture, economy, and aesthetic of North Korean and South Korean cinema are often assumed to be polar opposites, they are comparable in their melodramatization of politics, history, memory, and the experience of the everyday.[9] The Korean film industry during the era of the Japanese empire has mostly been studied separately from the Cold War North Korean and South Korean industries, but this book reveals the important continuities in ideas and practices of melodramatic filmmaking. These include leftist filmmaking of the proletarian arts, as well as the use of melodrama for the total mobilization of colonial Korea for Japan's war effort. Finally, it is often assumed that film melodramas simply gave emotional shape to political ideologies in the two Koreas; however, a closer examination of the moods, affects, and self-consciousness of their film melodramas reveals that in both industries the sentimental representation of mass experiences of modernity

inevitably created and provoked affects in excess of the surface ideological message. Rather than assuming that differences reveal themselves by contrasting North Korea and South Korea, I find such differences in the tension between ideology and affect in melodrama.

THE MELODRAMATIC MODE AND KOREAN FILM

Melodrama is a mode of representation that uses pathos to provoke sympathy and through that sympathy to give emotional authenticity to a Manichaean moral world in which good and evil, innocence and experience, and virtue and iniquity struggle for dominance. There are many important studies that address melodrama in Korean film, spanning from early cinema to the South Korean Golden Age and into the contemporary period, and I draw on this canon of critical works throughout this book.[10] Although not all these works focus specifically on melodrama, they analyze sentimentality and pathos in film in relation to issues of colonized nationalism, nation building, state mobilization, gender, ethics, violence, political economy, and other social and cultural issues. It would be impossible to summarize here the many and varied insights that scholars have made into Korean film and Korean society through the analysis of melodrama. However, to my knowledge, no work on Korean film melodrama has used the concept of melodrama in a comparative study of North Korea and South Korea. In order to develop a comparative approach that connects the Cold War film cultures of North Korea and South Korea through an aesthetic and social analysis of melodrama, it is necessary to delineate the general conceptual framework that I am using for my analysis.

The characteristics of the melodramatic mode have been established over the decades of films studies scholarship. These characteristics need to be clearly defined, but as many of these previous studies of Korean film have pointed out, they must also be modified, expanded, and sometimes critiqued as they are brought into conversation with the history of Korean film:

1. Melodrama is not an individual genre of film, but rather a ubiquitous and genre-crossing mode of representation in cinema.[11]
2. The diegesis (or world) of a film melodrama is defined by a Manichaean struggle between evil external forces and the good "moral occult." The moral occult of a film melodrama often entails the defense of traditional values, but melodrama is not strictly religious and expresses a post-sacred, modern sensibility. In Cold War Korean film melodrama, the moral occult is explicitly political and creates a sense of popular belonging.[12]
3. In terms of narrative, melodrama's stories center on the possibility of redeeming the moral innocence of the protagonists or returning to a "space of innocence," often through a gendered struggle between modernity and a traditional notion of home.[13]

4. In terms of temporality, melodrama occurs in a composite tense of simultaneous past, present, and future. The persistent sense of arriving too late conditions its narrative present and its articulation of possible futures.[14]

5. Although dichotomous in its worldviews, melodrama depends on moments of counterpoint—good and evil appear equal or the film's narratives and affects call into question its own structuring ideology.[15]

6. The referential illusion (Barthes) of the melodramatic mode depends on the translation of affect into emotion, particularly the provocation of sympathy for the suffering of characters (or pathos).[16] As Linda Williams states, "Supposedly realist cinematic *effects*—whether of setting, action or narrative motivation—most often operate in the service of melodramatic *affects*."[17]

7. As the Greek prefix *melo-* (music) suggests, melodrama is an embodied and multisensory mode of representation. It is a body mode provoking excessive affect.[18]

Working through this list of the characteristics of melodrama, we can begin to reflect on the kinds of adaptation and translation that were required when North Korean and South Korean film and film theory took up the techniques and strategies of cinematic melodrama alongside local traditions of sentimental cultural forms.

The taxonomical, genre-based, and gendered categorization of melodrama prevalent in the mid-twentieth century should be replaced with a consideration of the modal quality of melodrama. Melodrama is not a single cinema genre with origins in the women's film or tearjerker of the 1940s and 1950s.[19] Nor can it be relegated to the soap opera style of so many popular television serials. Rather, melodrama is a mode of representation taken up in various genres and media and is fundamental to narrative cinema. As Linda Williams and Ben Singer both have shown, melodrama has been the ubiquitous mode of sensational cinematic representation from very early in cinema's history.[20] North Korean and South Korean film melodramas are a significant part of global Cold War cultural history; however, tracing the transnational and translocal flows of the melodramatic mode to tell the story of this global/local connection requires reading melodrama and its characteristics not as taxonomical genre categories but as dynamic elements of a mode of imitation that is subject to iteration, translation, and transformation. Because melodrama is not a specific genre but a ubiquitous mode of representation in cinema, spanning various kinds of films and ideologies, it was able to become formative and effective on both sides of the Cold War divide in Korea. It could give visual form to anticommunist ideology in South Korea through mournful but humanist depictions of romantic love just as easily as it could portray, in North Korea, a partisan fighter's suffering under class domination and dedication to proletarian and anticolonial revolution. If melodrama is indeed a mode, one must consider its modularity in film history—how it coexists with a particular

industry's film genres, its local theatrical and performative practices, its literary source texts, and its other modes (e.g., comedy and tragedy).

The limited way that many directors and critics, such as Yu Hyun-mok (Yu Hyŏn-mok) and Yi Yŏng-il in South Korea, criticized the genre of *mellodŭrama* in the 1950s and 1960s does not detract from the fact that they employed and advocated an artistic version of the melodramatic mode in their filmmaking and film criticism.[21] South Korean directors such as Yu, Kim Su-yong, and Lee Man-hee (Yi Man-hŭi) combined melodrama with avant-garde experimentation, while vanguard directors in North Korea, such as Kang Hong-sik and Chʼoe Ik-kyu, employed the melodramatic mode in the construction of total works of art (*chonghap yesul*) that would contribute politically and ideologically to the North Korean revolution. The flexibility of the melodramatic mode in terms of both genre and political ideology, as well as its pervasiveness throughout the history of Korean film, makes it a useful entry point into this comparative study. Locating and deepening the analysis of points of comparison are paramount, considering how Cold War politics disallowed such comparisons and how state-centered national narratives have often forced cultural analyses to adhere to the paradigm of national cinema rather than to historical interconnections across the DMZ.

One reason that the melodramatic mode was able to cross genre boundaries and national cinema boundaries so effectively was its resonance with the modern ethos of suspicion about the surface of meaning. Melodrama is one popular and moralistic version of the hermeneutics of suspicion.[22] Expressing a post-sacred, modern sensibility, melodrama does not fully regress to traditional religious systems. It rather imagines popular secular identities such as the nation. Nonetheless, it does so through a moral questioning and suspicion of the surface of reality reminiscent of theology. Peter Brooks calls the agent of this questioning the moral occult, or "the domain of operative spiritual values which is both indicated within and masked by the surface of reality."[23] In addition to being a horrifically violent and hot war, particularly in the Global South, the Cold War was also a war over the spiritual values of humanity, or what Lyndon Johnson called "the hearts and minds" of the Vietnamese people, echoing a French colonial official. When an anticommunist film employs the melodramatic mode to expose communists as an inhuman threat to liberalism or a communist film uses it to expose the evil of class enemies, they both do so to unmask the moral truths that are only partially visible on the surface of reality. Such political uses of melodrama, which amount to more than propaganda, articulate a diegesis (or world) structured by a political conflict between the truth of the moral occult as the domain of operative spiritual values and a false external reality associated with the enemy.[24] This amounts to the melodramatization of the political and the politicization of melodrama.

The melodramatization of the political seeks to ground politics in spiritual values, but melodrama is not a metaphysical archaism; it entails a modern translation of the sacred. Brooks writes,

> The moral occult is not a metaphysical system; it is rather the repository of the fragmentary and desacralized remnants of sacred myth. It bears comparison to unconscious mind, for it is a sphere of being where most basic desires and interdictions lie, a realm which in quotidian existence may appear closed off from us, but which we must accede to since it is the realm of meaning and value. The melodramatic mode in large measure exists to locate and to articulate the moral occult.[25]

A history of the melodramatic mode in Cold War Korean film must take account of the local cultural forms and historical experiences that make up the "remnants of sacred myths" that appear in fragmentary, desacralized, and translated form in film melodrama. However, the codes and references that appear in Korean film melodramas emerged out of a very modern collision of past, present, and future. Because the myths and experiences of the past appear in fragmented and refracted form within the melodramatic mode, the comparison between the moral occult and the unconscious mind are only partially apt. According to the psychoanalytic understanding, the unconscious is *not* the realm of meaning and value but rather a mostly invisible strata of repressed desires, drives, and affects. Although the concept of the moral occult remains extremely useful, particularly in interpreting the political logics of Cold War Korean film melodramas, in these films we are not seeing a fully manifested unconscious mind. Rather, we are exposed to excesses of affect that the moral worldview of the film is compelled to contain within conventional and even formulaic narrative and discursive framings. Furthermore, Korean film melodramas are often post-psychoanalytic and therefore refer self-consciously to the mechanisms of the psyche as understood by psychoanalysis, such as repression, displacement, and transference. The films analyzed in the following chapters do not manifest unconscious myth through the moral occult. Instead, they give symbolic meaning to real historical experiences specific to the Korean cinema audience, but always with affective excesses that escape the moral occult that forms the political and spiritual world of the film. Rather than being a direct manifestation of the unconscious mind, the moral occult is the arena of play between visibility and invisibility, consciousness and the unconscious, ideology and excess.

In the narrative progression of Korean film melodramas, it is clear that the discourse of the film directs the arena of play in a morally and politically purposeful direction, even if this means defying realist causality. A fiction film whose diegesis is formed by a moral occult will necessarily diverge from the linear cause and effect of verisimilitudinous realism. Although the spaces and settings of film melodrama are realistic, the narrative tends toward the magical causality of allegory, due to the moral imperative that it should emphasize the redemption of the innocence of the protagonists.[26] According to Williams, in prioritizing the authenticity of innocence against realist cause and effect, melodrama has the tendency to suspend time and space.[27] Those films that Colin MacCabe labels the classical realist text of early Hollywood cinema always had deep connections with melodrama, particularly in

their occult defenses of moral innocence and in their use of horizontal (temporal) and vertical (spatial) suspensions of causality, sequence, and realist psychology.[28] The suspension of time extends the wait for redemption indeterminately, such that anticipation of a return to a state of innocence becomes a pleasurable affect. Melodrama also suspends the continuities of space to create sensational special effects, or to make possible magical coincidences that reestablish an allegorical space of innocence.[29] In the case of Cold War Korean film, the narrative will suspend time, space, and verisimilitude not out of a failure of logic or causality but rather to emphasize the moral, political, and spiritual conflict. These conflicts have historical specificity, including collisions between modernity and tradition, communism and anticommunism, war memory and patriotism, and civilian suffering and state mobilization.

The suspension of linear causality does not pertain solely to instances of unbelievable happy endings. This suspension of the supposedly natural time of realism more often conveys lateness—late arrivals, missed opportunities, and past losses. The melodramatic mode shares with its theatrical precursors, such as the German mourning play (*Trauerspiel*) or the Korean *sinp'a* theater, what Walter Benjamin discussed as continual tragedy without catharsis.[30] Not only does the moment of redemption often come too late, but it is also possible that it will never arrive at all. One consequence of this negativity is that past hopes have already been dashed and past futures already foreclosed. According to Jane Gaines, the obsession with lateness in melodrama should not lead us to pose a typical question of melodrama: is its worldview inherently progressive or conservative?[31] In her analysis of the time of melodrama, she argues it takes place in a composite tense that links a future and a past within a present that is never only present:

> Basic to historical time in contemporary theories of history are Martin Heidegger's three modes as temporal "ecstasies."[32] We learn from Heidegger that these modes of time may be felt to coexist, for instance, as when the past "comes again," held over in custom or tradition like the legacy of slavery in our current times. More important for melodrama theory, the past, the present, and the future are in circular relation such that we invariably understand each one in terms of the others.[33, 34]

The coexistence of multiple ecstasies (Gr. *ekstases*), or ways of being outside oneself temporally, is key to the modernity of the melodramatic mode. What Gaines calls the "circular relation" of past, present, and future temporalizes hope, despair, mourning, suspense, desire, abjection, and disappointment, which occur moment to moment or simultaneously. The unevenness of the composite tense—the initial admission that past versions of the future have not been realized—also means there is no guarantee or teleology to time. In the cycle of moments comprising past, present, and future, the future may always end in disappointment, like all the previous futures.

Therefore, in the composite tense, it is often impossible to determine where a melodrama stands politically in a spectrum from progressive to conservative.

Even in historical narratives that present dominant state ideas straightforwardly, such as the North Korean classic *The Flower Girl* (*Kkot p'anŭn chŏnyŏ*, dir. Ch'oe Ik-kyu and Pak Hak, 1972), the temporal problematic of melodrama affects the ostensible message. In this case, the narrative present is the late Japanese colonial period (1936–1945). At the end of the film, the protagonist proclaims in a speech that a stateless nation like colonial Korea cannot survive. Certainly, the film's purpose is to legitimate the revolutionary North Korean state as the overcoming of Japanese colonialism. However, the film also shows a cycle of suffering under colonial violence that far exceeds the scenes of hope for a resolution. Even in this most heavy-handed political film, the composite tense of the narrative temporality opens a space for affects and interpretations in excess of the film's explicit discourse. For example, whatever the intentions of the producers, the audience is asked implicitly if the postcolonial North Korean state has fulfilled the past promises it made concerning a future without colonialism and exploitation.[35]

Therefore, the composite tense and the negativity of time in melodrama suggest at least two coexisting emotional directions in a single narrative (e.g., hope and disappointment). The composite tense is connected to what Thomas Elsaesser identified as melodrama's dependence on counterpoint. Discussing instances when a film humanizes the hero and the villain equally by showing them performing everyday tasks, he writes, "The difference is one of stylistics, of emphasis or 'soft-pedaling' in the telling of the tale. It is one of the ways American films have always been able to 'contradict' or subvert their manifest moral intent or ideological bias."[36] The melodramatic mode presents a dichotomous worldview that pits the moral occult against an illusory surface reality, but contradictions, subversions, and contrapuntal melodies help to form its narrative, spaces, and moods.[37] Although Elsaesser refers to American cinema, the same could certainly be said of North Korean and South Korean cinema—without a degree of soft-pedaling in the depiction of good and evil, characters would lose their humanity and the film would lose its capacity to inspire thought and action. When I discuss counterpoint or contrapuntal moments in film melodramas, I am referring to how their characters, narratives, spaces, music, or moral worldview can express simultaneously two countervailing ideological perspectives or discordant affects. At significant dramatic moments in a film melodrama's articulation of popular sensibility, good can appear equal to evil, political victory can coexist with irredeemable suffering, and dreams of progress toward the future can be fused with melancholy toward a lost past.

The moral worldview, allegorical narrative structures, and mournful temporality of melodrama are all aspects of its mode of representation. But how does melodramatic mimesis make a claim on reality if it is not primarily driven by verisimilitude? In 1947, the South Korean film critic Yi Yŏng-jun argued that Korean national cinema had to capture the Real (*riarŭ*) in a "three-dimensional" (*ipch'ejŏk*) and "haptic" (*chŏpch'okchŏk*) manner, leaving lasting impressions on the audience

through the embodied touch of image and sound.[38] Later in the Cold War, in North Korea, the country's future leader Kim Jong Il, or his ghostwriters, made a detailed theoretical argument in *On the Art of the Cinema* (1973) for a cinematic realism that located facts (*sasil*) in ideological and political struggle; cinema had to manifest this struggle emotively not only in the script but in the expressions of the characters' bodies, in the surrounding mise-en-scène, and in the film score.[39] If we are to address the poetics of the melodramatic mode as it pertains to the history of nation-building projects in North and South Korea during the Cold War, then we require a way of analyzing such ideas of melodramatic mimesis—the way that embodied melodramatic representation stakes its claim on social realities through its referential illusion.

I take the term *referential illusion* from Roland Barthes's essay "The Reality Effect," which describes how nineteenth-century European literature uses techniques of description to create an illusion of accord between signifier and referent, between the world on the page and the world outside the text.[40] In his discussions of Italian neorealism of the early Cold War, film critic André Bazin celebrates its documentation of social realities: "Italian films are first and foremost reconstituted reportage," and they "have an exceptionally documentary quality that could not be removed from the script without thereby eliminating the whole social setting into which its roots are so deeply sunk."[41] However, as suggested by the contrasts Bazin draws between realism and the symbolic expressiveness of melodramas, the referential illusion of melodrama is different from the naturalist or documentarian illusion of a direct accord between signifier and referent. Melodrama gives visual and sonic form to moral, political, and spiritual ideas that transcend the empirical realm of what exists in the narrative present of the diegesis. The referential illusion of melodrama depends on making perceptible through emotive expression the struggle of the hidden, underground morality to assert itself on the surface of social life. This centering of the truth of the moral occult in the referential illusion of melodrama is reflected in North Korean film criticism's placing the mechanism of realism in the power of the performer to convey vital moral authenticity (*chinsilsŏng*) and positive heroism against the surface historical situation. In the words of Hong Sŏng-u, "Artistic authenticity is nothing but the reflection of the truth of actual life. The special characteristic of artistic experience lies more than anywhere in an extremely deep concern with life."[42] However, these two types of referential illusion—one documentarian and the other vitalist, moral, and allegorical—can also coexist in tension within the same film. In fact, the realist inclusion of historical references that lie beyond the scope of the melodramatic dilemma is one very common form of excess discussed throughout this book.

Melodrama uses the characters' expressive bodies, the surrounding mise-en-scène, symbolic objects, and music to give form to this conflict between the world as it exists and the world as it ideally should be. It gives the illusion that this moral conflict structures reality by provoking sympathy for the suffering and

emotional turmoil that arises when the good spiritual values of one domain confront the evil of another. Rather than relying on description, melodrama tries to create, through pathos, an embodied feeling of moral authenticity. However, there is always more—more affect, more interpretation, more reference—than can be accounted for by the film's primary discursive message. These excesses, which are embodied and not abstract, define the historical dimension of Cold War Korean film melodrama as much as the dominant ideologies that we can recognize in its stories and discourses.

Yi Yŏng-jun and other early advocates of postcolonial Korean national cinema in the two Koreas understood the vital importance of an embodied mode of cinematic representation, even if the term *mellodŭrama* tended to be used in a derisive, limited, and gendered manner, in reference to the women's film or tearjerker. Williams situates melodrama alongside pornography and horror and refers to it as a body genre par excellence, suggesting that it constitutes a kind of foundation for the other body genres.[43] Taking into account Williams's reexamination of the trans-genre aspect of melodrama and her tendency to subsume the other body genres into the mode of melodrama, I propose to think of melodrama as a body mode—in Yi's terms, a haptic realism whose claims on reality are three-dimensional and affective.[44]

Despite the higher intensity of affect when viewing body genres, all film experience is embodied, as are all mediated encounters with objects. In situating the problem of embodiment in melodrama within the history and politics of Cold War Korea, it is necessary to understand how the conventions of embodiment in melodrama relate to its referentiality—in other words, how the body mode of melodrama captures new and emergent historical and political conjunctures and subjectivities (such as the postcolonial societies and states of the two Koreas). Particularly after the wave of affect theory in recent decades, there are many ways into the problem of embodiment within melodramatic representation. Therefore, the problem is less whether the study of film and media should consider embodiment than in what way. The following section argues that mood is the category of embodiment that provides the best conceptual backdrop for analyzing the uneven and negative affects of Cold War Korean film melodrama. Having worked through the main characteristics of the melodramatic mode and suggested how they are found in Cold War Korean film, let us turn now to mood.

THE MOODS OF MELODRAMA

Carl Plantinga differentiates between art moods, or moods belonging to artworks, and human moods, which can be elicited by art moods but do not correspond to them directly.[45] This book is mostly concerned with the art moods of film melodrama, but it also takes a phenomenological interest in the embodied human experience, or reception, of these art moods. It even speculates about the deep

historicity of the moods of film melodrama, without assuming that sorrowful and melancholic films are directly expressive of a shared Korean national experience or consciousness. As Plantinga writes, "Moods are ways of seeing, ways of experiencing, ways of perceiving; insofar as filmmakers can use art moods to elicit human moods, they can also elicit such ways of experiencing the film's fictional world."[46] My contention is that we cannot understand the full scope of social meaning of Korean film melodramas without accounting for how their moods elicit ways of experiencing their fictional worlds while also referring to real historical experiences. However, it is necessary to show how the moods of films not only elicit raw affect but also simultaneously provide a language (or set of cues) through which to interpret that affect. In other words, moods have both an affective and a cognitive dimension.

Considering how significant the aesthetic category of emotion (*chŏng*) has been in anthropological readings of Korean culture, distinguishing mood from emotion can help avoid the conflation of the art moods of Korean films with an assumed collective feeling for a particular object (e.g., the nation). Plantinga summarizes Noël Carroll's helpful philosophical differentiation: "Emotions are directed at specific objects, while moods are not. Emotions are selective and exclusive, while moods are incorporative and inclusive. Moods pervade perception rather than focus it. Moods bias the subject toward making certain kinds of judgments over others but are linked to cognition indirectly rather than directly. Moods are like frames of mind, setting a broad agenda."[47] Because moods incorporate and include rather than differentiate, they are a collective immersive experience; however, because they are not directed toward a specific object, their referentiality is open-ended and varied. They may provide cues for cognitive or ideological interpretation, but only indirectly. Where I depart from Carroll's and Plantinga's cognitive understandings of mood is in the notion of a frame of mind. Following phenomenological and ontological readings of affect (as well as the above interpretations of melodrama as a body mode expressive of spiritual values), this book reads the cognitive and discursive dimensions of mood not as primarily mental or psychological but as embodied and ontological. Mood is certainly a kind of affective backdrop setting a broad agenda, but it is not exactly a frame of mind. It is rather a paradoxical and dispersed condition provoking and incorporating multiple unruly human affects while simultaneously providing cues to interpret those affects in a particular direction or toward a specific object, as a personalized emotion.

When Martin Heidegger discussed mood (*Stimmung*) as a way of attunement (*Befindlichkeit*) with the world, he differentiated a ground-mood (*Grundstimmung*) such as anxiety (*Angst*) from mere fear.[48] If fear as a mode of attunement is directed toward an individual object (something scary in a film), anxiety is rather "one of the *most far-reaching* and *most primordial* possibilities of disclosure—one that lies in Dasein itself."[49] The virtuality of the melodramatic representation of embodied suffering and redemption is structured in such a primordial way by its

mood. The typical melodramatic mood of melancholy is not directed toward a specific event in the plot or even a single, identifiable lost object, but rather it "lies in Dasein itself"—it is the very interface between our being and the environment of the film. This does not mean that the mood of a film is an entirely internal state of mind of the protagonist or viewer. It is a pre-subjective condition of possibility for the epistemological and social questions that the film poses about love, death, politics, redemption, social position, and so on. It is not simply a frame of mind, but rather a fully embodied attunement to the world of the film. Following Carroll and Heidegger, I define mood in film melodrama as an ontological attunement to the world of the film, an affective backdrop that sets the agenda for the narrative, subjective identification, and emotions of the audience but simultaneously indexes affects, references, and historical experiences that are in excess of the film's primary moral code.

Looking back to early cinema in Korea under Japanese colonial rule, we can see a strong political concern with the power of art moods to shape human moods, as well as a volatile attempt to employ the melodramatic mode to elevate raw affect into proper subjective emotions. Cultural authorities recognized the power of film melodrama's art moods to provoke human moods while also directing these moods toward proper emotions and moral worldviews. The education of the emotions (*kamjŏng kyoyuk*) was a significant colonial idea of subject formation and a theme of colonial Korean intellectual and cultural discourse.[50] This intellectual legacy did not end suddenly along with the end of the Japanese empire, although it did get more explicitly connected to cinema. North Korea adapted Joseph Stalin's characterization of artists, taken from Yuri Olesha, as "engineers of the soul" and his consideration of film as the chief artistic medium in industrial modernity.[51] In South Korea, cinema was called upon to be an emotionally effective part of anti-communist education.[52] These were instrumental uses of the power of cinema for emotional and spiritual manipulation. They were also responses to the problem of cinema's potentially negative effects on the bodies and minds of its audiences. Cinema was the most powerful artistic medium and therefore the most dangerous. The mood provided an affective milieu that was complex and negative enough to touch on the often-horrific historical experiences of the audience, as well as a cue or code for how to translate those affects into proper subjective emotions. Such contradictory or contrapuntal uses of mood in the melodramatic mode are what makes melodrama interesting. Melodrama expresses what Lauren Berlant calls "social negativity" and simultaneously attempt to direct that affect toward the popular moral and political projects of modernity.[53] It is in this sense and not in the sense of mere propaganda that the moods of melodrama are political.

The problem of the bodily states of viewers and the dangers of melodramatic mimicry accompanied the earliest screenings of narrative film in colonial Korea. As in many parts of the world in the early twentieth century, journalism in Korea in the 1920s expressed moral and political concerns about the new technology

of cinema.[54] One early example was in response to *The Border* ([*Kuggyŏng*], dir. Kim To-san, 1923). Advertisements and discussions of the film appeared next to articles warning about the shocking and negative effects of motion pictures on audience members. Articles foregrounded the problem of embodied mimesis and the idea that motion pictures could give the audience immoral thoughts through bad emotions:

> These days, the variety of motion pictures that are projected at the movie theaters in the city of Kyŏngsŏng has increased. When the projected photographs include meanings that are not good, they can have more than a small influence on the thoughts of the audience members. Recently there was even a case when children who had viewed motion pictures laid down rocks on the train tracks in an attempt to derail a train. Educators and police held a meeting in the security division of the Kyŏnggi prefectural police department to strictly forbid such actions, which resulted in an effort to organize a group dedicated to the prevention of bad emotions that arise from motion pictures.[55]

If a film presents a criminal act within a suspenseful and enjoyable series of images, will children be prone to mimic such actions in real life? The sensational worlds of cinema will reverberate in everyday life and affect the behaviors of the civic audience, which means that the potential for bad emotions must be prevented through civic engagement and policing concerning the emotional effects of films. The earliest cinematic exhibitions in Korea instigated a question of how to code sensational moving images morally to prevent cinematic affects from becoming bad emotions that lead to immoral actions in real life.

Melodrama becomes operative in this context. It gives expression to excessive affects that result in part from the shock of modern technologies themselves, including cinema. However, it situates this excess of bodily affects within a humanist and universalist moral and political framework, creating a sense of shared values defined by the moral occult. As Dong Hoon Kim has shown, films such as Na Un-gyu's *Arirang* (1926) were politically problematic for Japanese colonialism not necessarily because they provided a plan of action for anticolonial revolution but because they framed their pathos with Korean nationalism, translating negative affects into national sentiments.[56] Drawing on the acting techniques and staging of modern sentimental theater, such as *sinp'a*, early Korean cinema showed the political power of a popular cinema giving expression to democratic political ideas through embodied performance, cinematic movement, and narrative scenarios centered on good versus evil. However, later in the colonial period, films produced by the Japan-backed Chosŏn Film Production Corporation hybridized the melodramatic mode—including the narrative and editing techniques of classical Hollywood—with documentary political propaganda; pathos was repurposed for Japanese imperial nationalism and its pretense toward universality.[57] Still, even in the films of the late Japanese empire, negative and excessive affects remain at the margins of the narrative—protagonists fall ill suddenly and cannot participate

in the most ideological scenes; wounded Korean soldiers of the Japanese military long to return home from the battlefront; the women left behind support the troops but also express deep sorrow about the soldiers' sacrifices and their own. The politicization of melodrama is a strategy for framing affect discursively to prevent "bad emotions," but this process is always incomplete.

Concern about the affective excesses of Korean films and how to situate them within a set of universal spiritual and political values continued in different ways on the two sides of the Cold War. In North Korea, pathos and sympathy in suffering were employed to direct negative affects toward the national narrative of anticolonial struggle against Japan and the United States and the articulation of the policies of the Korean Workers' Party. The techniques of Soviet and Chinese socialist realisms situated North Korea national narrative within global socialist internationalism. In South Korea, the stories of many films directed negative affects connected to war, colonialism, and inequality toward ideas of modernization and industrial development, bourgeois cosmopolitan values, and the righteousness of anticommunist struggle.

Despite these positive universalist narratives and moral ideologies, cycles of sorrow and preemptive disappointment about the future remained a hallmark of the moods of film melodramas in both industries. In the year *Bloodline* was released, 1963, South Korean films were entering farther into the global film market through exportation and international festivals. Some critics expressed concern about Western responses to the number of tears shed in South Korean films and suggested limiting them in the future to facilitate and modernize cultural exchange (*munhwa oegyo*). In a report upon returning from the Berlin International Film Festival that year, Kim Hye-yŏng wrote, "Europeans seek the 'positive' more than the 'negative,' and rather than trying to feel for themselves our painful and agonizing sadness, their very physiology rejects and turns away from it."[58] As Park Chung Hee was beginning his developmental dictatorship, Kim suggested showing the world the new Korea rather than dwelling on the sadness of the past. However, the excesses of affect that supposedly repelled European audiences were also traces of the historical experiences of the South Korean national audience, which film melodramas attempted to capture and which could not be fully translated into the dominant cosmopolitan framework for emotion. As stated above, a North Korean film like *The Flower Girl* also presents universal ideas of freedom through revolution that are translatable within the sphere of socialist internationalism, but its pervasively melancholic mood also carries traces of the intractable negative historical experiences of its original North Korean audience—particularly Japanese colonialism and its ambivalent memory and legacy.

Therefore, the contrapuntal moods of film melodrama in the two Koreas register both the cosmopolitan and the national, the universal and the particular. However, the term *mood* contrasts with other prominent terms in the lexicon of Korean aesthetics that have been mobilized in the project of aesthetic enlightenment. In

the modern cultural history of Korea, two terms of aesthetics have been particularly prone to periods of revival in intellectual and cultural discourse: *chŏng* (情) and *han* (恨). As the second character in the compound *kamjŏng* (感情), or "emotion" in "education of the emotions," *chŏng* is best translated as "emotion" or "sentiment." *Han*, on the other hand, refers to a shared national feeling of sorrowful resentment caused by decades of oppression and violence. Discussion of *chŏng* goes back to the Confucian aesthetics of the Chosŏn period (1392–1910), but the term was reworked in the modern context. Novelists and critics of the colonial period such as Yi Kwang-su wrote about *chŏng* extensively in their novels and their essays during the emergence of modern Korean nationalism. Many consider Yi Kwang-su's *The Heartless* (*Mujŏng*, 1917) to be the first modern vernacular novel in Korea; the title can be translated more directly and less artfully as "without emotion" or "emotionless."[59] This bildungsroman tells the story of Korean youths who transform and lift themselves above a Korean society characterized by emotionless behavior, developing into personalities (*in'gyŏk*) whose morality, education, and cultural pursuits are guided by their emotional interiority, or their inner person (*sok saram*).[60] The narrative resonates with Yi's ideas in critical works such as "What is Literature?," which states that in order to overcome the heteronomous and oppressive morality of Confucianism, emotion (*chŏng*) must be freed from its subordination to morality and become an autonomous guiding force of subjectivity.[61] In Yi's work, *chŏng* is a universal capacity for emotion that is necessary in order to have a modern interiority, but it comes to serve as a foundation for national subjectivity within the cosmopolitan sphere of culture.

At the other end of the twentieth century, the patriarch of South Korean cinema, Im Kwon-Taek, also took up the language of *chŏng* explicitly in his films beginning in the early 1990s, after a decades-long career of using emotion and sympathy to provoke nationalist sentiment in the context of the Cold War. His film *Sopyonje* (1993) portrays a surrogate family of pansori musicians maintaining their musical traditions in the face of the influx of Western, American, and commercial music. *Painted Fire* (2002) is a biopic of the historical painter Chang Sŭng-ŏp, portraying Chang's mastery of formal painting techniques alongside his intuitive and ingenious confrontation with the movement and flow of both nature and modern life. Set during the initial entry of imperial Japan into Korean politics at the turn of the twentieth century, the film politicizes Chang's aesthetic and emotional sensibility, again connecting it to a native cultural identity that can resist cultural and political imperialism. Through strict repetition and brutality, the patriarch of the musical family in *Sopyonje*, Yubong, trains his adopted daughter, Songhwa, to express *han* in her singing. Im's connection of emotion to *han* expresses a resentment that arises out of colonization and is then culturally and artistically sublimated into a unifying national sentiment based in mutual sympathy for shared suffering. Chungmoo Choi has critiqued the patriarchal nationalism of the concept of *han* in Im's films.[62]

Mood in Cold War Korean film melodrama is related to but distinct from these terms. Two Korean words translate the word *mood: kibun* (氣分) and *punwigi* (雰委氣); and another, *chŏngdong* (情動), translates *affect*. In contrast to *chŏng* and *han*, which tend to connect subjective interiority to a community of sympathy (i.e., the nation), these terms emphasize the interrelation of interior and exterior through a shared physical or embodied environment. One philosophical definition of *ki* is "the energy, vitality, or spiritual power at the origins of activity."[63] The characters for *kibun* connote a part, segment, or division of *ki*, a determined part or division of this vital power at the origins of activity. *Chŏngdong* contains *chŏng* (emotion), but the second syllable refers to the movement or activation of that emotion by forces beyond the individual subject. Therefore, *kibun* and *chŏngdong* both refer to instances of the power of one body acting upon another and each resonates with Spinoza's definition of affect (*affectus*).[64] *Punwigi* also contains the character *ki* and refers to Earth's atmosphere but can also signify the atmosphere of a built space. *Ki, punwigi*, and *chŏngdong* all suggest an attunement to the world (of a film) that is ontological and affective rather than strictly conceptual, discursive, or linguistic.

In the 1950s and 1960s, North Korean film critics such as Han Hi-chŏl and Cho Chong-sik discussed mood, or *punwigi*, with a theoretical emphasis on its affective dimension; their arguments are also pertinent to understanding mood in South Korean film melodrama.[65] They differentiated mood from the setting, considering it the vital mediation (or attunement) between the setting, the characters and their psychological interiority, the ideas of the plot (*syuzhet; syujet'ŭ*), and the responses of spectators. As will be discussed in chapter 2, unlike the temporal, spatial, and psychological linearity assumed by the education of emotions or the sublimation of suffering, these critics identified the movement, life, flow, and rhythm involved in the creation of an effective film mood. Prefiguring Williams's discussion of suspense, Cho claimed that the living mood (*saenghwaljŏk punwigi*) of the film dilates or elevates events, suspending the natural time and space of events.[66] Even if a film relies on a linear narrative or discourse to frame this living mood within a set of dominant ideas, according to Cho, the mood should be a dynamic and rhythmic attunement to the world of the film; otherwise, the mood will neither keep the interest of spectators or convey the tempo and rhythm of actuality (*hyŏnsil*). Although North Korean critics rarely referred to melodrama, I argue that they were discussing an essential problem of mood in melodrama. The mood is a vital and affective way of attuning spectators to the diegesis and must engage with the tempos and rhythms of life. However, filmmakers should also be concerned with guiding this affect toward the affirmative pathos and moral occult of its political ideology. Although a script might present these two levels of a film melodrama—its moods and its moral occult—as connected in a linear manner, Cho's concern with the suspension of natural orders of space and time in the cinematographic construction of mood makes clear that a living mood cannot be reduced to linear

causality. We should address mood without relying on a deterministic idea of historical or cultural context or assuming a linear translation between aesthetic experience and its conceptual, linguistic, or ideological coding.

Mood does not connote the unidirectional translation or elevation of affect into moral sentiment or the connection of an inner self to a community of sympathy through sublimation, as in Yi's notion of *chŏng* or Im's notion of *han*. Taking emotion and resentful suffering as the most significant aesthetic categories recognizes only the reality effect created by identification and sympathy—how melodramatic pathos conveys dominant ideas about history and society. A more immanent reading of melodramatic film moods can draw from Brian Massumi's influential distinction between affect and emotion at the origins of affect theory. According to Massumi, emotion is "qualified intensity"; "owned, personalized affect"; or "affect given language."[67] Affect is the embodied Real prior to experience, and emotion is affect that has been given language and personalized. As Vivian Sobchack states in her phenomenological reading of cinematic experience, "A film presents and represents acts of seeing, hearing, and moving as both the *original structures of existential being* and the *mediating structures of language*."[68] Therefore, the cognitive or ideological dimension of melodrama as a mode of cinematic representation, as well as its referential illusion, depends on both pre-subjective affects and mediating linguistic and discursive structures. Psychoanalytic and apparatus theories of cinema argue that the viewer as subject of the cinematic apparatus, through interpellation, identifies primarily with the gaze of the camera and secondarily with the character of the protagonist.[69] Although they rely on concrete visual references, theories of identification and the gaze tend to subsume the ontological and the affective into psychological structures of language. In the case of melodrama, one could say that identification in the psychoanalytic sense is an identification with the sympathetic gaze of the camera and a feeling of shared embodied suffering with characters on screen (which together can be called pathos). In this understanding, we are dealing only with the level of emotion, or affect given language, personalized, and subordinated to the film's referential illusion. What about the excesses of affect, meaning, and reference, which, even bracketing the chaos of audience reception, are apparent at the margins of the fictional diegesis? The mood of a film melodrama is more than an ideological emotion and more than a mode of psychological identification. Mood is the intersection of the level of affect and the level of emotion—it mediates between embodied affects that extend beyond subjectivity and the processes of identification that transform affect into emotion through personalization.

Rather than assuming particular affects produce particular emotions, Massumi pays attention to the paradoxes that emerge in the resonance and feedback between the body and the mind, between the affects whose force suspends the circuit of action and reaction and an embodied mind whose mental activity is always responding to or feeding back the affects that occur beneath experience. This is

a relation between affect and emotion defined by constant and mutual feedback, not Yi's Enlightenment idea of unidirectional elevation of instinct into emotion (or aesthetic education). For Massumi, the two levels of affect and emotion come together within the virtual: "The virtual is a lived paradox where what are normally opposites coexist, coalesce, and connect; where what cannot be experienced cannot but be felt—albeit reduced and contained."[70] For melodramatic films, negative bodily affects such as physical wounding, unfulfilled longing, and tearful suffering coexist with cinematic pleasure, inspirational ideals, and the hope for redemption. Another word for the lived paradox of the virtual in film melodrama is *mood*—it sets the ontological agenda for the film, but often in a contradictory way that creates feedback loops between affect and emotion and between the art mood of the film and the infinitely varied human moods felt by spectators. But as Massumi's concern with feedback suggests, mood should not be confused with a harmonious relation between being and environment. As Heidegger's discussion of anxiety as a ground-mood for the modern subject suggests, moods, which unlike emotions are not attached to specific objects, are characterized by a general ontological discord. Attunement to the world (of the film) is never harmonious, nor should a specific lost object (e.g., the nation) be indicated based on assumptions about historical context or the film's professed ideological position.

The concept of mood brings up the problem of spectatorship, or how cinematic experience mediates between art moods and human moods. In the absence of adequate empirical evidence concerning the aesthetic experience of cinemagoers in the early decades of film in the two Koreas, I rely primarily on analyses of the construction of art moods and discussions of melodramatic representation in film theory and criticism from that time. I do engage in some speculation about potential interactions between art moods and the human moods of the spectator, which are based on my own experiences of the films, the relation between film narrative and the known facts of the film's historical moment, and how the film gives language and discourse to affects we can assume were associated with the representation of mass historical experiences. My readings are not intended to somehow stand in for the infinite number of actual affective responses of spectators to particular films. They rather engage in formal analyses of narrative, image, and sound that take into account the affective, and not strictly cognitive, meanings that are at play.[71]

How, then, does a film melodrama technically and mimetically create an art mood that can affect a human mood? How does it manufacture an embodied, ontological, and discordant attunement to the world (or diegesis) of the film? Referring to Merleau-Ponty, Sobchack states that films are "an expression of experience by experience."[72] They create an experience that is expressive of experience. The melodramatic mode in particular is characterized by somber, melancholic, and anxious moods that create a cinematic experience expressive of experience— meaning that the art mood of the film connects with the human moods (and

historical experiences) of the audience and attunes them to the film's diegesis (which is structured according to the language of the moral occult and its struggles with a surface reality). As film theorists in both North Korea and South Korea pointed out during the foundational period for both industries in the late 1940s, it is cinema's capacity to activate and to move multiple senses at once that allows it to create such a virtual state of being-in-the-world. In his theory of haptic realism, Yi Yŏng-jun argued for cinema's three-dimensionality and its ability to touch the audience through its combination of sound, image, and language.[73] In North Korea, the concept of cinema as the total work of art celebrated its ability to synthesize multiple senses and multiple media into a singular aesthetic experience of history and politics. As a body mode, the melodramatic mode relies on cinema's capacity to create a multisensory mood, which the Greek meaning of the prefix *melo-* (music) suggests. However, the moods of film are neither communicated emotions nor reducible to a film language that conveys ideology. They are rather a lived paradox of experiencing simultaneously the discursive coding of affect and affects that are in excess of discourse and narrative.[74] In the case of Cold War Korean films that engage incessantly with history, these excesses of affect, meaning, and historical reference exist in the gap between human historical experiences and their idealized cinematic representation. The formal cinematic aspects of mood are means of provoking these excesses and providing a set of narrative and emotional cues for their interpretation. Plantinga points to this problem when he discusses the effects of art moods on human moods without conflating them.[75]

As a mode of haptic cinema, the moods of melodrama tend toward melancholy, pathos, and anxiety. Such negative moods pervade Cold War Korean melodrama and can be pleasurable despite their negativity. The virtual instantiation of such moods always leaves excesses of affect that find expression at the visual and narrative margins. A happy ending can only partially resolve the cycles of social negativity in the melodramatic mode.[76] *Return to the Fatherland* uses high contrasts and a melancholy soundtrack, particularly in the scenes of exploitation and violence set in South Korea, to create a somber, almost gothic mood. Wŏnil's revenge killing of the priest takes place in a shadowy, practically haunted church that accentuates the evils of Christianity and US imperialism. These scenes are unsurprisingly contrasted by scenes of Wŏnil's family in North Korea, particularly the well-lit socialist elementary school where his younger son is gradually able to overcome his separation from his father and become a good student. The contrasting moods of the two settings attune the viewer to the worldview of the film. On the other hand, Wŏnil's constant suffering as he experiences war, family separation, exploitation, and clandestine migration appears through the same somber mood that is used to demonize South Korea under US colonial occupation. The film tries to place the blame for this suffering at the hands of South Korean anticommunism and US imperialism. Wŏnil personalizes and gives language to his negative affects by transforming them into political emotions: enmity for North Korea's enemies and

patriotic dedication to the nation's children. He makes up for the loss of In'gil by realizing his mistakes and building a gift to the nation's children. Following North Korean critics of socialist realist cinema, the tragedies experienced by Wŏnil—the typical party human (*tangjŏk in'gan*) and positive protagonist (*kŭngjŏngjŏk chuingong*) of the film—should not dwell in depictions of negative and regressive suffering; the film should rather express an affirmative pathos (*kŭngjŏngjŏk ppap'osŭ*) about the future of communist society.[77] Nonetheless, the mood of the film continually manifests social negativity, melancholy, and a degree of pathos in excess of the film's socialist realist narrative. This excess belongs to the feedback loop between affects and emotions, which, as in nearly all melodramas, is never fully resolved. The joyful images at the beginning and end of the film depicting the opening of the Kaesŏng Children's Palace do not provide full catharsis, nor do they transparently establish the North Korean state as a space of innocence in regard to the Korean War, the Korean people, and family separation.[78] Cold War Korean film melodramas are replete with such excesses of affect and meaning, which influence their moods as much as the personalized emotions that convey ideological messages.

HISTORICIZING THE COLD WAR THROUGH MELODRAMA

The use of film melodrama for political purposes in Korea precedes the Cold War. In the late Japanese empire (1939–1945), films produced under the auspices of the Korean Film Production Corporation combined the documentary style of newsreels and culture films with fictional melodrama to give more affective impact to cinema's claims on real politics and history.[79] Analyses of this period show that the process of the imperial state's politicization of melodrama was incomplete and that within the new narrative frame of imperial subject formation, films continued to deal with popular themes of 1920s and 1930s cinema in Korea, such as national identity, class differences, gender difference, and family problems.[80] The instrumental political appropriation of melodrama persisted after liberation from Japanese rule. Because of state, party, and leadership control over film production, all work on North Korean film has had to contend with its use as a medium of political propaganda. Brian Yecies and Aegyung Shim, for example, have shown in convincing historical detail the importance of state institutions, censorship, and propaganda for the formation of the South Korean film industry.[81]

Understanding the power of the state in the production and consumption of film melodrama is essential; however, in historicizing continuities across colonial and postcolonial political regimes, I am not primarily concerned with the category of propaganda or with determining the degree of state control over the production of films. All films defend political, moral, and ideological positions, but cinematic experience is not a closed system of narrative and emotion. The concept of

melodrama offers a means of examining cinema's volatile and open-ended partici-pation in state subject formation, because film industries and film artists employ the melodramatic mode both for emotional and political manipulation and to explore the affects and experiences of the popular audience that are not fully contained by state ideology. *Return to the Fatherland* and *Bloodline* are good examples of films more usefully analyzed through the questions and problems of melodrama rather than being reduced to propaganda or instruments of emotional manipulation.

Analyzing how moods work in film melodramas can have a significant bearing on how we historicize modern Korean culture and the global Cold War. Korean literary and film studies have made important contributions to global Cold War history. Hughes confronts the disavowal of the proletarian arts, the history of mobi-lization of Koreans by the Japanese empire, and North Korean cultural production by drawing continuities between the colonial and Cold War periods and looking to the margins of films and texts, where one can find traces of these disavowed objects.[82] In South Korea, Kim Chul has also questioned the erasures enabled by the anti-Japanese national melodrama of Cold War South Korea and has provided new readings of Korean participation in Japanese colonialism.[83] In film studies, Jinsoo An showed the central importance of representations of colonial spaces of the Japanese empire in Cold War South Korean film.[84] These studies make impor-tant connections between anticommunist national liberation movements and the failure to grapple with the ethical and political connections to prior colonialisms.

One metaphor that speaks directly to the melodramatic mode and melodra-matic mood, as well as the political problems of colonialism, postcoloniality, and the Cold War, is what Pheng Cheah calls "the mutual haunting of the nation-people and the state." Rather than imagining the postcolonial nation and its vital organic-ity as the overcoming or dialectical sublation of the oppression, annihilation, and techniques of government of the colonial state, we should think of the relation between the nation and the state in the postcolony as one of mutual haunting: "the nation and the state are the *différance* of each other in Derrida's sense of an origi-nary difference that cannot be interned within self-presence."[85] Postcolonial state-building is haunted by the deaths and ghosts of those who have been killed; the formation of a state empowered to represent the organic community of the nation depends upon such sacrifices of its heroes. The mutual haunting of nation-people and state is visible in both Cold War Korean film industries. In South Korean films such as *Homebound* (*Kwiro*, dir. Lee Man-hee, 1967), this mutual haunting of the nation-people and the state appears in its mood of mourning, which juxtaposes the bodily suffering caused by the state with a strained national sympathy. Many North Korean films—from *Return to the Fatherland* to *Traces of Life* (*Saeng ŭi hŭnjŏk*, dir. Cho Kyŏng-sun, 1989)—convey a similar sense that the trauma and violence of state building haunts the patriotic emotions of the protagonists, creat-ing a mood of irreconcilable mourning.

This mutual haunting speaks to the late arrivals of melodrama within the composite tense of past, present, and future. The Cold War developmental state

presents itself as a modernizing agent of technology, industrialization, and enlightenment, but it is haunted by the deaths of the nation-people who were sacrificed for its liberation and construction. Nationalist melodramas ask whether, if not for the nation-people's late arrival to forming a state and past colonialisms' persistence in the present, this haunting might have been resolved, if the space of innocence of the nation-people might have been reconstituted. Writing out of another instance of Cold War national division, Indian partition, Bhaskar Sarkar argues that film melodrama's temporality of too late is the mirror image of the developmentalist logic of globalization; there must be an ideology of on time in order for there to be a notion of too late.[86] Steven Chung makes similar connections between melodrama and development in his interpretations of Shin Sang-ok's (Sin Sang-ok's) films of the 1950s and 1960s.[87]

It seems as though melodrama is the cinematic mode of the latecomers to modernity. When we consider the prevalence of the melodramatic mode in multiple Asian, African, and Central and South American film and television industries, it is tempting to assert that a particular location or historical situation gives rise to the melodramatic mode. However, historicizing the late arrivals of melodrama should not lead us to state that melodrama is the mode of film representation endemic to the latecomers to modernity, to developing nations, or to the Global South—to those whose modernity remains haunted by the past of colonialism. This historical understanding of melodrama, while it may open new ways of comparing distant film and television cultures in relation to the history of colonialism, relies on a teleological notion of economic and political development vis-à-vis aesthetics and ignores histories of the melodramatic mode in Europe, North America, or other areas that have been coded as arriving on time in the development of history, politics, and economy. In other words, lateness in melodramatic narrative does not map onto a model of a spatialized world history defined in terms of development. Lateness in melodrama and the moods that are deeply connected to the problem of that lateness are general to modern temporality and can emerge in any narrative situation in which the arrival of some sort of progressive or regressive redemption, revolution, reconciliation, or consummation is threatened to be delayed repeatedly. Therefore, the periods of colonization, decolonization, and the Cold War in the mid-twentieth century are not the determined context for lateness, as when social-scientific theories of late development are applied to melodrama.

However, as Bliss Cua Lim reminds us, haunting is a noncontemporaneity that disrupts linear and homogeneous notions of time and is pertinent to the cinematic translation of temporal frameworks under colonial and postcolonial conditions.[88] Melodrama does not belong specifically to the postcolonial condition, but in a Cold War postcolony like Korea, melodrama's moods and narratives can capture powerfully the "mutual haunting of the nation-people and the state." And such haunting is essential to melodrama's conflict with modernity and modern orders of time. Reading the moods of the melodramatic mode comparatively between the two Koreas can open many new possibilities for historicizing the Cold War outside

the temporal framework of modernization (which itself belongs to the Cold War era).

Melodrama makes possible a detailed comparison between the characteristics of North Korean and South Korean cinema.[89] In both its themes and its affects, film melodrama spans the colonialism of high imperialism and the neocolonialism of the Cold War. It represents Cold War ideologies through an embodied mode of mimesis, but in translating the affects connected to historical experiences into emotions with an ideological content, it also produces excesses of affects, meaning, and historical references that cannot remain within its own moral framework. The moral occults of Cold War Korean film melodrama remain haunted by two primary specters: the specter of the effects of colonialism on the formation of the state and the nation-people and the specter of the commodity form that subjects life to the regime of abstract time. The mood expresses virtually the interplay between affects and ideological emotions, simultaneously constructing a moral occult through propaganda and proliferating excesses. The aim is to read film melodrama of the two Koreas to expand the comparative breadth of Korean studies, to contribute to the global history of film melodrama, and to provide new ways of historicizing the Cold War beyond the binary frameworks of national cinema. The purpose is not to ignore the political differences between a revolutionary state-socialist society and an anticommunist neocolony of the US; the purpose is to explore how the melodramatic mode works subjectively across genres of film and genres of political thought.

The book is divided into two sections, the first on North Korean film and the second on South Korean film, focused mainly on the years 1945–1970. Chapter 1 concerns the film theory and journalism leading up to North Korea's first film, *My Home Village* (*Nae kohyang*, dir. Kang Hong-sik, 1949), and includes a close reading of the film itself. It argues that both film theory and the style of *My Home Village* are connected to the Japanese colonial period. Through an examination of the journal *Film Art* (1945–1949), it describes how film critics drew from ideas of the late Japanese empire on the limits of commercial cinema and the possibility for cinema to become a "total work of art" that synthesizes every sense and every media—all in the service of forming a communist mass culture and a subjective, national revolution against American imperialism. The result of this effort was the use of the moods and affects of melodrama to convey political ideology. The chapter shows how *My Home Village* creates a revolutionary mood through montage and the melodramatic mode. It also argues that in the mood, montage, and narrative of the film, we can already sense emerging conflicts between political positions, prefiguring the kinds of contradictory elements that permeate later juche-realist films.

Chapter 2 examines the melodramatic mode from the socialist realism of the 1950s and 1960s, including the most important ideas in the film journal *Chosŏn Film*, to the emergence of juche realism in the late 1960s. It draws from the work

of Evgeny Dobrenko on the political economy of socialist realism to rethink North Korean film as a spectacular consumer culture in which the products are socialism and anticolonial nationalism. It shows that North Korean domestic melodramas such as *The Newlyweds* (*Sinhon pubu*, dir. Yun Yong-gyu, 1955) and early espionage films such as *A Dangerous Moment* (*Wihŏm han sun'gan*, dir. Cho Kye-ok, 1958) depended on the representation of emotions to convey the ideology of state-led industrialization and postwar national reconstruction but also conveyed excesses of affect, meaning, and historical reference. It also discusses how films such as *Return to the Fatherland* and *The Ch'oe Haksin Family* (*Ch'oe Hak-sin ŭi ilga*, O Pyŏng-jo, 1966) ambivalently represent the experiences and memories of the Fatherland Liberation War (the Korean War). The final section concerns juche realist classics such as *The Flower Girl* and *Sea of Blood* (*P'i pada*, dir. Ch'oe Ik-kyu, 1969), which moved further away from everyday life and used adaptations of opera to present the anticolonial movement through a reenlivened practice of the total work of art.

Chapter 3 uses Tzetvan Todorov's theory of the fantastic to analyze how fantasy films engage in a great deal of play with the conventions of North Korean realism and can subvert common dictates on historical referentiality by depicting the nation-people themselves as a mythic fantastic folk outside the bound of dominant North Korean historiography. I interpret *Tale of Hŭngbu* (*Hŭngbujŏn*, dir. Kim Sŏng-gyo and Yi Sŏng-hwan, 1963), based on a Chosŏn-period folktale, as an example of magical socialist realism. The fantastic folk are further represented in *Rim Kkŏk-jŏng (*dir. Chang Yŏng-bok, 1986–93), a series of historical films based on Hong Myŏng-hŭi's colonial-period novel about a mythically strong man who led a band of commoners against the yangban in sixteenth-century Chosŏn, and in Hong Kildong (dir. Kim Kil-in, 1986), a folktale version of the same figure, who uses magical martial prowess to defend Korea against Japanese invasion.[90] Finally, the chapter discusses *Pulgasari* (dir. Chŏng Kŏn-jo and Shin Sang-ok, 1985), which makes even more explicit interventions into North Korean realism by specifically quoting conventions such as the socialist-realist gaze but doing so with a monster in the place of the state socialist sovereign.

Turning to South Korea, chapter 4 discusses films and film journalism in the South from liberation until the Korean War (1945–1950). It connects one primary mood of melodrama, melancholy, to the processes of translation whereby a postcolonial film industry appropriates and transforms conventions of vision, sound, and narrative in order to construct a national cinema. It works through the problem of translation in notions of national cinema in various works of film theory and journalism of the late 1940s. Then a close reading of *Hurrah! for Freedom* (*Chayu manse*, dir. Ch'oe In-gyu, 1946), the first independence film (*kwangbok yŏnghwa*) produced in South Chosŏn, explores the formal and affective elements of its melodramatic aesthetic. Through readings of the musical *Blue Hill* (*P'urŭn ŏndŏk*, dir. Yu Tong-il, 1948) and the biopic *Pilot An Ch'angnam* (*An Ch'angnam pihaengsa*,

dir. No P'il, 1949), the following section shows how the translation of Hollywood genre films was important for the construction of national cinema through the versatile mode of melodrama, because genre translation multiplied the conventions and references—from musical numbers to heroic histories—through which films could create shared national sentiments. The final section again turns to examples of contrapuntal narrative and spatial elements that problematize the concept of national cinema, including the reimagining of the countryside against any notion of secure maternal origins in *A Hometown in the Heart* (*Maŭm ŭi kohyang*, dir. Yun Yong-gyu, 1949).

Chapter 5 discusses the relationship between realism and melodrama in post–Korean War films of South Korea (1953–1970). In films such as *To the Last Day* (*I saengmyŏng tahadorok*, dir. Shin Sang-ok, 1960) and *Bloodline*, families serve as allegorical microcosms of the national community and its social conflicts. The negative moral and material effects of indolent fathers on their families in *Money* (*Ton*, dir. Kim So-dong, 1958) and *Dream of Fortune* (*Toejikkum*, dir. Han Hyung-mo, 1961) provide a way to represent anxieties about modernization and economic development, while also providing images of possibility for postwar reconstruction. In each case, the mood of the film expresses tension between realism and melodrama, and between the state and the nation, because it allows for the simultaneous expression of abstract moral demands and everyday desires and social structures that condition what is currently possible ideologically. This mood of tension between realism and melodrama also plays out in the cinematic representation of the dominant state ideology of anticommunism in films such as *The Hand of Destiny* (*Unmyŏng ŭi son*, dir. Han Hyung-mo, 1954) and *Piagol* (*P'iagol*, dir. Yi Kang-ch'ŏn, 1955).

Chapter 6 discusses the relationship between melodrama and art cinema, arguing that when South Korean film melodramas explored self-consciously the generic or referential limits of the melodramatic mode, they insinuated the cinematic apparatus explicitly in the representation and production of ideology. These modernist melodramas exhibit a high degree of self-consciousness about the ideological work of melodramatic moods in Cold War South Korea. I examine the framing of invisibility in *Aimless Bullet* (*Obalt'an*, dir. Yu Hyun-mok, 1960) and *Homebound* (1967) and the modernist exploration of dreamlife and alienation in Yu Hyun-mok's *The Empty Dream* (*Ch'unmong*, 1965) and Kim Suyong's *Mist* (*An'gae*, 1967). Finally, through a reading of *The Housemaid* (*Hanyŏ*, 1960), I show how Kim Ki-young's (Kim Ki-yŏng's) satirical treatment of melodramatic convention exposes an underlying mood of fear in bourgeois melancholy, both participating in and challenging (through horror motifs) the politics of interior and exterior, and the threat of feminine desire at the center of nation-building and the melodramatic mode.

PART I

North Korea

Mood and Montage in the Total Work of Art

As any revolutionary regime would, the DPRK, the Korean Workers' Party, and President Kim Il Sung cast the North Korean Revolution (1945–50) as the beginning of an entirely new era. Throughout the Cold War, across literature, film, television, art, and journalism, the guerrilla struggle in the 1930s was the first act, and the establishment of the DPRK (1945–48) was the climax of the story of ending Japanese colonial rule. However, transformative historical events never erase the effects of the past completely, and the legacies of Japanese empire continued to haunt the formation of the North Korean nation-state.

Many of the early filmmakers and actors had had careers in the colonial film industry and had worked, along with some early North Korean film theorists, to support the Japanese empire. Against the common notion that the formation of North Korean cinema begins with the influence of the Soviet occupation (1945–1948), it is necessary to trace these connections with the Japanese colonial period.[1] Secondly, juche thought, which was the national ideology from the 1960s onward, was traditionally presented as an indigenous Korean form of socialist thought developed by Kim Il Sung; however, juche thought also originates in the discourses of the practical subject that arose in the Japanese colonial period. Therefore, both juche thought and North Korean realism contain traces of colonial thought and culture. Thirdly, interpreting the melodramatic mode and melodramatic moods of the first North Korean feature film, *My Home Village* (dir. Kang Hong-sik, 1949), reveals that from the outset North Korean film was not nearly as ideologically homogenous as is normally assumed. Film theories expressed different views concerning the proper form of cinematic and political subjectivity that would continue to develop in the 1960s debates on the meaning of juche (or the practical subject). Meanwhile, the combination of the stories, moods, and conflicts of melodrama with the verisimilitude of documentary montage in *My Home Village*

did not manifest the ideal of the total work of art sought in film theory; instead, it gives an impression of the undecided nature of cinematic and political subjectivity during the formation of the North Korean state.

My Home Village brought together the technology, editing, and storytelling strategies of Soviet socialist realism with the class conflicts, colonial structures, and cultural references local to Korea. Because of the active revolutionary situation in North Korea under Soviet occupation in the late 1940s, the film captures both the pathos of suffering under Japanese colonial rule and the revolutionary enthusiasm of national liberation. However, it by no means represents a clean break from colonial-period filmmaking. The director Kang Hong-sik had acted in many plays and films during the Japanese colonial period and was immersed in the politics and style of Japan's Korean Film Production Corporation (1939–1945).[2] Although most of Kang's colonial period films are lost, we can see his appearances in Ch'oe In-gyu's *Homeless Angel* (*Chip ŏmnŭn ch'ŏnsa*, 1941) and Imai Tadashi's *Love and Vow* (*Ai to chikai*, 1945), including scenes expressing patriotic loyalty to Japan. Once he had access to Soviet films, Kang rapidly incorporated their style, including elements of Soviet montage and documentary and socialist realist narrative. Because of the development of a revolutionary cinema in North Korea that explicitly challenged the aesthetics and politics of Hollywood and Japanese fascist cinema, *My Home Village* exhibits a higher degree of stylistic transformation than the films of South Chosŏn (1945–1948). Yet there are important connections with the late colonial period, particularly in the way the film combines the moods and scenarios of melodrama with depictions of political and historical subjectivity.

Another entanglement between North Korean cinema and the late colonial period is the career of the lead actress of *My Home Village*, Mun Ye-bong (figure 1). She was the most famous Korean film actress of imperial Japan, starring in *Sweet Dream* (*Mimong*, dir. Yang Chu-nam, 1936), *Volunteer* (*Chiwŏnbyŏng*, dir. An Sŏg-yŏng, 1941), *Homeless Angel, Korea Strait* (*Chosŏn haehyŏp*, dir. Pak Ki-ch'ae, 1943), and *Love and Vow*. In *Korea Strait*, her character, Kinshuku, voluntarily dedicates her labor to the Japanese war effort by entering a textile factory, which allows her to overcome the moral stain of having a child out of wedlock with an upper-class man. After liberation, Mun Ye-bong spent some time in the South in the Chosŏn Film Alliance (Chosŏn yŏnghwa tongmaeng) and then went to North Korea in response to anticommunist suppression in the South and continued her career there. She starred in *My Home Village* only a few years after *Korea Strait*, this time playing the sister, Oktan, of the main protagonist, the anticolonial partisan Kwanp'il. Along with her family, Oktan suffers under the Japanese colonial system, including working as a tenant farmer for large landowners and eventually being conscripted for labor (likely as a "comfort woman"). The family's suffering ends only through the anti-Japanese revolution and the regaining of Korean sovereignty. Therefore, in the span of a few years, Mun went from playing a fallen woman who redeems herself by volunteering for factory work as a
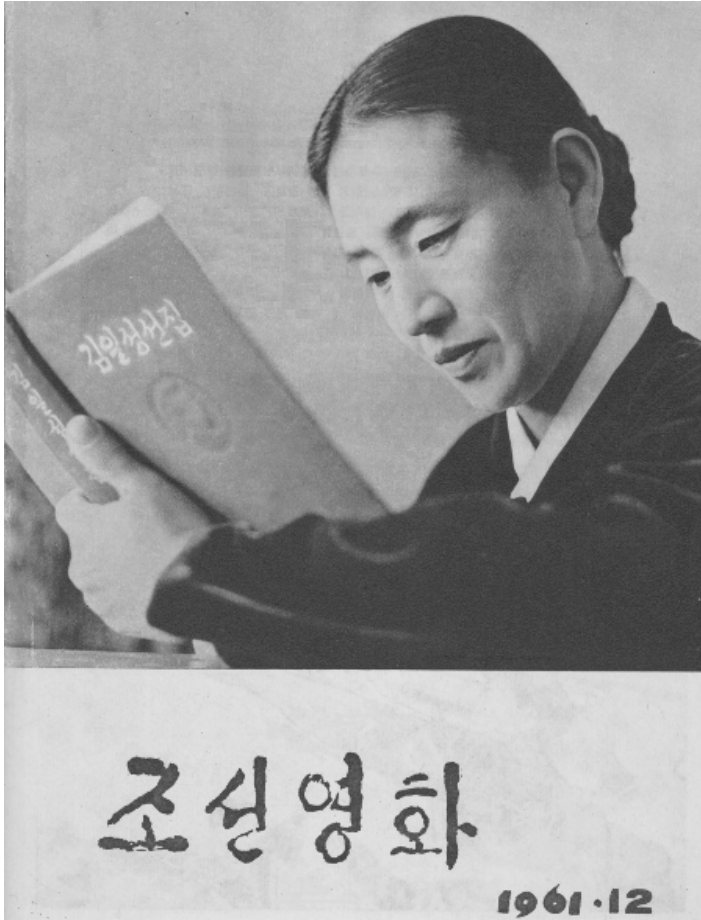
FIGURE 1. Actress Mun Yebong, once a star of pro-Japanese films in the 1940s, appears on the cover of the North Korean film journal *Chosŏn Film* in December 1961, reading *The Selected Works of Kim Il Sung*.

patriotic Japanese national subject to playing an innocent sister who experiences forced labor under Japanese rule and is liberated by the North Korean revolution. Mun's career shows that because of the transformations in political power at the end of the Japanese empire and the onset of the Cold War, the fictional lives of film characters did not align with the politically complicated personal histories of citizens or film artists, despite claims to cinematic realism in late imperial Japan and North Korea.

The temporality of national liberation, as it appeared in early Cold War film in both the North and the South, was one of haunting, not the dialectical overcoming posited by national liberation narratives.[3] The haunting of the postcolonial nation-people by the colonial state, which in this case results from continuities in the technological and aesthetic mediation of cinema, is apparent in individual film careers and even more pertinently in early film theory in North Korea (1945–1950). The leftist directors and critics who put forward ideas of cinematic subjectivity that contributed to the project of constructing the North Korean film industry first worked under the Japanese fascist state and engaged with its literary and cultural criticism in the early 1940s. Instead of establishing direct analogies between Japanese and North Korean cinema (for example, through the concept

of totalitarianism and its conflation of fascism and communism), the analysis of North Korean film theory of the 1940s below reveals a translation of ideas about mass culture and the artwork across time and space between the Japanese empire, the Soviet Union, and North Chosŏn (the term used for northern Korea under Soviet occupation, 1945–1948).

The well-known conclusion to Walter Benjamin's essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" presents fascism's aestheticizing of politics and communism's politicizing of art as dialectical opposites in political conflict with one another.[4] The translation of theoretical concepts during the establishment of the North Korean film industry calls for a rereading of this dialectic. In the case of North Korea, the tensions between fascist, communist, and capitalist film aesthetics are better considered a problem of the micropolitics of film form and film affects, of difference through repetition on a microscopic scale, rather than a conflict between bounded ideological positions in negative, dialectical relation with one another. As studies of fascist cinema have shown, such genealogies require seeing the history of fascist film not as an exceptional and isolated case of film propaganda but as one modality and style that borrowed from and influenced other cinemas.[5]

One aesthetic idea that ties film theory and filmmaking in North Chosŏn to the period of Japanese fascism and allows for comparison without conflation is the total work of art (*chonghap yesul; sōgō geijutsu; Gesamtkunstwerk*). In communist contexts, the total work of art referred to an immersive, multisensory, and multimedia artwork that brought together the various modern arts into a popular, mass aesthetic experience. Boris Groys has explored the problematic conflation of artistic representation with the creation of a people in his study of the Soviet avant-garde and the transformation of its ideals under the aesthetic system of socialist realism.[6] In the film criticism of North Korea, we find a great deal of self-consciousness about the political power of cinema to not just represent political realities but to create them by way of an immersive spectacle that is not only visual but a fully embodied and multisensory experience of sight, sound, and touch. The question of how to document the historical specificities of the North Korean revolution through such an immersive and multisensory artwork remained a significant theoretical question until the late 1960s and early 1970s. During this span, the melodramatic mode played a role as a way of imitation that could capture historical realities through idealized sentimentality and action. The body mode of melodrama and the immersive and multisensory mass aesthetic experience of the total work of art remained integral to one another in North Korean cinema throughout the Cold War era.

My Home Village attempted to capture the mood of revolution through a combination of melodramatic narrative, montage, and documentary. The ideal artistic form for this project was the total work of art—an immersive, multisensory, and multigenre work that would merge cinematic image and sound with historical

and political subjectivity and action. Eventually the characteristics of the total work of art would be theorized and formalized in the 1960s, when Kim Jong Il, in *On the Art of the Cinema*, compiled the insights of the previous decade of North Korean film theory and criticism and applied them toward the creation of a cinematic state (*yŏnghwa kukka*) through the aesthetic system of juche realism.[7] The North Korean canonization of Kim Il Sung's thought in the 1960s delineated his 1955 speech, "On Eliminating Dogmatism and Formalism and Establishing Juche in Ideological Work" as the origin of juche thought.[8] Western media commonly translates *juche* as "self-reliance," but it is actually derived from the Japanese compound *shutai*, the subject of practice or the embodied, acting subject. According to the memoir of Hwang Chang-yŏp, who defected to South Korea in 1997, there is not a single version of juche thought, and the canonized version is actually the result of synthesis and debate. In the 1960s, the debate among North Korean state leaders concerning the true subject of revolutionary practice asserted multiple possible subjects of history: the popular masses, the party, the leader, and humanity as a whole.[9] This debate reveals that the status of the subject in North Korea, as well as the realist aesthetic that was to represent this subject, were not stable or homogeneous, even if the sovereignty of Kim Il Sung became the hegemonic idea of juche beginning in the late 1960s.

From early in North Korean film theory and practice, critics and filmmakers considered the immersive experience of film as total work of art to be the most politically effective way of representing the practical, embodied, and active subject of history. This idea of representing political and historical experience by cinematic experience depended on the conflation of the forms of subjectivity on screen and the lived-body and experience of the spectator. As Vivian Sobchack discusses in her phenomenological study of cinematic experience, the lived-body of the viewer is not a passive vessel for a film's representation of subjectivity:

> The lived-body is the "opening" through which the invariant structure of consciousness gains access *to* the world, but it is also what Merleau-Ponty likes to describe as a "fold" *in* the world (a nice insistence that the body is part of the world's materiality). The fold in the world that is the lived-body situates the *access* of consciousness to the world in a world that *exceeds* the lived-body's situation and perspective and that surrounds it as an infinitely rich and variable *horizon* toward which intentionality is concretely directed.[10]

The concept of the total work of art is an attempt to close the lived-body's fold in the world and create a closed system of history, identity, politics, and the body (the eventual hegemonic idea of juche). However, the lived-body is situated within a world that exceeds it. When a film such as *My Home Village* tries to encapsulate a mass historical experience within a single subjective system—the total work of art as aesthetic embodiment of the emergent postcolonial nation-state—this system is nonetheless mediated through the fold of the lived-bodies of

its various spectators, an opening that connects the film to a world and to affects that exceed the discourse and intentionality of language and consciousness. Although the actual bodily experiences of North Korean viewers in the late 1940s are inaccessible, the narrative structures, art moods, and contrapuntal moments of films carry traces of a world that exceeds the film's linguistic and ideological coding of subjectivity. Particularly through its negotiations with the multiple potential perspectives in its audience, the supposed total work of art *My Home Village* is haunted by colonialism (e.g., the careers of its director and star) and full of alternative possibilities for revolution (e.g., the mood of exuberance of a liberated people that exists beyond the Stalinist framework of leader-centered historical and political subjectivity).

In the first North Korean film, *My Home Village*, and surrounding film theories, multiple possibilities for Korean national cinema were still in play. There were echoes of the previous decade of Japanese imperial cinema, as well as visions of revolutionary possibilities for documenting history cinematically. In the late 1940s, North Korean film and film criticism arguably appear in their most experimental and historically layered forms. Through a reading of early North Korean film theory and the elements of melodrama and montage in *My Home Village*, this chapter explores the constellation of ideas and moods that informed the cinematic representation of subjectivity during the founding of the North Korean nation-state. While theories articulated the role of cinema-as-total-work-of-art in subject formation, they also reveal persistent tensions between the colonial and postcolonial, popular sovereignty and dictatorial sovereignty, and documentary realism and melodrama. These tensions also play out in the popular, ecstatic, and revolutionary mood of *My Home Village*, which the visual form and narrative of the film can only partially contain within the visual and narrative framing of party, state, nation, and leader as the true subjects of history.

FILM THEORY AND THE NORTH KOREAN REVOLUTION

My Home Village exists in the composite tense, depicting the revolutionary and perilous present of an emerging nation-state while pointing uncertainly toward the colonial past and the postcolonial future. To understand the discursive context for the film's multiple visions for national subjectivity, it is revealing to analyze the film theory and film journalism that contributed to the early imagining of the North Korean film industry. The first three volumes of North Korea's first film journal, *Film Art* (*Yŏnghwa yesul*), appeared in 1949. The second volume has a special section dedicated to summarizing and evaluating *My Home Village*. This section includes articles documenting responses on the part of peasants and workers to their viewings the film. The volumes contain many articles published entirely in phonetic Korean script (hangul) without the inclusion of Chinese

characters, which shows the pedagogical function of both film and film journalism in North Korea. They also contain translations of articles by Soviet intellectuals and discussions of many Soviet films that were screened in Pyongyang and would serve as models for the North Korean industry, including late Stalinist productions such as the musical *Ballad of Siberia* (dir. Ivan Pyryev, 1948) and the war films *The Third Blow* (dir. Igor Savchenko, 1948) and *The Young Guard* (dir. Sergei Gerasimov, 1948).

Articles by theorists and practitioners such as Sŏ Kwang-je, Yun Tu-hŏn, and Ch'u Min appear toward the front of the volumes and stand out due to their complex critical writing style, their use of Japanese-based technical character compounds, and their inclusion of the intellectual vocabulary of the late Japanese empire. The style of these articles reflects that all three of these intellectuals were educated in the Japanese colonial education system and became filmmakers and cultural critics during the Japanese imperial system and its policy of Japan-Korea unity (*naesŏnilch'e*). Sŏ Kwang-je was a critic in KAPF, the Korean Proletarian Arts organization, before directing the now rediscovered *Military Train* in 1938, a film that contains ambivalent messages about the need to be vigilant against liberation movement spies and the importance of Japan-Korea unity. In 1946 while a member of the Chosŏn Film Alliance in the anticommunist South, he wrote *On Chosŏn Cinema*, which set forward a leftist, proletarian ideal for Korean national cinema that would quickly become impossible to realize there.[11] In 1943, Yun Tu-hŏn joined the Korean Alliance for National Total War and the Korean Patriotic Organization, where he wrote on the importance of Koreans contributing to the war effort; his articles published in *Film Art* reflect the Pan-Asianist anti-American rhetoric of the Japanese empire.[12] Ch'u Min was also a proletarian arts critic during the colonial period, and like Sŏ Kwang-je and the actress Mun Ye-bong, after independence he initially joined the leftist Chosŏn Film Alliance before going to the North to avoid anticommunist suppression and to participate in the North Korean revolution.[13]

In the first volumes of *Film Art*, these theorists rearticulated concepts about the proper form and social function of film that first became hegemonic in Korea under Japanese fascism in order to construct a popular and autonomous Korean national cinema. This new national cinema would draw from Soviet advancements; it would show Koreans coming into national and class consciousness; and it would be critical of US imperialism. These articles in many ways prefigure the film criticism of the 1950s and 1960s and Kim Jong Il's *On the Art of the Cinema* (1973), particularly in their critiques of capitalist entertainment films and their attention to the formation of national political subjectivity through cinema. However, these critics were writing about the development of Korean national cinema before the formalization of film theory around a North Korean version of Soviet socialist realism. In addition to socialist realism, their writings on film drew more explicitly from the film and cultural theory of late imperial Japan.

The ideas that were translated and repeated from the context of Japanese empire include (1) the conception of sound film as a total work of art: an immersive, multi-sensory, and multimedia artwork that brings together the various modern arts into a popular, mass aesthetic experience; (2) the assertion of Asian resistance against US empire and Western Europe and their debased capitalist cultural forms; (3) the centering of cinema as the primary medium for the subjectification (*chuch'ehwa*) and individualization (*kaesŏnghwa*) of a national community; and (4) the idea that film should contribute to the revolutionary transformation of historical reality through the combination of fictional narrative and documentary realism.

In these articles, "the total work of art" appears multiple times to describe the ideal form of a film. Ch'u Min opens his essay "Ideas for Filmmaking, For Aspiring Filmmakers" with "Of course, the basis of film art is not solely 'montage'; film art that is a total work of art takes all of the elements of literature, performance, art, music, and photography and makes them work together in order to create a single work."[14] For Ch'u, constructing a film does not involve solely montage or the editing together of shots and sequences; it should incorporate all the modern art forms into a single, totalizing aesthetic experience. Richard Wagner used the term *Gesamtkunstwerk* in the mid-nineteenth century to discuss the fusion of theatre, music, and poetry. Many studies of the modernist avant-garde, including the Soviet avant-garde, have associated the bringing together of various genres and media implied by the term *total work of art* with an ideal, organic fusion between art and life or between representation and the poetic construction of a polity.[15] Ch'u's opening statement echoes Eisenstein and other Soviet theorists' ideas about sound film as a total work of art, which were translated into colonial Korea beginning in the late 1920s. This connection is clear in the third volume of *Film Art*, where Ch'u quotes Eisenstein's famous discussion of the counterpoint between montage and sound, as well as his arguments about the autonomy of film, as well as cinematic space and time, from other media.[16] Another submerged reference point for such discussions of the total work of art in *Film Art* is Japanese film critic Imamura Taihei, who in 1938 wrote of the synthetic form of film, which brings together various genres and media.[17]

In this respect, the many references to the total work of art in *Film Art* situate the nascent North Korean film industry within the history of the modernist avant-garde, including the socialist realist system that was translated into North Korea through Soviet occupation. However, these invocations of the total work of art also resonate with discussions of Japanese imperial literature and film, particularly if we situate them within the broader historical and political arguments of these early texts of North Korean film theory. For example, Ch'u goes on in the same essay to connect this concept of the total work of art to a critique of the lack of politicality and the lack of consciousness and ideology in the films of capitalist societies. During the height of the project of national literature and imperial film culture in colonial Korea, fascist critics such as Ch'oe Chae-sŏ, in works such as

Korean Literature in a Time of Transition (1943), had launched similar criticisms of culture within profit societies (*eiri shakai*).[18] More important than Ch'oe's and Ch'u's location of the origins of cultural debasement in the capitalist commodity are their moralistic polemics against the cultural symptoms of this debasement—cosmopolitan individuality, divided and fragmented subjectivity, and the purely formal and psychological approach to representation in the experimental avant-garde, art for art's sake, and psychoanalysis. Ch'oe associated all these cultural symptoms of modernity, or the "states of division" in the subject, with the detachment of cosmopolitan society from national community and proposed the formation of a multiethnic Japanese national literature as a solution to the alienation of the modern subject. Ch'u very similarly characterizes the experimental avant-garde, art for art's sake, and psychoanalysis as reflections of a degraded cosmopolitan culture, but he more explicitly connects this bad cosmopolitanism to the project of American imperialism, stating that films that are without ideology or purposive consciousness "become cheap tools of American imperialists who dream of a wicked world system that includes cosmopolitanism."[19] Criticisms of American consumer culture and cosmopolitanism were prevalent during the Japanese empire. However, the first texts of North Korean film theory repeat these criticisms in the context of the Cold War and explicitly discuss aesthetic modernism as a tool of American imperialism and its debased form of cosmopolitanism. Very early in the Cold War the critics in *Film Art* addressed the "ideology of modernism" (Jameson) and "Cold War modernism" (Barnhisel) in the postwar United States, or how modernism and its modes of subjectivity were canonized as exceptional examples of human freedom and employed in foreign policy against communism and socialist realism.[20]

For Ch'u, the total work of art had an ethical mission to create a new ethics and a new human subjectivity not bound to the symptoms of cultural degradation and the artistic dishonesty of both formalist and commercial filmmakers (the high culture and the low culture of a singular US-centered cosmopolitanism). However, when Ch'u and the other critics of *Film Art* discussed how film as a total work of art can and should create a new ethics and a new human, they were not only translating ideas about the Soviet new man and socialist morality but also referring back to Japanese imperial theories of literature and film by Ch'oe Chae-sŏ and many others, which in the early 1940s asserted the need to create an organic unity between artists, their artworks, and the national masses, one that could resolve the crisis of modern culture, which was expressed in fragmented and pathological modern subjectivities and the separation of cosmopolitan culture from the national masses. Therefore, while it would be a mistake to conflate the aesthetics of Japanese fascism and Soviet socialist realism, if we hear echoes of the late Japanese empire in the political and film theory of North Korea from this period until Kim Jong Il's *On the Art of the Cinema*, it is because many of the leftist intellectuals in Korea who supported imperial Japan found in North Korea

a state that continued Japan's project of overcoming modernity (not overcoming capitalism).[21] For Ch'u, in order for cinema to overcome the new Cold War intersection of modernist aesthetics and American foreign policy, it had to contribute to the construction of a new form of democracy based in a better description and transformation of the human. Because cinematic space and cinematic time are both autonomous and specific to the medium, film as total work of art can construct a free historical community out of its spectacles. However, it must avoid turning the camera inward, toward the interiority of the modern individual and its pathologies and situate the human again in a mass historical movement of democratic revolution and state formation. It is reasonable that the Soviet films Ch'u refers to, as well as *My Home Village*, would turn to the melodramatic mode in order to represent the human in historical context rather than delving into the discontinuities of internal time consciousness through formal experimentation. If montage is to serve a political purpose, it has to contribute to a total aesthetic experience, the complete immersion of the spectator in the spectacle, not just visually but also through music and embodied pathos. It is through the immersion of the audience in a collective mood that cinema can contribute to the creation of nation-state subjects.

In "My Proposal Concerning Film Art," Yun Tu-hŏn connects the total work of art to the subjectification (*chuch'ehwa*) and individualization (*kaesŏnghwa*) of the nation-people (*inmin*).[22] The term *subjectification* contains the same term for practical, active subjectivity as juche thought, the national ideology of North Korea from the 1960s onward. This is one of the earliest theorizations of juche in North Korea, and it is telling that Yun makes it in a discussion of the subjectification process of cinema. Like Ch'u, Yun argues that film is an ideological tool and that it is responsible for creating a new ethics and a new human, particularly by enlivening the consciousness of national subjects, encouraging patriotism, and building a new type of democracy. Furthermore, unlike literature (which was Yun's original field), film has a mass appeal and scale and is therefore the most effective medium for ideological transformation. Ensuring this ideological role for cinema requires the development of new systems for film production, including systems of film theory and film production education, as well as the growth of film as an expressive system that can capture the truth of the historical moment. Yun argues for learning from Soviet film and film theory in order to create these systems, as well as for establishing a national individuality and national subjectivity that does not take the Soviet Union as North Korea's model form but turns to the local historical conditions of Korea.

These issues of *Film Art* were published seven years before President Kim Il Sung's famous juche speech (1955), where it was later said he first articulated the principles of juche thought.[23] And yet Yun's article refers to the relationship with the Soviet Union, the creation of a democratic people's republic, and the need for film to contribute to subject formation—all through an emphasis on the term

juche. This essay also appeared twenty-five years before Kim Jong Il's *On the Art of the Cinema*, where the president's son (or perhaps his hired writers) connects juche explicitly to film production, and yet it articulates how and why film will be the most significant ideological tool for the state. Also, for Yun, the incorporation of music is the most important way that film can bring together media and become a total work of art. He refers to the Soviet musical *The Ballad of Siberia* (1948) as an example of a successful combination of media, because it uses music to create a multisensory and immersive mood for the audience. Yun made this statement twenty-four years before the best-known and classic North Korean film, *The Flower Girl*, incorporated elements of opera in order to represent the North Korean national origin myth with melodramatic pathos, showing through image and song the plight of a peasant family in Manchuria and the rise of the anti-Japanese guerrilla movement in the 1930s.

Therefore, "My Proposal Concerning Film Art" points to many of the future dominant ideas about cinematic subjectivity in North Korea throughout the Cold War, including the incorporation of music (the *melo-* of melodrama) and the importance of embodied suffering and sympathy for conveying political ideology. Yun is more specific than Ch'u about the form that US imperialism is taking after 1945 and criticizes American film and cultural policy by arguing along Soviet lines that the Marshall Plan was suppressing French filmmakers and regulating their content by making commercial motivations the primary driver of film production. Likewise, South Korea and its film industry were one example of the cultural hegemony of US imperialism. Yun states that American films have an anesthetic effect on the working class: "They cause people to lose the ability to think in an idealistic way about the human and thereby enervate the consciousness of struggle within the working class."[24] He connects this loss of the capacity to idealize the human being to the pollution of the human spirit under US occupation in Western Europe: "Not only is the US [in France] taking the money and starving the population, they are polluting the human spirit of the population. This is the meaning of American 'entertainment.'"[25] Just as Ch'u argued that the European avant-garde was becoming further degraded culturally by the hegemony of US consumer culture and imperialist expropriation, Yun writes that Korean filmmakers should no longer look to the Western European avant-garde, as Yi Yŏng-il and Yu Hyun-mok in the South eventually would. Rather, North Korea should look to a creative translation of Soviet film and film theory. Yun anticipated a great deal of the content of juche thought, which emphasizes the creative application of Marxism-Leninism and is an important link between the Japanese empire and North Korean cinema and political philosophy. Therefore, the reconstitution of authentic and wholistic human subjectivity is to happen through melodrama in the original Greek sense, a combination of music and drama reconceived in modern terms as the total work of art. Cinema would produce a new human subjectivity not through a new mode of rationality or transcendental subjectivity

but through the moods of music and drama and their shaping of the subject's practical relation to the world.

In presenting this creation of a new democracy and a new humanism through film in spiritual terms as the overcoming of the pollution of the human and national spirit by the colonial imposition of American consumer culture while critiquing the fragmentation and lack of ethics and humanity in the European avant-garde, Yun was very much working with the terms and discourse of Japan's 1930s and 1940s revolt against the West. This repetition of Pan-Asianist rhetoric could no longer appear fully because of the danger of being outed as explicitly pro-Japanese. Therefore, Yun framed his argument about the pollution of the spirit with the language of global communist criticisms of US imperialism. However, at moments in the essay this repetition of the past does show itself more explicitly, as when he refers to the developments made through the founding of the Korean Film Studio in Pyongyang as a source of pride for the East.[26] For someone so immersed in the political organizations and ideologies of the late Japanese empire, this invocation of the East as a collective subject of world history was clearly an echo of the earlier period. It was precisely through the language of redemption from spiritual pollution that many critics of the late Japanese empire articulated the project of Japan and Asia overcoming modernity as an antidote to American commodity culture.[27] However, as I discuss in the following chapter, such theories about overcoming capitalist commodity and consumer culture through a North Korean version of socialist realism could not prevent this realism from becoming a consumer culture whose commodity was the socialist and national utopia itself.

Because Sŏ Kwang-je directed a film concerned with Japan-Korea unity, *Military Train* (1938), perhaps it is through his essays in *Film Art* where we can see most concretely the kind of aesthetic and formal questions at play between Japanese imperial film culture and early North Korean film and film theory. Sŏ's essay "Survey of Recent Films" argues that Soviet films such as *The Third Blow* (1948) are humanist and heroic, but Hollywood films are not. Sŏ couches his discussion of heroism in many of the same assertions as the other two theorists, focusing in particular on a critique of the detached, ahistorical, and individualistic representation of the human being in psychoanalysis and psychoanalytically informed filmmaking. One of the most significant assertions in the essay is that in order to achieve a properly historical representation of the human being, film as a total work of art will have to combine dramatic film with documentary film in order to create a new vision of history and historical transformation. What Sŏ appreciates most about *The Third Blow* is that it "gets rid of the idea that future documentary films cannot also be dramatic."[28] Rather than a film being guided by a single psychological individual, the protagonist of the film, he argues that "events themselves should become the protagonist of the film."[29]

Considering that Sŏ published his essay in a special issue dedicated to the release of *My Home Village*, his idea that a film as total work of art does not need

a main protagonist is likely in part a reflection on the narrative structure of this film, which deviates considerably from the Hollywood-style films about Korean national liberation produced in the South. The brother and son character in *My Home Village*, Kwanp'il, has no love interest and the plot avoids the double causal structure of classical Hollywood discussed by David Bordwell: public mission and heterosexual romance.[30] Kwanp'il's experiences in prison and his formation into an effective partisan make up the first half of the film, and the middle of the film crosscuts between circumstances in his home village and his partisan actions against the factory and trains. As the film nears August 15, 1945, the sister Oktan (played by Mun Ye-bong), the mother, and depictions of exploitation in the village, rather than Kwanp'il and his mission, carry the narrative through to its climax. He is absent during the revolutionary liberation and returns only months later in the final scene. On the one hand, his character and his partisan actions have to make way for the introduction of an even more ideal partisan subject, Kim Il Sung. On the other hand, the film changes genres at the climax, turning to documentary footage of the North Korean revolution rather than the actions of an individual hero. Upon the return of Kim Il Sung to Korea, real documentary footage shows huge masses of people, gathered to listen to the young leader's speech (he appears in one shot).

In addition to *The Third Blow*, such sequences no doubt inspired Sŏ Kwang-je to consider the possibilities for combining dramatic and documentary representations of the ongoing North Korean revolution. He imagined that future North Korean films would continue to find new ways to combine dramatic and documentary genres in order to represent cinematically a democratic political community coming into history. Rather than individual protagonists, such a cinema would, again, present events themselves as protagonists. Sŏ's essay seems completely unconcerned with the role of the cult of personality of leadership in both *The Third Blow* and *My Home Village*. In "The Myth of Stalin in Soviet Cinema," André Bazin discusses how *The Third Blow* uses the power of the cinematic re-creation of history in order to establish Stalin, irrefutably, as a world-historical figure. Stalin is depicted as the subject of history who alone determines the correct military strategy for the taking of Crimea.[31] The climax of *My Home Village* could be said to accomplish the same for Kim Il Sung, resorting to the insertion of documentary footage of his return to Korea to eliminate the semblance of fiction. Although Sŏ does refer to the leader once in the essay, his argument about the replacement of individual protagonists with the events as protagonists seems to willfully ignore how these films not only show historical events as mass experiences but also recenter their optics away from individual psychological protagonists to heroic leaders who are ultimately the subjects who bring about military victories or national liberation. In the sequence from *My Home Village*, it is notable that in the middle of the documentary footage are spliced a number of manufactured images of what Stephanie Hemelryk Donald calls the "socialist

realist gaze."[32] Fictional characters filmed after the historical event of the revolution are filmed in close-up, looking not only toward the collective future of the democratic republic but also toward the body of the sovereign who has returned to Korea after his heroic revolutionary victories against Japanese imperialism (none of which, by the way, are substantiated by the historical record). Although Sŏ imagines a kind of seamless combination of fictional dramatic film and documentary, this combination of the two genres ended up producing an uneven cinematic experience.

The problem of how to combine dramatic and documentary film was a significant question in the late Japanese empire. In this regard, Sŏ did not continue to make films in the Japanese empire after the formation of the Korean Film Production Corporation in 1939 and did not experiment with the kind of combination of newsreel-style depictions of total history and family drama narratives that were the hallmark of late colonial Korean film. As Imamura wrote in 1938, "If newsreels develop, they will no longer be scattered shorts screened as the edge of a dramatic film. They will become valuable records of political and economy society. They will depict poetry and theater that are based on the social realities that run parallel to dramatic films."[33] Although *Military Train* is ostensibly a propaganda film celebrating the modernity of the Japanese military and train system and promoting the need for vigilance in the face of spies from the Korean national liberation movement, it also contains a great deal of ambiguity in its consideration of the proper way for colonial Koreans to act and to think within the imperial system. Considering these ambiguities, perhaps Sŏ imagined a different way of combining dramatic film and documentary film during the colonial period, one that would not be tied to the typical narrative of imperial subjectification of Koreans required for films such as *Volunteer* or *Korea Strait*. Although this possibility about his colonial-period career is speculative, Sŏ seems to ignore purposefully the cult of personality, emphasizing that the unfolding of historical events takes precedence over psychological individuality. One can speculate that Sŏ's silence during the era of imperial subjectification in Japan and his silence on the problem of the centering of socialist realism around the figure of the sovereign suggest he resisted the militarist and dictatorial political formations and cinematic cultures of modern Korea and sought alternative possibilities for a popular, revolutionary cinema.

The multiple tensions between these film theories' ideas of the revolutionary subject—tensions repeated in the later juche debates of the 1960s—register in the mood of *My Home Village*, which both expresses the popular, ecstatic enthusiasm for revolutionary change and attempts to contain that affect within the visuality and narrative of party, nation, state, and leader. Reading the mood of the film and its formal construction through montage reveals the political promise and the political limits of the total work of art's goal of the aesthetic absorption of the mass audience.

MY HOME VILLAGE

The first half of *My Home Village* is concerned with the nation as a lost object; however, the melancholic mood and pathos, rendered spatially and musically, provide a backdrop for the representation of class differences and the exploitation of the impoverished peasantry by the Korean large landowners and the Japanese colonizer. As in many later North Korean films, the focus at first is on a single family and village living as tenant farmers under an exploitative system of rent and taxation and the violence of the Japanese military and the landowners. The climax changes the focus from the individual protagonist Kwanp'il and his family to documentary footage of the North Korean revolution combined with montage sequences depicting a mass revolution. These exultant sequences rely on discontinuity editing and the socialist realist gaze, creating the sense of being immersed through cinema in a world-historical transformation rather than the actions of a single heroic individual.[34] The film also has a very different spatial sensibility from the films of imperial Japan and South Chosŏn, using domestic interiors not in order to establish gender difference and a male nationalist interiority but to contrast the sublime and collective landscape of Korea, often filmed through point-of-view shots, with the luxurious domestic spaces of the collaborationist Korean landowners. The North Korean revolution redeems the collective national landscape from the enclosures of the landowners' and colonizers' properties, creating an open space for mass politics. This space is captured through a combination of stock documentary footage and montage. Although the relationship between the melodramatic mode and world-historical transformation is somewhat comparable to Japanese fascist cinema in colonial Korea, there is a notable contrast in mood. Japanese imperial cinema also combined the historical referentiality of newsreels and culture films with fictional melodramatic storylines, but the moods of those films tend toward a melancholic, self-sacrificial embrace of individual injury and death for the sake of the state. The images at the climax of *My Home Village* express a different sort of sublime mood: the collective revolutionary joy of peasants overturning decades, or rather centuries, of economic and political exploitation.

Although the problems of Stalin-era socialist realism and the cult of personality appear at the end of *My Home Village*, much of the film lives up to Sŏ's idea of events themselves being protagonists and to the goal of creating a revolutionary national cinema. The film forcefully aestheticizes mass politics, giving the sensation of being immersed in the movement for liberation from Japanese colonial rule. It actualizes much of what Sŏ, Ch'u, and Yun meant by the total work of art. It inaugurated a history of North Korean dramatic film dedicated to reproducing the national myth and legitimating what Wada Haruki called North Korea's partisan state, centering families and village communities to depict oppression

at the hands of pro-Japanese large landowners, peasant partisan struggle leading to the end of colonial rule, and the unification of the Korean nation through the rhetorical, political, and visual hegemony of the Korean Workers' Party and its idolized leader.[35] Because filmmaking that showed class revolution and drew from Soviet cinema could not appear within the colonial Korean film industry, it made a more revolutionary break from the past in contrast to the films of South Chosŏn. However, the film also adumbrates the repressive dimension of this liberation and its cinematic representation because the overturning of class relations, liberation from the colonial state, and the freeing of national subjectivity are accompanied by a new visual regime that ultimately codes the collective mass movement as an expression of the will of its party leader.

The last decade of imperial Japanese film in Korea was marked by the hybridization of the historical referentiality of newsreels, documentaries, and culture films with melodramatic fiction film. Their difference from *My Home Village* lies in how their moods connect to the arc of the political narrative. The colonial-period fascist film *Korea Strait* begins with a melodramatic scenario that includes various familial problems: an illegitimate child, class differences between protagonists Kinshuku and Seiki, and Seiki's failure to live up to the ghost of his dead brother. Likewise, the mood is melancholic and constructed through individuating close-ups emphasizing pain and loss. However, after Seiki volunteers for the Japanese military, the film begins to celebrate the protagonists' self-sacrificial embrace of individual injury and death for the sake of the state and as a means of redeeming their lost innocence. The melodramatic scenario at the beginning of *My Home Village* is presented through a similar attunement through melancholy, but this negative affective background directs our attention to collective suffering caused by colonial class relations. The lost innocence that needs to be redeemed is the dignity and equality of the Korean peasantry. The film uses sentimental familial relations not as a moral standard to which the fallen woman and fallen man must return through self-sacrifice for the state but as a way to create a more focused sympathy for the suffering masses. Its romantic visual rhetoric of pictorial landscape combined with melodramatic realist depictions of suffering bodies links sympathy for the oppressed characters with the struggle of partisans and their party. The climax provokes a sublime mood of victory and redemption; however, rather than the sublime pointing toward the solidification of the holy trinity of fascism—the individual, the family, and the totality of the nation-state—for the colonized minority, the montage sequences and point-of-view shots of the Korean landscape present a romantic image of national community realized through anticolonial revolution. When the sister and brother Oktan and Kwanp'il look out over the landscape at the end of the film, they express intense joy at having become part of a new nation-people, in contrast to the injury, illness, and exhaustion of Kinshuku and Seiki at the end of *Korea Strait*, which surrounds the protagonists' heroic acts of becoming Japanese with a mood of ambivalence.

Despite the mythical portrayal of Kim Il Sung's successes as an anticolonial guerrilla revolutionary, which would remain significant throughout the history of North Korean film and literature, *My Home Village* provides historical and social context for revolution and liberation. It represents Japanese imperialism as an issue of national identity and collaboration and resistance but also as a system that perpetuates exploitative class relations. It employs the binaries of melodrama in its depiction of the noble, impoverished peasants and the evil, rapacious large landowners, but this is done to refer to a number of specific economic problems: the exploitative taxation of tenant farmers by landowners, the propping up of these landowners by the Japanese colonial state, the brutality of the Kwantung Army and colonial police, the partisan activities of revolutionary peasants (including the sabotage of factories and railroads), and the forced conscription of Koreans into labor camps or the military. Rather than stripping away as much of the historical context and class politics as possible in order to individualize and psychologize the national identity conflict, it focuses on the macropolitics of history.

The film takes up two important narrative aspects of later Soviet socialist realism: an emphasis on maintaining narrative continuity (for the sake of popularization) and the figuration of the party leader as the primary source of narrative and visual causality (particularly at the climax). However, the narrative's differences from the double causal structure are apparent in that the male protagonist, Kwanp'il, has no love interest. His experiences in prison and his formation into an effective partisan make up the first half of the film, and the second half crosscuts between circumstances in his home village and his partisan actions against the factory and trains of the Japanese empire. He is absent during the liberation and returns only months later in the final scene; at the climax primacy is given to mass revolution rather than to the individual hero. Documentary footage of huge masses of people, gathered to listen to Kim Il Sung's speech, are insinuated where a classical narrative would position the individual protagonist's achievement of his public mission.

The cinematic space and the mood of the mise-en-scène also convey a different political sensibility. Kang Hong-sik was a theater and film actor during the Japanese colonial period. Not surprisingly, considering Kang's background, the first scene of the mother pleading with the landowner appears very theatrical in its mise-en-scène and blocking, with the landowner seated inside with his tax books and the mother looking in through a square window, her lower body invisible, as though she were kept neatly outside the interior of the house through the capture of a picture frame. This scene establishes relations of domestic interior and exterior landscape that continue throughout the entirety of the film. However, the distinction between interior and exterior is not a matter of gender, as the spatial dichotomies of the South Korean film *Hurrah! For Freedom* are, but rather a matter of social class. The landowners' home is the site of wealth, entertainment, and

connivance, and as in all North Korean films set in the 1930s or 1940s, the tenant farmers cannot enter the house until the revolutionary climax. The homes of the farming families are dark and marked by suffering; they are also gradually emptied as Kwanp'il goes to prison and then flees to the mountains. It is then that the Japanese military conscripts the majority of the village into forced labor. Therefore, the mood of alienation and loss directs our attention not to gendered spaces and the threat that feminine desire poses to the colonized national community, but rather to the enclosure of national space by collaborationist landlords and accumulation of wealth and luxury at the expense of the farmers. The very division of domestic interior and sublime exterior spaces is an ideological one that facilitates class exploitation. During Kwanp'il's process of becoming a partisan, most of the significant domestic scenes, including a remarkable flashback to his childhood when he recounts his thwarted desire to attend school, occur outside around a campfire at night, surrounded by both male and female cadres. Therefore, the film centers on a family, but a family whose domestic space is broken and who is dispersed into the natural and industrial landscapes, returning home eventually only by means of the revolution. All the interior spaces of the film—the landowner's home, the inside of the train, the inside of the factory or prison—are coded as spaces of ownership and power, whereas the rural partisan is able to gain a romantic connection to both community and to land through his displacement, finding in the nationalized natural landscape inspiration for the struggle. Rather than the mood of national loss getting filtered through the prism of masculinist national identity and the gendered fetishism of interior and exterior, this melancholy can be resolved only by expelling the colonial agents of enclosure and spatial division, through the ecstatic mood of revolution presented by way of montage.

Leading up to the revolutionary climax, the fictional narrative of the first half, with its focus on the microcosm of the single family and village, eventually gives way to a more documentary approach to the revolution and the beginning of North Korean national history. However, the techniques of documentary—including documentary footage and titles explaining historical events—function to expand the established melodramatic conflict to the macropolitical dimension of the nation-state, both as a form of historical exposition and as a way to distill the terms of the Manichaean struggle of the melodrama narrative. Regarding the film's claim to document real history, its realism is as questionable as that of late Stalinist films imported to North Korea during the Soviet occupation. Superimposed titles and intertitles give the film an air of pedagogical and documentary authority, but one prominent intertitle that appears at the film's climax evidences how mythic North Korean cinematic realism was from the outset. A title shows the date August 15, 1945, some bombs drop on the village from an anonymous source, and the explosion disrupts the party of the evil large landowners. The intertitle that follows states, "The unrivaled patriot General Kim Il Sung, at the end of a fifteen-year armed struggle against the Japanese, overthrew Japanese imperialism and liberated

FIGURE 2. What appears to be stock footage of the North Korean Revolution is edited with performed scenes of Kwanp'il and other characters cheering for Kim Il Sung upon his return to Korea from the Soviet Union.

the Motherland." The bombing that ends World War II and liberates Korea is not attributed directly to any agent. The Soviet Union never officially declared war on Japan, although the threat of that declaration contributed to Japan's decision to surrender. The seemingly aerial bombardment perhaps visually alludes to the United States' atomic bombings of Japan, but the liberation itself is attributed to Kim Il Sung, who as a partisan in Manchuria in the 1930s and 1940s had no access to aerial weapons or artillery. Later, when the film shows, through a mix of live action and documentary footage (figure 2), Kim Il Sung's return to Korea from the Soviet Union on October 14, 1945, it is not explained how he was able to use guerrilla tactics to topple the Japanese empire while in exile in the Soviet Union. Therefore, from the beginning, the North Korean film industry inherited many of the conventions of late Stalin-era Soviet films (1945–1953), which tended to depict every historical event, including the end of World War II, as an effect of Stalin's will and military acumen.[36]

The insertion of documentary footage into a romantic revolutionary melodrama dramatically changes the purpose of the footage from fact-based exposition to a means of punctuating the mood of the melodrama narrative and giving an ideological direction to its pathos. Some of the titles do point to significant historical facts that were in danger of getting lost as East Asia transitioned to the Cold War order, such as Japan's subjection of Koreans (including comfort women) to forced labor. In this case, the title adds to the fictional portrayal of villagers being rounded up by the Japanese military and Oktan's capture by a local soldier, providing a broader factual context for the events experienced by the family and the village. However, the purpose of the title is not mere propaganda, because it informs the audience about the shared historical circumstances of lower-class Koreans under Japanese colonial rule rather than trying to impel particular thoughts or actions from them. The tragic and dramatic soundtrack in combination with the title connects the fate of the conscripts to the injustices of Japanese colonial rule

and Koreans' struggle against these injustices. However, in the case of the vague or inaccurate intertitles discussed above, the use of documentary information to punctuate the resentment and desire for redemption within a mood of loss gives way to the hyperreality of myth. The fact that Kim Il Sung liberates Korea through his guerrilla movement in one scene and then returns from the Soviet Union in the next scene is a narrative inconsistency that the film seems to try to cover up with an intensive series of images of revolution and the leader's return presented through discontinuous montage editing. The technique creates a hyperreal version of the revolution that gains its historical and political legitimacy as narrative through the affective power of the series of images and the ideas and political personality at their center.

It is telling that the film turns to montage precisely at the moments when it emphasizes the shared national identity of Koreans or when it captures the sublime mood of revolution—since Eisenstein and Vertov, montage has lent itself well to the expression of abstract ideas and the moods of social transformation. Although the first half of the film is concerned primarily with class relations, the revolution of the second half is guided as much by the idea of national sovereignty and the personality of the leader as it is by the overturning of class relations. Montage performs a central role in the translation of class oppression at the level of the family and the village—the primary content of the melodramatic narrative and its mood of pathos and negative affects—into the positive struggle of a national community guided by a political party.

There are two main styles of montage to consider: landscapes and mass politics. To use a term from Carl Schmitt's reading of partisanship, the *telluric* quality of the partisan struggle is emphasized through the film's montages of images of the Korean landscape, particularly in the very symmetrical first and final scenes.[37] As Kim Sŏn-a points out, the film begins and ends with two fairly long montages of pictorial landscape images—shots panning across the river that runs through the village or the deep space of the agricultural valley, shots capturing the still beauty of nearby lakes and mountains and trees blowing in the wind, and also some pastoral glimpses of farmers and farming equipment.[38] In camera movements that are allegorical and epitomize the melodramatic narrative of loss and redemption, shots in the opening landscape montage pan to the right and those at the end of the film pan to the left. The first sequence transitions to the scene of the mother pleading with the landowner, signaling the loss of the land through its commodification, and the last personifies the gazes of Kwanp'il and Oktan as they scan the Korean landscape, toward the future of Korean sovereignty and the people's republic. As a film that both turns to the recent past and points to the future of the DPRK nation-state, these montages are utopian in a dual sense. The first montage imagines a collective origin that has been broken by colonialism and class differences. The montage at the end of the film contains similar shots panning in the opposite direction, suggesting that this origin has been returned

FIGURE 3. Sister and brother, Oktan and Kwanp'il, are reunited and the camera begins to pan left across the liberated landscape of the Korean nation.

to its proper state through the revolution and the home village has reintegrated into its natural landscape. Through these pictorial landscape montages, the North Korean aesthetics of liberation create a sense of national interiority distinct from the gendering of private and public space in many Hollywood and South Korean melodramas. They are not merely sublime shots of nature. The melodramatic narrative and mood of lost origins delimits a nation-people and a national subject, an oppressed and then liberated political community defined by their historical experience of colonialism and their shared aesthetic experience of emerging from and returning to the same landscape. The final montage begins with a shot of brother and sister embracing after Kwanp'il's heroic return but then pans to the left (figure 3), following the line of his gaze, attributing to the images a perspective that is lost at the beginning of the film, is mourned throughout, and then finally regained through national liberation.

An earlier scene of train passengers arriving home from the distant locales of their forced labor presents the same idea through more social realist and less romantic and metaphysical images of reunion; it belongs to the second type of montage in the film. This type represents mass politics, using dramatic close-ups of faces and long shots of masses of people that certainly echo Eisenstein and early Soviet film. A montage that occurs at the moment of liberation conveys this latter

sense of human community through a series of close-ups of the faces of humble villagers smiling and shouting "Manse!" Although the montage begins with images of characters, including the mother, the subsequent series of faces borrows from Soviet practices of typage; they do not appear to be hired actors, but rather regular citizens. This montage begins a sequence of images of massive crowds and is followed by the villagers tying up and punishing the landowners and collaborators, creating analogies between the liberation of the home village and the liberation of the nation. Because the series of close-ups occurs as the villagers are beginning to use their popular power to overturn the class structure and because it includes non-actors, it is one of the more powerful and referential scenes in the film. It is also the scene that most directly calls upon the viewer to identify with the characters and their actions.

VIRTUAL REVOLUTION

The mood in the last third of *My Home Village* is a virtual space filled with visual and sonic affects, the translation of these affects into ideological emotions, and excesses of revolutionary desire. The close-ups at the end of *My Home Village* are perhaps the most important aspect of the revolutionary mood and one indebted to Soviet montage. In an analysis of the close-up that spans many theories, Mary Ann Doane encapsulates the different use of the close-up that Eisenstein assigned within Soviet cinema. Although she warns against blanket descriptions of Hollywood aesthetics, her reading of Eisenstein is useful for the present comparison:

> As opposed to the American cinema's use of the close-up to suggest proximity, intimacy, knowledge of interiority, Eisenstein argues for a disproportion that transforms the image into a sign, an epistemological tool, undermining identification and hence empowering the spectator as analyst of, rather than vessel for, meaning.[39]

In comparing this series of close-ups in *My Home Village* with those in a South Korean independence film such as *Hurrah! For Freedom* (discussed in chapter 4), a few telling differences can be identified. In *Hurrah! For Freedom*, Ch'oe In-gyu's close-ups are comparable to D. W. Griffith's (in Deleuze's contrast between Griffith and Eisenstein), because he gives preeminence to the "reflexive face" rather than to the "intensive face" that was Eisenstein's preference for the transformation of image into sign.[40]

The most effective close-ups in *My Home Village* show that Kang Hong-sik's Soviet-influenced film tends toward the virtuality of intensive faces that draw together the singularities of the narrative and themes in a manner similar to Eisenstein's:

> Eisenstein's innovation was not to have invented the intensive face, nor even to have constituted the intensive series with several faces, several close-ups; it was to have produced compact and continuous intensive series, which go beyond all binary structures and exceed the duality of the collective and the individual.[41]

FIGURE 4. In *My Home Village* (1949), the mother of the family yells "Manse!" upon the liberation of Korea from Japanese colonial rule.

At its climax, *My Home Village* becomes a long, complex, and continuous intensive series. The initial rapturous joy of the villagers is followed by documentary footage of Kim Il Sung's return and the final landscape shots. The close-ups of mostly anonymous people shouting "Manse!" begins this long series (figure 4). If the spectator can identify with this intensive series, it is not through the melodramatic invoking of sympathy with the pained or controlled body but rather in the way the sequence transforms the image into a sign, particularly the sign (or idea) of the nation-state. The egalitarian expression of patriotism is certainly emotional, but this emotion is not presented as psychological interiority, and the close-ups do not make one feel more intimate with the characters. Instead, the intensive series abstracts the external object of the faces' affection (the nation-state) from space and time, transforming it into a virtual possibility.

The different uses of the close-up in *Hurrah! For Freedom* and *My Home Village* speak to the two Cold War political systems that were already beginning to develop in North and South Korea in the immediate aftermath of World War II. On the one hand is a film steeped in the liberal humanism of psychological individuals and their struggles against clear obstacles. On the other hand is a film that gradually deemphasizes the role of the everyday individual in history and imagines the nation-state as an organic whole held together by an idea.

The intensive series at the climax of *My Home Village* elevates the community of faces from an imagistic object to a sign. Each face is connected to the next

not through personal psychology or spatiotemporal continuity in the manner of objects; one can no longer speak of a binary of individual and collective. As the history of North Korean film develops, this empty offscreen space will be filled more and more transparently by the figure of the sovereign leader, but in 1949 such a scene could still empower analysis, or perhaps a popular will to imagine a postcolonial future whose form was yet to be decided. In other words, the mood of revolutionary fervor was not contained by a socialist realist gaze directed toward the body of the sovereign. The virtual openness of the revolutionary mood and the series of gazes correlates with emergent ideas about subjectivity in film theory at the time. Just as the identity of the practical subject (juche) of historical transformation was up for debate, in *My Home Village* there is space for multiple notions of subjectivity. The melodramatic family scenario, the staged montage sequences, and the landscape point-of-view shots live up to Sŏ's notion that events themselves should be the protagonist of the film. Although Kwanp'il is a hero, the implied meaning of the aesthetic is that the national popular masses, and not a single individual, bring about historical transformation. On the other hand, the documentary montage sequences and the intertitles establish Kim Il Sung as the ocular and ideological center of national history. The historical direction of both the total work of art and the North Korean revolution had yet to be determined.

Despite its relative openness to multiple ideas of subjectivity and revolution, the degree to which *My Home Village* prefigures later North Korean cinema and theater is remarkable. The most canonized and well-known melodramatic and operatic films of the late 1960s and early 1970s, such as *Sea of Blood* (1969) and *The Flower Girl* (1971) are certainly indebted to it. The story relies on a primary contrast between a large landowning family and an impoverished tenant farming family. It depicts the landowning family eating large feasts, enjoying the luxury of fine clothes, playing Go, dancing, and plotting with Japanese authorities. This family also relies on the colonial police to suppress peasant rebellions. The film contrasts these landowners to the tenant farming family, which suffers physically and spiritually because of the landlord's taxation, the Japanese state's appropriation of rice, its forced conscription of laborers, and the sexual harassment of Oktan by a soldier. As in the later films, the landowning family also degrades and insults the farming family, in this case when the young son spits at her feet when she comes to discuss the food shortages and, later on, when she is beaten. The spitting incident sets off the main events of the plot, because Kwanp'il retaliates and is imprisoned and then escapes to the mountains with a partisan leader to join the guerrilla revolutionaries. All these narrative elements appear in later films, in only slightly modified form (e.g., in *The Flower Girl*, the landowner's wife blinds the youngest daughter, and the mother dies of overwork).

My Home Village and the surrounding film theories prefigured juche thought's concerns with subjectivity, which entailed various ideas of the subject that policy and cinema both tried to unify visually and narratively. For example, the end of

the film declares the end of trauma and a radical history fissure beyond memory, because in scanning the Korean landscape in the aftermath of revolution, Kwanp'il and Oktan have moved beyond the Japanese colonial period and their experiences of imprisonment, forced labor, and state-sanctioned sexual violence. Although this dialectical overturning is inspiring as a story of liberation, the real-life tumultuous careers of Kang Hong-sik and Mun Ye-bong, Yun Tu-hŏn, and so on suggest that this pure political position of redeemed innocence is entirely cinematic and virtual.

There is no realistic version of the North Korean revolution in which postcolonial cultural and cinematic subjectivity would not remain split in some way by the politics and experiences of the colonial past. There are traces of the violence of that translation of real everyday experience into the sovereignty of party leadership in the way that the film is compelled to present documentary elements that construct an unbelievable version of events, occluding basic factual information. The reunion of the family and the redemption of their innocence within a Korean landscape of reconstituted natural origins also symbolically conflate the social registers of family, village, nation, and state, giving them the image of an organic whole somehow no longer haunted by the contamination of colonial class and gender relations. This elevation of myth and occlusion of everyday experiences and structures of history are common aspects of melodramatic cinema, which Evgeny Dobrenko argues serves to mask the violence of the state in socialist realism.[42] However, the mood of suffering and pathos at the beginning of the film contrasts so strongly with the revolutionary exuberance at the end that the melodramatic extremes also threaten to overflow the film's claims to a semblance of reality. The narrative fallacies and melodramatic moods in *My Home Village* would remain perceivable in later films in the contrasts between individual traumas and the master narratives of the revolution.

As Suzy Kim's analysis of everyday life during the North Korean revolution shows, the gendering of the national subject reinscribed conservative ideas about motherhood and domesticity into the rhetoric of revolution, equality, and freedom.[43] *My Home Village* avoids the misogyny of some scenes in *Hurrah! For Freedom* and represents women partisan fighters in addition to innocent mothers and sisters. However, beginning with this first film, melodramatic cinema in North Korea often used gender difference in an allegorical manner, as a way to accentuate the need for good motherhood in the revolution, to present symbols of lost innocence in wounded sisters, and to proliferate ideal victims who need to be defended and redeemed by male protagonists.[44] The character of Oktan would become paradigmatic and conventional, particularly in films dealing with the colonial period. On the other hand, women heroes did gradually gain more agency, and between *The Flower Girl* (1972) and *Traces of Life* (1989), the need for a masculine lead gradually diminished. What these kinds of transformations in conventions over time show is that despite the monolithic aesthetic sought in

North Korean film theory, a monolithic film, a total work of art with a singular aesthetic effect on subjectivity, is an impossibility. That is why differences in mood and affects across genders, classes, and relative position within the party and the state remained present in films throughout the history of Cold War North Korean film. In *My Home Village*, we can already sense this impossibility, because as a total work of art meant to give life to the organic whole of the nation-people, its theorization, its production, its form, its narrative, and its moods all remain open to multiple and conflicted meanings and subjective relations to history.

Melodramatic Moods from Socialist Realism to Juche Realism

As the social transformations celebrated in *My Home Village* were coming into effect, the Korean War (1950–53) devastated the two Koreas. The North Korean state considered the Fatherland Liberation War a continuation of the armed resistance against Japanese colonial rule, this time directed toward the perpetuation of colonial class relations by the United States and its "puppet state," the Republic of Korea. After three years of war that engulfed the entirety of the peninsula and its population in horrific violence, an armistice agreement established the DMZ as the new border between the two Koreas (only slightly different, territorially speaking, from the thirty-eighth parallel that divided the Soviet and US spheres of occupation). In the aftermath of the destruction of nearly all urban areas in North Korea by US aerial bombardment in the last two years of the war, reconstruction became the central concern of the state.[1] Cinema played a central role in postwar reconstruction in 1950s North Korea and during the Chollima economic development plan of the 1960s.[2] It provided the stories, images, affects, and ideas that could help to mobilize workers for these tremendous nation-building efforts.

Film genres and film theory distinguished clearly between documentary films (*kirok yŏnghwa*) and art films (*yesul yŏnghwa*, the North Korean term for fictional feature film). At the same time, art films utilized the melodramatic mode to make their claims to represent the realities of revolution and the construction of a utopian socialist society, and montage sequences including documentary footage still occasionally made their way into art films (see the discussion of *A Dangerous Moment* in the section "Socialist Reconstruction and National Identity"). The result of using popular melodramatic cinema as an agent of historical change was a state socialist cinema in which idealized images of socialism were the primary consumer product and object of spectacle. This chapter focuses on the state socialist commodity culture of North Korean art films and how the melodramatic mode

shaped their narratives, moods, and historical referentiality from the era of social-ist realism in the 1950s until the emergence of juche realism in the late 1960s.

CHOSŎN FILM AND MELODRAMA

Film criticism and film theory influenced the formation of the North Korean film industry in the 1950s and early 1960s, because they introduced movements in world cinema, articulated theoretical positions on representation and technol-ogy, and conveyed responses from both critics and audiences. The most important venue for film criticism during this period was the journal *Chosŏn Film* (*Chosŏn yŏnghwa*). Because of the sensational allure of a future dictator publishing a theoretical work on cinema and the fact that the work has been translated into English, Kim Jong Il's *On the Art of the Cinema* (1973) has stood in symbolically for the entirety of North Korean film theory and criticism in most of the limited publications on North Korean film.[3] This text was published after the release of a series of films that would become classics of North Korean cinema and the most well-known films outside the country: *Five Guerrilla Brothers* (1968), *Sea of Blood* (1969), and *The Flower Girl* (1972). However, Kim's text and the establishment of juche realism (*chuch'e sasiljuŭi*) as the dominant system of cinematic representa-tion in the late 1960s were preceded by two decades of critical essays written within the rubric of Marxist-Leninist socialist realism. As Chŏng Yŏng-gwŏn has shown through a reading of two years of *Chosŏn Film* (1965–1966), and specifically Kim Chong-ho's column "Introduction to the History of World Cinema" (1965–66), the elite film culture that preceded the ascendence of juche realism in 1967 was more cosmopolitan.[4] In the late 1950s and early 1960s, in addition to the translation of ideas of Stalinist and post-Stalinist socialist realism in the Soviet Union (including Latvia), articles on world cinema addressed topics such as developments in social-ist cinema in China, East Germany, and Romania, as well as numerous articles on important film artists of colonial Korea, especially Na Un-gyu.[5] Kim Chong-ho's column introduced the French New Wave, as well as the histories of Italian, Ger-man, British, Russian, and early Soviet film.[6] The journal also included reports on foreign screenings of North Korean films, including in Hong Kong.[7] Finally, the many articles criticizing reactionary movements in world cinema, especially Kyŏng Ryong-il's column "Against Bourgeois, Reactionary Literary Movements," were an important part of the journal's cosmopolitanism, because they required erudite translations, presentations, and interpretations of highly influential move-ments in world culture (even if the purpose was to denounce them). Such articles addressed Hollywood cinema, of course, but also the philosophical views of exis-tentialism, modernism, pragmatism, and Freudianism and their negative influ-ences on cinema and literature.[8] The introduction of juche thought in 1967 and the subsequent formation of juche realism in cinema eventually led to a more isolated and nationalistic film industry, but the film cosmopolitanism of *Chosŏn Film* was a

crucible for later ideas on juche realism. Juche realism was cosmopolitan, and not solely by way of socialist internationalism.

Reading issues of *Chosŏn Film* from the two decades prior to *On the Art of the Cinema* reveals that most of Kim Jong Il's ideas on film were derived from the discourses of various other critics. Even his famous seed theory (*chongja riron*)—which states that the totality of a film should be created organically out of its primary ideological concern—has its obvious precursors. For example, in "The Seed of Action: Its Internal Basis" (1964), Pak Yŏng-hwan states, "The actress Sŏng Hye-rim, who played the role of a young woman in *Paek Il-hong* [dir. Ŏm Kil-sŏn, 1963], . . . captures correctly the seeds [*ssiattŭl*] of action that are formed within the living foundation and specific situation of the character."[9] Pak uses a different word for "seed" than Kim Jong Il does, but the concept is nearly identical. By situating the seed of action at once in the psychological interiority of the character and in the surrounding living environment, Pak prefigured the organicist and vitalist ideas in Kim's work, where the totality of the film must emerge out of an ideological seed that is drawn from actual life but also guides internally the moral and political actions of the positive protagonist. Pak also emphasizes that it is this internal capacity for moral action that defines the human being, a common assertion within later juche thought.

The turn in 1967 from world cinema and international socialist realism toward juche thought and juche realism was marked by both continuity and change. Kim Sŏn-a shows that in the late 1960s both the political system and the film industry were in transition: "*On the Art of the Cinema* belongs neither to socialist realism nor to juche realism and instead refers only to an era of socialist realism and juche; we can read this as Kim Jong Il's intention to enact the translation and transformation of socialist realism to fit the era of juche, rather than a complete rupture between the two."[10] This transitional quality of film theory and the different possibilities for the direction of juche realism were reflected in the political and philosophical discussion of juche (or subjectivity) itself. As discussed in chapter 1, Hwang Chang-yŏp described internal party debates in the 1960s about juche concerning the true practical subject (juche) and sovereign of history: the popular masses (*taejung*), the party (*tang*), the leader (*suryŏng*), or the human in general (*in'gan*).[11] Although leader-centered sovereignty became the hegemonic idea after 1967, the party, the popular masses, and the human remained essential to the main tenets of juche thought and policy, and the debates related by Hwang show that the status of the subject in North Korea was especially unstable in the previous decade. The shifting identity of the ultimate subject of historical change and action is particularly apparent in 1950s and 1960s film theory and criticism. Despite the retrospective locating of the origins of juche thought in Kim Il Sung's 1955 speech "On Eliminating Dogmatism and Formalism and Establishing Juche in Ideological Work," his presence by no means dominates the pages of *Chosŏn Film* during these two decades, and the journal was certainly not an organ for the

cult of personality.[12] Prior to 1967, articles in *Chosŏn Film* are rarely concerned with juche and address problems of socialist realist representation, such as how to represent life (*saenghwal*) and actuality (*hyŏnsil*) in a truthful way, particularly through the authentic artistic depiction of the actions of positive protagonists and their political ideology. A rare 1961 article on establishing juche in filmmaking by Kwŏn Tu-ŏn bears this out. While it contains ample quotations from Kim Il Sung, for Kwŏn "applying the principles of Marxism-Leninism creatively" is primarily a matter of bringing to life Korea's revolutionary traditions while articulating a new communist future. His reading of *My Home Village* emphasizes these themes rather than Kim Il Sung.[13]

The concept of melodrama can illuminate some of the historical particularities of North Korean cinematic realism during the era of socialist realism and the transition to juche realism. If the melodramatic mode is a matter of wresting the true from the real, it must create contrasts and conflicts between surface conditions and the effort of a truer life, morality, and politics to gain expression. In "Living Actuality and Artistic Authenticity," a critical interpretation of *Sound the Whistle* (1959), Kim Mun-hwa defines how affirmative pathos can draw these contrasts while ensuring that the conflict resolves in a manner consistent with positive heroism, socialist patriotism, and communist thought:

> Through the definitive conflicts in this work, the screenwriter did attempt to show the new human—the positive and typical human of our era growing and developing into a communist human. He chose these conflicts and told the *syuzhet* [*syujet'ŭ*] in order to complete this task.
>
> However, the screenwriter's task was not successful, because he was lacking the real and burning affirmative pathos and noble party spirit to advocate passionately for the affirmative, the progressive, and the new within actuality and to eliminate the negative, the conservative, and the old—to generalize artistically the victory of the new over the old. Concerning the construction of communist literature today, the problem of creating the party human and communist types presents itself to party writers as the primary problem.[14]

Sound the Whistle depicts young people working on railroad construction between P'yŏngsan and Chihari to encourage effort and achievement during the Chollima economic plan. Kim argues that the film has no heroism that would be typical in actuality, but "actuality" (*hyŏnsil*) here refers to the embodied ideas of the referential illusion of melodrama and not to verisimilitude. At the climax of the film, there is a cave-in caused by the protagonist Yŏngp'al's mistakes and some people are injured. As he is struggling and suffering because of the incident, a commander gives advice during crew meetings and the incident turns into a lesson and warning to the workers. According to Kim Mun-hwa, this is an extremely conservative ending and lacks affirmative pathos, because it depends on the authority of the commander and does not depict the collective struggle and cooperation of actual people in the face of a crisis. Also, the film doesn't provide other details and

episodes to sharpen the conflict, which ends up appearing as just another incident in a series of difficulties experienced by the young workers.[15]

Another example of an early version of seed theory, Kim Mun-hwa's essay proposes that a film scenario should be integrated and unified as one organic body (*yugich'e*) around its primary conflict and task. *Sound the Whistle* failed to translate struggle and suffering into the singular affirmative pathos and revolutionary consciousness required in the Chollima era and therefore could not inspire socialist patriotism, communist thought, and the formation of a new human against old and conservative thinking. The idea of affirmative pathos assumes the unilateral translation between affect and emotion that I questioned in the introduction. Following Brian Massumi, I have argued that affect and emotion are better imagined as two poles of a feedback loop. Affirmative pathos in North Korean film theory requires that mistakes, struggle, suffering, pain, tragedy, humiliation, and other signs of social negativity both inspire and are overcome through the actions of the hero and the community, who elevate these affects and experiences into a collective sympathetic emotion. Nonetheless, despite idealist theories of narrative such as Kim Mun-hwa's, filmmakers continued to produce works like *Sound the Whistle* that retain regressive aspects or linger too long in the unredeemed suffering of characters trying to adjust to the demands of the state and the economy. Affirmative pathos remains pathos, and the melodramatic mode's provocation of pity and sadness creates excesses of negativity that cannot be fully recoded by the overarching ideological task.

Of the essays on the practice of film production in the period of *Chosŏn Film*, the greatest number are dedicated to scriptwriting, followed by cinematography and editing, performance, music, and technological development. But film critics' Romantic concern with the organicity of the work of art was not limited to its narrative.[16] Equally important was the mood and atmosphere of the film, composed through a combination of all these facets of filmmaking. The mood establishes film's affective agenda and attunes viewers to its world. In "Cinematography's Description of Mood," Cho Chong-sik wrote,

> All the thoughts and actions in a film are given form and develop through the contrast in size between shots, within the tempo and rhythm established by the mutual combinations and connections between these shots' different scales and microcosms. Furthermore, if we want to employ the energetic form and rhythmic image of a shot, then we need the varied and skillful techniques belonging to cinematography. The use of photographic machines of various kinds can dilate or elevate an event and can describe distinctly the living mood [*punwigi*] of the shot.[17]

In Cho's discussion, *punwigi* refers to something between a mood and an atmosphere—it is both psychological and a backdrop to the narrative and action. It is different from the setting (*paegyŏng*), which connotes the objective place of the story, because it is a living (*saenghwaljŏk*) aspect of the film. It is living because it is not merely observed by spectators but involves them through their shared vitality

and affects. According to Cho, the proper description of a living mood (e.g., one that will engage spectators vitally and affectively) is not static; it is established through the tempo and rhythm of movement and the contrasts and combinations of different shot scales.

Cho Chong-sik's notion of the rhythmic description of a living mood is as much a matter of editing as cinematography—how shots are put together and sequenced in addition to how they are shot. Essays on editing and montage in *Chosŏn Film*, including translations of Chinese critics, focus on the technical dimensions of editing for narrative.[18] As Jessica Ka Yee Chan has explained in relation to Chinese film theory of the 1950s, by that time montage was treated as synonymous with editing and not limited to the methods of early Soviet montage that had influenced some segments of *My Home Village*.[19] Prefiguring Mao Zedong's call for popularization at the Yan'an forum on literature in 1942, Soviet intellectuals of the Stalin period judged the value of past and present artworks according to their level of progressive popular spirit (*narodnost*).[20] They also sought to incarnate, through both historical and fictional biography, the positive heroes of socialism, to render intelligible to the people personalities that were transcendent in their humanity and their ideology. Hence, socialist realism included criticism of too much formalist experimentation and insisted that editing for continuity and narrative would contribute to the necessary popularization of cinema. Popularization (*taejunghwa*) in socialist realist film in North Korean and elsewhere involved borrowing from the editing style of the classical Hollywood system, with its adherence to principles of spatiotemporal continuity, the primacy of narrative, and individual typology. As indicated by articles in *Chosŏn Film* dedicated to the principles of continuity editing, such as Kim Rak-sŏp's explanation of eyeline matches, the 180-degree rule, and shot/reverse-shot in "The Directionality of Shots," these principles became foundational for the editing style of art films in North Korea as well, and the experimentation with montage and combining of melodrama and documentary in films such as *My Home Village* disappeared.[21] In North Korean film, form is largely subordinated to the "*syuzhet*'s [plot's] presentation of the *fabula* [story]."[22]

Continuity editing also concerned mood, affect, and emotion, because its contributions to popularization were meant to facilitate a consistency of emotion between the film and spectators. Hence, in a criticism of the formalism of the film *On a New Hill* (1958), Kang Nŭng-su writes, "The director filled the film with dandyist choices in editing methods, the arrangement of scenes, and film language that do not match the emotions of the people."[23] Despite such criticism of formalism in editing, the alternative was not a naturalist depiction of everyday life but Revolutionary Romanticism, an ethos first articulated by Maxim Gorky in the 1930s.[24] In China, socialist realism became "revolutionary Romanticism plus revolutionary realism" during the Sino-Soviet split, and in North Korean cinema critics argued for the incorporation of Revolutionary Romanticism into realism.[25] For Kim Rak-sŏp, adding Romanticism to realism (*sasiljuŭi*) was a matter of imagining a future for the life of humanity and the nation-people:

The human life at the center of all social relations belongs to a historical process in which the past, present, and future worlds are unified. Within this historical process, Romantic artists constantly put effort toward emphasizing harbingers of future things in present actuality and devoting themselves to what has not yet appeared but what they anticipate will appear, aiming to generalize these tendencies through artistic forms that correspond to them. Thus, Romanticness that arises inevitably from reflecting on the future to come is the core of Romanticist artworks.

However, Romanticness in artworks does not belong solely to Romanticism and exists also in realist works that are authentically reviving the strong aims of the people concerning their living emotions and their future.[26]

Although popularization dictated that the editing of North Korean art films be spatiotemporally continuous, subordinated to narrative, and in line with the mass emotions of the people, critics argued against a realism that merely reproduces what exists. Revolutionary Romanticism demanded recognizing social tendencies in the objective historical process and emphasizing them as signs of future yet to come. As Kim Il Sung's slogan put it, "Like the lead article in the party paper, cinema moves ahead of reality."[27] This view toward the future pertains to positive protagonists who have a clear ideological direction expressed through sympathies shared with the audience (or an affirmative pathos). It also pertains to the nationalist, future-oriented nostalgia of landscape imagery, as critics highlighted the effectiveness of sublime shots of the natural environment for conveying Revolutionary Romanticism, including distant horizons over the mountains or crashing waves of the "seas of the Fatherland," which "teem with life."[28]

The idea that cinema should move ahead of reality changed the status of referentiality and the referential illusion in North Korean realist cinema. According to Roland Barthes, nineteenth-century literary realism circumvented the signified and established an illusion of direct accord between signifier and referent.[29] Concepts of cinematic realism that value verisimilitude assume that cinema creates an illusion of such a direct accord. However, the referent of North Korean cinematic realism, as well as socialist realism broadly speaking, is not socialist reality as it is but socialist reality as it should be.[30] The referential illusion does not primarily concern the indexing of physical objects or an exposition of the real social structures. Rather, it seeks the affective materialization of ideas and ideology, an embodied way of representing the positive heroes who will bring about an ideal future that is truer to the essence of life.

The moral occult of the melodramatic mode is another term for the ethos of such an idea-centered notion of the historical real. As Istvan Csicsery-Ronay points out, what Samuel Delaney calls "mundane fiction," including nineteenth-century European realism, has always had to grapple with its "its reliance on inherited ethical-mythic structures underlying the concrete details of quotidian existence."[31] A cinematic realism such as North Korea's can employ the melodramatic mode in order to explore these underlying ethical-mythic structures, without which realism would be reduced to naturalistic depiction and lose any relation to the spiritual,

moral, political, and mythic structures of ideology and history. The vitalism and organicism of North Korean theories of film were in part attempts to close this gap between underlying ethical-mythic structures and the concrete details of quotidian existence. Montage and music could provide a physiological organization to cinematic experience, giving flesh to the film's future-oriented ideology. Through this expression of experience by experience, the emotions of the spectator could be transformed and shaped. The ethical-mythical structures underlying quotidian details could be given an emotional valence. This is the power of the melodramatic mode: to imagine an alternative moral order—the moral occult—through an appeal to and organization of emotions (*kamjŏng*). Throughout the issues of *Chosŏn Film*, articles such as Yun Kyŏng-ju's "The Results Achieved in the Cultivation of the Masses through Film" or Ri Si-yŏng's "The Cultivation of Class and Contrastive Composition" use a term translated from the German Enlightenment, *Bildung* (cultivation, *kyoyang*), to refer to this organization of emotions; critics made aesthetic cultivation and the organization of emotions the foundation of the subjectivity of the working class, the masses, and the nation.[32] The first article states that the distribution of films across North Korea is essential to the cultivation of the people under the banner of the party, leader, and Chollima economic plan, while the second analyzes *Return to the Fatherland* to show that the class identity of the working masses can be cultivated only through authentic (melodramatic) contrasts between class heroes and class enemies, which it maps onto this film's representation of North Korea's conflicts with South Korea and Japan.

Therefore, North Korean films use such melodramatic contrasts to give clear ideological content to the patriotic emotions that are foundational to the cultivation of national and class subjectivity, but as discussed in the introduction, films such as *Return to the Fatherland* also deal with complex and real social and historical issues whose attending affects the discourse of the film cannot translate completely into patriotic sentiment, such as family separation, exile, and US colonial racism. Ri Si-yŏng reads this emotional complexity as a virtue of *Return to the Fatherland*, because it makes the contrasts between friend and enemy truer to reality.

In relation to the delicate balancing act in politicized melodrama between provoking often ineffable or excessive affects while also providing a moral code, critics turned to montage and its structuring of space and time to explain how films could organize emotions while maintaining an authentic connection to the actual lives of the people. Similar to Cho Chong-sik's discussion of the creation of a living mood through cinematography, Chŏn Sang-in wrote about using montage to create a filmic flow organized physiologically, temporally, and rhythmically in a way that corresponds to "our living emotion":

> Looking at filmic flow (tempo and rhythm), we can say that film is an art of process and time. We can say, on that point, that it has a physiological organization similar to music. When a shot is good, but the flow (tempo and rhythm) has been destroyed,

not only is it unable to create any kind of emotion for spectators, but it produces the opposite phenomenon of creating displeasure. In this way, the problem of filmic flow (tempo and rhythm) becomes an urgent issue of montage. Moreover, today films must have the filmic flow (tempo and rhythm) belonging to the kind of montage that corresponds to our actual development and living emotions. If they do, then today's problems of historical particularity and modern aesthetic sensibility will also be resolved.[33]

Rather than disrupting the illusion of experience through formal experimentation, filmic flow should provide a physiological organization that both provokes emotions and organizes the emotions of spectators. At stake was nothing less than all the problems (or even crises) of modern aesthetic sensibility, and the editing techniques of socialist realism were tasked with resolving them. Because *melodrama* means "drama accompanied by music," Chŏn Sang-in's comparison of montage and music is apt, and the countless articles on film music and the inclusion of song scores in the film journal *Chosŏn Film* confirm how significant music and sound were to the creation of film moods and to the cultivation of class and national subjectivity. Music became even more essential to the aesthetic and physiological organization of emotion as revolutionary operas emerged in the late 1960s and enacted a return to the total work of art combining film, music, and theater.

Evgeny Dobrenko provides insights into the status of reality in the immersive spectacle of Soviet socialist realism, many of which pertain to the North Korean context.[34] The assertions in Dobrenko's argument that are pertinent to North Korean cinema are that the Stalinist political and cultural project was fundamentally representational, that the transition to socialism was accomplished, to a large extent, discursively, and that the realization of socialism through the aestheticization of society entailed a de-realization of everyday life.[35] In the era of socialist realism, socialism itself existed only in representation, through its cinematic, literary, and discursive construction. Drawing from Jean Baudrillard, Dobrenko states that through the socialist realist system of representation, socialism became hyperreal—that is, more real than the de-realized everyday life—and, quoting Guy Debord, it became a spectacle, "not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images."[36] The aestheticization of socialism in Stalinist culture glorified production, the ethic of labor, and political loyalty to the party's economic projects. However, these representations did not reflect the reality of productive relations in society, but themselves became society's primary product and commodity. Socialist realism boldly moved the political and economic basis of revolutionary socialism into the aesthetic, transforming socialism into an image and a story consumed by the popular masses. A political economy of the sign similar to the one Dobrenko describes has been an important aspect of the realism of North Korean cinema.[37]

The excesses of affect in the melodramatic mode of North Korean films are also in excess of these films' own professed ideologies and the state socialist commodity

culture for which socialist reality was itself the product. The consumption of idealized images of suffering, revolution, and redemption and the personalization and collectivization of affect into emotion and sympathy also leave behind traces of social negativity, registered in the surrounding mood, that cannot be fully subsumed into the Manichaean world of the film (the people versus the enemy). As in capitalist films, these film moods contain contrapuntal traces of social antagonism, perceptible despite the aestheticization of politics and the de-realization of everyday life through cinematic spectacle. The antagonisms in the background of realist films pertain to the debates about subjectivity and sovereignty outlined in the previous chapter through the work of Hwang Chang-yŏp. They are the affective and cinematic analog to the uncertainty and disunity of the debates on subjectivity concerning the people, the party, the masses, and the leader.

Between the Korean War and the late 1960s, when the North Korean film industry and culture engaged deeply with world cinema on both sides of the Cold War, the technologies and techniques of cinematography, editing, and sound were mastered; genres began to take shape; film stars emerged; stylistic conventions were established; the melodramatic mode became dominant; national narratives and myths solidified; and audiences were trained to read the codes of a melodramatic socialist realist cinema. In tracing the formation of the North Korean realist film aesthetic from the period of socialist realism in the 1950s and 1960s to the height of revolutionary opera and juche realism in the early 1970s, I argue that the construction of North Korea's state socialist film culture involved much more than refining cinema's propaganda messaging. It was an ongoing process of engaging with the everyday lives, affects, and memories of the cinema audience and directing these toward personalized affects (i.e., emotions). Like any consumer culture, however, the affects of melodramatic North Korean cinema were not fully contained within this alienating function of the commodity form. Even with the establishment of juche realism, with its focus on the Japanese colonial period and its clear lines between friend and enemy, the melodramatic mode's provocation of affects remained an unstable foundation for political discourse. The living moods of melodrama retain traces of social negativity that resist direct translation into dominant narratives and sympathies.

SOCIALIST RECONSTRUCTION
AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

North Korean cinema's connections to global cinema in the 1950s included both the predominance of the melodramatic mode and the translation of multiple genres and genre elements and their attendant moods. Two significant genres that employed the melodramatic mode were the family drama and the counterespionage film. Similar to contemporaneous films of South Korea, many North Korean films of the mid-1950s present families as microcosms of the larger society to dramatize

problems of economic development, modernization, and gender in the aftermath of the Korean War.[38] In a family drama, the mood of the film tends to emerge out of a conflict between family members, which contrasts significantly with the conflict between a sympathetic family and the colonial system that we find in the epic narratives of *My Home Village* and later juche realist films on the Japanese colonial period. The melancholic mood and pathos of a family drama tends to originate from the inability to establish the family as a space of love and innocence. In national independence films set during the colonial period, the fallenness of the family and the mournful mood are caused entirely by Japanese colonialism, and national liberation brings about the redemption of the family as a space of innocence. However, in 1950s family dramas concerned with national reconstruction, conflicts internal to the family related to labor, gender roles, and lack of affection between couples are just as significant. Elevation of the characters' sympathy, morals, and political perspective allows them to resolve these issues internal to the family, and the family then becomes an allegorical microcosm for national reconstruction and socialist development. However, as in South Korean family dramas of the era, such narratives about the education and development of subjects' emotions and ideas provoke and leave behind remainders of affective and social negativity that do not fit into the ideal integration of family, nation, and state.

The director Yun Yong-gyu made the most artistic melodrama of late 1940s South Korea, *A Hometown in the Heart*, an adaptation that eschewed many of its literary source text's overt nationalism. After emigrating to North Korea during the Korean War, he made *Boy Partisan* (*Sonyŏn Ppaljjisan*, dir. Yun Yong-gyu, 1951), another film that tempers nationalist themes by again focusing on the relationship between a boy and his mother.[39] He then made an early classic of North Korean socialist realism, *The Newlyweds* (*Sinhon pubu*, dir. Yun Yong-gyu, 1955). Many later juche realist films continued in the tradition of epic national history developed in *My Home Village*, but in *The Newlyweds*, Yun introduced an important aspect of South Korean melodrama to the North: the effective use of small-scale, melodramatic short stories for the purpose of conveying larger themes and ideas. Compared to contemporaneous South Korean melodramas dealing with gender roles between the domestic and public spheres of labor, such as *Madame Freedom* (*Chayu puin*, dir. Han Hyung-mo, 1956), *The Newlyweds* has an overall more progressive view of women entering the workplace, even if its representations of family and feminine desire are more unambiguously heteronormative and celebratory of the nuclear family. In *Madame Freedom*, Madame Cho's work at a boutique exposes her to black-market corruption and her husband punishes her with expulsion from the home when he finds out about her extramarital affair; however, as a matter of counterpoint, many scenes do celebrate, visually and sonically, consumer culture, jazz, extramarital desire, and homoeroticism between women.[40] Within the parameters of socialist morality, *The Newlyweds* does not explore the prospect of extramarital affairs or other topics of capitalist consumer

FIGURE 5. "The capital Pyongyang teems with construction": a photo spread of construction projects appears in the May 1960 *Chosŏn Film*, connecting cinema to national reconstruction.

culture, but it does deal with the problem of women entering the workplace during an era of industrialization and economic development with a greater sense of gender equality created through labor and the family.

Yun Yong-gyu scaled down the melodramatic mode to the everyday. *The Newlyweds* begins with conflicts in the domestic sphere about the gendered division of labor and ends with a macropolitical, socialist realist vision for the resolution of everyday domestic antagonisms.[41] The melodramatic aspects of the film extend beyond the focus on domestic conflict: a symphonic soundtrack and diegetic musical performance, the manifestation and soft-pedaling of moral dilemmas, the use of close-ups to accentuate sorrow and pensiveness, and the fallacious spectacle of an ultimate resolution. The many films dealing with the quotidian dimension of socialist reality and economic development tend not to tell the epic sweep of national history but focus more locally on the worker's role in the construction of socialism (figure 5). Although it has many scenes set in the train system and train-parts factory, *The Newlyweds* emphasizes conflict within domestic space more than most films on the theme of the socialist reality.[42]

At the outset, *The Newlyweds* takes a conventional approach to gendered national imagery. In an early scene, Ŭnsil (Kim Hyŏn-suk), who has left her job at

the train-parts factory in order to become a housewife, smiles as she picks flowers on a hillside, wearing a traditional Korean *hanbok*. Adumbrating the image of ideal femininity that would solidify in the character (and state cultural franchise) of Kkotpun (Hong Yŏng-hŭi) in *The Flower Girl*, landscape, tradition, and femininity fuse in one iconic shot. The bright, harp-centered musical theme creates a mood of natural and humble joy. Ŭnsil's husband, Yŏngch'ŏl (Yu Wŏn-jun), works hard to become the fastest and most productive train engineer. She sees him returning home from work and they embrace and then break into song as they walk home, adding fond sentiments of conjugal love and a gendered image of the uniformed husband and traditionally clothed wife. Of course, there can be no melodrama without a dilemma, and the earlier scenes of Ŭnsil being visited by her old workmates and Yŏngch'ŏl feeling pressured by his comrades to become a labor hero foreshadow the main conflict: Ŭnsil desires to return to the factory to support the postwar effort to rebuild after the horrific US aerial bombings during the last two years of the Korean War; Yŏngch'ŏl wants Ŭnsil to stay at home and raise a family so that he can pursue his goal of becoming a labor hero of the first three-year economic plan (1954–1956).[43] By the end of the walk, Ŭnsil already looks pensive, and her shame over not contributing to factory labor and economic development grows in the course of the film. Later on, looking into a vanity mirror, she rejects her conservative, bourgeois position as housewife by throwing foundation powder at her reflection, and the scene dissolves to a flashback in which she is dressed in her worker's uniform and operating a machine in the factory with assistance of her friend (Mun Ye-bong). This friend is shown during her earlier visit to Ŭnsil's house to have a baby, yet still she maintains her job in the factory.

Although produced in a state socialist country, *The Newlyweds* dramatizes a core issue in colonial and postcolonial forms of capitalism, which is the gendered division of labor between unwaged household work and waged industrial manufacturing.[44] Toward the end of the film, Ŭnsil puts her worker's uniform back on and begins working in the factory secretly, while also remaining in *hanbok* in the home and dutifully performing her domestic work. Yŏngch'ŏl eventually finds out but supports her after realizing how important her work is for supporting his own engineering job and the economic plan. In this respect, the film seems to provide a socialist critique of patriarchy and a resolution to the problem of housewifization, because Yŏngch'ŏl overcomes his traditional ideas about gender and family, and Ŭnsil achieves ostensible equality through labor. She is liberated through her work. Because industrial and agricultural labor were valued as a means of liberation for women (*yŏsŏng*) and contrasted to the bourgeois idea of the supposedly non-laboring wife (*puin*), the fact of Ŭnsil's re-entrance into the factory stands as a sign of women's liberation.[45] The film also captures how this liberation was often in conflict with the DPRK's reliance on the social formation and images of the nuclear family for its projection of community. Indeed, just prior to Yŏngch'ŏl discovering that Ŭnsil has returned to the factory, she, back in *hanbok*, serves him and his fellow workers drinks in their home, impressing them with the performance of her

housework, including her affective labor of supporting the men in their moment of leisure. The film unambivalently values women's industrial work outside the home in contrast to the melodramatic mix of questioning and defensiveness concerning patriarchal control over the household that we find in South Korean films. However, similar to South Korean melodramas, Ŭnsil's labor is split between the demands of tradition and the promises of modernity, and her body and its accoutrements hold the allegorical weight of the film's social antagonisms and contradictions concerning family, state, economy, and reproduction.

The Newlyweds is an example of how socialist realist films do not depend on verisimilitude in order to establish their sense of historical actuality, but rather take up a set of abstract ideas and then give them realistic form through the creation of affectively impactful melodramatic scenarios. Dobrenko's analysis of the aestheticization of socialism in socialist realist art and consumer culture pertains to how the film is able to ignore the fact that its fundamental social problem is not actually resolved. Despite the couple's sentimental dialogue and return to conjugal love upon his discovery of her return to work—importantly, witnessed in the public space of the factory by many of their comrades—the story perpetuates the fallacy that only quantified industrial labor contributing directly to national economic growth counts as labor in the proper sense. The story does not address whether the gendered division of labor within the household will have to change as the couple commit to becoming heroes of the socialist economy. Using the melodramatic mode to present the primary social conflict—the necessity of both quantified abstract labor and unquantified household labor for social reproduction—allows the film to aestheticize this conflict and transfigure it into a gendered allegory of women's liberation through work.

Yun aestheticizes socialism and figures national and party objectives as the singular resolution of the symptomatic conflicts within the everyday melodrama narrative. The result is not propaganda in the strict sense but a somatically impactful political fiction. South Korean films of the period, such as *The Coachman* and *Bloodline*, end happily with the children characters entering the factory, aestheticizing technological advancement and industrial labor as means of overcoming class exploitation and discrimination in the former, and subaltern status as Northern refugees in the latter. In focusing on the train system and an industrial factory, *The Newlyweds* also prefigures the future for a largely rural society; in Kim Il Sung's later formulation, film moves ahead of reality.[46] The opening scene pans across a train station from a high angle, highlighting the steam and the sublime size of the train. It takes on the point of view of the factory manager as he goes to the next room to see the women at work, cuts to close-ups of the machines, and then shows him filling in the numbers on a chalk graph tracking the production and repair schedule.

The beginning of the film fetishizes quantifiable labor in a way that allows subsequent scenes to contrast it to the alienation and unproductive life of domestic space. The most transformative moment for Ŭnsil takes place after her flower-picking on the hillside and singing with Yŏngchŏl, when they take a sightseeing

FIGURE 6. In *The Newlyweds* (1955), Yŏngchŏl, in his train engineer's uniform, and Ŭnsil, in traditional *hanbok*, observe the rebuilding of Pyongyang in the aftermath of the Korean War, the former with elation and the latter with disappointment and frustration that she can no longer contribute her labor outside the home.

trip to Pyongyang. There they briefly enjoy feminized consumer culture, purchasing the powder that she will soon be throwing at her own reflection. They also visit monumental architecture, filmed with the same sublime scale as the industrial technology. The turning point occurs, however, when they visit a construction site where women are hard at work contributing to rebuilding the capital. Ŭnsil speaks with an inspiring young worker and then gazes upon the construction site with consternation and shame. In a relay of gazes that expresses a contrapuntal mood of inspired patriotism for Yŏngchŏl and shameful alienation for Ŭnsil, we see her watching the spectacle of socialist reconstruction without belonging to it. In this way, the film aestheticizes the socialist totality through melodramatic visual contrasts and frames the eventual return of the alienated individual to the aestheticized social totality at the climax as an overcoming of alienation. This reliance on the moods, visuality, and embodiment of melodrama protects some patriarchal structures from critique; the character Ŭnsil is liberated to work only as a hero who contains and sublates her divided subjectivity. She becomes an impossible, dualistic, and nationalist sign for both the modern factory girl and the traditional, dutiful wife. The consummation, preservation, and social recognition of the couple's relationship and the promise of future children become the foundation for socialist reconstruction and development (figure 6).

Ŭnsil's duality is technically resolved in the narrative, but not affectively. By way of music and images of the body, the mood of the film expresses negative

affects connected to the formation of the nuclear family that cannot be resolved through the socialist morality that celebrates factory labor. The coldness, violence, and aggression expressed in the segment during which the couple fights comprise the dominant mood of the second half. Ŭnsil tells Yŏngchŏl that she would like to return to the factory. In the subsequent heated conversation about love, he argues that their love is enough, while she looks toward the horizon and states that by itself their love is not enough. In the middle of the scene, as he tells her that their life together is fulfilling without her working outside the home, she pinches her fingers together tightly. The spat ends with him pushing her aggressively twice and her weeping with her back turned toward him. His selfishness and aggression carry over into his work, as he drives his train too hard and causes damage to it, eventually having to participate in a self-criticism session. In fact, he reconsiders the value of her factory work only when it helps to protect him from further reproach at the session. What should we make of this mood of coldness between the couple conveyed through subtle and overt moments of aggressive and internalized violence? In the second half of the film, this mood is broken by a scene of his joyful workmates singing, to which he turns his back and complains, crosscut with her dutiful maintenance of the household despite reentering the factory. When he accepts her work, the negative affects of the domestic space are supposedly transformed into an overcoming of selfishness and a reinvigorated dedication to the cooperative socialist economy. However, these negative affects and the mood of coldness and violence linger in excess of the narrative's closure, and the ending of the story does not overturn the patriarchy of the household economy that causes them.

Family drama was not the only genre appropriated and reworked for the purposes of socialist realism. In the early days of the counterespionage genre, films such as *A Dangerous Moment* (*Wihŏm han sun'gan*, dir. Cho Kye-ok, 1958) employed the moods and storytelling of noir crime film—including high contrast between light and dark, expressions of urban alienation and delirium, and a struggle against shadowy enemies—to dramatize an identity struggle between North Korean socialism and the depraved colonial capitalist system of South Korea. The emergent counterespionage genre's suspenseful action and noir aesthetic creates a mood of suspense and fear, a kind of embodied intensification of melodramatic melancholy into an atmosphere of danger and menace. The genre also uses the melodramatic mode to direct this suspense and fear toward a spiritual struggle against South Korean spies and the temptations of capitalism. However, the translation of suspense and fear into the spiritual values of the nation-state's moral occult is accompanied by scenes of subjective fragmentation symptomatic of a cinematic and everyday conflict between socialist humanism and urban alienation and moral seductions. The quality of the affects and moods of a counterespionage film may differ from a family drama; however, the defining feature of the melodramatic mode remains—its provocation of affect in the service of spiritual values and the excess of that affect in relation to those values.

Made in the aftermath of threats to Kim Il Sung's sovereignty during the era of de-Stalinization in the Soviet Union, *A Dangerous Moment* addresses the problem of South Korean spies working in North Korea in order to subvert its national effort at reconstruction. Although it does not contain a love story, it is comparable to the South Korean anticommunist counterespionage film *The Hand of Destiny* in its depiction of spies through the generic conventions of crime films, representing the Cold War enemy as a criminal organization internally threatening the nation's sovereignty. It also contains scenes of normative spectatorship and healthy bodies; a long circus scene presents a wholesome form of traditional entertainment contrasted to American and South Korean immorality and inauthenticity: jazz music, alcohol, counterfeit money, and sexual promiscuity.[47]

The proletarian film theorist Ch'u Min wrote the script for *A Dangerous Moment* in collaboration with Han Sang-un. The story reflects many of Ch'u's theoretical concerns, particularly his critiques of consumer culture and liberal cosmopolitanism and his advocacy of North Korean national culture as a mass aesthetic experience (or total work of art). The story focuses on an elderly bus driver, Kim U-sil (Chŏn Un-bong), who inadvertently assists a South Korean spy ring whose mission is to destroy an important factory under construction, but then he heroically fights and helps to capture the ringleader. This story about industrial espionage and postwar reconstruction under the banner of "increased production, saving output" (*chŭngsan chŏryak*) begins by referring to a real incident of US and South Korean economic warfare during the Korean War, which was the production and dissemination of counterfeit North Korean hundred-wŏn notes in an attempt to devalue the currency.[48] Usil's young adult niece Insun (Chang Yŏng-jin) works collecting fees on the bus and gives a political speech to the passengers about the DPRK's postwar reconstruction efforts in Pyongyang, liberation from Japanese colonial rule, solidarity with African countries, and resistance to US imperialism. When Insun turns in the day's earnings, the money counter notices that one of the hundred-wŏn bills is counterfeit; Insun is alarmed, but Usil is not concerned and says they should just spend the money. When Insun's young brother and Usil's nephew In'gil (Min Pyŏng-il) hands another counterfeit bill to her, she reports it to the chief of the Home Office. In'gil's story to the chief is visualized with a blurred circular frame overlaid with non-diegetic music. He was sledding and found a wallet dropped by a man later revealed to be Cho Pyŏng-hwan (Kim Tong-gyu), a spy for South Korea. When he returned the wallet, the man was appreciative and gave In'gil some money. He followed In'gil to the art supply store, where the boy tried to purchase some drawing paper; however, the salesperson noticed the counterfeit bill. The man left and In'gil eventually handed the bill to Insun. The montage of the boy's story captures well the child's perspective, with low-angle point-of-view shots of the man's face and a somewhat limited perspective on the mysterious and menacing incident.

The film quickly establishes its moral occult through melodramatic contrasts. Usil is not concerned about the counterfeit bills. He is also prone to excessive

drinking and tells war stories to a friend at a bar as Cho Pyŏng-hwan eats nearby and listens secretly to their conversation. Usil also refuses the invitation of his women coworkers to go to the circus theater (*kogye kŭkchang*) and is therefore not a participant in the valorized form of mass spectatorship. Until his heroic act at the end, he is a veteran caught between good national subjectivity and his foolhardiness and bad habits. Meanwhile, the leader of the espionage plot, Yi Kyŏngch'il (Pak Sŏp), is introduced as he is boarding the family's bus, right after Insun has made her speech and received the approving gazes of the passengers. Before paying Insun with what we find out is a counterfeit bill, he steals a seat while a young man is offering it to an elderly woman and rudely absorbs himself in his newspaper. Despite the good North Koreans laughing at Yi's lack of concern, he does not notice and the friend of the young man is forced to give up her seat for the elderly woman. Socialist humanism and morality are contrasted to the everyday selfishness and inhumanity of someone we soon find out is a South Korean agent. The film also creates melodramatic dichotomies between edifying aesthetic education, such as children learning to draw the gates of Pyongyang castle, and the subjective fragmentation caused by US imperialism and capitalist consumer cultures of jazz music and bars.

In adapting the ideological concerns of Ch'u Min and Han Sang-un's scenario into cinematic form, Chu Kye-ok employed a number of stylistically remarkable camera movements and editing choices to create a living mood embodying multiple layers of history, memory, and political signs. One melodramatic technique used frequently in North Korean film of the time is superimposition not only for typical dissolve transitions but for longer periods within a scene in order to express these layered moments. Images of past events in personal or national history are superimposed upon a close-up shot of the character experiencing the memory; such scenes show the character's internal consciousness as well as affective facial responses to the memories. This technique creates a variety of moods depending on the images and the character's responses: melancholy, nostalgia, fear, revolutionary enthusiasm. No matter the specific quality of the mood, its affective form is self-reflexivity. According to James Chandler, shot/reverse-shot creates self-reflexivity by showing a perspective on an object or character followed by a response to that object or character.[49] Flashbacks create self-reflexivity by cutting back to an image of the character experiencing the memory in the narrative present. Superimposition in the North Korean style condenses the self-reflexivity of shot/reverse-shot and flashback into a series containing both the objects and the character's subjective responses presented simultaneously.

There are two such scenes in *A Dangerous Moment*. Usil's nephew Inho (Ch'u Sŏk-bong) is leading the construction of additions to a factory, and during a drunken night out Cho Pyŏng-hwan asks Usil to convince his nephew to get him a job there, which he does. Working covertly at the factory, Cho sneaks into Inho's office and makes an impression of the keys that unlock the cabinet holding

the plans for the factory. During his next meeting with Yi in their dark hideout, Yi makes a further demand, which is that Cho set fire to the factory and steal the plans before they can change the lock. After Cho refuses, Yi loads his gun and asks him if he has already forgotten his meeting in Seoul. The first superimposed shot follows: a close-up of a smiling Cho is overlaid with point-of-view shots of a US officer offering him piles of money, a sex worker dancing and laughing, empty bottles of alcohol on the table, and finally the officer threatening him with a gun (as Cho's face turns from joy to fear). Although most of the soundtrack of the film includes orchestral themes and traditional Korean instrumentation during the circus scene, swing jazz plays during the superimposition. Combined with the erotic delirium and claustrophobia of the point-of-view shots and the final threat of violence by the US officer, the scene aestheticizes an idea that Ch'u Min had articulated early on in North Korean film theory: US cultural imperialism and military imperialism go hand in hand and proper national subjectivity requires the rejection of US cultural forms, consumer society, and sexual imperialism in addition to direct military occupation and violence. As a character questioning whether to continue with the plot, Cho is shown to be under the threat of violence but also immoral in his choice to give in to vice, money, and personal gain.

A second, contrasting scene of superimposed shots occurs after In'gil recognizes Cho at a restaurant as the man with the counterfeit hundred-wŏn bills, through a low-angle, blurry point-of-view shot. Yi sees In'gil recognize Cho, follows him out of the restaurant, and then comes back in and lies to Usil that a boy in a fur hat has been hit by a car. While In'gil and Insun report Cho to the police and they arrest him, Usil gets in a car to go to find In'gil. However, Yi gets in the backseat and pulls his gun, ordering Usil to drive. Usil sweats profusely in an extreme close-up, while a shot from the front of the speeding car captures the dirt road in front of them. As the music crescendoes and the scene cuts back to Usil's face, superimposed images appear again, but this time the superimposition dissolves to a montage sequence depicting the National Liberation Day of Korea. With a soundtrack of triumphant patriotic music, a combination of fiction and stock documentary footage reminiscent of *My Home Village* shows the center of Pyongyang as a mass of people releases balloons and birds, young women march in file, the crowd shouts "Manse," In'gil rides on Usil's shoulder, and Kim Il Sung tips his hat to the crowd. Rather than the sense of delirious interiority and juxtaposed moments in the superimposed shots of Cho and Seoul in the earlier scene, the complete dissolve into the hybrid montage places Usil fully within his memory and the spectacle of mass patriotism. Cutting back to the present, Usil becomes resolute, purposefully crashes the car, and then struggles with Yi in the dirt until the police arrive to arrest him. Usil redeems himself from his drunkenness, pride, and gullibility by remembering the glory of the North Korean revolution and his previous integration into the spectacle of socialism (figure 7).

FIGURE 7. In *A Dangerous Moment* (1958), as the South Korean spy handler Yi holds a gun to Kim U-sil's head, images of his memories of North Korean liberation are superimposed over his close-up; these memories inspire him to act courageously and patriotically to crash the car and subdue Yi.

These superimposed shots and accompanying soundtrack give melodramatic expression to ideology by linking subjective interiority to the social exterior (in other words, by connecting memory and national history). The analogies and differences between Cho and Usil epitomize melodramatic counterpoint because they suggest that heroes and villains live with similar temptations and confront similar moments of moral decision. In addition to these melodramatic moral struggles, exciting shots of the Pyongyang cityscape from moving vehicles, sublime images of the factory's architecture and industrial technology, the spectacle of the circus and its acrobats, and a high-contrast mise-en-scène combine to give lively expression to the urban experience of North Korean socialist modernity. Like most North Korean films, *A Dangerous Moment* is realist only in a restricted sense based in the melodramatic worldview. Its reality is constituted through a combination of the monumental materiality of a capital city and an ideological and spiritual struggle over authentic Korean national identity. At the same time, the aesthetic and mood of the film are premised on the division of Korean subjectivity across national, spiritual, and social differences, layered in space and time like superimposed cinematic images, never fully integrated into a single national body. The power of the melodramatic mode lies in this ability to capture subjective fragmentation and alienation as much as in its emotional and sentimental pleas to national unity, patriotism, and socialist reconstruction.

Of course, not all early North Korean socialist realist films concerned with reconstruction and national identity were set in the city and dealt with urban industrialization. The melodramatic mode was equally powerful in depicting internal social conflicts between classes in the ongoing process of agricultural collectivization. *The People of Sujŏnggol* (dir. Kim Chi-hak, 1960) is one of many that focuses on postwar problems in the countryside. It begins with tragic scenes of the protagonist Hyŏngch'an (Ch'a Kye-ryong) returning to his small village, Sujŏnggol, and seeing the graves of dead villagers and the rural landscape and infrastructure

FIGURE 8. On the left are stills from various documentary films and on the right an advertisement for *The People of Sujŏnggol* (1960), from the August 1960 issue of *Chosŏn Film*.

that had been destroyed by US aerial bombardment. The main social issue addressed is the reluctance on the part of landowners, their managers, and their allies in the party to join the farmers' union, collectivize their property for agricultural production, and apply modern science and industrial mechanization to their farming tools and practices. While urban films on reconstruction graft the style and narratives of Hollywood genre films onto the worldview of socialist realism, films on agricultural collectivization and modernization have their foundations in Soviet and Chinese socialist realism, aestheticizing the transition from colonial-feudal land relations and technologies, as well as village-level political affiliations, to modern industrial agriculture led by the party and enacted by the nation-state.

Despite the film's emphasis on ideology and historical progress, it uses the moods of melodrama to express the uneven temporality of the nation-state and the lateness of many of the characters to the historical moment of national reconstruction and agricultural modernization. Unlike many contemporaneous back-to-the-land and development films in South Korea, such as *Evergreen Tree* (dir. Shin Sang-ok, 1961) or *Soil* (dir. Kwŏn Yŏng-sun, 1960), the story of *The People of Sujŏnggol* is not based on the nationalist, colonial-period back-to-the-land novels concerning rural enlightenment projects undertaken by urban college graduates. Its ideas of development and the modernization of agriculture are socialist and specific to land reform, collectivization, and reconstruction (figure 8). Nonetheless, as in the South Korean films, the melodramatic mode and mood validate apprehension about the social displacement and loss of personal identity

during periods of rapid urbanization and industrialization. The film ends with the landowner and his party ally—who spend nights drunk together—getting caught trying to burn down the new houses of the farmers' union, even after Hyŏngch'an has invited the union to help plant his rice fields with their scientific methods and new technology. With the landowner and his allies out of the way, the union uses tractors and plows provided by the state to cultivate his land; the last scene shows the farmers working the fields together and celebrating their new working conditions in typical socialist realist fashion.

Much of the film focuses on characters caught between the villainous land-owner and the heroic revolutionaries, such as Yŏnggwan, who raises cows and manages the landowner's property, and his daughter Tongsuk, who returns to the ravaged Sujŏnggol along with Hyŏngch'an at the beginning of the film. Although not a bad person according to the sympathetic Hyŏngch'an, Yŏnggwan fears an end to his livelihood and his traditional ways of farming and initially refuses to join the union. Only when the landowner's ally injures Tongsuk as she tries to stop him from burning the farmers' new homes does Yŏnggwan beat and apprehend the land-owner and fully commit himself to the union. In the final scene, he remarks how much collectivization and mechanized agriculture has improved his life. The stuff of melodrama—a society torn between two temporalities, contrapuntal moods and characters, the defense of an innocent daughter—allows socialist realism to recognize the anxieties of rural audiences while also conveying a didactic message about the ultimate benefits of collectivization and industrialization. Just as *A Dangerous Moment* represented watching the circus as a wholesome practice in contrast to alcohol consumption, *Sujŏnggol* attempts to train the cinema audience in its view-ing practice diegetically. *The People of Sujŏnggol* includes a scene of the villagers enjoying a singing performance by Tongsuk, now dressed in *hanbok* rather than her cadre uniform. A later film, *Story of a Nurse* (*Han kanhowŏn e taehan iyagi,* dir. O Pyŏng-ch'o, 1971), similarly depicts a screening of a traveling documentary film, including images of the audience's patriotic responses. By showing cinema viewers how rural people should react to sanctioned spectacles, the film frames national culture and spectatorship as integral aspects of economic modernity, postwar reconstruction, and anti-feudal land reform. In family dramas, espionage films, and rural socialist realism, the melodramatic mode splits identification between conflicting temporalities and positionalities but also situates the reintegration of subjectivity in the political and cultural project of national reconstruction.

Later in the 1960s, films on the socialist reality focused more on the Chollima work-team movement and the speed campaigns. Defector and former party elite Hwang Chang-yŏp called this period the golden age of juche thought, when the North Korean economy was growing at a good pace and the work-teams repre-sented an effective indigenous communism.[50] In the quintessential Chollima work-team film *When We Pick Apples* (*Sagwa ttal ttae*, dir. Kim Yŏng-ho, 1971) the ideological seed is that agricultural workers should remain dedicated to increasing

apple production. The leader of the work-team thinks that fallen apples need not be harvested because of the abundance produced by the socialist economy, and a bride concentrates more on her upcoming wedding than on her work at the cooperative farm. The hero, a young woman named Chŏngok, intervenes to inspire the workers and the children of the village to respect food production, overcome their individualism, and maintain their ideological commitments to Chollima despite the country's economic successes.[51] A comparison between *The People of Sujŏnggol* and *When We Pick Apples* shows how dramatically the North Korean economy, particularly the rural economy, transformed in the 1960s. It also reveals the flexibility of the melodramatic mode within the political economy of socialist realism. The former depicts with sensitivity the hesitancy on the part of farmers to unionize and collectivize their agricultural labor, as well as the evil acts committed by landowners to prevent them. The latter presents an image of an established agricultural utopia in the form of the village work-team, which is threatened by a regression to individuality and indolence. This contrast shows how important the melodramatic mode was to both projecting better futures and maintaining the idea of a present utopia.

FATHERLAND LIBERATION WAR MEMORIES

The aesthetic and narrative construction of North Korean identity in 1960s films about the Fatherland Liberation War and the ongoing civil conflict with South Korea often emphasizes internal struggle and ideological crisis, rather than drawing absolute political lines about intra-Korean class conflict (peasant versus large landowner), as in films set during the colonial period. This internal ideological and identity struggle includes the appearance of moods of pathos and fractured subjective states that refer to the traumatic historical experiences of national division and civil war, while the narrative attempts to elevate affect into ideology through a psychological variation of the melodramatic mode.

Return to the Fatherland, described in the introduction, gives deserved symbolic weight to the setting of Kaesŏng. Kaesŏng is a culturally and politically important city that was Korea's capital between AD 919–1392, during the Koryŏ Period. The thirty-eighth parallel that divided the territories of Soviet and US military governments (1945–1948) runs just north of the city, which initially belonged to the Republic of Korea after its establishment in 1948. However, it was captured, recaptured, and captured again, and after the armistice agreement of 1953, it became the only major city to change control from South Korea to North Korea as a result of the war. Like the protagonist architect Wŏnil himself, Kaesŏng was caught in between two nation-states but was finally returned to the fatherland of North Korea. As a Kaesŏng citizen who would have never lived under Soviet occupation or witnessed the North Korean revolution, it is realistic that Wŏnil is susceptible to his classmate's anticommunist image of North Korea, even though he tragically gets separated from his family. He loses his eldest son and cannot parent his

other two children due to this poor decision; however, he nonetheless redeems himself as a father on the larger scale of the nation-state by refusing to cede his plans to South Korea and designing and building an iconic postwar monument in Kaesŏng, the Children's Palace (historically completed two years prior to the film's release, in 1961).

The realistic separation experienced by a Kaesŏng family and the reference to the historical completion of the Children's Palace give *Return to the Fatherland* a sense of verisimilitude. The miraculous reuniting of the family and Wŏnil's contributions to architecture and reconstruction occur in a magical allegorical causality connected to state and party ideology. However, in between realism and melodrama is the mediation of individual subjectivity and the representation of psychological responses to trauma. Like most North Korean productions dealing with South Korea, the film attempts to use melodramatic mimesis to contain the subjective experience of trauma and the negative mood within a national political frame. The point-of-view pan across the Children's Palace in the opening scene presents an architectural sublime, an aesthetic experience of monumental grandeur through which Wŏnil and his family sublimate the struggles of the previous ten years. Wŏnil tells his personal tragic story within that very public and state-sanctioned space. Nonetheless, in representing his experiences of displacement and separation, various visual flourishes produce a mood of pathos bordering on surrealism (figure 9).

In a tiny, shadowy apartment in Seoul, a compatriot who sympathizes with North Korea plays a melancholic tune on the violin for his wife and Wŏnil, close-ups of his face pressed against the instrument and images of his shadow on the wall accentuating their longing and melancholy in the South. The next day, he works as a day laborer building a US military installation and witnesses the violent expulsion of impoverished families from their homes, showing his helplessness in confronting the realities of US neocolonialism. The scene dissolves to a remarkably composed deep space, low-level shot of a rubble landscape emptied of houses; only two military jeeps and a compressed horizon appear in the distance. Both these scenes are followed by close-ups of Wŏnil walking pensively toward the camera, deep in thought. Wŏnil's classmate and his US handler also meet in a dark, shadowy office. When Wŏnil, covered with rain, beats the priest to avenge the death of In'gil, the interior of the church is high contrast—almost gothic—and the priest shows the hypocrisy of Christianity when he attempts to fend off Wŏnil by wielding the cross on the wall as a weapon. When Wŏnil escapes to the eastern coast and is about to cross over to Japan, rear projection presents a backdrop of crashing waves and sunlight piercing a clouded sky and reflecting on the ocean surface. He and a helpful fisherman are framed in a mythical landscape and their conversation marks the beginning of Wŏnil's return journey to North Korea. These scenes are exemplary of the "living mood" discussed by Cho Chŏng-sik, creating vital images of suffering and alienation and establishing the need for an eventual redemption of innocence.

FIGURE 9. In *Return to the Fatherland* (1963), Pang Wŏn-il narrates the story of his experience of the Korean War in South Korea as images of his memories are superimposed over his close-up.

These gloomy spaces are accompanied by depictions of poverty, especially In'gil's plight from being a student talented in drawing to becoming homeless and joining a group of street children who work for meager meals, to his murder by the priest's dog. The high contrast images of sinister urban life and the realist depiction of poverty contrast melodramatically with the bright, stable, medium close-up shots of Wŏnil's family in North Korea. While social conflict exists in the film's postwar Kaesŏng, particularly in the younger son's psychological adjustment to family separation, it is gradually resolved through socialist education and the inclusion of women in the project of industrialization. Social negativity never manifests aesthetically in the subjective form of the cinematography and editing of the North Korean scenes. Nonetheless, by including extensive scenes set in South Korea and exploring the protagonist's subjective traumas and struggles with national division, the film introduces excesses of mood and affect that would have remain uncontained within the state master narrative for North Korean audience members who actually experienced national division and war and may have had relatives on the other side of the Cold War divide. The allegorical and magical narrative causality and aesthetics of familial reunification and national heroism would contrast deeply with many audience members' real experiences of the war, including, in the case of Kaesŏng specifically, the initial North Korean attack of South Korea. Therefore, in referring to negative war memories

within a mood of pathos and sentimentality, the melodramatic mode cannot fully guarantee that the affects associated with these memories can all be translated and recoded at the personal, subjective level into North Korean national pride and anticolonial enmity toward the United States and the South Korean puppet state.

What Elsaesser calls the "soft-pedaling" aspect of melodrama is related to the tendency to reserve political enmity for the South Korean government and US military occupation, rather than directing it toward South Koreans themselves.[52] *The Chʼoe Hak-sin Family* (*Chʼoe Hak-sin ŭi ilga*, O Pyŏng-jo, 1966) is a telling example of how civilian memories of national division and the war are topics that tend to introduce affective ambivalence into the narrative and visual forms of North Korean cinema; such ambivalence is directed toward not only everyday people who affiliate with South Korea but even dominant North Korean state narratives. In her reading, Suk-Young Kim translates statements by the director O Pyŏng-jo to show that the portrayal of a character such as Chʼoe Hak-sin is delicate, even if civilian characters who defect are a powerful means of conveying the power and truth of an ideology.[53] During the course of the film, Chʼoe transforms from a pro-American Christian minister to a supporter of North Korea, but O states that he could not make Chʼoe a neutral character; he had to describe his transformation as a complete reversal.[54] Chʼoe, as well as his eldest son and ROK soldier Sŏnggŭn, do not embrace North Korea until the very end. Their ideological changes are both very gradual, so while they are not "neutral" characters, like Wŏnil in *Return to the Fatherland*, they undergo a wrenching transformation as characters caught between their idealist beliefs about religion, Korean nationalism, and US imperialism and the oppression and violence they witness during the South Korean and US attack and occupation. Chʼoe's complete reversal is not instantaneous.

The film's critique of Christianity is typical of North Korean literature and cinema that memorializes the Fatherland Liberation War. According to these narratives, American Christians are colonizers who conspire with the US military to oppress and kill Koreans in contradiction to their expressed faith; Korean Christians are colonized and misguided and should learn to believe in the Korean people and the North Korean revolution rather than God and Christ. The insight that the universalist missionary discourses of the United States are a way of masking the racial and national exceptionalism of its imperialist projects appears in the opening thesis of the film, presented through a voice-over and titles scrolling over flames, smoke, and a bombed-out landscape: "American imperialism, which is the main ringleader of world reaction on earth, continues to exist, and there remain people who harbor illusions about the myths that it spreads concerning 'freedom,' 'philanthropy,' and 'aid.' This tragedy about one family is not just a story that concerns the past." Made fourteen years after the armistice agreement, the film reminds North Koreans of the dangers of believing the mythic Christian and democratic ideals disseminated by US imperialism, because as inspiring as the ideas of freedom, philanthropy, and aid may be, they mask the global reactionary violence of US imperialism and anticommunism.

However, through counterpoint the film analogizes Christian belief in God and nationalist belief in the people and the state. At the beginning and end, two important discussions concerning belief occur between Ch'oe Hak-sin and Sŏkche, an elder very close to the family. In the first discussion, Ch'oe defends Christianity and says that even modern scientific people need a higher power, God, especially during a time of war, while Sŏkche explains that the younger generation criticizes Christianity as superstition. The second discussion occurs while Sŏkche is dying in Ch'oe's arms after being shot by American troops and the apocalyptic US aerial bombardments have commenced. The two elders agree in this final scene that the higher power is the Korean people and the North Korean state in their struggles against the evils of US imperialism. In this way, the primary melodramatic conflict is not between religious belief and scientific reason but what the true objects of belief should be. Although the film contrasts the ideologies of Christianity and anticolonial nationalism, its messaging also depends heavily on a general notion of belief (*midŭm*) and the analogous vocabulary, affects, and practices between religion and nationalism. Despite the aim of avoiding neutrality, the process of ideological transformation nonetheless occurs within an existential and a priori mood that frames both nationalist and Christian belief as responses—albeit one correct and the other incorrect—to the same affective landscape. The melodramatic mode allows for any Korean to come to the correct ideological conclusion within this shared affective landscape not by discovering a materialist science of history but by redirecting the passionate idealism of Christianity toward different political objects.

Of course, it is through a social realist attention to historical violence and suffering that the film can give authenticity to the realizations of Ch'oe and his eldest son, Sŏnggŭn. The family is at odds internally, as the youngest daughter, Sŏngmi, is a revolutionary and along with her mother helps the Korean People's Army soldier Yŏngsu recover in a back room of the family home. Even before discovering Yŏngsu and feeling unable to kill him, the ROK soldier Sŏnggŭn struggles with criticism from his mother and Sŏngmi for helping to imprison and interrogate locals close to the family, particularly Sŏkche, who we discover, through another superimposed flashback, is a surrogate uncle who helped to raise him. An American officer conspires with a minister—Ch'oe Hak-sin's religious hero—to use Ch'oe to help control the locals through Christianity. He eventually discovers that the officer has killed his other sister, Sŏngok, after she rejected his advances, which is the final straw. When the officer orders Sŏnggŭn to execute Sŏkche, Sŏnggŭn refuses and shoots and kills the officer and commits suicide instead. Then the US attack ensues. By depicting the sympathy that Sŏngmi and her mother feel for the wounded Yŏngsu, the violent arrests and interrogations in which Sŏnggŭn becomes complicit, and the disrespect toward the family by South Korean soldiers searching for Yŏngsu, the Christian ideals of the Americans and South Koreans contrast with the colonial violence of US anticommunism and imperialism. The officer's spying, sexual advances, and murder of the married and innocent Sŏngok are certainly the worst immorality

committed against the family, but the officer's immoral actions are contextualized within the macropolitical conspiracy between US imperialism and Christianity, including the various forms of subjection represented through social realism.

Ch'oe and Sŏnggŭn are the most complex characters in the melodrama because they experience the most anguish over the loss of their ideals and also undergo the most dramatic psychological and ideological transformations. Despite the caricatured Manichaean conflict at its foundation (including Korean actors made-up to look like evil, hook-nosed, white Americans), the film is powerful and engrossing mainly because of the aesthetically effective way that it captures the turmoil these two characters go through as they lose faith in Christianity and America in the face of the colonial violence directed at their closest relations.

Two scenes capture well the way that melodramatic counterpoint presented through a sorrowful space and mood prevent the film from devolving into characterless propaganda. The first scene occurs upon Sŏnggŭn's return to the family home, when he and Sŏngok sing a patriotic song together while he plays the piano. The sound of the music reverberates to the back of the house where, unbeknownst to Sŏnggŭn, Sŏngmi is caring for Yŏngsu. Although separated by the walls of the house, which stand in for the national division that has come between the two soldiers, each character hears and is touched by the siblings' duet. The space of the scene is replete with melodramatic tension as it cuts between the two rooms—the house, like the Korean nation, are united through the song but still divided by politics.

The second scene is more formally experimental. When Sŏnggŭn stands before Sŏkche and has been ordered to execute him, struggling to keep his eyes open as the church bells begin to ring and he begins to drift into a delirium, the scene cuts to a point-of-view shot from his perspective and Sŏkche's image goes in and out of focus as Sŏnggŭn struggles to aim. Then a relatively long, two-minute montage ensues, superimposed upon the image of the church bells swaying with only the sound of their ringing. This time, the montage superimposes three images at a time—the church bells are constant and Sŏnggŭn's agonized face fades in and out as other images from the plot of the film overlap: Sŏkche playing with Sŏnggŭn as a child and pleading with him in the present, the menacing faces of the American officer and minister, the officer harassing Sŏngok, their mother lying by Sŏngok's corpse, Sŏngok's husband castigating him for wanting to execute Yŏngsu, and the officer shooting their mother. After this montage, Sŏnggŭn cannot bring himself to follow the order and fires at the tree above Sŏkche's head and then, after being scolded, kills the officer and commits suicide as the American troops march in. Of course, this dramatic turn to internal consciousness and the layers of Sŏnggŭn's memory at the height of the melodramatic conflict and action emphasizes ideological transformation. However, it also renders the struggle of the South Korean soldier with sensitivity to both his colonial position vis-à-vis powerful Americans and his unbearable regret.

The scene of patriotic music uniting Koreans across national division, as well as the extended and delirious montage showing the internal consciousness of a South Korean soldier, contrast with the later hesitancy in North Korean film to portray South Korean soldiers or their memories in films about the war. Perhaps the most well-known North Korean film on the war, *Wolmi Island* (*Wolmido*, dir. Cho Kyŏng-sun, 1982), tells the story of a small group of soldiers and civilians who for three days defend Wolmi Island against the United States' Inchon invasion. It is a melodramatic story about victimization, redemption of innocence, and duty toward the state, party, and leader in the face of death. South Korean soldiers do not appear; they are lumped together with the UN forces and referred to vaguely as the enemy. The only flashback scene occurs at a night gathering when a young woman radio operator, who is later killed, sings a patriotic and leader-centered song accompanied by the cook and his accordion ("dead or alive, we are in your embrace"). Tracking in one-by-one on the faces of the singer and two men listening to the song, the scene focus-fades to each character's nostalgic memory of their home village: a soldier happily farms land gained through revolution, the radio operator walks through a field and reads with her sister, and the commander of the troop meets his lost love in a grove. Memories of revolution and war are idealized to the point that every personal memory refers directly to the message of the song: all losses and all innocent moments of the past are redeemed in the consummation of one's duty to the state and the leader, which is in death. By 1982, war memories had achieved a stable format and gone were many of the fascinating moments of mutual haunting between the nation-people and the state that we find in 1960s cinema.[55] Concomitantly, there was a reining in of the formal and aesthetic experimentation that went into representing the intense ideological struggles, fragmentations of identity, and inclusions of South Korean perspectives that we find in a film such as *The Chʼoe Hak-sin Family*. Later films on the war, at least from the fascinating and complex *The Fate of Kum Hui and Un Hui* (*Kŭmhŭi wa Ŭnhŭi ŭi unmyŏng*, dir. Pak Hak, 1974) onward, tended to render more transparent and homogeneous the subjectivity of cinema and politics and limited extended reflection on the origins of psychological and somatic trauma in national division.

REVOLUTIONARY OPERA AND THE RETURN TO THE TOTAL WORK OF ART

The production of the North Korean films most well-known outside of North Korea corresponded to the turn from socialist realism to juche realism in *Chosŏn Film* in 1967. These include two of the celebrated classics based on theatrical operas: *Sea of Blood* and *The Flower Girl*. While the films discussed thus far in this chapter deal with ideological, psychological, and political problems internal to the North Korean state and its civil and anticolonial conflicts with South Korea and the United States, these two films return to the Japanese colonial period and

use the melodramatic mode, combined with operatic elements, to re-mythologize the North Korean state and its origins. Both films depict a family's extreme suffering under Japanese colonial rule and the Korean landlord class that it historically propped up. Imprisonment, blinding, and death are followed by the eventual coming-into-consciousness of the remaining family members through the intervention of national consciousness and the party. These films on the revolutionary traditions narrate the individual's emergence out of unconscious victimization into conscious activity, forging various analogies between this movement and the unfolding of national history. The climax redeems oppression by way of naturalized connections between the individual hero, the family, the nation, and the party.[56] They utilize a larger-than-life aesthetic; in the words of Kim Jong Il, they "aim high," representing individual lives as bound to the collective mission to liberate the nation from colonial incursion.[57] It is a shared experience of oppression and sympathy with others' suffering that gives rise to group identification and partisan struggle. Subjects gain political agency and correct political ideas by recognizing, more through shared emotion than political savvy, that their personal and familial suffering is enmeshed with the macropolitical conflicts of the colonized nation and the emergent nation-state. In contrast to the genre films on socialist reconstruction and films that were working through the recent memories of the Korean War in an ideological fashion, these revolutionary opera films return to many of the cinematic conventions established during the North Korean revolution itself.

However, there are significant differences between these films and *My Home Village*, particularly in relation to montage, mood, and music. My reading of *My Home Village* emphasizes how the montages at the film's climax express revolutionary enthusiasm and have an ontological relationship with the history of the North Korean revolution due to the inclusion of documentary stock footage. Although there are certainly scenes of revolutionary enthusiasm and ecstasy in juche realist films of the 1960s and 1970s, the exclusion of stock footage, the intensification of pathos and suffering, and the adaptation of operatic elements in films such as *Sea of Blood* and *The Flower Girl* entail a new version of the total work of art (figure 10), one reminiscent of Wagner's intermedial conception. *My Home Village* incorporates explicative subtitles and intertitles to provide narrative and historical information: the character Kwanp'il joined the partisan resistance; Japan subjected Koreans to forced labor; Kim Il Sung defeated the Japanese empire and eventually returned from the Soviet Union. These titles establish connections between the film's fictional narrative and its historical referentiality. These nods to documentary realism do not appear in the revolutionary opera films, which depend even more on the music (Gr. *melo-*) and expressivity of the melodramatic mode for their referential illusion. Although the characters do not sing diegetically, *Sea of Blood* and *The Flower Girl* are based on two of the five great revolutionary operas, and the melancholic themes and lyrics of their music accentuate the embodied suffering and heightened sentimentality. The sublime beauty of the film's combination

FIGURE 10. In *The Flower Girl* (1972), Kkotpun and her younger sister Sunhǔi mourn the death of their mother as the operatic soundtrack plays. The integration of image, music, and political ideology mark the return to cinema as a total work of art.

of sight, sound, and language conveys the film's ideological perspective on history. This further aestheticization of politics and history changes the terms by which we might understand the historical referentiality of *Sea of Blood* and *The Flower Girl*. In *My Home Village*, accuracies and inaccuracies about history are obvious, and they can be discerned by comparing and contrasting the documentary historical claims with the historical record. The aestheticization of the revolution in revolutionary operas, detached from the concerns of realism and conveyed primarily through the structuring expressive mood of operatic melodrama, attempts to occlude the historical gap between the organic events of the revolution and the reinvigoration of the national mythology of anticolonial guerrilla resistance beginning in the late 1960s.

These cinematic portrayals of colonial oppression and guerrilla revolution are not realist in the sense that they reflect the complex historical reality of Japanese colonialism (1910–1945). However, as quasi-mythical texts, they shape the hyper-reality of North Korean national history during an era when the anti-Japanese partisan revolution of Kim Il Sung and party leadership again rose to the forefront of cultural production.[58] Toward the end of *The Flower Girl*, set in the 1930s, Chǒllyong escapes from a Japanese prison and leads peasant rebellions, in part to save his sisters (the captured flower girl, Kkotpun, and the younger Sunhǔi, who was blinded by collaborationist landlords). At the height of the narrative arc, when he argues that a larger revolt is necessary, a medium close-up shows Chǒllyong embracing his sisters and crying as he explains the colonial class structure and the historical reasons for the plight of the Korean nation. He conveys the ideological seed of the film—that a stateless nation cannot survive—in the most direct terms at the height of the bittersweet emotion of the family reunion. This discursive unveiling of the seed at the climax of the film is similar to the second discussion between Ch'oe Haksin and Sǒkche in *The Ch'oe Hak-sin Family*. However, by setting the story in

the colonial period, the problem of the mutual haunting of nation-people and state can be sublated somewhat because of the lack of competing Korean nation-states. Because US neocolonialism operates through the granting and manipulation of national self-determination among the anticommunist states that it occupies, North Korean cinematic rhetoric about sovereignty in the post–Korean War era could not depend on the same colonial binary of exploited stateless nation and self-governing nation-state that appears in *The Flower Girl*. One reason that the films considered to be quintessentially juche realist are set during the Japanese colonial period is that this setting allows for a clearer articulation of the lack of Korean subjectivity under colonialism and its recuperation through revolution. The only characters who live between colonizer and colonized are the large landowners, and they are invariably represented as purely evil collaborators. The complex divided subjects of early films on the Korean War do not appear and there is little experimentation in cinematic form dedicated to capturing these characters' interiorities. Therefore, rather than seeing a persistent emphasis on the Japanese colonial period from the late 1940s onward, these classics should rather be understood as belonging to an era when the debates on the meaning of juche gave way to a master narrative of national origins and national leadership dependent on the aestheticization of a period that was gradually becoming the distant past. At the same time, because *The Flower Girl* unfolds in the composite tense, it is far from ideologically seamless. Even the most direct expression of the ideological seed of the film, Chŏllyong's speech, implicitly asks the audience to consider whether or not the contemporary North Korean state, thirty years later in 1972, has brought about the redemption of the Korean people from the suffering of colonialism.

Not all films on colonial-period partisanship are operas. This form of heroism was attributed to a non-communist nationalist of the colonial period in the biopic *An Chunggŭn Shoots Itō Hirobumi* (*An Chunggŭn Idŭngbangmun ŭl ssoda*, dir. Ŏm Kil-sŏn, 1979), which celebrates the historical person who resisted Japanese colonialism by shooting the Japanese resident-general in Harbin, China, in 1909. It is rendered most sublimely in the three parts of *Five Guerrilla Brothers* (dir. Ch'oe Ik-kyu, 1968), set during the Japanese colonial period, in which dramatic long shots of the mountainous Korean landscape present a sublime object for contemplation and for political commitment to what Carl Schmitt called the telluric struggle of the partisan in the colonial war.[59] The turn to the Japanese colonial period is more about developing the icon of the anticolonial partisan as the foundational hero of national history. However, the intermedial connections with opera are emblematic of the aestheticization of history and the attempt to create an immersive total work of art devoid of any instigation to make comparisons with documented history. In the fully aestheticization of politics and history through opera and the melodramatic mode, counterpoint in excess of ideology becomes less explicitly perceptible in narrative conflict or the interiority of characters and becomes an aspect of the affective excess itself (or its fallacy). For such immersive films, the

points of overidentification, misidentification, or disidentification on the part of the audience are no doubt present, although impossible to quantify or measure. The excess of pathos and musical expressivity in a spectacle of history can lead to all these responses because there is no entirely unconscious immersion of the consumer of socialism or the national people in the aesthetic experience of the film and therefore no entirely unconscious inculcation of the version of history that is aestheticized.

3

Fantastic Folk

Beyond Realism

As in much of global cinema, there is a close affinity between melodrama and the fantastic in the North Korean film industry, due in part to the inherent mythological quality of many juche realist films. Because of the attention to the everyday in 1950s and 1960s North Korean melodramatic films, most of them remain in the realm of the mundane. However, through the reinvigoration of the total work of art through operatic elements and the dominance, beginning in the late 1960s, of epic representations of party leadership and the anticolonial guerrilla movements, there was a stronger tendency to push the melodramatic mode toward the mythological. The primary mythologies of North Korean film include elements such as the heroic exploits of the anticolonial guerrilla movement, the infallibility and generosity of the leader, and the inviolable goodness of the oppressed Korean people. These are not myths in the supernatural sense, but rather, in the language of Roland Barthes, they belong to a second-order semiotic system.[1] Such mythologies are metalanguages that take signifiers, the final terms of a linguistic system, and transform them into the first terms of a second-order mythical system.[2] For example, the common image of a partisan revolutionary combatting the Japanese signifies, in the linguistic system, the anticolonial movement. However, in juche realist films, the figure of the partisans become more than a signifier of a historical signified; they are the *signification* of moral and political purity, heroic willpower, and the perfection of party leadership. Barthes addresses bourgeois mythologies and argues that while myth exists on the left, it does not penetrate the whole of everyday life in the same way as bourgeois language. Bourgeois language is detached from materiality, production, and revolution, and therefore more prone to becoming a metalanguage. However, it is telling that Barthes's main example of left-wing myth is Stalinism and the Stalin myth, and North Korea and its film industry are an example of how state socialist representations of revolution, party,

and leader become a mythology.[3] These mythologies make claims on reality through the referential illusion of the melodramatic mode—the real incarnation of ideas and the moral occult through affects.

This chapter will examine how North Korean films that indulge in supernatural and fantastic elements are mythological like the melodramas of juche realism but present alternative moods that challenge its dominant concepts of sovereignty and subjectivity. Following Csicsery-Ronay, if realisms furtively rely on "inherited ethical-mythic structures underlying the concrete details of quotidian existence," then they often have a dialectical relationship with what Samuel R. Delany calls "mundane fiction."[4] One possible mediating mode in this dialectic is melodrama. In the case of North Korean cinema, melodrama and melodramatic moods work similarly in juche realist and fantastic films; in each case they mark a departure from verisimilitude to the affective expression of a moral occult. Of course, the moral occult is tied to the nation-people, typically pitting the good and noble Koreans against foreign aggressors and their collaborators. Fantastic films also employ the melodramatic mode and the moral occult to tell the story of the nation-people. However, because they are usually set in the distant past or in a utopia (in the neutral sense of non-place), their class politics often do not map clearly onto the modern nation's history of imperialism, colonialism, and revolution. The subject of history is not the modern nation-people (*inmin*) per se, but rather the villagers or common folk (*paeksŏng*) of the past, a class that would include all the peasants, artisans, fishermen, and small merchants who had no broad political and economic power within the feudal system. By taking up or creating folktales and popular myths and visualizing them with special effects and the mise-en-scène of period drama (*sagŭk*), North Korean fantastic films transform the common folk into a magical subject of history and revolution.

However, to see how fantastic films share mythologies with realism through melodrama but still present distinct ideas of sovereignty and subjectivity, it is necessary to look beyond their own purported historical referentiality (i.e., their historical settings) and toward their moods. Tzvetan Todorov's study of the fantastic in terms of the affect of hesitancy in the face of the supernatural is important for seeing how fantastic North Korean films challenge some of the conventions of the melodramatic mode, including the way melodramatic moods express an uncertain national history and identity. For Todorov, the primary characteristic of the fantastic is the moment when the protagonist, and the reader by way of identification, hesitates in the face of a supernatural phenomenon. Can the supernatural phenomenon be explained according to the laws of reason? This is the nagging question that defines the fantastic for Todorov. He also locates the fantastic in the middle of a continuum between the uncanny and the marvelous, each of which extends indefinitely away from the fantastic, encompassing a myriad of texts. In the broad genre of the pure uncanny, "events are related which may be readily accounted for by the laws of reason, but which are, in one way or another,

incredible, extraordinary, shocking, singular, disturbing or unexpected."[5] The uncanny would include many detective fictions, thrillers, and melodramas. In the pure marvelous, on the other hand, "supernatural elements provoke no particular reaction either in the characters or in the implicit reader. It is not an attitude toward the events described which characterizes the marvelous, but the nature of these events."[6] In other words, the pure marvelous is not defined by a hesitating reaction to the supernatural; supernatural events are accepted as reasonable within the diegesis. Todorov also discusses in detail two transitory subgenres, the fantastic-uncanny and the fantastic-marvelous, that exist between the fantastic and these other two genres on the continuum. These subgenres "include works that sustain the hesitation characteristic of the true fantastic for a long period, but ultimately end in the marvelous or the uncanny."[7] In other words, the supernatural event is ultimately found to have a reasonable explanation (the uncanny) or is found to belong to a larger supernatural world (the marvelous).

Todorov's taxonomy of genre brings up many issues of border and exception that film and literary theorists have worked through with more attention to the historicity and process of the circuits of text, reception, and criticism, as well as the formal contradictions between the semantic and syntactic elements of genre.[8] Nevertheless, by locating the defining feature of the genre of the fantastic in the realm of affect—that is, in the moment of hesitation—Todorov's theory resonates with my discussion of the melodramatic mode as being defined by its mood. The melodramatic moods of suspense, melancholy, and lateness are comparable to Todorov's hesitation. Of course, hesitation about a supernatural event is not typically the same kind of hesitation that characterizes melodramatic moods. However, crossover exists between the melodramatic mode, with its hybridization of historical referentiality with magical causality and a sense of fatedness, and the fantastic, with its suspension of a clear decision about the rational or supernatural determinacy of events. Furthermore, both melodrama and the fantastic are mediated by primary affects connected to the act of waiting and late arrival, not to mention spectrality and the hauntedness of mundane life by occult forces.

As Immanuel Kim has pointed out, analyses of North Korean politics and media tend to overstate the degree of ideological homogeneity and uniformity, and family comedies and other genres concerned with everyday life are an important contrast to dominant state and party mythologies.[9] Another possibility opened up by the centering of political myth is to move even further away from the mundane, the rational, and the historical and include supernatural events. Politically speaking, the effects of the inclusion of supernatural events vary. They can be used to validate explicitly the mythology and cosmology of official ideology, to veil a social critique of the regime, or to follow the counterpoint of melodrama and combine these two possibilities. Just as significant as the political and allegorical dimensions of supernatural events in North Korean cinema, however, is how they restructure melodramatic affect—lateness, pathos, sympathy—around the hesitation toward

the supernatural discussed by Todorov. Many North Korean films with supernatural elements draw from folktales and fantasy myths and according to Todorov's strict taxonomy would belong to the fantastic-marvelous because they eventually show the supernatural events to be unremarkable aspects of a fully magical world. However, the turning points of their narratives are often moments of uncertainty when historical referentiality suddenly gives way to the supernatural. What is held in abeyance for the duration of the fantastic film is not necessarily whether there might be a reasonable explanation for the supernatural event but how the fantastic-marvelous story and aesthetic relate to the opening realist frame and therefore to the realist genres that are dominant in the film industry as a whole. Therefore, even when the diegesis is fully supernatural, a question of referentiality, a dialectical relationship with the ostensibly realist genres, remains in play.

Adaptations of folktales began in North Korea with *Tale of Chunhyang* (*Ch'unhyangjŏn*, dir. Yun Yong-gyu, 1958) and *Tale of Simch'ŏng* (*Simch'ŏngjŏn*, dir. Pak Pyŏng-su, 1957). That many fantastic films are also period dramas (*sagŭk*) set during the Koryŏ period (AD 918–1392) or the Chosŏn period (1392–1897) adds to the sense of historical distance, allowing the modern and contemporary history of Korea to appear only symbolically or tangentially within the synthesis of supernatural events with representations of peasant rebellion against the feudal system. Suk-Young Kim argues that because it predates the socialist revolution and unassailable state leadership of North Korea, theater and cinema have not focused on figures from the feudal past and have viewed it negatively.[10] Although it is true that the number of period dramas set prior to the twentieth century is lower than in South Korea, it is notable that some of the most popular North Korean films—including *Hong Kildong* (dir. Kim Kil-in, 1986) and *Pulgasari* (dir. Chŏng Kŏn-jo and Shin Sang-ok, 1985)—are based on folktales and use the distant past as a backdrop. To explain the appeal of period dramas based on folktales, one should consider their incorporation of the fantastic and consider the new kinds of reflection on history and reality that the fantastic creates.

Hesitancy toward the question of referentiality is the primary mood of North Korean supernatural films; the fantastic folk of supernatural films are not allegorically equal to the nation-people of juche realism. The nation-people emerge organically out of the historical conditions of colonialism and civil war, whereas the fantastic folk tend to battle against mythical versions of feudal lords, the Sino-centric dynastic system, and the early modern Japanese invasion. Even more than revolutionary operas, fantastic films elevate the folk to a supernatural and transhistorical subject, creating a fully mythical version of ethnicity. This separation of the folk struggle and folk origins from a modern notion of historical processes pushes North Korean cinema yet further away from historical materialism and also takes the struggle of the folk out of the project of modern nation-building. If the modern state is haunted by the death of the nation-people, to which it can never be fully adequate, the fantastic folk create a temporal distance from this

modern problem while never fully circumventing it, because of the intractable allegorical connections to the modern historical present. Rendering the folk fantastic does not have a transparently hegemonic or subversive effect, but it changes the framing of the melodramatic allegory so that the historical and political references become more obscure or fungible. Therefore, the hesitation of the fantastic is also a matter of medium and form; it concerns an audience's hesitation in the face of the end of cinematic realism and the beginning of fantastic spectacle. Perhaps the introduction of fantastic elements was a matter of creating more mass appeal for North Korean films domestically and abroad—in other words, a simple consideration of entertainment—but it also had unintended effects.

The fantastic folk have no clearly defined moment of historical origin, such as the Japanese colonial period. On the one hand, this can make the Korean folk appear eternal and transform ethnicity into something purely mythological (and hence potentially powerful ideologically). On the other hand, the fantastic folk's enemies and historical mission are somewhat more ambiguous. Assuming that period dramas are always also about the historical present, the question arises what the allegorical connections might be between the fantastic folk of the film and the real national subject of the historical present. North Korean realism tries to make that connection as obvious as possible by explaining how the struggle against Japanese and US imperialism continues. But for fantastic films set in the ancient past, the heroes are heroes of the common folk, not the Korean nation per se, and the enemies are often class enemies. There is a manifest sense that the eternal struggle of the fantastic folk may not map onto the politics of North Korean nation-building. Hesitation in the face of the supernatural is one affect within the melodramatic mode of these fantastic films that makes the politics of their moods ambiguous and their stories potentially more universal and utopian than national history.[11]

MAGICAL SOCIALIST REALISM

Tale of Hŭngbu (dir. Kim Sŏng-gyo and Yi Sŏng-hwan, 1963) is based on a p'ansori fiction recorded in writing during the Chosŏn period. There are numerous modern fictional, cinematic, and animated versions of the story, including fiction by major writers of colonial Korea (Ch'ae Man-sik) and South Korea (Ch'oe In-hun) and a recent South Korean film version, *Heung-boo: The Revolutionist* (dir. Cho Kŭn-hyŏn, 2018).[12] Interpretations of the story include historical studies that try to discern from the text the consciousness and imagination of Chosŏn-era people, philosophical studies that read the primary conflict between the brothers Hŭngbu and Nolbu as a Hegelian dialectic, and Marxist studies that anachronistically discuss their class dynamic in terms of capitalist alienation.[13] The variety of possible readings show the cultural richness of the story in multiple contexts in Korea. The 1963 North Korean film adaptation reflects the context of post-revolutionary

socialist humanism, particularly in its melodramatic contrast between the greed and sloth of the elder brother, Nolbu (T'ae Ŭl-min), and the moral goodness of the humble and kind Hŭngbu (Kim Se-yŏng). The film hybridizes the fantastic narrative of a folktale with a local socialist realism film style. Although structured by the typical moods of melodrama, the moral and political meaning of supernatural events and the affect of hesitation in the face of them directs melodrama's temporality of waiting and late arrival toward the mystery of magical phenomena. Melodrama provides some consistency between realism and the fantastic within the hybrid aesthetic, while the fantastic transforms the allegories of the melodramatic mode even further away from historical referentiality toward a mystical and decontextualized moral occult. As explained above, the political and ideological effects of this hybrid aesthetic are ambiguous.

Studies of magical realism have tended to focus on contemporary literature and the synthesis of fantastic indigenous cultural traditions with the modern novel form.[14] As a film that precedes the practice and label of magical realism in the international literature market, there is no artistic or contrived cultural synthesis to the fantastic narrative and aesthetic *of Tale of Hŭngbu*. The story follows closely the original folktale, which already contains proto-socialist moral ideals expressed through supernatural events. When their father passes away, Nolbu tricks his brother, cutting him out of the inheritance of the family home and property. Hŭngbu lives humbly in poverty while Nolbu is lazy and enjoys living off of his inheritance. Nolbu and his equally pernicious wife appropriate food that Hŭngbu has gathered for his children. Nolbu hits Hŭngbu's daughter when she steps on a paper spirit tablet (*chibang*) that has blown off the table during a *chesa* (ancestor worship) ritual. He refuses to provide any rice or money to Hŭngbu, even to feed his hungry children, forcing the family to migrate to the mountains, clear some land, and become farmers and clothing artisans. Three different socialist realist–style montages represent the joyful labor of the family clearing the land, planting crops, and making clothes. However, the kind Hŭngbu gives his meager profits away to a struggling young girl in the marketplace for her sick mother's medication. Upon his wife's urging, he reluctantly returns to Nolbu again to request assistance, but his brother again refuses to help with rice or a bit of money. He refuses to call him younger brother (*tongsaeng*) and beats him with a stick. Desperate for money, Hŭngbu agrees to receive punishment in place of a criminal, which upsets his wife; however, he refuses to go through with it when he realizes that another man waiting to be punished has received a higher rate from the same man, stating that he does not want that "dirty money."

The scenes of the first half of the film are typical socialist realist depictions of feudal land relations. Because the film is set during the Chosŏn period, the economic system depicted does not have all the same characteristics as the colonial-period system of *My Home Village* or *The Flower Girl*. There is no Japanese army, no colonial prisons, and no collusion between colonial capitalism and the

system of large landowning and tenant farming. However, the costuming, editing, and cinematography—such as a low angle of framing for Nolbu and a high angle of framing for Hŭngbu—present the class relationship similar to the way peasants and landlords are presented in films set during the colonial period. These shots, along with the dramatic and melancholy music, establish an aesthetic analogy between period dramas and socialist realism pertaining to social class and poverty, even if the period settings are different. The class conflict between peasants and landowners, which North Korean realism situates in the national problem of colonization and the class problem of the colonial economic system, is elevated into a nearly eternal moral struggle between humble commoners (*paeksŏng*) dedicated to mutual aid and those greedy for property. Although the meaning of the folktale would seem to be consonant with, or even prefigure, state socialism, the revolutionary party, state, and leadership are absent from the period folktale, opening new possibilities for political signification.

The supernatural events that make up the most memorable part of the folktale begin only in the last third. After setting up a nesting shelf for a swallow on the wall of his family's home, Hŭngbu fights off a snake, saves a baby swallow, and nurses it with his family before returning it to its nest. The swallow survives and can leave the nest. A voice-over describes the winter migration path of the swallow while typical North Korean cinematic images of nature romanticize the landscape. The following spring, the swallow returns and drops a seed from its nest, which Hŭngbu decides to plant, knowing the bird has returned from the south. The first supernatural shots show the massive gourds on the vines that grow from the seed, which are crosscut and contrasted with shots of his brother Nolbu gnawing on expensive meat at home (meat-eating being a common sign of large landownership in mundane films such as *My Home Village* and *The Flower Girl*). The first gourd they harvest is so heavy that Hŭngbu and his wife must cut it in half with a large saw. The scene again invokes socialist realism, despite the artisanal rather than industrial nature of the labor, as lyrical music accompanies the rhythm of their sawing. The couple's diegetic singing and rhythmic swinging, the close-ups of the faces of the onlooking children, and the subtitles that provide the emotive lyrics to the audience create a joyful mood glorifying the labor of the family. Then the giant gourd opens, revealing a nice house sitting in mist (figure 11). Two ghostly women walk down the stairs carrying some treasures. They bow to the family and say in unison that they have brought good fortune from the south. The inside of the house is immaculate and has a very large storehouse of rice and many reams of silk.

Nolbu finds out that his brother has become wealthy and visits his house, where he damages the garden and the paper wall before gazing at the furniture and treasures. After Hŭngbu tells him about the magic swallow, he takes a swallow from its nest and throws it to the ground. He ties a string around the bird and then grows his own giant gourds from its seeds, trying to replicate his brother's success. However, his ploy and his prayers do not pay off. In an analogous scene, he has two servants cut the giant gourd with a saw. Nolbu and his wife watch them and

FIGURE 11. On the left, as Hŭngbu and his family saw open the magic gourd as they sing a folk song from the source texts, whose lyrics appear on screen. On the right, the opened gourd reveals a large house for them.

sway rhythmically, but do none of the work themselves. And instead of treasures, the gourd reveals three *yangban* ghosts and their debt collector, who demand payment. Nolbu decides to saw open another gourd against his wife's advice, but they have to do it themselves because their servants have abandoned them. This time monks appear and encircle Nolbu, castigating him for his greed. The third gourd produces bandits who beat him and steal his possessions. Finally, the fourth gourd that they open unleashes a storm that destroys their house. In midst of these scenes, the film cuts to Hŭngbu as he shares his silk and rice freely with his fellow commoners.

The combination of socialist realism with a folktale creates the conditions for the hesitation that typifies the fantastic. Because the characters belong to the magical and marvelous world of the folktale, they do not express this hesitation in the face of the supernatural or question the possibility of the events that they experience and witness. However, the hesitation could be better described as an ongoing tension between the realist genre of the first two-thirds of the film and the allegorical speculation enabled by the turn to the fantastic. The first part of the film provokes sympathy for the kind and humble Hŭngbu and his family. What does one make of the moment when the first gourd cracks open, smoke fills the mise-en-scène, and the large house appears between the two halves of the rind? Because the folktale is widely known, one cannot expect great surprise or hesitation at the initial moment of the supernatural event. What would more likely cause hesitation, contemplation, and cognition in the audience is the question of how the mood of wonder at the supernatural elements of the folktale relate to or are integrated into the dominant conventions of socialist realism. When the two ghosts approach Hŭngbu's family, speak in unison, and hand them trays of goods, how does this magical reward and justice for the goodness and hard work of Hŭngbu's family relate to the film's familiar depictions of labor and social classes? What is the allegorical meaning of the fantastic aesthetic of the supernatural in this synthesis of it with socialist realism?

Part of the answer to these questions lies in the melodramatic mode. As analyzed in *The Newlyweds*, socialist realist films of the 1950s and 1960s presented mythologies of a socialist economy that would provide for those who dedicate themselves to economic development. The melodramatic mode—its temporality of lateness and its mood of melancholic psychological struggle—permeate these fictions and link the films to other genres. It allows the film to present a moral occult of socialist humanism, gender equality, and the nuclear family working against tendencies toward moral iniquity, oppressive paternalism, and the temporal lag of family traditionalism. In the case of *Tale of Hŭngbu*, the dominant mythologies of socialist realism become supernatural myths—Hŭngbu's humility and kindness are rewarded and Nolbu's greed and laziness are punished, both magically. The melodramatic mode, with its synthetic and trans-genre capacities, is able to create analogies between the mythological world of socialist realism and the fantastic world of the folktale, with their shared material and spiritual rewards for goodness and morality. The Korean people are not a historical subject formed through the resistance to colonialism and postwar reconstruction. Rather, they are a transhistorical subject whose origin is the commoners of a mythical and distant past. Likewise, the enemies of the commoners are not the historical enemies of the North Korean revolution, the large landowners who collaborated with the Japanese, but the lure of greed among the commoners themselves (Nolbu is visited by ghosts of the ruling *yangban* class, who demand payment of debts). Instead of economic and social conditions producing a certain outcome through a kind of allegorical causality, a magical nature intervenes to establish a more just social order.

Melodrama's turn to the fantastic re-enchants the good folk, giving them a mythical status supported by this magical nature—the sparrow, the seed, the gourd, and the ghosts. In the passage from mundane mythology to the supernatural, the folk and its heroes are glorified beyond the bounds of real nature and history. According to the story's original folktale philosophy, the tale is about the rewards that nature provides for those who are kind, humble, and good and the destruction by those who are greedy and try to manipulate the natural order for personal gain. On the other hand, the palimpsest of the folktale and the socialist realist aesthetic conveys that being kind, humble, and good entails doing the labor of the folk and sharing the spoils of nature with them. If the role of the fantastic folk is to act in accordance with the supernatural, the connection between this role and the historical role of the national people represented in realist genres remains unclear. Because the magical sparrow provides for Hŭngbu and his family and punishes Nolbu for his greed, the modern governmental role of the party, state, and leader as the representative of the interests of the people is rendered metaphysical through symbolism or set aside completely. The film questions all the philosophical and ideological presuppositions of juche thought as a human-centered philosophy, rendering magical what is supposed to derive from man, who is "the master of everything and decides everything."[15] It remains unclear if the supernatural nonhuman elements function as symbols for secular human

actors, or if they represent what exists beyond human will and human action. The setting of the distant past explains the absence of human subjectivity to the modern viewer, without eliminating the persistent question of the relationship between the vague period setting and the contemporary moment. The mood of hesitancy and wonder, punctuated by folk songs, the laboring body, and the emotive expression of naive humility of Hŭngbu's family provide a backdrop for this question of the role of magical thinking in socialist realism. The moods of the fantastic, then, serve an affectively critical function, opening a space within it for a folk that is not yet a nation-people.

LEGENDARY BANDITS

Tale of Hŭngbu stands out as an example of a fantastic film made before the incorporation of elements of East Asian commercial cinema for the purposes of making North Korean cinema more entertaining to domestic and international audiences.[16] As discussed in the previous chapter, North Korean cinema was already very international in 1963. However, filmmaking and film criticism were still structured fundamentally by the dichotomy between capitalist commercial cinema and socialist realism's political mobilization and articulation of ideological perspectives on national historical experience. As discussed by Steven Chung, by the 1980s the North Korean film industry was trying to compete with the spectacles of world commercial cinema from Hollywood to Hong Kong.[17] The rest of this chapter traces the developments of the fantastic aesthetic and its representation of the folk beyond the era of socialist realism and into this period of incorporating capitalist commercial cinema. *Rim Kkŏk-jŏng* (1986–1993) and *Hong Kildong* (1986) also represent the commoners of the feudal, pre-national past, but because their supernatural martial arts spectacles create a mood of action and suspense that clashes with realism, they appear more aware of the conventionality, rather than referentiality, of realist films. Whereas the fantastic aesthetic of *Tale of Hŭngbu* engages with socialist realism and economic development, the emergence of the supernatural in these later films was a response to the exhaustion of juche realism of the 1970s and its repetition of the origin story of North Korean national subjectivity and leadership in partisan resistance to Japanese colonial rule. The two titular heroes are bandits and warriors of the distant past who battle the Japanese and the ruling *yangban* class, respectively, using their supernatural strength and martial abilities. In the context of the 1980s, the films were tasked with reinvigorating the dominant realist depiction of anticolonial revolution, and the heroes became representatives of the fantastic folk. These characters were therefore dialectically related to the real historical heroes of the North Korean revolution: Kim Il Sung and his partisan compatriots.

Although a great deal of literature of the 1970s tended to mythologize the biography of Kim Il Sung, it is telling that his image is absent from the cinematic classics of the period. There is a tendency for the cinematic image, no matter how

spectacular, to render the mythological mundane. Furthermore, Kim Il Sung seems to have been unwilling to allow actors to play the film versions of himself, the way that Mikheil Gelovani and Aleksei Dikiy portrayed Stalin in Soviet films. The mythical depiction of heroism in *Rim Kkŏk-jŏng* and *Hong Kildong* is able to occupy a space opened by the lack of explicitly biographical cinematic mythologies about the ultimate hero of the national revolution. On the other hand, these characters belong to the feudal past and therefore would not threaten the mystique of the leader, which is perhaps heightened by the absence of his image and his constant presence in dialogue and song more than it would be by a realistic performance.[18] Just as *Tale of Hŭngbu* positions him between the fantastic realm of a supernatural nature that rewards goodness among the folk and the socialist humanist idealization of labor and mutual aid, *Rim Kkŏk-jŏng* and *Hong Kildong* are both inside and outside history. This positioning affects how the melodramatic narrative plays out in the films. They are fantastic heroes of the folk, but they are simultaneously restricted by a feudal class system that prevents the formation of any modern sense of national identity. As in *The Tale of Hŭngbu*, the folk remain commoners (*paeksŏng*) who can only suggest the future formation of a national people. At the same time, the melodramatic struggle between commoners and noblemen (*yangban*) can take on utopian desires and meaning that do not belong directly to the North Korean master narrative of state formation and are therefore more open to various affects and allegorical readings.

Based on a colonial-period novel by Hong Myŏng-hŭi, *Rim Kkŏk-jŏng* is fantastic in a limited sense.[19] Hong was a socialist writer and wrote the novel as a historical novel meant to dramatize the exploits of a class hero in part to transform him into a precursor to the modern socialist movement. The story of the novel and the film is set in a realistic version of the Chosŏn period and follows Rim, a butcher who experiences class exploitation before joining and then leading a band of robbers against the noblemen. Although overlaid with a modern socialist message about global revolution, the narrative presentation of the economic and political reasons for the robberies and the revolt is mostly a realist attempt at historical accuracy. An authoritative voice-over at the end of each episode also marks the events of the story as historical.

Because of the pretension to realism in the novelistic story, many of the supernatural events of the film version are an effect of the visual and sonic aspects of the cinematic medium. By the 1980s, the cinema of attraction had returned to North Korean film in the form of special effects and spectacle.[20] Most of the supernatural events of the film are impossible moments of martial arts action in which a bandit throws an evil nobleman a long distance or exaggerated sound effects contravene natural sound. Perhaps these movements would be categorized not as supernatural events in Todorov's sense but as spectacular exaggerations in an otherwise mundane period drama. However, they belong to a depiction of a hero whose strength and abilities lie somewhere between the human and the superhuman. In episode

one, Rim (Chʼoe Chʼang-su) and his brothers hunt birds with preternatural archery and rock-throwing skills. Later, a commoner is smashing open some walnuts using all his strength and then offers to do the same for Rim. However, Rim says it is unnecessary and takes some walnuts in his hand and cracks them open with a couple fingers. A close-up of another commoner's face captures a look of hesitation watching such seemingly supernatural strength. They defeat large numbers of Japanese invaders at the beginning of the episode and in later episodes defeat the noblemen's soldiers, tossing them great distances and fighting off their weapons with their bare hands. Much of the choreography and filming of the action borrows from East Asian martial arts films, particularly the Chinese *wuxia* genre, which frequently includes elements of the fantastic.

Despite its spectacular action and violence, *Rim Kkŏk-jŏng* retains the melodramatic pathos and moods of mundane melodrama. Along the lines of *The Flower Girl* and *Sea of Blood*, the commoners are led to revolution both by the immiseration and expropriation of the noblemen, the wounding or death of family members, or the protection of the innocence of women. For example, Rim's friend Kwak O-ju joins the bandits soon after the murder of his wife by a nobleman's son. At first, the governor gives Rim special permission to farm because of his exploits as a warrior against the Japanese invasion of the Cholla province in 1555, including beheading the leader. However, he is ostracized by the nobility once he reveals his identity as a butcher, and then the noblemen try to expropriate the villagers' crops. After he uses his superhuman strength to fight off the noblemen and their soldiers, the magistrate detains Rim, his father, and his sister. Rim is initially morally resistant to the activity of the bandits. However, the laughing evil magistrate orders the execution of his father and sister in front of him, and he narrowly escapes with the help of the villagers. He then dedicates himself fully to leading them, and his brothers join as well.

The scene of his brother Talsok's death at the conclusion of episode four is another example of how the film incorporates melodrama. At the climax of the multipart story, Talsok's death at the hands of noblemen's soldiers is depicted with the heightened weeping, sorrow, and pathos that appear in juche realist films. It is then that Rim declares in a speech to the bandits, "We will get our revenge a thousandfold" and "We should prepare for the big battle to cleanse the world of all *yangban* blood." As the episode ends, the voice-over describes the affective origins of the revolution: "The sorrow over Talsok's death has turned into a monstrous vengeance. All their battles were the revenge of the common people, and a dreadful vengeance toward which noblemen were too afraid to lift a finger." Close-ups, quick zooms, whip pans, and music give a melodramatic expressivity to these scenes of violence and mourning, mimicking the moods of melodrama while adding the movement and sound of martial arts action (figure 12).

Through the melodramatic mode and moods, the film creates analogies with its mundane counterparts, with which it has a dialectical relationship. Although its

FIGURE 12. In *Rim Kkŏkjŏng*, *Part I* (1986), the folk hero, after defeating a horde of soldiers with his superhuman strength, prepares for his mortal battle with the head nobleman.

historical references are limited to the Chosŏn period, multiple events in the film inspire comparison with the history of the Manchuria-based national liberation movement of the 1930s, the biography of Kim Il Sung, and the formation of the North Korean partisan state under conditions of the Cold War. After becoming a leader of the bandits, Rim creates a kind of guerrilla base in Yangju, scenes of which are reminiscent, besides the costuming, of rural partisan outposts in juche realist films. When Rim goes undercover as a nobleman in Seoul, there are echoes of Cold War espionage and the mapping of class conflict onto the geography of the two Koreas. The battle against the noblemen, including ecstatic scenes of ransacking their homes and expropriating their property and lands, are similar in style and action to the realist melodramas about peasant revolts against colonial-period landowners. Although not a modern political party, the band of robbers gradually becomes more than criminals, as Rim encourages a political consciousness beyond robbery, and their moral virtue is clarified in contrast to the evil noblemen. Finally, there is the personality of Rim himself. The bandits call him admiral or boss (*taejang*), a term used only occasionally for Kim Il Sung, who typically receives the grander honorific of general (*changgun*); however, the intentional comparison is obvious. Rim displays heroic qualities of martial prowess and ideological purity, the latter expressed through an absolute compassion for the commoners and enmity for the noblemen. The role Rim plays as the affective center of the melodramatic political conflict resonates with the personality cult of Kim Il Sung, even if the leader very rarely appears on screen as a character.

The fantastic aesthetic and the hesitation that it causes—particularly in the face of the question of whether Rim is a historical or supernatural being—reveal more explicitly the ethical and mythic structures underpinning realist genres. It takes the mythology of heroism, normally articulated through mundane melodrama, and renders it magical. As with magical socialist realism, the political and ideological effects are ambiguous. The film fits with, and even elevates into the realm of the eternal and supernatural, the representation of class struggle against landowners and noblemen, whether of the feudal or the colonial period. However, the historical setting means that the fantastic folk cannot be shown to develop into the national people represented by a virtuous socialist state. Considering the timeline of Korean history, the commoners must necessarily fail in their mission to eradicate the blood of noblemen from the world.[21] Representing the folk through an allegorical and fantastic period drama in some ways highlights the temporal distance between the modern national people and the collective origins they are typically given. Bringing the people out of the realm of modern history and into folkloric history and reimagining them as commoners (*paeksŏng*) lead to the generalization of their revolutionary spirit. Their class revolt against the noblemen is not a just a feudal peasant uprising; it takes on the meaning of a more global levelling. Allegorically speaking, this opens up the interpretive question of whether their revolution is consonant with North Korean national liberation, based in colonial politics and nationalism, or if it represents another mode of revolution. In historical and period dramas, these dialectical relationships with realist genres and with the distant historical past reflect a fundamental ambiguity and spectrality of the modern state and the degree to which it can adequately stand in for the nation-people that it governs.

According to Georg Lukács, it is the middle-of-the-road characters of historical novels who are best able to illuminate the contemporary meaning of the historical past—those characters who do not have strong allegiances from the outset but move between parties in a conflict.[22] Although both *Rim Kkŏk-jŏng* and *Hong Kildong* eventually take a clear political side, they begin on the middle way. Rim first fights for the ruling class in order to repel the Japanese invasion, and it takes discrimination, exploitation, and the execution of his family members before Rim fully commits to the bandits. Rim, the son of a butcher, is born into class discrimination. On the other hand, Hong Kildong, a literary character based in part on the historical figure of Rim Kkŏk-jŏng, is organically in the middle, because he is the son of a nobleman and a concubine of low birth. Just as Rim's in-betweenness exposes multiple viewpoints and shows how ideology and political repression work in the maintenance of the political system, Hong Kildong moves from an early life among the nobility to training in the magic arts with an elder master and combatting bandits, to eventually leading those very bandits, along with the commoners, against a foreign invasion of Japanese ninjas. He is half noble by birth but also has a familial and political affiliation with the commoners, which allows him to become a hero with both learning and political authenticity.

In the North Korean film version, Kildong's movement between various classes ends with him becoming a protosocialist and protonationalist hero; however, the king refuses to reward Kildong for his victory over the Japanese invasion by approving his marriage to his love interest, Yŏnhwa, who is of purely noble birth. He is forced to escape with her, the bandits, and the commoner soldiers, sailing out on a ship to "find a land where all can enjoy equal rights and live harmoniously free from poverty," according to the final voice-over. As a middle-of-the-road hero, Kildong is able to reveal various social contradictions embedded in the historical representation of the Chosŏn period. His birth itself is a transgression against social class, suggesting the possibility of a world without it. His ostracization from the nobility allows him to train his skill and magic, through which he is able to contribute to the Korean national mission of resisting Japanese invasion. However, the intractability of class society under the feudal system leads him to seek a more ideal and utopian future, not so subtly projecting the future DPRK as the eventual leveler of social hierarchies and liberator of the commoners from poverty. The full social complexity of the contradiction between the nationalist narrative of nearly eternal anti-Japanese resistance and internal class conflicts would not be explored without Kildong's middle-of-the-road heroism.

The story of *Hong Kildong* is based on a Chosŏn-period novel whose authorship is unknown and the matter of some controversy.[23] Of course, neither the novel nor the film is historical fiction. Despite aspects of realism in both the novel and the North Korean film, the fantastic events and action are central. The film shares the details of Hong Kildong's birth and early life with the novel, but then diverges significantly, particularly in its depictions of Kildong's resistance to an invading band of Japanese ninjas, the Black Corps. There are so many versions of the Hong Kildong story that to facilitate comparison and maintain brevity, I will limit myself to the plot of the film. The circumstances of the births and social class of Rim and Kildong are different, but the effect is similar: Rim being a butcher and Kildong being the illegitimate son of a nobleman prevent each of them from reaping the rewards for their service in repelling a Japanese invasion. While this betrayal by the noblemen happens at the beginning of *Rim Kkŏk-jŏng*, it happens at the very end of *Hong Kildong*. Therefore, Rim turns gradually to combatting the noblemen in a class war after his resistance to a Japanese invasion in the opening scene. However, even though the legal wife of his father plots successfully to drive him and his mother out of the family and Yŏnhwa's family discriminates against him, Kildong (Ri Yŏng-ho) does not fully gain class consciousness until the end, after defeating the invading band of Japanese, when the king refuses to grant his marriage to Yŏnhwa.

Although each story ends up depicting class conflict with the noblemen and the feudal system, the difference between the two stories is important. One shows the veteran of a war with a foreign power refocusing his enmity toward an internal class enemy. The other is more overtly nationalist and uses stereotypes of the enemy Japanese—they are a sneaky army of ninjas infiltrating the Korean national

space; they are depicted as fascistic and intolerant of failure when one corps leader is executed for losing a battle; the leaders smile wickedly, and their evil cunning is accentuated by multiple zooms to close-ups, and so on. While the majority of *Rim Kkŏk-jŏng* focuses on the evils of the noblemen, *Hong Kildong* is more concerned with defending the nation prior to the final scene when he, Yŏnhwa, and the bandits sail away in search of a more just and equal society. These two plot lines show how the modern adaptations transform the meaning of the folktales in order to present different versions of the fantastic folk, but that even in an obviously nationalist period drama such as *Hong Kildong*, the politics of the folk cannot be fully contained within the framework of the nation-state and nation building.

Much of the joyful and entertaining mood of the film derives from its *wuxia*-style magical martial arts sequences, as well as Kildong's iconic purple scarf, the fantasy-style costuming, and the outrageous sound effects. Unlike the novel, the fantastic sequences begin rather early in the film. Like Rim, Kildong's alliance with the bandits is gradual. He first encounters them as a young boy migrating with his mother after their ostracization from his father's home. He tries to defend himself and his mother from the bandits' theft, kidnapping, and sexual violence, but needs the aid of a magical "grandfather" who saves them. After seeing the old man easily fight off and freeze the enemies, Kildong requests to train with him. In an archetypal journey for a hero, the old man trains him in the mountains, teaching him both martial arts and magic. Kildong meets the bandits again and they ask him to join them, but he refuses and kills one of them. After the old man refuses to train Kildong further because he has become distracted by his love for Yŏnhwa, he leaves the mountains and returns home. Eventually, Kildong makes amends with the bandits, even the brother of the man he killed, as they join together to resist the Japanese invaders and eventually escape together on the ship.

Although clearly a nationalist and romantic melodrama—Korea struggles with Japan and Kildong deals with unrequited love—the fantastic fight sequences of *Hong Kildong* in many ways exceed melodramatic affect. Although an action film as well, much of the violence in *Rim Kkŏk-jŏng* remains tied to mundane melodramas, particularly the many scenes of class violence against the families of Rim and the other bandits. The use of stop action to capture multiple ninja stars hitting trees (or in one scene Kildong's body); the repetitive use of zoom shots to capture the resolute or wry facial expressions of combatants; and the magical jumping, climbing, and use of spells—the affective forms of such shots and sequences are closer to the joy of martial arts spectacle and slapstick comedy. The Japanese villains have a cartoonish quality that at once racializes them and removes them from any historical context. The fantastic in *Rim Kkŏk-jŏng* inspires hesitation, because it is unclear if Rim is a historical or supernatural being, if he is a folk hero fully of the past or a precursor to Kim Il Sung. *Hong Kildong* tends more toward the marvelous, because the supernatural events are a given and the story is more detached from any realist historical reference. It is certainly the closest that North

Korean melodramatic film has gotten to fantastic entertainment spectacle. This is an expression of the pressure in the 1980s to move beyond the aesthetic of realism. However, it is also a sign of the difficulty of containing the Hong Kildong story within the framework of a modern nationalist film culture.

The fantastic folk and the hero who appear in the Chosŏn-period story remain caught between a variety of political statuses as the story is adapted to North Korean political representation. For example, the typical North Korean narrative shows the utopian North Korean state emerging out of the struggle against Japanese colonialism; however, for both legendary bandits, Rim and Kildong, the struggle against the Japanese leads them to (a) an apocalyptic class war against the noblemen and (b) sailing away from Korea to find a society with equality and justice. In the very least, the hybridization of melodrama with the fantastic and with period drama disrupts the typical rhythm and causality of the unfolding of national and class consciousness.

THE MONSTROUS GAZE

The only fantasy film more well-known outside of North Korea than Hong Kildong is *Pulgasari,* a reptilian monster film often compared to the Godzilla franchise (figure 13). Adding to the mystique of the film, as well as the whole of 1980s North Korean film industry, is the story of Kim Jong Il supposedly ordering the kidnapping of actress Ch'oe Ŭn-hŭi, followed by her ex-husband, the director Shin Sang-ok. Without repeating the details of this affair, it suffices to state that the incorporation of the fantastic into 1980s North Korean films reflect Shin's artistic influence, as well as the goal of Kim Jong Il and the state to bring the film industry more in line with international standards. At the same time, fantasy was not the only recourse, as Shin and Ch'oe also made a number of realist films, including some based on the recuperated texts of colonial-period proletarian literature writers.[24] Nonetheless, of all the films Shin directed or produced in North Korea, *Pulgasari*, which he left incomplete when he returned to South Korea in 1985, has been subjected to the most speculation concerning its political message and its potential criticisms of the North Korean state.

Pulgasari is set during the twelfth-century peasant rebellions against the Confucian court. However, the image of the monster Pulgasari is based in part on Godzilla and features the veteran of Japanese monster films, Satsuma Kenpachirō, as the rubber-suit actor. The narrative of oppression and peasant revolution certainly fits the typical themes of North Korean melodramatic films. A father imprisoned for making metal tools for the peasant rebels constructs a Golem-like figurine out of boiled rice. When the daughter spills her blood on it, the figurine gradually grows into a monster that helps the peasants defeat the landed gentry. The narrative takes another turn, however, when the monster's insatiable and automatic need to accumulate metal endangers the very peasants he has helped to liberate, and the daughter, Ami (Chang Sŏn-hŭi), must sacrifice herself to destroy him.

FIGURE 13. Having grown enormous from being fed iron by the commoners, the revolutionary monster Pulgasari destroys the palace of the king.

The film is easily read as a thinly veiled allegory for either capitalism or the Korean Workers' Party, which both followed a similar trajectory from liberation to accumulation. Although *Pulgasari* probably avoided censorship because of its antifeudal themes and the conceivability that the monster represents the contradictions of the capitalist stage of development, it is difficult not to read the film's primary allegorical-historical reference as the Korean Workers' Party and the North Korean state socialist system, particularly in its passage from liberation in the 1940s to accumulation in the subsequent decades.

Pulgasari parodies the conventions of subject realism in both its narrative and its form. It takes up the science fiction theme of a monster that acts unconsciously and is therefore dangerous despite himself. Pulgasari emerges among the people and becomes a sublime physical force of revolution, but then unwittingly becomes the agent of accumulation endangering the lives of the peasants. This narrative works against the typical causality and referentiality of a production of subject realism in which peasant suffering, party-led revolt, and the smooth post-revolutionary construction of socialism are presented as the entirely conscious historical activity of the national subject. Considering the humanism of juche thought, which proclaims that man is the master of everything, the film's use of an unwitting science fiction monster in the narrative role of the revolutionary subject slyly parodies the master narrative of history as a process of a totalizing human consciousness

and highlights how the human sovereignty of the party or leader can never fully
govern historical and natural processes.

Another way *Pulgasari* parodies realist conventions is through the reiteration
and inversion of the socialist realist gaze.[25] In the final scene of *The Fall of Berlin*
(dir. Mikheil Chiaureli, 1950), Stalin steps from the airplane and shots of the ador-
ing stares of the Soviet soldiers and citizens visually articulate the leader as the
subjective center not only of a popular personality cult but also the entirety of
geopolitical history. Bazin discussed this centrality of Stalin in the socialist realist
aesthetic as a mummified image of history and the subject of history.[26] Although
Kim Il Sung rarely appears in North Korean films, characters often look toward the
camera with the same kind of adoration and emotional attachment for the leader
in countless North Korean films (often when a character is conveying a message
from the invisible leader). After the villagers' political victory against the king, the
camera takes the perspective of the monster's gaze rather than the leader, filming
the villagers looking up at the monster, offering him their metal tools and lament-
ing his appetite. This analogy created formally between the monster and the leader
is possible only in film, and it allows the film to throw into question the version of
causality and referentiality in which the sovereign leader is shown to govern the
trajectory of Universal History. Pulgasari takes the place of the human sovereign
of subject realism and prepares to consume the metal tools that the peasants have
gathered for him.

The end of *Pulgasari* resolves these cognitive tensions, but the allegorical mean-
ing of the monster is not necessarily an image of the Great Leader or the Korean
Workers' Party in a rubber suit. Before she sacrifices herself to kill the monster and
save the village, Ami pleads to it, "Please do not keep eating iron, or someday we
humans will have to use you to take over other countries." At this point, *Pulgasari*
takes on a much more ecological and materialist connotation, differing both from
a nation-centered parody of subject realism. In this scene, the allegory of accu-
mulation is expanded, so that the monster no longer seems to refer to the North
Korean state as such but to the process of enclosure and accumulation endemic to
modernity. Ami speaks of a perpetual war between humans if the monster, which
once embodied the will of the national people, forces the people to turn against
other nations. This discussion about the inherent imperialism of the state, or per-
haps the imperialism of the accumulative process in capitalist modernity, re-poses
the question of historical referentiality in a much more ambiguous way. *Pulgasari*
presents Ami's sacrifice as a way to preserve the revolution by extinguishing its
sovereign power and its unconscious and monstrous turn to accumulation.

The history of fantastic films in North Korea carries with it these alternative
possibilities for political allegory, because they move away enough from realism
and the modern master narrative of the North Korean nation-state to create new
constellations of supernatural signs whose historical meaning cannot be fully
derived from an analysis of the diegesis. In this way, the fantastic can reinvigorate

the critical possibilities of the melodramatic mode, because it does not draw direct lines between the affects of suffering and the signs of the redeemers of that suffering: the nation-people, the party, and the state. The fantastic folk precede the nation-people historically and also exceed the history to which the nation-people belong. Therefore, the possibility remains that they belong to a different moral occult, a different locus of truth, perhaps one that extends beyond the boundaries of the DPRK. If the purpose of many North Korean film melodramas is to create as clear a conflation as possible between class interests and national interests within the war between colonialism and anticolonial nationalism, the fantastic folk might be a transnational subject. As the bandits sail away at the end of *Hong Kildong,* or Ami warns against the inherent collusion between accumulation and the nation form in *Pulgasari*, other kinds of utopian desire express other possibilities for the melodramatization of the political.

Because these films borrow from the spectacles of capitalist commercial cinema, these alternative utopian desires are alienated and reified through the commodity form. Although still within the realm of the melodramatic mode, they use rapid camera movement, action, and shorter shot lengths to create a mood of action and suspense in which the supernatural exists in expanded human abilities, not as a kind of magical nature outside human will. Melodrama is still present in the pathos of these heroes and in the primary moral conflict, but the use of such moods of entertainment cinema introduces new embodied subjectivities expressive of fantastic identities beyond the Korean nation-people. While commodified and reified in spectacle, these magical excesses of subjectivity no doubt provoked affects in their audiences beyond the limited scope of state politics.

South Korea

4

National Cinema and the Melancholy of Liberation

World War II was followed by a dramatic restructuring of the geopolitical landscape, including the beginning of the Cold War communist-anticommunist conflict, the continued rise of the United States and the Soviet Union as hegemons, the strengthening and successes of Asian and African national liberation movements against European colonial rule, and, in the case of Korea, the end of the Japanese empire and the beginning of national division. Direct US military rule in the form of the US Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK) led to the founding of the ROK in 1948, and the DPRK was founded in the same year after the end of the Soviet occupation of North Chosŏn (1945–1948). Both nation-states presented themselves as agents of liberation from Japanese colonial rule. However, in writing cultural and social history, including the history of film cultures, we should not apply too abstractly the chronology of pre- and post-1945. Imagining that everything changed in Korean politics, culture, and cinema in 1945 and imagining that each was liberated from the effects of Japan's political, economic, and cultural imperialism have been important mythemes for the national liberation narratives of both the South Korean and North Korean states, which sought to solidify ethnonationalist identity through the public criticism and purging of pro-Japanese persons and ideas and the ideological mobilization of anti-Japanese sentiment. However, as histories of Korea's mid-twentieth century have shown, many of the events of the Cold War in Korea, including the Korean War, were shaped not only by Cold War politics but also by the previous period of Japanese imperialism and colonialism.[1] As the examination of early North Korean film theory in chapter 1 showed, it was not easy for the emerging states of the ROK and the DPRK to cast aside the effects of imperialism and colonialism, particularly under conditions of occupation by the United States and the Soviet Union.[2]

The most urgent problem in the flurry of new journals covering arts, culture, literature, politics, and history that emerged in Korea in the late 1940s was postcolonial nation-building. Although the division of the peninsula into North Chosŏn and South Chosŏn affected the ideas of national culture put forward in each territory, there was still a great deal of movement between North and South. For example, as discussed in chapter one, Ch'u Min, Sŏ Kwang-je, and Mun Ye-bong all belonged to the Chosŏn Film Alliance (Chosŏn yŏnghwa tongmaeng) under USAMGIK and Sŏ published *On Chosŏn Film* before all three went to North Korea and joined the film industry there. Comparative discussions of the two developing national cultures were common during this time, and numerous film journal essays, such as Kim Sŏk-dong's "Impressions of North Chosŏn," discussed in travelogue form, often very positively, Soviet occupation, everyday life, and the emergent cinema culture in the North.[3] Sovereignty and ideology divided the national community, but ideas of national cinema in the late 1940s in South Chosŏn, as in North Chosŏn, proposed the inherent historical unity of the Korean people and cinema's role in reflecting and constructing their collective experiences.

In order to accomplish the goal of creating a national cinema that would unite the Korean people, the narratives, style, and aesthetics of Korean film had to change. Immediately after liberation, An Chŏr-yŏng, who produced and directed the remarkable colonial-period melodrama *Fishermen's Fire* (1939) independently without the inclusion of Japanese propaganda, delineated what would be required to create a postcolonial Korean national cinema. In an essay titled "On the Management of Cinemas and Theaters in the Process of Nation-Building," published in the inaugural issue of *People's Art* (*Inmin yesul*) in South Chosŏn he wrote: "For half a century, under the yoke of the Japanese empire, Korean culture and all its sectors struggled greatly in being completely exploited and enslaved through colonialism, and we were unable to see the staging of plays or the screening of films that were cinematic in the genuine sense of the term, or to view advanced foreign films."[4] Referring to the nightmare of Japanese imperialism, An inveighs against the control of filmmaking by capitalism and imperialism and declares that the pro-Japanese artistic and commercial interests who exploited the Korean people should be completely swept away in order to open theaters that serve the project of nation-building.[5] Because Korean film artists did not have their own capital and were dependent on investors and the commercial interests of theater managers, they ended up losing their conscience, adhering to the strict system of control over culture, and colluding with the Japanese to produce a uniform set of films. It was unreasonable to expect that Korean cineastes could make artistic and conscientious films under these circumstances. He argues that Chosŏn films of the colonial period tended to stick to melodramatic dilemmas that "skillfully took advantage of the public sentiment of spiritual strife"; otherwise, they could not get their films

made.[6] He imagines the creation of an artistic and conscientious cinema that would be concerned with more than love and money and would not be subordinated to imperialist economic and political interests.[7] Reflecting on the combination of the melodramatic mode and political propaganda under the Korean Film Production Corporation of the late colonial period, An thought that Korean national cinema would have to overcome the manipulative aspect of the melodramatic scenarios and their use of sentimentality for imperial mobilization.[8]

An Chŏr-yŏng made his assertions about a liberated Korean cinema in a moment when intellectuals and politicians had founded the Korean People's Republic, an indigenous idea for a unified postcolonial nation-state that still seemed like a viable possibility.[9] These hopes would soon be dashed as US occupation officials in the military government (USAMGIK) favored anticommunist conservatives to a socialist or left-liberal government while a revolutionary communist state formed in North Chosŏn under Soviet occupation.[10] As in other postcolonial nations during the early Cold War, Korean national cinema in both territories remained haunted in multiple ways by imperialism, especially because foreign occupation did not end with the Japanese empire. Despite An's vision for a cinema critical of imperialism and colonialism—and not reliant on the formulas of Hollywood, Soviet-style socialist realism, or Japanese imperial cinema—this vision was disrupted by Cold War politics and economy. In South Chosŏn, An's vision at the moment of liberation for a total transformation of the economy of Korean film production and exhibition and the end of manipulative melodrama and its replacement with films of conscience and artistry made for the masses proved too ambitious under conditions of US military occupation and anticommunism. Particularly as the United States Information Service (USIS) in Korea became more involved in filmmaking leading up to and during the Korean War—and future famous directors such as Kim Ki-young learned filmmaking by making culture films (*munhwa yŏnghwa*) under its auspices—nation-building through South Korean national cinema became intertwined with the politics and warfare of the US military occupation and the ideology of anticommunism.[11] Nor was it possible for Korean national cinema to overcome what An saw as the manipulative sentimentality of melodrama or to do away with the colonial influence of Hollywood and Japanese cinema. Retrospectively, An's own films would be described as melodramas, but he was critical of the use of melodramatic cinema to distract Koreans politically or to mobilize them overtly during the late Japanese empire. The tendency in liberation cinema of both Koreas, however, was not the overcoming of the melodramatic mode through a more elevated and artistic national cinema but a continuation of the mode's dominance, now applied to the creation of national cinema through the production of mass national sentiment. As with all national cinemas, the emergent film industry in South Chosŏn developed out of the translation and adaptation of various foreign models and ideas of filmmaking

and film spectatorship. The result was not the creation of an autonomous national cinema but a national cinema formed through complex processes of translating and adapting the narrative forms, style, and economics of globally dominant cinemas, under the conditions of continued occupation.

The quintessential independence film (*kwangbok yŏnghwa*) of South Chosŏn, *Hurrah! For Freedom* is paradigmatic of the processes of translation involved in the formation of Korean national cinema in the late 1940s, as well as the way that Japanese imperial politics continued to haunt this process. The film hews closely to the style and narrative forms of the classical Hollywood system while also drawing from the aesthetic of late Japanese imperial film in order to represent a mythical underground Korean resistance movement at the very end of the Japanese colonial period. The film is useful for examining how early South Korean films appealed to the postcolonial national audience by narrating a political break from the colonial period but did so by translating and repeating general narrative structures, stylistic qualities, and spatial representations of both Hollywood and Japanese imperial cinema.[12] Despite the canonization of *Hurrah! For Freedom* as a film that inaugurated the South Korean national film history, in the last two decades, with the rediscovery and availability of colonial-period films, film historians have also explored the director Ch'oe In-gyu's controversial colonial-period career and the irony of his production of pro-Japanese films in the early 1940s.[13] In the years before making this film about underground nationalist revolutionaries, Ch'oe In-gyu directed *Homeless Angel* (1941), *Children of the Sun* (1944), and *Love and Vow* (with Imai Tadashi, 1945), which contain explicit celebrations of the possibilities of Japanese empire and Koreans' place within it. As with Kang Hong-sik's and Mun Ye-bong's careers in the North, analyzing Ch'oe In-gyu's individual motivations, reveal only so much about the political transformations in his career and in the content of his films. More significant than his shifting political perspective is the dissemination and incorporation of narrative forms, film styles, and moods of film melodrama in response to shifting political circumstances.

Because the melodramatic mode is an important continuity between imperial filmmaking (both Japanese and US) and the project of Korean national cinema, accounting for its general characteristics and dynamics contributes to reading South Korean films, particularly of the late 1940s. Working through many critiques of the concept of national cinema, JungBong Choi has argued convincingly against any facile dismissal of the concept on the grounds that it is tied to puritanical and atavistic notions of national culture.[14] Against wholesale dismissals, he argues for national cinemas in the plural and for radical particularism, including seeing each national cinema and national community as heterogeneous, mongrel, contaminated by otherness, and replete with local particularities.[15] He states, "The uniqueness of national cinemas must be searched not from the perceived particularity of styles or themes as such but from the relationships they maintain with

the society and social processes by which they became meaningful in a unique way."[16] Choi's discussion of national cinema is helpful in reorienting how we view the relationship between cinema and nation as a social process and not something essential. I read the social process of proposing and trying to actualize Korean national cinema in South Chosŏn in terms of a dynamic engagement with cinema's conventionality and repetitiveness, as well as its capacity for particular historical and experiential references. For example, in order to read *Hurrah! For Freedom* in all its historical and processual complexity, we have to account for its use of global and colonial conventions of storytelling, style, and ideology as well as its inclusion of historical and experiential references that would be fully meaningful only to the imagined community of Koreans who were the intended audience forming and being formed by an emergent national cinema.

The melodramatic mode and its moods are precisely the virtual space where these two levels converge. On the one hand, cinema tasked with engaging with the local experiences of a society will employ spectacles and narrative forms that provoke affects connected, at least tangentially, to collective experiences. On the other hand, in coding those experiences according to the spiritual ideal of the nation, national cinema simultaneously provides a visual, narrative, spatial, and temporal interpretive framework for reading affects and historical references as matters of national consciousness, history, and sympathies. Following liberation, the moods of film melodrama remained the affective attunement through which to engage the popular masses in the moral project of building a nation through cinema, but these moods also provoked affects, meanings, and historical references outside the framework of nationality, which nonetheless emerged out of the negative spiritual, mental, and somatic strife of colonialism. Melancholic moods register national liberation not as the sublation of colonialism through postcolonial nation-building, but rather as a social process characterized by the mutual haunting of the nation-people and the state. In the melodramatic mode and its haunted, composite temporality, the nation is both a spiritual community responding to the colonial past and a lost object that will never be fully reconstituted. Even in ecstatic revolutionary films such as *My Home Village* and *Hurrah! For Freedom*, the social negativity caused by colonialism lingers in the encompassing melodramatic mood, and colonialism's power persists in the technological means and the cultural conventions through which liberation is represented.

The affects and mood of melancholy are in excess of the ideological framework of nationality and national liberation, even if they provide a foundation for the articulation of national sympathy. The melodramatic mode occurs in the composite tense, because past failures and late arrivals suggest that the possibilities of the future and the past may already be foreclosed.[17] According to Freud, the difference between mourning and melancholia is that the former is a less pathological way of dealing with loss, because the object remains external to the self; however, in the latter, the lost object is no longer external, but has rather been internalized.[18]

The object of loss, as well as of aggression, becomes conflated with the self. Despite melodrama's probing search for the future redemption of innocence, the lost objects of melodrama have typically already been internalized not into an individual psyche but into the film's post-psychoanalytic staging of psychic conflict, as expressed in its images, language, and sound. Therefore, whatever object a melodramatic film frames as lost—whether it is youth, love, the nation, moral innocence, or some combination—exists virtually in the mood of the film. It does not have a real historical or experiential referent but aestheticizes in the virtual the potential of restoring a lost object, through what Svetlana Boym calls restorative nostalgia.[19] As Boym points out, restorative nostalgia both intersects and conflicts with reflective nostalgia, which involves a more persistent and individual sense of loss. Melodrama and its moods occupy a space between reflection and restoration, between individual mourning and collective melancholy.

Film melodrama seems compelled to admit self-consciously that it can only ever be a copy of the feeling of losing something really and authentically historical. It never reflects histories and experiences directly but only proliferates a conflicted nostalgia about a past that never fully existed or a future that will never fully come into being. The psychoanalytic idea of the lost object entails gendered subjectivity and fetishism both for the affects of melancholy themselves and the representation of the national community. In the project of building a Korean national cinema in South Chosŏn, melancholy was often the mood of a masculine melodrama that projected a gendered spatiality and temporality of the national subject. This melancholy connoted both the collective suffering caused by colonialism and the haunting of the project of liberation by an internal otherness and lost object projected onto the feminine other.

The Soviet occupation of North Chosŏn ended in 1948 with the establishment of the DPRK, but the US military occupation of South Korea continues today. One would expect different representations of liberation and independence in these two political contexts—one decolonized and the other colonized—particularly with the importation of the socialist realist film style in the North and the hegemony of Hollywood in the South. I analyze some of the apparent differences in narrative and style between *My Home Village* and *Hurrah! For Freedom* (1946). However, I do not mean to suggest a dichotomy between an exuberant revolutionary cinema in the North and melancholic melodrama in the South. In both North Korea and South Korea, representing national liberation in cinema was a process haunted by continuities with Japanese imperial cinema and Cold War national division. In both cases, this haunting is tangible in the tension and counterpoint between the discursive and narrative construction of the moral occult of the postcolonial national community and the background mood of melancholy and irrecuperable loss (a trace of the violence of the colonial state and its continuation in the politics and economy of the postcolonial nation-state).

THEORIZING NATIONAL CINEMA

In order to understand the historical dynamic between the powerful idea of national cinema after liberation and the films that were produced in the late 1940s, it is necessary to create a fuller picture of what was at stake in the many calls for national cinema in South Chosŏn. In March 1946, six months after liberation from Japanese colonial rule, the well-known illustrator, screenwriter, and film director An Sŏk-chu reflected on the importance of mass moral and political conscience for the development of national cinema in Korea:

> Public sentiment goes from being individual conscience to being national common sense; it becomes the conscience of art and the conscience of politics. Before creating a new cinema, cineastes should first gain a humanistic conscience and build the conscience of cinema. . . .
>
> I think when creating a national cinema, cineastes must have a conscience of the nation and of the era, and national cinema could be built on that.
>
> Conscience of a nation lies in the development of thought that can contribute extensively to the autonomy and independence of the nation and the genuine happiness of humanity, and conscience of the era lies in completely grasping democracy and in the arrival of the fulfillment and victory of democracy in our nation.[20]

For An Sŏk-chu, a national cinema would not just give expression to existing ideas of individual film viewers but would reconstruct the public sentiments of individuals into a new national common sense about art and politics. For cineastes to be able to create such a mass conscience in the people, they must first cultivate their own humanistic understanding of the public purpose of their films. Japanese imperialism had impeded the development of Korean national cinema, and in the aftermath of liberation he advocates using the technological power of cinematic images and storytelling to overcome that negation and create a national population with shared emotions and a shared common sense. In invoking conscience, An was speaking to the confluence of moral principles and emotions (or affects given ownership and language). A proper mediation between affect and morality, or the realm of conscience, had been unable to develop under Japanese colonial rule. The project of building a national cinema had to be based in national conscience but would also produce it en masse through new mediations between affects and moral sentiments.

An Sŏk-chu sees national cinema as serving a pedagogical and subject-producing role that colonial-period intellectuals had often assigned to national literature.[21] Although An argues for the development of thought that contributes to the autonomy and independence of the nation, he also connects the cinematic apparatus to more universalist and humanist ideas of moral cultivation that were prevalent during the previous decades of Japanese colonial rule. He grafts these ideas of moral cultivation onto the primary ideological term of US occupation: democracy (*minjujuŭi*). As the hybridity of An's discussion of national cinema suggests, rather than articulating a plan for autonomous and independent national cinema, he was

involved in a complex translation. An indigenous call for Korean national independence, the ideals of American democracy, the moral and political philosophies of the Japanese empire, and reflections on the technology of cinema all intersected in his formulation of the relation between politics and film art. In filmmaking practices of the time, the melodramatic mode provided just such a mediation between universalist humanism and national community and between affects and morality.

We should not imagine that film criticism in the South was commercial and Hollywood in orientation, while critics in the North concerned themselves solely with Soviet models of revolutionary cinema. Particularly before the establishment of the communist DPRK and anticommunist ROK states in 1948, ideas about cinema were not strictly codified in such Cold War political terms, and the primary concern on both sides of the thirty-eighth parallel was the national particularity of Korean cinema in the aftermath of Japanese colonialism. Critics were concerned with how to transition from foreign domination to the sovereignty of the Korean people and how to create a national culture no longer threatened by foreign hegemony. The film critic Yi Sŏ-hyang put it this way in early 1948, on the eve of the founding of the ROK: "The great ethical responsibility in building a national cinema [*minjokchŏk yŏnghwa*] is to construct a cinema culture that serves the people [*inmin*] on the people's soil."[22] Yi posits a strong connection between cinema and politics, because political and economic independence are required in order to realize the "ethical responsibility" to construct a cinema produced domestically and in the interest and taste of the Korean people.[23]

The understanding of cinema as mass culture moved critics to see it as the medium most conducive to bringing together various social classes by way of aesthetic experiences. In "The Mass Character of Film Art," Yi Chŏng-u connected the idea of national cinema to social class, arguing that in the wake of liberation from imperialism, an autonomous Korean cinema would be best realized when film artists are immersed in the life of the national masses (*minjung*).[24] According to Yi, cinema is not merely entertainment that might as well be produced outside of Korea and imported. It has an essential pedagogical and social function: to affect the spirit and feelings of the audience, helping to cultivate their artistic sensibilities. Because film is a total work of art, it is capable of penetrating and representing the everyday lives of ordinary people, simultaneously transforming their feelings about culture. Yi argues that cinema as mass media not only should emerge out of the masses but is also essential to their very creation:

> In thinking that cinema exists in no other place than among the masses, the path from cineastes to the audience is again restored to normalcy. Contemporary cineastes appear to exist in a time when even if they are only one person, they must command much of the popular masses [*taejung*] and contribute to the formation of a new national mass.
>
> A new people [*inmin*]! Only they can be the ground that forms a new culture, and we call them the last "place" that guarantees the superiority of culture over politics.
>
> True art film in the hands of the people![25]

In North Chosŏn at the time, critics were theorizing the total work of art of film in explicitly political terms, but Yi's essay also reflects an old colonial-period debate about the social function of art. While Yi Sŏ-hyang stated the purpose of national cinema in moral terms, Yi Chŏng-u argues that the masses are themselves a modern work of art, and one that can come into subjectivity and develop a culture through the medium of cinema. At work in this conception of national cinema is a notion of popular sovereignty that is democratic in principle but also tied to nationalist ideas of the aesthetic and cultural formation of a people. The national community that forms and is formed by cinema exists both outside and within the state, a subject and object of representation that requires a state but also supersedes it.

These statements about a liberated national cinema were made within a situation of divided sovereignty and continued foreign occupation by the United States and the Soviet Union. In the case of constructing a national cinema during the liberation period, the melodramatic mode allowed for the cinematic expression of suffering, sorrow, sympathy, and unfulfilled desire and therefore enabled its refraction of the negative and traumatic historical experiences of the audience, including colonialism, capitalist crisis, fascism, and national division. However, this construction of national cinema by way of the melodramatic mode involved multiple translations. The appropriation of *sinp'a* and other existing indigenous theater traditions was only one translation among many to consider, including translations of the techniques, forms, and moods of the late Japanese imperial films, of Hollywood narrative and visual conventions, and of historical, cultural, and psychic events that for the audience preexist the intervention of cinematic representation. The various processes of translation involved in films that aspire to become national cinema are connected to the limits of the representational capacity of the postcolonial state or its continued haunting by imperial and neocolonial sovereignties. Melancholy is the mood through which these translations and hauntings of melodrama become visible in the cinema of the postcolony. In South Korean films of the 1940s, we find an ambivalent process of translating conventions, the gendering of national subjectivity along colonial lines, and melancholic moods surrounding the uncertainty about whether or not the lost object of the nation will ever be retrieved and reconstituted.

GENDERING TIME AND SPACE THROUGH POSTCOLONIAL TRANSLATION

Hurrah! For Freedom (1946) and its history include all these problems of postcoloniality, the Cold War, and the melodramatic mode. As Ch'oe In-gyu went from making Japanese propaganda films to depicting a mythical underground national liberation movement in the span of one year, and he set out to contribute to the formation of a Korean national cinema, his filmmaking practice came to involve translations of the melodramatic mode of Japanese imperial cinema and Hollywood narrative cinema (which Japanese imperial cinema had already

appropriated in its own way). A comparison on *Hurrah! For Freedom* with the North Korean independence film *My Home Village* reveals some apparent differences in mood and style.

At the climax of *My Home Village*, the attention shifts from the exploited family and the individual protagonists to the revolutionary masses and their leader Kim Il Sung, which entails a transition from the formal qualities of narrative cinema to montage sequences that splice together fictional images and documentary footage. The mood of the end of the film is one of revolutionary ecstasy, collective joy, and redemption of innocence, produced by triumphal music, a series of close-ups showing faces unified by the idea of the liberated nation-state, and point-of-view shots panning across the romantic and reappropriated Korean landscape. *Hurrah! For Freedom* also depicts the period right before the end of the Japanese empire (two weeks before liberation) and includes many action scenes that relish in the pleasure of cinematic suspense and spectacle. Plot elements of the film are consistent with the overall mood of melancholy. Although other activists state that liberation from Japanese rule by external factors is likely and continued resistance only endangers them, the protagonist Hanjung (Chŏn Ch'ang-gŭn, also the screenwriter) insists that armed direct action is still necessary. His heroism and authenticity are defined not by political ends but by his individual psychological commitment to national martyrdom. The film script suggests that the lost end of the film shows the masses celebrating liberation but focuses on Hanjung's search for the tomb of one of the two women protagonists, Mihyang (Yu Kye-sŏn), who was killed by Japanese police and her collaborationist lover Nambu. Therefore, the gendered lost objects of the love interest and the nation appear to persist beyond the moment of liberation.

Even more significant than these plot points maintaining the nation and love interests as lost objects, the mood of the film conveys gendered modes of resentment and melancholic identity struggle reminiscent of late imperial Japanese films about the mobilization of Koreans for the Japanese state. Much of the gendering of national subjectivity, as well as the melancholic mood surrounding it, are articulated through particular spatial and temporal configurations. Like the music (*melo-*) of melodrama, its moods are both temporal and spatial. The troubled history of the film itself, including various layers of censorship by the US occupation government and the Park Chung Hee dictatorship (1961–1979), further surround the film text with a mood of lost opportunity, presenting difficulties at the level of affect in archiving it as the first film of postcolonial Korean national cinema.

Despite its national allegory of epic political conflict, the aestheticization of liberation in *Hurrah! For Freedom* adheres to the everyday gendered spaces of melodrama. The house and hideout of the nationalist revolutionaries is coded as entirely masculine. Besides Mihyang's dangerous appearance there, only men inhabit it. It is also filmed with low-key lighting and appears darker and more clandestine; it is always under the direct threat of political adversaries. The national revolutionaries

guard the inside of this building with guns and secret codes, in scenes more at home in a crime drama or film noir. The space of the women's houses, on the other hand, marks the feminine sphere as separated from political conflict by its association with the private travails of love and the apolitical sentimentality of feminine emotion.

The particularly affected scene that ends with Mihyang's murder expresses the entanglement of the film's mood with the gendering of national subjectivity and melancholic identity struggle. The collaborationist Nambu (Tok Ŭn-gi) is the evil counterpart to the nationalist Hanjung, as well as his alter ego and his competitor in love (for reasons described below, Nambu's scenes are largely excised from the extant version). In the scene ending in her death, Mihyang crosses the threshold between two important interiors: her domestic space, which has been visited by both Nambu and the fugitive Hanjung, and the underground hideout of the national liberation movement. Mihyang steals information from Nambu and goes to the hideout; however, at the same time she unwittingly leads the Japanese colonial police to the revolutionaries. When she first arrives, she admits her past evilness to Hanjung. In the shot/reverse-shot capturing this final conversation with Mihyang, Hanjung maintains his authenticity and his stoicism by looking away from her toward an invisible horizon and declaring his willingness to die. In contrast, Mihyang weeps uncontrollably and collapses on the table, close-ups capturing the bodily expression of her guilt and regret for previously supporting the Japanese empire through her love for Nambu (figure 14).

Liberation in the film is not a macropolitical movement, but rather a matter of purifying ethnic identity, psychologically and morally, within a limited group of characters. The purification of national identity is haunted by doubles and foils: Nambu and Hanjung; Mihyang and Hyeja (an innocent and loyal nurse who also loves Hanjung and frees him from the hospital after his capture). The mood of melancholy—of national identity as a lost object—is articulated through gendered representation of interior spaces and Hanjung's male resentment toward Mihyang's sentimentality, foolishness, and boundary crossing. Close-ups form the mood of the scene of Mihyang's unwitting betrayal. As Doane argues, in classical Hollywood and derivative film forms, close-ups provide "proximity, intimacy, knowledge of interiority," in contrast to idea-oriented close-ups of Soviet-style montage.[26] As an "affection-image," the characters' faces express reflection on an interior psychological state. Mihyang's weeping gives visual expression to her guilt and regret for her late arrival to Korean nationalism.[27] Because they are overflowing and irrational, her emotions contrast with Hanjung's close-up, which conveys single-mindedness and impassive determination.

As Deleuze argues, "Affects are not individuated like people and things, but nevertheless they do not blend into the indifference of the world. They have singularities which enter into virtual conjunction and each time constitute a complex entity."[28] The affection-image has a virtual quality; it has the power to abstract itself

FIGURE 14. In *Hurrah! for Freedom* (1946), Mihyang cries out of regret for her relationship with the collaborationist Nambu and subverting the anticolonial movement, while Hanjung looks stoically toward the horizon and declares his patriotism.

from space and time and thereby bring singularities into relation with the whole. The facial close-up is an affective moment that "suspends individuation" and concentrates a complex of action, narrative, and political ideology.[29] However, not all close-ups work the same way. The affection-images of *My Home Village* suspend individuation to figure a singular democratic collectivity with a relatively open future, but in this scene, "proximity, intimacy, knowledge of interiority" transform affect into emotion, making the pathos of Mihyang's regret an owned, personalized affect that coexists with Hanjung's stoicism. Collectively, the scene represents a masculine national subjectivity that tries to contain its negative affect by pathologizing Mihyang and her dangerous crossing of the threshold between domestic life and politics. However, Mihyang's weeping gives expression to a deep sorrow and regret about the fate of the Korean nation under colonialism, and the virtual conjunction, or mood, of her close-ups overflows their gendered narrative and visual coding. The affection-image of her sorrow both suspends individuation and personalizes affect. As much as the film tries to articulate a pure national community out of the melodramatic contrasts between its four main characters, such scenes express a mood of melancholy and frame national identity as an irretrievable object. That Hanjung eventually searches for Mihyang's tomb and dies at the

moment of liberation points further to this negative confluence of past, present, and future in this version of national identity.

The history and fate of the film in Cold War South Korea provides another layer to its problematic position as an origin point for postcolonial Korean national cinema. The existing film was both damaged and edited severely at various points: the time of its production, during the Korean War, and when it was "restored" in 1975.[30] Kim Su-nam's research into the film documents, through comparison with the original screenplay, which scenes were left unmade at the time of the film's production, which were likely destroyed during the Korean War, and which were deleted for the 1975 version. The existing film is twenty-four scenes shorter than the original screenplay.[31] Nearly forty minutes of the film were lost or deleted; the largest portion disappeared from the end of the film, including the heroic death scene of the protagonist Hanjung.[32] In Kim Ryŏ-sil's evaluation, the original film was much more ambiguous in its politics and presented the possibility for a postcolonial unification of right and left nationalists; however, the 1975 version transformed the film into a national narrative suitable to the anticommunist nationalist perspective of the Yusin-era Park Chung Hee regime.[33] The fact that all the scenes in which the actor Tok Ŭn-gi appears as Nambu were deleted and his name taken out of the opening credits bears out Kim Ryŏ-sil's assertion, as these scenes were removed simply because Tok went to North Korea after the release of the film. As Adam Hartzell points out, these deletions detract from the quality of the film and its main dramatization of resistance and collaboration.[34]

The extant version of *Hurrah! For Freedom* opens with a subtitle stating the date when the story begins: August 1, 1945. This subtitle loses some of its historical reference in comparison to the original screenplay, because the original scenario contains scenes of the US atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.[35] In examining how the film narrates national history and liberation, this omission is significant, because such images would have asked the audience to consider the violence through which the United States contributed to the liberation of East Asia from Japanese colonial rule. The precise reasons for the omission of these scenes are unknown; they could have included a lack of available stock images or the technical capacity to reproduce them. Kim Ryŏ-sil speculates that the United States of America Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK) may have demanded the deletion of these scenes in 1946. Other significant scenes that were left out at the time of filming *Hurrah! For Freedom* include many that would have served to deepen the love-triangle story involving the protagonist Hanjung, the nurse Hyeja, and Mihyang.[36] These scenes include a dream sequence in which Hyeja (Hwang Ryŏ-hŭi) imagines marrying Hanjung, as well as further scenes of her nursing him back to health. Further action scenes of Hanjung's escape from prison and chase scenes that were to be filmed at night were also left out due to technical and financial limitations. The various versions of *Hurrah! For Freedom*—from the original screenplay to the heavily censored 1975 version—tell one

complex story of the cinematic representation of South Korea's liberation from Japanese colonial rule. Many of the omissions and deletions affect only the visual pleasure of the film and are not explicitly political. However, other erasures explicitly contribute to reducing the narrative of the colonial conflict to one between those who remained loyal to the nation and those who betrayed it. In other words, censorship and revision have eliminated most of the elements of melodramatic counterpoint, despite the political complexity of the film artists' own past work during the colonial period.

Censorship was only an aid to the simplification of the film's narrative of Korean liberation. In both the original screenplay and the extant version, several narrative conventions are employed that suggest important continuities with colonial period filmmaking (including Ch'oe In-gyu's own work). One can speculate that Ch'oe In-gyu's own career as a propagandist for Japan affected his realization of Chŏn Ch'ang-gŭn's script and that the cinematography of the conservative Han Hyung-mo (Han Hyung-mo) influenced its version of masculinist national identity. In order to explore the translatability of cinematic conventions as they pertain to the politics of liberation, one can compare *Hurrah! For Freedom* to late colonial-period films, with reference to classical Hollywood film form. The comparison with classical Hollywood may seem ahistorical, considering that Hollywood films were banned in the Japanese empire between 1938 and 1945. However, in the late Japanese empire, narrative and formal techniques of Hollywood were explicitly appropriated, transformed, and employed in film melodramas supporting the Japanese empire. *Hurrah! For Freedom* does not adhere precisely to all the narrational principles that David Bordwell puts forward concerning classical Hollywood cinema, but three aspects certainly pertain: individual psychology, linear causality, and the double causal structure of public mission and heterosexual romance.[37] Many colonial-period films, such as *Korea Strait*, were written and edited according to these two lines of action. *Korea Strait* (dir. Pak Ki-ch'ae, 1943) shows the public mission of the male protagonist Seiki's joining the Japanese military and the female protagonist Kinshuku's joining the textile factory as a resolution to their class differences, their family conflicts, and their illegitimate child. Like *Hurrah! For Freedom*, such late-colonial-period films are also marked by an excess of melancholic mood and suffering beyond the bounds of what could be redeemed by the glory of the state.

In her reading of the late-colonial-period film *Volunteer* (dir. An Sŏg-yŏng. 1941), Yi Yŏng-jae argues that the protagonist Ch'unho's depression exists prior to the beginning of the story and is not simply a matter of his disappointment about not being able to become a volunteer in the Japanese military.[38] Yi discusses Freud's concept of melancholy, in which the lost object is internalized and its identity obscured, as a pervasive mood in late-colonial-period films because of the lasting disappointment and shock of not being able to found a Korean state. These melancholic moods might also be attributed to the reticence on the part of Korean filmmakers to represent the process of becoming Japanese as an easy proposition

emotionally and politically. Why does an independence film such as *Hurrah! For Freedom* carry a similar melancholic mood into the postcolonial historical context? Certainly, Cold War division and continued occupation by the United States and the Soviet Union are factors, but equally important are the conventions of gendered narrative, subjectivity, and space that Ch'oe In-gyu, for example, continued to employ in his film style. Moods of melancholy in cinema of course can adumbrate an eventual recovery of the lost object that has been internalized as loss, inspiring patriotism. However, the continuation of the melancholic mood in cinema of the liberation period suggests that the affect of loss still precedes the beginning of the cinematic narrative for both character and audience and is the film's structuring mood. The moral occult of postcolonial nation-building through cinema defines the object that must be retrieved (the nation) through the repetition of gendered conventions and representational spaces that also appear in Japanese imperial cinema. The varied affects of loss and anxiety in both art moods and human moods are not directly attached to specific lost objects such as the nation, and the project of coding of affect into national consciousness is always an incomplete one, regardless of the surface messaging of cinematic narratives and discourses.

Hurrah! For Freedom is a post-liberation film working through the meaning of the prior period, but it does so by borrowing its cinematic conventions. Hanjung's story of heroism is also told through the double causal structure, and its mood also remains ambivalent about the possibility of reconciling the public mission with heterosexual romance in the formation of a national community. Although the goal of national liberation is clearly his most urgent motivation, the heterosexual romantic triangle between Hanjung, Hyeja, and Mihyang is an important second plot line. The intertwining of these two plot lines ends up being crucial to the film's narrative causality and the most important source of political and social meaning. Although the male characters Hanjung and Nambu are pitted against one another in the fashion of melodrama—the naturally loyal Korean versus the evil collaborator—the female character Mihyang, with her overly sentimental and confused sense of love and politics, brings the two men together in conflict and unwittingly causes injury to the hero despite her better intentions. In this way, the first half of the film articulates its political stance—that liberation is primarily a matter of distinguishing resistant Korean masculinity from collaborationist Japanese masculinity—by displacing the uncertainty about the political situation onto Mihyang and her vacillating female desire. Even as the good woman, Hyeja, passes messages and helps Hanjung to escape from the hospital toward the end of the film, her primary motivation is not nationalism but her love and respect for the hero Hanjung. In other words, the double causal structure is accompanied by gender norms that allow for displacements between the public and private conflicts and a gendering of ideal national subjectivity as masculine.

In keeping with the double causal structure of its narrative, *Hurrah! For Freedom* uses the interior of buildings in order to articulate a mood that emphasizes

both the division between and the dangerous interpenetration of public and private life. While Mihyang's apartment might still be dangerous despite that scene's slapstick comedy, the home of the younger Hyeja is presented as a completely safe haven from the political conflict. One of the more formally interesting scenes is Hanjung's visit to her home. It begins with a two-shot in which Hyeja states her sympathy for another arrested revolutionary and a close-up of her expressing fear that Hanjung sees her only as a little girl. This is followed by shots of Hanjung studying and Hyeja lying down and writing in her journal before bed, with the presence of her sister providing a buffer. The page reads, "He isn't my brother or my teacher. Then what is he? He's so brusque and he didn't even see the flowers I brought him. His awareness . . ." At that moment Hanjung notices the flowers and interrupts her to thank her for them; she crosses out the thoughts on the page and rips up the paper. The camera lingers on her bowed head and although she does not speak, she lifts her head and expresses a mix of love and pain, a mute desire and repression common to melodrama. The presence of her mother in the house and their intimate conversations highlight her innocence and her morality, in contrast to Mihyang's life as a single woman with conflicted desires. This scene establishes Hyeja's family house as an apolitical space where moral goodness and feminine affection protect the hero from the dangers of his public mission.

The articulation of the Korean nation-people was tied to the general cinematic conventions of melodrama, as well as the colonial past, particularly through the narrative and spatial representation of gender difference. *Hurrah! For Freedom* began to establish in film the binary of resistance and collaboration, which would remain one primary way to solidify Korean ethnic national identity in South Korea through the representation of the colonial period and the stoking of anti-Japanese sentiment. It takes up the tendency of late colonial period films to incorporate techniques and conventions of classical Hollywood to depict conflict, suspense, action, and counterpoint. It does so in order to dramatize the psychological and political conflict between resisters and collaborators, which is at once an internal psychological conflict projected onto the female characters and an external political conflict between good and evil. In terms of film form, liberation can be understood first as a narrative form tied to the temporality and mood of melodrama. In order to represent national liberation, one must first represent oppression, the negation of national identity, and the conflict between the imperial and colonial nations. Then the national people appear, overcoming this state of oppression through the exercise of their political will. However, in *Hurrah! For Freedom*, there is a perceptible ambivalence about this narrative of overcoming, because the film's production and consumption remain haunted by the external circumstances that brought about liberation, including the violence of US warfare and neocolonialism. They are also haunted by the specter of collaboration, which the film displaces by strategically representing gender difference and constructing masculinity.

MODE AND MOOD ACROSS GENRES

One aspect of building a national cinema through the melodramatic mode that was not emphasized as frequently in film theories of the time but was clearly a concern in film production was the development of multiple genres through which the melodramatic mode could give expression to national history and identity. Genres such as *sagŭk* (period drama)—for example, *Chunhyang* (dir. Yi Myŏng-u, 1935)—and the Western—for example, *Suicide Squad at the Watchtower* (dir. Imai Tadashi and Ch'oe In-gyu, 1943)—already developed during the colonial period. During the construction of a South Korean film industry after liberation, and particularly during the golden age of the 1950s and 1960s, genres diversified further with the emergence, as well as the mixing, of the musical, the war film, the horror film, the comedy, and the family drama. Based on the idea that Korean national cinema had to reach wide and diverse audiences through a democratic cinema culture, the establishment of genres opened up multiple worlds, narratives, chronotopes, and media through which moviegoers could experience the shared sentiments of national consciousness. For many genre films, it was the trans-genre melodramatic mode that connected the genre to the larger ideological project of national cinema, as well as the ambivalent and melancholic mood of postcolonial translation. These emergent industrial genres showcased the modernity of Korean national cinema, but the incorporation of the melodramatic mode allowed for the expression of anxiety and melancholy toward the postcolonial state's embrace of the modern development of industrial and communications technologies (e.g., sound recording, aviation, and cinema itself).[39]

Two partially extant films of the late 1940s, the musical *Blue Hill* (dir. Yu Tong-il, 1948) and the biopic *Pilot An Ch'angnam* (dir. No P'il, 1949) show the trans-genre and modal quality of melodramatic moods within the process of constructing a Korean national cinema. *Blue Hill* is a musical that represents the music industry, and therefore is self-reflexive about music production and the genre of the musical itself. The story follows a young man from the countryside, Hyŏnin, who achieves great success as a singer in Seoul after winning a singing competition. From the thirty-five minutes of the film that still exist, it seems all the musical sequences of the film occur in theaters; however, these musical sequences are integrated into the diegesis because of the story's focus on musicians and the music industry. One remarkable scene moves from Hyŏnin's live performance to documentary-style shots of the factory where they are mass-producing the vinyl recording of the song. The continuation of the sound of the live performance over the images of the mass production of the recording brings the process of sound production into the diegesis of the film, emphasizing the multiple technologies involved in the emerging South Korean cultural industry's intermediality. Representing sound recording across cinema and musical production within the genre of the musical creates the type of synergy between sight and sound and their technological

mediation that theorists of the total work of art imagined necessary in the cinematic creation of a national cinema in both South and North Korea.

Having many of the typical qualities of the musical, including music and dance spectacles that break up the linear plot, the mode of *Blue Hill* remains melodrama. The degree to which the national in cinema was tied to and expressed through the melodramatic mode and its melancholic mood is apparent in that it was not only the dominant mode of liberation films that directly represented anticolonial movements but also such genre films concerned with the development of national culture through the technologies of mass media. The story takes up a conventional plot line of melodrama: a protagonist moves from the countryside to the city and enters a love triangle with a conniving urban modern girl and a humble, traditional, and virtuous young woman from his hometown. As in later films such as *Madame Freedom* (dir. Han Hyung-mo, 1956) and *A Flower in Hell* (*Chiokhwa*, dir. Shin Sang-ok, 1958), female figures as objects of desire are split between the modern and traditional through costuming, their association with urban or rural landscapes, and their behaviors. The nation-form as an idea of community is inherently caught between modern mass culture, one of its conditions of possibility, and the invented traditions that appear threatened by that very modernity and are essential to a notion of shared origins (or, in Balibar's term, "fictive ethnicity").[40] The melodramatic mode dramatizes this internal contradiction within the idea of the nation (and national cinema) by introducing a play of surface and depth that is a matter of both gender ("woman" as fetish object shifting back and forth between the twin objects of androcentric nationalist desire, modernity and tradition) and melancholic mood (a way of attunement that expresses that time and space may remain forever fissured, that community and individuality will continue indefinitely to arrive late to their destinations). Hyŏnin gets engaged to his rural love interest and gives up on both the glory and the potential for moral corruption in urban modernity, but the bittersweet mood of loss and nostalgia is not entirely assuaged.

The modern girl goes so far as to pay to have Hyŏnin kidnapped to prevent him from performing and leaving her for the other woman. The negative melancholy of the love story is expressed both in the action of the modern girl's revenge and in the way the countryside and home village serve as objects of loss and nostalgia. The mood is expressed in the various musical numbers. It is also directed self-reflexively toward the very genre of the musical as a translated cultural form and to the uneasy incorporation of this genre into national cinema. The clearest point of melodramatic tension is between the visual and sonic celebration of the modern technology that enables amplification, radio broadcasting, and recording in the music industry—not to mention cinema—and the negative and dehumanizing effects that the social relations of modernity have on Hyŏnin. He frequently contemplates an image of Beethoven on his wall when he is remembering his original innocent desire to become a musician, but industrial capitalism and the

modern culture industry threaten that innocence. In an experimental scene of a picnic, Hyŏnin gets drunk with the modern girl, and they meet an indigent man. Through a remarkable sequence of dissolves between a close-up of the man's face from Hyŏnin's point of view and images of the man's memories, Hyŏnin sees the man's life story—he was a famous singer but became addicted to opium and ended up poor and homeless. The scene uses the visualization of memory and its visual superimposition with the present in order to create a melancholic mood of lost innocence and lost opportunity. Like the film's narrative arc of hopeful urban migration followed by a return to tradition through marriage, the future-oriented cultural development enabled by visual and sonic technologies and the mourning of lost cultural and social signifiers are interwoven.

This melancholic and melodramatic take on the musical genre emphasizes self-reflexively that the genre belongs to the institutions of the culture industry and its commercial orientation. Like *Hurrah! for Freedom*, it genders the time and space of the diegesis and creates a mood of lost innocence in order to pose the problem of whether translated technologies, forms, and genres can give shape to an autonomous postcolonial national cinema. The melodramatic mode and its moods allow for the localization of the musical because they emphasize the tension between the genre and the local national context; they also broaden the scope of national cinema beyond explicit liberation films, diversifying the generic signifiers through which to stage problems of modernity and tradition relevant to the contradictory trajectories of national culture—one toward the future and the other toward the past. The colonial-period film *Spring of the Korean Peninsula* (*Pando ŭi pom*, dir. Yi Pyŏng-il, 1941) concerns the efforts of artists to produce a film version of the folktale Chunhyang under conditions of colonialism and touches on recording and stardom in the music industry, also dealing self-reflexively with the problem of the reproducibility of tradition. In that film, the formation of the Peninsula Film Production Corporation (a reference to the historical Chosŏn Film Production Corporation) allows the directors and music producers to complete their projects; however, the protagonist falls ill notably and does not appear in the propagandistic scene of the founding of the company. As Kyung Hyun Kim points out, through the film-within-a-film device, it introduces complex questions about nationality and film capital, and it uses scenes of illness to critique the image of the healthy male body as the dominant symbol for imperial subjectivity.[41] Although made after liberation from Japanese colonial rule, *Blue Hill* does not depict a culture industry liberated from political, economic, and moral turmoil; rather, it expresses a similar ambivalence toward industrial cultures and genres through self-reflexivity about the musical genre and a focus on the moral problem of the commodification of music culture and music stars.

Pilot An Ch'angnam uses the biopic genre to accomplish a similar broadening of national cinema through the melodramatic mode, presenting the violence of Japanese colonial rule and a mixed mood of anxiety and the sublime concerning

FIGURE 15. Pilot An Ch'angnam, played by Myŏng Yu-jŏng, in the cockpit (1949).

the technologies of colonial modernity. Based on the life story of the first aviator in Korean history, An Ch'ang-nam (Myŏng Yu-jŏng), the film creates Korean national sentiment by depicting An's experiences of ethnic discrimination and harassment at the Okuri Aviation School in Japan. Like later biopics of North Korea (e.g., *An Jung Gun Shoots Ito Hirobumi*, 1979) and South Korea (e.g., *The Life of Na Un-gyu*, *Na Un-gyu ilsaeng*, dir. Mu-ryong Choi, 1966), *Pilot An Ch'angnam* represents the struggles and triumphs of a national hero of the Japanese colonial period. An is beaten and suspended from the aviation school for a semester when he is falsely accused of injuring a Japanese student during a drill. After returning to work as a milk deliveryman with his humble wooden cart, he returns and becomes Korea's first licensed pilot in 1920 (figure 15). Based on An's real-life biography, the lost second half of the film likely goes on to show his return to Korea and his participation in the Korean independence movement in China.

A biopic need not be nationalist, but the genre does lend itself to celebrating or working through the events of national history through the life of a historical personality. The result is a simplification of history. As Belén Vidal states, in the biopic, "Personality and point of view become the conduit of history in stories that often boil down complex social processes to gestures of individual agency."[42] As with the fictional protagonists of *Hurrah! For Freedom*, there is a refraction of politics and history through individual psychology and identity, but because the stories are based on a real historical personality, the genre of the biopic carries

a stronger aura of verisimilitude and truth. The melodramatic representation of emotional and bodily pain caused by colonial discrimination and physical violence, as well as An's overcoming that discrimination in order to best his Japanese classmates and eventually dedicate himself to the anti-colonial struggle, creates powerful allegorical and sentimental connections between the experiences of one historical personality and the experiences of the national community as a whole.

Pilot An Ch'angnam has many long takes of airplanes flying above, including trainings and An's aerial demonstrations. Although the airplanes are not contemporary to the late 1940s, these shots of modern technology against a blank clear sky present a version of the technological sublime and celebrate An's skill as the first Korean pilot.[43] These shots—along with images of bodily training, technological education, and An's development of superior engineering skills—show industrial modernity and science as essential aspects of nation-building. Although Japan is the conduit for the transfer of technology, modernity, and education, An's Japanese classmates bully him mentally and physically and also get him suspended. Later, during a nationalist event for Korean students, the police intervene and stop a musical performance. An is arrested after he leads the crowd in pushing out the police and chanting "Manse!" and a collaborationist Korean investigator who previously offered to help him with his suspension tells him that "shouting Manse must put you in an exhilarating mood, but it's useless." Therefore, the film shows the contradictions of colonial modernity, which offers the means of technological and scientific development but also assimilates collaborators and subjects the colonized to ethnic discrimination and violence.

The melodramatic mode and the mood of melancholy are important for conveying these contradictions, which also pertain to the relationship between South Korean nation-building and the US occupation at the time of production. After his suspension, An is forced to return to humble subsistence work. A close-up tracking shot of the wheels of An's wooden milk cart highlights the gap in technology between the means of a colonial Korean migrant student and the airplanes that he came to Japan to master. An bemoans his unfair treatment to two Korean friends, an elderly benefactor and his daughter, making explicit the conflict between Japan's control over technology and its colonial discrimination. The melodramatic representation of this problem of colonial modernity manifests the haunting of the nation by the prosthetic technologies of the colonial state, which are necessary for its modernization, and the haunting of the colonial state by its violence toward its colonies. In this respect, the themes and moods of the film also belong to the *late* 1940s, when a new occupying power (the United States) and its neocolonial nation-state (the Republic of Korea) were making technologized violence an endemic part of their postcolonial, anticommunist state formation. The biopic genre provided a way to bring the colonial past into the historical present through allegory, distilling the broad social, political, and economic processes of colonialism and imperialism into a melodramatic story of a heroic individual's

encountering modernity and surmounting of discrimination. *Blue Hill* and *Pilot An Ch'angnam* show that the formation of genres was another example of the role of the translation of convention in the formation of national cinema, and such translation entailed an alienation from origins and identity that found expression through melodrama.

REIMAGINING ORIGINS

The problem of translation in modernity is a matter of signification, sentiment, and origins. Translation theory is concerned in some fashion with how arbitrary signs come to refer to culturally specific objects and affects through a slippery binary between the domestic and the foreign. Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida showed how modern ideas about language and translation are inherently involved in the problem of origins.[44] How can human communities be understood to have a shared origin if the signification of shared origins always involves translation, a process of mimicry and repetition? Foucault approaches the problem of origins in modern thought through a genealogy that shows how and at what time this seemingly transhistorical concern actually emerged. Derrida discusses the logic of supplementarity, in which a master-signifier comes to occupy the absence at the ground of signification, providing an illusion of systematicity to the human and its origin. I have been arguing that in the formation of a national cinema, cinema represents the dynamic process of mimicry and repetition—translation—as a transfer of meaning between two coherent signifying systems. In the language of national cinema in South Korea in the late 1940s, a liberation film cannot be fruitfully compared to an imperial Japanese film because they are presumed to belong to two different systems of signification. And yet, when we see the postcolonial film as repeating formal and affective aspects of the late Japanese film industry rather than superseding it dialectically, then it becomes clear that the notion of a shared origin of the signifying system—Korean national cinema—is itself self-differentiating in the process of translation through which it is constituted. This is the case as much for national cinema as it is for national language.

Hurrah! For Freedom shows how the problem of national origins in early South Korean cinema is caught up in gendered and spatialized metaphors of authentic national subjectivity and its struggle against moral and political corruption, a conflict played out within a general mood of melancholy. The articulation of gender difference in the service of establishing an image of origins in nationalism and national cinema is extensive, from the foundational American white supremacist myth of needing to defend innocent white women against black male violence in *The Birth of a Nation* (dir. D. W. Griffith, 1915) to the depiction of humble and moral Hindu motherhood as the center of national consciousness in *Mother India* (dir. Mehboob Khan, 1957).

In contrast to national melodramas that represent women as the bearers of tradition, *A Hometown in the Heart* stands out as a remarkable artistic meditation on

origins, community, and motherhood at a time when the gender conventions used to produce South Korean national cinema through the melodramatic mode were still nascent. The film is set in a mountain temple where a boy, Tosŏng (Yu Min), was abandoned by his mother at the age of three, visiting him only once, when he was seven. He is now twelve years old and will train to be a monk. Although the film utilizes the more typical orchestral music of melodrama in some scenes, it begins with meditative silence as the camera pans across the mountain landscape and then the beautiful temple. It is morning and a monk walks through the corridors striking a drum. Tosŏng rings the massive temple bell, which reverberates loudly through the forest. After a couple more empty shots of the temple, the scene cuts-in to the monks chanting and striking a temple block in front of a statue of the Buddha. The meditative atmosphere of the opening of the film, with the natural and direct sounds of the temple, creates a subdued mood that contrasts with the opening chase scene of *Hurrah! For Freedom* or the opening depiction of familial conflict in *Sweet Dream* or *Madame Freedom*. After establishing its meditative mood, a temple worker discovers Tosŏng measuring his height against a tree, and they discuss the main conflict. Tosŏng tells a temple worker that the worker lied to him because he has grown bigger but his mother has not returned for him as the worker said she would.

This scene creates a mood of intense sympathy and melancholy and sets up all the conditions for the unfolding of a more typical reunification narrative in which an abandoned child struggles to return to his mother, a story line to which multiple layers of allegorical meaning could be applied. However, this film is concerned not with such a symbolic return but with meditating on the meaning of the sign of mother in a context of detachment. Detachment is not only a matter of the secluded setting and the representations of Buddhist meditation but also the rendering of hometown (*kohyang*) as an internal state or desire rather than a substantial space or fixed object of nostalgia. When a widow (Chʾoe Ŭn-hŭi) comes from Seoul to the temple with her mother, Tosŏng begins associating her with his mother, who has yet to return for him. We find out that the tragedy of the death of the widow's husband has been compounded by the death of her young son from measles. Tosŏng's desire for the widow to become his mother puts into tension Buddhist practices of detachment from desire and the abandoned Tosŏng's irrepressible need for maternal love. As he sits with the monks chanting from a book of sutras, a point of view shot from his perspective shows the widow appearing on the pages of his book, encircled by an iris. This use of the widow's superimposed image creates a contrapuntal idea and mood common to melodrama: detachment coexisting with desire. The contrast between the moral occult and the excess of affect in this shot has an intellectual resonance. The image presents a melodramatic tension between detachment and desire, between the moral demand that the priest places on Tosŏng to overcome his bad karma through meditation and prayer, and Tosŏng's heartbreaking desire to be nurtured. The moral problem of bad karma is emphasized by the neighboring children getting in trouble with the

FIGURE 16. In *A Hometown in the Heart* (1949), Tosŏng dreams of reuniting with his mother, here represented by the surrogate widow who wishes to adopt him.

head priest and temple workers for shooting birds on the temple grounds, and Tosŏng gets embroiled in that conflict when he gets caught by the head priest after shooting a turtledove in order to make a feathered fan for the widow, one that would match his biological mother's.

The iris returns later when Tosŏng dreams that the widow is his mother and returns to the temple to take him back. The dream ends badly when he slips on the rocks and the widow walks ahead; the iris goes blurry, and he wakes from the dream. The use of the iris creates a feeling of concentrated claustrophobia and conveys Tosŏng's fixation on the widow as a surrogate mother (figure 16). It presents the perspective of a child—limited, framed, and encircled, unable to see the broader picture that might allow him to understand how his mother came to abandon him or why the widow cannot adopt him immediately and take him to Seoul. When his biological mother does return to the temple for Buddhist rites of departure, she explains to the widow that she came from poverty, lost her parents early on, and ran away with a hunter, abandoning Tosŏng at the temple. Meanwhile, the widow tells her mother and then the head priest about wanting to adopt Tosŏng, but her mother tells her she needs to forget about the death of her son and not try to replace him. And the head priest thinks that the boy needs to overcome the bad karma of his mother before returning to the wider world. The conflict between the child's and the widow's innocent desires for the ideal of motherhood and the Buddhist worldview of karma and detachment is a melodramatic dilemma. As Juhn Ahn shows, the film's source text, Ham Se-dŏk's play composed in 1939 and published as *Young Monk* in 1947, imagines the boy's struggle to reunite with his

mother as an allegory for universal class struggle; on the other hand, the director Yun Yong-gyu reinterpreted the allegory as a struggle for national sovereignty.[45] Considering their politics, it is not surprising that both artists went to North Korea, where Yun Yong-gyu made *The Newlyweds*, discussed in chapter 2.

The allegorical dimension of the film exhibits what Linda Williams describes, in her reading of *Stella Dallas* (dir. King Vidor, 1937), as "the device of devaluing and debasing the actual figure of the mother while sanctifying the institution of motherhood," which she states is typical of the "woman's film" of this period.[46] After other guests at an upper-class resort mock Stella for her working-class and garish version of high style, she debases herself in an act of self-sacrifice. Despite loving her daughter Laurel more than anyone, she acts dismissively toward Laurel and pretends to marry the boorish and indigent Mr. Munn. She does this to ensure that Laurel will go to live with her father and the wealthy widow Mrs. Morrison; the film ends with her watching Laurel's wedding through the window, proud that she has improved her daughter's economic situation. Both *A Hometown in the Heart* and *Stella Dallas* "sanctify motherhood" while "devaluing and debasing" mother figures, who abandon their children and show themselves unfit. At the same time, the patriarchs (Mr. Dallas and the head monk) misunderstand Stella and the widow as an immoral biological mother and an unworthy surrogate, respectively. Melodramatic counterpointing between the surface social readings of their actions and their true and pure intentions establishes the moral occult of the films on a foundation of misrecognition. Motherhood can be valorized only by simultaneously questioning a society that can only partially recognize its ideal form in actual mother figures. Both films are aware of this moral conundrum, despite their conservative values, and *A Hometown in the Heart* in particular ends up questioning the way that the allegories of patriarchal nationalism transform motherhood into an allegory for national development and reproduction.

Therefore, despite the melodramatic allegories of class struggle or national liberation told through a celebration of motherhood and a debasing of mothers in *A Hometown in the Heart*, these conventions are attenuated by other aspects. Its setting and its Buddhist themes prevent these allegories from finding closure through the gendering of space common to other films of the period.[47] The doubling of the figures of motherhood beyond the constraints of the biological nuclear family and the displacement of the hometown away from a substantial rural storehouse of nostalgia and memory to a more conflicted temple environment and eventually to the very psyche or heart (*маŭм*) of Tosŏng counterpoint the concern with returning to an authentic maternal origin with meditations on detachment and surrogacy. There is certainly an appeal to motherhood at the center of the film's gendered allegory of origins, care, and sympathy. However, neither the widow nor the biological mother ends up taking in Tosŏng and reestablishing a stable image of motherhood or family. The two mothers meet and decide that the widow should take him; however, after the head priest finds out that Tosŏng has

shot the turtledove, he will not let him go. After finding out that his biological mother had already returned once, Tosŏng decides to travel to Seoul himself. As he walks down the mountain path, he turns briefly when he hears the chime of the temple bell, but then continues down the path. In contrast to earlier point-of-view shots using the iris, which visualize the limited and fixated fantasies and dreams of a child, the film ends with a point-of-view shot of the valley below. Tosŏng has come of age and become the subject of his own landscape, moving beyond the space of the temple and no longer in immediate need of a mother's nurturing.

If any existing film of late 1940s South Chosŏn lives up to An Chŏr-yŏng's call for conscientious and artistic films that move past the colonial-period manipulation of the public sentiment of sorrow through the use of melodramatic dilemmas, it would be *A Hometown in the Heart*. Both visually and narratively, the film does not merely translate the conventions of the gendered fictions of late-colonial-period films, transforming the imagery and storytelling strategies used to convey to Koreans the possibilities of Japanese imperial subjectivity into the independence film. It begins with an allegorical reflection on the fundamental problem of the gendered desire to return to an origin and the possibility or impossibility of detaching oneself, particularly as a child, from that worldly and eventually ideological dilemma. Therefore, even though it is set in the deep mountains, the film presents a mood in which to meditate on the crisis of modernity and to see that melodrama, as well as national cinema, need not always insist on the possibility of a redemption of innocence, revenge and punishment against evil, or any of the other ways that fictions close themselves off from complex social realities.

5

Realism and Melodrama
in the Golden Age

Despite melodrama's simplified moral allegories, in the aftermath of the Korean War South Korean filmmakers found ways to use melodrama to represent deeper and more complex social structures, as well as the historical experiences and traumatic memories of their audiences.[1] The social issues that emerged during the end of Syngman Rhee's rule (1948–1960), the April 19 Uprising and Second Republic (1960–61), and the Third Republic of the Park Chung Hee era (1961–1972) affected film melodrama. Urbanization and the formation of the nuclear family and attendant ideas of economic and political modernization influenced ideas of moral authenticity, economic rationality, innocence, and virtue in family dramas. The trauma of the Korean War and its catastrophic military and civil violence produced deeply ambivalent and self-contradictory feelings about state subjectivity, feelings that were worked through in melodramas focused on the war, war veterans, and war widows. Anticommunism expanded from state and military ideology to a broadly influential cultural form, including in cinema. In confronting these social and ideological conditions, cinema often took up melodrama at cross-purposes—to translate the negative affects connected to collective history into individual emotions and sentiments useful for moral allegory and instrumental political ends but simultaneously to provoke pathos and sympathy in order to reveal social injustices, exploitative social structures, and the inadequacy of South Korean state projects in addressing the collective problems of the nation.

In the South Korean golden age, situating the body mode of melodrama between ideology and historical referentiality linked realism directly to the haptic impact and memorability of cinematic image and sound. In order to explicate the complexity of the question of realism, I work through some theories of cinematic realism presented in South Korea leading up to and during the golden age. One early statement by Yi Yŏng-jun, "The Problem of Realism in Cinema" (1947), argued

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for haptic realism.[2] For Yi, the touch of a film produces a sense of actuality that is essential to its claims to refer to real history. However, he describes this touch as also excessive, as an affect not fully contained by narrative and discourse. Haptic realism did not only entail raw affect and was often accompanied by the moral or political coding of affect in the form of narrative or discourse; however, affects and their coding were often in conflict. The melodramatic moods that served as the background of and ontological attunement to the film's diegesis were internally contrapuntal, such that the individual scenes and segments of a film expressed multiple interpretations of the negative affects attached to historical experiences. Therefore, the moral occult of the melodramatic scenario should not be conflated with the totality of historical actuality that a film purports to represent. In film melodrama, the affects of the cinematic image and sound are situated between the haptic and discourses attributing meaning and ownership to those affects. The confluence of the two can direct attention simultaneously to the most abstract or othering of ideological positions, as well as to an explication of complex and underlying social structures.

In order to capture the contrapuntal relation between realism and melodrama, it is useful to focus on those images (or themes or problems) that present both raw affect and sociohistorical reference. One image that lends itself to both heightened sentimentality and social critique is the family. Although film industries and film studies often speak of family drama, never does one use the term family realism. This suggests that family has mostly been an affective and imaginary category, one that draws out the embodied emotions of spectators rather than appealing to a sense of verisimilitude. However, the family can also serve as a microcosm of the social, because cinema can connect the intense affects created by the representation of familial relations to other larger social formations, such as the nation-state. The conflict of scale between the family and the nation-state that it is made to represent was an important problem of realism and melodrama during the golden age. The second such image discussed in this chapter is the image of poverty. The ways that films depicted poverty varied from radical social critique to ideologies of economic development, to nearly exploitative images of poverty (for which the pleasurable feeling of cathartic sympathy was an end in itself). Interpreting these various ways of representing poverty allows one to track the dual impulse in melodramatic films toward morality plays focused on *homo economicus* (or the human as household economic actor) and a realist concern with larger social structures. Finally, the ideology of anticommunism was both a constellation of affects provoked and organized through cinematic sight and sound, as well as a real political and historical phenomenon that touches on tragic and traumatic experiences and events (such as divisions between relatives and friends, the fear of totalitarian state violence, regimes of censorship, and military and police atrocities). Due to ambivalent feelings about anticommunist culture and politics among popular audiences

and the way that cinema is never entirely coded by political intention, the aesthetics and ideology of South Korean anticommunist films were by no means uniform.

VICISSITUDES OF REALISM

In her account of the discourses of realism in early South Korean film criticism, Kim So-yŏn shows that ideas of realism changed greatly between the 1940s and the 1950s. In the colonial period and in the late 1940s, socialist critics, some of whom were later influential for the development of the North Korean film industry (e.g., Im Hwa and Sŏ Kwang-je), argued that proletarian realism should be grounded in dialectical materialism and represent the actuality (*hyŏnsil*) of the lives of workers.[3] In late 1940s South Korea, critics in the Korean Film Alliance emphasized the ideological content of films or, when critics such as An Sŏk-chu discussed film form, they advocated Soviet-style montage as an expression of historical actuality. However, with the influx of Italian neorealism in post–Korean War 1950s and the solidification of anticommunist ideology, the dominant idea of realism became "Korean realism," a nationalist idea of realism resistant to the notion of film as entertainment and serving the political and cultural purpose of enlightening the masses. Yi Yŏng-il would eventually ground this elitist idea of national realism in art cinema. Kim So-yŏn writes,

> The realism that emerged "anew" in South Korea in the late 1950s under the strong influence of neorealism was an aesthetic strategy in an era of crisis to prevent films from devolving into a means of entertainment that pacifies the masses, a political strategy in a time of ideological suppression to present actuality as it is, and a discursive strategy to guarantee the legitimacy of Korean cinema since Na Un-gyu's *Arirang*. Therefore, working with the critical standard called "realism" meant that film would become an art that could enlighten the masses, become a resistant power that could protect democratic values even in the form of right-wing ideas, and continue the tradition of national realism in Korean cinema.[4]

It is important to recognize this transition from proletarian realism to national realism in South Korean film criticism and the concomitant shifts in the dominant idea of actuality. However, there are two continuities between proletarian realism, the Korean adaptation of neorealism, and the eventual development of Korean realism: (1) the centrality of affect for conceptualizing cinema's representation of actuality and (2) the way that ideas—whether Marxian or Enlightenment—structured the concept of actuality. I argue that the continued emphasis on affect and its capacity to express ideology in various realisms indicates that the power of the melodramatic mode persisted throughout this period, despite the criticism of melodrama as popular entertainment shared by both 1940s leftists and later advocates of a nationalist art cinema. Ideas of actuality may have changed, but there was a continuous and shifting tension between melodramatic affect, with its

capacity to convey moral and political ideas in excess of reality, and the realistic representation of historical conditions.

Although the claims about realism and montage by leftists in the 1940s may seem far afield from melodrama, which we associate with continuity editing and fictional narrative cinema, we have already seen in the North Korean case how montage and melodrama share a dependency on the affection-image. Leftist ideas about the relationship between film and historical actuality—particularly between the affective impact of cinema and its capacity to refer to the audience's historical experiences—established cinematic realism as a problem for South Korean film theory and production. Even if directors concerned with class issues, exploitation, migration, poverty, war memories, and other social issues during the golden age did not and could not profess Marxist positions, the Korean Film Alliance and other leftists of the late 1940s did influence the perception that cinema should engage socially with an ethos of realism. If the film industry was to engage with the real experiences of audiences and potentially have broad social and ideological effects, some kind of relationship between social reality and the dominant mode had to be established. Ideas about montage provided one theoretical articulation of the affective mediation between the two.

Some theories of realism were based at once in the indexical relation between photographic images and objects and the world-building capacity of montage. Yi Chŏng-gi argued in "Film and Actuality" (1948) that film is the most actual of art forms and is therefore the least artistic; at the same time, it is not a purely photographic medium, because montage (i.e., editing) allows for the realistic expression of abstract ideas and the rendering of photographic actuality into something artistic.[5] Although editing allows a film artist to construct a distinct world, Yi suggests that film could never be entirely art for art's sake because of its photographic connection to actuality. Combining an indexical notion of photographic realism with an Eisensteinian concern with idea-guided montage, Yi establishes a dialectic between the two, whereby the world-building capacity of montage depends on the actuality of the photographic image to prevent it from becoming completely abstract formalism and, conversely, the photographic image depends on montage to capture the role of ideas and subjectivity in history. In arguing for the ability of montage to build a world and to elevate the photographic actuality of film toward the ideas and forms of an art, Yi was grappling with how cinema can use movement, virtual chronotopes, and multiple perspectives to abstract from things as they are and actualize a truer world than what is merely given in the image. If we take montage in the broad sense of the term, to mean any kind of editing, Yi's argument is highly relevant for melodrama. If melodrama seeks "the true, wrested from the real," then melodrama, too, depends on the establishment of a social reality against which the spiritual values of the moral occult can be asserted.[6] Film melodrama also depends on the actuality of the photographic image to moor its diegesis in the precinematic experiences of the audience and construct its referential

illusion. Simultaneously, that social reality must also appear as a threshold that has to be overcome through an assertion of hidden values and ideas—subjectivity must be confined realistically by actuality and also capable of transforming it. Although they did not take up Soviet montage, filmmakers of melodrama who were concerned with social realism made films positioned between the indexing of sociohistorical realities and the subjective dimension of world-building.

Yi Yŏng-jun clarified that the mediation between photographic realism and the world-building capacity of cinema was touch, articulating a theory of film experience as haptic realism. In "The Problem of Realism Cinema" (1947), Yi Yŏng-jun contrasts Korean works to Western works in order to imagine how to make the cinematic medium the center of arts and culture: "The works of our country largely include many narrative works such as fiction and scripts; because the works of the West include many three-dimensional expressions, including film, theater, music, and fiction, the emotional effect on the audience is bold and powerful."[7] Yi Yŏng-jun's distinction between Korean and Western works, however reductive, is part of his attempt to articulate a new mode of realist mimesis for Korean film. According to Yi, Korean works were long steeped in a culture of text, particularly of printed fiction and scripts, and therefore lacked the three-dimensional (*ipch'ejŏk*) capacity to move an audience that Western film, theater, and music possessed. Considering colonial Korea's vibrant film culture and the continuation of the culture of the book in Europe and North America, Yi's binary is not exactly accurate. However, in order to imagine a future cinematic realism for postcolonial Korea, he accentuates the embodiment, expressiveness, and performativity of modern Western works. He opens the essay with a reference to Hegel and tries to synthesize idealism and realism in his theory of cinematic representation. He frames Western works as models for how they affect the audience in an embodied and emotional manner. With the project of nation-building and subject-formation in the background of the essay, he presents these works as an ideal future for Korean works, which remain too tied to the printed word. For Yi, national culture is a social form with an origin in the putative West, and cinema is a powerful technology with the same origin, a technology that has not yet been adequately employed in Korea for the representation of social reality and the production of national subjectivity.

When Yi Yŏng-jun contrasted Korean textual traditions to the three-dimensionality of Western artistic forms, including cinema, he was asserting that the Korean arts had to begin anew through cinema and dismissing the Korean national cinema that had taken shape under Japanese colonial rule. Yi's binary view of "the West and the Rest" should be read critically, with attention to translation and the haunting of the postcolonial nation-people and postcolonial cinema by imperialist and neocolonial forms of culture and politics; however, his focus on dimensionality is suggestive and revealing. The emphasis he and other critics put on dimensionality, photographic realism, and embodied performance in the formation of a shared actuality (*hyŏnsil*) for the national masses through cinema speaks

to the importance of cinematic space in the imagination of a shared national and social space.

Yi Yŏng-jun advocates another version of the total work of art in the context of South Chosŏn, which connects his ideas to the nascent North Korean film industry of the time. He states that it is difficult for film to live up to its promise of becoming a total work of art because it is mass-produced. Although the technologies of mass production are what enable the idea of the film artwork as something aesthetically encompassing, in contrast to the general arts, in which the three processes of artistic creation—planning, scripting, and production—are interconnected within the spiritual action of a single person, film is "extremely difficult because at the same time as it is a total work of art, the three processes of planning, scripting, and production separate and reunify until the very end."[8] In other words, the production of a film is a complex venture involving multiple simultaneous processes that can become autonomous from one another, detracting from the unity (and totality) of the work. Under these conditions, Yi turns to realism as the aesthetic means for integrating these processes into a total work, an aesthetic philosophy in keeping with his Hegelian understanding of national cinema. Yet despite his references to Hegel, Yi argues that realism is not obtained through idealistic abstraction or social critique. Neither is realism a matter of verisimilitude. It is rather the expression of the film artist's worldview accomplished by moving the audience through powerful imagery and juxtapositions. Realism is a matter of affect.

Yi was concerned with how to synthesize idealism with what is real (*riarǔ*) and the power of cinema to achieve both realism and idealism by affecting the sensorium of the audience. He thought of cinema as a mode of mimesis that could use sight and sound in order to activate the sense of touch—a theory of haptic cinema. Because of its negative association with commercialism and conventionality, he did not use the term *melodrama*, but his description of haptic cinema resonates with the body mode of melodrama:

> When viewing a cinematic work, in order to understand the filmmaker's worldview according to their creative spirit and through the passivity and activity of the senses, the depictions of the film must be carried out haptically [*chŏpch'okchŏk ŭro*]. In a film of Pudovkin, the close-ups of workers with pockmarks, the details of a noble sweating profusely, the sea looming behind a wet corpse like an ominous cloud. . . . When we recall these things, it is sufficient to consider that we hold in our hearts for a long time whatever in the work moved us because it remains with us in the form of touch.
>
> Furthermore, touch requires change, or rather there is beauty in change. When we shut our eyes and see a sculpture belonging to the plastic arts, we would be alarmed by its changeability. In the depictions of a cinematic work as well: after a grainy close-up, a clearly sensed sky like glass; after touching wet blood that gives you goosebumps, soft white clouds like cotton. . . . The contrasts in these kinds of touch are what move us in a determinant way.
>
> The eye that truly grasps actuality is a perspective which has dug deeply into the sense of touch. Isn't the key to the method of descriptive realism hidden in the way it presents the expression of its images as a form of touch?[9]

Prefiguring discussions of the haptic visuality of cinema, Yi argued that in viewing a close-up of a worker's face or an image of the weather, we are not merely seeing; in hearing the accompanying sound and music, we are not merely hearing.[10] For Yi, a good film touches us, meaning it affects our entire body, or, following Laura U. Marks, our entire skin.[11] For Yi, and not metaphorically, the memory of a film stays with someone in their chest or heart (*kasŭm*) rather than primarily in their mind. He argues that the edited juxtaposition of discontinuous images and the haptic impact that they have are particularly powerful and memorable. Therefore, realism is ensured neither by continuity editing and the bourgeois realism of classical Hollywood nor by the ontology of the photographic image but by images edited together in a way that the audience will feel touched and retain a corporeal memory of the film's most poignant scenes; such editing is often more effective when it is discontinuous and creates a moving series of juxtapositions.[12]

Yi Yŏng-jun wrote this article on realism before the establishment of the two Korean states and the Korean War. In 1947, the field of discussion of cinema in South Chosŏn included more Soviet references, and Yi holds up Pudovkin's films as exemplars of realism. However, in turning to the golden age of South Korean film in the 1950s and 1960s, one finds that Yi's idea of realism remains relevant, even if the film culture of that period was ostensibly more cut off from communist and state socialist filmmaking. One connection between this later era and Yi's idea of realism was, of course, melodrama. Melodrama was the dominant mode of the golden age due to its claims to authenticity, realism, and social relevancy. A coherent world, or cosmos, guided a melodramatic film's narrative and its affects, and therefore melodrama as a mode of representation could make the processes of planning, scripting, and production unify and cohere. At the same time, melodrama made the senses and embodied aesthetic experience the central mediation through which to present this cosmos; its authenticity was based in the capacity for sight, sound, and touch to convey the worldview of a moral occult.

What primarily defined the melodramatic mode across genres was its moods, those affective attunements that are the a priori background of narrative and discursive meaning. Mood is another way of thinking about Yi Yŏng-jun's haptic realism. It is an affective attunement to the world and has a purposeful direction and can motivate attachment to a constellation of ideas. That is why the moods of melodrama are so integral to the moral occults of Cold War ideologies. The mood accentuates the conflict between the existing situation of characters and the potential for their more authentic and truthful emotions and ideas to be brought to the surface in order to transform the world from evil toward good. The mood of a melodrama film often represents, in an embodied way, social and historical phenomena and possibilities that have no basis in the extra-cinematic social world. However, another aspect of the melodramatic mode and moods is exposing the limitations placed on subjectivity and exploring the social negativity inherent to a complex and crisis-ridden modernity. The realist impulse, particularly the social realist one prominent during the golden age, is to exploit the verisimilitude of the

photographic image to reveal social, political, and economic structures that lie below the surface of melodramatic moral conflicts. In many golden age films, the melodramatic mood is directed toward the cosmological conflict between good and evil, innocence and guilt, virtue and vice; meanwhile, the realist impulse harnesses that same mood for a countervailing purpose, which is to direct our bodies, attention, and sympathies toward underlying social structures. This attention to underlying social structures produces affects, meanings, and historical references in excess of the moral cosmos of Cold War nationalism (always also present). The realist impulse extends sympathy beyond the bounds of national melodrama, offers alternative meanings of negative affects associated with historical experiences, and indexes everyday events outside the scope of state national history, provoking affective responses uncontained within the ideological framework of Cold War state politics.

As Kim So-yŏn shows, beginning in the late 1950s elitist critics called for the employment of this affective power of cinema for socially relevant narratives and the top-down instilling of democratic values. At the height of the golden age of South Korean cinema, in 1960, the student-led April 19 Revolution deposed President Syngman Rhee and instituted democratic reforms prior to Park Chung Hee's military coup in 1961.[13] As a cultural as well as political movement, April 19 strongly influenced the sphere of culture, including film theory and criticism. In "The Establishment of Cultural Spirit" (1960), film critic Yi Yŏng-il wrote about the Korean War and April 19 as historical conditions for a cultural transformation that would finally allow Korean artists to bridge concepts and concrete historical realities:

> The June 25 War and the April Democratic Revolution have certainly given us belief and a spiritual foundation that are not empty concepts. The June 25 War was a transformation that occurred through external historical conditions and the April Democratic Revolution was a revolution resulting from an internal explosion. These two historical facts drove our situation into a crucible of the harshest misfortune, but it also grew our power to be able to overcome this situation with our internal energy.
>
> There was nothing previously like the vivid experiences of the last ten years to give us such an acute conviction concerning our beliefs. Almost every literary-historical period of Korea passed by fruitlessly due to the distance between ideas and actuality. The actuality that confined the world and actions of the private sphere presented a gap that could never be hurdled. Therefore, writers lived in vain, and literature tended to become idealistic.
>
> However, today we clearly feel a pulsating generation among us. This is not a deformed generation in which thoughts and actuality do not match, like in the past. Our experiences and actions are now supported by definitive ideas of value. This is something exceptional in our cultural history.[14]

Yi Yŏng-il's writings in 1960 express optimism about the ongoing political and cultural revolution, which will finally allow Korean literature and film to make

their ideas adequate to actuality. Under conditions of Japanese colonialism and the early Cold War dictatorship of Syngman Rhee, state and market control over culture, including film production, meant that ideas were detached from external social realities and did not have the power to affect history. Although the Korean War and the April 19 Revolution drove South Korea into a "crucible of harshest misfortune," they also created political and cultural energy, particularly among the youth, to overcome the historical situation through a political movement and a cultural renaissance. A number of classic South Korean films, including *Aimless Bullet* and *The Housemaid* (*Hanyŏ*, dir. Kim Ki-young, 1960) were made at this time. Yu Hyun-mok's films in particular represented to Yi Yŏng-il the emerging possibilities of a realist arthouse cinema that would contribute to a democratic film culture.[15] Such a cinema would finally overcome the gap between ideas and actuality, a claim that cast the cinematic image as a Hegelian mediation that would bring together idealism and historical referentiality.

By late 1961, seven months after Park Chung Hee's military coup, Yi Chŏng-gi and Yi Yŏng-il were taking stock of the gains and losses over the previous five years of South Korean cinema in articles appearing in *The Chosun Daily*.[16] The idea that cinema was an important aspect of democratic revolution created an ambivalent relationship to melodrama, which was the primary mode of popular cinematic representation, but also tended to defend conservative values and sentimentality in the face of real politics and history. Echoing Yi Yŏng-il's calls for a cinematic cultural spirit free from bureaucratic and market controls, Yu Tu-yŏn argued that the withdrawal into ideas was a problem of commercial cinema and melodrama. He contrasted the melodrama of South Korean film to Italian neorealism and the French New Wave:

> The backbone to bring about a revival could not be established in the state of consciousness of filmmakers. This is corroborated by the fact that despite suffering the horrors of August 15 [liberation] and June 25 [the Korean War], there was no movement of Italian realism, nor a movement of Nouvelle Vague, and the industry ended up in a deluge of melodrama that aimed only at the safety of recuperating production costs.[17]

Yu certainly diagnosed the economic and political factors that had prevented South Korean cinema from fully realizing its artistic and cultural potential. However, even in the midst of the April Revolution, in a commercial film industry in the developing world, in a country defined by anticommunist politics and without the kind of state institutions that supported European arthouse cinema, could the "deluge of melodrama" be held back by a dam of engaged and avant-garde realist artworks? Although both Yi Yŏng-il and Yu Tu-yŏn felt that Korean society had undergone the kind of cataclysmic historical experiences that could energize film artists toward experimentation and a new cinematic realism, the economic and cultural hegemony of melodrama would not disappear overnight. Nor was

their ideal, European arthouse cinema, bereft of its own appreciation for and use of the melodramatic mode. In filmmaking practice, overcoming the gap between ideas and actuality happened through a version of the haptic realism articulated by Yi Yŏng-jun, a synthesis of the idealism of the melodramatic moral occult and a realist attention to social structures.

The desire on the part of critics and ambitious filmmakers to create an arthouse, avant-garde, and realist film aesthetic could not simply ignore the power of melodramatic suspension of realistic space and time, particularly in a film market still governed by profit motives and spectacle. Furthermore, even for the original instance of Italian neorealism itself, it is now widely understood that "neorealism overlaps with popular melodramatics throughout this era, challenging assumptions that melodramatic emotion is incompatible with or even betrays (as contemporary criticism put it) realism."[18] Haptic realism necessarily involves the interweaving of realism and melodrama.

The touch of melodramatic cinema refers to a realm of truer spiritual values at the same time as it indexes the constraints and oppression of the given social reality. The conflict between the real and the true is felt in these films' moods. In the following analysis of realism and melodrama in the golden age, I focus on how film melodramas depict social phenomena that are particularly replete with sociohistorical significance, haptic impact, and affective excessive: war memory, family, poverty, and the communist other. I show how the moods of these films express an ongoing crisis between the symbolic and the psychological, between the melodramatic tendency toward allegorical causality and the realist impulse to use the indexical or duplicative capacity of cinema to engage the audience in reflection on complex social problems.

FAMILY AS MICROCOSM

Films of the 1950s and 1960s often utilized the household and its limits to demarcate public boundaries of gender, class, and national belonging.[19] By 1960, at the macro-political level, class relations, gender roles, and the geographical and political integrity of the nation had been put into crisis through Japanese colonialism, national division, American occupation, and the destruction and impoverishment caused by the Korean War. Many aspects of these social crises were only intensified by the authoritarian government of Syngman Rhee, operating under the aegis of American occupation, and by the nascent industrialization of the late 1950s and early 1960s. The golden age of South Korean cinema was punctuated by ongoing political crisis in the aftermath of the Korean War. In 1960, Syngman Rhee was forced out of office by the April 19 Revolution, which was followed by one year of parliamentary rule with Yun Po-sŏn acting as president. The following year, General Park Chung Hee's military coup succeeded, and in 1962 he became president. Changing into civilian clothes, he would serve as president for eleven years, maintaining power through two questionable elections (1963, 1967). Then, with

the Yusin Constitution of 1972, he would dissolve parliament and serve seven more years as a legalized dictator, until his assassination in 1979.

During this period of rapid industrialization and successive dictatorial regimes, some of the most successful directors of the golden age turned to the family household as a manageable milieu in which to depict the experiences of their national audiences. As Martha Kinder and Angelo Restivo have shown in their studies of the emergent Spanish and Italian national cinemas of the same period, the cinematic apparatus, including all the non-filmic media that surround the production and consumption of films, is a particularly powerful technology for the construction of national identity and for enacting the various spatio-temporal reorientations, psychological reconfigurations, and reimagined social relations implied by such a historical process.[20] However, the family is not an entirely stable reference point for the sentimental and sympathetic construction of national identity and national cinema. Particularly in the melodramatic mode, the nuclear family functions as a contradictory site of moral authenticity and turpitude, innocence and resentment, reunification and fracture; it often appears as a symptomatic microcosm of the painful and cataclysmic process of Cold War nation-building. The representation of family could play on the sentimentality and sympathies of the audience for the purposes of nation-building, but like any embodied melodramatic mode of mimesis, it also invoked the suffocating limitations, repressiveness, and normativity of family relations and the social negativity these can create. The family as a microcosm of national community functioned within realism as an idea elevated into ideology by way of coded affects of sentiment and sympathy, but it also touched negative social realities that the idea of the family could not itself resolve.

The horrors of historical reality are expressed no more clearly and painfully than in family dramas dealing directly with the traumatic experiences of the Korean War. Shin Sang-ok's *To the Last Day* (1960) confronts the extremes of trauma and loss brought about by the Korean War and is among the most tragic of his melodramatic films. Captain Kim (Kim Chin-gyu) is wounded in battle and paralyzed from the waist down. His wife, Hyegyŏng (Ch'oe Ŭn-hŭi), cares for him as he struggles with the loss of his mobility and capacity for sexual intercourse and reproduction, weeping that he would prefer to die. He allegorizes his injury and disability as a symbol of national division: "My body has been hacked in half, just like this country." After he is able to use a wheelchair, Kim, Hyegyŏng, and their daughter, Sŏn'gyŏng (Chŏn Yŏng-sŏn), flee Seoul to Taegu in order to escape the Chinese invasion (the People's Volunteer Army of China joined the war in October 1950 and pushed the UN and ROK forces south of Seoul). They manage to find a ride in the back of a truck to escape the battlefront, but their newborn baby dies of pneumonia along the way. Hyegyŏng pushes and pulls her husband and all their remaining possessions in a cart down the rest of the way to Taegu. The deep space of the sparse landscape surrounding the road and the stream of trucks driving by, already filled with other refugees, highlight the isolation and dire circumstances

of the family. Such images of exhaustion and suffering refer to the extremes of displacement, pain, and struggle that many in the audience would have experienced only years earlier. Although the location filming in the countryside and the use of real military vehicles contribute to the realism of the scene, the scene's referentiality is primarily an effect of its haptic invocation of war memory.

In such working-through of collective trauma by way of the melodramatic mode, the film takes on the quality of ritual mourning, but without the singular moment of catharsis characteristic of tragedy.[21] The family experiences an unrelenting series of horrific events with only a few momentary suggestions of the possibility of a better future in the postwar, including the ending discussed below. Through the first third of the film, Kim wishes to die but commits to living again after a life-altering event. On the way to Taegu, Kim would rather die than live as a paraplegic and is racked with guilt about slowing down his family's progress. Kim gets out of the cart after Hyegyŏng and Sŏn'gyŏng leave him to get something to eat, intending to commit suicide. He drags himself across the dirt to the train tracks, but Hyegyŏng returns carrying Sŏn'gyŏng on her back and they begin calling for him. He goes under the train bridge as they walk across it above him. When he hears a train coming, he reveals himself in order to warn them; they are just barely able to run off of the bridge and save themselves.

This remarkable scene displays Shin Sang-ok's directing skill. Its sublime outdoor setting is reminiscent of the ending of his *A Flower in Hell* (1958), in which Yŏngsik (Kim Hak) chases the sex worker Sonya (Ch'oe Ŭn-hŭi) through a foggy mud flat in order to take revenge on her for reporting him to the police and seducing his younger brother Tongsik (Cho Hae-wŏn). The image of the dying Yŏngsik and Sonya lying mud-splattered on the ground became one of Shin's most iconic. Likewise, this scene in *To the Last Day* uses this sublime landscape of the mountains and valleys of central Korea, accentuated by a shot from Kim's point of view, a backdrop that establishes an existential mood and dramatizes his decision to commit suicide. As he drags himself onto the train tracks, they extend infinitely into the background, toward the mountainous horizon. The shot reduces life to a single man struggling with his disability, his death wish, and his physically and mentally traumatic war experiences in a space and mood reduced to sublime natural landscape and the dehumanizing technology of the train. As Hyegyŏng and Sŏn'gyŏng start to call for him, low-angle shots show them running across the bridge, against a clear sky in the background, while high-angle shots capture Kim dragging himself under the bridge. The wooden railroad ties jut into the foreground of shots from both angles, visually highlighting the division that has been created in the family by technology and war. Captain Kim weeps when he discovers that he cannot commit suicide and then yells to his family to get off the bridge. After a harrowing series of shots of Hyegyŏng and Sŏn'gyŏng barely making it off the bridge, the family hugs each other while Hyegyŏng pleas with her husband, asking how he could do such a thing. The film then cuts to Taegu, where Hyegyŏng

works happily selling goods at a stall to earn money for her family's return to Seoul and befriends another merchant, Mr. Cho (Nam Kung-wŏn).

The scene on the train tracks returns later in a sonic flashback, after Hyegyŏng, Sŏn'gyŏng, and Cho have moved into a house together, occupying separate rooms. Hyegyŏng and Cho embrace, and Cho says that her "life is so tragic." As they lie down on his bed, the extradiegetic sound of the oncoming train and Kim's yelling returns, "I'm here! Watch out!" The aural haunting of the family's moment of survival connects the narrative present to a past that must be honored and redeemed, preventing Hyegyŏng from acting on her desire. She is overcome with guilt and leaves Cho's room, visibly resisting her sexual desire. Later films such as *Homebound* (1967) repeated this theme of the effects of paralysis on war veterans and their families, and the problem of the repressed desires of wives of paralyzed veterans, as well as war widows, became something of a motif.[22] The conflict comes to a head when Kim goes from the hospital to the house and discovers Hyegyŏng and Cho together; Kim is angered but eventually relents when he realizes how dependent he is on her.

These conflicts are very common to the family drama. Douglas Sirk's *All That Heaven Allows* (1955) centers on the conflict between the widow Cary's desire for Ron and her fidelity to her children and her dead husband. However, the setting and the audience's direct experiences of the Korean War affect the narrative and mood of *To the Last Day* and its engagements with the conventions of the marital and family drama. As Kim's comparison between his disabled body and the division of Korea suggests, one of these effects is the allegorization of the family conflict as a microcosm of national conflict. The weeping and paroxysms of grief in the film express a ritual of mourning that creates sympathy not only for the family unit but of course for the national community that has gone through the cataclysmic collective experience of civil war. These experiences are not primarily referred to through realistic depictions of war, although the real circumstances of refugees and colonial sex workers are highlighted, but through the haptic realism of melodrama. Kim's unbearable pain and death wish through the first part of the film plunges the mood of the film immediately into a deep melancholy that seems intractable. There is little room for Sirkian irony about the foibles and conventions of the middle class because the couple's feelings about death and survival and family loyalty and individual desires are connected to extreme mass violence.

Because the family is made to stand in symbolically for a broken national community, in order to end the film with optimism about the national future, the characters' sense of purpose has to be directed beyond individual desires and resentments. This begins to happen after Cho reunites with his sister Yŏngsŏn and discovers that she is a sex worker, the second reference to sex work for American soldiers after Hyegyŏng is disturbed by soldiers and workers in her hotel before moving in with Cho. Cho shames Yŏngsŏn, even though she explains the dire economic circumstances that led to her decision, and she commits suicide. As a

FIGURE 17. In *To the Last Day* (1960), the family experiences a brief moment of joy and hope for the future at the end of the war, after the daughter Sŏngyŏng says, "I will invent something to fix you," and shows them a drawing of her father standing up from his wheelchair.

melodramatic sacrificial lamb of national feminine propriety, she writes to her family in her suicide note that they should take the money she has earned and contribute it to a good cause. When Hyegyŏng and family decide to return to Seoul, Cho gives her the money and upon their return Hyegyŏng and Captain Kim open a workhouse for war widows. Earlier in the film, when Kim is awarded a medal and promoted to major, Hyegyŏng questions his sacrifice for the ROK state, causing Kim to weep and question her denial of the small joy of his promotion. However, by the end of the film, Hyegyŏng and Kim come together around an idea of postwar national community, not in supporting the state directly but in opening the workhouse and contributing to the national welfare and economic development (figure 17). Even after a final tragedy befalls the family when Sŏn'gyŏng is killed by a truck while crossing the street, Hyegyŏng still gives an inspiring speech to the widows, telling them, "We have all become family now." Then a point-of-view shot captures the sunshine opening the clouds before she and Kim deliver their final lines, the original title of the film: "Until the last day of this life!"

Kim overcomes his death wish, and Hyegyŏng is able to see beyond her husband's disability and her unfulfilled sexual desire by way of a public mission. That the funds of a sex worker would be redirected toward the widow's workhouse presents a pretty clear moral allegory for national innocence and redemption.

Through this allegory centered on the propriety of women, the meaning of family also transforms from the nuclear family to the extended family of the workhouse and, implicitly, the nation: "We are all family now." Considering the series of collective and personal tragedies portrayed in the film, it ends on a hopeful note that feels forced. However, the characters' realization that their family is not a limited and self-sufficient community but a microcosm of a larger national community gives meaning to their sacrifices and ensures that neither community will be undone by selfish desires. Like many post–Korean War films of both Korean film industries, the haptic realism of the melodramatic mode translates familial suffering into national mission. However, the allegory is not entirely closed, due to the contrapuntal quality of the melodramatic mode. The film also refers to state-sanctioned death and immiseration, sexual desires outside the nuclear family, and colonial sex work for American soldiers. The ending attempts to resolve the tension between melodrama's redemption of national innocence and realism's exposition of underlying social structures by providing an image of a postwar future and subsuming the problem of individual morality into the national community.

Two other examples of this type of melodrama of postwar possibility are *The Coachman* (dir. Kang Tae-jin, 1961) and *Bloodline* (dir. Kim Su-yong, 1963), both of which star Kim Sŭng-ho, one of the most famous actors of the era; he was known for playing struggling patriarchs, including in *Romantic Papa* (*Romaensŭ ppappa*, dir. Shin Sang-ok, 1960) and *Under the Sky of Seoul* (*Seoul chibung mit*, dir. Yi Hyŏng-p'o, 1961).[23] In *The Coachman*, Kim plays Ha Ch'unsam, a single father who supports his four children by working as a coachman. The film focuses on a family living in poverty and debt, and supported by Ch'unsam's preindustrial labor, exploring through melodrama the structural economic and social problems of uneven development.[24] His younger daughter, Okhŭi (Ŏm Aeng-nan), is ashamed of being poor and tries to find a husband who will support her. In a striking early scene, she rides in the back of an automobile with a man who lies to her about getting her a job at a trading company. A shot peeking over the dash of the passenger seat captures Ch'unsam walking his horse and carriage across the street. The car almost hits him, and Okhŭi hides her face in the back seat as the man tells the driver to go ahead. The juxtaposition of old and new technology and the lack of awareness and conscience that accompanies automobile driving foreshadows another remarkable scene. A frustrated driver honks at Ch'unsam from behind, then an automobile speeds around the corner in front of him and we cut in to see that the driver is Ch'unsam's boss (Chu Sŏn-t'ae), the carriage owner. The owner hits the horse, which drags the carriage wheel over Ch'unsam's leg. As he lies on the ground, the owner is concerned only with the damage to the front of his automobile. Ch'unsam is a subaltern worker dependent on an outmoded technology and threatened on the street by industrial modernity. The owner's dehumanization of Ch'unsam following the accident is a continuation of the inhumanity of the direct expropriation of his labor in the form of rent. This subaltern exploitation

is contrasted to the relative promise of factory labor and ownership. After saving Okhŭi from the swindler, the carriage owner's more ethical son, Ch'angsu, heroically helps her get a satisfying job at a confectionary factory and they begin a relationship. Meanwhile, Suwŏn-daek, the maid of the carriage owner who has a romantic bond with Ch'unsam, purchases the horse from her bosses for their family and joins the family as a stepmother the final scene.

The Ha family is in many respects a microcosm of the economic and social situation of South Koreans in 1961, the majority of whom were living an impoverished subaltern existence while also looking forward toward a future of industrialization and factory labor. Each sibling embodies a particular circumstance that might befall someone in the family's position. The eldest son, Suŏp (Sin Yŏng-gyun), struggles against class prejudice as he studies for a higher civil service examination and eventually takes up his father's work after his injury. The eldest daughter, Ongnyŏ (Cho Mi-ryŏng), is disabled (mute), and the physical and emotional abuse of her philandering husband drives her to suicide. Okhŭi seeks upward mobility through marriage by lying about her family background, before going to work at the confectionary factory. And the youngest son is a thief, as shown in the film's exciting opening chase scene, in which a camera moving on a picture car captures him biking away from and then toward it rapidly through old narrow streets. However, there are also signs of equality, nationality, and mass culture, as when Ch'unsam and Suwŏn-daek go to the movie theater to watch one of many adaptations of the romantic folktale *Chunhyang*. The movie theater is a levelling experience of mass culture placed self-consciously within the melodrama, but it is also connected to his secret budding romance. The second time they go to the same film, he sees Okhŭi, who is on a date with the swindler; he also exchanges an uncomfortable glance with Suŏp while at a restaurant with Suwŏn-daek. In other words, in melodramatic fashion, the family is inside the industrial economy and national mass culture (Chunhyang) but also exterior to them, owing to the looming obsolescence of their patriarch's labor and their frequently mentioned social expendability. This contradictory position of the family becomes a part of its internal divisions—Ch'unsam and Okhŭi can sit in the same theater, watching a classic Korean folktale, but not as a family due to her lies and his secret. In this way, family lies and secrets, as well as the tragedies of Ongnyŏ's suicide and Ch'unsam's injury, highlight the structural social inequalities, although within the sympathetic moral framework of melodrama.

The social problems allegorized as family problems are resolved when Ch'angsu gets Okhŭi a job in the factory and addresses his family's treatment of them and when Suwŏn-daek purchases the horse and becomes part of the family. Suŏp also passes his examination, despite the class prejudice of other characters against his ambitions. Just as the speech on surrogate family and the point-of-view shot of the opening sky bring an abrupt conclusion to *To the Last Day* and its exploration of the horrors of war memory, the resolution of the family's economic problems and

their reintegration into a new image of national society—the final shot captures them walking down the road, all together for the first time in the film—relies on sentimental identification and acts of generosity between characters of different classes and backgrounds. Class problems are resolved through nation-state development represented at the micropolitical level. However, remnants of the unevenness of the economic and social situation remain. The marriage of Ch'unsam and Suwŏn-daek and the purchasing of the horse are narratively possible primarily because he is a man. In films focusing on women widowers, such as *Mother and a Guest* (*Sarangbang sonnim kwa ŏmŏni*, dir. Shin Sang-ok, 1961) and *Dongsimcho* (dir. Shin Sang-ok, 1959), the new relationship is almost always left unconsummated through marriage, following a convention established by *All That Heaven Allows*. This gendering of authentic national subjectivity is also reflected in the disturbing violence directed toward the two sisters, not only by men outside their family but by Suŏp and Ch'unsam themselves. Furthermore, factory labor functions as a moral ideal and equalizing social force that allows Okhŭi to overcome her shame, lies, and false hopes, even though in actuality capitalism merely reorganized the exploitation of labor power into a wage system. The social realism of the film is reflected through the prism of a sentimentalized family, giving affective form to social negativity at a microcosmic level. Thereby the unevenness and conflict of the larger society can be subsumed into a sentimental resolution. This vacillation between realism and melodrama is apparent in the visual and musical mood swings between melancholy and hopefulness and in the gradual shift in the narrative causality from a real overdetermined economic and social structure to the allegorical magic of melodrama.

Bloodline tells the story of refugees from the north living in a shantytown on the mountain slopes outside Seoul. It is based on a play by Kim Yŏng-su and director Kim Su-yong uses the setting of a small group of houses to re-create a theatrical feel. Although the film uses family drama to explore issues of poverty, social class, and migration, it expands the focus beyond a single nuclear family. One of many stylistic flourishes appears halfway in, as the camera tracks in on the window of one house and then pans quickly from one window to the next. We cannot see through the windows, but at each window the audio cuts suddenly to the conflict inside each house: (1) A grandmother sings a melancholy prayer. Her two sons fight with one another, her granddaughter is disabled, and her daughter-in-law is dying. (2) A widower father, Tŏksam (Kim Sŭng-ho), has arranged for a much younger bride to come live with him, and he is heard entreating the silent woman to sleep with him and to speak. (3) A strict mother (Hwang Chŏng-sun) sings to her adopted daughter-in-law Poksun (Ŏm Aeng-nan), forcing her to train as a *p'ansori* singer so that she can earn money for the family as a *kisaeng*. The scene then crosscuts between the interior of the three houses. Poksun is disgusted by her *p'ansori* training, and her mother yells at her husband for being lazy. In the next house, the grandmother reads from a Bible while her son (Sin Yŏng-gyun) wraps

boxes of salvaged cigarette butts with his daughter, and his wife lies dying, unable to afford health care. In the last, Tŏksam forces his new wife to take off her blouse, while the *p'ansori* training from next door can be heard in the background.

The title refers to kinship and genealogy, and the story is concerned with the relationships between generations. Poksun's father remarks to the village barber, Kapdŭk, "The old people don't have what it takes to start a new life, but you have your whole life ahead of you." However, in describing multiple connections between three different families, the circuits of sentiment and sympathy are not clearly contained within the nuclear family and its genealogy. The inclusion of three families allows the film to refer to multiple layers of colonial history. All the characters have migrated as refugees from the north. Poksun's mother is displaced from Hamhŭng province, and she is trying to teach her the singing style of that region. Tŏksam has worked as a miner in Hokkaido, part of the massive labor migration from Korea to Japan proper in the last decade of the Japanese empire. His wife presumably died during the Korean War, "twelve years ago." The cigarette salesman's younger brother, Wŏnch'il (Ch'oe Mu-ryong), has been studying in Japan, funded by his sister-in-law's factory labor prior to her fatal illness. A landowner comes to the village demanding payment for property rights, which he likely gained through cooperation with Japanese or US colonialism.

Wŏnch'il also has a love interest (Kim Chi-mi) who is a sex worker for the US military. When she and Wŏnch'il go out together near the US military base, Kim Su-yong captures the alienation of US occupation in a signature montage. The couple drinks at a club while a singer and jazz band play a melancholic song. The scene cuts from couple to couple, US soldiers smiling at Korean women with solemn faces, and then back to the band. The anonymity of the faces and the eeriness of the song creates a surreal mood of depressed delirium. Kim presents the problem of US colonialism and the sex work of Korean women but does not give the conflict the typical melodramatic treatment (e.g., weeping over the loss of the sister's innocence, as in *To the Last Day* and *Aimless Bullet*). Kim uses the atmosphere and music of the club to create a discomforting aesthetic distance and experimental feel. Although Wŏnch'il breaks with her in the subsequent scene, by momentarily contravening the melodramatic and allegorical conventions of representations of sex work, Kim is able to critique politically the alienation of the social context rather than merely denouncing morally the iniquity of the woman worker.

Despite the film's social realist attention to the layers of colonialism, migration, and economic exploitation, the ending is as optimistic about the future as the above films. Tŏksam's son Kŏbuk is in love with Poksun and after the scene that cuts between the three houses, they run away together and begin working at a textile factory. He writes a letter to their families and their two fathers go to visit them at the factory. A scene of the factory floor shows them happy to be doing industrial labor. They reunite with their fathers and the family lineage as the two fathers arrange their marriage, and Tŏksam says, "She is from a good family.

FIGURE 18. *Bloodline* (1963) begins in a shantytown where three families struggle to get by and ends with a young couple entering a factory, where industrialization and the nuclear family promise a better life for some.

She belongs to the Yangju Cho family clan." Reminiscent of the final shot of *The Coachman*, the fathers and children walk toward the factory (figure 18). The wide walkway, the landscaping and pond, and the factory walls and smokestack in the distance—everything about the space of the final shot, including its symmetry and clear point-of-view perspective, differs from the multiple disorienting angles and ramshackle mise-en-scène of the scenes of the shantytown. This image, combined with the triumphant music, presents a sublime aesthetic of modernity. Because of its absolute visual contrast with the rest of the film, the image makes an abstract break from all the story's complex and saddening social conditions. Realism and melodrama do not align with modernity and tradition. The final image is formally melodramatic, an emblem of the victory of familial sentiment, industrial labor, and national development over uneven structural conditions. The image is also one of the film's most realist, if the criterium for realism is point perspective. The three families and their layered histories are occluded by an image of the future: family lineage, industrial modernization, and postwar national development. The

dialectic of realism and melodrama resolves into a singular image and story of recovery and reconstruction.

Aimless Bullet stands out as a family drama that refuses to end with such an image of family and nation-state. It is relentless in its dark view of South Korea in the aftermath of the Korean War. Based on the 1958 short story by Yi Pŏm-sŏn and like *Bloodline* after it, *Aimless Bullet* depicts refugees from the north. Eldest brother Chŏrho (a secretary), his wife and daughter, younger brother Yŏngho (an unemployed war veteran), and the family's grandmother live in Liberation Village, a neighborhood known for North Korean migrants. There are a number of scenes that explicitly draw attention to the problem of melodrama in relation to realism, which is not surprising, considering the director Yu Hyun-mok's critiques of melodrama and his adoration of arthouse realism.[25] Chapter 6 deals in detail with some of the more obviously self-reflexive moments in the film, in which Yu uses the setting of a film studio, as well as offscreen space, to problematize the limits of melodramatic and cinematic representation in relation to real historical events and traumas. In terms of family drama's use of the family as a microcosm for society or the nation-state, a few qualities distinguish *Aimless Bullet*. The grandmother repeats the phrase "Kaja!" ("Let's go!") in a sort of delirium. This line is taken from the short story, where it expresses her desire to cross the thirty-eighth parallel to return to their home village in the north. The famous final scene of the film depicts Chŏrho, who has had two rotten teeth removed, collapsed in the back of a taxi. His brother has been arrested for robbing a bank, his sister has become a sex worker, and his wife has died in childbirth. He tells the driver different destinations—Liberation Village, University Hospital, and the police station—unsure if he should go home, see his newborn child, or visit his brother. When the taxi arrives at the police station, Chŏrho does not get out and tells the drivers to "just go." They say he must be drunk or an "aimless bullet," which inspires Chŏrho's monologue: "An aimless bullet. . . . I have to be a son, a husband, a father, a brother, and a secretary. . . . So many things I have to be. Maybe you're right. I might be an aimless bullet made by the Creator. I don't know where I should go, but I should be going somewhere now." He lies down in the back seat and when asked again by the drivers where they should go, he responds, "Kaja!" and collapses back in the seat.

In contrast with the majority of family dramas of the golden age, *Aimless Bullet* ends with a paralysis about the future and one's role within the family and society. Rather than using the microcosm of the family as a symbol for the overcoming of historical suffering and social divisions, the scene shows Chŏrho questioning familial roles as a matter of subject position. Every relationship through which his familial and work identity could make sense as part of the larger whole of society or the nation-state has been shattered. As the above films show, this refusal to encapsulate possibility and optimism in a familial image was an overt resistance to the pressure to express melodramatically and idealistically the ethos of postwar reconstruction. Earlier, Yu intentionally inserts into Yŏngho's bank robbery chase

scene images of the April 19 Revolution labor protests, as well as a horrific image of a mother who has hung herself with a baby on her back. These insertions work very explicitly against the sensationalism, suspense, and action of the melodramatic chase scene, referring through juxtaposition to an extra-cinematic world of continued suffering and social crisis—not even the spectacle of the chase, as necessary as it might be for a popular film, can momentarily hide the real social conditions of the postwar that the film has exposed through negative affects and moods. Likewise, in the final scene, there is no image of a future direction, no opening of the sky, or no sentimental reunion of the family that can redeem suffering and translate social negativity into a well-formed affect of hope. *Aimless Bullet* became a classic in part because of this refusal to allow the melodramatic mode and mood to serve an integrative social function, even as Yu uses it to explore the real suffering, traumas, and injustices of a social system that has not yet moved beyond war. This kind of self-conscious melodramatic filmmaking does not attempt to resolve the tension between realism and melodrama. Rather, it uses popular melodramatic spectacle to attract a mass audience, self-conscious de-realization as a reminder that it is only a movie, and strategic insertions of realist references to history to disrupt haptic immersion in a moral occult.

IMAGES OF POVERTY

In numerous films of this era, a common scene shows a relatively minor character reminding one of the protagonists of a debt that is owed to him. In *The Coachman*, a neighborhood man who is also interested in Suwŏn-daek, Kim Sŏ-gi (Kim Hŭi-gap), pesters Ch'unsam to repay a debt, before later on spying on the couple in jealousy. In *Bloodline*, the barber Kapdŭk, who asks Okhŭi's father for her hand in marriage, reminds Kŏbuk that he owes him money, before later seeing the couple at the train station and telling her adopted mother that she has run away with Kŏbuk. Both scenes of attempted debt collection occur in the first fifteen minutes and set the stage for a conflict between the lender and debtor over a romantic interest. These conventions for representing indebtedness connect the economic problem of debt to an allegorical social world. Played by the same "bad guy" actor, Chu Sŏn-t'ae, the carriage owner and landowner character in each film, respectively, wield their power directly and coercively. However, the acquaintance lenders belong to what Elsaesser calls the counterpoint of melodramatic narrative. They operate as foils to the protagonist and compete with him in love, but they are also equal to him. The debt works to create sympathy for the protagonist at the same time as it establishes the protagonist's moral dilemma. These acquaintances are not evil, and their repayment is not directly connected to exploitation; therefore, the debt becomes an ethical problem for the individual protagonist. The problem of debt expresses a larger ambivalence concerning poverty and capitalism in *sŏmingŭk*, or common-people's drama.[26] As Mauricio Lazzarato explains, debt is

not simply a mode of oppression but also a technique of governmentality, because indebting subjects is key to keeping them ideologically and practically dependent on the capitalist labor market.[27] The indebtedness of the common person can be transformed into a moral allegory of the whole economy through which structural problem of poverty can be displaced into issues of governmentality, particularly the practices of individual *homo economicus.*

Money is one classic portrayal of debt and gambling in a village setting. The film surrounds the image of poverty with an ambivalent mood of both sympathy and frustration with the main character Pongsu's tragic flaws in relation to household finances (Kim Sŭngho again plays the foolish father). As the title of the film suggests, although it does represent labor and the struggles of farmers within the rural economy, its primary focus is on money. As Marx showed in his analysis of money, money is itself a commodity and emerges out of commodity exchange.[28] Just as a commodity alienates and hides the value of the congealed labor in the commodity, money operates as an equalizing and symbolic abstraction. It facilitates the circulation of commodities, particularly in relation to the temporal and spatial gaps between sites of production, exchange, and consumption. As a commodity with pure purchasing power for any other commodity (its use value), it becomes an object of accumulation and hoarding, as well as a quantitative symbol of wealth and power. However, also as a commodity, it hides the value that labor has added to it in the production process—not only in the production of the material of the money itself but of all the commodities through whose exchange and circulation a quantity of money was accumulated. In a melodramatic film focused on poverty, these symbolic, metaphorical, abstract, and occlusive qualities of money can transform it into a master-signifier that stands in place of the totality of complex social relations involved in impoverishment and accumulation. In the case of *Money*, this symbolism transforms the social realist concern with agricultural labor, the urban and rural divide, and the debts of farmers into an allegorical reflection on the moral problems of money as commodity: gambling, grift, theft, and murder. This shift of emphasis from labor and debt to the proper and improper circulation of money as the binding social symbol melodramatizes poverty into a problem of governmentality. The social realist representation of political economy gives way to an allegory concerning the proper practices of *homo economicus* and their necessity for sustaining modern subjectivity and a modern family.

Pongsu is very naïve about managing money. He is in debt to Mr. Ch'oe, who asks him to sell his calf in order to at least pay the interest on the loan. Again, Ch'oe is not the primary enemy and the two reconcile later in the film. However, even though Ch'oe is not evil, the debt to Ch'oe causes Pongsu to put off his daughter Suni's wedding and precipitates all his mistakes in managing the family's money. The real villain of the film is Ŏkcho (Ch'oe Nam-hyŏn), who makes money usuriously lending to impoverished farmers and getting them to gamble on the card game *hwat'u*. Ŏkcho's wife (Hwang Chŏng-sun) owns a bar that employs Okkyŏng

(Chʻoe Ŭn-hŭi), who is the love interest of Pongsuʼs son, Yŏngho (Kim Chin-gyu). It is not the fact of Chʻoeʼs debt that sets in motion the tragic sequence of events that makes up the melodramatic narrative. Rather, Pongsu is talked into playing *hwatʻu* with two other farmers during a drunken night at Ŏkchoʼs house. He wins enough of their money to pay his debt, but Yŏngho insists that he return it. However, when he meets Ŏkcho to return the money, the usurer tells him that he would be a fool to return the money, that the others will not thank him, and that "people will even sell their souls for money." He then coaxes him into playing *hwatʻu* again, cheating in order to win all the money Pongsu had previously acquired from his fellow farmers, as well as what he has earned by selling rice. These losses put Pongsu at the mercy of Ŏkcho, who connects him with another debtor businessman in Seoul. Pongsu earns money selling the familyʼs cow in Seoul but is swindled out of the funds. When Ŏkcho tries to rape Okkyŏng, she fights him off and he drops his money. Pongsu finds the money and gets in a fight with Ŏkcho over it; Ŏkcho pulls a knife and Pongsu accidentally kills him with it during the struggle. When Okkyŏng finds the money on the ground, she mistakes it for good fortune and shares it with Yŏngho as they plan their move away from the village. However, the police arrest them for theft and murder and take them by train to police headquarters. The film ends with a shot from the back of the departing train, which captures Pongsu on his knees, weeping and yelling, "Yŏngho! it was neither you nor me, it was money that killed Ŏkcho!"

Money concerns a village economy in the aftermath of rural reforms. However, as Jinsoo An argues, the localism of *Money* does not simply emphasize the rural and regional color of the village setting; the vernacular nationalist discourse of 1950s cinema entails using the conventions of Hollywood-style narrative and continuity editing to allegorize the national through the rural, local, and regional.[29] Although the realism of the film draws attention to the material conditions of poverty in the countryside, the melodramatic narrative and mood use the rural as a backdrop to dramatize the individual morality at the foundations of the national economy. The film surrounds the symbolic function of money with a melodramatic mood that emphasizes the tragedy of Pongsuʼs lack of financial understanding. Han Sang-giʼs melancholic orchestral theme plays only during the opening credits and in the final scene; it stands out during Pongsuʼs final condemnation of money as the true murderer. As a comparatively quiet melodrama, the filmʼs mood otherwise depends on lighting, cinematography, and acting. In the fateful scene in which Pongsu loses his money gambling, the focus is on his pensive face as Ŏkcho manipulates him into playing more and more hands. Key lighting from the left side illuminates Pongsuʼs facial expressions: fear, anger, and anguish. The ignorance that allows him to be conned by Ŏkcho and then swindled during his trip to Seoul inspires empathy but also moral frustration, particularly because his family suffers greatly from his actions. As the referentiality of the film gradually shifts from the realist representation of the economic injustices besieging farmers

to a haptic melodramatic mood of lateness and tragedy centered on the morally symbolic circulations of money, poverty itself is allegorized and the demise of Pongsu's family takes on a fated causality connected to his improprieties and lack of economic rationality. The apportioning of guilt is threefold: structural injustices, the actions of evil characters, and Pongsu's foolishness all lead to the tragic circumstances. The virtual space of the film—one way that it translates political economy into melodramatic allegory—reorients realism away from the exposition of structure toward psychological individuality. Therefore, despite its condemnations of rural poverty, the film also depicts debt as an effect of lacking economic rationality by symbolically isolating the moral circulation of money from productive economic relations.

The original Korean title of *A Dream of Fortune* (dir. Han Hyung-mo, 1961) is *A Dream of Pig*, referring to the superstition that if you dream of a pig, you will gain a fortune. In this case, it is also a word play, because the plot centers on a family that is persuaded to raise a pig in order to help lift themselves out of poverty. The reference to magical causality in the title points to the allegorical and melodramatic aspects of the film.[30] It uses the intimacy of the family and refers to traditional superstitions about wealth in order to transform political economy and the image of poverty into matters of familial sympathy and morality. Similar to *Money*, it gradually transforms the object of economic analysis and discourse from underlying macrosocial structures to the *homo economicus* of psychological individuals.

A Dream of Fortune has both melodramatic and comedic flare, including two aspects of Han's signature style: bright music and spectacular images of urban consumer culture. The opening credits appear over two funny cartoon images of a pig, one in which the pig is being filmed while a scriptwriter is sitting on it and a second in which a man is being kicked by a bucking pig. However, the mood then shifts from comedic imagery and music to a scene of social realism in the form of a state documentary. A vast landscape shot of Seoul cuts to a series of busy street scenes at the center of the city: cars, pedestrians, trains, bicyclists, and buildings. A female voice-over addresses the audience as the scene shifts to residential areas on the outskirts of Seoul, from mansions gradually to a shantytown:

> Hello everyone! Home to two million people, this is Seoul. Look at the flood of cars and people. What do all these people eat and where do they live? Of course, they can't carry their homes on their backs like snails. They have to build their homes. If I may speak for the Department of Social and Health Services, there are currently 400,000 families in Seoul, but only 180,000 homes. That leaves about 200,000 families without a home. That means that there are more people without a home than with a home. Those with money live in luxurious homes, but those without live in poverty on top of mountains or build shacks beside streams. According to a survey, birds can still build in Seoul, but there isn't enough land for people to build homes. That is why each year the government builds 3,000 homes on the outskirts of the city, saying they will give it to the homeless, but of course it's not free. The protagonist of this movie lives in one of these homes built by the government.

Using the language and imagery of documentary realism and citing government statistics in order to explain the housing problem, the voice-over is authoritative and expository. The opening sequence grounds the film narrative in sociological and economic facts, framing the story of a family living in government housing with the authority of social realism.

However, the film quickly leaves behind its documentary and social realist framing, relying on comedy and melodrama in the representation of poverty. The son of the family, Yŏngjun (An Sŏng-gi), limps around on his worn-out shoes. When his mother (Mun Chŏng-suk) explains that his father, Son Chang-su (Kim Sŭngho), does not make enough money as a schoolteacher to afford new basketball shoes, Yŏngjun banters with her humorously. The mother has been doing the household expenses by placing labels on piles of money on a desk and the son moves the label "shoes" over one of the piles. Changsu sleeps in a closet on his day off, but his wife finds him and riles him out of bed. He is too chubby to fit through the door of the house, refuses to return to an office job, and has pretensions to writing a movie script. These early moments of slapstick and situational comedy gradually push the narrative away from a realist exposition of poverty and social structures toward an emphasis on physical movement and sharp-tongued verbal conflict. Changsu dreams that he brings a large pig into the house, which becomes a reality when a neighbor convinces his wife to begin raising a pig. However, the real financial "dream," as well as the melodramatic plotline, begins when she convinces Changsu to involve himself with a Korean American from Hawaii, Charlie Hong (Hŏ Chang-gang), and his smuggling business. The family goes further into debt in order to loan Charlie some money, only to find out that he is a con artist and that the suitcase of goods he has left the family is full of rocks and grass. When the con is discovered, the wife weeps uncontrollably and Changsu slaps her violently. While Changsu drinks and his wife goes off to her sister's house, Yŏngjun runs out of the house to try to find Charlie, whereupon the film repeats the convention of a car accident killing the family's child.

The gradual shift in mood from sober-minded documentary to physical and situational comedy and then to tragic melodrama mirrors a movement from the center of Seoul to its impoverished periphery, where the government helps to house lower-middle-class families who nonetheless remain threatened by economic exclusion and foreign US swindlers. The melodramatic last half of the film emphasizes the tragic consequences of Changsu's drinking, his wife's greed, and their collective poor management of the household finances. The family and its patriarch are again both sympathetic and woeful and become too immoral to actualize the fortune promised them in Changsu's dream of the pig. The suggestion is that if the couple had focused on the real economic possibilities of pig raising or office work rather than chasing easy money, they could have lifted themselves out of poverty. Instead, they are swindled out of money, left in debt, and their son dies. However, in turning to the tired convention of a car hitting and killing a child, which also appears in *Sweet Dream* and *To the Last Day*, the film

displays an exhaustion of some melodramatic tropes by the early 1960s. Melo-drama experiences an exhaustion of its conventions, leading some filmmakers, such as Yu Hyun-mok, to break from the magical causality and sentimentality of melodramatic allegory and linger more persistently on social realism's exploration of underlying socioeconomic structures and ideology, as well as introducing self-consciousness about cinematic representation's capacity to capture the actuality of history. Others, such as Kim Ki-young, parodied melodrama and intensified its embodied moods into uncanny horror.

THE ANTICOMMUNIST FILM

Another Han Hyung-mo film, *The Hand of Destiny* (1954), stands as the most sym-bolic visual expression of anticommunist ideology. The main protagonist, Mar-garet (Yun In-ja), is a North Korean spy who begins a relationship with a South Korean counterintelligence agent, Yŏngch'ŏl (Yi Hyang). The most striking visual element of the film is that Margaret's North Korean boss and other intelligence officers are filmed from a low level of framing and their faces are invisible until the last ten minutes of the film (figure 19). The film's melodramatic mimesis creates a bodily experience of paranoia and fear that is an expression of the idea of anticom-munism; the constellation depends on the obverse of the facelessness and mecha-nism of communist thought, which is the romantic relationship and its associated affects. The close-ups of the faceless North Korean enemy subtract one element from the scene and through this subtraction create an illusion of coherence and completeness for the film's Manichaean moral and political world. In contrast, when the camera shows Margaret and Yŏngch'ŏl sharing an embrace, the cam-era is intimate with their intimacy, and their love is presented in all its untainted purity. The film includes the first onscreen kiss in Korean cinema history, and this transformative event of mass culture epitomizes, in the narrative, the humanistic bond between the two characters. As Hyun Seon Park argues, these bodily images are part of a biopolitical representation that contrasts the healthy and whole body of the South Koreans with the fragmented and incomplete bodies of the North Korean communists.[31] According to Park, a Hollywood montage of Yŏngch'ŏl and Margaret going to sporting events, including boxing and cycling, and then playing golf further highlights the healthy nationalized bodies of South Korean athletes, spectators, and consumers.[32] Such montages are an early Cold War example of what Mark Fisher calls the "atmosphere" of capitalist realism, or what I call its mood.[33] Mimicking the position of the audience in the cinema, such sequences of images of healthy bodies immersed in spectacle and consumption, in contrast to the faceless North Koreans, creates an illusion of a closed and defined body politic defined by its capitalist values.

Such images of joyful consumption are accompanied by other noir sequences that highlight the intractable gloom of postwar urban existence, while using a

FIGURE 19. For most of *The Hand of Destiny* (1954), the faces of Margaret's North Korean handlers do not appear on screen, but a close-up frames her fully visible face as she delivers a speech about tiring of communist schemes and wanting to regain her humanity.

politicized melodrama to project the cause of this negativity onto the communist other. The camera transforms characters into objects in a melancholic and allegorical play taking place in a political world with demarcations between good and evil, purity and corruption, human and inhuman, emotional and mechanical, and so on. The subtraction of a single element makes the invisible perceptible as an absence in order to instill a sense of fear and paranoia; the film attempts to make the limit of embodied perception into a fearful inhuman enemy in order to create an illusion of somatic transparency, identity, and wholeness in the audience. It gives an image to the totalitarian body of the anticommunist nation.

Yi Kang-chŏn's *Piagol* (1955) stands as one of the more politically and ethically complex of the early anticommunist films produced in South Korea, and its concern with both cinematographic and narrative realism contrasts with *The Hand of Destiny*. According to Yi Sun-jin's archival research, both of these films responded to real documented events: Kim Su-im, like Margaret, was uncovered as a female spy, and Yi Hyŏn-sang, like the troop leader Agari in *Piagol*, led a troop of partisans in the south into the rural areas around Mt. Chiri during the Korean War.[34] Despite these shared foundations in historical incidents, which lends a certain realism to each film, *Piagol* does not represent communists in a purely melodramatic fashion as evildoers who lack human emotion and threaten to infiltrate South Korea and undermine the emergent possibilities for freedom of thought, humanity, and romantic love. Although *Piagol* certainly does contain some melodramatic aspects, Yi Kang-chŏn aspired to a more realist portrayal of the characteristics, actions, and milieu of communists by focusing almost solely on one troop of communist cadres and depicting them as complex individuals with attitudes and sensibilities that transform over the course of the narrative. The film's communists are not simply foils for South Korean national subjectivity or the opposing forces in a Manichaean moral and political struggle; they are psychologically complex internal others stranded in South Korea after the Inchon landing. In addition, Yi's use of on-location shooting near Mt. Chiri, which contrasts

with the predominance of urban settings in *The Hand of Destiny*, further highlights the real historical situation of most partisans of the Korean Workers' Party, who were largely rural partisans who maintained a telluric connection to the Korean landscape in both ideology and practice.[35]

One of the most unique aspects of *Piagol* is that it genuinely attempts both to understand and to represent realistically the communist other, which most of its contemporaries, as well as later anticommunist productions, were unable to do. The fact that the South Korean government banned screening the film because it was thought to defy anticommunist laws shows the degree to which its status as an anticommunist film was controversial, even though most viewers are likely to identify it as anticommunist. The ambiguity of the film's anticommunism is an effect of its aspiration to realism, and film critics have often celebrated it as one of the most important Korean War films because of its realist approach to representing the communist partisan.[36]

Despite its divergence from the most excessively paranoid and fundamentalist versions of anticommunist aesthetics and narrative, the film's realism is still overlaid with Cold War and post–Korean War melodrama. The film's allegorical depictions of gendered sexual violence and innocence lost are typical of anticommunist narratives that highlight the immorality of the communist worldview. The film also suggests that in isolation communist guerrillas are prone to turning against one another and exposing their moral and political corruption. In terms of its visual style and its dramaturgy, the film attempts to provoke sentimental identification with victims of communist partisanship, as well as the romantic love of defectors, through the depiction of embodied emotions that are excessive of the film's realism. Nonetheless, these melodramatic aspects of the narrative and visual style are fused with and tempered by that impulse toward realism.

The narrative, visual style and form of *Piagol* are hybridized in unprecedented and unexpected ways, including with North Korean productions, which in part explains critics' continued interest in the film's unique aesthetic and its unique perspective on the Korean War. In contrast to many Hollywood films and Korean films about the Korean War and as a document of world cinema more generally, *Piagol* provides an example of the sheer complexity of the intersections between cinema and geopolitics, civil war, national cinema, communist and anticommunist ideologies, and the politics of representation in the context of the global Cold War and a fascinating period of realism and melodrama in both Korean film industries.

Piagol is the name of the real valley where *Piagol* is set, currently located in Mt. Chiri National Park in the Southern Chŏlla Province, South Korea. The story begins right after the Korean War armistice (1953). A troop of communist partisans are stranded in South Korea and chased by ROK and UN troops. The troop is unable to go north of the Demilitarized Zone and get to North Korea, their supply lines are cut, and they cannot depend upon the Chinese troops to ensure liberation. Under their ruthless captain, Agari (Yi Ye-chŏn), the partisans are forced to

maintain their loyalty to the troop and to communist ideology. As internal strife and the threat of external attack by the South Korean government break the troop apart, its political identity begins to dissolve, even as many of the members remain faithful to the lost cause of revolution in the southern part of the peninsula. The two main characters who openly question the ideology and practices of the troop are Chŏlsu (Kim Chin-gyu) and Aeran (No Kyŏng-hŭi). Chŏlsu is skeptical from the beginning of the film, and Aeran transforms from a cold-hearted partisan to a critical detractor through her love for Chŏlsu. After Agari kills Chŏlsu, Aeran escapes death by defecting, an event suggested by the superimposition of the ROK flag over her image as she struggles down the mountain. The censors demanded that Lee include this image as a condition for the film's rerelease in 1955, following the film's banning and Lee's appeal.

A number of other plot events convey the film's basic anticommunist message, despite the concern of censors that it portrayed some of the communists too favorably or at least as having too many human qualities. Many of these events highlight the ruthlessness of the hardened captain Agari and the homicidal and misogynist violence of a particularly immoral member, Mansu. Firstly, when the troop reconvenes after fleeing, Agari is more concerned about a lost carbine rifle than two fatalities and one injury and shoots the member who had lost the carbine after being shot in the arm. Mansu then finishes off the man with a large rock. Secondly, a long sequence depicts the troop's attack of nearby Namsanli village, where they seek to gather supplies and to take revenge on the villagers whom they believe informed the government about their mobilization. Importantly, this is the home village of the youngest man in the troop, Iltong. The troop burns down much of the village and ransacks it for supplies, claiming that it is full of reactionaries. One of the main partisans, Talsŏk, kills Iltong's mother, and he cries and hugs her dying body. The headman and two other villagers are also taken hostage, after which Aeran forces the two villagers to execute the headman by spear and to become informants for the partisans. The climax of this rather stunning sequence, which also includes many impactful and expressionistic close-ups, occurs when Agari finds out that the headman was Iltong's maternal uncle. Calling him a "hereditary reactionary," he kills Iltong by chasing him off a cliff with a large rock, despite Iltong's pleas that he cared for his uncle only because he had paid his tuition and that he had now disowned him. The ransacking of the village, the coerced execution of the headman, and the murder of the young cadre portray communist revolution as brutal, manipulative, politically irrational, senselessly violent, and destructive of traditional family relations.

However, whereas the sequence employs the melodramatic mode to represent the partisans as morally evil, it also contextualizes their violence realistically within the struggle between the revolution and village leaders who often were at the center of anticommunist resistance during the Korean War, particularly in the face of North Korea's large-scale land reforms during its occupation of the South

and the often-horrific reprisals of organized peasants against landowners. The inclusion of the character Iltong, a young man living in between his mobilized communist subjectivity and his prewar familial past, provides a complex image of the partisan, who might be unbending and ruthless in the execution of his or her political ideology or otherwise be torn between different affiliations during a time of extreme crisis, social upheaval, and civil war. The film aspires to make a realistic reference to history through the ambivalent position of Iltong, a position closer to that of the majority of Koreans whose families and villages were caught up in the horrific violence of the war, even when individuals were compelled to choose a political side. Iltong remains a partisan even in his innocent victimization, meaning that the sympathy provoked for him is not dependent upon seeing him as either a political enemy or a political friend of the South Korean state.

The most central series of events that helps to articulate the film's anticommunist message utilizes a more conventional melodrama narrative. Soju is a young agent who, after being relocated to the main camp, stumbles into Mansu with an injured shoulder and informs him that the enemy has attacked the main camp, that they have killed the chief captain, and that Piagol will soon be destroyed. Upon hearing this apocalyptic message, Mansu does not respond heroically; he rapes and kills Soju and then kills his comrade Talsŏk and blames him for the crimes. Just as Iltong is an innocent victim of his familial relations, Soju is a sympathetic character whose relocation to the other camp provides some drama to an early scene of the chief captain giving orders to the Piagol troop. Mansu commits the rape and murder at the moment when the political mission of revolution in the South is coming to an end, suggesting that communist morality is not based in an individual sense of right and wrong and therefore easily allows for selfish criminality, even against one's own people, when the political mission no longer provides an ethical framework and justification for murderous violence. However, the depiction of Soju as an innocent victim is again rendered more complex by the film's intent focus on partisan characters; although she is a victim of Mansu, she is also a victim of the government's counterinsurgency and a loyal agent of the party. Therefore, even in its allegorical and melodramatic representation of rape and stolen innocence, *Piagol* is ambiguous in its anticommunism and its gendering of politics, because the distinction between the victim and the perpetrator of sexualized violence does not match neatly with the distinction between the communist enemy and good South Koreans.

The final series of events is interspersed between these first three and provides the main arc of the narrative. Throughout the film, Aeran has a romantic interest in the taciturn Ch'ŏlsu and tries to engage him in conversation and flirtation. Ch'ŏlsu is silently critical of both Captain Agari and the revolution, whereas Aeran dutifully carries out her role as a hardened revolutionary until the end of the film. Although the actor Kim Chin-gyu skillfully expresses Ch'ŏlsu's doubts throughout the film, he does not verbally express his critical thoughts until the moment when

he and Aeran decide to renounce their communist politics and escape the mountain before it is too late. Meanwhile, Agari strictly censures any romantic relationships within the troop but nonetheless desires Aeran, which is one motivation for his killing Chŏlsu when he overhears their plan.

Although the love story between Chŏlsu and Aeran provides a narrative arc to the film, its causality is largely independent from the established norms of the melodrama mode of the time. Aeran is not punished for her independence, her strong-willed and masculine violence as a partisan, or her direct expressions of romantic interest in Chŏlsu. She is a ruthless revolutionary for most of the film, particularly during the execution in Namsanli, and does transform through romantic love. However, rather than undergoing a sudden conversion, she gradually and reasonably decides that they must try to escape the mountain and Agari. Most importantly, she is not punished for her past acts as a partisan or for being desirous; she survives her male counterparts rather than being reduced to an allegorized symptom of their conflicts of psychology or identity. The film's aspiration to realism, while not entirely fulfilled in the allegorical representation of defection, does allow for a more flexible moral universe than most melodrama films and certainly most anticommunist melodrama films, of the 1950s.

In addition to the more complex and focused characterizations of communist partisans and the unexpected ways that the narrative allows them ethical ambiguity and even redemption, it is likely that the visceral and cognitive experience of the visual style and sound of *Piagol* gave the censors pause in the mid-1950s. Perhaps because the film depicts communist partisans almost exclusively, its mise-en-scène, cinematography, and editing create a visual style that often resembles a North Korean production, even though the film's anticommunist messaging is apparent. In other words, the realism of the film is in part an effect of its mimicry of the North Korean realist style, which, like its South Korean counterparts, employs the melodramatic mode of conveying moral and political truths in addition to on-location shooting and an attempt to represent real social structures and possible historical events. At the same time, there are multiple scenes in *Piagol* that draw from the conventions of North Korean films but also contain a visual or sonic twist that rearticulates the scene's political perspective or subjectivity. Although one might conjecture that this type of direct engagement with and transformation of North Korean conventions might actually make for a more effective anticommunist film for an audience caught between two parties in a civil war, they probably instead contributed to the censors' concerns about the political position of the director.

One example of such a scene occurs after Agari has killed the youngest partisan, Iltong, by chasing him off of the cliff with a rock. Agari begins interrogating Iltong's confidante and criticizing him for not bringing up Iltong's ideological impurity during the attack on the village. Although Agari is clearly not the type of righteous and benevolent hero that we find in North Korean partisan films,

the scene does mimic formally how important ideological content is conveyed in North Korean cinema. The dialogue between the powerful pedagogue and the accused troop member, captured by shot/reverse-shot, highlights the importance of learning to overcome individual weakness for the sake of the larger political mission. More importantly, this dialogue is followed by a breaking of the 180-degree rule by cutting to a medium-long shot that depicts the partisan leader (Agari) turning around and giving a powerful speech to the surrounding troops about the need to remain dedicated to the party and the state regardless of the armistice agreement and the dire circumstances of their isolation in the South. The filming of the spatial relation between individual speaker and the crowd of troops, which includes a track-in that gradually enlarges the speaker, is a very common convention of Cold War North Korean films.

While it draws from ideological and formal conventions of the melodramatic representation of political speeches in North Korean films, the scene in *Piagol* contains two obviously awkward elements that speak to both its anticommunist didacticism and its delightful hybridity. As Agari interrogates the partisan, the camera breaks from the shot/reverse-shot convention and pans slightly to the right, bringing Chŏlsu and his ethically and politically skeptical gaze uncomfortably into the frame. Through an intensely consternated scowl, the actor Kim Chin-gyu conveys his character Chŏlsu's questioning of Agari's murder of the young partisan and, by extension, the whole rhetoric of the hereditary reactionary, which serves as a justification for violence against family members and villages caught within the civil conflict. This silent, contrapuntal perspective on the rhetoric of the partisan leader is further expressed as the camera tracks in on Agari's speech. The tracking is slow, with no dramatic punctuation of the speech. More significantly, halfway through the tracking, when the camera has again framed only Agari and Chŏlsu, it suddenly veers to the left, occluding the speaking Agari and arriving at a close-up of the silent and pensive Chŏlsu.

In this way, *Piagol* incorporates elements of the North Korean film style, which relies heavily on such melodramatic scenes of interrogation and political speech, while also self-consciously introducing twists into the formal conventions. However, because the focus of the film remains the internal struggles of the partisan hero rather than the South Korean counterinsurgency, the aggregate effect of such twists is not so much a transparent and positive rendering of anticommunist ideas as a more complex formal expression of a partisan subjectivity split between the political ideas of revolution (and the violence necessary to carry them out) and an exhaustion of the power of those ideas for the isolated Southern partisan questioning the foolhardy continuation of the revolution after the truce. Again, by straddling the line between melodrama's effective use of emotive discourse and visuality to convey the power of a moral system and realism's confrontation with the material and psychological limits to that system, *Piagol* presents narratively and visually an anticommunism for which communists are not dangerous

automatons but complex subjects who are transformed by both circumstances and their own reason.

Another type of scene from North Korean film whose visuality *Piagol* appropriates self-consciously is that of the partisan gazing out over the Korean landscape, which in North Korean partisan films is presented as the object of his or her political affection and dedication. As I showed in chapter 3, the convention of using dramatic landscape shots, often filmed in point of view, to capture the political ethos of the partisan was established early on, in *My Home Village*. In *Piagol*, immediately following the fade out of the scene of Agari's speech and Chŏlsu's consternation, we fade into another shot of Chŏlsu looking pensively into the distance. The camera tracks around to his side and then the scene cuts to a point-of-view shot, which directly mimics those of *My Home Village* in the way it pans across the mountains from the perspective of the partisan. However, the music is not the triumphant patriotic music of a North Korean production but sorrowful and melancholic strings that capture in melodramatic fashion the internal mood of the despondent and silent Chŏlsu. The subversion of the North Korean partisan film's use of landscape is apparent in this scene of a defeated and anguished communist's contemplation of the Korean landscape and, by extension, his reconsideration of the rightful heirs of the anticolonial struggle in the aftermath of civil war. This is anticommunism in its most aesthetically complex form because it inhabits visually the perspective of the partisan as it was developed in North Korean film, even as it utilizes sonic dissonance and close-ups of Chŏlsu to show the agony of a revolution that has lost its way and lost its object.

Later scenes of Chŏlsu and Aeran also emphasize this contemplation of the landscape but more explicitly supplant the platonic and purely political affection between male and female partisans in North Korean films with suggestions of a budding romance that might outlive the dissolution of the troop. *The Hand of Destiny* also frames romantic relationships as the means toward a humanizing ideological reorientation of the North Korean spy Margaret, but in *Piagol* the South Korean male is not present, and the relationship between Chŏlsu and Aeran does not contain the kind of missionary conversion of the female communist that we find in the earlier film. Aeran remains a strong and willful character, even as she comes to question communism through her conversations and romance with Chŏlsu. If the melodrama of heterosexual romance gradually replaces that of partisan subjectivity, the film nonetheless remains ambivalently attached to a realist concern with context, circumstances, and contradiction and never suggests, like many other anticommunist melodramas, that love will, or at least should, conquer all.

Much of *Piagol* provides what we might expect from an anticommunist film: Agari is a ruthless and secretly self-interested commander, Mansu steals Soju's innocence at her most vulnerable moment, and partisans cannot but turn against one another when the structure of the state and the party disappear and they are

FIGURE 20. In *Piagol* (1955), the communist troop leader Agari enters a Buddhist temple during the troop's attack of the village Namsanli. His face expresses fear and guilt during a series of shot/reverse-shots with two statues of the guardians of the Buddha.

left to their own devices. On the other hand, *Piagol* constantly conveys a tension between melodrama and realism and between the demands of anticommunism and an honest attempt to portray the psychology of the communist partisan in the aftermath of revolutionary struggle.

This tension between melodrama and realism reaches a peak in one scene whose mood and pathos stand out in terms of both aesthetic impact and experimentation with the representational possibilities of the melodramatic mode (more on that in the following chapter). The scene stands out not because of its engagement with North Korean conventions of realism but because of its unexpected expressionism and mood of regret and sympathy toward the staunch communist Agari. As the troop is attacking Namsanli, Agari enters a Buddhist temple. He has his eyes closed in reflection in what is the only scene where he seems to express remorse or uncertainty. The lighting is very dark and the shot tracks in very slowly toward his anguished face as swirling orchestral music builds. At the climax of the sequence of music, a series of shot/reverse-shots show Agari opening his eyes and looking up at statues of Narayŏn Kŭmgang and Miljŏk Kŭmgag, two powerful and imposing guardians of the Buddha (figure 20). The music provides the only sound, and again the character does not profess ideological uncertainty openly but only through his facial expressions. The scene is filmed in a highly expressionistic manner and its insertion in the middle of the Namsanli sequence would seem out of place if *Piagol* did not contain other such narrative and visual flourishes that mark it as much more than an anticommunist propaganda picture. Although Agari never shows weakness or uncertainty toward the other partisans, here, alone in the temple, he experiences guilt and apprehension when he confronts the religious icons. The inclusion of such an expressionistic scene speaks to Yi Kang-chŏn's ambitious vision for the film and to the more experimental possibilities of the melodramatic mode.

6

Melodrama and Art Cinema

In 1959, in the inaugural issue of the journal *Film Art*, Yi Yŏng-il, the most prominent South Korean film critic of the Cold War era, drew from Enlightenment ideas of aesthetics and subjectivity in stating the task of a future Korean national cinema:

> The contemporary trend in film is to bring about an indomitable self-formation for the sake of the freedom of spirit and aesthetic liberation, which are the traditional tasks of art, while also aligning film with all the desires and criticisms of people who live with today's social characteristics and historical realities.[1]

Yi was drawn to Italian neorealism and the French New Wave, and in founding the journal *Film Art* he sought to contribute to the elevation of the mass medium of film to the status of an art form while maintaining its alignment with popular tastes, ideas, and experiences. Throughout the golden age of South Korean film (1953–1970), he would argue for the need to develop Korean national cinema through an avant-garde movement that would push the conventional and aesthetic boundaries established by imported commercial productions. By "freedom of spirit and aesthetic liberation," he was imagining a vanguard of auteurs freely expressing the spirit of the times through a film aesthetic unrestricted by state censorship and unfettered by profit motive.

One year before the April Uprising and the deposing of President Syngman Rhee, a cinema liberated from censorship was certainly one concern. But this call for the aesthetic liberation *of* cinema was grammatically ambiguous and also connoted an aesthetic liberation *through* cinema. In 1950s South Korea, the term *haebang* (liberation) referred to much more than the liberalization of cultural production. The word *liberation* reverberated with the cataclysmic historical period of decolonization and immediate entrance into Cold War bifurcations that characterized the Global South's experiences of the mid-twentieth century. Therefore, even if Yi Yŏng-il primarily aimed to secure for cinema the status of autonomous art and for South Korean films to accede to the level of European arthouse

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cinema, his statement also suggested "freedom of spirit and aesthetic liberation" as a response to the problem of political liberation. Auteurs should be empowered with a freedom of spirit to create films with a liberated aesthetic but also films that would in turn contribute to the political liberation of the mass audience by way of the aesthetic. For Yi, this aesthetic liberation of the audience was to occur somewhat beyond the machinations of the state, in the sphere of national culture and the national cinema. And the audiences themselves were prepared for this liberation, because, as Yi stated, "They are beings who are drawn to satisfaction and sympathy about all the experiences of life and about aesthetic imagination, emotion, and thought. Though they may exult and be wild with joy when they view a superb work, they show justifiable hatred and criticism toward inferior works."[2] Yi imagined an arthouse Korean national cinema that would enter the global sphere of film art while also contributing to aesthetic education and enabling new forms of subjectivity among Korean film artists and their sophisticated popular audiences.

Also in 1959, director Yu Hyun-mok was asked about film's position between art and popular mass culture, a position that forces even experimental films to include commodified melodramatic elements. This inclusion of the melodramatic mode does not preclude the possibility of a film being an artwork. Echoing statements of the North Korean critics, he was interested in transforming film into a total work of art:

> Question: How do you see the distinction between melodrama and art cinema?
>
> Answer: If we speak of popular audiences, they include many fans who lack consciousness. Those works that entice these viewers and sufficiently arrange the necessary suspenseful scenes or bittersweet scenes, and have a story that is precious, and also satisfy their amusement by inserting dreams and hopes that are difficult to find in reality—this we view as melodrama. Therefore, it is a method of dramaturgy for the sake of the film's value as a commodity, and as films that have many characteristics of mass communication, that is an inevitability I cannot lament.
>
> That said, art films do not belong to aristocratic art. They only reject the complacency of pandering and have a difference of method whereby they prioritize the resonance and value consciousness that the pure spirit of the author supplies to the popular masses.[3]

On the one hand, Yu is critical of melodrama as the result of the pressure that commodification puts on the content of scenes. However, he understands that film is a mass art form and that mass communication unavoidably entails commodification and convention. Earlier in the interview, when asked what sort of film he would make if no conditions were in place, he answers "an avant-garde film." His ideal avant-garde film would create a multisensory experience of utopia (or simply "no place"), one distinct from the false hopes and dreams that he associates with melodrama and commodification. He came closest to this ideal

with *The Empty Dream*, discussed below. Like Yi Yŏng-il, Yu was interested in developing an art cinema in South Korea, but he understood that film is a mass cultural form and that therefore it would always be conditioned by some sort of commercial pressure. Like nearly every prominent director of the North and the South during the Cold War era, therefore, Yu did not subtract melodrama from his films. He rather used it artistically in order to introduce self-consciously the very problems of which melodrama was one symptom: commodification, alienation, and embodied suffering.

As the above discussions of art cinema in 1959 suggest, the idea of cinema as both a fine art and a mass culture—important to the French New Wave—began in South Korea almost contemporaneously and was part of the global distribution of art films and film criticism. Therefore, leading up to the April Uprising and the brief and democratic Second Republic (1960–61), intellectuals and filmmakers were imagining art cinema's role in democracy. In addition to the loosening of restrictions on film content, the energy surrounding "aesthetic liberation"—which linked freedom in the arts to political democratization—is a significant reason why the year 1960–61 stands out as one of the most important in South Korean film history. However, as Charles Kim has detailed in relation to the radical youth of the April Uprising, after the Park Chung Hee coup in 1961, the state managed to channel much of the uprising's intellectual energy into state-centered national development projects or reform-minded civil society working under increasing constraints.[4] In her reading of Kim Su-yong's *Mist* (1967) and art cinema under dictatorship, Chung-kang Kim historicizes the influence of European art cinema on South Korean film during the Park Chung Hee era (1961–1979), showing that art cinema did not entail unambiguous freedom or liberation.[5] The state rather appropriated the idea of aesthetic liberation, instituting the Motion Picture Law of 1962 to protect the economy of South Korean film production and later supporting the production of "high quality films" for film festival exportation (including literary, anticommunist, and enlightenment films).[6] In watching 1960s South Korean dramatic films, one often senses the threefold pressure of the popularity and marketability of melodrama, the desire for art cinema auteurship, and state demands concerning the characteristics of quality art films.

Under an anticommunist dictatorship and Cold War US military occupation, ideas and practices of art cinema became involved in what Fredric Jameson terms "the ideology of modernism."[7] Although the canon of modernism begins with the European avant-garde, Jameson reveals how the process of canonization itself was a postwar American enterprise that sought to differentiate high art from politically engaged art (specifically the socialist realism on the other side of the Cold War). Characterizations of aesthetic modernism in postwar US criticism, especially that of Clement Greenberg, emphasized modernism's self-reflexivity vis-à-vis form and medium.[8] Jameson argues that Greenberg's definition of modernism

in terms of self-reflexivity about form and medium was central to the ideology of modernism, which institutionalized a Kantian view of aesthetic form with an emphasis on fine visual art (e.g., Abstract Expressionism).[9] The strong interest and marketability of European art cinema in the American context, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s, belonged to the ideology of modernism, melding fine art with bourgeois mass culture and elevating cinema to an art form capable of self-reflexivity about form and medium and self-consciousness about its address to the spectator.[10]

Despite the stereotype that melodrama lacks self-reflexivity and brings social symptoms to the surface in a more or less unconscious manner, throughout 1960s South Korean melodramatic cinema, we find numerous examples of self-reflexivity about film form, reflections on the limits of representation, high degrees of abstraction, an attention to psychological complexity, distended or fragmented temporalities, and other qualities normally associated with the formal experimentations of aesthetic modernism. South Korean films that straddle the line between melodrama and art cinema, the way Yu imagined was necessary under his circumstances, belong at once to the ethos of experimentation in aesthetic modernism and the popular engagement of melodramatic scenarios and pathos. At least in discrete scenes, these films are modernist melodramas concerned with self-reflexivity about form, the truth of subjective alienation, and the limits of realist representation. Although modernist melodrama may seem like a contradiction in terms, it indicates how the melodramatic mode worked as a point of departure into aesthetic experimentation. Film melodrama is not inherently lacking in self-reflexivity because of its expressivity and sentimentality but often exhibits self-reflexivity about visibility and mimesis that is specific to the cinematic medium. The notion of modernist melodrama is not an attempt to elevate the melodramas of this era to a higher art form. Nor is the point to contrast the vernacular modernism of melodramatic cinema to the ideal of high aesthetic modernism; it is rather to read the melodramatic mode and art cinema as inextricable, particularly in the context of Cold War South Korea.[11]

The hybridization of melodrama and art cinema, including art cinema's critiques of melodrama, is a broad-ranging topic that would have to include discussions of countless auteurs of global cinema, including Douglas Sirk, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Ozu Yasujirō, Chantal Akerman, and many, many others. The purpose of this chapter is necessarily much more limited and concerns how art cinema techniques and forms of self-reflexivity appeared within the melodramatic mode of 1960s South Korean films, impacting how the art moods of the films establish a backdrop for the provocation and coding of human affects into emotions. The moods of art films, or art-cinematic moments in realist melodramas, often explicitly disrupt and question the apparatus of identification, revealing a gap between the affects of spectatorship and their coding by the moral occult. Although the idea of art cinema certainly belonged to the ideology of modernism and even

the development projects of state dictatorship, self-reflexivity about representation combined with the moods of melodrama could create politically critical effects that questioned the violence of the state apparatus and dominant social mores in the context of Cold War neocolonialism. By mimicking, re-creating, and transforming art cinema, melodramatic films did not achieve Yi Yŏng-il's enlightenment ideal of aesthetic liberation; rather, they interrogated their own conditions of production and lingered more consciously in the gap between the historical experiences of their audiences and their cinematic representation.

There are many possible entry points for a discussion of modernism in South Korean film melodramas, but I will narrow the focus to aesthetic forms that self-consciously disrupt the transparent personalization of melodramatic affect. These forms are perceptible in the same register as the melodramatic mode's typical contrapuntal moods and countervailing discourses, but they betray a higher degree of experimentation, self-consciousness, and irony. These qualities inhere most saliently in the mise-en-scène in both cinematic space and in attendant temporal breaks from the typical moralistic causalities of melodrama.

The first aesthetic form pertains to conspicuous scenes in *Aimless Bullet* and *Homebound* (dir. Lee Man-hee, 1967), and many other uses of offscreen space in the 1950s and 1960s. Through the invocation of spaces that remain off screen, these scenes create a formal and aesthetic tension between the visible and the invisible and thereby provoke conscious reflection on the limits of melodramatic representation. The next aesthetic forms are dreamworld and mist. Both melodramas with surrealist elements, *The Empty Dream* (dir. Yu Hyun-mok, 1965) explores the dream logic of cinema, and *Mist* (dir. Kim Su-yong, 1967) incorporates mist as part of the landscape, as internal to the mind, and as mediation between interiority and exteriority. Each film blurs the edges of perspective and reality, intervening into the personalization of affect and the articulation of ideology in melodramatic mimesis. The final aesthetic form is the uncanny, exemplified best by Kim Ki-young's *The Housemaid*, which takes the familiarity and hominess of the middle-class household and, by exaggerating the negativity of melodrama, renders it fearful and frightening. Kim's ironic and satirical intensification of melodrama into horror belongs to the aesthetics of Freud's uncanny and engages with the unconscious beyond the pathos and expressivity of a typical melodrama. By reflecting self-consciously upon the desires and gendered violence at the foundations of the melodramatic mode, it gives visual and sonic form to the fantasy structures and phobias that remain occluded in a more typical melodrama, despite the mode's pretension to reveal everything. Self-consciously pointing out the limits of the camera's perspective, or the arbitrariness of the framing of human characters and consciousness, or the way that the moral occult is connected to the unconscious through repression are limitations on the representation and personalization of affect within a melodramatic mode that purports to bring hidden truths to the surface through emotive expression.

THE INVISIBLE

In a self-conscious scene in *Aimless Bullet*, the younger brother in the family, Yŏngho, encounters the film industry. Yŏngho's friend Miri surprises him with news that she has found him a job at a film company, despite the chronic unemployment and postwar destitution described realistically in the first segment. On the day of the interview, he is very happy, because he has reunited with Sŏrhŭi, a nurse who took care of him during the war. The assistant director tells Yŏngho that he is perfect for one of the characters in their new film, a serviceman who is wounded in the stomach and has a personality similar to his own. In the film, a nurse will bring Yŏngho's character back to health, just as Sŏrhŭi once had done for him in his life. Then the director asks to see the scars on Yŏngho's stomach, to see if they will work for the film. Disturbed by the idea that a film would imitate his own life experiences so closely, Yŏngho asks angrily, "Does it really say all that? . . . I did not get my wounds in a game," storming out of the studio. The assistant director replies, quoting the ethos of melodrama, "Precisely, art follows life."

This scene encapsulates the way that *Aimless Bullet*, while a popular melodrama with a realist ethos, also works against the cinematic illusion of intimacy upon which the South Korean film industry at the time often relied. The scene is self-reflexive in this regard because the script of the film they are making within the film is very similar to Yŏngho's own experiences, and this is what angers him. His resistance to the notion that the director can make his art adequate to lived experience—that is, his unwillingness to have his relationship with Sŏrhŭi or his war wound exploited by the camera—is addressed to the spectator as well, who has already watched the previous scenes showing Yŏngho and Sŏrhŭi's developing romance. While Yŏngho's refusal gives him an aura of authenticity that helps move the narrative forward, it also turns our attention to cinema as a form of economic exploitation and puts into question, or estranges, emotional investments in the film. The director who appears in the film wants to extract value directly from Yŏngho's body, by making a spectacle of a typified version of his wounds and his life story. To the extent that *Aimless Bullet* itself participates in a similar economy of generalizing traumatic experiences, it can only point out the problem and, in its self-reflexivity about its own form, convey that the historical experience of extreme violence exceeds the constraints of cinematic vision. The Brechtian approach of this scene aims to reveal the ideological character of the medium and mode of cinematic representation.

In Peter Brooks's discussion of the moral occult, he argues that melodrama brings the content of the unconscious to the surface of the body and the mind, in the manner of an exhaustive and hysterical visualization of pathetic symptoms that essentially erases the depth of unconscious material. However, in contrast to the complete exteriorization of the psyche, 1960s South Korean melodramas make creative use of the play between the visible and the invisible, visualizing some ideas

and experiences while strategically rendering others invisible. Therefore, the exteriorization of the psyche should in this case be amended to include film melodrama's strategic use of offscreen space.

The discussion of offscreen space in modernist melodramas not only is a matter of aesthetic experience but also concerns issues of historical referentiality and nation-building. In one of the notes that make up Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *The Visible and the Invisible*, which he was writing at the time of his death, he makes a statement about the relationship between history and perception that pertains to my approach to melodrama in the context of Cold War Korea: "The problem of knowing what is the subject of the State, of war, etc., are exactly of the same type as the problem of knowing what is the subject of perception: one will not clear up the philosophy of history except by working out the problem of perception."[12] Merleau-Ponty states that a phenomenology of perception is primary and preparatory to historical thinking. Although one might question whether a phenomenology of perception can by itself provide a sufficient foundation for a philosophy of history, Merleau-Ponty makes an important shift away from narrative, which dominated the philosophy of history and historical representation throughout modernity. In dealing with the melodramatic representation of history, Merleau-Ponty's assertion that problems of perception are primary and preparatory to historical knowledge is key. Film melodrama is not a reflection of a historical context, nor solely a symptom of knowable historical crises and impasses, but a poetic mode that actively creates perceptions of history. The phenomenological study of perception can deepen the view of melodramatic mimesis, or the way that film melodrama purports to reference or to imitate the empirical, historical world.

Sobchack quotes Merleau-Ponty's text in stating that films are "an expression of experience by experience."[13] Although Merleau-Ponty likely did not have cinema in mind, Sobchack quotes his phrase to explain that in the living exchange between cinematic experience and film language, film language is not abstract signification but an immanent expression of experience. Film expresses experience by the creation of a (virtual) experience. Mood is the affective backdrop or mode of attunement to the fictional world of the film; the expression of experience by experience accrues affective resonances through the mood. This phenomenological rendering explains how experience is made visible (or expressed) by film experience. However, in the living exchange between perception and language, Merleau-Ponty was also concerned with the limits of expression, with the realm of the invisible. In thinking through the question of invisibility and offscreen space in film melodrama, one should consider the horizon of bodily space—the horizon of our being-in-the-world beyond which we are aware we cannot perceive.

In *The Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty differentiates bodily space and its horizon from other senses of space: the Cartesian space in which all space is reducible to extended things and the thinking subject and the figure-background structure posited in Gestalt psychology:

The "body schema" is, in the end, a manner of expressing that my body is in and toward the world. With regard to spatiality, which is our present concern, one's own body is the always implied third term of the figure-background structure, and each figure appears perspectivally against the double horizon of external space and bodily space. We must, then, reject as abstract any analysis of bodily space that considers only figures and points, since figures and points can neither be conceived nor exist at all without horizons.[14]

Merleau-Ponty questions the notion that all perceptible figures appear against a transparent background such as the abstract mind of a disembodied subject (Descartes) or a negative background of a gestalt. In the relation between figures and their backgrounds, there is the implied third term of the body of the perceiver. If the body is understood too abstractly, as simply one figure or point in abstract space, then we imagine that there are only points and figures in infinite empty space. But figures and points can be conceived or exist only with horizons. Merleau-Ponty refers to these horizons as a "double horizon of external space and bodily space." In other words, both the structures and limits of external space and the structure and limits of our bodily space determine our perception of the world.

The figure-background relation and the formal and technical aspects of cinematic framing and editing apply to the construction of cinematic spaces and our embodied experiences of those spaces. Cinematic photography and framing are engaged with both aspects of the double horizon. External space is analogous to the profilmic space being captured, whereas cinematography, editing, and sound construct an embodied film experience (an expression of experience by experience). The two horizons of these spaces are immanent to one another; they work simultaneously in cinematic experience. When a film draws our attention to offscreen space, it asks us to consider the horizon of external space and the figures and points that lie beyond the represented space of the film. However, more importantly for the melodramatic mode, drawing our attention to offscreen space also asks us to consider the horizon of bodily space, the limit of our embodied perception beyond which objects and figures become invisible.

As discussed, melodramatic mimesis depicts bodies and emotions to represent ideas and spiritual values struggling against an external reality. In melodrama, the figures on screen are not merely extended bodies that we perceive against an empty background. Nor are they merely objects of psychological identification. The horizon of bodily space refers to how cinematic framing creates a malleable and shifting boundary between the visible and the invisible, within which objects, figures, ideas, and values become perceptible. However, this film experience occurring within the horizon of bodily space is contiguous with invisible regions outside the frame. These invisible regions are not simply abstract figures and points that lie physically outside of the external space represented in the film. The invisible involves our cinematic body in the limits of its perception. Despite Brooks's suggestion of a total externalization of the unconscious in the melodramatic mode,

melodramatic mimesis does not make all emotion and all thought visible on the surface of the characters' bodies against the background of the mise-en-scène. The visuality and narrative of melodramatic film touch invisible regions beyond which the embodied subject is no longer present to itself. Therefore, the invisible becomes a matter of self and other because what lies beyond the horizon of bodily space is other to our perception.

The dominant moods of a film serve as an affective background to our perception of figures in cinema. They set the affective agenda, so to speak, for our emotional connections with characters, events, and ideas. However, the figure-background relation is mediated by the third term of our body. The human moods that form in response do not necessarily align directly with the mood of the film. Therefore, melodramatic mimesis and its moods do not represent a closed system of identification and emotion. That is why Massumi writes of feedback between affects and emotions, not of a unidirectional translation.[15] Many film melodramas exhibit a high degree of self-consciousness about how cinematic framing expresses experience by experience—in other words, how they produce emotions and experiences that are owned, personalized, and given language. This self-consciousness involves critical reflection on the horizon of bodily space. It directs our attention to how cinematic framing does not merely express experience by experience but also creates invisible regions that cannot be experienced because they are beyond our perception (beyond the horizon of our bodily space). This self-consciousness in turn influences the mood, introducing affective uncertainty about our encounter with figures and otherness on screen.

The above scene from *Aimless Bullet* is a good example of the invisible and its pertinence for melodrama's ideas about history. On the one hand, the mood and moral occult of the film tells the viewer to sympathize with Yŏngho, to experience him as an object of pathos. On the other hand, this scene shows the exploitative dimension of the film industry's demand for moral authenticity conveyed through pathos when the director presents Yŏngho's own story as a generic war tale and asks to see and film his real scar. When Yŏngho refuses to show his scar, it remains invisible. While many scenes in the film certainly translate negative affects into ideological emotions and sympathies, in this scene the horizon of our bodily space does not extend to the wounds of the other. By questioning the complicity of the audience in melodramatic pathos and its representations of history, the scene also shifts the mood of the film. By demanding demarcation between film experience and historical experience, the mood of the film becomes less sensational and more contemplative about the limits of cinematic representation. This is a moment of modernist self-reflexivity in melodrama, when melodrama refuses to follow its tendency toward affective absorption in the experience of the diegesis.

The framing of the visible and the invisible can have various ideological and ethical implications, and the horizon of bodily space can even be defined in a totalitarian manner. The case of *The Hand of Destiny* shows how melodramatic

mimesis creates a bodily experience of paranoia and fear that is an expression of the idea of anticommunism; the constellation depends on the obverse of the facelessness and mechanism of communist thought, which is the romantic relationship and its associated affects. The close-ups of the faceless North Korean enemy subtract one element from the scene and, through this subtraction, create an illusion of coherence and completeness for the film's Manichaean moral and political world. In contrast, when the camera shows Margaret and Yŏngch'ŏl sharing an embrace, for example, the camera is intimate with their intimacy. The film includes the first onscreen kiss in Korean cinema history, and this transformative event of mass culture epitomizes, in the narrative, the "humanistic" bond between the two characters. These filmic techniques create several oppositions typical to melodrama, oppositions that are then woven into a political allegory through the formal construction of the film's idea. The camera transforms characters into objects in a melancholic and allegorical play taking place in a Manichaean moral and political world with clear demarcations between good and evil, purity and corruption, human and inhuman, emotional and mechanical, and so on. In this film, the invisible is used in a fairly obvious political way. The subtraction of a single element makes the invisible perceptible as an absence in order to instill a sense of fear and paranoia; the film attempts to completely politicize the horizon of bodily space, making the limit of embodied perception into a fearful inhuman enemy, in order to create an illusion of somatic transparency, identity, and wholeness in the audience. In this sense, the film creates a kind of totalitarian intercorporeality of the anticommunist nation.

With its focus on impoverished refugees from the North, unemployment among war veterans, and the April Uprising of 1960, *Aimless Bullet* works narratively against such totalitarian anticommunist politics; however, it also does so through the visual framing of bodies and experiences. The above scene at the film studio confronts cinematic mimesis self-consciously, questioning the morality of the notion that "art imitates life" while at the same time giving the character of Yŏngho an aura of masculine authenticity. However, the film's questioning of the limits of cinematic representation through the play of visible and invisible is not primarily concerned with masculine heroism. In the scenes that take place at the house, Chŏrho's mother (No Chae-sin) is lying by the window. She intermittently sits, or wakes, up, and yells out, "Kaja!" (Let's get out of here!), often interrupting the other characters' dialogue. It seems that she relives the war, or one experience of the war, over and over again, but we never see an image of this experience, only the mother's facial expressions, her gestures, and her bodily movements as she relives it through the experience of her traumatic dream or hallucination. In these scenes, the face of the mother shows us the incompleteness of the cinematic perspective and calls for another kind of ethical relation with the other. The camera shows four jet fighters flying overhead and then cuts to the mother sitting up in bed, yelling

FIGURE 21. In *Aimless Bullet* (1961), Chʼorhoʼs mother darts up from her sleep in a hallucinatory state after hearing jets flying overhead, reliving the war and yelling for everyone to flee; however, the experiences she is reliving remain invisible to the audience.

for the children to pack their things and escape toward the greener hills (figure 21). She is hallucinating that she is again fleeing south to escape the war, perhaps the US aerial bombardment of North Korea. The decontextualization of her body from any of the elements of the original scene of violence, except for the sound and image of the jet planes in the present, brings the war into the postwar but as a hallucination of a memory to which we have no visual access. The pained and terrified body of the mother asks how it is possible to respond to her memory of what is both present and invisible. The scene at the film studio and the scenes of the mother's hallucinatory war memories display both a modernist self-reflexivity about cinematic framing and mimesis and an ethical and political awareness concerning visibility and invisibility.

A remarkable scene toward the beginning of Lee Man-hee's *Homebound* (1967) is similar to those of the mother's hallucinations in *Aimless Bullet*. Chʼoe Tong-u (Kim Chin-gyu), a paraplegic veteran of the Korean War, receives a letter from the army of the Republic of Korea "on the fourteenth anniversary of our victory." His wife, Chiyŏn (Mun Chŏng-suk), who will later be tempted by a romantic affair, seems to read the letter to Tongu, but she does not move her mouth and

FIGURE 22. In *Homebound* (1967), Tongu jumps out of his wheelchair as he relives the traumatic experience of his injury. Patriotic music plays on the record player as his wife Chiyŏn looks on in sympathy and horror.

the content of the letter is conveyed by a voice-over—the disembodied voice of a male officer. In this scene and a later one in which Chiyŏn flashes back to her military wedding, the voice-over conveys the spectral presence of the state in the lives of the couple, who in their sense of duty and their typicality stand in for the nation-people.

After the voice-over reads the content of the letter, Tongu is lying in bed and asks Chiyŏn to get his uniform. In the next scene he is dressed in his uniform and sitting in a wheelchair. We cut between high-angle shots of a record player playing a patriotic war song, low-angle shots of Tongu looking toward an invisible horizon, and medium close-ups of Chiyŏn watching uneasily. Tongu begins recounting the event of his wounding and Chiyŏn pleads for him not to continue. As the music crescendoes, calling on the soldiers to write their final letters to their lovers, Tongu's description of the battle becomes more and more gruesome. Chiyŏn covers her ears and turns away in horror while the record player spins. Tongu becomes fully immersed in his memory and tries to stand up but collapses to the ground (figure 22). Chiyŏn tries to help him, but he pushes her away. At this point, the voices of the two characters are completely drowned out by the patriotic military music, which takes on the quality of a non-diegetic soundtrack. While the music becomes the only sound, the camera captures a troubling and grotesque pantomime: Tongu is in the midst of a psychotic delusion, pointing his finger and giving commands while lying entirely prostrate on the floor; Chiyŏn is unable to watch the reenactment and cries inaudibly until she is finally able to stop the record player. In the mode of melodrama, the characters' bodies are hyper-expressive and hysterical, but their voices are mute. Their bodies express the suffering inflicted by a larger cosmology of moral and political organs—the ROK state, the Cold War system, the veterans' bureau, the family, and nationalist media.

The mood of the above scene is one of intensified and heightened pathos: the shots shorter and their scale closer, the gestures more pained, and the tears more abundant than other scenes. The technologies of reproduction—including the recorded voice of the state and the record player that plays the nationalist song—link the present to the past scene of Tongu's wounding during the Korean War, which becomes visible to us only through his reenactment on the surface of his present body. It is entirely present to him in his state of hallucination but still opaque to us—the scene is not a flashback. In this sense, we are put in a comparable position of sympathy as Chiyŏn, who did not share the experience of battle with her husband. The pain of her loss of love and lack of sexual fulfillment becomes the film's more central focus and is the result of a trauma that she cannot directly share. Therefore, heterosexual love comes into conflict with Tongu's public mission and what it has done to his body, and the scene sets the melancholic mood of the film, which ends with a powerful image of Chŏngsuk sitting on her bed alone and weeping, deeply saddened by her inability to consummate her love affair and suffering under the moral demands of the wife of a disabled veteran. Within the film's background melancholic mood, it communicates both a surface moral and political "message" and presents contrapuntal affects of disappointment and mourning connected to these same moral and political dictates.

The mood is neither an internal, subjective psychological state of the characters or spectator nor an external, objective setting or profilmic space. It is entirely virtual and cinematic, as much an affective mise-en-scène as it is an emotion cognized by a character's language or a spectator's thoughts. The historical referentiality of the mood to both real state institutions and a collective national experience is not direct, nor does it point to a context. Rather, these two primary points of historical reference, the state and the collective experiences of the nation-people it purportedly represents, appear at odds with one another, mutually contaminating and mutually haunting. Neither can be indicated in a direct or transparent manner because each appears mediated within the mood of the diegesis, whose melancholy, uncanniness, and anxiety pervade every affective gesture toward extra-cinematic reality. The letter from the veteran's bureau, the recorded patriotic song, Tongu's uniform, and the speech he gives—all signs of the state—are not univalent, because they are intertwined in the scene with the wounded, "incomplete" body of the veteran and the suffering of the veteran's wife, neither of whom can resolve the negative effects of the state's war through the mediations and repetitions—the recorded sound and patriotic anniversaries—offered to them by the state. Conversely, Tongu's and Chiyŏn's patriotic and sympathetic emotions are directed less toward state institutions themselves and more toward the ideal nation, a Korean national community liberating itself from colonialism and the incursions of communist revolution.[16] Cheah refers to this mutual haunting as an "irresolvable haunting [that] implies that the nation and the state are the *différance* of each other."[17] Lee's aestheticization of this haunting goes directly against the

supposedly harmonious relation between state and nation-people disseminated by the official state nationalism of the Park Chung Hee regime.

The scene is complicated by its reflection on the technological mediation involved in the production of what Alison Landsberg terms *prosthetic memory*— the disembodied voice-over of the military officer reading his letter and the record player playing the patriotic song.[18] Tongu remembers the war and the traumatic event of his lower-body paralysis without a visible flashback. However, the director, Lee Man-hee, develops a more explicit critique of the South Korean state by contrasting official nationalist media and their mnemonic ecology of intentional affects with an invisible traumatic event that cannot be fully placed within it. Of course, for Lee, cinema itself is also complicit. Although a skilled director of Korean War films, the historical event itself remains for him partially unrepresentable.

In *Homebound*, invisibility does not pertain solely to the events of the war but also to the representation of sexual desire. The plot of the film concerns Chiyŏn's devotion to Tongu despite his paralysis and loss of ability for sexual intercourse and reproduction, despite any temptation she may feel toward other men. This is also the plot of the apparently autobiographical serial novel that Tongu is publishing. As Chiyŏn delivers installments of the novel to the newspaper, where the editor wants the character of the wife in the novel to be more realistic and have an affair, a reporter, Kanguk, falls in love with her and tries to free her from her duty to her husband. She spends an afternoon and evening with Kanguk after missing the train from Seoul to Inchon, and Tongu finds out from his sister, who witnesses them at Seoul Station. After Tongu shoots the family dog in anger, Chiyŏn entertains the idea of escaping with Kanguk, before staying with her husband in the final scene. After writhing around in pain on the bed, she speaks with Kanguk on the phone and enters her own state of metaphorical paralysis. She places the phone on a chair and then collapses on the bed, mouthing contradictory words to Kanguk about going to meet him and not being able to meet him. The inscrutability of the conflict between her desires and her devotion to her husband is captured here by the gap between her words and her inactive body on the bed, powerfully framed by the bedroom doors as though she were physically trapped between them. Through the metafictional inclusion of the film's plot diegetically in the form of Tongu's novel, the film builds up a melodramatic moral occult around Chiyŏn's faithfulness, because everyone, including Tongu's own sister, expect that she (and the wife character in Tongu's novel) will divorce Tongu and start a relationship with another man. What remains invisible and unexpressed are Chiyŏn's repressed desires; we can assume, as all the characters do, that she must have unfulfilled desires, but what, besides social mores that already seem outdated, prevents her from divorcing and finding a lover in Kanguk or someone else?

As Mary Ann Doane explains, the 1940s women's film was not concerned with representing the desires of real women but was often about male film directors' projections of their fantasies about women and their desires.[19] Lee Man-hee

introduces a bit of self-consciousness about addressing this structure of the women's film to the spectator by including the novel version of the plot diegetically and having the fantasy of the novel affect how the characters see Chiyŏn. More importantly, however, Lee includes long scenes of Chiyŏn's urban wanderings, both alone and with Kanguk, ornamented with a melancholic symphonic soundtrack. For many of these scenes, Chiyŏn is completely silent, and beyond the basic knowledge of her conundrum, we are forced to try to make meaning of the actress Mun Chŏng-suk's evocative facial expressions and, at the end of the film, bodily contortions. These affects are rather typical of melodramatic pathos, but there is a heightened connotation of sexual desire in the embodied expressivity. Lee's self-reflexive combination of melodramatic pathos and repressed sexual desire in his modernist take on the women's film identifies a classic enigma of the genre (i.e., the desires of women) and presents it in an impossible situation for a woman protagonist caught between a sexless marriage based in purely sentimental affections and, as Tongu's sister remarks, the things which she, "as a woman, can understand." By connecting the melodramatic pathos of war memory to the pain of libidinal alienation, Lee certainly gives voice to patriarchal anxieties about wounded masculinity and the dangers of women's sexuality. However, he also uses these tropes of melodrama to explore the philosophical problem of modern alienation, particularly when one's life is torn apart by the machinations of a disembodied state authority. This more intellectual treatment of melodramatic scenarios comes through saliently in many scenes, including the one described above. It repeats when Chiyŏn receives a wedding invitation and then remembers back to their own wedding ceremony, when another voice-over, again by a military official, presides over her own wedding fourteen years earlier, explaining her duties as a wife of a soldier. As the voice plays, Chiyŏn responds to this specter of the military state by darting her eyes about, and Lee capture this with a point-of-view shot moving rapidly across the ceiling, as both Chiyŏn and the camera are searching for the invisible body of this voice that is capable of pushing her husband into post-traumatic hallucinations and herself into an existential panic and, eventually, her own kind of paralysis.

The invisible, therefore, is by definition indeterminate. *Homebound* exemplifies a more self-reflexive melodramatic cinema that tempers the pathetic moods of expressivity and sentimentality with an awareness of the persistence of the unrepresentable, at once gesturing toward possible objects of contemplation or sympathy—the experience of war, unrequited love or lust, the pain of loss—while not offering a full image of the historical reference. Taking the virtuality of melodramatic film moods seriously, modernist melodramas frame inaccessible landscapes and psyches, provoking a desire to know and to empathize without providing the aesthetic cues and experience necessary to do so. In the midst of a hallucination triggered by a military jet overhead, a mother calls out for her children to escape the war (but does she seek to escape the past or the present?). We inhabit a military

wife's perspective as it darts about the ceiling trying to place the transcendental voice of the state that she hears. Melodrama is capable of such critical delirium, which supersedes moral coding and responds to fascism's "aestheticizing of political life" with the "politicizing of art."[20] Creating such intellectual effects requires a deep knowledge of the workings of the melodramatic mood and an ability to manipulate film form and the cinematic framing toward a cognitive-corporeal play of presence and absence, visibility and invisibility. Psychoanalytically speaking, the play of visible and invisible is often no more than an expression of phallocentric fetishism; however, in the above examples and many more during the South Korean golden age, problematizing the horizon of bodily space is a way of questioning conventional corporeal, phenomenological, and ontological relations to history and the values and ideas that supposedly drive it.

DREAMWORLDS AND MIST

In the interview quoted above, the director Yu Hyun-mok states that if he could make any kind of film, he would make an experimental avant-garde film requiring fewer elements of popular melodrama.[21] *The Empty Dream* is probably the closest he came to realizing that aspiration, and yet the plot retains melodramatic aspects, including a love triangle. Two patients, a man (Sin Sŏng-il) and a woman (Pak Su-jŏng), go to the dentist and are treated at the same time. The woman passes out from anemia and the man receives Novocain. The majority of the film shows the man's dream while he is sedated and includes a number of nonlinear, expressionistic, and surrealist scenes. This was not the first time that Yu used dental surgery as a means of pushing the melodramatic mode toward dreamworld imagery. At the end of *Aimless Bullet*, Ch'ŏrho wanders Seoul aimlessly after having two teeth pulled at two separate dentists. As the camera follows him walking around, he holds his cheek in pain and is oblivious to much of his surroundings. Although very much a waking reality, dark images of urban Seoul give the ending a dreamlike quality. *The Empty Dream* is more lighthearted, but it also represents dental surgery and the extremes of pain and drug-induced states in order to cross a threshold from a melodramatic mode closer to realism to a melodramatic mode that explores the juxtapositions, displacements, and repressed desires of dreamworlds. This section and the next are concerned with depictions of dreams and fantasies in melodrama and how they affect its mood and aesthetic.

As in *Homebound*, in important aspect of the modernist self-reflexivity of *The Empty Dream* are the erotic resonances of its melodramatic pathos and embodied suffering. Significantly, the film is a remake of a 1964 Japanese film, *Daydream* (*Hakujitsumu*, dir. Tetsuji Takechi, 1964), itself based loosely on a Tanizaki Junichirō short story of 1928. *Daydream* is an early *pinku* film, a genre of erotic film emerging in Japan whose audience was working- and lower-middle-class men.[22]

As Alexander Zahlten describes in his study of the *pinku* genre, it used sexual and eroticized violence to give expression to masculine anxieties and desires in Cold War, US-occupied, postwar Japan.[23] If the general mode of many *pinku* films could be described as soft-pornographic, masculine melodrama, *The Empty Dream* uses the dreamworld frame as a point of departure for experimentations in mise-en-scène, cinematography, and editing that are reminiscent of surrealism and expressionism and self-consciously disrupt the melodramatic elements of erotic films.[24] Despite Yu's artistic pretensions to rise above the aesthetic of erotic films and make something avant-garde, the film negative was nonetheless prosecuted as indecent for including a nude scene (although Pak Su-jŏng was actually wearing a body suit). The real reason for Yu's prosecution was his presentation of a paper titled "Freedom of the Silver Screen" at an international conference of cultural figures, following Lee Man-hee's prosecution and imprisonment under the Anticommunist Law for his film *Seven Women POWs* (1965).[25] After Park Chung Hee's ban on screenings of *Aimless Bullet*, this was Yu's second confrontation with the regime's censorship. *The Empty Dream* does not contain the same kind of social realist references to poverty, unemployment, and left-wing political movements, but its eroticism, particularly combined with its aesthetic experimentation, was also clearly political, because it more directly challenged the sensibilities of mainstream nationalist cinema.

Freud and psychoanalysis had powerful effects on modernism, and the modernist literary and visual arts movements of surrealism and expressionism set out to explore the unconscious and dream life.[26] By filming and editing according to dream logic as opposed to the linear causality of realism or the allegorical causality of melodrama and by borrowing some of the music, rhythm, and eroticism of early *pinku* films, Yu reimagined the mood and affects of melodrama. A few main techniques stand out: the use of discontinuity editing and slow motion, a conscious borrowing of cinematic motifs, and the absurd juxtaposition of affects. Combined, these techniques express apprehensions toward modernity and modern technology that we also find in many melodramas, but without the moral desire for a new cohesiveness between modernity and traditional community.

The discontinuous editing begins before we enter the man's dream, heightening the uncanny interpenetration of waking life and dream life. The film begins with a scene of children dancing to "Blue Danube" and acting out the three main characters of the film—the man, the woman, and the dentist. Cutting to the next scene, the music changes to an upbeat lounge jazz with emphatic tom drums and cymbals and percussive vibes. There is a montage of the various dentures, tools, and medications in the dental office, with one loud and discontinuous image of a circular welding tool in a factory cutting into metal notches in a repetitive and rhythmic way, in time with the music. A series of graphic matches ensues. A patient sits in a dentist's chair and is worked on with a cleaning tool and there are

multiple cuts back to welding tools in the factory. The patient's moaning crescendoes along with the lounge music and the grinding sound of the factory tools. After cross-cutting to introduce the man and woman characters waiting in the lobby, there are further discontinuous cuts that introduce the dentist's chair as a place of visions, fantasy, and association. The point of view of a young boy looks at the fan above the chair, followed by a cut to the front of a propeller plane; he sees a kitten on the floor, followed by a cut to a rabbit in a field. Next, an old man looks at three lights shining down on him, followed by three images—three slips of hanging paper, two candles and an incense burner, and a large, dead tree in a desolate landscape. When the woman enters and begins her treatment, we see the same three lights from her point of view, followed this time by three white orchids and a botanical garden. The graphic matches between dental tools and industrial factory machinery and the repetition of trinities do not adhere to spatiotemporal continuity. The former presents an intensive image of the way that industrial technologies, including cinema, penetrate and affect the human body; the latter presents the religious and natural visions of the patients experiencing delirium-inducing pain and the effects of medication. Meanwhile, the lounge soundtrack adds an incongruent playfulness to the associations and ideas that govern the discontinuous editing.

There is very little dialogue in these first ten minutes, during which the subjective perspective is enveloped in a quick-paced montage. The logic of the editing does not follow the continuous space and time of melodramatic narrative, whether linear or allegorical in its causality. Rather, it follows the logic of a dreamworld, with associations, displacements, and symbolic connections created and energized through the desire of singular subjectivities—the boy sees an airplane and a rabbit, the old man sees ritual spaces, and the woman sees flowers. The opening is important for establishing the interpenetration of waking life and dream life, so that the main body, the man's dream, cannot be cordoned off from the rest of the diegesis. By the time the dentist finishes treating the woman and she passes out, there have already been fantasy montages of multiple characters' subjectivities, as well as the man's lascivious view of both the woman's mouth full of fluid and the dentist's invasive gaze. The dentist's inspection of the man includes further cuts to industrial machinery. He has his assistant administer Novocain to the man, lie the woman down, and remove her blouse, after which her chest heaves and her legs rub erotically. As the camera tracks in on the man and the scene fades, the conditions for his dream are in place, but the film has already shifted between multiple dreamlike fantasies of various characters.

The empty dream, or spring dream (*ch'unmong*), that constitutes the majority of the film leaves behind any semblance of mundane space and time through the continuation of discontinuity editing and intertextual motifs and a mise-en-scène drawn from the history of cinema. The narrative of the dream belongs to melodrama, but the violence is more overtly sexualized: there is a love triangle between

FIGURE 23. In *The Empty Dream* (1965), the man looks on as the dentist controls the woman, with sets and costuming reminiscent of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) and German expressionism.

the sadistic dentist, the hypnotized and violated woman, and the man who tries to save her. Musical and dance performances mean a break in the narrative action, and the dream begins with the woman dressed in a fancy ball gown singing "Padre" in English; the song was written by Jacques Larue and Alain Romans, translated into English by Paul Francis Webster, and sung most famously by Toni Arden in 1958. The man carries an expressionist painting through the dark and theatrical stage setting with art deco geometrical lines with men in white porter uniforms standing by. Halfway through the song, the dentist appears dressed like Dr. Caligari from *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (dir. Robert Wiene, 1920). The scene then cuts to a woman in a sparkling bikini performing an acrobatic dance to mambo music. In other words, for the first part of the dream sequence, narrative is almost entirely subordinated to the spectacle of music and dance performance. The 1950s art deco geometry, the Marilyn Monroe–type vocal performance, the 1920s-style expressionist painting and Dr. Caligari costume, and, finally, the mambo dance—this menagerie of juxtaposed moments in the history of styles, motifs, and mise-en-scène continues throughout the film: the angular urban backgrounds copied from *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, the castaway's beach, a room of mannequins, and so on (figure 23). It is as though the three main characters are moving through sets from multiple films from multiple eras, and the dreamworld has merged with the history of cinema, which now appears in a pastiche of fragments.

After the dance performance, the man begins to follow the woman, witnessing, through a window, the dentist tying her up and subjecting her to electroshock. He also shares a kiss with the woman through the glass. In the manner of Dr. Caligari, the dentist uses electroshock to hypnotize the woman, visualized through her flashes to beautiful natural scenery when she is being shocked. As Siegfried Kracauer argued, Dr. Caligari's hypnotism, through which he directs a somnambulist to commit murders, was a criticism of state authority and warmongering in the

aftermath of World War I and connected these to the industrial technology of cinema and its power to shape the unconscious.[27] Therefore, from the outset of *The Empty Dream* there is another set of references for understanding the relationship between technology and the body, distinct from the melodramatic mode and its coding of negative affect through pathos, sympathy, and the moral occult. The film's representation of mind control through electroshock and use of expressionist motifs harkens back to a moment in early silent cinema before melodrama and the "classical Hollywood system" became the normative ways of representing the violent intersection of modern technology and unconscious desires. The lack of moral Manichaeism and the adherence to dream logic becomes apparent at the end of the dream, when the man inexplicably stabs the woman on a theatrical city street while passersby, many dressed in traditional clothes with modern diagonal lines drawn on them, walk by without noticing and ignore his pleas, "I've killed this woman! I am a murderer!" This is more than melodramatic counterpoint, when good and evil characters share moments of analogy. Surreal moments of violence disrupt the causal connections between characters and actions in different scenes. Likewise, the man's identity follows the narcissism of the ego and the id (no moral high ground of the superego) and, as the kissing scene through the window glass suggests, his identity is formed only through his gaze upon the illusory specter of the woman other. Although he is a hero saving the damsel in distress within the dream's melodramatic scenario, the dreamworld does not follow that logic because it is beholden to the unconscious rather than to the moral occult; he kills the object of his desire.

The inconsistency in the man's character is doubled by the inconsistent affects of the woman as she is pursued by both men and tortured by the dentist. In part because of the dentist's manipulation of her psyche, which mimics the situation of being in the dentist's chair, she jumps from expressions of pained rapture to laughing to suffering and weeping (that is, when she is not performing musical numbers in a common way). These sudden shifts in affect and mood, accentuated by the man's confused watching, do not allow for a single mood, a single ontological condition for the conveying of narrative and ideology, to take hold. Are we supposed to sympathize with the woman? Laugh with her? Resent her? Enjoy her as performance spectacle or sexualized object? The kaleidoscope of affects does not easily allow for a settled mood or perspective at the center of the film's male scopophilia. As I will discuss in relation to Kim Ki-young's *The Housemaid*, this does not mean that the film is subversive of phallocentric visuality; however, it does present a modernist appropriation and critique of melodrama that denies any realist referentiality and whose moods and affects reveal, self-consciously, the dreamworld artifice of all cinematic experience. The result is an eroticized detachment from moral, political, and historical concerns, and therefore an idiosyncratic aesthetic for the time and for Yu Hyun-mok's filmography. The man awakens from the dream and uses the return of the woman's handkerchief, which she left behind

accidentally in the dentist's office, as a pretense for speaking with her and getting a ride home; but the return to reality in the final scene does little to abate the uncanny mood. With its discontinuous editing and lack of concern for historical referentiality, *The Empty Dream* represents one of the most radical experimentations in 1960s South Korean cinema.

Films did not need to represent dreams and dream logic to explore the fragmentation of subjectivity through surrealist imagery. Kim Su-yong's *Mist* (1967) follows very closely its literary source text, Kim Sŭng-ok's short story "Record of a Journey to Mujin."[28] Kim Sŭng-ok is known as a modernist writer, and the short story lends itself very well to an art film adaptation. In the years 1966–69, there was a dramatic increase in the number of literary films in response to the government's classification of literary films as "high quality films" and a decrease after they eliminated in the category in 1969.[29] The film employs experimental cinematography and editing techniques of European art cinema—Ingmar Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* being one reference for Kim Su-yong—in part to mimic the free indirect discourse, jumps between past and present, and hallucinatory descriptions of the literary source text.[30] However, these aesthetic and formal innovations are not simply a reproduction of literary technique, nor is Kim Su-yong's directorial style simply an imitation of an established art cinema film style. The artistry of Kim's style and the cultural significance of the film are best discerned not through an abstract comparison with other art cinema but by recognizing the film's foundations in melodramatic storytelling and affect, as well as its deliberate disruptions of the modes of subjectivity typically articulated through melodrama. Like its literary source text, the film is fundamentally about the shock of modernity and modern historical transformation and the feeling of time being out of joint. It suggests more typically melodramatic frameworks for dealing with the temporal problem of modernity, such as the binaries of modernity and tradition, urban and rural, and the sacred and mundane. However, flashes of memory, blurred perspective, hallucinatory images of a double self, and the intrusion of mist into the mise-en-scène constantly disrupt the mapping of these binaries.

The melodramatic qualities of the film are apparent. Most of the narrative and dialogue are based directly on the story, which highlights contrasts between urban Seoul and rural Mujin through a travel story. A manager at a pharmaceutical company (Kim Hŭi-jun in the story, Kim Ki-jun in the film) experiences mental strain, and his wife and father-in-law suggest he return to his hometown of Mujin, a foggy coastal town that he has not visited in four years. There he meets friends from his school days, Pak and Cho, and has an affair with a working-class music teacher, Ha In-suk (Yun Chŏng-hŭi). He also visits his mother's grave and remembers hiding out in the lumber room during the Korean War to avoid military service. Eventually, his wife calls him back to Seoul and he leaves Insuk behind, tearing up the love letter he writes to her. Thus, common narrative themes of melodrama appear: the lost opportunity for love explored through the protagonist's modern wife

and more traditional lover, the moral quandaries of draft dodging and infidelity, and the good and bad qualities of the claustrophobic rural hometown and the big city of Seoul. The musical theme played throughout the film is also a mood cue typical of melodrama. At several moments throughout the film, various instrumental versions of the song "Mist" play as non-diegetic soundtrack, including the pared-down and melancholic guitar version that accompanies Kim Ki-jun (Sin Sŏng-il) walking through town or remembering his youthful days and the more upbeat jazz version that ends the film. Most prominently, Insuk sings the song (or rather lip-syncs it) to Kijun at the climax of the film. This title song, recorded and then performed for decades by Chŏng Hun-hŭi, has lyrics about loneliness and walking into the mist, moving melancholically through chords in the C-minor scale over a slow Latin beat. In contrast to the fragmentation and intellectual abstraction of much of the film, this moody theme song situates the film within a media ecology of popular culture beyond cinema. It also makes the film a musical, lending vernacular and popular appeal to its depictions of alienation.

These conventions and expressions of melodrama are a point of departure into a more experimental visualization of memory, trauma, hallucination, and alienation than we typically find in melodrama. Kim Sŭng-ok's short story invites this experimentation in its first-person descriptive passages. The narrator Hŭijun describes synesthesia and other disorientations of the senses: "I used to have the sensation that the crying of the frogs was changed into innumerable, twinkling stars. It was a strange phenomenon, this sensation which used to occur, of an auditory image changing to a visual image."[31] Kim Su-yong does not attempt to render in film this particular synesthetic illusion, choosing rather to place it within a dialogue between Kijun and Insuk as they walk along the shore. However, such passages do invite visual experimentations. If the total work of art of film melodrama was meant to bring together sight, sound, and touch into an expression of experience by experience, *Mist* follows its source text in including fragments of illusion, hallucination, and memory that express non-normative sensory experiences and syntheses. The film expresses an awareness of the normative moods of melodrama and the moral and political ideas about subjectivity, sympathy, and the proper ordering of the affects into emotions that they typically express through a sorrowful yet cognitively stable pathos. The film's art cinema aesthetic is not an imitation of style but a series of reflections on subjectivity opened up by combining melodrama with the alternative ethos and discourse of art cinema.

A few examples suffice to show the effectiveness of these self-reflexive disruptions of the stable pathos of melodrama. We have seen how anxiety is one of the most prominent ground-moods of film melodramas of this period, but they rarely express anxious moods outside the framework of cinematic realism. In this context, the opening scene of *Mist* is shocking in its surrealism. As Kijun works in a high-rise office building, he looks down at the papers on his desk and then the scene cuts to a point-of-view shot. Like a few other point-of-view shots from

Kijun's perspective, the image is slightly out of focus, and crawling around on his papers is a horde of ants. He leans back in his chair and takes a pill, signaling that he realizes the image is an illusion and an effect of the stress and anxiety he experiences at work as a manager at his in-laws' pharmaceutical company. His wife suggests the trip to Mujin as a salve for his stress, promising a promotion to director from her father upon his return. In taking the pill and taking his wife's advice, Kijun's hallucinations become an object of a modern scientific perspective working to cure the presumed medical and psychiatric causes of his visions.

As this insertion of a surreal hallucination in the opening scene suggests, however, the film itself does not take up a realist, scientific view of psychic illusions. On the stuffy, hot train to Mujin, Kijun's first-person voice-over describes his fear of flying and contrasts the "blazing sun, cloying fog, and small minds twisted by poverty" of Mujin to the nostalgic and comfortable image of hometowns. Immediately, the film resists any pretense of restorative nostalgia, even though the trip home is supposed to restore him to mental health. Instead, as though on a movie screen, Kijun sees an image of his younger self reflected on the window of the train. Using the superimposition of two images to convey a split subjectivity, like the North Korean films discussed above, silent images of a younger Kijun appear layered on the window. The younger Kijun experiences mental anguish and, according to the voice-over, "insanity," biting his nails, smoking a cigarette, and moving in paroxysms while yelling. We soon find out the context for these images in a flashback to the Korean War, in which he pleads with his mother to allow him to leave the hideout in the lumber room and join the army. His sallow complexion and another blurry point-of-view shot of his mother convey his madness, and the empty shoreline and fog convey the malaise and starkness of his interior and exterior landscapes.

This scene stands out in the way that it frames the past as the past through an extended flashback, because so many other flashbacks are presented as brief flashes of memory or edited to interlace the past and present. When the bus to Mujin breaks down, the sign "10km to Mujin" provokes Kijun's memory and a shot/reverse shot and eyeline match show his young self exchanging gazes with his present self. Sometimes his younger self appears in the same space as Kijun like this; other times he appears in a reflection, such as in the train window or later on the surface of a pond. The repetition of traversing the same landscape around Mujin makes possible the insertion of the younger Kijun into the same space. This doubling of Kijun comes to a head after Kijun begins his affair with Insuk and is walking with her on the shore. Kijun looks ahead and an extreme long shot captures the back of his present self walking alongside his younger self. The scene then cuts to a conversation between the two (figure 24)—the older Kijun speaks to the younger about his marriage to wealthy widow and his stable life, but when he asks for a response, his younger self only spits. Then it cuts quickly back to Kijun and Insuk walking and talking on the same shoreline. This surreal doubling and

FIGURE 24. In *Mist* (1967), Kijun walks along the shoreline with his younger self, asking him about his decision to leave Mujin and marry, but his younger self refuses to respond.

even tripling of Kijun's identity conveys an alienation from himself that disallows any nostalgic view of his hometown or his youth. Likewise, while Insuk contrasts with his urban wife in typical ways for a melodrama—she is rural, poor, and artistic—the affair seems only to return him to his alienation from other selves. For example, as Insuk asks if she can go to Seoul with him while walking on the shore, he has the illusion of speaking with himself instead. At the end, as Kijun writes a letter to Insuk that he will ultimately tear up, he states, bluntly, "I love you, Insuk. Because you are me." Despite its gendered melodramatic contrasts between the city and the countryside, therefore, the film never entertains a restorative nostalgia by figuring woman, hometown, or landscape as ideal objects. As in the films of Kim Su-yong's inspiration, Ingmar Bergman, what seems to exist outside the self ends up being an illusion of that same self reflected back. Another extreme long shot of Kijun walking across an empty square shows him in isolation, as he essentially is throughout, alone in his memories and anxiety.

In a brilliant performance, Sin Sŏng-il manages to express both the pain of this alienation and his character's detachment, particularly when he smiles furtively at a party with his old friends or when he remembers his past experiences of madness. These glimpses of levity, along with the melodramatic love story, prevent the film from becoming too painfully abstract or intellectual. The mist that covers Mujin and obscures objects in the mise-en-scène performs a similar function, creating mystery and invisibility through a common melodramatic trope of weather. In combining the forms of melodrama and art cinema, *Mist* introduces the topography of the protagonist's memories and unconscious to counterpoint the surface of identification and pathos. This spatial juxtaposition of hallucination and perspective, visualized emotion and invisibility, transforms the primary theme from infidelity (toward the nation and marriage) to the dreamlike interpenetration of past and present. The mood and mood cues of the film are less tied to the

emotional and moral problems of draft-dodging and extramarital affairs and are rather a backdrop for the expression of affects that remain irrational and unknowable. Pathos and sympathy provide a more comfortable social coding of affects and memories. By mimicking the temporal jumps and surreal descriptions of a modernist literary text, *Mist* does not provide the relief of knowing the meaning of memories and affects. Rather, it remains in the original mood of anxiety expressed through hallucination, unable to reconcile the past and present and caught in their uncanny interpenetration.

THE UNCANNY

In their introduction to the history of Korean horror cinema, Alison Peirse and Daniel Martin state that the narratives of Korean horror films are "often preoccupied with *han* (a sense of agonizing grief at unfair suffering) and embedded in melodramatic plots."[32] The connection between melodrama and horror through narrative structures and the aesthetic category of *han* is based on a culturalist understanding of affect propagated in both South Korea and abroad. It is also consonant with Linda Williams's analysis of melodrama as a kind of Ur-genre at the foundation of other body genres such as horror and pornography.[33] However, how would melodrama and horror be differentiated from one another if not through their affects and emotions? If horror films, like melodrama, by and large express the same agonizing grief at unfair suffering, would it be the inclusion only of supernatural elements or moments of intensified suspense that differentiates melodrama and horror? Kim Ki-young's *The Housemaid* is widely considered to have established the postwar horror genre in South Korean film and was made at the height of golden age melodrama. Therefore, understanding how the film brings together melodrama and horror is one starting point for figuring out the connections between melodrama and horror without conflating them in the typical ways—on the level of narrative, aesthetics, affect, or gender difference.[34] It can also allow us to avoid culturalist or nationalist assumptions about a shared collective psyche or set of aesthetic categories that define the collective consciousness of the Korean people.

This is particularly important for reading *The Housemaid* because it is neither a straightforward melodramatic horror film nor a straightforward horror-film take on melodrama. What elevates *The Housemaid* to art cinema is its meticulous mimicking and parodying of the tropes of melodrama. Kim Ki-young self-consciously and self-reflexively engages with the aesthetic and narrative forms of the melodramatic mode, ironically manipulating the mode in order to explore its unconscious desires and repressions. Because the horror genre challenges safe and enlightened affects, perhaps its driving ethos originates in modernist and avant-garde engagements with the grotesque, absurd, and ironic. More importantly for melodramas of the South Korean golden age, however, the horror genre can enable a social

critique at the level of affect, because it is capable of taking the sacred myths of a society (e.g., those of national melodrama) and revealing the underlying violence and arbitrariness of their signs. *The Housemaid* employs a horror style to satirize and critique the sacred myths of melodrama and to thereby question the moral occult of post–Korean War developmentalism and middle-class morality.

Kim's film is a self-conscious, ironic, but politically ambiguous engagement with the repressed contents of bourgeois domesticity and with the unconscious wishes that accompany the moral principles of patriarchy. It presents a phantasmagoria of desires, fetishes, and death drives that demand a consideration of the multiple relationships between the constitution of political power and the modern dream-factories of the bourgeois household and the cinematic apparatus. It displaces the moral dilemmas and Manichaean moral universe of melodrama and becomes a volatile suspense film whose enjoyment relies upon a dominant topography of femininity and a fear of the feminized masses. The film's political allegory, which takes place almost entirely within the setting of an uncanny house, can be read in relation to its historical moment, when the emergent neocolonial nation-state of South Korea was constituting itself through a fear of internal sedition.

The dominant aesthetic and mood of *The Housemaid* is the uncanny because everything that should be familiar within the moral occult of the family drama appears unfamiliar and alien through the mechanism of repression. By pushing the family drama toward the horror genre through dark satire, Kim creates an alternative view of modernity for which melodrama's simple tradition versus modernity dichotomy breaks down, revealing the underlying violence involved in the construction of the nation-state, the middle class, and the libidinal economy of the patriarchal household.[35] Kim's irony and satire do not prevent him from presenting his own sexist worldview based in the idea of the monstrous feminine, but his modernist and post-psychoanalytic version of the family drama does effectively mock its conventions and norms in the manner of a self-conscious critique (figure 25).

The Housemaid adheres to many of the conventions of the melodrama genre, including the excessive expression of emotion and simplified moral dilemmas. At the same time, many of the cinematographic and narrative techniques that Kim Ki-young deployed are more appropriate to the suspense and horror genres, particularly in their provocation of an anticipatory fear of violence or death.[36] The film also exceeds melodrama's moralistic framing, despite the somewhat ironic use of the frame-tale device, because the framed narrative completely compromises the virtue of its characters, drawing them into a struggle in which a righteous moral position can no longer be salvaged. Myŏngja's seduction of Tongsik and the cruelty that manifests in its aftermath compromise all the characters—except, perhaps, the handicapped daughter—to the extent that the victory of virtue over evil can only be reasserted at the end of the film by claiming implausibly that it is only a fantasy sequence with a negative didactic purpose. The only character who

FIGURE 25. At the end of *The Housemaid* (1960), Tongsik breaks the fourth wall and addresses the audience, telling men not to succumb to their desire for younger women as they age. Such a delivery of the didactic message only adds to the uncanny mood of the film.

remains virtuous and innocent throughout the film is the disabled daughter, who would typically be an icon for the innocence that needs to be redeemed but is instead treated sadistically both by her father, her brother, and Myŏngja.

During the long fantasy sequence that makes up the film, the most familiar elements of daily life appear, by way of the return of the repressed, as the most mysterious, secretive, and strange. In a 1919 essay, Freud puzzled over the contradictory qualities of the aesthetic experience of the uncanny—its combination of familiarity and frightfulness—and offered a preliminary observation that "the uncanny [*unheimlich*] is something which is secretly familiar [*heimlich-heimisch*], which has undergone repression and then returned from it."[37] If the uncanny is the motif that emerges with the return of a repressed aspect of what is most familiar—a repression marked by the "un-" prefix added to "familiar" (*heimisch*)—then the disconcerting version of the household represented in the framed fantasy offers refracted elements of the unconscious.[38] The uncanniness of the house in *The Housemaid* is highlighted by the disarray caused by the ongoing construction, the stairs that the handicapped daughter cannot climb, and the many close-ups of aging art objects. Laura Mulvey has discussed such dilapidated houses in Hitchcock's films as reminiscent of the decay and disintegration associated with the mother's body, and it is perhaps fitting that the house in *Psycho* (dir. Alfred Hitchcock, 1960), which Mulvey refers to as the most uncanny of houses, was also released in 1960.[39] The ambiguity of the analogy between the house in *The*

Housemaid and the macro-political national community is perhaps best understood through this sense that the national subject both feels at home and is, at the same time, estranged from its home through the work of repression.

The political form and content of *The Housemaid* are directly connected to how it figures and negotiates gender difference. The negotiations of gender difference in the film produce more than a single version of the feminine, and the uncanny house is a site for other performances of femininity: sacred, dangerous, ideal, licentious, insubordinate, and so on. In particular, as Myŏngja becomes an object of suspense, the film seems to relish in her violent undermining of the family, while simultaneously it reestablishes strict boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable femininity, between proper and improper subjects, and between bourgeois propriety and the unruly masses. The film's fantasy of destruction and failed reconstitution and its allegory of gendered class conflict is structured around a fetishistic fear and denial of gender difference. This fear and denial of gender difference is negotiated through the household's relationship to Myŏngja and points to underlying class anxieties and their expression in the nation-building project.

This negotiation is apparent in the scene of seduction between Myŏngja and Tongsik. As Tongsik approaches her, the shot changes to view into the room from the outside, through the sliding glass door. We can see her face, but he cannot. While the camera is facing in from the outside, Myŏngja's eyes shift back and forth and she purses her lips; she quickly moves to the side to block him as he reaches to shut the cracked door, and she begins caressing her hair. It is almost as though she is performing a seduction that she herself has seen in a film, and it seems that neither she nor we are supposed to be sure of her intentions. However, when the camera angle shifts to Tongsik's perspective, she turns her head slowly toward him with a drawn-out, deliberate, and assured look reminiscent of classic Hollywood. In this second shot, Tongsik and the camera see what Laura Mulvey has described as "the erotic allure of the female star concentrated in a highly stylized and artificial presentation of femininity."[40] What we know from her facial expressions in the previous shot, however, is that Myŏngja may have multiple intentions in seducing him. The combination of the two shots depicts Myŏngja as duplicitous: she presents herself to Tongsik as the fetish object that Mulvey describes, but direction asks us to consider what her ultimate motivation might be. The scene presents Myŏngja's liminality as dangerous because she presents herself differently to the interior and the exterior of the house. As the story progresses, the duplicity she displays in this scene progressively intensifies, and following the abortion of her child and her realization that she cannot usurp the wife's position, she begins to exact revenge, becoming an object of pure fear and suspense. Much as the female factory workers were a source of confusion for Tongsik, Myŏngja is an enigma. Her look toward the outside of the house and therefore to the gaze of the public as an imaginary collective viewer incites uncertainty and the potential for misinterpretation. However, her look toward the inside of the house and toward Tongsik's

gaze presents a figure of pristine femininity, desirable for her performance of an idealized image.

Like the bourgeois household in *The Housemaid*, in the long Korean Cold War, the neocolonial nation-state (South Korea) and the imperial nation-state that occupies it (the United States) are often compelled to refashion their external borders into internal ones and to perpetuate a reciprocal terror between the state and the masses through the interpellation of national subjects as individual members of the totality.[41] The cinematic apparatus participates as an active agent in this process of refashioning borders, interpellating subjects, and rearticulating the terms of inclusion and exclusion. In this sense, the suspense in a film like *The Housemaid* is intimately tied to an aesthetics of belonging within the internal border, because it is the affect through which the film can represent the working-class woman as internally seditious and as the inassimilable element for an ambivalently circumscribed identity. By fixating upon her as the object of a fearful and pleasurable gaze, the fear of the masses becomes the affect through which (national) subjects are simultaneously individuated and totalized.

The Housemaid and other South Korean horror films should not be subsumed into aesthetic categories or terms of emotion such as *han* nor have their narratives conflated with melodrama. The meaning of fear is distinct from pathos, particularly when considering the problems of gender roles and social class. One purpose of Kim Ki-young's film is to deploy the tropes and conventions of melodrama but, by inserting fear where pathos and sympathy should be, to reveal the violence at the heart of sentimental projects such as nation-building. His irony clearly does not prevent the film from projecting a misogynist paranoia onto the working class. However, rather than wrapping this paranoia in a melodramatic narrative that defines good and bad affects by offering proper objects of identification, *The Housemaid* makes it difficult to sublate the mood of the uncanny into an owned and personalized emotion without also recognizing one's complicity in horrific violence. Hence, every character is compromised by the violence of the house (and nation of houses). The film uses modernist techniques of self-reflexivity to show that there is nothing innocent about the spaces and moods of innocence to which every melodrama seeks to return.

Epilogue

When Yi Yŏng-il proposed his arthouse ideal as the proper foundation for a future Korean national cinema, he referred to aesthetic liberation of and through cinema. As discussed in chapter 1, an analogous connection between film and subjectivity was made contemporaneously on the other side of the Cold War divide in North Korea. Ch'u Min, Yun Tu-hŏn, and Sŏ Kwang-je argued that a film should be a total work of art that incorporates many styles and media into a unified aesthetic experience whose effect would be the subjectification and individualization of a national community that could continue the spirit of the anti-Japanese revolution and resist US imperialism and occupation. Boris Groys traces the continuities between the avant-garde's attempts to radically transform society through artistic experimentation and socialist realism's program for political and economic revolution.[1] Writing under Soviet occupation during late Stalinism, North Korean film theorists came to consider cinema to be the most powerful medium for North Korea's version of such a project of aesthetic and cultural revolution, in large part because of film's synthetic capacity, its bringing together of various senses and sensations into the integrated whole of the artwork. Although this version of aesthetic liberation seems at odds with that of Yi Yŏng-il, who sought to refashion Korean national cinema in the mold of the best of Hollywood and the European arthouse cinema, the versions of aesthetic liberation in North Korea and South Korea are intimately connected; they not only belong to the same geohistorical era of the Cold War but also share an emphasis on the intersection between cinematic experience and the formation of a liberated national subjectivity through national cinema.

The connection of liberation to aesthetics cannot be separated from the problems of melodrama, as Yi himself admits when he states that cinema must remain in line with popular tastes.[2] An Enlightenment notion of liberation of and through the aesthetic could not fully elevate the negative affects of the melodramatic mode, because it is precisely through melodramatic excess that cinema remained connected to the historical experiences of its audiences and to a recognition of the

limits of Cold War ideology to represent the social realities of the two Koreas. The purpose of this book has been to bring affect into a discussion of Korean film and to develop a method of comparison across the Cold War divide without falling back on culturalist interpretations of aesthetic categories like *chŏng* and *han*. This is a challenge not only to nationalism but also our understanding of melodrama, which too often has assumed a direct translation between affects and the social meaning given to them by narrative and discourse. If I have managed to open up some new ways we might interpret the power of melodramatic representation and ideas in tandem with the more mysterious excesses of affect that pervade the mode, then I will have accomplished my purpose.

On the other hand, the concepts of art cinema in the South and the total work of art in the North also contributed to the production of the most aesthetically interesting and politically complicated films of the 1950s and 1960s. Without the idea of liberation of and through the aesthetic, cinema truly did run the risk of becoming mere entertainment or distraction, unable to provoke deeper reflections on life, politics, and social conflict. Yi Yŏng-il rightly thought that in order to become an art, cinema had to move beyond commercialized sentimentality; his mistake was in reducing melodrama to base sentimentality. As I have shown, attempts at creating a total work of art in the North and an art cinema in the South depended on elaborations of the melodramatic mode. In order to explore both the synthetic capacity and the limits of embodied representations through a popular media on the cusp of becoming art, neither avant-garde could ignore the melodramatic mode. Aesthetic experimentation and melodrama were intertwined and not simply because artistic innovation ran up against the political constraints of ideology and censorship and the economic constraints of commodification and development. They were intertwined because the cinematic avant-garde could not bring about the new without also recognizing and interpreting the pasts of its audiences—the existing everyday affects, memories, experiences, and stories that were the raw material for cinema's representation of experience by experience. Using the term melodrama derisively, as Yi Yŏng-il did, associated this attachment to the past with a backward-looking, regressive, and ultimately feminine sentimentality; instead, melodrama was a style of thinking and mimesis without which avant-garde experiments in synthesis, self-consciousness, fragmentation, and political subjectivity would all amount to hollow formalism. If the purpose of the avant-garde is to transform the social through aesthetics, melodrama is not the obverse of such progress and innovation but a point of contact between cinema and mass historical experiences.

Despite its articulation of moral occults, melodrama offers a kind of corrective to the notion of aesthetic liberation or to fantasies of liberation more generally, because of its persistent negativity. The falsity of the happy endings of many Cold War film melodramas that tell of familial reconciliation, national development, revolution, or romantic love should not be attributed primarily to the failure of

the mode to adhere to realism or its tendency to indulge in fantasies of returning to a state of innocence—this falsity is attributable more to the preceding effective depiction of a degree of suffering that could never be fully redeemed by narrative, language, or, certainly, political ideology. In other words, the falsity of the ending is also a result of the virtual experience of reflecting on the pain of experience. The moods of a film melodrama can certainly cue those virtual experiences, using the linguistic dimensions of sound, image, and story to guide the emotions of the viewer toward an ideological endpoint; however, embedded in those same moods are an excess of affective associations. If the ending feels false, that is because the film both provoked and failed to contain those excesses within the unfolding of the narrative. The capacity of the mood of a film melodrama to undo the film's own ideological premises by provoking an excess of negative psychosomatic affect amounts not to a narrative failure of the melodrama genre but to a virtue of the melodramatic mode—a mode of thinking, experiencing, and representing between language and what it fails to signify.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Harry S. Truman, "Speech Explaining the Communist Threat," June 2, 1950, *Teaching American History*, http://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/speech-explaining-the-communist-threat/.

2. Kim Il Sung, "On the Present Situation and the Immediate Tasks of the Democratic Youth League Organizations: Speech at the Join Conference of the Central Committees of the Democratic Youth Leagues of North and South Korea, January 18, 1951," in *Kim Il Sung Works*, vol. 6 (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1981), 218.

Following convention, I use North Korea to refer to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and South Korea to refer to the Republic of Korea. I also occasionally use these terms to refer to the territories of North Chosŏn and South Chosŏn, as they were referred to in the south prior to the establishment of the two nation-states (1945–1948, under Soviet occupation and the United States Military Government in Korea [USAMGIK], respectively).

3. Monica Kim describes how warfare changed during the era of the Korean War, as official wars between nation-states were replaced by police actions and interventions in the name of universal humanity. This change in warfare during the Cold War is connected to melodrama, which casts good versus evil as a universal moral struggle over sovereignty, taking place largely in the decolonizing world. Kim, *Interrogation Rooms of the Korean War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019). Carl Schmitt's search for an ontological foundation of the political through the distinction between friend and enemy, based in a melodramatic and moralistic view of the political, is one precursor to this Cold War notion of war and politics. Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007). He elaborated on those arguments in his discussion of the "wars over humanity" in 1950, in *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the*

Jus Publicum Europaeum, trans. G. L. Ulmen (New York: Telos Press, 2003), 419; and in his genealogy of Cold War insurgency and counterinsurgency in 1972, *Theory of the Partisan: Intermediate Commentary on the Concept of the Political*, trans. G. L. Ulmen (New York: Telos Press, 2007).

4. Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (London: Verso, 2002).

5. Bruce Cumings, *North Korea: Another Country* (New York: New Press, 2004).

6. Eun Mee Kim and Gil-Sung Park, "The *Chaebol*," in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, ed. Byung-Kook Kim and Ezra F. Vogel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 270–72.

7. By *excess* I do not mean that melodrama is in excess of a normative realism, a position that Linda Williams has rightly criticized. By *excess* I mean that a melodramatic text produces affects, meanings, and historical references that are in excess of its own guiding ideological principles. Linda Williams, "Mega-Melodrama!: Horizontal and Vertical Suspensions of the "Classical,'" *Modern Drama* 55, no. 4 (Winter 2012): 523–43.

8. Theodore Hughes, *Literature and Film in Cold War South Korea: Freedom's Frontier* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

9. Although the inclusion of economy may be particularly controversial, I argue for reading North Korean cinema as a consumer culture comparable to South Korean cinema following insights into state socialism by C. L. R. James, *State Capitalism and World Revolution* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1986); and Evgeny Dobrenko, *The Political Economy of Socialist Realism*, trans. Jesse M. Savage (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007).

10. To name only a few of the studies touching on melodrama in Korean film: Dong Hoon Kim, *Eclipsed Cinema: The Film Culture of Colonial Korea* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017); Takashi Fujitani, *Race for Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Yi Yŏng-jae, *Cheguk ilbon ŭi Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (Seoul: Hyŏnsil munhwa, 2008); Kim So-yŏn et al. eds., *Maehok kwa hondon ŭi sidae* (Seoul: Sodo, 2003); Kathleen McHugh and Nancy Abelmann, eds., *South Korean Golden Age Melodrama: Gender, Genre, and National Cinema* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005); Steve Choe, *Sovereign Violence: Ethics and South Korean Cinema in the New Millennium* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018).

11. Christine Gledhill, "Prologue: The Reach of Melodrama," in *Melodrama Unbound: Across History, Media, and National Cultures*, ed. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), xiii–xiv. Steve Choe takes up Gledhill's and Williams's definition of melodrama as the dominant mode in popular cinema to analyze more recent South Korean films and their depictions of violence, justice, and ethics. He treats melodrama philosophically as a style of thought that opens up complex problems of ethics and politics despite its seemingly simplistic worldviews. Choe, *Sovereign Violence*, 19.

12. Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzacs, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995).

13. Linda Williams states, "Melodrama begins, and wants to end, in a space of innocence." Williams, "Melodrama Revised," in *Refiguring American Film Genres: History and Theory*, ed. Nick Browne (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 65.

14. Jane Gaines, "Even More Tears: The Historical Time Theory of Melodrama," in Gledhill and Williams, *Melodrama Unbound*, 325–39.

15. Thomas Elsaesser's identification of "counterpoint" is perhaps the biggest of his many contributions to the study of melodrama. Elsaesser, "Tales of Sound and Fury," in *Film Genre Reader*, ed. B. Grant (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 278–308.

16. Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect," in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 141–48.

17. Williams, "Melodrama Revised," 42. Italics in the original.

18. Linda Williams, "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess," *Film Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (Summer, 1991): 2–13; Carol J. Clover, "Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film," *Representations* 20 (Fall 1987): 187–228.

19. In readings of Korean film history as a history of national cinema, critics such as Yi Yŏng-il have used these generic classifications of melodrama to critique the supposed sentimentality and anti-intellectualism of Korean film melodramas. Yi Yŏng-il, "Sin onyŏn ŭi konggwa, yŏnghwa: 'Irhŭn kŏt' yŏnghwa yulli wi ŭi haech'e, yesulsŏng ŭl irhŭn chejak kyŏnghyang," *Chosŏn ilbo* (30 December 1961): 4, repr. in *Sinmun kisa ro pon Han'guk yŏnghwa, 1958–1961*, ed. Cho Chun-hyŏng, Yun Hye-suk, Yi U-sŏk, and Cho Oe-suk (Seoul: Han'guk yŏngsang charyowŏn, 2005), 1054–55. See also Yi's histories of Korean film, including *Han'guk yŏnghwa chŏnsa* (Seoul: Sodo, [1969] 2004), 345–58. Christine Gledhill critiques gendered dismissals of the excessive sentimentalism of melodrama as well as the masculine aesthetic elitism of notions of national cinema such as Yi's. Gledhill, "The Melodramatic Field: An Investigation," in *Home Is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film*, ed. Christine Gledhill (London: BFI, 1987).

20. Williams, "Melodrama Revised"; and Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

21. Yi Yŏng-il, "Sin onyŏn"; and Ch'oe Il-su, interview with Yu Hyun-mok, "Han'guk e nŭn ajik yŏnghwa yesul i ŏpsŏtta," *Yŏnghwa yesul* 1, no. 1 (1959): 58–59.

22. See Paul Ricoeur's reading of modern hermeneutic thinking as a hermeneutics of suspicion, especially in the works of Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970), 32.

23. Brooks, *Melodramatic Imagination*, 5.

24. Relevant to Cold War melodrama is Carl Schmitt's search for an ontological foundation of the political in the distinction between friend and enemy, which is based in a melodramatic and moralistic view of politics. Schmitt, *Concept of the Political.*

25. Brooks, *Melodramatic Imagination*, 5.

26. Angus Fletcher discusses magical causality in his study of allegory, which is pertinent to understanding melodramatic narrative. Fletcher, *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012).

27. Williams, "Mega-Melodrama!"

28. Colin MacCabe, "Realism and the Cinema: Notes on Some Brechtian Theses." *Screen* 15, no. 2 (July 1974): 7–27.

29. Williams, "Melodrama Revised."

30. Walter Benjamin, *Origin of the German Trauerspiel*, trans. Howard Eiland (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019).

31. Gaines, "Even More Tears."

32. Gaines's citation: Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), 308–21.

33. Gaines's citation: David Carr, "Review of *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*," *History and Theory* 26, no. 2 (May): 197–204.

34. Gaines, "Even More Tears" 329–30.

35. *The Flower Girl*, directed by Pak Hak and Chʻoe Ik-kyu (1972; Pyongyang: Korean Film Import and Export Corporation, 2009), DVD.

36. Elsaesser quoted in John Gibbs, *Life of the Mise-en-scène: Visual Style and British Film Criticism, 1946–1978* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2013), 202.

37. For a full discussion of melodrama and contrapuntal space, see Travis Workman, "Other Scenes: Space and Counterpoint in Cold War Korean Melodrama," *Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema* 7, no. 1 (April 2015): 1–13.

38. Yi Yŏng-jun, "Yŏnghwa e issŏsŏ ŭi riarijŭm munje," *Yŏnghwa sidae* 2, no. 5 (December 1947): 54–56, repr. in *Sinmun, chapchi, kwanʼgo ro ponŭn Nambukhan yŏnghwa, 1945–1953*, ed. Yi Myŏng-ja (Seoul: Minsogwŏn, 2014), 720. For a detailed history of *Yŏnghwa sidae* during the colonial period, when it was a mainstream liberal publication, to the liberation period, when it became more involved in the politics of film, see Yi Hwa-jin, "Yŏnghwa rŭl ingnŭn sidae ŭi torae, yŏnghwa sidae (1931–1949) Hanʼguk kŭndae yŏnghwa chapchi wa tʻochʻakchŏk yŏnghwa munhwa," *Hanʼguk kŭgyesul yŏnʼgu* 63 (March 2019): 15–50.

39. Kim Jong Il, *On the Art of the Cinema* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, [1973] 1989).

40. Barthes, "Reality Effect."

41. André Bazin, "An Aesthetic of Reality: Neorealism," in *What Is Cinema?* Vol. 2, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 20.

42. Hong Sŏng-u, "Paeu yŏnʼgi hyŏngsang esŏ ŭi chinsilsŏng," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (January 1960): 11.

43. Williams, "Film Bodies."

44. Vivian Sobchack's phenomenological discussions of the film body are influential in this regard. Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Yi Yŏng-jun, "Yŏnghwa e issŏsŏ ŭi riarijŭm munje."

45. Carl Plantinga, "Art Moods and Human Moods in Narrative Cinema," *New Literary History* 43, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 455–75.

46. Plantinga, "Art Moods and Human Moods," 469.

47. Plantinga, "Art Moods and Human Moods," 468; Noël Carroll, "Art and Mood: Preliminary Notes and Conjectures," *The Monist* 86, no. 4 (October 2003): 527–30.

48. See Lauren Freeman's explication in "Toward a Phenomenology of Mood," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 52, no. 4 (December 2014): 445–76.

49. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 226. Italics in the original.

50. Cho Yun-jŏng focuses on the education of emotions in the sphere of national language education in "Pŏp, kugŏ, kyoyuk: pʻyŏnchʻanchʻwiŭisŏ rŭl tʻonghae pon 'potʻong hakkyo kugŏ tokpon,'" *Hanʼguk hyŏndae munhak yŏnʼgu* 50 (December 2016): 109–48.

51. Joseph Stalin reportedly used this phrase in a speech at the home of Maxim Gorky on October 26, 1932; Gorky repeats it in "Soviet Literature," in *Soviet Writers' Congress, 1934: The Debate on Socialist Realism and Modernism; Gorky, Radek, Bukharin, Zhdanov, and Others*, (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1977), 68.

52. Kim Chŏng-gang analyzes the entertaining appeals to emotion that anti-communist films directed toward young men to mobilize them for the South Korean military. Kim

Chŏng-gang, "Naengjŏn kwa orak yŏnghwa 1950–60-nyŏndae kunsajuŭijŏk namsŏngsŏng kwa pan'gongjŏk chuch'e mandŭlgi," *Han'gukhak yŏn'gu* 61 (June 2017): 71–110.

53. Lauren Berlant, "The Female Complaint," *Social Text*, no. 19–20 (1988): 237–59.

54. For example, see James M. Burns, "Cinema, Social Fears, and Moral Panics in Britain's Tropical Empire," in *Moral Panics, Social Fears, and the Media: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Siân Nicholas and Tom O'Malley (New York: Routledge, 2013), 90–103.

55. "Hwaldong sajin ŭl kaesŏn; choch'i mot han sajin ŭl yŏngsa hamyŏn; choch'i anhi han yŏnghyang i ittago," *Chosŏn ilbo*, 13 January 1923, repr. in *Sinmun kisa ro pon Chosŏn yŏnghwa, 1923*, ed. Han'guk yŏngsang charyowŏn and Han'guk yŏnghwasa yŏn'guso (Seoul: KOFA, 2011), 37.

56. Kim, *Eclipsed Cinema.*

57. Travis Workman, "Stepping into the Newsreel: Melodrama and Mobilization in Colonial Korean Film," *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review* 3, no. 1 (May 2014): 153–84.

58. Kim Hye-yŏng, "Paengnim yŏnghwaje e tanyŏwasŏ (wan) / nunmul ije kŭman . . . / saeroun Han'guk poyŏchuŏssŭmyŏn," *Chosŏn ilbo*, 23 August 1963, repr. in *Sinmun kisa ro pon Han'guk yŏnghwa, 1962–1964*, ed. Yi Kil-sŏng et al. (Seoul: KOFA, 2005), 910.

59. Yi Kwang-su, *The Heartless*, trans. Ann Sung-hi Lee, in *Yi Kwang-su and Modern Korean Literature: Mujong* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell East Asia Series, 2005).

60. For a longer genealogy of the problem of interiority and emotion in modern Korean literature, see Yoon Sun Yang, *From Domestic Women to Sensitive Young Men: Translating the Individual in Early Colonial Korea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2017).

61. Yi Kwang-su, "What Is Literature?" trans. Jooyeon Rhee, *Azalea: Journal of Korean Literature and Culture* 4 (2011): 293–313.

62. Chungmoo Choi, "The Politics of Gender, Aestheticism, and Cultural Nationalism in *Sopyonje* and *The Genealogy*," in *Im Kwon-taek: The Making of a Korean National Cinema* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001), 107–33.

63. *Yŏnsei hyŏndae han'gugŏ sajŏn*. Accessed 16 Feb 2020. http://ilis.yonsei.ac.kr/dic/.

64. Benedictus de Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. George Henry Radcliffe Parkinson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

65. Han Hi-chŏl, "Yŏnghwa yŏnch'ul esŏ ŭi punwigi myosa," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (July 1959): 16–17; Cho Chong-sik, "Ch'waryŏng ŭi punwigi myosa—yesul yŏnghwa 'nyŏgyowŏn e taehayŏ," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (December 1961): 17–19.

66. Cho Chong-sik, "Ch'waryŏng ŭi punwigi myosa," 17; Williams, "Mega-Melodrama!"

67. Brian Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect," *Cultural Critique* 1 (October 1995): 88.

68. Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 11. Italics in the original.

69. Christian Metz, *Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, trans. Delie Britton and Annwyl Williams (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 42–57.

70. Massumi, "Autonomy of Affect," 91.

71. Eugenie Brinkema puts forward a similar combination of formal and affective reading in *The Forms of the Affects* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

72. Sobchack, *Address of the Eye*, 3.

73. Yi Yŏng-jun, "Yŏnghwa e issŏsŏ ŭi riarijŭm munje."

74. This notion of excess is different from the one criticized by Williams, who aims to avoid the traditional binary between a normative realism and the sentimental excesses of melodrama. Williams, "Mega-Melodrama!"

75. Plantinga, "Art Moods and Human Moods."

76. Berlant, "Female Complaint."

77. Han Hyŏng-wŏn, "Kŭngjŏng ŭi ppap'osŭ rŭl ongho hayŏ," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (December 1959): 38–39; Kim Mun-hwa, "Saenghwaljŏk sasil kwa yesuljŏk chinsil—yesul yŏnghwa 'Kijŏk i ullinda' taehayŏ," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (February 1960): 6–7.

78. Williams, "Melodrama Revised."

79. Workman, "Stepping into the Newsreel"; Fujitani, *Race for Empire;* Takashi Fujitani and Aimee Kwon, "Introduction," *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review* 2, no. 2 (May 2013): 1–9.

80. Workman, "Stepping into the Newsreel"; Fujitani, *Race for Empire;* Fujitani and Kwon, "Introduction"; Yi, *Cheguk ilbon ŭi Chosŏn yŏnghwa.*

81. Brian Yecies and Aegyung Shim, *The Changing Face of Korean Cinema: 1960–2015* (London: Routledge, 2016), 19–42.

82. Hughes, *Literature and Film.*

83. Kim Chul, "Minjok-mellodŭrama ŭi agyŏkdŭl: 'T'oji' ŭi Ilbon(in)," *Ilbon pip'yŏng* 3 (August 2010): 138–65; Kim Chul, "Mollak hanŭn sinsaeng: 'Manju' ŭi kkum kwa 'nonggun' ŭi odok," *Sanghŏ hakbo* 9 (2002): 123–59.

84. Jinsoo An, *Parameters of Disavowal: Colonial Representation in South Korean Cinema* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018).

85. Pheng Cheah, *Spectral Nationality: Passages of Freedom from Kant to Postcolonial Literatures of Liberation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 330–31.

86. Bhaskar Sarkar, *Mourning the Nation: Indian Cinema in the Wake of Partition.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009; Bhaskar Sarkar, "The Melodramas of Globalization," *Cultural Dynamics* 20, no. 1 (March 2008): 31–51.

87. Steven Chung, "Melodrama and the Scene of Development," in *Split Screen Korea: Shin Sang-ok and Postwar Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014): 129–58.

88. Bliss Cua Lim, *Translating Time: Cinema, the Fantastic, and Temporal Critique* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).

89. Only Hyangjin Lee has written about North Korean and South Korean cinema in equal measure in the same book. Hyangjin Lee, *Contemporary Korean Cinema: Identity, Culture, Politics* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2000). My study focuses less on national identity per se and more on how nationalist ideals are expressed through the melodramatic mode, but always with affects that are in excess of identity.

90. Hong Myŏng-hŭi, *Im Kkŏk-chŏng: pyŏkch'o Hong Myŏng-hŭi sosŏl* (Kyŏnggi-do P'aju-si: Sagyejŏl, 2008).

1. MOOD AND MONTAGE IN THE TOTAL WORK OF ART

1. Works that focus on the Soviet influence rather than the legacies of Japanese colonialism include Ham Ch'ung-bŏm and Chŏng T'ae-su, "Pukhan yŏnghwa hyŏngsŏng kwajŏng yŏn'gu: Soryŏn kwa ŭi kwan'gye rŭl chungsim ŭro," *Yurŏp sahoe munhwa* 29 (2018): 265–300.

2. Kim Nam-sŏk, "Kŭkdan ch'wisŏngjwa yŏn'gu: 1929-nyŏn yuwŏl kyŏngsŏng ipsŏng ihu rŭl chungsim ŭro," *Ŏmun nonjip* 53 (2006): 387–417.

3. Gilles Deleuze's critique of Hegel is pertinent in the case of North Korean film as well, because in independence films on both sides of the Cold War, liberation is not a negation, sublation, or supersession of colonial representations of Korean-Japanese imperial subjectivity but rather a repetition of narrative and formal conventions of Japanese imperial film. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 28–69.

4. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version," trans. Michael W. Jennings, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, vol. 3, *1935–1938*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 122.

5. Andrea Sloane, *A Not So Foreign Affair: Fascism, Sexuality, and the Cultural Rhetoric of American Democracy* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001); Lutz Koepnick, *The Dark Mirror: German Cinema between Hitler and Hollywood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

6. Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism*, trans. Charles Rougle (London: Verso, 2011).

7. The seed theory that appears in Kim Jong Il's *On the Art of the Cinema* (1973) can be understood as a version of the total work of art, because every aspect of the film—action, affect, character, narrative—is organically connected to the totality of the work since everything in it emerges from the same ideological seed. See also Kim Sŏn-a, "Yŏnghwa kukka mandŭlgi—'Yŏnghwa yesullon' rŭl chungsim ŭro han sahoejuŭi yŏnghwa mihak e taehan koch'al," *Yonghwa yŏn'gu* 48 (2011): 117–51.

8. Kim Il Sung, "On Eliminating Dogmatism and Formalism and Establishing Juche in Ideological Work," in *Kim Il Sung Works*, vol. 9, *July 1954–December 1955* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House [1980], 1995), 395–417. Brian Myers rightly questions the North Korean story of Kim Il Sung's generation of the idea of juche—or the subject of practice—by showing that it originated during the Japanese colonial period and that discussions of (national) subjectivity were also very common in state-socialist societies across Eastern Europe and Asia during the thaw, following the death of Stalin. Myers, "The Watershed That Wasn't: Re-evaluating Kim Il Sung's 'Juche Speech' of 1955," *Acta Koreana* 9, no. 1 (January 2006): 89–115. I fill out more of the details by way of film theory in the late 1940s, which is one bridge between the intellectual history of the Japanese empire and the formation of the North Korean state prior to Kim's speech. However, there is no space here for a full genealogy of the term *juche*. Such a genealogy would have to include the translation of the term *subject* into modern Japanese philosophy, which makes a distinction between the epistemological subject (Jp. *shukan*) and the practical subject (Jp. *shutai*, Kr. *chuch'e*). One would then have to track its colonial-period uses in both Marxism and pro-Japanese imperial philosophy in colonial Korea through the works of Sŏ In-sik, Pak Chi-u, and others. Memoirs and philosophical works by the former North Korean official Hwang Chang-yŏp would also be important because they show that the term *shutai/chuch'e* was commonly encountered by educated lay readers in philosophy and politics through sources as diverse as Kant's moral philosophy and Marx's ideas about subjective historical transformation. Hwang Chang-yŏp, *Na nŭn yŏksa chilli rŭl pwatta: Hwang Chang-yŏp hoegorok* (Seoul: Hanul, 1999).

9. Hwang, *Na nŭn yŏksa chilli rŭl pwatta*, 133–39; Hwang Chang-yŏp, *Kaein ŭi saengmyŏng poda kwijung han minjok ŭi saengmyŏng: Choguk p'yŏnghwa wa minjok ŭi t'ongil* (Seoul: Sidae chŏngsin, 1999).

10. Sobchack, *Address of the Eye*, 64. Italics in the original.

11. Cho Hye-jŏng, "Migun chŏnggi Chosŏn yŏnghwa tongmaeng yŏn'gu," *Yŏnghwa yŏn'gu* 13 (December 1997): 131.

12. Han'gukhak chungang yŏn'guwŏn, *Han'guk yŏktae inmul chonghap chŏngbo sisŭt'em*, "Yun Tu-hŏn," October 23, 2010, http://people.aks.ac.kr/front/dirSer/ppl/pplView .aks?pplId=PPL_7HIL_A1914_1_0025772&isEQ=true&kristalSearchArea=P.

13. Cho Hye-jŏng, "Migun chŏnggi Chosŏn yŏnghwa tongmaeng yŏn'gu," 131–32.

14. Ch'u Min, "Yŏnghwa chakka e taehan inyŏm: Yŏnghwa chakka chimangjadŭl wihayŏ," *Yŏnghwa yesul*, no. 2 (1949): 16.

15. David Imhoof, Margaret Eleanor Menninger, and Anthony J. Steinhoff. eds., *The Total Work of Art* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2016); David Roberts, *The Total Work of Art in European Modernism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011); Groys, *Total Art of Stalinism*.

16. Ch'u Min, "'Yŏnghwajŏk' t'amgu," *Yŏnghwa yesul*, no. 3 (1949): 19–22.

17. Imamura Taihei, *Eiga geijutsu no keishiki* (Tokyo: Yumani Shobo, [1938] 1991), 9–125.

18. Ch'oe Chae-sŏ, *Tenkanki no Chōsen bungaku* (Seoul: Jinbunsha, 1943).

19. Ch'u Min, "Yŏnghwa chakka e taehan inyŏm," 17; Christina Klein, *Cold War Cosmopolitanism: Period Style in 1950s Korean Cinema* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2020).

20. Jameson, *Singular Modernity*; Greg Barnhisel, *Cold War Modernists: Art, Literature, and American Cultural Diplomacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

21. Richard Calichman, ed. and trans., *Overcoming Modernity: Cultural Identity in Wartime Japan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

22. Yun Tu-hŏn, "Yŏnghwa yesul e taehan na ŭi chŏngŭi," *Yŏnghwa yesul* (North Korea) 2 (1949): 12–15.

23. Kim Il Sung, "On Eliminating Dogmatism."

24. Yun Tu-hŏn, "Yŏnghwa yesul e taehan na ŭi chŏngŭi," 13.

25. Yun, 13.

26. Yun, 13.

27. Calichman, *Overcoming Modernity*.

28. Sŏ Kwang-je, "Ch'oegŭn yŏnghwa kaegwan," *Yŏnghwa yesul*, no. 2 (1949): 21.

29. Sŏ, 21.

30. Bordwell, "Classical Hollywood Cinema," 19.

31. André Bazin, "The Myth of Stalin in the Soviet Cinema," in *Bazin at Work: Major Essays and Reviews from the Forties and Fifties*, trans. Alain Piette and Bert Cardullo (New York: Routledge, 2014), 23–40.

32. Stephanie Hemelryk Donald, *Public Secrets, Public Spaces: Cinema and Civility in China* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 59–67.

33. Imamura, *Eiga geijutsu no keishiki*, 406.

34. Donald, *Public Secrets, Public Spaces*.

35. Wada Haruki, *Kin Nichisei to kōnichi sensō* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1992).

36. Denise J. Youngblood, *Russian War Films: On the Cinema Front, 1914–2005* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 55–106.

37. Schmitt, *Theory of the Partisan*, 20.

38. Kim Sŏn-a, "Nae kohyang," *Korean Movie Database*, 2012, accessed 12 February 2015, http://www.kmdb.or.kr/db/kor/detail/movie/F/22249.

39. Mary Ann Doane, "The Close-up: Scale and Detail in the Cinema," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 14, no. 3 (2003): 107.

40. Doane, 91–92.

41. Doane, 92.

42. Dobrenko, *Political Economy of Socialist Realism*, 216–17.

43. Suzy Kim, *Everyday Life in the North Korean Revolution, 1945–1950* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), 174–203.

44. Jin-kyung Lee analyzes the problem of the ethnonationalist and masculinist allegorization of gendered violence in the case of South Korea in *Service Economies: Militarism, Sex Work, and Migrant Labor in South Korea* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

2. MELODRAMATIC MOODS FROM SOCIALIST REALISM TO JUCHE REALISM

1. Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 296–98.

2. Chollima refers to the mythical thousand-ri horse as a metaphor for increasing the speed of production through the formation of collective work-teams in factories and agriculture.

3. Kim Jong Il, *On the Art of the Cinema.*

4. Chŏng Yŏng-gwŏn, "'Chuch'e' ijŏn pukhan ŭi segyeyŏnghwasa insik—*Chosŏn yŏnghwa* yŏnjae (1965–66) rŭl chungsim ŭro," *Asia yŏnghwa yŏn'gu* 14, no. 2 (January 2021): 133–68.

5. Among the articles on world cinema, the largest number in *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* are on contemporary Soviet film and the history of North Korean–Soviet film culture exchanges. For a small sample, see Sŏ Man-p'ung, "Chosso ryangguk yŏnghwa kyoryu ŭi pinnanŭn 10-nyŏn," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (April 1959): 10–11, on ten years of cinematic exchange; Ryu Myŏng-chŏl, "'Chamae' e taehayŏ," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (August 1958): 37–40, on *The Sisters* (dir. Grigori Rashal, 1957); "Renin e taehan iyagi," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (November 1958): 14–15, on the film *Stories about Lenin* (dir. Sergei Yutkevich, 1957); "Ssobeťu yŏnghwagye ŭi ttwiyŏnan yŏnch'ulga Mihail Rom," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (May 1961): 41, on the director Mikhail Romm; a report on North Korean participation in the Moscow International Film Festival, "P'yŏnghwa wa ch'insŏn, yŏnghwa yesul ŭi indojuŭi rŭl wihan Mossŭk'ŭba kukche yŏnghwa ch'ukchŏn," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (September 1959): 8–9; and an introduction to the Soviet Latvian film *The Fisherman's Son* (dir. Varis Krūmiņš, 1957), "Kang han ŭji ŭi him—Ssoryŏn yesul yŏnghwa 'ŏbu ŭi adŭl' e taehayŏ," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (February 1958): 32–33. Introductions of contemporary Chinese film, film artists, and exchanges follow in number. See, for example, "Sae Chungguk yŏnghwadŭl," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (September 1959): 32, on new Chinese films such as *Daughter of the Party* (dir. Lin Nong, 1958) and *Youth in Our Village* (dir. Su Li, 1959); "Yŏnghwain sogae—Chungguk ŭi nyŏpaeu Paek Yang," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (February 1959): 37, an introduction to the Chinese actress Bai Yang; and "Rodong kyegŭp ŭi kyoyukhak ŭi pinnanŭn che iljang—Chungguk kwanjungdŭl i pon Chosŏn yesul yŏnghwa 'Pulgŭn kkot,'" *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (June 1964): 46–47, on the responses of Chinese

audiences to the North Korean film *Red Flower* (dir. Ri Chong-sun, 1963). The numerous articles on national icon Na Un-gyu include Kang Ho's "'Arirang' chŏn sigi ŭi Na Un-gyu wa kŭ ŭi tongnyodŭl," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (June 1963): 43–46, and "Na Un-gyu ŭi yŏnch'ul subŏp kwa kŭ ŭi t'ŭksŏng," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (August 1962): 60–65. The East German, Italian, and French coproduction *Les Misérables* (dir. Jean-Paul Le Chanois, 1958) is introduced under its Korean title *Jean Valjean*, in "Chyan Paljyan," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (February 1960): 24–25. An announcement, "Rumania yŏnghwa kamsanghoe," (September 1959): 5, advertises a Romanian film festival at the Tongdaewŏn Theater in Pyongyang celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of Romanian independence. Films screened included *The Ball* (dir. Andrei Blaier and Siniṣa Iveteci, 1958) and *The Devil's Ravine* (dir. Jean Mihail, 1957). Contemporary developments in Romanian film are also the topic of "Paljŏn hago innŭn Rumania yŏnghwa yesul," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (December 1959): 44.

6. Kim Chun introduces the French New Wave in "'Nubel Pag' (saeroun mulgyŏl) nŭn ŏdi ro hŭllŏ kanŭn'ga?," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (October 1964): 44–45. Ri So-hun provides a history of Italian film in "It'aeri yŏnghwagye ŭi ŏje wa onŭl," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (December 1964): 46–47. In his column "Introduction to the History of World Cinema," Kim Chong-ho provides histories of German cinema in "Togil yŏnghwa ŭi palsaeng," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (July 1965): 51; on British cinema and the Brighton School in "Yŏngguk yŏnghwa ŭi palsaeng kwa Pŭrait'onp'a," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (March 1965): 49–51; on capitalist films during WWI in "Che il ch'a segye taejŏn sigi ŭi chabonjuŭi yŏnghwa," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (August 1965): 50–52; and on Russian film from before the October Revolution in "10-wŏl hyŏngmyŏng chŏn ŭi Rossiya yŏnghwa," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (June 1965): 51–52. Considering the criticism of the formalism of early Soviet cinema under Soviet socialist realism after 1932, Kim's celebratory article on early Soviet classics such as *Mother* (dir. Vsevolod Pudovkin, 1926), *Earth* (dir. Alexander Dovzhenko, 1930), and *October* (dir. Sergei Eisenstein, 1927) is remarkable: "Ssobet'ŭ yesul yŏnghwa ŭi kaehwa," (March 1966): 42–44.

7. "Hong K'ong esŏ Chosŏn yŏnghwa sangyŏng," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (June 1958): 34.

8. Kyŏng Ryong-il, "Siljonjuŭi mihak ŭi pandongjŏk ponjil," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (August 1964): 41–42; Kyŏng Ryong-il, "Modŏnijŭm," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (December 1964); 44–45; Kyŏng Ryong-il, "Siryongjuŭi ŭi pandongsŏng," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (January 1965): 42–43; Kyŏng Ryong-il, "Saekchŏngjuŭi munhak kwa P'ŭroidŭjuŭi," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (February 1965): 48–49.

9. Pak Yŏng-hwan, "Haengdong ŭi ssiat—naejŏk kŭn'gŏ," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (April 1964): 11.

10. Kim Sŏn-a, "Yŏnghwa kukka mandŭlgi," 124.

11. Hwang, *Na nŭn yŏksa chilli rŭl pwatta*, 133–39; Hwang, *Kaein ŭi saengmyŏng poda kwijung han minjok ŭi saengmyŏng*.

12. Kim Il Sung, "On Eliminating Dogmatism and Formalism and Establishing Juche in Ideological Work," in *Kim Il Sung Works*, vol. 9, *July 1954-December 1955* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, [1980] 1995), 395–417. Immanuel Kim provides a history of the transition to Kim-il-Sung-ism in the introduction to *Rewriting Revolution: Women, Sexuality, and Memory in North Korean Fiction* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2018)

13. Kwŏn Tu-ŏn, "Yŏnghwa ch'angjo saŏp esŏ chuch'e rŭl chŏljŏhi hwangnip!" *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (February 1961): 2–5.

14. Kim Mun-hwa, "Saenghwaljŏk sasil kwa yesuljŏk chinsil," 7.

15. Kim Mun-hwa, "Saenghwaljŏk sasil kwa yesuljŏk chinsil."

16.   In connecting North Korean references to the film work as an organic body to Romanticism, I have in mind the discussion of the organic relation between artist and work in Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*, trans. Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester (Albany: State University of New York Press), 1988.

17.   Cho Chong-sik, "Ch'waryŏng ŭi punwigi myosa," 17.

18.   Chu Wi [Zhu Yu], "Yŏnghwa monttajyu ŭi myŏt kaji munje," trans. Yun Kyŏng-ju, *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (June 1960): 16–18.

19.   Jessica Ka Yee Chan, "Translating 'Montage': The Discreet Attraction of Soviet Montage for Chinese Revolutionary Cinema," *Journal of Chinese Cinema* 5, no. 3 (2011): 206.

20.   Groys, *Total Art of Stalinism*, 48–63.

21.   Kim Rak-sŏp, "Hwamyŏn ŭi panghyangsŏng," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (May 1966): 38–40.

22.   David Bordwell, "Classical Hollywood Cinema: Narrational Principles and Procedures," in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 17–34.

23.   Kang Nŭng-su, "Hyŏngsikchuŭi ch'angjak t'aedo rŭl paegyŏk handa," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (May 1962): 23.

24.   Maxim Gorky, "Soviet Literature," in *Soviet Writers' Congress, 1934: The Debate on Socialist Realism and Modernism* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1977), 25–69.

25.   Jason McGrath, "Cultural Revolution Model Opera Films and the Realist Tradition in Chinese Cinema," *The Opera Quarterly* 26, no. 2–3 (August 2010): 349.

26.   Kim Rak-sŏp, "Yŏnghwa esŏ ŭi rangmansŏng kuhyŏn e tae hayŏ," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (February 1962): 40.

27.   *Korean Film Art* (Pyongyang: Korean Film Export and Import Corporation, 1985).

28.   Song Ki-yŏng, "Saenghwal i tŭlkkŭnnŭn choguk ŭi pada rŭl hyŏngsanghwa haja!," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (July 1959): 6–7.

29.   Barthes, "Reality Effect"

30.   Jason McGrath uses the term "prescriptive realism" to describe this moving-ahead-of-reality as a principle of realism in socialist realism and its offshoots. McGrath, *Chinese Film: Realism and Convention from the Silent Era to the Digital Age* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2022), 159–98.

31.   Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, "Possible Mountains and Rivers: The Zen Realism of Kim Stanley Robinson's Three Californias," *Configurations* 20, no. 1–2 (Winter–Spring, 2012): 153.

32.   Yun Kyŏng-ju, "Yŏnghwa rŭl t'onghan taejung kyoyang esŏ talsŏng han sŏnggwa," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (September 1961): 13–15; Ri Si-yŏng, "Kyegŭp kyoyang kwa yŏnghwa esŏ ŭi taebijŏk kusŏng," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (November 1963): 20–24.

33.   Chŏn Sang-in, "On Film Montage," interview, *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (Sep 1962): 9.

34.   Dobrenko, *Political Economy of Socialist Realism*.

35.   Dobrenko, 1–74.

36.   Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1995), 7; qtd. in Dobrenko, *Political Economy*, 35.

37.   Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, trans. Charles Levin (St. Louis, MO: Telos Press, 1981).

38.   For a reading of this film in relation to the indeterminacy of everyday life and gendered work under developmental state socialism, see Cheehyung Harrison Kim, "Pukhan ŭi kukka sahoejuŭi, kŭrigo ilsang ŭi purhwak chŏngsŏng kwa kanŭngsŏng," *T'ongil Inmun Munhak* 49 (May 2010): 75–86.

39. Ham Ch'ung-bŏm and Yi Chun-yŏp, "Namhan kwa Pukhan esŏ chejak toen Yun Yonggyu kamdok yŏnghwa e taehan pigyo yŏn'gu: 'Maŭm ŭi kohyang (1949),' 'Sonyŏn Ppaljjisan' (1951) ŭl ch'ungsim ŭro," *Hanminjok munhwa yŏn'gu* 63 (September 2018): 7–40.

40. Klein, *Cold War Cosmopolitanism;* Abelmann and McHugh, *South Korean Golden Age Melodrama.*

41. Cheehyung Harrison Kim, "Pukhan ŭi kukka sahoejuŭi."

42. *Korean Film Art.*

43. Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 295–97.

44. Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labor* (London: Zed Books, 1999).

45. In *Everyday Life in the North Korean Revolution*, Suzy Kim shows that women's demands for education and work outside the home were met with state responses that granted these equal rights while also continuing to idealize women's roles as homemakers and mothers.

46. *Korean Film Art.*

47. Dima Mironenko discusses the importance of the circus for the development of North Korean cinema spectatorship, particularly comedy. Mironenko, "North Koreans at the Movies: Cinema of Fits and Starts and the Rise of Chameleon Spectatorship," *Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema* 8, no. 1 (2016): 25–44.

48. Kim Yŏng-gwŏn, "(6.25 Tŭkchip) 2. Paekho kerilla pudae hwaryaksang kwa Malk'om chŏn taeryŏng ŭi hoego," *Voice of America Korea*, 26 June 2015. http://www.voakorea.com /korea/korea-social-issues/2837026

49. James Chandler, *An Archaeology of Sympathy: The Sentimental Mode in Literature and Cinema* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

50. Hwang, *Kaein ŭi saengmyŏng poda kwijung han minjok ŭi saengmyŏng.*

51. For a comparative psychoanalytic account of the different modes of identification in hidden hero films compared to Chollima-era films on the economy, see Travis Workman, "The Partisan, the Worker, and the Hidden Hero: Popular Icons in North Korean Film," in *The Korean Popular Culture Reader*, ed. Kyung Hyun Kim and Youngmin Choe (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 145–67.

52. Elsaesser quoted in John Gibbs, *Life of the Mise-en-scène: Visual Style and British Film Criticism, 1946–1978* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2013), 202.

53. Suk-Young Kim, *Illusive Utopia: Theater, Film, and Everyday Performance in North Korea* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 202.

54. O Pyŏng-jo, "From the Creative Notes of *The Ch'oe Haksin Family*," *Chosŏn yesul* 3 (1967): 12. Cited and translated by Suk-Young Kim, *Illusive Utopia*, 202.

55. Cheah, *Spectral Nationality*, 330–31.

56. Kyung Hyun Kim, "The Fractured Cinema of North Korea: The Discourse of the Nation in *Sea of Blood*," in *In Pursuit in Contemporary East Asian Culture* (London: Routledge, 1996), 85–106; Kim Sŏng-jin, "Pukhan yesul ŭi sŏsa kujo ilgo: Yŏnghwa, hyŏngmyŏng kagŭk, sosŏl 'Kkot p'anŭn chŏnyŏ' rŭl chungsim ŭro," *Hyŏndae munhak iron yŏn'gu* 25 (2005): 135–59.

57. Kim Jong Il, *On the Art of the Cinema*, 122.

58. Just as Stalin became a hero of the October Revolution through film and fiction, Kim Il Sung became a successful guerrilla revolutionary in the same way. Denise J. Youngblood, *Russian War Films: On the Cinema Front, 1914–2005* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006), 82–106.

59. Schmitt, *Theory of the Partisan*, 13.

3. FANTASTIC FOLK: BEYOND REALISM

1. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 113.

2. Barthes, *Mythologies*, 115.

3. Barthes, *Mythologies*, 147.

4. Csicsery-Ronay, "Possible Mountains and Rivers," 153; Samuel R. Delany, *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw: Notes on the Language of Science Fiction* (Elizabethtown, NY: Dragon Press, 1977).

5. Tzetvan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975), 46.

6. Todorov, *Fantastic*, 54.

7. Todorov, *Fantastic*, 44.

8. Ralph Cohen, "History and Genre," *New Literary History* 17, no. 2 (Winter 1986): 203–18; Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (London: BFI, 1999).

9. Immanuel Kim, *Laughing North Koreans: The Culture of Comedy Films* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2020).

10. Suk-Young Kim, *Illusive Utopia*, 60–62.

11. In the interest of tracing some of the longer history of fantastic film in North Korea, this chapter moves beyond the bounds of the periodization of the rest of the book.

12. Kwŏn Sung-ŭng, "'Hŭngbujŏn' ŭi hyŏndaejŏk suyong," *P'ansori yŏn'gu* 29 (2010): 5–34.

13. Chŏng Ch'ung-gwŏn, "'Hŭngbujŏn' ŭi changmyŏn kuhyŏn yangsang kwa minjungjŏk sangsangnyŏk," *Ŏmunnonjip* 83 (2018): 26–57; Yu Yung-nye, "'Hŭngbujŏn' ŭi in'gan ŭi pyŏniyangsang," *Tongyang munhwa yŏn'gu* 25 (2016): 195–216; Yi Sang-il, "'Hŭngbujŏn' e nat'anan in'gan sooe ŭi tu yangsang: Hŭngbu wa Nolbu ŭi yongmang ŭl chungsim ŭro," *Kojŏn munhak kwa kyoyuk* 27 (2014): 235–60.

14. See, for example, the essays in Kim Sasser and Christopher Warnes, eds., *Magical Realism and Literature* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

15. The phrase "man is the master of everything" appears repeatedly in treatises on juche, including in Kim Jong Il, *On Carrying Forward the Juche Idea* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1995), 14.

16. Steven Chung discusses this deliberate effort, led by Kim Jong Il and beginning in the late 1970s, in the context of director Shin Sang-ok going to the North. *Split Screen Korea*, 178–80.

17. Chung, *Split Screen Korea*.

18. This analysis was suggested to me by Saena Ryu Dozier.

19. Hong, *Im Kkŏk-chŏng*.

20. Tom Gunning discusses the return of the cinema of attraction in 1980s Hollywood in "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," in *Early Cinema: Space-Frame-Narrative*, edited by Thomas Elsaesser and Adam Barker (London: BFI Publishing, 1990), 56–62.

21. Suk-Young Kim, *Illusive Utopia*, 61.

22. Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983).

23. Since the 1930s and Kim Taejun's nationalist scholarship, the novel has traditionally been attributed to the nobleman Hŏ Kyun, but Minsoo Kang argues convincingly that this attribution is based in nationalism and class prejudice and that writers did not claim

authorship of such mass market fiction at the time; therefore, we are unlikely to ever know who wrote the late eighteenth-century *hangŭl* version. Kang, *Invincible and Righteous Outlaw: The Korean Hero Hong Kildong in Literature, Culture, and History* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2019).

24. Chung, *Split Screen Korea.*

25. Donald, *Public Secrets, Public Spaces*, 59–67.

26. Philip Rosen, "History of Image, Image of History: Subject and Ontology in Bazin," in *Rites of Realism: Essays on Corporeal Cinema*, ed. Ivone Margulies, 42–79 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).

4. NATIONAL CINEMA AND THE MELANCHOLY OF LIBERATION

1. Bruce Cumings first argued for the importance of colonial-period social conflicts, including communism and anticommunism, for the Korean War in *Origins of the Korean War*, vol. 1 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981).

2. Sangjoon Lee connects post–Korean War, US-centered pan-Asian film alliances, such as the Federation of Motion Picture Producers of Southeast Asia, to Japan's earlier pan-Asian project of film production in the 1930s and 1940s. Both were concerned with film production as diplomacy and as an integral part of anticommunist nation-building. Lee, *Cinema and the Cultural Cold War: US Diplomacy and the Origins of the Asian Cinema Network* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020), 4. Considering these later developments, North Korean film theorists in the late 1940s were correct to see continuities between the Japanese empire's political employment of cinematic cosmopolitanism and the US occupation's and also to see in the latter the cultural dimension of a Marshall Plan in East Asia.

3. Kim Sŏk-dong, "Pukchosŏn ŭi insang," *Munhak* 8 (10 July 1948): 111–33, repr. in *Sinmun, chapchi, kwan'go ro ponŭn Nambukhan yŏnghwa, 1945–1953*, 632–51.

4. An Chŏr-yŏng, "Kŏn'guk kwajŏng e issŏsŏ ŭi yŏnghwa wa kŭkchang unyŏngnon," *Inmin yesul* (December 1945): 13–16, repr. in *Sinmun, chapchi, kwan'go ro ponŭn Nambukhan yŏnghwa, yŏn'gŭk pangsong, 1945–1953*, 693.

5. An Chŏr-yŏng, "Kŏn'guk kwajŏng," 695.

6. An Chŏr-yŏng, "Kŏn'guk kwajŏng," 693–94.

7. An Chŏr-yŏng, "Kŏn'guk kwajŏng," 695.

8. An Chŏr-yŏng, "Kŏn'guk kwajŏng," 695. I analyze the melodramatic dimension of late Japanese imperial films in "Stepping into the Newsreel." See also Takashi Fujitani's analysis of gender and war mobilization through cinema in *Race for Empire;* and Yi Yŏng-jae, *Cheguk ilbon ŭi Chosŏn yŏnghwa.*

9. Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 190–92.

10. Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun.*

11. Han Sang Kim, "Cold War and the Contested Identity Formation of Korean Filmmakers: On *Boxes of Death* and Kim Ki-yŏng's USIS Films," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 14, no. 4 (2013): 551–63.

12. Kim Chong-won and Chŏng Chung-hŏn, eds. *Uri yŏnghwa 100-yŏn* (Seoul: Hyŏnamsa, 2001), 223; Ho Hyŏn-ch'an, ed. *Han'guk yŏnghwa 100-yeon* (Seoul: Munhak sasangsa, 2000), 86.

13. Kim Su-nam, *Han'guk yŏnghwa kamdongnon 1: Haebangjŏn Han'guk yŏnghwa chakka 12-in.* (Seoul: Chisik sanŏpsa, 2002), 235–38.

14. JungBong Choi, "National Cinema: An Anachronistic Delirium?" *Journal of Korean Studies*, 16, no. 2 (Fall 2011): 173–91.

15. Choi, "National Cinema," 177.

16. Choi, "National Cinema," 181.

17. Gaines, "Even More Tears."

18. Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey, vol. 14 (London: Hogarth, 1953), 243–258.

19. Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 49.

20. An Sŏk-chu [An Sŏgyŏng], "Uri yŏnghwa ŭi chŏnmang," *Chogwang* (March 1946): 28–31, repr. in *Sinmun, chapchi, kwan'go ro ponŭn Nambukhan yŏnghwa, yŏn'gŭk pangsong, 1945–1953*, 699.

21. For example, see Yi Kwang-su, "What Is Literature?"

22. Yi Sŏ-hyang, "Yŏnghwa ŭi kimanjŏk kamsang," *Yŏnghwa yesul* (May 1948): 12, repr. in *Sinmun, chapchi, kwan'go ro ponŭn Nambukhan yŏnghwa, 1945–1953*, 677.

23. An Sŏk-chu, "Uri yŏnghwa ŭi chŏnmang."

24. Yi Chŏng-u, "Yŏnghwa yesul ŭi minjŏngsŏng," *Uri kongnon* (April 1947): 47, repr. in *Sinmun, chapchi, kwan'go ro ponŭn Nambukhan yŏnghwa, 1945–1953*, 691–93.

25. Yi Chŏng-u, "Yŏnghwa yesul ŭi minjŏngsŏng," 693.

26. Doane, "Close-up," 107.

27. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 87–90.

28. Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 103.

29. Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 100.

30. Kim Ryŏ-sil, "*Chayu manse* ŭi taljŏng chŏnhwa rŭl wihan siron: Hyŏnjŏn sinario wa yŏnghwa ŭi ch'ai rŭl chungsim ŭro," *Han'guk munye pip'yong yon'gu* 28 (2009): 281–83.

31. Kim Su-nam, *Han'guk yŏnghwa kamdongnon 1*, 234.

32. Kim Su-nam, *Han'guk yŏnghwa kamdongnon 1*, 234–35.

33. Kim Ryŏ-sil, "*Chayu manse*," 288–89.

34. Adam Hartzell, "1949–1959: Hurrah! For Freedom," *Darcy's Korean Film Page*, last updated November 15, 2014, http://koreanfilm.org/kfilm45–59.html.

35. Kim Ryŏ-sil, "*Chayu manse*," 292; Kim Sunam, *Han'guk*, 233.

36. Kim Ryŏ-sil, "*Chayu manse*," 290–91.

37. Bordwell, "Classical Hollywood Cinema," 18–19.

38. Yi, *Cheguk ilbon ŭi Chosŏn yŏnghwa*, 63–68.

39. Alexander Zahlten, *The End of Japanese Cinema: Industrial Genres, National Times, and Media Ecologies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).

40. Étienne Balibar discusses two primary aspects of the nation form: the object of future-oriented patriotism, the ideal nation, and fictional past origins, or fictive ethnicity. Balibar, "The Nation Form: History and Ideology," in *Race, Nation, Class*, ed. Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein (London: Verso, 1991), 86–106.

41. Kyung Hyun Kim, *Virtual Hallyu: Korean Cinema of the Global Era* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 65–67.

42. Belén Vidal, "Introduction: The Biopic and Its Critical Contexts," in *The Biopic in Contemporary Film Culture*, ed. Tom Brown and Belén Vidal (New York: Routledge, 2013), 3.

43. I have in mind David E. Nye's understanding of the term *technological sublime* in *American Technological Sublime* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), which he derived from Perry Miller, *The Life of the Mind in America: From the Revolution to the Civil War* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1965), 269–313.

44. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Vintage, 1973); Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *Writing and Difference* (London: Routledge, 2001), 351–70.

45. Juhn Ahn, "*A Hometown in the Heart* (1949): A Meditation on Freedom and Class," in *Rediscovering Korean Cinema*, ed. Sangjoon Lee (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2019), 99.

46. Linda Williams, "'Something Else Besides a Mother': *Stella Dallas* and the Maternal Melodrama," *Cinema Journal* 24, no. 1 (Fall 1984): 3.

47. Juhn Ahn argues that the film's Buddhist themes of training and detachment make the film an innovative precursor to later South Korean Buddhist films. Ahn, "*A Hometown in the Heart*," 122–23.

5. REALISM AND MELODRAMA IN THE GOLDEN AGE

1. Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," trans. Walter Jephcott et al., in *Walter Benjamin Selected Writings, 1938–1940*, vol. 4, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 389–400.

2. Yi Yŏng-jun, "Yŏnghwa e issŏsŏ ŭi riarijŭm munje," *Yŏnghwa sidae* 2, no. 5 (December 1947): 54–56, repr. in *Sinmun, chapchi, kwanʾgo ro ponŭn Nambukhan yŏnghwa, 1945–1953*, ed. Yi Myŏng-ja (Seoul: Minsogwŏn, 2014), 719–721.

3. Kim So-yŏn, "Chŏnhu Hanʾguk ŭi yŏnghwa tamnon esŏ 'riŏllijŭm' ŭi ŭimi e kwanhayŏ: 'Pʾiagol' ŭi metʾapipʾyŏng rŭl tʾonghan chŏpgŭn," in *Maehok kwa hondon ŭi sidae*, ed. Kim So-yŏn et al. (Seoul: Sodo, 2003), 24–25.

4. Kim So-yŏn, "Chŏnhu Hanʾguk," 58–59.

5. Yi Chŏng-gi, "Yŏnghwa wa hyŏnsil," *Yesul yŏnghwa* (May 1948): 9, repr. in Yi Myŏng-ja, ed., *Sinmun, chapchi, kwanʾgo ro ponŭn Nambukhan yŏnghwa, 1945–1953*, 675–76.

6. Brooks, *Melodramatic Imagination*, 2.

7. Yi Yŏng-jun, "Yŏnghwa e issŏsŏ ŭi riarijŭm munje," 720.

8. Yi Yŏng-jun, "Yŏnghwa e issŏsŏ ŭi riarijŭm munje," 721.

9. Yi Yŏng-jun, "Yŏnghwa e issŏsŏ ŭi riarijŭm munje," 721.

10. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari theorize Alois Riegl's idea of haptic space in *Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 492–97. Laura U. Marks and others have taken up haptic space in order to develop the concept of haptic visuality for the study of visual art and cinema. Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000).

11. Marks, *Skin of the Film*.

12. This typical idea of bourgeois realism based on narrative structures was put forward by Colin MacCabe in "Realism and the Cinema."

13. Charles R. Kim, *Youth for Nation: Culture and Protest in Cold War South Korea* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2017).

14. Yi Yŏng-il, "Munhak chŏngsin ŭi hwangnip: kwanje munin, munhwa tanch'e, mundanjŏk pyŏngni (ha)," *Kyŏnghyang* (16 May 1960), repr. in *Sinmun kisa ro pon Han'guk yŏnghwa, 1958–1961*, ed. Yi Kil-sŏng et al., 484.

15. Yi Yŏng-il, "C'hanggansa," *Yŏnghwa yesul* (South Korea) 1, no. 1 (1959): 33.

16. Yi Chŏng-gi, "Sin onyŏn ŭi konggwa, yŏnghwa: 'Ŏdŭn kŏt': 'sinesŭk'o ŭi tŭngjang / haeoe chinch'ul ŭi sŏgwang pich'igo," *Chosŏn ilbo*, 30 December 1961, repr. in *Sinmun kisa ro pon Han'guk yŏnghwa, 1958–1961*, 1053–54; Yi Yŏng-il, "Sin onyŏn ŭi konggwa, yŏnghwa: 'Irhŭn kŏt' yŏnghwa yulli wi ŭi haech'e, yesulsŏng ŭl irhŭn chejak kyŏnghyang," *Chosŏn ilbo*, 30 December 1961, repr. in *Sinmun kisa ro pon Han'guk yŏnghwa, 1958–1961*, 1054–55.

17. Yu Tu-yŏn, "Han'guk yŏnghwa nŭn ŏdi ro kal kŏsinga: sinbu ŭi hyŏksinjŏk yŏnghwa chŏngch'aek ŭl paramyŏnsŏ (sang)," *Kyonghyang* (9 September 1960), repr. in *Sinmun kisa ro pon Han'guk yŏnghwa, 1958–1961*, ed. Yi Kil-sŏng et al., 605.

18. Louis Bayman, "The Sorrow and the Piety: Melodrama Rethought in Postwar Italian Cinema," in *Melodrama Unbound: Across History, Media, and National Culture*, 276.

19. The essays in Kathleen McHugh and Nancy Abelmann, eds., *South Korean Golden Age Melodrama: Gender, Genre, and National Cinema* discuss how South Korean melodramas of the period constructed gender norms, confronted issues of social class, and referred to the nation-building project. Other films of the period that connect domestic space to establishment of gender and class boundaries include Han Hyung-mo's *Madame Freedom* (*Chayu puin*, 1956), Yi Pyŏng-il's *The Wedding Day* (*Sijip kanŭn nal*, 1956), and Kim Ki-young's *The Housemaid* (1960).

20. Marsha Kinder, *Blood Cinema: The Reconstruction of National Identity in Spain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Angelo Restivo, *The Cinema of Economic Miracles: Visuality and Modernization in the Italian Art Film* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).

21. The lack of a true moment of catharsis points to another history of theater and cinema, one existing in a temporality of eternal disappointment or lateness. Walter Benjamin draws a similar distinction between the German *Trauerspiel*, which is more akin to melodrama, and classical Greek tragedy in *Origin of the German Trauerspiel*, trans. Howard Eiland (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019).

22. Other films in this vein include Shin Sang-ok's *Dongsimcho* (1959) and *Mother and a Guest* (*Sarangbang ŭi sonnim kwa ŏmŏni*, 1961) and Pak Na-mok's *The Widow* (*Mimangin*, 1955).

23. Kelly Jeong, "The Quasi Patriarch: Kim Sŭng-ho and South Korean Postwar Movies," in *Korean Popular Culture Reader*, ed. Kyung Hyun Kim and Youngmin Choe (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 126–44.

24. "Uneven development" is Leon Trotsky's term referring to the coexistence of multiple modes of production and degrees of development that combine unevenly within national and world economies. Trotsky, *Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects* (Seattle: Red Letter Press, 2010), 163.

25. Ch'oe Il-su, interview with Yu Hyun-mok, *Yŏnghwa yesul* 1, no. 1 (1959): 58–59.

26. Hye Seung Chung and David Scott Diffrient discuss the importance of Japanese *shōmingeki* (common-people's drama) for the formation of *sŏmingŭk* in South Korea. Chung and Diffrient, *Movie Migrations: Transnational Genre Flow and South Korean Cinema* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2015), 75.

27. Maurizio Lazzarato, *Governing by Debt*, trans. Joshua David Jordan (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015).

28. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin, 1992), 162–244.

29. Jinsoo An, "'Ton,' rokŏllijŭm kwa 1950-nyŏndae ŭi nongch'on kyŏngje," in *Maehok kwa hondon ŭi sidae*, ed. Kim So-yŏn et al., 62–98.

30. Angus Fletcher discusses magical causality in his classic study of allegory, *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012).

31. Hyun Seon Park, "Volatile Biopolitics: Postwar Korean Cinema's Bodily Encounter with the Cold War," *The Review of Korean Studies* 18, no. 1 (June 2015): 103–26. Park also draws from Theodore Hughes's discussion of the Cold War body and biopolitics in *Literature and Film in Cold War South Korea.*

32. Park, "Volatile Biopolitics," 112.

33. Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (London: Zero Books, 2009).

34. Yi Sun-jin, "1950-nyŏndae kongsanjuŭi ŭi chaehyŏn kwa naengjŏn ŭisik," in *Maehok kwa hondon ŭi sidae*, ed. Kim So-yŏn et al., 129–71.

35. Schmitt, *Theory of the Partisan*, 13.

36. Kim Chong-wŏn, *Han'guk yŏnghwasa wa pip'yŏng ŭi chŏpchŏm: Yŏnghwa p'yŏngnon sasip ch'illyŏn ŭi hanghae* (Seoul: Hyŏndae mihaksa, 2007), 302.

6. MELODRAMA AND ART CINEMA

1. Yi Yŏng-il, "C'hanggansa," *Yŏnghwa yesul* (South Korea) 1, no. 1 (1959): 33.

2. Yi Yŏng-il, "C'hanggansa," 33.

3. Ch'oe Il-su, interview with Yu Hyun-mok, "Han'guk e nŭn ajik yŏnghwa yesul i ŏpsŏtta," *Yŏnghwa yesul* 1, no. 1 (1959): 58–59.

4. Charles R. Kim, *Youth for Nation: Culture and Protest in Cold War South Korea* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2017).

5. Chung-kang Kim, "*Mist* (1967): 'Art Cinema' under Dictatorship," in *Rediscovering Korean Cinema*, ed. Sangjoon Lee (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019), 173–86.

6. Kim, "*Mist* (1967)," 177.

7. Jameson, *Singular Modernity*, 169–77.

8. Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 4, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 86–89.

9. Greenberg derives his reading of modernism from a combination of Kant's aesthetic philosophy and his philosophy of reason, arguing for self-reflection on media and aesthetic form as its defining feature. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987); and Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996); Jameson, *Singular Modernity*, 139–210.

10. Although *self-consciousness* and *self-reflexivity* are sometimes synonymous, I am following David Bordwell's definition of self-consciousness: "The degree to which the narration acknowledges its address to the spectator." Bordwell, "Classical Hollywood Cinema," 18. See also Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 58–59. By *self-reflexivity*, on the other hand, I mean the degree to which the film expresses a critical understanding of the conventions of form and medium. Bordwell

states that in Soviet cinema and art cinema, "style becomes more prominent here because of its deviation from the classical norm," Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 242. While I avoid the language of norm and deviation, style does become more important relative to narrative in the modernist scenes of melodrama exhibiting self-consciousness and self-reflexivity.

11. Miriam Hansen introduced vernacular modernism in part to shift the view of modernism away from form and abstraction toward a focus on popular cinematic cultures. Hansen, "The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism," *Modernism/Modernity* 6, no. 2 (1999): 59–77.

By focusing on the melodramatic mode, I am assuming a similar concern with the vernacular, but would like to explore melodrama's avant-garde elements vis-à-vis its forms and media.

12. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 196.

13. Sobchack, *Address of the Eye*, 3.

14. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (London: Routledge, 2010), 103.

15. Massumi, "Autonomy of Affect."

16. Balibar, "Nation Form."

17. Cheah, *Spectral Nationality*, 331.

18. Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Era of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

19. Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987). Kim T'aegyun and Sin Jiho examine the modernist and French poetic realist aspects of Lee Man-hee's films, including speed, alienation, and existentialism, as well as his use of female protagonists in "Lee Man-hee yŏnghwa wa sijŏk sasiljuŭi: P'ŭrangsŭ sijŏk sasiljuŭi ŭi kwan'gye chungsim ŭro," *Han'guk tijit'ŏl yŏngsang hakhoe* (2012): 7–33.

20. Benjamin, "Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," 122.

21. Ch'oe Il-su, interview with Yu Hyun-mok.

22. Tetsuji remade the film twice, in 1981 and 1987, in more hard-core versions. Hong Chin-hyŏk offers a detailed comparison between *The Empty Dream* and *Daydream* in "Yu Hyun-mok 'Ch'unmong' ŭi sŏsahwabŏp [narration] kwa sŏngjŏksogu [sex appeal] p'yohyŏn sŭt'ail punsŏk," *Ssine p'orŏm-* 17 (December 2013): 157–85.

23. Zahlten, *End of Japanese Cinema*.

24. Linda Williams analyzes the connections between pornography and melodrama in *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

25. Hong Chin-hyŏk, "Yu Hyun-mok," 163. Hong bases his account on various newspaper articles gathered in Yi Kilsŏng et al., eds., *Sinmun kisa ro pon Han'guk yŏnghwa (1965–1966)* (Seoul: KOFA, 2007).

26. Maud Ellmann, *The Nets of Modernism: Henry James, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and Sigmund Freud* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Abigail Gillman, *Viennese Jewish Modernism: Freud, Hofmannstahl, Beer-Hofmann, and Schnitzler* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009).

27. Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1947), 65–66.

28. Kim Sŭng-ok, "Record of a Journey to Mujin," trans. Kevin O'Rourke, *Korean Journal* 17, no. 6 (1977): 13–27.

29. Kim, "*Mist*," 177.

30. Kim, "*Mist*," 173.

31. Kim Sŭng-ok, "Record of a Journey to Mujin," 21.

32. Alison Peirse and Daniel Martin, "Introduction," in *Korean Horror Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 1.

33. Williams, "Film Bodies."

34. One illuminating essay that provides a dynamic treatment of affect between melodrama and horror is Annette Brauerhoch, "Mixed Emotions: 'Mommie Dearest.' Between Melodrama and Horror," *Cinema Journal* 35, no. 1 (Autumn 1995): 53–64.

35. Chris Berry discusses *The Housemaid* in terms of the uncanny aesthetic and the crises of modernity in "Scream and Scream Again: Korean Modernity as a House of Horrors in the Films of Kim Ki-young," in *Seoul Searching: Culture and Identity in Contemporary Korean Cinema*, ed. Frances Gateward (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 99–113.

36. For a discussion of Kim Ki-young's hybridization of genres and its relation to the film's uncanny aesthetic, see Berry, "Scream and Scream Again."

37. Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny" (1919), in *The Standard of Edition of the Complete Psychology Words of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 17, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1953), 245.

38. Freud, "Uncanny," 245.

39. Laura Mulvey, "The Myth of Pandora: A Psychoanalytic Approach," *Feminisms in the Cinema*, ed. Laura Pietropaulo and Ada Testaferri (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

40. Mulvey, "Myth of Pandora," 18.

41. Balibar shows through a reading of J. G. Fichte that national subjects are formed through the transformation of external borders into internal ones. J. G. Fichte, *The Addresses to the German Nation*, ed. Gregory Moore (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Balibar, "Fichte and the Internal Border: On *Addresses to the German Nation*," *Masses, Classes, and Ideas: Studies on Politics and Philosophy Before and After Marx,* trans. James Swenson (London: Routledge, 1994), 61–85.

EPILOGUE

1. Groys, *Total Art of Stalinism.*

2. Yi Yŏng-il, "C'hanggansa," 33.

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Melodrama films dominated the North and South Korean industries in the period between liberation from Japanese colonial rule in 1945 and the hardening of dictatorship in the 1970s. The films of each industry are often read as direct reflections of Cold War and Korean War political ideologies and national historical experiences, and therefore as aesthetically and politically opposed. However, *Political Moods* develops a comparative analysis across the Cold War divide, analyzing how films in both North and South Korea convey political and moral ideas through the sentimentality of the melodramatic mode. Travis Workman reveals that the melancholic moods of film melodrama express the somatic and social conflicts between political ideologies and excesses of affect, meaning, and historical references. These moods dramatize the tension between the language of Cold War politics and the negative affects that connect cinema to what it cannot fully represent. The result is a new way of historicizing the cinema of the two Koreas in relation to colonialism, postcolonialism, war, and nation building.

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TRAVIS WORKMAN is Associate Professor of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.

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