

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 Yasujiro 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 Chŏe 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 archaicism; 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. Chŏe 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" (*ipchŏjŏk*) and "haptic" (*chŏpchŏkchŏk*) 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 derivative, 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 battlefield; 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, *chōngdong* (情動), translates *affect*. In contrast to *chōng* 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. *Chōngdong* contains *chōng* (emotion), but the second syllable refers to the movement or activation of that emotion by forces beyond the individual subject. Therefore, *kibun* and *chōngdong* 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 *chōngdong* 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-chōl 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’ü*), 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 (*saenghwaljōk 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 (*hyōnsil*). 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 *chōng* 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 Wõnil—the typical party human (*tangjök in'gan*) and positive protagonist (*küngjǫngjök chuingong*) of the film—should not dwell in depictions of negative and regressive suffering; the film should rather express an affirmative pathos (*küngjǫngjök ppap'osü*) 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 Kaesǫng 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 participation 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 mobilization 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 important 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 melodramatic 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 organicity 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 originary 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 ūi 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, creating 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 Chŏe Haksin Family* (*Chŏe Hak-sin ūi 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. Chŏe 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 Tzvetan 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. Chŏe 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 Chàngnam* (*An Chàngnam 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 ūi 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 ūi son*, dir. Han Hyung-mo, 1954) and *Piagol* (*P'iagol*, dir. Yi Kang-chŏn, 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 Su-yong'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.