

Introduction

Rediscovering Korean Cinema

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The idea for *Rediscovering Korean Cinema* struck me unexpectedly during the BIFF Film Conference and Forum held at the Twentieth Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) in October 2015. I was a respondent to the panel “Re-evaluating Korean Film Authors.” Four well-established panelists, Seung-hoon Jeong, Hyangjin Lee, Nam Lee, and Mi-Jeong Lee, discussed such distinguished authors as Bong Joon-ho (Pong Chun-ho), Hong Sang-soo (Hong Sang-su), and Kim Ki-duk (Kim Ki-dök). After their thought-provoking talks, during the question and answer session, two audience members raised questions about the availability of an appropriate textbook for teaching Korean cinema in their home countries. One of them strongly requested that we write an accessible and readable book that would cover canonical film texts for students and general readers alike. After the panel, we discussed the request. All of us took this matter seriously and indeed had already acknowledged the absence of such a textbook. Despite the quantum leap in Korean film scholarship in recent years, there is still a shortage of essays on individual films and directors. Yi Man-hŭi (Lee Man-hee), Han Hyöng-mo (Han Hyung-mo), Kim Su-yong (Kim Soo-yong), Ha Kil-chong (Ha Gil-jong), Yi Chang-ho (Lee Jang-ho), Yi Tu-yong (Lee Doo-yong), Chöng Chi-yöng (Chung Ji-young), and Pae Ch’ang-ho (Bae Chang-ho) are among the many Korean directors whose cinematic treasures have not been written about in the English language. Even worse, no systematically structured book-length textbook offering a comprehensive history of Korean cinema had been published when the idea for this book was proposed. I began this project to fill this gap in the field. Three panelists—Seung-hoon Jeong, Hyangjin Lee, and Nam Lee—

instantly accepted my invitation to participate. To my surprise, it was not difficult to find over thirty contributors who are known as specialists on particular authors, genres, movements, and historical periods. A volume of this size would not have been possible ten years ago. Indeed, the field of Korean cinema studies has already passed the stage of its infancy.

South Korean cinema provides one of the most striking case studies of non-Western cinematic success in the age of the neoliberal world order, in which Hollywood dominates the global movie consumer's heart, mind, and soul. Against the onslaught of US products in the world's media marketplace, South Korean cinema has successfully defended itself. In 2001, South Korea became the first film industry in recent history to reclaim its domestic market from Hollywood. In 2006, local films had a 67 percent market share—the highest such figure in the world except for the US and India—and they have continued to maintain a market share of around 50 percent in the 2010s (50.9 percent in 2018, Korean Film Council 2018). Admissions per capita in 2018 also reached 4.18, up from 1.1 in 1998 and 2.92 in 2010. The number of screens in South Korea has soared, from 511 in 1997 to 2,937 in 2018 (Korean Film Council 2018). Adding to this success, the high-quality South Korean local product has flowed outward to global film markets to connect with international audiences in commercial cinemas, in art theaters, and at major international film festivals. Bong-Joon-ho's *Parasite* (*Kisaengch'ung*, 2019) and Park Chan-wook (Pak Ch'an-uk)'s *Oldboy* (*Oltūboi*, 2003) received the Palme d'Or and the Grand Prix, respectively, at the Cannes International Film Festival. Hong Sang-soo had great success in Cannes, Berlin, and Locarno with *Hahaha* (2010), *Right Now, Wrong Then* (*Chigūm ūn matko kūttae nūn t'ūllida*, 2015), and *On the Beach at Night Alone* (*Pamūi haebyōnesō honja*, 2017). Other breakthrough auteurs, art-house and genre-bending specialists alike, followed: Lee Chang-dong (Yi Ch'ang-dong), Im Sang-soo (Im Sang-su), Kim Jee-woon (Kim Chi-un), Ryoo Seung-wan (Ryu Sūng-wan), Kim Ki-duk, and Kim Tong-wŏn (Kim Dong-won). In 2015, the New York-based film magazine *Film Comment* released its second special issue on South Korean cinema, following the first in 2004.¹ Goran Topalovic (2015), a general editor, wrote in his brief but powerful introductory essay: "Since then [2004], the perpetual renaissance not only continued, but reached new levels of growth and success, breaking domestic box office records, and gaining ever wider international acclaims and recognition for Korean films—both mainstream and independent—and the people who make them" (34). In English-language academic circles, likewise, interest in South Korean cin-

ema as a serious scholarly subject has been growing exponentially. The evolution of South Korean cinema scholarship has been noteworthy.

In this introduction, I will discuss three phases of scholarly interest in Korean cinema in English-language academia that have shaped the history of the field. The first coincides with a new cinema known as the “Korean New Wave” (*K’orian nyuweibü*) that emerged similarly to what Western critics, journalists, and scholars have labeled the “Hong Kong New Wave” of the late 1970s and the “New Taiwan Cinema” of the mid-1980s. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, a group of films that included Pak Chong-wön’s *Guro Arirang* (*Kuro Arirang*, 1989), Park Kwang-su (Pak Kwang-su)’s *Chilsu and Mansu* (*Ch’ilsu wa Mansu*, 1988), Sin Sŭng-su’s *Rooster* (*Sut’ak*, 1990), Chŏng Chi-yŏng’s *Nambugun* (1990), and Jang Sun-woo (Chang Sŏn-u)’s *Love in Umukpaemi* (*Umukpaemiüi sarang*, 1990; aka *A Short Love Affair*) was introduced at various international film festivals.² Witnessing what was likely the last “New Wave” of East Asian cinema, Isolde Standish published two articles about it in 1992 and 1993. The first, for *Korea Journal* (“United in Han,” 1992), used the concept of “Han” to discuss two Korean New Wave films—*Nambugun* and Chang Kil-su (Chang Gil-soo)’s *Silver Stallion* (*Ŭnmanün oji annŭnda*, 1991). The second article, “Korean Cinema and the New Realism: Text and Context,” appeared shortly thereafter in the *East-West Film Journal*, published by the East-West Center (EWC) at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa.³ In it, Standish (1993) argued that some of South Korea’s most prominent contemporary filmmakers had come from the “Korean New Wave,” as she called it, which had “come about as a ‘revolt’ against traditional conventions imposed by a stringent system of political censorship” (68). She considered the Korean New Wave to be characterized by new characters (the working classes, radical students), new settings (the factory, slums), and new problems (the north/south division, urbanization, industrial unrest, family breakdown) (69).

Standish did not coin the term “Korean New Wave,” but she was one of the first academics in the West to use it. In September 1996, the first Pusan International Film Festival (PIFF; now BIFF) took place in a South Korean port city. The first Korean cinema retrospective during the inaugural BIFF was *The Korean New Wave: Retrospectives from 1980 to 1995* (*80–90 nyŏndae K’orian nyuweibü*). It was organized by Yi Hyo-in, Yi Chŏng-ha, and Kyung Hyun Kim. The publication of the retrospective catalog played a critical role in turning the term “Korean New Wave” into a systematic and historical category. The catalog provides an exact timeline for the

phenomenon—from 1980 to 1995—and identifies Yi Chang-ho’s *A Fine, Windy Day* (aka *Good Windy Day*; *Param purō choŭn nal*, 1980) as the beginning point of the wave (Pusan International Film Festival, 1996). Likewise, the Korean film scholar Moon Je-cheol (2008) argues that “the strategy of the New Wave for implementing change was to combine auteurism with realism, thus creating a new approach to the film they called auteur-realism. While the Western concept of auteurism emphasized film as art, auteur-realism in Korea operated as a practical strategy for challenging every facet of the Korean film institution” (39). The Korean New Wave provided a crucial turning point for Korean cinema in the global film culture and industry.

In fact, before the “wave,” Korean cinema’s place in the world had long been at the margins. No major academic study of Korean cinema in the English language was to be found before the 1980s. Korean cinema as a whole had been so consistently marginalized and ghettoized that even its adjacent regional peers overlooked films produced in Korea. The Japanese film critic Sato Tadao (1989) reminisced about the moment when he first encountered Im Kwon-taek (Im Kwŏn-taek)’s *Mandala* (*Mandara*, 1981): “It made me realize for the first time that I had to pay keen attention to the artistry of Korean motion pictures” (24). Thomas Doherty (1984), along these lines, proclaimed that “no Korean film has yet established for itself an international reputation, and it is rare for a South Korean film to be screened at even the most esoteric film programs at universities or museums” (850).⁴ Similarly, Geoffrey Gilmore (1989), before his tenure at Sundance, wrote that no South Korean director had ever been the focus of attention on the international art cinema circuit (22). Markus Nornes (2015) recalled that in the late 1980s, when he first encountered South Korean cinema during his graduate studies in Los Angeles, “the only book on Korean cinema was Lee Young-il [Yi Yŏng-il] and Choe Young-chol [Chŏe Yŏng-chŏl]’s overtly nationalist *The History of Korean Cinema* (1988). It left me thinking Korean cinema must be far more interesting than their book suggests. The only way to test this suspicion was to watch films, but this was not a straightforward matter. . . . thankfully, USC bordered Koreatown, and I borrowed snowy VHS dubs from nearby grocery stores” (245–46).

In 1989, just one year after Lee and Choe’s book came out, the relatively unknown newcomer Pae Yong-gyun (Bae Yong-kyun) grabbed the Pardo d’Oro (Golden Leopard) trophy at the Locarno International Film Festival with his *Why Has Bodhi-Dharma Left for the East?* (*Talma ka tongtchokŭro kan kkadalgŭn?* 1989; hereafter, *Bodhi-Dharma*). Before *Bodhi-Dharma*,

Mandala (1981) and Yi Tu-yong's *Mulleya Mulleya* (*Yöin chanhoksa mulle ya mulle ya*, 1984) had been invited to the Berlin Film Festival and the Cannes Festival in 1982 and 1984, respectively. But it was *Bodhi-Dharma* that made the greatest impact. *Bodhi-Dharma* was one of the most talked-about films on the international film festival circuit in 1989. Although somewhat overshadowed by the unexpected triumph of *Bodhi-Dharma*, *Chilsu and Mansu* was named the winner of the Young Critics Award at the same festival.⁵ Just a month earlier, in July, the Korean actress Kang Su-yön (Kang Soo-yeon) had received the Best Actress award at the Moscow International Film Festival with Im Kwon-taek's *Come Come Come Upward* (*Aje aje para aje*, 1988). This was Kang's second Best Actress award at a European film festival, after Venice in 1987 with Im's *The Surrogate Woman* (*Ssibaji*, 1987). All of a sudden, South Korea began receiving attention from curious film festival programmers, critics, and scholars outside the Peninsula.

When Paë's, Park's, and Im's films were first introduced to the European film festivals, East Asian cinema was undergoing a momentous transition. Evoking the 1985 Asian Cinema symposium, organized by Wimal Disanayake in conjunction with the Hawaii International Film Festival, William Rothman (1993) wrote: "other than martial arts films, few of us had seen a single film from Hong Kong, Taiwan, or mainland China. And the cinema of Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Southeast Asia was completely unknown to us" (255). The now prospering field of Sinophone cinema studies was not considered important by many Chinese studies specialists in English-language academia before the 1990s.⁶ Chris Berry (1991) wrote: "Few people outside China had seen many Chinese films, and even fewer claimed to understand or like them. . . . Within months all that changed when *Yellow Earth* (*Huáng tǔdì*, 1984) appeared at the Hong Kong Film Festival" (1). According to Tony Rayns, the packed screening of *Yellow Earth* was received "with something like collective rapture" (cited in Bingham 2012, 66). Within a few years, major international film festival programmers were competing to discover new East Asian film auteurs, particularly emerging talent from China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Korea. Zhang Yimou won the Silver Bear at the Berlin Film Festival with his feature debut *Red Sorghum* (*Hóng gāoliáng*) in 1987. Hou Hsiao-hsien became a fixture on the international film festival circuit after his award at Venice in 1989 with *City of Sadness* (*Bēiqíng chéngshì*). Edward Yang, Hou's peer, picked up a Silver Leopard at Locarno for *The Terrorizer* (*Kǒngbù fēnzǐ*) in 1987. Together with Chen Kunhou, Tsai Ming-liang, Hou and Yang became known as leading figures of the Taiwan New Cinema (aka New Taiwanese Cinema). In 1991, one of the early scholarly works on Chinese cinema, *Perspectives on Chinese*

Cinema, edited by Chris Berry, was published, and the field of Asian cinema studies in North America emerged around this time.

Not long afterward, some fast movers embarked on the new frontier of South Korean cinema. An Im Kwon-taek retrospective at the Festival of the Three Continents in Nante, France, in 1989 was the first. Then, in 1992, the Pesaro International Film Festival in Italy organized a retrospective of South Korean cinema. The late Kim Chi-sök (Kim Ji-seok), Yi Yong-gwan (Lee Yong-kwan), and Jay Jeon (Chõn Yang-jun) were invited to the screenings. This was the first time the three cofounders of BIFF discussed the possibility of initiating South Korea's own international event (Cazzaro and Paquet 2005). In 1993, the Centre Pompidou in Paris and the New York Museum of Modern Art mounted major retrospectives of South Korean cinema. Tony Rayns was among the first Western film critics to notice South Korean cinema. He curated *Seoul Stirring: 5 Korean Directors* and introduced Im Kwon-taek, Jang Sun-woo, Park Kwang-su, Kim Ŭi-sök, and Lee Myung-se (Yi Myõng-se) to UK cinephiles in 1994.⁷ Suddenly, South Korean cinema became "East Asia's best-kept secret" (Elley 1995, 82). After Jang Sun-woo won the Alfred Bauer Prize with the Buddhist-themed film *Hwaomkyung* (*Hwaõmgjøng*, 1993) at the Forty-fourth Berlin Film Festival in 1994, the British Film Institute (BFI) commissioned Jang to direct a South Korean entry for the BFI's "Century of Cinema" series of personal film essays to celebrate the centennial. *The Cinema on the Road* (*Han'guk yõnghwa ssitkim*, 1995), with Tony Rayns's voiceover narration, had its world premiere at the Forty-eighth Cannes Film Festival in 1995. Jang, much more prolific at the time, completed his critically acclaimed film *A Petal* (*Kkonnip*, 1996) one year later, and it was screened at the Rotterdam Film Festival. Park Kwang-su also enjoyed the peak moment of his filmmaking career in the 1990s. Two festival favorites, *To the Starry Island* (*Kũ sõm e kago sipta*, 1993) and *A Single Spark* (*Arũmdaun chõngnyõn Chõn T'ae-il*, 1995), received enthusiastic responses at the Three Continents Festival in Nantes and the Berlinale, respectively. For the first time in the history of Korean cinema, Jang and Park gained critical attention as modern film auteurs on the international film festival circuit. Before the emergence of Korean film scholarship, the above-mentioned screening series, film festival retrospective booklets, and conference proceedings served as valuable sources for non-Korean-speaking scholars outside the Peninsula.

On the other side of the Pacific, twelve of the South Korean master Im Kwon-taek's films were screened at the University of Southern California (USC) in November 1996, presented by the School of Cinema-Television and the Korean Studies Institute at USC, the Korea Foundation, and the

Korean Cultural Center in Los Angeles (“USC Fetes” 1996, 30). This retrospective and an accompanying conference, both organized by Kyung Hyun Kim (then a doctoral student at USC) and David E. James, were a critical breakthrough for the US reception of South Korean cinema.⁸ As James (2002) recalled, the festival “culminated with Im’s visit to Los Angeles and to the university, where he was presented with a lifetime achievement award by Arthur Hiller who was at the time president of the Academy of Motion Pictures” (9). Two years later, in 1998, Chungmoo Choi organized “Post-Colonial Classics of Korean Cinema,” a film screening series of twenty films spanning the 1950s to the mid-1990s at the University of California, Irvine. Lee Chang-dong’s *Green Fish* (*Ch’orok mulgogi*, 1997) was the opening film. Such classics as *A Public Prosecutor and a Teacher* (*kömsa wa yö sönsaeng*, Yun Tae-ryong, 1948), *Madame Freedom* (*Chayu puin*, 1956), *Aimless Bullet* (*Obalt’an*, 1961), *The Housemaid* (*Hanyö*, 1960), and *Chilsu and Mansu* were shown to Irvine’s academic communities and a general audience, followed by an academic workshop with Chungmoo Choi, Soyoung Kim, and Chris Berry (Herman 1998).

The second phase began with the emergence of the first generation of Korean cinema researchers. Scholars such as Soyoung Kim [Kim So-Young] (1998a, 1998b, 2000 with Chris Berry), David E. James (2001), Rob Wilson (2001), Kathleen McHugh (2001), Paul Willemen (2002), Seung Hyun Park (2002), Charles K. Armstrong (2002), and Kyung Hyun Kim (2001, 2002) inaugurated the field of Korean cinema studies.⁹ It should be noted that the new scholarship on Korean cinema in English-language academia also benefited from the blossoming of Korean cinema studies in South Korea. The Korean Film Archive (KOFA) and BIFF played important roles in the field’s formative years by screening Korea’s classic films at KOFA cinemas on a regular basis and organizing a series of Korean cinema retrospectives at BIFF. Together with a new stream of young and emerging researchers from the nation’s prestigious film studies and Korean literature programs, the Korean Cinema Institute at KOFA and BIFF competitively published monographs and edited volumes and organized academic workshops and symposiums that helped to ignite the field of Korean cinema studies in Korea and beyond.¹⁰

Two pioneering monographs and one edited volume—dedicated to Im Kwon-taek—followed in the UK and the US: Hyangjin Lee’s *Contemporary Korean Cinema: Culture, Identity, and Politics* (2000), Kyung Hyun Kim’s *The Remasculinization of Korean Cinema* (2004), and David E. James and Kyung Hyun Kim’s *Im Kwon-Taek: The Making of a Korean National Cinema* (2002). Lee’s *Contemporary Korean Cinema*, the first

book-length study in English, is a comparative study of films from North and South Korea. Drawing on the work of Louis Althusser, Antonio Gramsci, and Michel Foucault, Lee takes a “hermeneutic” approach to the history of Korean cinema, both South and North, using a political development model that considers “governmental intervention and resistance to such interference” (16). Lee’s chapter on the history of Korean cinema—both South and North—has been used in many university classes. James and Kim’s edited volume on Im Kwon-taek is based on the 1996 USC conference. The two editors contributed three chapters; in addition, Chungmoo Choi, Julian Stringer, Eunsun Cho, Han Ju Kwak, and two respected scholars from South Korea, Yi Hyo-in and Cho Hae Joang, examined the ideas behind Im’s films and shed light on his unique position in South Korean cinema. This volume also includes an interview with the director himself. Two years later, Kyung Hyun Kim published *The Remasculinization of Korean Cinema*. In this monograph, Kim uses the term “New Korean Cinema”—instead of the “Korean New Wave”—to refer to South Korean cinema comprehensively from the 1980s, under the Chun Doo-hwan (Chŏn Tu-hwan, 1980–88) military regime, to the period of the Asian financial crisis (known as the “IMF crisis” in South Korea) in the late 1990s. New Korean Cinema, in Kim’s argument, refers to the cinema of the 1980s, namely, the cinema of the oppressed *minjung*, which is marked by social, economic, and political emasculation. Kim characterizes the cinema of the 1980s as a crisis of masculinity from a psychoanalytic perspective.

The early 2000s was a landmark period for South Korean cinema.¹¹ Im Kwon-taek won the Cannes Festival’s Best Director award with his *Chihwaseon* (aka *Painted Fire*, *Ch’wihwasŏn*) in 2002. Park Chan-wook grabbed the Grand Prix trophy at the same festival in 2004 with his cult classic *Oldboy*. Kim Ki-duk, Hong Sang-soo, Lee Chang-dong, and Im Sang-soo followed. The culmination was the massive South Korean film retrospective titled “60 Years of South Korean Cinema” that was held at the Walter Reade Theater at Lincoln Center in New York in November–December 2004. With Im’s *Low Life* (*Haryu insaeng*, 2004) as the opening film, thirty-one South Korean films were screened during the three-week schedule, including *A Coachman* (*Mabu*, Kang Tae-chin, 1960), *Bodhi-Dharma*, *Chilsu and Mansu*, *Peppermint Candy* (*Pakha sat’ang*, Lee Chang-dong, 1999), and *Aimless Bullet*.

Riding the waves of the interest in South Korean cinema in the first half of the 2000s, what Chris Berry aptly called “full service cinema,”¹² three critical edited volumes in the field were published between 2005 and

2007. They were Chi-Yun Shin and Julian Stringer's *New Korean Cinema* (2005), Kathleen McHugh and the late Nancy Abelmann's *South Korean Golden Age Melodrama: Gender, Genre, and National Cinema* (2005), and Frances Gateward's *Seoul Searching: Culture and Identity in Contemporary Korean Cinema* (2007). *New Korean Cinema* was one of the first of its kind and is probably one of the most widely read and cited books on the subject. This volume appeared at the moment when academic interest in South Korean cinema was skyrocketing. Strategically relying on Michael Robinson's insightful account of Korea's twentieth-century history, *New Korean Cinema* discusses the industry, fan culture, cinephilia, genre, and post-national/transnational identity of contemporary South Korean cinema. The second volume, *South Korean Golden Age Melodrama*, brought the "Golden Age" of South Korean films into the arena of English-language scholarship, reflecting the surge of academic output on the subject in South Korea in the early 2000s. In this ambitious anthology, McHugh and Abelmann periodize the Golden Age from 1955 to 1972. They claim that during the period, "a number of South Korean directors produced a body of work as historically, aesthetically, and politically significant as that of other well-known national film movements such as Italian Neorealism, French New Wave, and New German Cinema" (2–3). Probably the most crucial contribution that *South Korean Golden Age Melodrama* made to the field is its novel approach of highlighting the transnational connections between South Korean and other cultures and cinemas, including Hollywood, Mexican, and Japanese cinema. Last, *Seoul Searching* explores dynamically changing cultural and societal aspects of South Korea through essays about contemporary South Korean films. *Seoul Searching* follows the same path as *New Korean Cinema*. The two volumes share many contributors, scopes, and critical perspectives that cover most of the social, historical, and cultural issues central to contemporary South Korean studies. With Lee's and Kim's monographs and four edited volumes published in the UK and the US between 2000 and 2007, along with a special issue of *Reading Contemporary Korean Cinema and Television for Post Script* (2008), edited by Robert L. Cagle, the field of South Korean cinema studies was finally established. Since then, South Korean cinema studies has flourished in monographs, edited volumes, and academic journal articles.

The third and current phase opened with two notable changes. The first is the rise of scholars of South Korean cinema outside the discipline of cinema studies. Second, a wave of South Korea-born graduate students has entered US/UK academic institutions. These two changes are related. Due to increasing numbers of scholars in area studies in US academia,

non-Western film scholars, including Koreans, do not necessarily belong to the discipline of cinema studies. Area studies' cultural turn and comparative literature's disciplinary redirection toward more lucrative film and media studies since the 1970s have transformed the field of national cinema studies. Area studies programs in the West, such as East Asian ones, did not pay full attention to the cinema until the 1990s. They became fully supplied with cinema specialists, however, as the new millennium began. Compared to the intercultural discipline of cinema studies, which "could never have respected the university's linguistic divisions" (Yoshimoto 2002, 383), area studies gives more weight to language competency, cultural background, and at least a few years of field research, along with a certain knowledge of literary and critical theories. Accordingly, a new group of South Korean film scholars appeared from Korean studies, comparative literature, communication studies, visual studies, and cultural anthropology. The field has rapidly expanded, and such diverse subjects as Korea's colonial-era cinema, the Cold War, North Korean cinema, gender and sexuality, international film festivals, the film industry, globalization and transnationalism, multiculturalism, LGBTQ cinema, tourism, and auteur studies have been rigorously studied.¹³ Steven Chung and Moonim Baek (2015), accordingly, begin their introduction to a special issue of the *Review of Korean Studies* with this observation:

As recently as the early 2000s it was possible both to compile a comparatively short bibliography of publications on Korean cinema and to chart the central theoretical trajectories of research and writing on it. . . . Even a casual search now will net dozens of monographs, collections, and special issues as well as hundreds of articles touching on myriad aspects of Korean cinema through a variety of methodological approaches that have grown out of the dispersed geographic and institutional forum in which Korean cinema studies has taken root. (7)

In 2010, New York University hosted a three-day international conference titled "Korean Cine-Media and the Transnational," which Jung-Bong Choi and I organized, and selected papers were published in two journal special issues (J.-B. Choi 2011, 2012). Moreover, an annual international academic event dedicated to Korea's film, media, and popular culture, the Korean Screen Culture Conference, was started in 2012 at SOAS University of London (Jackson 2016). The *Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema* was founded in 2009, edited by David Desser and Frances Gateward. At

the time of the writing of this introduction, Jinhee Choi and Michael Raine had just taken over as editors from Hye Seung Chung and David Scott Diffrient. Despite all this activity, however, the study of Korean cinema has not yet fully matured compared to Chinese, Indian, and Latin American cinema scholarship, which has experienced a meteoric rise in recent years. Korean cinema boasts impressive achievements in the global film market, but its rich cinematic heritage has not yet been appropriately treated. It is still challenging to find scholarly articles on pre-1990s Korean films. Most importantly, there has been to date no single volume on the subject that offers a wide-ranging set of films, directors, and critical perspectives suitable for undergraduate-level readers and informed viewers of Asian cinema.

Rediscovering Korean Cinema

Rediscovering Korean Cinema grew out of a longstanding need to provide accessible and comprehensive texts for classroom use. Darcy Paquet (2010) and Jinhee Choi (2010) have written excellent studies of contemporary Korean cinema that provide useful introductions to the subject. But Korean cinema before the contemporary era is still undeveloped territory. What is more, current scholarship on Korean cinema, even writings on contemporary cinema, has tended to focus on a small number of canonical texts and film festival favorites. A substantial number of outstanding films in the history of Korean cinema have not yet benefited from insightful academic examination. This project was undertaken to fill this gap. The current volume, however, is more ambitious than its original agenda. *Rediscovering Korean Cinema* examines the state, stakes, and future direction of Korean cinema studies. The role models for *Rediscovering Korean Cinema* are *Chinese Films in Focus* (Berry 2003) and *Japanese Cinema: Texts and Contexts* (Stringer and Philips 2007). Coincidentally, editors of both volumes—Berry and Stringer—have also contributed chapters to this volume. I have applied the basic idea of the two above-mentioned models, which is “one film at a time.” Stringer and Philips embrace this concept—analyzing a single film per chapter—out of a conviction that “students should pursue topics through the analysis of strong films and that critical discussion should lead out of the films themselves towards matters of aesthetics, culture, history, and society” (2). Given this goal, *Rediscovering Korean Cinema* draws upon the expertise of established and emerging scholars from Asia-Pacific, Europe, and North America both to reexamine

the established texts across the historical range of Korean cinema and to explore previously undervalued areas of interest. I have carefully chosen contributors who specialize in particular texts, authors, genres, or cinematic movements.

What were the criteria for selecting films? It is not my intention to establish a canon. Five basic standards were applied in the process of selecting films. First, films included in the Korean Film Archive's *100 Korean Films* (*Ha'nguk yŏnghwa 100-sŏn: 'Chŏngch'un ūi sipcharo' esŏ 'P'iet'a' kkaji*, 2014) were given priority.¹⁴ Second, the films should not have been excessively written about. Exceptions were made for a handful of key texts in Korean cinema studies (*Aimless Bullet*, *The Housemaid*, *Oldboy*, etc.) that most university courses on Korean cinema include as mandatory on their screening lists. Accordingly, such important films as *Peppermint Candy*, *Shiri* (*Shwiri*, Kang Che-gyu, 1999), and *Memories of Murder* (*Sarin ūi ch'uo'k*, Bong Joon-ho, 2003), among others, were not included in this volume. Third, after the first two basic standards were met, it was left to the commissioned authors to select the films. My role as the editor was to negotiate with the contributors to avoid unexpected overlaps with others and to encourage them to maintain fresh angles, deep analysis, and excellence in scholarship. Fourth, I added films that tackle such issues as gender and sexuality, North Korean migrant workers, and contentious political subjects. Last, each film chosen had to be relatively widely accessible in DVD or digital format with English subtitles. For almost a decade, KOFA has been putting considerable energy into making its materials accessible by releasing DVDs of restored old films, publishing books, and screening classic films with English subtitles. Most of the films discussed in the volume are currently available on DVD and Blu-ray and via web-based streaming services such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, and YouTube Red. Most of the classic films (pre-1990s) in this volume are accessible on KOFA's YouTube channel "Korean Classic Film Theater." Libraries at major academic institutions in North America, Europe, and Asia-Pacific also hold copies of the major contemporary Korean films covered in this volume.

Chapters

After **Cho Junhyoung's** brief but comprehensive account of the history of Korean cinema (chapter 1), *Rediscovering Korean Cinema* begins with two chapters that cover Korea's colonial past, the Japanese Occupation period

from 1910 to 1945. Korean cinema during the colonial period has been a thorny problem for Korean film historians. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Korean Film Commission, and KOFA have embraced 2019 as the centenary of Korean cinema, hosting public events and organizing academic conferences and screening series. But the year 2019 may or may not be the centenary. Many film historians claim that the first Korean film was *Fight for Justice* (*Ŭirijŏk kut'ŏ*, Kim To-san), released in 1919. This work was not a full motion picture in the modern sense, however, but rather a “kino-drama” (*yŏnswaegŭk*), a combination of a motion picture and a play performed on stage. Evidence of *Fight for Justice*'s exact date of production, plot, and very existence remains sketchy at best. In fact, Korean film historians have continuously debated the question of the “first” film: Which was the first film production in Korea? Was it *Fight for Justice* or *The Vow Made Below the Moon* (*Wŏrha-ŭi maengsŏ*, Yun Paeng-nam, 1923)? Or *The Story of Jang-hwa and Hong-ryeon* (*Changhwa Hongnyŏn*, Pak Chŏng-hyŏn, 1924)? Likewise, until the new millennium, fewer than a dozen films produced during Korea's colonial period and only 56 of 308 films produced in the 1950s had survived and were available to film historians. This “empty” archive, or what Soyoung Kim (2011) terms “phantom cinema,” has caused the study of early Korean cinema to lag behind scholarship on other Asian national cinemas.

In view of this situation, Dong Hoon Kim (2017) began his book *Eclipsed Cinema: The Film Culture of Colonial Korea* with this statement: “When approaching the film culture in Korea under Japanese colonial rule, we are quickly led into a vast site of absence and voids which requires us patiently to carry out an archaeological unearthing and excavating of the remnants across historical, social, and cultural terrains” (1). Since the early 2000s, however, KOFA has been hunting down “lost” films, and with newly discovered films from China, Japan, Hong Kong, and Russia, the early history of Korean cinema has been continuously rewritten by a new generation of scholars, including Yecies and Shim (2011), S. Chung (2011), Kwon (2013), Chung and Kim (2013), and H. Kim (2016). With the accessibility of the archives, new historical studies have emerged.

The first three chapters of *Rediscovering Korean Cinema* are about, respectively, *Sweet Dream* (*Mimong*, Yang Chu-nam and Yamazaki Fujie, 1936), one of the oldest surviving Korean films; *Spring in the Korean Peninsula* (*Pando ŭi pom*, Yi Pyŏng-il, 1941); and *A Hometown in the Heart* (*Maŭm ŭi kohyang*, Yun Yong-gyu, 1949), which was released just a year before the Korean War. **Brian Yecies** (chapter 2) examines the complex cinematic milieu in Korea during the period of Japanese rule through two

case studies. First, in *Sweet Dream*, Yecies investigates how filmmakers in colonial Korea (Chosŏn) used entertaining “message” films to engage with the “lady of leisure” figure popular in contemporary Hollywood films, while also commenting on the “modern girl” narrative. Second, a case study of “rehabilitation” screenings of the Hollywood film *Les Misérables* (1935) by the P’yŏngyang Yuhyanghoe illustrates how government-backed benevolent organizations assisted discharged prison inmates in reintegrating into society. **Nayoung Aimee Kwon** (chapter 3) enquires into the possibilities and limits of a postcolonial reevaluation of the colonial past via recently discovered films. Adopting “code-switching” as a concept and a tool that allow us to carefully examine remnants of the past while simultaneously revealing the challenges of such close readings, Kwon focuses on *Spring in the Korean Peninsula*, a film of colonial *mise en abyme* about filmmaking in the colony, to examine the dilemmas raised by a contested past. **Juhn Ahn** (chapter 4) offers a brief introduction to and analysis of the film *A Hometown in the Heart*. Unlike Ham Se-dŏk’s original play, which tells the tale of a young orphan Buddhist acolyte who struggles to come to terms with the fact that he was abandoned by his mother as an infant, the film humanizes the relationship between mother and child, situates morality not in tradition but in the individual’s desire to be free, and downplays class conflict while emphasizing instead the historically particular experience shared by Koreans who have lost their “mother,” as symbolized by the nation. These changes, Ahn argues, are reflections of the uncertain times during which the film was produced.

After the Korean War armistice in 1953, South Korea faced an abrupt influx of migrant workers. The number of Seoul residents spiked: Seoul’s population more than doubled to reach 1.5 million by 1955 from a mere 650,000 in 1951. Along with the overflow of migrant workers to the metropolis, postwar South Korea faced a rapid influx of American culture, that is, “core” modernism. Certainly postwar/postcolonial Korean people encountered phantasmagoric material goods produced by an advanced capitalist economy, and, as Chungmoo Choi (1998) argues, “the seduction of, desire for, and resistance to the power of fetishistic late capitalism weave the tapestry of the post-colonial nation’s history” (5). The sudden arrival of Hollywood films, with the alluring charm of what Miriam Hansen (1999) calls “vernacular modernism,” fascinated postwar Korean civilians. Hollywood cinema became immensely popular among audiences and filmmakers. The astonishing successes of *Chunhyang* (*Ch’unhyang chŏn*, Yi Kyu-hwan, 1955) and *Madame Freedom* (*Chayu puin*, Han Hyŏng-mo, 1956) in the domestic

film market boosted the entire industry. In 1953, only 6 films were produced in South Korea, but in 1959, the number reached 111 (Lee 2017). Given this, **Christina Klein** (chapter 6) examines the postwar classic *Madame Freedom*, arguably one of the most successful films of the postwar era. Klein reads the film intertextually in relation to the best-selling novel on which it was based and explores two modes of spectatorship: the “spectator-in-the-text” created through cinematography, editing, and plot construction and the “historical spectator,” who was likely familiar with the novel’s presentation of the same story. By reading the film in this manner, Klein reveals *Madame Freedom*’s powerful feminist dimension: it enables the viewer to identify with a new type of Korean person, the female individual. **Travis Workman** (chapter 5) reads Yi Kang-chön’s controversial *Piagol* (*P’iagol*, 1955), which was banned from screening after being declared in violation of the anti-communist law. Workman focuses on the particular intersections of the melodrama mode and realism in the film’s narrative and visuality, showing how it diverges from other South Korean anti-communist films of the Cold War era in its depictions of communist partisans. Workman sees *Piagol* as a more aesthetically complex anti-communist film because its anti-communism is constituted through various self-conscious and subtle deviations from the forms and conventions of North Korean partisan films.

The next four chapters deal with South Korea’s Golden Age of cinema. Although McHugh and Abelmann periodize this era more broadly—from 1955 to 1972—many historians view the 1960s as South Korean cinema’s Golden Age, when the number of commercially successful films “soared in conjunction with the emergence of a new generation of Korean directors” (J. Choi 2010, 6). **Steven Chung** (chapter 7) sheds new light on the underappreciated but beautifully made film *Flower in Hell* (*Chiokhwa*, 1958), directed by Shin Sang-ok (Sin Sang-ok). One of the most important and powerful directors of South Korean cinema’s Golden Age, Shin was influenced by Italian neorealism, like most of his contemporaries in South Korea during the 1950s. *Flower in Hell* clearly shows this influence. Chung argues that the innovative stylistic elements in *Flower in Hell* are an index of the film’s embeddedness in global cinematic flows and that, more importantly, it is the uneven and frequently awkward configuration of these elements that is most clearly illustrative of the politics of the film and the realities informing it. In other words, it is in *Flower in Hell*’s very instabilities that the specific ways in which it mediates Korea’s postwar predicament can be found. Chung examines these forms of mediation on two disparate terrains: the film’s synthetic style and its spatial figurations.

Chris Berry (chapter 8) and **Kelly Y. Jeong** (chapter 9) discuss two of the most beloved South Korean classics of the 1960s, *The Housemaid* (*Hanyŏ*, Kim Ki-young) and *Aimless Bullet*, both released in 1960. By closely reading *The Housemaid*, Berry argues that the film's significance is fivefold. First, it captures the social and cultural characteristics and tensions of South Korea at the beginning of its period of rapid and forced modernization. Second, it established Kim Ki-young (Kim Ki-yŏng)'s auteur brand, making him famous and featuring the key tropes that appear in many of his other films. Third, it inaugurated the South Korean horror genre, and many contemporary horror films refer back to it. Fourth, the rediscovery of Kim Ki-young has rewritten Korean film history, challenging the conventional association of modernity with realist aesthetics. And finally, the film continues to resonate with other films today. Jeong, meanwhile, focuses on several notable aspects of *Aimless Bullet*, such as its modernist sensibility, the place of women in the postwar South Korean cultural landscape, and its significance in light of South Korea's cinematic realism tradition. Jeong argues that *Aimless Bullet* is a notably modern yet realistic narrative of a contemporary individual's antagonistic relationship to society in postwar South Korean cinema.

Kim Su-yong's *Mist* (*An'gae*, 1969), arguably one of the most artistically satisfying and popularly received films of the 1960s, is the last example of Golden Age cinema in this volume. **Chung-kang Kim** (chapter 10) explores the history of South Korean "art" filmmaking of the 1960s, the way art cinema was institutionalized, and *Mist*'s exclusive positioning within such modes of production. Kim argues that the "artistic property" cannot be essentially defined but is always situational and historically constructed. Though born within the clear limits of institutionalized art cinema under the dictatorship in 1960s South Korea, *Mist* displays a clear art style and the enthusiasm of the people who were involved with its production.

The 1970s has been regarded as the beginning of two decades of recession in South Korean cinema, known as South Korean cinema's "dark age." In 1972, President Park Chung Hee (Pak Chŏng-hŭi, 1963–79) passed a new constitution, *Yusin*, which abolished the direct presidential election system and allowed the president to designate one-third of the assemblymen. With the passage of the new constitution, South Korea's democracy reverted to a dictatorship. The new *Yusin* Motion Picture Law of 1973 allowed the government to easily control film production. Autonomous filmmaking was prohibited, due to the change from a registration to a licensing system, which required the permission of the government to establish a film production company. Moreover, freedom of expression became impossible

due to the double censorship that demanded that first the screenplay and then the completed film be submitted for review. **Hyun Seon Park** (chapter 11) and **Han Sang Kim** (chapter 12) deal with two significant films produced during this period. Park's critical reading of *The Road to Sampo* (*Samp'o kan'un kil*, 1975), a posthumous film directed by Yi Man-hŭi, illuminates the extent to which Yi's work is filled with a fierce tension among his experimental creativity, the commodified milieu of film production in the 1970s, and the repressive force of the military regime of Park Chung Hee. She examines *The Road to Sampo* in the entangled aspects of film authorship, genre formation, and political aesthetics, focusing on the significance of landscape, the motif of homecoming, and dislocated localities. Park also addresses the way *The Road to Sampo*, as a literary film and road movie, articulates the doubling aesthetics of the cinematic and the literary as well as the distinctive sensibility of nostalgia and communal affectivity in the rapidly changing South Korean society of the time.

Kim argues that *The March of Fools* (*Pabodŭl ūi haengjin*, Ha Kil-chong, 1975) was the outcome of a strong self-consciousness that deviated from the Park government's intention to exploit the film industry as an anti-communist propaganda machine. *The March of Fools*, Kim emphasizes, can be considered one of the most direct answers to the *Yusin* regime among South Korean films of the era. The film is full of images that reveal the disciplinary facets of everyday life under the Park regime. As alluded to in the film's title, the protagonists embark on a "march of fools" as a show of resistance to the regime's nonsensical repression and of their refusal to serve as docile bodies. Despite this somewhat resistant spirit, Kim argues, *The March of Fools* also exposes the limits of formulating an account of subjectivity. The deep distress that the protagonists experience in the film is for the most part related to the issues of individual existence and free will. Thus, their resistance to repression ends up being individual. Their solidarity appears when they indulge in a certain misogynistic self-pity, which shows how female subjectivity was excluded from the *chŏngnyŏn* (youth) identity.

Hyangjin Lee (chapter 13), **Darcy Paquet** (chapter 14), **Nam Lee** (chapter 15), **Jinhee Choi** (chapter 16), and **Steve Choe** (chapter 18) discuss the Korean New Wave of the 1980s–90s. Calling it "an accidental masterpiece," Lee discusses *Declaration of Idiot* (*Pabo sŏnŏn*, Yi Chang-ho, 1983), one of the most important South Korean films that has nevertheless rarely been written about in academic terms. Yi Chang-ho, the director of *Declaration of Idiot*, has often stated that he never intended to make a political statement or pursue artistic experimentalism through the film.

He has even remarked, tongue in cheek, that the film was so strictly regulated that it was made “by the government, not [himself].” Lee examines this unexpected victory of Yi and *Declaration of Idiot* by focusing on the relationship between revolutionary film culture and oppressive censorship in 1980s South Korea under the nation’s new dictator, Chun Doo-hwan. In turn, Paquet points out that Park Kwang-su’s debut feature *Chilsu and Mansu* is remembered as the opening salvo in a new film movement centered on realist, socially engaged storytelling. Paquet argues that the film breaks with previous trends in the mainstream South Korean film industry and allies itself with one of the broader social movements of the 1980s, the *minjung* movement, which sought to bring attention to working-class people. According to Paquet, *minjung* is “often used to express the notion of a repressed and exploited working class. One of the central ideas of *minjung* theory is that the masses should be seen as the subject, not the object, of history, and therefore history should be presented and understood from their perspective.”

Given this, Lee continues Paquet’s analysis of *minjung* theory by analyzing a seminal film of the *minjung* cinema movement, *The Night Before the Strike* (*P’aöp chönya*, Jangsangotmae [Changsan’gonmae], 1990). This was the first feature-length film in South Korea to deal directly with labor issues; it depicted metal factory workers’ struggle to set up a democratic labor union. Lee examines the film’s sociopolitical significance and its aesthetics in the context of the 1980s South Korean social movement that gave rise to the underground independent film movement and the theoretical debate surrounding the notion of *minjung* cinema. *The Night Before the Strike* is a rare South Korean film that manifests the strong influence of socialist realism, which in turn reflects the larger aspirations for a socialist revolution in the late 1980s. However, the *minjung* cinema movement failed, mainly due to the government’s brutal suppression and to the ignorance of most intellectuals and, ironically, working-class people. Most of its filmmakers left the group and went to the *Ch’ungmuro* (South Korea’s version of Hollywood) instead. Some achieved critical acclaim in the local film industry and beyond.

Choe examines Jang Sun-woo’s *A Petal* (*Kkonnip*, 1996), which had its world premiere at the Rotterdam International Film Festival in 1996. *A Petal* reflects Jang’s self-confidence and the political circumstances of South Korea at the time. Choe shows how *A Petal* works through the memory of past trauma—the Kwangju Democratic Uprising in May 1980—and addresses a historiographical crisis. This problematic is one that was raised by the *minjung* movement and finds expression through means specific to

the cinema in Jang's work. Critically developing the crisis of historical narration through the politics of melodrama, Choe explains why *A Petal* insists on the psychoanalytic logic of the fetish in its thinking of the relationship of the present to the past and, subsequently, of the film image to historical reality. Throughout the film, Choe argues, the viewer is presented with a multiplicity of images—flashbacks, dream sequences, hand-drawn animations, and hallucinations—to underscore how traumatic memories are given representation yet remain unredeemed.

Choi explores Lee Myung-se's *My Love, My Bride* (*Naüi sarang naüi sinbu*, 1990). Lee is a rare director in South Korean cinema. Unlike most New Wave directors, who experimented with storyline and style to talk about reality, Lee, a cineartist, was engrossed in finding film's identity. Drawing on the philosopher and film theorist Stanley Cavell's interpretation of the Hollywood comedy of remarriage, Choi examines the 1990s South Korean comedic cycle, such as *My Love, My Bride* and *Marriage Story* (*Kyöllhon iyagi*, Kim Ŭi-sök, 1992), which Choi claims constitutes a South Korean "comedy of remarriage." She argues that the narrative premise of the South Korean comedy of remarriage is similar to that of its Hollywood counterparts; films begin (rather than end) with the marriage of a couple, who become disillusioned with married life or find obstacles to maintaining that married life, and in the end get back together again. Choi further focuses on the diverging gender roles manifested in *My Love, My Bride* and its 2014 remake (Im Ch'ang-söng) and discusses how they register changing social mores.

South Korean cinema entered the 1990s with tremendous social and political changes. The June Democratic Uprising (*Yuwöl hangjaeng*) was a wave of protest that swept South Korea in June 1987. Centered on calling for democratic reforms, it started as a demand for direct presidential elections and protest against the extended rule of the military regime. In the end, the Chun Doo-hwan regime surrendered and a declaration was made promising a direct presidential election. In 1992, Kim Young-sam (Kim Yöng-sam, 1993–97) was elected president—the first South Korean president without a military background after Park's coup in 1961. During the mid- and late 1990s, film culture in South Korea saw an explosive growth; *Sopyonje* (*Söp'yönje*, Im Kwon-taek, 1993) brought more than one million audience members to a movie theater in Seoul; Korea's first weekly film magazine *Cine 21* (*Ssine 21*) was launched in April 1995; the number of film schools increased significantly; major conglomerates (*chaebol*) such as Samsung, SK, and Daewoo made inroads into the film industry, pushing forward the industrialization of films; and the first

BIFF took place in September 1996. But a year later, a sudden shortage of foreign reserves left the South Korean government with no choice but to formally ask the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a relief loan. In return, the IMF demanded the restructuring of South Korean industries. Kim Dae-jung (Kim Tae-jung, 1998–2003) was elected president in the midst of the chaos. After several years of struggle, South Korea was able to emerge from the financial crisis under Kim’s leadership. The Kim government implemented measures to support the film industry, and the range of possible subject matter widened. Under these circumstances, South Korean films experienced a full-fledged renaissance in the new millennium. The following chapters discuss many facets of contemporary South Korean cinema: political and human rights documentaries, celebrated auteurs, mainstream genre films, independent cinema, and Korean blockbuster films.

Hye Jean Chung (chapter 17) and **Markus Nornes** (chapter 25) examine two important South Korean documentarists, Pyŏn Yŏng-ju (Byun Young-joo) and Kim Tong-wŏn. Analyzing the *Murmuring* trilogy (Najŭn moksori 3-bujak), directed by Pyŏn, Chung discusses three films—*The Murmuring* (Najŭn moksori, 1995), *Habitual Sadness* (Najŭn moksori 2, 1997), and *My Own Breathing* (Najŭn moksori 3, 1999)—that deal with the issue of “comfort women” (*wianbu*), or women who were forced into sexual slavery by Japanese military forces during the Asia-Pacific War (1935–45). Chung argues that *The Murmuring Trilogy* demonstrates how the form of the documentary film can be used to bear witness to historical trauma and how it can incorporate formerly silenced voices into official history. She also emphasizes that the intimate collaboration between filmmaker and subject calls the spectator to action by expanding the scope of relevance from the personal to the collective. Nornes reads Kim Tong-wŏn’s critically acclaimed documentary film *Repatriation* (Songhwan, 2003). Weaving into the chapter his personal encounter with Kim, a specialist on the legendary Japanese documentarist Ogawa Shinsuke, Nornes notes Ogawa’s influence on Kim and Pyŏn during the 1980s. Following in Ogawa’s footsteps, Kim and Pyŏn established a collective of their own, calling it P’urŭn yŏngsang, or P.U.R.N. Production for short. Nornes argues that *Repatriation’s* most significant achievement is its powerful rendering of the impact of division on daily life—on everyone, every day, and in a multitude of ways.

Nikki J. Y. Lee (chapter 20) helps to expand the boundaries of South Korean cinema by examining the under-evaluated action film master Ryoo Seung-wan (Ryu Sŭngwan), often called a “cine-kid,” and his debut

feature *Die Bad* (*Chukkõna hogŭn nappŭgõna*, 2000). Despite a series of box office successes, including *The Berlin File* (*Perŭllin*, 2012) and *Veteran* (*Pet'erang*, 2015), and the South Korean public's steadfast interest in his movies, Lee points out that English-language scholarly works on Ryoo and his films are "few and far between." Lee lays out the primary terrain from which this film's world can be explored further. She discusses the distinct qualities of *Die Bad* in relation to its production, its reception, and Ryoo's cinematic dispositions, with a focus on cinephilic filmmaking and genre. **David E. James** (chapter 21), who coedited a volume on Im Kwon-taek with Kyung Hyun Kim in 2002, discusses three films Im has directed in the new millennium. James closely reads *Chunhyang* (2000), *Chihwaseon* (2002), and *Hanji* (*Talbit kirõ olligi*, 2011)—all of which dramatize with ethnographic detail and accuracy ancient customs or art forms—and argues that the narrative focus on art and artists provides the basis for Im's allegorical exploration of the present state of Korean culture and especially of his own filmmaking. The representation of a specific traditional artist, art form, or cultural practice in any given film generates reflexive patterns of similarity and difference between it and Im's film about it, providing a vocabulary through which the possibilities of Im's art can be explored. **Kukhee Choo** (chapter 22) sheds new light on *My Sassy Girl* (*Yõpkijõgin kõnyõ*, Kwak Chae-yong, 2001), one of the most commercially successful South Korean films in Asia. With South Korea's rapid socio-economic changes during the late 1990s to early 2000s in mind, Choo analyzes *My Sassy Girl* and its relation to the evolving *yõpki* culture and its interconnected gender dynamics. Her analysis goes beyond the portrayal of the female protagonist in the film; Choo argues that the film's depiction of a strong female protagonist is a trope used to cope with the ongoing social anxieties associated with the aftermath of South Korea's IMF crisis in 1997.

Six celebrated contemporary South Korean film auteurs—Park Chan-wook, Kim Jee-woon, Kim Ki-duk, Bong Joon-ho, Lee Chang-dong, and Hong Sang-soo—who ignited the global phenomenon of South Korean cinema at the beginning of the new millennium are the subjects of the chapters by **Julian Stringer** (chapter 19), **Kyu Hyun Kim** (chapter 24), **Daniel Martin** (chapter 26), **Hye Seung Chung** (chapter 27), **Peter Y. Paik** (chapter 28), **David Scott Diffrient** (chapter 30), and **Seung-hoon Jeong** (chapter 33). Stringer provides a fresh perspective on the much-discussed *The Power of Kangwon Province* (*Kangwõ-nd õi him*, 1998), the second feature film by Hong Sang-soo. Instead of analyzing the text, Stringer's innovative study focuses on the sound and sound systems used

in the film, an approach that is extremely underutilized but that offers fruitful new vantage points from which to assess a total vision of the film. Stringer's chapter reveals insights into the dynamic relationship between the director and the audio crew and raises vital questions concerning the multiple aesthetic choices that inevitably must be made during the complex process of assembling a modern South Korean soundtrack. Kim, in his provocative study, takes a stance against the majority of scholarly readings of *Oldboy*, many of which are insightful and stimulating but approach the film as essentially an allegorical representation of the South Korean experience—a parable for the neoliberal dismantling of post-IMF crisis (male) Korean subjectivity. These readings largely give primacy to the character of O Tae-su (Ch'oe Min-sik), a salaryman incarcerated in a private prison for fifteen years and seeking revenge and an explanation for such an extreme punishment. Kim, instead, contextualizes the film within the genealogy of post-Hitchcockian thrillers, such as Brian De Palma's *Obsession* (1976) and Roman Polanski's *Chinatown* (1974). By doing so, Kim seeks to establish *Oldboy*'s status not only as a modern classic of the New Korean Cinema but also as a powerful artistic film that explores the universal human condition, especially the conflict between social and ethical norms and desires that cannot be openly acknowledged.

Martin revisits Kim Jee-woon's *A Tale of Two Sisters* (*Changhwa Hongnyŏn*, 2003), which has been celebrated as perhaps the most accomplished and frightening horror film of its generation. Martin sees in *A Tale of Two Sisters* a fascinating opportunity to study the narrative and thematic patterns of traditional and contemporary South Korean horror. He explores the film on this basis, examining its treatment of the themes of family and justice, its depiction of the archetypal female ghost from Korean folklore, its relationship to a tradition of "restrained" (rather than visually explicit) horror, and the extent to which the film reflects a generic hybridity that can be seen as intrinsic to the South Korean horror movie. By discussing *3-Iron* (*Pinjip*, 2004), Chung investigates silence as a recurrent motif in Kim Ki-duk's oeuvre. Unlike Kim's other films, in which quietude signifies mistrust of words or political resistance, *3-Iron* suggests another potential role of screen silence: to be an active agent and facilitator of communication. Chung argues that Kim's cinema as a whole can be interpreted as a coherent effort to expose alternative spaces of invisibility, exile, and alienation—the "other" 180-degree side of South Korean society that is largely suppressed and neglected in mainstream commercial filmmaking.

Bong Joon-ho's two big-budget films *The Host* (*Koemul*, 2007) and *Snowpiercer* (*Sŏlguk yŏlch'a*, 2013) are closely examined in Paik's and

Jeong's chapters. Paik's rich textual analysis takes *The Host* to a new level of discussion. He argues that *The Host* subverts the conventions of the monster movie not only by transplanting a hallmark Hollywood genre into the context of recent South Korean history and making numerous references to South Korea's geopolitical predicament and economic travails, but more fundamentally by shifting the emphasis of the film from scenes of dramatic action to scenes of everyday life. In contrast, Jeong argues that Bong's global blockbuster *Snowpiercer* is perhaps the first major South Korean film to tackle outright the fate of humanity in the face of global environmental and sociopolitical crises. Set in a new ice age, *Snowpiercer* unfolds a sci-fi parable about a never-stopping train where postapocalyptic survivors are put into a dystopian caste system. This iron Ark draws our attention to a series of issues and dilemmas allegorically related to today's economy and ecology, revolution and sustainability. Discussing these points along with a detailed film analysis, Jeong weaves together diverse discourses on critical topics such as biopolitics, capitalism, utopia, and cinema. Jeong's chapter particularly illuminates how the train as a biopolitical ecosystem implies post-historical symptoms and how its final catastrophe leaves room for the new potential of human agency.

Diffrient explores the cultural implications of the Criterion Collection's endorsement of the director Lee Chang-dong's *Secret Sunshine* (*Miryang*, 2007) as a work of considerable artistic merit, one deserving of a place in the DVD/Blu-ray company's "digital archive" and global cinematic canon. Diffrient also undertakes a textual analysis that reveals how extradiegetic discourses of inclusion and exclusion—so central to the process of canonization—run parallel to diegetic moments when the main character, Shin-ae, must negotiate a new environment: that of the titular town of Miryang. The reason for her journey is unclear, but details of her backstory gradually accumulate over the course of a narrative that is torn between the catastrophic and the quotidian, the extraordinary and the everyday—a trademark of the director. These and other thematic tensions, including that between the seen and the unseen, lend textual support to the Criterion Collection's paratextual framing of *Secret Sunshine* as a distinctive yet representative entryway into South Korean cinema, a heretofore elusive national cinema that can now presumably be grasped by non-Korean audiences, if only at a distance.

Michelle Cho (chapter 23), **Chi-Yun Shin** (chapter 29), **Eun Ah Cho** (chapter 31), and **Ungsan Kim** (chapter 32) provide critical views on South Korea's contemporary independent film scene, which has expanded the boundaries of the country's film culture by exploring such little-developed

issues as North Korean defectors, multicultural families, women, LGBTQ culture, migration, and human rights. Accordingly, Michelle Cho argues that the low-budget female coming-of-age film *Take Care of My Cat* (*Koyangi rül put'akhae*, 2001), directed by Chŏng Chae-ŭn (Jeong Jae-eun), endeavors to visualize the ways inbuilt architectural spaces—homes, workplaces, and urban interiors and exteriors—delimit characters' interpersonal and sociopolitical possibilities. Thus the film renders the struggle to negotiate domesticity and publicness, both literally and figuratively, for young women trying to reconcile their gendered conditioning with the promise of liberal personhood. The film's visualization of habitats (industrial, urban, and corporate) defines its historicity—its relationship to the aesthetics of realism in New Korean Cinema and its approach to the politics of gender in the post-movement, post-authoritarian period.

Shin discusses Kim T'ae-yong's *Family Ties* (*Kajok ūi t'ansaeng*, 2006), which had its domestic release in a year that was dominated by big-budget commercial hits, including *The Host*. This relatively low-budget, semi-independent film quickly disappeared from the box office charts. *Family Ties*, however, has garnered great critical acclaim and has been recognized as one of the most significant South Korean films by critics and film scholars. Shin argues that *Family Ties* ruminates on the configuration of human relationships and eventual families. The film is profoundly empathetic to the small hatreds, resentments, affections, joys, and insecurities behind every relationship and offers an intimate drama imbued with unexpectedly deep emotional resonance. Eun Ah Cho analyzes Pak Chŏng-bŏm's low-budget independent film *The Journals of Musan* (*Musan ilgi*, 2011) to see how a North Korean escapee establishes his gender and class identity after arriving in his new country, South Korea. In the film, a North Korean man becomes an underclass migrant worker in South Korea. South Korean society's recognition of North Koreans as working migrants depoliticizes North Koreans compared to the old rhetoric of the Cold War. Cho claims, however, that *The Journals of Musan* shows how the male protagonist becomes morally corrupted in a capitalist society and enters the realm of micro-politics. Kim closely examines another important independent film, Kim Kyŏng-muk's *Stateless Things* (*Chult'aktongsi*, 2011). Through a close reading of *Stateless Things*, Kim focuses specifically on the way queer independent cinema reappropriates the heteronormative organization of time and space. As queer Korean cinema has diversified and developed with the contributions of independent directors in recent years, it has now outgrown the common understanding of the term as identical to LGBTQ cinema to become a more inclusive and more critical cinematic mode that

challenges heteronormative and discriminatory social structures. Kim argues that *Stateless Things* is a prime example of this shift in that it uses various cinematic techniques and features various marginalized social groups to critique South Korea as a highly developed, progress-driven, heteronormative, and homogeneous nation-state.

The last two chapters examine South Korea's mega-budget blockbuster films. **Kyung Hyun Kim** (chapter 34) provides a critical account of the massive commercial hit *Ode to My Father* (*Kukche sijang*, Yun Che-gyun, 2014). Kim argues that *Ode to My Father* distinguishes itself from other films that depict the Korean War and the division by embedding itself profoundly in a Confucian framework. By emphasizing the loss of the father, *Ode to My Father's* Confucian values supersede the questions of historical ideology that most South Korean films have explored over the past two decades. *Ode to My Father*, Kim argues, also uniquely and unintentionally politicizes and deconstructs the discourse of mourning by focusing on an *isan kajok* (separated family) with a father stranded in North Korea. The uncertain status of this father over the past sixty years makes the timing of his *chesa* (postmortem Confucian-style ritual) indeterminate. The South Korean zombie film *Train to Busan* (*Pusanhaeng*, Yŏn Sang-ho, 2016) is the volume's grand finale. **Keith B. Wagner** (chapter 35) expands the "glocalized" discourse regarding zombies by articulating how Yŏn's *Train to Busan* exposes the impacts of globalization on South Korean society via its zombie outbreak, showing in particular how an invisible contagion and frenzied neoliberal competition are understood globally. Simultaneously, Wagner claims, *Train to Busan* also marshals local commentary about twentieth- and twenty-first-century outbreaks familiar to South Korean citizens (from polio to MERS) and the country's various economic downturns.

Rediscovering Korean Cinema and its thirty-five chapters are indeed highly ambitious academic endeavors. This book is designed both to respond to the popular interest in Korean cinema and to meet the new demand for high-quality academic publications on the subject. By bringing a wide range of academic specialists on Korean cinema together in a single volume, *Rediscovering Korean Cinema* aims to situate current scholarship on Korean cinema within the ongoing theoretical debates in contemporary global film studies by offering invigorating discussions of individual films. While the chapters provide in-depth analyses of particular films, together they cohere into a detailed and multidimensional presentation of Korean cinema's cumulative history and broader significance. With its historical

and critical scope, abundance of new research, and detailed discussion of important individual films, *Rediscovering Korean Cinema* will be used by students and scholars for years to come.

I would like to thank all the authors who have contributed to this anthology. Christopher Dreyer has been an incisive and constructive editor. I thank three anonymous readers for their careful reading of this unusually thick manuscript and their powerful and constructive comments and suggestions. This edited volume is part of the University of Michigan Press's ongoing publication series *Perspectives on Contemporary Korea*, sponsored by the Nam Center for Korean Studies at the University of Michigan. Special gratitude is due to Nojin Kwak, director of the Nam Center, and the series editor, Youngju Ryu. The romanization of Korean names in this volume follows the McCune-Reischauer system, which is the academic standard endorsed by the Library of Congress. Exceptions to this rule are a handful of names (notable filmmakers and political leaders) whose spellings are known to English-speaking readers, such as Park Chan-wook, Bong Joon-ho, Kim Jee-woon, Lee Chang-dong, Kim Ki-duk, Im Kwon-taek, Jang Sun-woo, Park Kwang-su, Lee Myung-se, Shin Sang-ok, Chun Doo Hwan, and Park Chung Hee. Korean names are presented in Korean style, that is, surname first, given name next. I use "South Korean cinema" for films produced after the founding of the Republic of Korea in 1948. The same usage applies to "North Korean cinema." Any films released before the division system are called "Korean cinema."

NOTES

1. *Film Comment* devoted its first special issue to South Korean cinema—"Korean Prospects: Inside an Asian Cinema Powerhouse." Chuck Stephens, the special issue's editor, proclaimed that South Korean cinema was "one of the greatest renaissances in global filmmaking the world has ever seen" (2004, 36).

2. Since the 1970s, the number of international film festivals had multiplied, and due to their ferocious competition to be recognized in the market, newly initiated film festivals as well as established ones were looking for lesser-known territory. Chinese fifth-generation cinema, New Iranian cinema, Taiwanese and Korean New Wave Cinema, and films from neglected parts of Europe such as Greece, Ireland, and Portugal entered the core business of world cinema.

3. Arguably the first American film journal devoted solely to the Asia-Pacific region as a whole, the short-lived *East-West Film Journal* (whose last issue was published in 1994) provided a forum in which Asian and Western cinemas could be introduced to and appreciated by a worldwide audience. It was led by Wimal Dissanayake, John Charlot, and Paul Clark, and most articles included in the journal were based on presentations at conferences that the EWC and the Hawaii International Film Festival (HIFF)

had co-organized. Scholars who are now household names in the field of Asian cinema—Donald Richie, David Desser, Catherine Russell, Keiko McDonald, Tony Rayns, Chris Berry, Yoshimoto Mitsuhiro, Krishna Sen, Markus Nornes, Stephen Teo, and Yingjin Zhang—contributed articles on cinema from Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Indonesia, and India. Oddly enough, however, throughout the journal's lifetime—eight years and sixteen issues—it published only three articles on South Korean cinema. One was written by the South Korean film director Pae Ch'ang-ho, who spent a year at the EWC as a filmmaker-in-residence in 1987 (Bae 1988). In addition to the South Korean film critic Ahn Byung-sup's (1987) short essay, Isolde Standish's "Korean Cinema and the New Realism" should be considered one of the first scholarly works on South Korean cinema written outside the Korean Peninsula.

4. In an email conversation with the author (May 29, 2016), Thomas Doherty recalled: "I wrote that piece when I had a year Fulbright research lectureship at Ewha Womans University—I figured I might as well take advantage of the local sources. My Korean wasn't near good enough but I figured I might make a couple of useful comments about some broad trends in the local cinema—which in the years since of course has blossomed so much."

5. Yi Chang-ho's *The Man with Three Coffins* (*Nagŭne nŭn kil esŏdo shwiji annŭnda*, 1988), which Amos Vogel (1988) claimed was "the most original film at the Berlin Film Festival in 1988" (63), should be noted here as another important South Korean film on the international film festival circuit in the late 1980s.

6. For instance, in his review of Jay Leyda's *Dianying: Electric Shadows, an Account of Films and the Film Audience in China*, Ralph C. Croizier (1973) wrote: "Among Chinese specialists, it seems that nobody takes Chinese movies seriously. . . . one must admit at the outset that China has not produced any great cinema art. There has been no Chinese Kurosawa or Satyajit Ray. In cinema, as in many other art forms, modern China has not yet fully succeeded in synthesizing indigenous tradition with western influence and adapting it to a modern medium" (501).

7. In his introductory essay for the program book, Tony Rayns (1994) wrote: "It is hard to think of any national cinema that has been more innovative and surprising in the last five years than South Korea's. As in China, young generation directors marked by bad state politics have moved into the film industry, dissatisfied with the films they grew up with and determined to do different, and better. . . . their best work leaves most recent cinema from western countries looking timid and under-nourished" (5).

8. Im Kwon-taek received an Award for Excellence in Filmmaking at the Hawaii International Film Festival (HIFF) in 1996 and the Kurosawa Award for Lifetime Achievement in Film Directing at the San Francisco Film Festival in 1998. However, Im's "big" international breakthrough came when *Chunhyang* (*Ch'unhyangdyŏn*, 2000) entered the Cannes Film Festival's competition category in 2000. It was also the first South Korean film to premiere at the highly selective Telluride Film Festival. After Telluride, *Chunhyang* traveled to many festivals around the world, including HIFF (where it won the Best Narrative award), Asia-Pacific, Pusan, Singapore, and the New York Film Festival. Im was even compared to "the late Akira Kurosawa" because "he (Im and/or Kurosawa) is the emperor, respected by everyone. . . . his films bridge the gap between popular fare for the average Korean and art movies for students and cinephiles" (Lopathe 2000).

9. Anthony C. Y. Leong's non-academic "guidebook" for contemporary South Korean Cinema, *Korean Cinema: The New Hong Kong*, was published in 2002.

10. Some of the notable studies on Korean cinema published in Korea between 2000 and 2005 include *Korean Cinema and Modernity* (*Han'guk yŏnghwa wa kŭndaesŏng*, Pyŏn et al. 2000); *The Phantom of Modernity* (*Kŭndaesŏng ūi yuryŏngdŭl*, S. Kim 2000); *Korean Blockbuster Cinema: Atlantis or America* (*Han'gukhyŏng pullokpŏsūtŏ: At'ŭllant'isŭ hogŭn Amerik'a*, S. Kim 2001); *A Dictionary of Korean Female Directors* (*Yŏsŏng yŏnghwain sajŏn*, Chu 2001); *The Housemaids Revolt: Kim Ki-yŏng* (*Hanyŏdŭl ponggi hada yŏnghwa kamdok Kim Ki-yŏng*, H. Yi 2002); *The Age of Fascination and Confusion: Korean Cinema in the 1950s* (*Maehok kwa hondon ūi sidae: 1950 yŏndae Han'guk yŏnghwa*, Paek et al. 2003); *Im Kwon-taek On Im Kwon-taek* (*Im Kwŏn-t'aek i Im Kwŏn-t'aek ūl marhada*, Chŏng 2003); *A History of Korean Film Policy* (*Han'guk yŏnghwa jŏngch'aeksa*, T. Kim 2004); and *The Complete History of Korean Cinema* (*Han'guk yŏnghwa chŏnsa*, Y. Yi 2004).

11. “The trio of features” (Stephens 2004, 36)—Jang Sun-woo’s *Lies* (*Kŏjinmal*, 1999) and Lee Myung-se’s *Nowhere to Hide* (*Injŏng sajŏng pol kŏt ŏpta*, 1999), together with Im’s *Chunhyang*—opened in US theatres in 2000. *Nowhere to Hide* was probably the most successful among American critics and cinephiles. Elvis Mitchell, after watching *Nowhere to Hide*, noted its rave reception at the Sundance screening. He wrote: “His [Lee’s] skills left the audience giddy and shaken from the kind of high you can only get in a dark room with several hundred strangers who feel exactly as you do” (2000). Jonathan Demme even cast Pak Chung-hun (the main protagonist of *Nowhere*) in his *The Truth About Charlie* (2002). None of the films mentioned above, disappointingly, had meaningful box office success in the US film market. But they clearly paved the way for more cinematic cutting-edge filmmakers from South Korea to enter the international arena.

12. By calling South Korean cinema “full service cinema,” a full range of modes of production and consumption, Chris Berry (2002) challenges a very common assumption—the idea that art cinema and independent cinema are opposed to mainstream commercial cinema (7).

13. An impressive number of monographs have been published since the mid-2000s: *Hollywood Asian: Philip Ahn and the Politics of Cross-Ethnic Performance* (Chung 2006); *New Korean Cinema: Breaking the Waves* (Paquet 2010); *The South Korean Film Renaissance* (J. Choi 2010); *Crisis of Gender and the Nation in Korean Literature and Cinema: Modernity Arrives Again* (Jeong 2010); *The Pusan International Film Festival, South Korean Cinema, and Globalization* (S. Ahn 2012); *Korea’s Occupied Cinema, 1893–1948* and *The Changing Face of Korean Cinema: 1960 to 2015* (Yecies and Shim 2011, 2016); *Virtual Hallyu: Korean Cinema of the Global Era* (K. H. Kim 2011); *Kim Ki-duk* (H. S. Chung 2012); *Split Screen Korea: Shin Sang-Ok and Postwar Cinema* (S. Chung 2014); *Literature and Film in Cold War South Korea: Freedom’s Frontier* (Hughes 2012); *Rising Sun, Divided Land: Japanese and South Korean Filmmakers* (Taylor-Jones, 2013); *Unexpected Alliances: Independent Filmmakers, the State, and the Film Industry in Post-authoritarian South Korea* (Y. Park 2015); *Movie Migrations: Transnational Genre Flows and South Korean Cinema* (H. S. Chung and Diffrient 2015); *Sovereign Violence: Ethics and South Korean Cinema in the New Millennium* (S. Choe 2016); *Zainichi Cinema: Korean-in-Japan Film Culture* (Dew 2016); *Tourist Distractions: Traveling and Feeling in Transnational Hallyu Cinema* (Y. Choe 2016); *Eclipsed Cinema: The Film Culture of Colonial Korea* (D. H. Kim 2017); *Parameters of Disavowal: Colonial Representation in South Korean Cinema* (J. Ahn 2018); *Transnational Korean Cinema: Cultural Politics, Film*

Genres, and Digital Technologies (D. Jin 2019); and *Cold War Cosmopolitanism: Period Style in 1950s Korean Cinema* (Klein 2020).

14. “To coincide with its fortieth anniversary, KOFA released a list of the one hundred most iconic Korean films of all time in 2014. A group of sixty-two leading Korean film scholars, critics, and journalists was surveyed to compile the titles” (Conran 2014).

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