

A Commitment to Showmanship

Spectacle

The opening scene of Han Hyung-mo's *Hyperbolae of Youth* (1956) is set in a medical clinic on a Saturday afternoon, where three nurses hum in unison as they tidy up the examining room and a doctor dressed in shorts prepares to go to the beach with a friend. When the nurses (the popular singing trio the Kim Sisters) remind the doctor (the legendary music composer Park Si-chun) about a promise he made, the doctor turns to his friend—and by implication to the audience—and says, “I’ll show you something fun. Wait.” He picks up a guitar and launches into Eddie Fisher’s hit song from 1954, “I Need You Now,” as the nurses sing along, first in Korean and then in English (figure 21). Dynamic editing and camera movement enhance the syncopation of the scene, as do the movements of the identically dressed nurses, who walk, wave their hands, and enter the frame in time to the music. Fluidly shifting visual compositions add to the sense of orchestration, as the nurses line up by height, wend their way through the room, and form a triangle around the doctor’s friend. At three minutes long, the scene allows the viewer to enjoy the song in full. This is a stand-alone performance, completely unintegrated into the film’s narrative: the song is unmotivated by the story, which has not yet begun, and the nurses make no further substantive appearance in the film. The jaunty song and the amusing image of a guitar-playing doctor and singing nurses do, however, introduce the film generically and thematically, preparing the viewer for a quasi-musical comedy—with songs composed by Park Si-chun—that revolves around the contrast and ultimate harmonizing of Korean and Western values.

Such moments of visual and aural pleasure constitute one of the signature elements of Han’s Cold War cosmopolitan style: as film scholar Cho Junhyoung has



FIGURE 21. A penchant for spectacle: the Kim Sisters, accompanied by composer Park Si-chun, sing Eddie Fisher's "I Need You Now" in *Hyperbolae of Youth* (1956). (Courtesy of KOFA)

noted, Han had an "obsession for spectacle." Many of his films contain moments in which the forward movement of the narrative pauses and the viewer is invited to gaze upon, and often listen to, something that is inherently interesting. I am interested in "spectacle" as a particular mode of address that a film makes to its viewer. Spectacles are moments of heightened visuality in which the viewer is invited to look at something whose intrinsic qualities justify the viewer's attention. Tom Gunning has argued that such moments of spectacle solicit the viewer's "attention and curiosity through acts of display." They are "attractions" that embody an aesthetic of showing rather than telling, and they draw the viewer's gaze directly rather than channeling it through the narrative mechanisms of character motivation or psychology. These are brief interludes of exhibitionist *presentation* that interrupt the viewer's otherwise voyeuristic immersion in the fictional *representation* being enacted on screen. Laura Mulvey has argued that in Hollywood films such female-centered spectacles often construct a male gaze that objectifies and eroticizes the female body, and this aspect is certainly at play in *Hyperbolae's* opening scene, which presents the nurses as physically attractive and inviting of the viewer's gaze.¹

The nature of Han's spectacles extends far beyond the erotic, however. A number of his films, including *Hyperbolae*, open with displays of bustling urban modernity that suggest postwar development and progress. *My Sister Is a Hussy* (1961) puts nature on display in sweeping Cinemascope shots of mountain vistas. *Let's Meet at Walkerhill* (1966) and *The Queen of Elegy* (1967), like *Hyperbolae of Youth*, present viewers with musical performances by popular singers. Han's displays of film form could themselves function as spectacle, as with the exuberant camera movements in *Madame Freedom* (1956) and the lavishly materialistic mise-en-scène in *The Hand of Destiny* (1954). Han's preferred spectacle, however, was the modern Korean woman-in-public, and he regularly paused his narratives and invited viewers to look at one of his après girl characters doing, or being, something remarkable. Han regularly presented the modern woman as something worth looking at—and thinking about. While some of these moments involved titillating scenes of female sexuality, as with Korea's first on-screen kiss in *The Hand of Destiny* and the S-sister relationship in *A Jealousy* (1960), the modernity of these acts mattered as much as their sexual nature. Han's orientation towards spectacle was part of what his colleagues saw as his larger commitment to "showmanship" and "service." Han liked to give the viewer as much entertainment value as possible, and he saw these spectacles as an added attraction that he could provide. Audiences responded favorably: according to Han's colleague Kim Kee-duk, "When people watched *The Pure Love* they would say, 'Ah, that's Hong Kong' . . . [and] when they watched the mambo dance, they would say 'Ah, how new.'"² This commitment to entertainment was an innovation within the film industry. Prior to Han's debut as a director, filmmakers favored a quasi-pedagogical aesthetic that valued the cinema as an instrument of moral uplift and mass "enlightenment." Han's aesthetic of spectacle helped to shift that orientation, and he nudged other filmmakers in the same direction.³

This chapter explores Cold War cosmopolitanism as a function of Han's poaching from contemporary South Korean public culture. Paying attention to spectacle in Han's films allows us to see the kimchi part of the "*budae jigae* cinema" metaphor, namely, the ways in which Han crafted his films by engaging deeply with local cultural fashions, which were themselves often cosmopolitan in nature. In his effort to infuse his films with a ripped-from-the-headlines quality of contemporaneity, Han drew extensively from various domains of Korean public culture and presented this material to the viewer as interludes of spectacle. Numerous scholars have noted that *Madame Freedom* drew on the postwar craze for Western social dance and the sexual scandals that ensued.⁴ Han's poaching extended far beyond the realm of social dance, however. His films serve as a kind of catalogue of postwar public culture, a visual and aural record of the many cultural tools that Koreans were using to make themselves modern.

This chapter focuses on four films, each of which uses a different Free World-inflected cultural form in combination with a modern Korean woman as its central spectacle: Japanese judo in *My Sister Is a Hussy*, Latin mambo in *Madame Freedom*,

European-inspired fashion in *A Female Boss* (1959), and traditional Korean dance in *Because I Love You* (1958). As expressive elements within the films, these spectacles construct their female characters as active and often powerful participants in modern public life: athlete, performer, professional, and cultural emissary. They also perform the cultural work of claiming cosmopolitan modernity for South Korea, in diverse ways. Read as historical evidence, these spectacles—like the *mise-en-scène* in the previous chapter—reveal the transnational networks in which South Korea was becoming embedded. Rather than looking at the inflows of consumer goods, however, this chapter focuses on the flows of people into—and out of—Korea as cultural performers and producers. Han's spectacles, when read as a form of historical evidence, illuminate a range of transnational networks—colonial, military, commercial, diplomatic, biographical—that fueled postwar public culture. They also reveal some of the ways in which Koreans were stepping out and making themselves visible on the Free World stage. As such, these spectacles are signs and products of Korea's colonial legacies and its increasing enmeshment with the Free World.

JUDO: MY SISTER IS A HUSSY

Spectacle and narrative are two modes through which commercial fiction cinema addresses its viewer. Narrative tends to be the more dominant, inviting the viewer to be drawn into the intimate lives of strangers. Spectacle tends to be secondary, with its intermittent pleasures of exhibitionism. A number of film scholars have focused on the tension between narrative and spectacle, akin to that between narrative and *mise-en-scène*. Kristin Thompson regards spectacle as a form of cinematic “excess,” which she defines as any element of a film that exceeds the demands of the narrative and thus escapes its “unifying impulses.” Such excess, she argues, can have a liberatory effect by temporarily diverting the viewer's attention away from the story and its embedded ideologies, denaturalizing its assumptions and revealing individual narrative events as mere convention rather than existential truth. Richard Dyer and Thomas Elsaesser, in turn, have focused on musical numbers as form of spectacle, suggesting that, by privileging sensory and aesthetic pleasure over the narrative's ideological coherence, they can create a space in which different values are affirmed.⁵ Paying attention to spectacle, then, is yet another way to read against the grain of narrative and recognize the articulation of alternative meanings in moments of visual pleasure.

My Sister Is a Hussey offers perhaps the most extreme instance of tension between spectacle and narrative in Han's oeuvre. The film tells the story of two adult sisters who have been raised by their single father, a martial arts instructor who has trained them in judo. Temperamentally the two sisters are quite different: the protagonist and older sister, Sun-ae (Moon Jung-suk), is strong-willed and ill-humored, while the younger sister, Seon-hui (Um Aing-ran), is easygoing and

accommodating. A romantic comedy of sorts, the film charts the love lives of the two sisters. While Seon-hui has a fiancé, Sun-ae one has no interest in marriage—echoing her previous role as Jaesoon in *A Jealousy*. Her father (Kim Seung-ho), concerned about her future, arranges for Sun-ae to meet a series of potential suitors, but she rejects them all. Through a series of comic misadventures, Sun-ae ends up falling in love with a friend of her sister's fiancé, and the two couples marry in a joint ceremony. Sun-ae, however, has a difficult time adjusting to married life and does not treat her husband (Kim Jin-kyu) with respect. Her father teaches her a lesson about a wife's proper role, and by the final scene Sun-ae has become a domesticated and subservient wife. The arc of the narrative moves through the three stages common to many of Han's films: a woman behaves in a transgressive manner that challenges patriarchal authority, she is punished, and she is restored to patriarchal authority and the domestic sphere.

The spectacle in this film consists of displays of judo, which was just becoming an object of widespread public interest. Developed in Japan by Kano Jigoro in the 1880s, judo is a modern martial art that involves throwing, grappling, and striking. It was introduced through colonial routes into Korea, where it became incorporated into the imperial military and educational systems; by the 1920s and 1930s, it had gained some popularity among Koreans. After liberation, rather than being banned as “Japanese things and ways” (*wae-saek*), it was indigenized as an “invented” Korean tradition. Newspaper articles claimed Korea as the ancient birthplace and subsequent exporter of judo to Japan, where it was transformed into a modern sport and, by some accounts, rendered “impure.” With the memory of its colonial origins repressed, “Korean judo” was ideologically cleansed and disentangled from what one journalist called the “brutal martial arts of the Japanese Empire.”⁶ The sport became enlisted in the service of South Korean nationalism during Rhee's presidency through the hosting of intraregional competitions, the founding of the Yudo (Judo) College of martial arts, and the incorporation of judo instruction into the Air Force Academy's curriculum. At the same time, the sport served as a means for Koreans to make themselves visible on the Free World stage, as judo masters traveled to the United States as teachers, delegations were invited to Europe, and Korean teams participated in international competitions in Japan. The sport served as an instrument of Korea's integration into the Free World, as the Korean Judo Association joined the Judo Union of Asia and the European-based International Judo Federation. Public interest in judo peaked around 1960–61 with the announcement that it would be included in the 1964 Tokyo Olympics and thus provide an opportunity for South Korean *judokas* to demonstrate their skill in this most visible and prestigious global venue. The announcement led to a sense of national excitement and widespread newspaper coverage, some of which endowed the sport with a Western aura by noting its popularity in Europe and America. Han's film capitalizes on this enthusiasm, incorporating a visually dynamic bit of Korean

public culture that had complex associations with colonialism, nationalism, and cosmopolitanism.⁷

Han uses judo in *My Sister Is a Hussy* to create feminist spectacles in which a woman physically contests the Confucian principle of female inferiority (*namjon-yöbi*). Sun-ae, in keeping with her prickly personality, uses judo to beat up every man who displeases her. Each of these encounters is treated as a privileged spectacle as the narrative pauses, the camera pulls back to a long shot, and the wide Cinemascope screen displays in full these surprising scenes of female physical prowess. Spectacle works here to challenge Confucian gender ideology by repeatedly offering evidence of a woman's physical superiority to a man. The visual excitement, emotional intensity, and sheer unexpectedness of these spectacles works to displace the abstract ideal of the Confucian principle.

The first explosion of female force arrives with the introduction of the main characters, and takes up the question of women in public. The film opens with the sisters, attired in Western-style dress, enjoying themselves in a public park; modern women, they are claiming the right to inhabit public space unaccompanied by a protective man. When two men make unwanted sexual suggestions, Sun-ae pretends to be interested and suggests they go to a secluded area, but when they arrive she turns her judo skills against the men. Sun-ae flips both men, who end up lying in a heap on the ground, and the two sisters walk away laughing. Rather than being forced out of public space by threats against their sexual virtue, the women physically defend their right to be there. Han takes care to present their violence as a legitimate act of self-defense against male harassment. One can imagine the thrill that this scene must have given some female viewers, who no doubt shared similar experiences as they moved into public life. A second scene of female judo expertise revolves around the issue of arranged marriage. When a suitor, invited to the house by Sun-ae's father, replies to her questions with some sexual innuendo about enjoying indoor sports involving two people, Sun-ae takes this as an invitation to do judo with him. She quickly throws him to the ground and then smirks as he crawls away on his hands and knees, his groveling, like the prone bodies of the men in the park, visually enhanced by the wide screen. Again, one can imagine this scene providing delight to those female viewers, growing in number in the 1950s, who wanted to choose their own husbands.

The third spectacle of judo revolves around the duties of a wife. Newly married, Sun-ae sits on the floor in a Western dress looking in a mirror and applying makeup, a classic image of the modern woman as narcissist (video 7). When her husband calls her from another room, she ignores him. Her behavior contrasts sharply with the preceding scene, in which her sister, dressed in a *hanbok*, lovingly tends to her husband. When Sun-ae's husband complains that she is not taking care of him and demands that she get his shirt, she refuses and snaps, "I'm not the maid," thereby raising the issue of wifely servitude. Asserting his masculine authority, he slaps her. Sun-ae does not submit, however, and instead she kicks



VIDEO 7. Clip from *My Sister Is a Hussy*.

To watch this video, scan the QR code with your mobile device or visit
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/luminos.85.7/>



him and flips him twice, leaving him moaning on the ground as she, like Ibsen's Nora, leaves the house. This is a genuinely shocking inversion of the gender hierarchy in which Sun-ae not only resists her husband's authority but asserts her own superior physical strength. Unlike the previous judo scenes, the tone shifts away from comedy towards something more foreboding, creating the implication that Sun-ae has crossed some sort of line.

What follows is the most disturbing scene of punishment in all of Han's extant films. When her father finds out what she has done to her husband, he decides to teach her a lesson. He invites Sun-ae into the dojo and delivers a physically and emotionally devastating beating. As he throws her onto the tatami mats over and over, heightened sound effects of her body hitting the floor convey how much she is being hurt. The father, who has heretofore been an exceptionally mild figure, is now asserting his patriarchal authority in a brute, physical way. As Sun-ae lies crying on the floor, he tells her that she needs to accept the role of a woman and learn to "serve her husband." When she replies that she is not a "slave"—the same term used by Helen Kim, Lee Tai-young, and Jaesoon in *A Jealousy* to characterize a woman's role in the patriarchal family—he beats her more. Towering over her prone body, he says he would rather kill her with his own hands than let her continue to behave in such a way. And indeed Sun-ae does appear to be dead, although she eventually gets up and staggers out. The scene is long and brutally violent, without a shred of humor or lightness. It presents one of the most sustained articulations of Confucian gender ideology—both visually and through dialogue—in all of Han's films: a dead daughter is preferable to a disobedient wife.

After this spectacle of punishment, one might expect the film to conclude quickly thereafter: the deviant woman learns her lesson, reconciles with her husband, and

lives happily ever after. Instead, the film continues with several more spectacles of female judo prowess. On her walk home alone, Sun-ae is assaulted in the street by the ruffians she beat up in the park. Sun-ae resists briefly, but then submits, as if she has decided to accept her subservient relationship to male authority. Suddenly her sister Seon-hui appears and rescues Sun-ae, flipping the men multiple times in arcing movements that Han captures elegantly within the Cinemascope frame. After the men limp away, Seon-hui chastises Sun-ae for letting herself be beaten up by delinquents and instead misusing her judo on her husband. This scene also feels like a plausible ending: having renounced judo herself and learned a lesson from her sister about the legitimate objects of female power, Sun-ae can live happily ever after with her husband.

Instead, she goes home and picks up her argument with her husband right where she left off. It turns out she is not repentant and has no intention of submitting to his authority. She kicks him out of their bedroom, throws his bedclothes after him, and forces him to spend the night in a separate room. Han's final spectacle of female physical power follows soon thereafter. During the night a burglar breaks into Sun-ae's room. Her husband, awakened by the noise, rushes and attacks him, only to knock out Sun-ae with a stray punch. The burglar quickly beats the husband into unconsciousness. At this point Sun-ae gets up, attacks the thief using her judo, and knocks him out—all the while wearing a flimsy white nightgown. A moment later her husband comes to and they embrace. Here is the film's real climax, and moral lesson: far from abandoning her physical power, Sun-ae must hold on to it and channel it appropriately, using it to defend her home and protect her husband, a visibly weaker creature who needs her help. (Two years later Kim Jin-kyu would play another man beaten into unconsciousness who needs to be rescued by a woman, in Han's *Prince Hodong* [1962].)

With this final verdict on female power rendered, the film can come to an end, and it does so with the obligatory scene of female domestication. In the brief coda, Sun-ae is wearing a *hanbok* (for the first time) and serves her husband (for the first time) a traditional Korean breakfast on a small *soban* table-tray. The husband compliments Sun-ae on her looks and her cooking, and praises her as a wise mother and good wife; she, in turn, helps put on and brush his coat, doing all the things her younger sister had previously done for her own husband. The final shots show her husband, now accompanied by her father, walking together in the public street as Sun-ae waves to them from the safety of her home. Not only have "proper" gender roles been restored, but the gendered separation of public and private spheres has been affirmed, and Korean forms of food and dress have replaced Western fashions and ideas of female autonomy.

Yet this brief moment of narrative closure fails to lock down the film's meaning. In fact, the very legitimacy of patriarchy as a hegemonic system has been called into question by the excessive quality of Sun-ae's punishment at the hands of her father. The beating that he delivers is so over-the-top that it becomes a spectacle

of masculine brutality rather than of legitimate authority and thus undermines rather than affirms his patriarchal precepts. If a woman must be beaten nearly to death in order to accept her “proper” role in a marriage, it suggests that her submission no longer has any real legitimacy. A relationship sustained by force rather than consent is tyrannical, not consensual, and the excess of the father’s violence reveals this. This ambivalence is reinforced by the star persona of actor Kim Seung-ho, who made his career playing “vanishing” and impotent patriarchs whose Confucian values have become outdated. Although his visual presentation and use of physical force in the dojo scene endow him with abundant potency, viewers familiar with his other films may have projected this aura of outmodedness onto the character he plays in this film as well.⁸ The result is that the final act of narrative closure restores patriarchy, but not absolutely. Sun-ae has learned to hold her judo in check, not give it up, and her power remains latent. As her husband banters with her while she shines his shoes, she warns him, “If you tease me, I’ll go back to being a hussy,” implying that her submission to him is conditional and that violence against him remains a possibility. Because her superior physical power has been treated as spectacle, it cannot be forgotten—by her husband or the viewer. It has been displayed too frequently, too intensely, and too attractively for its meanings to be wholly sidelined.

Contemporary reviews capture the tension between narrative and spectacle as competing producers of thematic meaning and cinematic pleasure. The *Chosŏn ilbo*’s reviewer begins by commenting on the film’s cosmopolitan dimension, observing that “judo fever” is high “in many countries including Europe, America, and Japan” and that the sisters live a “foreign” lifestyle characterized by “a leisurely household” and “time to spare.” Alongside a photograph of the wedding ceremony, the reviewer praises the narrative’s “happy ending” that shows Sun-ae “reeducated in the Eastern duties a woman must follow,” thus reading the film’s narrative closure as a rejection of judo’s cosmopolitan and feminist associations.⁹ The reviewer at the *Kyŏnghyang sinmun*, in contrast, emphasized the film’s spectacle. Accompanied by a still of Sun-ae throwing a man onto the ground, this review expressed delight at the sight of “a huge man being taken down by the skills of a fabulous woman” and noted that in judo Sun-ae has become “better than men.”¹⁰ Each reviewer arrives at a markedly different interpretation of the female protagonist—submissive to men or superior to men—by privileging either narrative or spectacle as the film’s primary expressive mode.

MAMBO: MADAME FREEDOM

One of the most compelling spectacles in all of 1950s cinema occurs in the middle of *Madame Freedom*: a mambo music and dance performance that brings the narrative to a grinding halt and solicits the viewer’s full attention (video 1 in chapter 5). The scene begins with a close-up of a trumpeter as he plays the solo

in “Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White,” a worldwide hit recorded in 1955 by the “king of mambo,” Damaso Pérez Prado. As the camera crane pulls back and begins its own spectacular movement through the space, it picks up Mme Oh and Mr. Shin as they enter the dance hall and follows them to their table. Once they are seated, the eleven-man jazz band, heavy on brass and replete with bongos and maracas, launches into Pérez Prado’s version of “Que Rico el Mambo.” A woman hops down a set of stairs from the stage and begins to dance. She is an exotic vision: sheathed in a tight black dress slit to the thighs, she wears a flower in her permed hair and sports bare shoulders, legs, and feet. Her performance is mesmerizing. As she dances to a propulsive Latin beat, she raises her arms skyward, shimmies her shoulders, and swivels her hips, opening up her body to the camera’s gaze. Diagonal rows of white fringe on her dress accentuate her curves and quiver enticingly when she shakes. The scene presents a richly sensuous depiction of a modern place and time: the elaborately decorated nightclub is filled with the sound of big-band Latin jazz, the sight of the dancer’s luxurious costume and artfully made-up face, the motions of her body, and even a vicarious sense of tactility as she touches herself. Long and medium shots reveal the dancer’s body in full and include members of the band, who are themselves objects of visual and aural interest; close-ups of the dancer’s body privilege the viewer’s gaze, providing more intimate access than any member of the diegetic audience would be able to experience. The performance’s extended duration—a full three minutes, uninterrupted by dialogue—loosens its ties to the narrative and heightens the autonomous pleasure of the scene.

As much as this performance functions as a stand-alone spectacle for the film viewer, it is also a spectacle for the audience within the film. Contra Laura Mulvey, Han edited the scene to privilege Mme Oh’s gaze. The dancer is introduced only after Mme Oh turns to look at her, and Han cuts repeatedly to Mme Oh’s reaction shots during the performance, revealing her face as it registers what seems to be a mix of wonder, confusion, and admiration. That she is profoundly affected by what she sees is indicated by the scene’s pivotal position within the arc of Mme Oh’s development: after watching it, she dances in public herself for the first time and pursues her own individual pleasures with greater enthusiasm. Spectacle here functions as a mode of pedagogy: as Mme Oh watches the dancer, she learns things that change the course of her life. What kinds of lessons did mambo convey? And how did mambo come to be in this Korean dance hall to begin with? I want to suggest that mambo was part of a curriculum in cosmopolitan modernity that the US military inadvertently introduced into Korea as it entertained its own troops. As a scene of education, the mambo performance outshines the earnestly nationalist yet visually dull lessons in Korean grammar that Mme Oh’s husband, Prof. Jang, offers his female students.

Mambo was a global phenomenon in the 1950s, one of the most cosmopolitan sounds in a period when the Cold War was opening up new cultural circuits

across the globe. According to cultural historian Gustavo Pérez Firmat, mambo was a profoundly transnational musical form, “conceived in Cuba, nurtured in Mexico, and brought to maturity in the United States.” The Afro-Cuban musician and bandleader Pérez Prado was the individual most responsible for determining “its musical shape and its commercial success.” In 1949 Pérez Prado left Cuba for Mexico City, recorded “Que Rico el Mambo,” and launched the mambo craze across Latin America, which quickly spread to the United States after the song’s release there in 1951. Mambo, according to Pérez Firmat, was a music of “ostentatious hybridness.” It combined Afro-Cuban rhythms with a North American big-band jazz instrumentation that featured large woodwind and brass sections. A “bicultural creation” of Cuban and American musics, it was described at the time as a “stew of sounds”—*a musical budae jjigae*, as it were. Mambo reached its fullest flowering in the ethnically diverse neighborhoods of New York City and then spread around the world, carried by an array of media including live performances, recordings, radio broadcasts, movies, and magazines.¹¹

Mambo involved more than just music. It was something to see as well as hear, a spectacle that merged the visual with the aural. Pérez Prado, like Han Hyung-mo, believed in showmanship¹² and he liked to prowling across the stage in a zoot suit, delivering his signature grunt and “punting the brass into action with a swift kick of his right foot.”¹³ Other mambo musicians of the day were known to “slither,” “roll on the floor,” and lie “prone on the ground” while playing their instruments. Dance played a central role in the global mambo phenomenon. According to Robert Farris Thompson, Afro-Cuban dancers, inspired by Hollywood’s all-black musicals of the 1940s such as *Cabin in the Sky* (1943), developed mambo by combining the lindy hop’s swing-outs and spins with the hip-centered movements of the rumba. As the dance migrated internationally, characteristic moves emerged, including “arms akimbo” stances, bodies that “quivered” in a shimmy, the shuffling of bare feet and the opening of mouths, and a woman’s step dubbed “the head” that involved “standing in place, weaving one hand in space, then the other, while rattling the head with puppet-like suddenness.” (This last move, according to Thompson, “announces the aura, of the coming of the spirit, among priestesses of the traditional religion of the Akan in Ghana.”)¹⁴ *Madame Freedom’s* mambo dancer was remarkably in step with these conventions as they developed in Havana, Mexico City, and New York. Barefoot and arms akimbo, she shimmies, quivers, and even does a version of “the head,” closing her eyes as if being transported to another plane of existence.

The mambo craze hit Asia hard and was embraced with wild enthusiasm by listeners and dancers in Taiwan, Japan, and even Communist China. In the Philippines, President Ramon Magsaysay was swept into office in 1953, buoyed by CIA support and the song “Mambo Magsaysay,” which he credited with giving his campaign its dynamism. In 1956 a Chinese-language version of Rosemary Clooney’s novelty song “Mambo Italiano” became a hit under the title “Cha Shao

Bao,” its lyrics localized to refer to different varieties of steamed buns. Mambo was controversial as well as popular. In China, Communist officials lambasted mambo as a vehicle for decadent “bourgeois ideology and sentiments.” In Japan, provincial education officials complained that “mambo is an indecent, corrupt music that is designed to highlight sexual desires” and called for a ban. In Taiwan, a security agency banned the Chinese-language version of “Papa Loves Mambo”—whose lyrics in English include the line “Papa’s lookin’ for Mama, but Mama is nowhere in sight”—for being “unwholesome.” Korea was no exception to the mambo craze, and the phrase “Hey! Mambo,” derived from Clooney’s song, became a popular catchphrase.¹⁵

Mambo formed part of the soundtrack for the new lives that were taking shape in postcolonial and postwar East Asia. It embodied a sense of the new, and it brought together a nascent postwar youth culture with the democratic values that the United States was promoting. The influx of mambo had a gendered dimension, suggesting in particular the transformation of young women’s lives. In 1957, Hong Kong’s MP&GI studio released *Mambo Girl*, a music- and dance-filled film that established Grace Chang’s star persona as the “charismatic embodiment of modern feminine identity.” Regarded by Jean Ma and other critics as the “single most representative work of postwar Mandarin cinema,” the mambo-rich film stimulated the “cosmopolitan imaginary” of postwar Hong Kong film. In the films that followed, female stars such as Chang and Linda Lin Dai embraced popular Western music and dance, as well as the latest fashions and international travel, becoming the “point of access to a world beyond local borders” and ushering in a period of “cosmopolitan worldliness.” The situation was similar in Japan where the youngest daughter of Emperor Hirohito was hailed as an icon of Japan’s modern young women. In addition to bucking tradition by driving a car and marrying a commoner, she took a job as a radio DJ. Her theme song? A mambo titled “Princess Suga,” written for her by Pérez Prado. Across East Asia in the 1950s and 1960s, writes Jean Ma, “cosmopolitanism had a feminine accent”—and a mambo beat.¹⁶

Given Korea’s poverty after the war, which limited access to foreign recorded music, how did mambo enter Korea? Through which circuits, to use Andrew F. Jones’s term, did this music flow? Kathleen McHugh points to the role of popular Mexican films. Mexican cinema in the 1940s and early 1950s was experiencing its own Golden Age, and dramas set in the mambo-saturated world of cabarets and nightclubs formed a rich vein of production. These films, many of them featuring Pérez Prado himself, served as one of the most important vehicles for mambo’s global diffusion. As McHugh points out, Han Hyung-mo’s staging of the mambo performance seems to be indebted to these Mexican films, echoing their setting, costuming, cinematography, style of dance, and, of course, music. While Korean film import records are spotty before 1956, the Mexican film industry was interested in Asian markets, and some Mexican films were imported in the later 1950s,

so it is possible that Han saw some of these films in Korean theaters.¹⁷ Mambo, however, flowed into Korea through multiple channels.

While the State Department sent Benny Goodman to South Korea in 1957 as part of its jazz-based cultural diplomacy effort aimed at nonaligned and decolonizing nations, it was the US military that created a capillary system through which mambo flowed into Korea.¹⁸ Here again we see how the American armed forces functioned in Korea as a cultural institution. The US military served as a global disseminator of Western popular music. It was a sprawling, transnational entity with vast entertainment needs, and the ethnic diversity of its troops—a consequence, in part, of America’s imperial reach into the Caribbean—created pathways for Latin music to flow into Korea. The Eighth US Army introduced mambo into South Korea just as it was taking off in the United States. During the early years of the Korean War, members of the Puerto Rican Sixty-Fifth Regiment created a band called the Mambo Boys and entertained soldiers across the country, often playing near the front lines and in theaters before film screenings. Similar live performances continued after the war as GI musical groups entertained troops; mambo was so popular that one soldier show featured a mambo version of the iconic Korean folk song “Arirang.” AFKN radio, the US military network, played all the hit songs of the day, and military service clubs offered mambo and other dance lessons. The Far East Army and Air Force Motion Picture Service published 45 rpm records of popular songs, including mambos such as Pérez Prado’s 1954 hit recording of “Skokiaan,” which were played in service clubs and sold in military PX stores.¹⁹ More spectacularly, the Eighth US Army hosted tours of big-name Latin bandleaders: Xavier Cugat toured US bases in Korea in 1953, and Pérez Prado himself arrived in September 1956—three months after *Madame Freedom’s* release—and performed for thousands of GIs. These celebrities also turned up on AFKN-TV (the US military TV network in Korea), which rebroadcast Pérez Prado’s appearance on “The Ed Sullivan Show” in 1958. The EUSA also distributed American magazines, which covered the mambo phenomenon extensively, as part of its standard soldier-entertainment package, so images of mambo dancers and fashions circulated as well.²⁰

While these iterations of mambo were aimed at Americans, quite a few Koreans had access to them as well. KATUSA soldiers (Korean Augmentees to the US Army), civilian employees of the military, and invited guests would have attended Xavier Cugat’s and Pérez Prado’s shows; Korean waitresses and dance partners were always present in military service clubs; Korean radio and TV sets picked up AFKN’s broadcasts; and American records and magazines found their way easily into Korean hands through the black market and other channels. The mastery of mambo by Korean musicians, who sometimes played alongside Americans in US military bands, was apparent by mid-decade. When a Korean singer performed for UN servicemen in 1956 as part of a “Korea’s Night” culture show, she sang “Arirang,” of course, but also “Mambo, Mambo,” which she delivered, according to

Stars and Stripes, with an “Eartha Kitt inflection” that left the “predominantly male audience howling for an encore.”²¹

Mambo also flowed into Korea from Japan, where its tremendous popularity was likewise linked to the US military. A sizable American population during the occupation (1945–52) and Korean War (1950–53) years stimulated the emergence of Japan’s lively jazz scene. Singer Misora Hibari had her biggest hit in 1954 with the song “Omatsuri Mambo,” and by 1955 American critics in Japan were complaining that mambo was appearing in practically every musical stage show, whether thematically appropriate or not, and homegrown Latin-music bands such as the Tokyo Cuban Boys and the Tokyo Mambo Orchestra had become well established.²² Unlike in Korea, where he performed only military engagements, Pérez Prado played to ninety thousand ecstatic fans during a single week of his month-long tour of Japan in 1956. He was the guest of honor in a three-hour parade, and the subject of a two-hour TV show. The musical border between Japan and Korea, like the one surrounding the US military bases, was porous. Korean newspapers commented on the mambo craze in Japan, and southern Korean cities and towns picked up Japanese radio and TV broadcasts.²³

What kinds of meanings might *Madame Freedom*’s mambo scene have conveyed to its audiences? As with other of Han’s cosmopolitan spectacles, this mambo performance entailed a degree of mimicry, as the dancer reproduces a set of moves that clearly originated elsewhere. In doing so, she is also claiming and recirculating some of their meanings. Jazz music in general carried powerful associations with individual creativity and freedom. This made it attractive to cultural Cold Warriors, who embraced it as “emblematic of the radical differences in human liberty between the ‘free world’ and the communist realm.”²⁴ As a form of dance, mambo also carried a specifically gendered set of associations relating to female sexuality. Mambo had an improvisatory dimension that conveyed a sense of sexual freedom. This was expressed through the seemingly “uninhibited” quality of the bodily movements, the “expression of ineluctable bliss” on dancers’ faces, and the insistence, in both music and dance, on a near-continuous sexually ecstatic experience. This aesthetic of improvisation also communicated a sense of individual freedom that was not found in other forms of social dance. As partners separated on the dance floor, the woman was liberated from the man’s guiding lead, leaving her “free to dance around her partner” just as “he was free to dance around her.” This linkage of sexuality and freedom led observers around the world to characterize the mambo as “primitive.”²⁵ In the Korean context, this primitivism took on a Picasso-like modernist quality that suggested the possibility of liberation from what some dancers no doubt regarded as the dead weight of tradition.

The nightclub performer in *Madame Freedom* communicates precisely this modern-primitive sense of sexual freedom. She channels an exuberant and mischievous sexuality, combined with a powerful vision of female autonomy. In one repeated gesture she stands with legs apart and thrusts her hand towards her pubic

area, arching her back and opening her mouth into a pleasantly surprised “O” as she gazes upward with ecstatic pleasure. The move has an unmistakably autoerotic dimension and offers a compelling vision of female sexual pleasure independent of any male participation—the ultimate après girl gesture. Like the judo spectacles in *My Sister Is a Husky*, this stand-alone musical number asserts a counterweight to the reassertion of patriarchal control at the film’s conclusion. With its loose ties to the surrounding story, it is able to express an alternative set of values that celebrate rather than condemn female sexual autonomy. And because the mambo dancer is not a character within the narrative, the vision of energy and abundance that she embodies is not subject to the narrative’s conservative closure: the film does not condemn her behavior through dialogue or visual suggestion. Instead, the scene offers a rich sensory experience that expresses ideas of women’s sexual autonomy and pleasure in ways that remain apart from the ideological containment of the narrative, even as it directly challenges Confucian ideals of female self-denial.

Mambo in Korea, as elsewhere in Asia, thus took on a set of gendered associations with personal freedom, release from male authority, and a female sexuality liberated from the demand to reproduce the patriarchal family. With these associations the word *mambo* escaped the realm of music and dance and became a free-floating synonym for modern. At a time when Korean women rarely wore pants, for instance, the slim-fitting cropped pants that fashionable young women began to wear were quickly dubbed “mambo pants.” Apparently inspired by Audrey Hepburn’s costume in *Sabrina* (1954), which was created by French designer Givenchy, mambo pants shocked Koreans who thought them overly sexual in the way that they revealed the shape of a woman’s backside and legs.²⁶ As such they were embraced by filmmakers seeking costumes for their après girl characters, such as the charismatic prostitute Sonia in Shin Sang-ok’s *Flower in Hell* (1958).

It is these lessons in personal freedom and sexual autonomy that Mme Oh imbibes from the mambo performer. Immediately after watching her, Mme Oh ventures out onto the dance floor herself, taking first Mr. Shin and then Mr. Han into her arms. She finds the dancing intoxicating and liberating, and increasingly seeks it out as the movie progresses. As she dances in public, Mme Oh performs her growing sense of autonomy and independence, her willingness to break from social norms, and her desire for sensuous bodily pleasures. Like many other fictional characters and social actors in Asia during the 1950s and 1960s, she physically enacts an expanding sense of her own possibilities via the mechanism of Western social dance.

Part of *Madame Freedom*’s “cinema of attractions” quality derives from the presence of celebrities. Han often poached well-known personalities from the larger arena of public culture, which he treated as a reservoir of human resources to be tapped at will. The mambo scene featured two prominent cultural figures: dancer Na Bok-hui, who was known as “No. 1 in the Korean Mambo World,” and trumpeter and band leader Park Ju-geun, who was an important figure in the postwar

Korean jazz scene.²⁷ As celebrities, they function as a form of cinematic excess. Because their identities are rooted outside the confines of the film, they threaten to pull the viewer's attention out of the narrative flow and onto themselves as autonomous performers. They appear in a presentational, rather than representational, mode: they are simply themselves, rather than pretending to be fictional characters. Park and Na were particularly high-status performers, and thus attractive to Han, because they performed primarily for Americans in what were known as Eighth Army shows. Until the mid-1960s, the live music scene in Korea ran on two parallel tracks. On one track were performers who sang Korean-language songs for Korean audiences in Korean venues, such as nightclubs, theaters, and even the Midopa department store.²⁸ Han borrowed celebrities from this track, including composer Park Si-chun, who appeared as the doctor in *Hyperbolae of Youth*, and the singer Baek Seol-hui, who performed in *Madame Freedom's* luncheon scene. On the other track were performers like Park and Na, who performed mostly Western music for American audiences in US military venues. There was some overlap of these tracks, as performers on the Eighth Army circuit sometimes played in the best Seoul theaters or appeared on Korean radio, but not much. Performers on the Eighth Army circuit had a significantly higher status due to their association with Americans, their access to the US military bases, their ability to use English, their immersion in Western musical culture, their often higher levels of education, and their higher earning power. In incorporating Na Bok-hui, Park Ju-geun, and Baek Seol-hui into his film, Han bridged these two domains of musical public culture. Han's showmanship in *Madame Freedom* thus involved not just presenting a compelling scene of music and dance, but also in making high-status performers available to a broad swath of the Korean population, who might not have been able to see them otherwise.²⁹

The Eighth Army shows played a major role in Korea's culture and economy. From the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s, the fifty to eighty thousand troops stationed around Korea created an enormous demand for entertainment.³⁰ The US military bases were home to an estimated 264 service clubs, many of which wanted live entertainment several nights a week, far more than military troupes and the USO could provide. To meet the demand, the US military turned to Korean musicians, singers, and dancers. The Eighth Army shows were a large-scale phenomenon, providing employment to many Korean entertainers and a large percentage of the live entertainment for GIs. In October 1954, for example, 25 separate Korean show units, which together employed 363 people, gave 556 performances to 170,000 GIs, or almost 50 percent of the total audience.³¹ At a time when the average annual per capita income was less than \$125, top-rated show groups were paid that much for a three-hour show, which meant that entertainers—many of whom were women—were able to achieve a measure of comfort in their lives and support other family members. Music historians estimate that the military spent about \$1 million annually on Korean entertainers, although earnings for some years were much

higher. The *Seoul Kyung Jae* newspaper reported, for instance, that entertainers in 1959 earned \$2.8 million, which was more than the value of all the domestically manufactured products that Korea sold to the ROK and UN Armed Forces in 1958.³² (Korean entertainers were paid out of the Eighth Army Major Command Welfare Fund, which was funded, in part, through income generated by PX stores—which meant that purchases of PX goods for resale on the black market helped pay the salaries of Korean entertainers as well as providing income to the black-marketers.)

The US military inadvertently facilitated the professionalization of popular music through its bureaucratic system of auditions, ratings, and performance reviews. This was similar to what the Asia Foundation intentionally sought to do with the film industry and publishing. The Americans who served on audition committees helped shape the shows' content and performance style according to American tastes. The performers, in turn, learned how to perform a range of Western popular music, so as to appeal to the military's diverse population. The singer Miss K, for instance, imitated Elvis Presley by holding the microphone stand at an angle; Miss Kim Hye-kyeong sang in the style of Nat King Cole; the Western Jubilee band specialized in country music; and the MBC band played jazz.³³ Performers learned how to sing in English, even if they didn't understand the words, and how to be entertaining and physically attractive, according to American standards. They learned, in other words, how to create a visual spectacle as well as an aural one. The shows also facilitated the professionalization of Korean managers and talent agents, who emerged to help the hundreds of performers navigate the military's entertainment system. Na Bok-hui's and Park Ju-geun's polished performances in *Madame Freedom* were products of this system. So were those of the Kim Sisters, the singing nurses in the opening scene of *Hyperbolae of Youth*.³⁴ Na's experience on the Eighth Army Show circuit no doubt contributed to the air of professionalization that she brings to Han's film. For all her exuberant sexuality, she comes across as a well-trained performer rather than an object of exploitation. The sexual autonomy that she mimes is paralleled by the professional autonomy that she radiates.

These Eighth Army shows make visible the complex role that mimicry played in the development of postwar Korean public culture. As these Korean musicians, singers, and performers gave their customers what they wanted, they laid the foundations for an indigenous popular music that would flourish in the 1960s and that was less beholden to Japanese music than were the Korean-language "trot" songs of the 1950s. Mimicry functioned as a tool of cultural redefinition: by copying American music, Koreans freed themselves of some of their colonial legacies. As David Scott Diffrient has argued in relation to Korean "remakes" of Western and Japanese films, such acts of copying were a crucial part of postwar cultural reconstruction.³⁵ Mimicry can be understood as a stage in cultural development, especially in the case of a small country navigating between more powerful

empires. It is how cultural producers learn a body of skills that can later be put in the service of more fully localized cultural production. The Eighth Army shows thus functioned as what Pil Ho Kim and Hyunjoon Shin have dubbed cultural “incubators”: they served as a training ground for Korean musicians of a cosmopolitan bent who were seeking new idioms for expressing distinctly postwar and postcolonial identities.³⁶

Han Hyung-mo was a secondary beneficiary of these incubators, which produced a field of local talent upon which he could draw. In seeking to give his viewers the best “service” possible, he sought out performers who had been professionally nurtured by the Eighth Army shows, as well as stars from the Korean-language circuit. His musical spectacles of Eddie Fisher songs and mambo dance were thus enabled, in diverse ways, by the entertainment infrastructure created by the US military.

FASHION

Han Hyung-mo opened *The Pure Love* (1957) with yet another kind of attraction: a virtual fashion show. Set on a beach, the scene starts out in spectacle mode, with a series of panning and tracking shots across a crowded beach that mimic the gaze of a strolling person. It presents the viewer with an engaging vista of ocean, sand, umbrellas, a water skier, and plenty of men and women in revealing bathing suits. Bodies are on display. The act of looking is emphasized when several sunbathers begin frantically pointing towards the sea, which prompts a cut to a point-of-view shot of a boating accident. After a brief scene in a hospital, the film returns to the beach for a montage sequence in which the female accident victim, In-sun (Kim Ui-hyang), looks for, finds, and goes on several dates with her rescuer, a painter (Seong So-min) (video 8). Over the course of this sequence, In-sun appears in seven extremely fashionable outfits. These include mambo pants, a white square-neck T-shirt worn snug atop matching short-shorts with a contrasting black belt, and a flesh-toned maillot with spaghetti straps, a ruffle along the top that accentuates her amply supported breasts, and a small decorative flower at the thigh. This fashion display is structured as a leisurely series of long and medium shots that are filmed straight on and allow the viewer to examine the costumes closely. Diegetically, these revealing Western-style clothes establish In-sun’s character as a sexually adventurous *après* girl who actively pursues a man in whom she has a romantic interest. At the same time, the number of outfits and the visual attention devoted to them constitutes a spectacle that far exceeds the demands of the narrative. One or two would have sufficed for sketching her character; seven outfits constitute cinematic excess that commands the viewer’s attention in its own right. Sexualized display is clearly part of this spectacle. But something more is going on.

In-sun works as an airline stewardess, a glamorous job that in the 1950s carried associations with capitalist and cosmopolitan modernity.³⁷ Travel is a key



VIDEO 8. Clip from *The Pure Love*.

To watch this video, scan the QR code with your mobile device or visit
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/luminos.85.8/>



element of her *après* girl characterization. She lives alone in an apartment decorated with an airline poster of Manila and a miniature airplane, and, when not dressed in fashionable outfits, sports a smart, professional uniform. Her flight to Hong Kong creates an opportunity for a brief touristic interlude in which the city's exotic sights—a sampan-crowded harbor, rickshaw-lined streets—are displayed for the viewer's pleasure. Her international travel extends the associations between modernity and female mobility that *The Hand of Destiny* and *Madame Freedom* forged with the automobile (an association that *Yŏwŏn* would likewise make in its "Miss Earring's World Adventure" travel series in 1961). International travel was also a component of Korea's Free World integration, as the Asia Foundation's support for international conferences attests. When the Minnesota-based Northwest Orient Airlines added Seoul and Busan into its pan-Pacific flight route in 1954, the airline became both a symbol of South Korea's engagement with the Free World and a means to achieve it. When *Yŏwŏn* published a photo essay on modern office etiquette in its second issue as part of its exploration of the working woman, it used a female travel agent as its subject and positioned a Northwest brochure directly

in front of her, alongside posters of London, Hong Kong, and Washington, DC.³⁸ And when Asia Foundation president Robert Blum traveled to South Korea and writer Kim Mal-bong traveled to America, they flew on Northwest Orient as well.

With *The Pure Love* and other films, Han incorporated into his film a particularly dynamic dimension of South Korean public culture: fashion. In the context of postwar South Korea, I am using the term *fashion* to refer to the embrace of Western-style women's clothing that calls attention to itself for its currency with contemporary styles in Europe and America (although as Steven Chung has noted, the *hanbok* was undergoing its own fashionable transformation in this period).³⁹ All clothing functions as an expressive medium that conveys information about the wearer's identity in terms of age, gender, occupation, and other defining categories. Traditional clothing, or what Ted Polhemus and Lynn Procter have dubbed "anti-fashion," emphasizes the wearers' collective, social identity and their adherence to long-standing shared values. "Fashion," in contrast, is defined by its newness. It is a statement of belief in the positive value of change. According to Malcolm Barnard, every fashionable item of dress "is a challenge and a contestation of the *status quo*. . . . It is the embodiment of difference, change, and of things not staying the way they are." For Grant McCracken, fashion serves as an expressive medium "through which social change is contemplated, proposed, initiated, enforced, and denied." Fashion conveys the ideals of individual self-expression, and of voluntary affiliation and disaffiliation with social groups, thus contributing to the construction of self-identity that Anthony Giddens regards as central to modernity.⁴⁰ In postwar Korean cinema, fashion functioned as a kind of billboard announcing the wearer's commitment to social change enacted at the level of the individual woman.

Han was among the first filmmakers to make fashion a central part of his style, and it figured prominently in the "feasts for the eyes" that he provided for his viewers. He regularly drew upon the emerging worlds of professional and street-level Korean fashion to create his spectacles, and as a result became known in the film industry for his "cutting edge" and "scandalous" costumes.⁴¹ Other filmmakers followed his cue, and the prominent use of Western fashion became a distinctive feature of postwar film style, where it served as a visual cue for a female character's attitude towards the sweeping changes that were remaking postwar Korea.

By dressing actresses in up-to-date Western fashions, Han and other directors claimed glamour for Korean women. Long the exclusive property of white women in Hollywood films and Western fashion magazines, glamour signifies affluence, sophistication, and worldliness. By making their actresses glamorous, filmmakers asserted that Koreans can rightfully occupy that elevated cultural space alongside Western women. The use of fashion as spectacle can also be read as a reaction against Japanese colonial visual discourse. As Michael Robinson, Todd Henry, and Youngna Kim have shown, spectacles of modernity such as neon street signage

and industrial expositions were common in colonial Seoul, but they served to construct primarily the Japanese as truly modern.⁴² The mass of Koreans, in contrast, were constructed as what E. Taylor Atkins has called Japan's "primitive selves"—a developmentally stagnant branch of a shared racial stock—and colonial officials directed considerable resources to public displays of the archaeology and folk culture of Japan's "backward cousins."⁴³ Clothing figured prominently in visual ascriptions of Korean backwardness, and Hyung Il Pai has shown how the colonial tourist industry symbolized this "Old Korea" via photographs of Korean women dressed in traditional *hanbok* and posed in rural settings.⁴⁴ As in Western colonial discourse, the denial of coevalness via visual constructions of the colonized woman as "traditional" helped to reinforce colonial hierarchies of power and justify foreign rule as an instance of a "civilizing mission." The panoply of fashionably dressed Korean women in postwar films can thus be read not simply as copies of Western femininity or titillating erotic displays, but also as a reaction against a colonial visual culture that used "traditional" costumes to signify Koreans' inferior status. Glamour and fashion served as postcolonial tools for extracting Korea from Japan's anthropological temporality and asserting claims of coeval modernity instead.

The 1950s was a transitional period during which many Korean women began wearing Western-style clothes for the first time. Although Korean men had adopted Western-style uniforms and suits at the turn of the century, most women continued to wear *hanbok* throughout the 1940s. The *hanbok*, which literally means "Korean clothing," is composed of two main parts: the *ch'ima*, a long, bell-shaped wrap skirt that ties across the chest or hangs from shoulder straps, and the *jŏgori*, a long-sleeved short jacket that falls just below the breasts. This loose-fitting outfit visually obscured the shape of a woman's body, but also threatened to reveal it in embarrassing ways. Because the wrap skirt was unsecured in the back, the wearer had to use one hand to bring the fabric forward to prevent her backside from being exposed, while the short jacket threatened to reveal her underarms if she raised her arms too high. The *hanbok* thus hindered a woman's movements, physically reinforcing Confucian ideals of feminine grace and modesty. As women moved into public life, they often found Western clothes more practical for working, riding public transportation, and even walking in the streets, as well as more comfortable than the flowing *hanbok*.⁴⁵ By the end of the 1950s Western clothes had become the norm for younger urban women, while the *hanbok* was reserved for married women and over the course of the 1960s became marked as ceremonial clothing.

Widespread poverty during and after the war stimulated the speed and scope of this sartorial transformation. Relief goods sent by American churches and charitable organizations provided the largest source of clothing, and Koreans modified military surplus items such as uniforms, blankets, and parachutes into practical

garments.⁴⁶ High-heeled shoes and accessories such as purses came into Korea through black-market channels, and many a Korean girlfriend ordered outfits from the Sears and J. C. Penney “moose manual” catalogues. Educated and affluent women were among the earliest adopters. Helen Kim noted that Ewha students, aided by donations from a group of “Ewha Friends” in Wichita, Kansas, quickly converted to an “all Western style” of skirts and slacks while seeking refuge in Busan during the war.⁴⁷ Women who had close contact with American men, including entertainers, dance partners, girlfriends, and sex workers, were also among the first to embrace Western styles, which emphasized the sexual dimensions of a woman’s body through tight bodices and cinched waists. Such beguiling clothes were often a pragmatic choice for Korean women whose livelihoods depended on American men. Such fashionable outfits, noted William Armour Murdoch, an Eighth Army civilian employee, made it “difficult to refrain from entering into a friendly or romantic relationship with those too many women, who were unfortunate enough to be alone in life after losing their husbands and brothers in the war so recently over.” Professional women, in turn, embraced Western fashion as a means to signify readiness to conduct business. Murdoch vividly recalled meeting a Korean executive in an industrial company that was contracting with Eighth Army engineers: she wore “a tailored knee-length pink wool suit, with full lace overlay. She had a pink leather handbag; pink medium height shoes and neatly coiffed black hair.”⁴⁸

Media played a role in this transformation as well, with Hollywood movies stimulating the desire for new fashions and seamstresses producing variations of outfits seen in *Vogue* and *Harper’s Bazaar*.⁴⁹ *Yŏwŏn* also functioned as a fashion manual, and the introductory photo essays almost always included a spread in which Korean or Western women modeled the latest in Western clothing, accessories, and hair styles. The magazine published an extensive dictionary of Western fashion terms that spread across two issues in 1958, giving readers a vocabulary for talking about the images they saw and explaining to their dressmakers exactly what they wanted, and it published sewing patterns in virtually every issue.⁵⁰ These included guides for making garments that reshaped the body along Western lines—such as “bullet” bras, which featured a wire spiral centered on the nipple that created an axis perpendicular to the chest, and which In-sun seems to be wearing in *The Pure Love*—as well as instructional articles explaining how to wear these new garments (figure 22). The embrace of Western fashion thus entailed revising Korean femininity by, for example, emphasizing a woman’s sexual identity over her role as a preserver of cultural norms. This interest in physical transformation extended to the body itself, and the magazine published articles and advertisements about plastic surgery—especially eye surgery—designed to literally remake women’s bodies along Western lines.⁵¹ In *Yŏwŏn*’s pages, the transformation of the female body appeared as part and parcel of the modernization of Korean society.

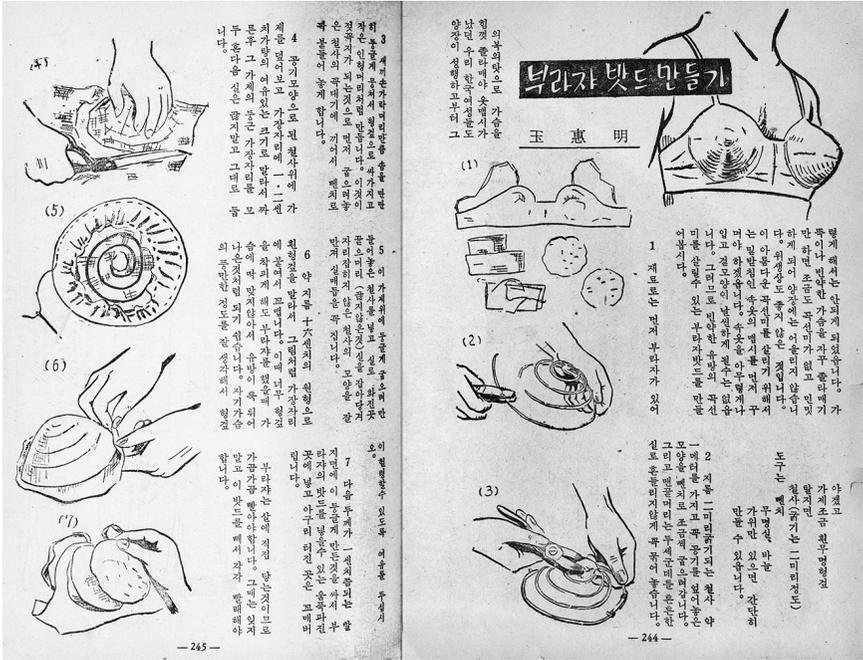


FIGURE 22. Revising Korean femininity: pattern for a “bullet” bra in Yŏwŏn. (February 1958)

Nora Noh

In the 1950s Nora Noh (1928–) emerged as Korea’s first fashion designer. Fashion—along with magazine publishing, higher education, the law, and music—marked a site within public culture where exceptional Korean women could launch professional careers. Noh operated across the worlds of fashion, women’s magazines, Eighth Army shows, beauty pageants, and film, and her career reveals the interconnections among these varied realms of public culture that centered on women and that had ties to the world beyond Korea’s borders. In her 2007 autobiography and a 2013 documentary film, Noh reveals how she used fashion to invent herself as a new kind of Korean woman—professional, breadwinner, cosmopolitan—in part by traveling along the transnational routes and seizing the creative and economic opportunities that the Cold War was opening up.⁵² In making new kinds of clothes for her customers, Noh tailored new identities for them—and herself—as professional women.

Noh was a second-generation “modern girl” and real-life *après* girl who helped invent Korean fashion as part of postwar public culture. She was born Noh Myeong-ja in 1928 to affluent parents who embodied colonial-era modernity. Her father was the founder of Korea’s first radio station, the Kyeongseong Broadcasting

Station, which went on the air in 1927, and her mother was the first female radio news announcer. Her stylish mother, who bought her own clothes in France, dressed Noh in Western-style clothes as a child and nurtured her interest in fashion. In 1944 at age 17, Noh married a young soldier in order to escape being conscripted into the Japanese imperial army as a “comfort woman.” What she got instead was a mother-in-law who conscripted her into the daughter-in-law’s traditional role of servitude. Even though she came from an affluent family, she couldn’t escape the drudgery prescribed by a traditional Korean family structure. Noh describes her “days of living as a daughter-in-law” in this way: “At 4:30 a.m., I would go to the farm over the hill to get milk for the baby, prepare meals five times a day for the mother-in-law who had given birth, prepare lunchboxes for my brother-in-law and sister-in-law, and prepare a table for my father-in-law in the evening when he drank.”⁵³ Recognizing that liberation was ushering in a new era, Noh decided to take a chance on the unknown, and in 1947, at age 19, she divorced her husband and set out to create a new life.

Like the Kim Sisters, Na Bok-hui, and Park Ju-geun, Nora Noh took advantage of opportunities that the US military presence offered. During the occupation period, she taught herself English, got a job as a typist in the US military government’s Department of Health and Welfare, and became a translator in the beauty parlor at the PX store, where most of the customers were officers’ wives. From there she moved on to a job as secretary to an American banker, a position that involved planning and attending receptions. Noh made her own culturally hybrid dresses for these events, using her mother’s old *hanbok* and kimonos left behind by departing Japanese as the raw material for her original creations. The American wives delighted in her work and spread the word that she was a talented designer. When her banker boss heard that Noh, like so many other young Koreans, aspired to attend school in the United States, he arranged for her to study in California. Noh’s travels outside Korea provided the foundation for her professional development. Noh took her impending departure as an opportunity to reinvent herself. When she applied for her passport in 1947, Noh Myeong-ja rechristened herself as Nora Noh: like Lee Tai-young and earlier generations of Korean feminists, she found inspiration in the rebellious Nora of Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*. In the United States, Noh studied fashion at the Frank Waggon Technical College and worked with the Taback of California clothing company. In 1949 she returned to Korea, motivated in part by a nationalist desire to help her young country develop. With the encouragement and support of her American friends, she opened a small boutique in her family’s house, where she began making dresses for the wives of US military officers and foreign diplomats. Noh’s decision to become a fashion designer in the late 1940s was quite courageous because, as she later said, “women who enjoyed wearing Western clothes were rare, and there weren’t many places that women could go wearing Western clothes.”⁵⁴

Like the GIs who constituted the audiences for performances by Na Bok-hui, Park Ju-geun, and the Kim Sisters, the elite foreign residents of Korea constituted an initial customer base on which Noh was able to draw at the early stage of her career. As such, they allow us to see the importance of Americans as early consumers of Korean cultural production and a market for some of the new nation's fledgling cultural industries. As with the black market and the Eighth Army shows, the US military served as an important cultural-economic force. By buying Korean-designed clothes and shaping and attending shows by Korean musical performers, American military personnel and their wives helped jump-start a few sectors of commercial public culture.

With the outbreak of war in 1950, Noh's developing career became further enmeshed with the US military. The Eighth Army shows that were so important for Korean singers, musicians, and managers also created opportunities for Noh, who began designing costumes for performers. The Army's demand for a steady stream of fresh material proved a boon to Noh, who was kept busy by performers needing to change their costumes as often as they changed their song lists. Noh also used her English skills to help the performers deliver the high-quality performance that the Army required, translating song lyrics into Korean so performers could understand what they were singing, and marking songs' emotional peaks and valleys so singers could make their delivery more expressive. The Eighth Army shows were "such a good chance for me," said Noh, who soon was able to build herself a bigger shop with its own small production facility.⁵⁵ Noh continued to avail herself of Eighth Army resources after the war—as Han Hyung-mo did for building his sets—when she began making costumes for a Korean theater troupe. For a production of *Hamlet*, for instance, she made the queen's costume out of some shiny silver paper that had been used to wrap American weapons, and Hamlet's costume from a US Army blanket.⁵⁶ In 1953 she staged a mini-fashion show for the American NBC television network as a way to demonstrate that Korean culture was still alive during the war: as a professional woman, she served as a symbol of Korean strength and creativity during difficult times. In 1955 Noh opened her own boutique in Myeongdong, the same fashionable neighborhood in which *Madame Freedom's* luxury goods shop would be located a year later. At age 27, she had become her family's breadwinner.

Creatively, Noh was oriented towards Europe, and she introduced Paris fashion trends into Korea. She indigenized Western fashion, enabling elite Korean women to feel themselves on par with their Free World contemporaries without being indebted to foreigners or becoming entangled in the black market. In 1956 she spent six months studying fashion in France and Spain, where she took in current design collections. Once again, her travels outside Korea proved crucial for her professional development. Noh drew on these European experiences when she staged Korea's first fashion show that same year. The show, like so much of Noh's

career, had a distinctly cosmopolitan air. Noh taught her models how to walk and move their bodies in the manner of Parisian runway models, while they displayed outfits—day dresses, evening dresses, suits, coats, even a wedding dress—inspired by the works of Christian Dior, Coco Chanel, Cristobal Balenciaga, and Nina Ricci that she had seen in Europe. Noh married the cosmopolitan style of her work to her nationalist sentiments, as she proudly made some of the outfits from the first high-quality wool produced by a Korean textile company, Goryeo Wool. Noh went on to stage additional runway shows in 1957 and 1958, as well as a private show for a “US Wives Club” in 1959. The fashion show was a new cultural form in Korea, and other producers of public culture quickly embraced it. Noh’s shows appeared on TV and in the pages of *Yŏwŏn*, which sponsored and devoted extensive coverage to the 1957 show held on the roof of the Bando Hotel. These shows were not without controversy, however, and they ignited opposition from the same orthodox Confucianists who resisted Helen Kim’s and Lee Tai-young’s efforts to revise the Family Law. Noh continued her international travel (via Northwest Orient Airlines) and her involvement in new forms of feminized public culture when she designed costumes and chaperoned contestants to the Miss Universe beauty pageants held in California in 1958 and 1959.⁵⁷ As Korean popular singers moved out from the Eighth Army shows and into Korean venues in the 1960s and 1970s, Noh moved with them, creating controversial miniskirt and hot-pants outfits, inspired by British and French fashions; during these same years she expanded her business into the US market, opening showrooms in Hawaii and New York and establishing an American subsidiary.

Noh understood her work as a designer as not just the foundation for her own individual career, but as an expression of her liberal and feminist values. Like Helen Kim and Lee Tai-young, Noh understood her work to be in the service of Korean women’s liberation. “What I tried to do,” said Noh recently, “was to make the people who wore my clothes move around freely and become confident upon wearing them. Back then, from right after liberation, there was almost no position for women in Korea. Just look at us—we had no freedom of marriage or freedom to go out in the society, or freedom of jobs. For us to accomplish something during those times required courage. So I did it all out of the thought that the women who would plant such awareness would wear the clothes and be active with confidence and demonstrate their abilities.” “Once you are comfortable in your clothes,” said Noh, “you can move around freely. Then your thoughts are eventually liberated, too.”⁵⁸ Pioneering female journalist Chang Myeong-su hailed Noh for “breaking free from all the chains of tradition that have tied the minds and bodies of the women in this country,” and celebrated her for fighting “the stubborn tradition of *namjon-yŏbi* (the superiority of male over female) and achieving the life she wanted.”⁵⁹ For Nora Noh and her like-minded peers, fashion was a modernizing enterprise.

Fashion in Film

Noh began designing costumes for films in 1954, and for the next twelve years she was an important figure in the film industry. She worked closely with director Shin Sang-ok on his cycle of women's pictures, and helped shape the personae of two of the era's biggest female stars, Choi Eun-hee and Um Aing-ran.⁶⁰ Noh had great leeway in designing film costumes, and she advised many young actresses on how to present themselves on screen. Her film work and custom couture business often overlapped: she used actresses as models in her fashion shows, and film directors often scouted her shows for new acting talent, with future director Lee Bong-rae (*A Petty Middle Manager*, 1961) even serving as the announcer for Noh's first show in 1956.

Films of the 1950s stand out for the ways they use Western-style costumes to express a range of meanings about women's experiences of modernity. Han Hyung-mo was one of the first directors to foreground Western clothes. When in *The Hand of Destiny* he dressed Margaret in a then-exotic striped men's bathrobe as she entertained her soon-to-be lover, he forged a conceptual link between Western clothes and Western values that would become standard throughout the 1950s. Park Nam-ok used Western costuming in *The Widow* (1955) to signify economic security: her war widow protagonist wears a *hanbok* when she struggles with poverty, and only dons Western-style clothes—already worn by her wealthy antagonist and a sex-worker friend—when she opens her own dressmaking shop and embarks on the road to financial independence. *Holiday in Seoul* (1956) deploys fashion as part of its celebration of the professional woman: the heroine is a Western-trained obstetrician who wears an elegant vertically striped sleeveless dress and matching short-sleeved coat. *The Love Marriage* (1958) creates a visual metaphor for a compromise “arranged love marriage” when a young woman dons a *hanbok jögori* over a strapless Western gown as she prepares to meet a suitor; here costuming suggests the possibility of harmonizing Western and Korean approaches to marriage. *Hyperbolae of Youth* creates a sharp contrast between characters who wear *hanbok* and those in Western dress; many other films depict women moving fluidly between these two styles. Such costuming suggests that modern and traditional values exist along a continuum, rather than in strict opposition to each other, and that women can locate themselves at different points along that continuum at different moments in their lives. Characters who embrace modern ideals sometimes wear *hanbok*, some of which have been modernized with new fabrics (nylon in *A Sister's Garden* [1959]) and patterns (polka dots in *The Widow*). This diversity of clothing styles implies individual choice and thus a degree of agency on the part of female characters, suggesting that they are actively navigating the processes of social modernization.

Even women's pictures that express skepticism about Westernization at the level of the narrative invariably pause for a moment of spectacle in which Western-style

clothes are directly presented to the viewer's gaze as an object of visual interest and pleasure. In Gwon Yeong-sun's *A Drifting Story* (1960), Um Aing-ran plays a naïve young coffeehouse waitress who becomes a prostitute after an accidental pregnancy leads to an abortion. When she returns to her job to give notice, she walks in wearing an elegant black Western-style suit, accessorized with high-heeled shoes, a purse, scarf, gloves, and sparkly jewelry. Narratively, the film condemns this character's choice: the virtuous manager (dressed in a *hanbok*) chastises and slaps her, and the young woman later kills herself. Visually, however, the film treats her costume as an object of intense visual interest. As if in a fashion show, Um's character pauses upon entering the coffee shop and strikes an elegant pose, which the camera captures in a long shot that reveals her outfit in its entirety. The viewer is directed to admire the outfit by other characters, who gaze at her intensely, and by closer-in shots that allow the viewer to inspect the costume's details. Shin Sang-ok's *A Sister's Garden*, which depicts the entry into public life of its "virtuous" protagonist (Choi Eun-hee) as a series of shameful humiliations, nonetheless poses her full-length in a polka dot New Look-style frock designed by Nora Noh. That film's ambivalent attitude towards fashion, and the modern values it implies, is made clear through the character of the "selfish" sister (Choi Ji-hie), a professionally ambitious fashion designer who mortgages the family home in order to open a shop in Myeongdong. While the narrative is critical of this Nora Noh-like character, Shin used Noh's shop as a set and incorporated poached footage from one of her fashion shows.⁶¹

By the turn of the decade, the embrace of Western fashion by modern young women had become such a convention that it was ripe for repurposing into reaction and critique. In the male melodrama *A Coachman* (1961), which tells the story of the old Confucian patriarchy giving way to a younger, more modern version, director Kang Jae-jin treats sartorial transformation as a sign of moral—and cultural-national—corruption. The film includes a scene in which a young working-class woman (Um Aing-ran) dons a Western suit for the first time, an outfit she hopes will trick an affluent businessman into marrying her. Kang presents Um as struggling painfully in her high-heeled shoes and grotesquely swinging her hips in an exaggerated sexual manner. While the seduction works, the businessman turns out to be a violent gangster who beats Um's character after having sex with her. Kang's film treats the fashionable, and victimized, woman as a symbol of Korea's heedless rush to Westernization, a process that it equates with cultural inauthenticity, self-prostitution, and humiliation. Yet even in this film the spectacle of fashion is present: the suit that Um wears was designed for the film by Nora Noh.

This treatment of fashion as spectacle solicited a distinct mode of spectatorship, in which female viewers were invited to withdraw their attention from the narrative—and its often-conservative lessons—and focus on the Western costumes instead. In a recent interview Um Aing-ran suggested that such a mode of spectatorship was quite common among postwar women, who were attracted to

her films by her Nora Noh–designed costumes rather than the stories. “When the films were released,” said Um, “people would be like, ‘hey, let’s go see what Um Aing-ran is wearing, let’s go see what she is carrying,’ as if they were window shopping in the department store.” As film viewers, their primary desire, said Um, was “to look” —not necessarily to lose themselves in a story.⁶² These viewers went to the movies to consume clothes and accessories vicariously, and perhaps as a guide to their actual consumption.

A Female Boss

Han Hyung-mo worked with Nora Noh on only one film, *A Female Boss* (1959), which presents the fashionable, professional woman as its central spectacle. The film stars Jo Mi-ryeong, who had walked in Nora Noh’s inaugural fashion show, as Joanna Shin, the publisher of a *Yŏwŏn*-like magazine called *Sin yoja*, or *The Modern Woman*. (This is the same title as the feminist magazine that Helen Kim helped found in 1920.) Like *My Sister Is a Hussy*, *A Female Boss* is a carnivalesque romantic comedy that upends patriarchal gender relations. Joanna is a strong-willed woman with feminist inclinations: she works at an enormous desk—like the ones visible in *Yŏwŏn*’s “Twelve Modern Korean Women” series—below a work of calligraphy that inverts the Confucian principle of *namjon-yŏbi* to read “women are superior to men,” and she answers her telephone with an assertive “This is the Modern Woman.” Throughout the film Joanna asserts her authority as a business-woman, as when she usurps the privilege of paying for an expensive dinner from her older, wealthier uncle. While the subplot, in a nod to the real crisis besetting the publishing industry, charts Joanna’s efforts to secure paper stock to keep her magazine afloat, the main plot follows her romantic pursuit of an employee whose conservative masculinity she finds irresistible. Mr. Kim (Lee Su-ryeon) resists her increasingly bold advances, only to succumb when she promises to give up her job. The film ends with the obligatory five minutes of patriarchy-restoring closure in which Joanna sits at home, while her now husband works at her big desk beneath a restored calligraphy painting that proclaims “men are superior to women.” An agent of wholesome modernization rather than retrograde orthodoxy, Mr. Kim promotes a working-mother journalist to the role of business manager and launches a *Yŏwŏn*-like photo series on the working woman. Nevertheless it is clear that *The Modern Woman*—as well as the modern woman—has been brought securely under a man’s control.

The film’s display of fashion cuts against this conclusion by presenting the professional woman as an attractive spectacle and inviting the gaze of young female viewers inclined to against-the-grain modes of spectatorship. Han does not pause the narrative for a single fashion-show-type scene, as he did in *The Pure Love*. Instead, he distributes the spectacle of fashion through almost every scene, borrowing a trick from Hollywood films such as *Rear Window* (1954, imported



FIGURE 23. A Nora Noh costume in *A Female Boss* (1959). (Courtesy of KOFA)

into Korea in 1957), in which Grace Kelly plays a fashion magazine editor who appears in a series of stunning outfits designed by the legendary Edith Head.⁶³ Han offers an extravaganza of Nora Noh designs, presenting Joanna and her female employees in more than a dozen outfits that survey contemporary Parisian fashion trends. Joanna, for instance, appears in a Balenciaga-inspired empire-waisted black and white dress paired with a short-sleeved kimono-style coat and matching hat (figure 23). The chief editor (Yoon In-ja) wears a Chanel-like little black dress with a Chelsea collar, complete with a double string of pearls. The business manager (Sim Suk-il) appears in a slim-fitting gray jersey dress with a wrap bodice,

three-quarter sleeves, and long black gloves. Several outfits are fully accessorized from hats to shoes, and the women sport a variety of au courant hairstyles, including a bob and a flip. A party scene creates an opportunity to display multiple elaborate Noh designs at once. The film thereby offers its viewers a visual experience akin to browsing through an issue of *Vogue*, an education in style that is enhanced by the Cinemascope frame that captures the costumes in motion as the women move across wide open spaces (as if in a fashion show) and offers up sartorial details for careful inspection. The European flavor of these clothes is enhanced by the settings in which they appear, which contain such decorative items as a globe and a mounted pair of exotic bulls' heads, thereby suggesting that fashion is integral to the cosmopolitan lifestyle of this new social type.

The film positively associates fashion with modernity from its opening frames. The credit sequence depicts Seoul's bustling Myeongdong rotary and a street packed with automobiles, images redolent of postwar progress and (literal) social mobility. Superimposed on these shots are the film's title and an image of an elegantly attired Joanna, making clear that she is the female boss in question. A jaunty tune on the soundtrack—Perry Como's "Magic Moments," a hit from 1958—signals the genre will be comedy. The first scene begins with a slow tracking shot of men walking along a crowded sidewalk, their bodies filmed from the knees down in a manner reminiscent of the opening of Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train* (1951) and Han's own *The Hand of Destiny* (video 9). After a moment the camera halts and tilts upward to reveal, in stages, the white high-heeled shoes, then the full skirt and jacket, and finally the face, hat, and gloved hands of Joanna as she monopolizes a public telephone. (This shot is a variation, perhaps, on the camera movement that accompanies the introduction—"reading from top to bottom"—of Grace Kelly and her striking black-and-white New Look dress in *Rear Window*.) The camera lingers on Joanna in a medium shot, giving the viewer time to inspect her chic outfit, then tracks slowly along a line of waiting men and women, before coming to rest on the handsome but disgruntled face of Mr. Kim, who is himself dressed in a not-unfashionable bomber-style jacket that signals he might be an appropriate mate for Joanna. Joanna blithely ignores the men's attempts to dislodge her from the phone, instead cooing at her tiny dog, Mario, as she feeds him a black-market Fig Newton and asserting her rights: "This is a pay phone. As long as I am using it, it is my right to talk on." Angered by this behavior, Mr. Kim kicks Mario, prompting a conflict that ends when Joanna stalks off into a taxi, leaving Mr. Kim to his telephone call and the revelation that he is unemployed and looking for a job.

While this meet-cute introduction is rife with class tensions, it also stages the familiar conflict between a cosmopolitan feminist and a cultural nationalist. Mr. Kim, as he explains later, is outraged that Joanna is feeding expensive American cookies to her dog when many Koreans don't have enough to eat. Joanna, in turn, ostentatiously refuses to conform to Confucian gender norms. Her disaffiliation



VIDEO 9. Clip from *A Female Boss*.

To watch this video, scan the QR code with your mobile device or visit
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/luminos.85.9/>



from these norms is signaled sartorially by the contrast between her fashionable Western-style suit and the anti-fashion of the two *hanbok*-clad women waiting in line. It is also signaled through her actions. By talking on the phone at such length and refusing to yield to the men's requests, Joanna violates the expectation that women should be quiet, self-denying, and deferential. More importantly, her refusal to vacate this small patch of sidewalk serves as a claim to public space and the masculine privileges of freedom and autonomy that go along with it. Because Joanna, like Han's other modern-woman characters, is not defined by her sexual virtue, she is not ashamed by encounters with men in public space. This opening scene prefigures that of *My Sister Is a Hussey*, in which the two sisters use judo to defend their right to enjoy a city park unmolested, even as it foreshadows its own ending when Mr. Kim takes charge of Joanna's desk and telephone.

The fashionable newness of the professional women's clothing communicates their eagerness to challenge the patriarchal status quo. The film presents the magazine office as a space in which professional women simultaneously display their fashionable clothes and exert their authority over men. In one extended sequence, the chief editor (dressed in a belted shirtdress) and the business manager (in a button-front blouse and slim skirt) interview a series of men for the position into which Mr. Kim will ultimately be hired. The women comment on the men's physical appearance and marital status, ask questions that reveal the

applicants' ignorance and overinflated sense of self, and otherwise treat the men with thinly veiled contempt—inversions, one suspects, of experiences encountered by postwar women as they entered the workforce. Although the women are described as “bitches” by their male coworkers, Han uses editing to indicate that they are delivering a well-deserved comeuppance: mid-scene he cuts away to a wordless shot of Joanna's teenage sister (Seo Ae-ja), dressed modestly in a long-sleeved frock trimmed with oversized rickrack, being visibly discomfited as she is aggressively ogled by a hallway full of men waiting to be interviewed. A similar exercise of female authority occurs during a party at Joanna's house. The chief editor, dressed in a sleeveless, boat-necked chiffon dress with a full skirt, puts an older male editor (Kim Hee-gap) in his place with a stern look after he mocks her style of dancing to Xavier Cugat's “The Brand New Cha Cha Cha.” At work and at leisure, then, the fashionable professional woman upends the normative social relations between men and women. One can imagine that these scenes, by combining the pleasures of fashionable looking with feminine self-assertion, appealed to educated young female viewers who were beginning to imagine new futures for themselves.

In addition to her professional success, Joanna expresses her modernity by assuming the traditionally male role of sexual pursuer. This is evident in a nightclub scene in which Joanna slow-dances with Mr. Kim to the song “Johnny Guitar,” pressing her body close to his while he registers both emotional discomfort and passive acquiescence due to her status as his boss. The song, which features a classical guitar motif, extends the film's Latin subtext (Balenciaga, bulls' heads, cha-cha-cha, Mario) and serves as a thematically appropriate extratextual reference. Peggy Lee wrote the song for Nicholas Ray's *Johnny Guitar* (1954, screened in Korea in 1958), a baroque Western starring Joan Crawford in a gender-bending role as a powerful business woman who aggressively pursues a handsome man (Sterling Hayden) who is her social and economic inferior. As in Han's film, Crawford's costume—pants, shirt, necktie, cowboy boots—visualized her character's challenge to contemporary notions of femininity, and prompted Bosley Crowther to seethe in the *New York Times* that Crawford was “as sharp and romantically forbidding as a package of unwrapped razor blades”—a sentiment seemingly shared by Mr. Kim as he dances stiffly with Joanna.⁶⁴ This nightclub scene is immediately followed by one in which Joanna—whose dress features two sharp handkerchief points at the neckline—urges Mr. Kim to remain in her apartment past curfew; a large bed in the background makes her intentions perfectly clear.

Finally, costume plays a role in the patriarchy-restoring ending, casting doubt on the work of ideological closure via a clothing-based joke. The final shot of the film shows Joanna dressed, for the first time, in a plain *hanbok* (indicative of her married status) and smiling as she crochets a tiny outfit and looks lovingly off-screen at what the viewer assumes is a baby (video 10). When the camera pans



VIDEO 10. Clip from *A Female Boss*.

To watch this video, scan the QR code with your mobile device or visit DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/luminos.85.10/>



left, however, it reveals not a child but her beloved Mario, the small dog to which she indulgently fed a Fig Newton in the opening scene. This pan to the dog, in combination with Joanna's mirthful expression, wordlessly suggests that perhaps she is making the outfit for him, an idea that immediately undercuts the notion of Joanna as a contented housewife. Perhaps the viewer should see her happiness in the domestic sphere as akin to crocheting clothes for a dog, that is, something silly. By incorporating this purely visual joke, Han makes it possible for the viewer to read against the conservative act of narrative closure, and regard it as a convention rather than a truth: we all "know" that the transgressive heroine must be restored to the domestic sphere, but that doesn't mean we need to take it seriously.

TRADITIONAL DANCE AND *BECAUSE I LOVE YOU*

Han's *Because I Love You* was one of two Korean films entered into the sixth annual Asian Film Festival, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaya, in 1959. The Asian Film Festival was a Cold War cultural institution (see chapter 2), and the participation of Korean filmmakers in it was the result of concerted efforts by Rhee's government and the Asia Foundation (TAF). International competitions such as film festivals, sporting events, and beauty pageants served as instruments of Free Asian integration, as they educated noncommunist countries about each other and fostered the development of transnational institutional ties and collectively held standards. Rhee

and TAF also valued these events as platforms for making South Korea visible on the Free World stage. Film figured prominently in these visibility efforts. Between 1957 and 1960, at least nine Korean films were shown at the Asian Film Festival, with more screening at festivals in Berlin, San Francisco, and other Western cities. *Because I Love You* won a special prize at the Kuala Lumpur festival, making it one of the first Korean films to take home an international award, and it was among the first generation of Korean films to be commercially exported within Asia.⁶⁵ (While no print of the film exists, a copy of the script was found during the researching of this book which, when read in combination with publicity materials, reviews, and other documentation, provides a substantive, although not complete, picture of the film.)⁶⁶

Because I Love You reveals a new dimension of Cold War cosmopolitanism: the display of Korea's cultural traditions on an international stage as a way of forging bonds with other anticommunist states. As such, the film achieves a synthesis of the competing cosmopolitan and cultural nationalist impulses coursing through postwar social and cultural life. It offers a vision of postcolonial traditionalism enlisted in the project of Cold War bloc building. Given the loss of the film itself, I explore Cold War cosmopolitanism less through the cinematic form of the spectacles themselves and more through the institutional structures through which these spectacles were produced and distributed.

Indigenous forms of culture can take on cosmopolitan shadings when they become self-conscious expressions of a nation's "cultural heritage" that is shared with people beyond the nation. *Because I Love You* narrates—and enacts—precisely such an act of international sharing. The film is structured around the spectacle of traditional Korean dance that is performed outside the country's borders for non-Korean audiences. Through display of this national art form, the film asserts that Korea possesses an indigenous culture worthy of recognition and respect by others. Spectacle here functions as a passport to the world stage and a mechanism for soliciting foreign interest in South Korea. Through spectacle, the film stakes a claim for Korea as a participant in the cosmopolitan realm of "world cultures," and contributes to the Cold War goal—shared by Washington and Seoul alike—of making Korea visible abroad.

In contrast to many of Han's other films, *Because I Love You* associates femininity with tradition, as did many postcolonial traditionalists. It does so with a twist, however: Korea's cultural heritage is borne by a professional woman who has achieved prominence in public life as a teacher and performer, not by a private woman who remains sequestered in the domestic sphere and lives these traditions as part of her everyday life (as in Shin Sang-ok's *The Houseguest and My Mother* [1961]).

Because I Love You tells a decidedly cosmopolitan story centered on international travel and cultural exchange. The film opens with the return of a young newspaper reporter, Min-ho (Yun Il-bong), from Malaya, where he has fallen in love with a local dancer, Wol-Yun (Landi Chang). He informs his widowed mother

Seong-ae (Kim Sun-seong), a well-known performer and teacher of traditional Korean dance, that she and her daughter Ok-kyong (Seo Ae-ja), along with the rest of their dance troupe, have been invited to Singapore in a cultural exchange program sponsored by his newspaper. The mother initially refuses because it would be too painful a reminder of her late husband Chang-min (Kim Jin-kyu), also a dancer, who died in Malaya during World War II after being conscripted into the Japanese imperial army. She later relents, and the three family members travel to Singapore. During her big performance at the National Theater in Singapore, Seong-ae sees her presumed-dead husband in the audience and collapses on stage. When everyone gathers around her bedside, the husband reveals his story: he was wounded during the war and nursed back to health by a Chinese-Malayan woman Li-Li (Chen Yan), whom he married out of gratitude. Together they had a daughter, who has now become a dancer. With a shock, the young lovers discover they are half-siblings and thus cannot marry. The two wives later decide between themselves with which family the husband should live. The Chinese-Malayan wife is willing to give him up, but at the last moment the Korean wife decides he should stay in Singapore. In the final scene, the Korean mother, son, and daughter drive away to the airport as the Korean husband, his Chinese-Malayan wife, and their daughter tearfully wave goodbye.

Because I Love You was unusual among Han's oeuvre, and 1950s films more generally, for being set in large part outside Korea. The film expands upon the urban automobility displayed by the female characters in *Madame Freedom* and *The Hand of Destiny* and showcases transnational mobility within the Free World. Where In-sun's international travel in *The Pure Love* is subsumed to her characterization as an après girl, Seong-ae's travel forms the spine of this film's narrative. As with *Breaking the Wall* (1949), his first feature film, *Because I Love You* engages explicitly with Cold War ideology: it is infused with the ideals of Free Asia bloc-building. Its story about Koreans traveling to Malaya resonates with the Asia Foundation's vigorous promotion of international travel as a tool of Korea's integration into the Free World. Several scenes are set in and around airplanes, which in the 1950s served as icons of globe-trotting sophistication. Screenwriter Park Seong-ho's dialogue somewhat bluntly imbues travel with the bloc-affirming value of international friendship: as the young journalist Min-ho tells his mother and sister, "My trip to the different countries in Southeast Asia made me realize how much they care about Korea. They all have hope for our independence and prosperity." Park's script expanded this rhetoric of friendship by invoking family ties as a metaphor for relations among Free Asian nations. An early version established this metaphor by having Min-ho remark upon his return from "our China" that "interacting with the Taiwanese is just like interacting with siblings." The film proceeds to literalize this metaphor through the father's bigamy and the revelation that the young Korean and Malayan lovers are half-siblings. In the end, the film sustains the binational marriage of the Korean husband and

his Chinese-Malayan wife rather than the nationally homogenous Korean-Korean marriage. The Cold War thematics of international travel, friendship, and family formation overwrite the World War II backstory of Japanese colonial exploitation and suffering, a process of historical progression that the script renders explicit through the son's frequent exhortations to his mother to "let go of the past" and embrace new opportunities in the present.

In addition to highlighting travel, Park sprinkled the script with multiple small acts of cultural exchange, as when the Korean mother gives the Malayan family a *hanbok*-clad Korean doll, and when the Malayan mother, in turn, offers the journalist son a "local Southeast Asian delicacy" to eat. The young lovers embrace each other's culture more fully in anticipation of their marriage, as when Wol-Yun dresses in a *hanbok* to meet her future mother-in-law and Min-ho is revealed as being able to speak Mandarin like "a Chinese person." Most importantly, the film locates the export of traditional Korean dance at the center of its plot. Again, Park's bluntly written dialogue makes this export motif explicit, as when Min-ho appeals to his mother's nationalist sentiments in urging her to undertake the trip to Singapore. "Mother," he says, "for all these years you've devoted yourself to preserving Korean dance for the next generation, and at the same time worked to introduce Korean dance to the world. This upcoming goodwill visit to Singapore is for the glory of our country." His appeal succeeds, and the mother agrees to the trip "for the sake of the nation, and to also see your beloved."

Han stages this theme of cultural export via extensive dance performances. The display of traditional dance begins even before the story itself commences: according to Park's script, the credit sequence features a group of Korean girls "vividly expressing the uniqueness of Korean folk culture" through their performance of a fan dance. Later scenes revolve around extended dance performances, including one set to the folk song "Arirang" and another based on the folk tale "Chunhyang."⁶⁷ The film turns these nationalist displays of Korean culture into a full-blown international exchange by balancing them with equivalent performances of Chinese and Malayan dance. Min-ho, for example, falls in love with Wol-Yun while watching her perform an ethnic Uyghur dance from China's far west Xinjiang province. She later performs a traditional Malayan candle dance, and the climactic show, billed as a Grand Sino-Korean Dance Performance, shows her performing a Chinese chopsticks dance. As it does with travel, Park's screenplay explicitly associates this exhibition with Free World integration, as when Seong-ae observes, "I hope our dance exchange program will enhance the friendship between our two countries." The film extends this logic of cultural exchange to include its spectators by staging the dance scenes in a spectacular, presentational mode that reproduces the visual experience enjoyed by the diegetic audiences. These extended dance performances dominate the film and occupy about half its running time.⁶⁸ The film likewise opened up to its viewers the spectacle-based pleasures of international travel, specifically the touristic viewing of sights. In addition to staging scenes inside and adjacent to an



FIGURE 24. Traditional dance as international exchange in *Because I Love You* (1958). (Courtesy of KOFA)

airplane, the film displays the dancers at some of Korea's most famous architectural landmarks, including Changdeokgung and Gyeongbokgung palaces (figure 24). These are in turn paralleled by scenes of bustling Singapore streets and lush Malayan countryside.⁶⁹ The film was thus an *act* of cultural exchange as much as a *representation* of it, introducing its own spectators as well as its characters—Korean and non-Korean alike—to foreign sights and forms of culture. Through dialogue, gift exchanges, dance performances, and touristic vistas, the film represented and promoted the growth of mutual understanding among Free Asian people.

It was this display of traditional dance that so appealed to the jury at the Asian Film Festival in Kuala Lumpur in 1959 and led it to bestow a special award for choreography upon the film.⁷⁰ The Korean judge, a professor at Ewha Womans University, emphasized the nationalist ideal of cultural authenticity when he noted that while films from other countries also included dance, many of these were “too Westernized” and thus not worthy of special recognition.⁷¹ This spectacular display of traditional Korean culture led to further international visibility when *Because I Love You* was commercially exported across Southeast Asia and invited to screen in a 1959 film festival in Frankfurt, West Germany, where it introduced the cultural heritage of Free Korean, Chinese, and Malayan people to Free Germans.⁷²

While *Because I Love You* shared the Asia Foundation's cosmopolitan agenda, it seems to have been more directly inspired by Rhee's efforts to wage the cultural

Cold War on his own terms. In the mid-1950s, Rhee began sending displays of Korea's traditional arts and modern development to the United States, Europe, Australia, and other parts of the Free World.⁷³ Rhee devoted particular attention to Southeast Asia, which had previously figured in Korea's colonial imagination as an exotic imperial outpost.⁷⁴ This initiative grew out of the Asian People's Anti-Communist League (APACL), which Rhee launched in 1954 as a bloc-building mechanism designed to strengthen ties among the avowedly anticommunist countries in the region (see chapter 1). In its Statement of Principles, the APACL pledged to promote social and cultural exchanges among its members, a goal that was strengthened by the passage of a resolution at its 1956 Manila conference (which Helen Kim helped to plan) that singled out the "native dances of member groups" as particularly worthy of showcasing.⁷⁵

In the mid-1950s, Rhee launched a sustained cultural diplomacy initiative designed to foster friendship and build ties with the people of Southeast Asia. It began with athletic delegations. The Korean national baseball team participated in the Second Asian Baseball Championship in the Philippines in 1955, which was followed by a visit from a professional golfer in 1956 and a girls' high school basketball team. South Vietnam, in turn, hosted visits from Korean boxing and football teams.⁷⁶ The effort expanded in 1957 with the dispatching of a large-scale Artists Mission to the region, which included the Seoul Symphony Orchestra and performers of Korean folk music and dance. The tour was a resounding success: the Vietnamese press reported being "astonished" at the quality of the performances, and the Korean legation in Saigon was thrilled to present Korea's "flourishing culture" to "other Asian nations which up until now have been almost totally ignorant of the artistic side of Korea."⁷⁷ Rhee's minister plenipotentiary Choi Duk Shin, invoking both anti-Japanese and cultural nationalist sentiments, urged the president to expand this initiative: Korea's diplomats must "devote much greater efforts for [the] introduction of Korean culture to the peoples in Vietnam and her neighboring countries so as to make them realize that Japanese culture is no more than simple imitation of ours." Choi also reported that South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem had requested additional exhibitions of Korean culture: "the cultural treasures" that Diem had seen during his recent state visit to Seoul "must be displayed [in Saigon] for all the people who have no knowledge of Korean culture."⁷⁸ In response, Rhee sent a second Cultural Goodwill Mission to Southeast Asia in 1958. This tour bypassed Japan, as did its predecessor, to visit only APACL members, including Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Okinawa. It consisted of 136 people, including 64 symphony orchestra members, 30 choir members, 7 Korean classical musicians, 4 dancers, and 31 marine honor guards. It also included exhibitions of anticommunist photographs from the Korean War, modernist paintings, handicrafts, and costumes.⁷⁹ With these two missions Korea joined the ranks of nations, including China, the Soviet Union, and the United States, that were waging the cultural Cold War by sending

performance troupes abroad for the purpose of forging international ties and polishing their image.

It seems likely that *Because I Love You* was inspired by these goodwill missions, which were extensively covered in newsreels made by the ROK's Taehan News and by the USIS's Liberty News.⁸⁰ As in his directorial debut, *Breaking the Wall*, Han turns the contemporary events of the Cold War into commercial entertainment. In making the film, Han and screenwriter Park Seong-ho seem to have poached several elements from these newsreels, including the Cold War rhetoric of promoting friendship and cultural exchange among the "free" people of Southeast Asia and Korea. The newsreels depict a series of enthusiastic cross-cultural encounters, as local leaders welcome the mission, Koreans bestow gifts, and audiences applaud exuberantly (similar scenes will appear in Han's film). They include performances of both traditional Korean performing arts and Beethoven's Fifth symphony, an admixture that suggests Koreans, in addition to possessing their own rich heritage, have mastered the forms of elite Western culture as well. As Han Sang Kim has noted, the Liberty News newsreel emphasizes the logistics and pleasures of international travel (as *Because I Love You* will also do): it depicts excitement-filled moments of departure and arrival, and shows the Korean artists on sight-seeing trips to ancient heritage sites and vibrant modern cities. These touristic sequences make clear that the countries of Southeast Asia, like South Korea, are also modernizing while holding on to their traditions. Korean women, who figure prominently in the newsreels as cultural ambassadors (as in *Because I Love You*), extend their national iconicity by wearing *hanbok* onstage and off. (The *hanbok* in Han's film are somewhat less traditional in style, featuring split sleeves and diaphanous fabrics.) The newsreels make clear that the mission was a Cold War project: the group is given a send-off at the APACL's Anti-Communist Center of Seoul, it travels on an ROK Navy war ship, Korean marine guards present arms and march in military parades, and political leaders such as Ngo Dinh Diem and Chiang Kai-shek greet the mission upon its arrival in their countries. (Unable to reproduce these military and diplomatic spectacles, Han's film relies on dialogue to link its displays of Korean culture to Rhee's Free Asian political agenda.)

The protagonist of *Because I Love You* seems to have been modeled on the dancer Kim Paik-bong, who was a featured member of the 1958 goodwill mission. Like Seong-ae, Kim was a celebrated performer, choreographer, and teacher of Korean dance who operated a private studio in Seoul.⁸¹ Kim's dances figured prominently in the newsreels, which show her performing a fan dance (a version of which is featured in the credit sequence of Han's film), a *geommu* sword dance, and a dance with a *junggu* hourglass drum (which appears in Han's film as well). As *Because I Love You* does, the USIS newsreel offers a moment of genuine cultural exchange when it presents a performance of a Filipino *tinikling* bamboo dance staged for the Korean visitors in Manila. Kim's dances are the exclusive subject of the second USIS film, "Kim Paik-bong Dancing in Bangkok," which features

three dances performed in the courtyard of a Thai temple.⁸² These extended performances are filmed in a presentational mode that reproduces the experience of watching the dances live (as in Han's film). These dances also suggest a kind of cultural exchange by combining Korean and Thai cultural spectacles, as Kim performs in front of an elaborately decorated temple flanked by two multistory statues of guardian *yaksha* spirits. Ultimately, as Han Sang Kim has noted, the newsreels offered Korean viewers a dual spectacle: of their cultural traditions (as presented in the shots of the performances) and of their Cold War cosmopolitan modernity (as presented in the shots of admiring audiences across Free Asia applauding those performances).⁸³ *Yŏwŏn* also covered the Goodwill Mission. Similar to what it did with the 1958 Miss Universe pageant, when it published a participant-observer article by Nora Noh, the magazine published a first-person travel essay about the mission written by Kim Paik-bong herself.⁸⁴

In addition to drawing on Rhee's diplomatic missions, Han's film tapped into emerging transnational networks within Asia's film industries. *Because I Love You* was made via a cosmopolitan mode of production. It was one of Korea's first international coproductions, a collaboration between Im Hwa-su's Korean Entertainment Company, which initiated the project, and Wong Cheuk-hon's Liberty Film Company of Hong Kong.⁸⁵ Both industries contributed personnel, with actors from Korea playing alongside those from Hong Kong. Korea's Park Seong-ho wrote the screenplay and Han Hyung-mo served as cinematographer and one of two editors, as well as director.⁸⁶ Intended as a prestige production aimed at Korean and Southeast Asian markets, the movie was filmed in multiple countries: primary shooting took place in Hong Kong's Wah Tat studio, with additional location shooting in Seoul and possibly Singapore and Malaya.⁸⁷ Im Hwa-su, a wealthy Korean producer and exhibitor, provided a lavish production budget, part of which went towards renting a commercial airplane for use as a set. Hong Kong producer Wong Cheuk-hon, in turn, assembled the Chinese cast and crew, rented the Wah Tat studio, and managed the logistics of shooting in Hong Kong; he also distributed the film in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia.⁸⁸

This cosmopolitan mode of production must be seen in relation to developments within the Korean film industry, the Hong Kong industry, and the Asian Film Festival, each of which valued cross-border cooperation for distinct reasons. *Because I Love You* was one in a series of Korean–Hong Kong coproductions initiated by Im Hwa-su in 1957 with *Love with an Alien*. A former black-marketer and well-known as a thug, Im had close ties to Syngman Rhee and worked to bring Korean film culture into alignment with Cold War ideology, pressuring artists to attend Rhee's rallies and later producing the state-funded election film *Syngman Rhee and the Independence Movement* (1959). Im launched Korean Entertainment Inc. in 1955 with the goal, according to one of its founders, of elevating the quality of Korean cultural products to an "international standard of entertainment" and exporting them abroad. He valued coproductions as an opportunity for Korean

technicians to gain experience working with Hong Kong's advanced equipment and as a way to penetrate overseas markets; he also believed they would lead to closer "friendships" with fellow noncommunist nations.⁸⁹ Rhee supported Im's commercial ambitions and publicly praised *Because I Love You* in the context of increasing the nation's film exports.⁹⁰ (After the April 1960 Revolution that ousted Rhee, Im was arrested for embezzling funds secretly provided by the government to support participation in the Asian Film Festival; he was later hanged by the Park Chung-hee government.)⁹¹ Screenwriter Park Seong-ho shared this politicized view of coproductions and regarded *Because I Love You* as a chance to work with the "free people" of Hong Kong to "maintain the anticommunist front line together." An internationally minded nationalist, Park viewed the production as an opportunity for Koreans to stop living like "frogs in a well" and broaden their vision of the world, which he saw as a first step towards securing "the entire world" as a market for Korean films.⁹² For Hong Kong producer Wong Cheuk-hon, coproductions offered fresh sources of capital to offset the loss of the mainland Chinese market in 1952 and the effects of currency restrictions in Taiwan in 1955. He was particularly interested in films set in the Free territories of Southeast Asia, as he sought to expand into these markets. Wong shared Im's anticommunist political orientation, and he cast the president of a pro-Taiwan anticommunist film organization in a minor role. The film also allowed Wong to get in on an emerging trend for female-centered, cosmopolitan dance films that was taking shape within Hong Kong's Mandarin-language cinema. Given these overlapping interests, it is little surprise that Wong responded enthusiastically to Im's invitation to collaborate, signing a contract within twenty-four hours.⁹³

As much as it was shaped by the needs of the Korean and Hong Kong film industries, *Because I Love You's* status as a coproduction was also shaped by the Asian Film Festival and thus, indirectly, by the Asia Foundation. Han Hyung-mo certainly had the upcoming 1959 Asian Film Festival in Kuala Lumpur in mind during production. According to screenwriter Park, Korea's inability to win a prize at the 1958 festival with Han's *Hyperbolae of Youth* —which one critic bemoaned as a "humiliating failure"—was much on the mind of the Korean crew as they shot the film, goading them to take special care with their work.⁹⁴ The Asia Foundation's direct involvement with the film was limited, but intimately connected to its cosmopolitan mode of production: in August 1958, the Seoul office gave Im's Korean Entertainment Company US\$1,000 in exchange for *hwan*, specifically to enable location shooting in Kuala Lumpur.⁹⁵

Jack James's decision to assist the film was in keeping with the Asia Foundation's desire to "to assist Koreans to bring their cultural achievements . . . to the attention of other members of the free world family of nations, and to gain a position of respect in this family."⁹⁶ It also reflected TAF's enthusiasm for international coproductions, which it had been encouraging since 1952 as a local initiative that aligned

with US interests. TAF saw coproductions as one of the best means for achieving several of its goals, including transferring knowledge from more to less developed film industries, improving production values, increasing regional film exports, and encouraging mutual understanding among Free Asian peoples. TAF's work on behalf of coproductions began in the Tokyo office, where Noel Busch and John Miller assisted Japanese producers who were eager to partner with Hollywood for their own economic and professional reasons. Soon thereafter, Charles Tanner began meeting with Hollywood studio heads, producers, and directors to encourage coproductions from that end as well. After the Asian Film Festival's launch in 1954, TAF looked to it as the preferred instrument for promoting coproductions, enthusiastically supporting the initiatives of the Federation of Motion Picture Producers Association of Asia (FPA).⁹⁷

The movement towards coproductions gained momentum in 1956. At the festival in Hong Kong (which Han Hyung-mo attended), FPA members passed a resolution encouraging coproductions and instituted a series of professional forums, suggested by TAF, in which they could be discussed. That same year, TAF proposed approving "travel grant requests from young Asian industries to enable them to participate in co-productions with, for example, more advanced Asian industries"; two years later, *Because I Love You* received such a currency exchange grant. The push for coproductions continued at the 1957 festival in Tokyo (which Han also attended), after which TAF film consultant John Miller applauded the rising number of such projects as the festival's most promising result. (This was the year Im launched his series of Korea–Hong Kong collaborations.) In 1958 (the year in which *Because I Love You* was made), TAF reminded all its representatives that coproductions contributed to the achievement of foundation goals and urged them to support the Asian Film Festival in whatever ways they could. By the 1959 Asian Film Festival in Kuala Lumpur (at which *Because I Love You* was awarded its prize), TAF staffer Cho Tong-jae reported that he was "amazed at the demonstration of kinship and friendliness by the Hong Kong and Free Chinese delegates toward Korean attendants" as a result of coproductions undertaken in the previous year. The growth of "friendliness" among Free Asian nations was, of course, a major TAF goal and a major theme of *Because I Love You*. In life, as in Han's film, the metaphorical ties of kinship among Asian people sometimes became literal: Cho couldn't help mentioning that the participants in one coproduction "became so friendly that one of the Hong Kong actresses bore a baby of a Korean actor."⁹⁸

As a coproduction with a Hong Kong company, *Because I Love You* was one of the first Korean films to get commercial distribution in Southeast Asia, an objective shared by TAF, Rhee, and the film's producers. Two distinct versions of the film were released, each tailored to a different market. The Korean-language version, titled *Because I Love You* and edited by Han Hyung-mo, presented the World

War II-era scenes in flashback and was released in Seoul in December 1958.⁹⁹ Im Hwa-su entered this version into the Asian Film Festival as an exclusively Korean production under the title *Love for You*. The Mandarin-language version, also titled *Love for You*, was edited by Chiang Hsing-lung and presented the story events in chronological order. The marketing material for this version capitalized on the Asian Film Festival award while downplaying Korean involvement and highlighting the display of Chinese and Malayan dance. It localized the film by treating it as a star-making vehicle for the Singapore-born Landi Chang, whom it identified as a “renowned Southeast Asian dancer.”¹⁰⁰ Aimed at the Southeast Asian market, this version opened in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, and Hong Kong in the fall of 1959 and across Malaya in 1960 and 1961.¹⁰¹ Han’s film thus delivered its Cold War cosmopolitan message to one of the audiences that TAF, and American cultural Cold Warriors more generally, were most concerned about—overseas Chinese.

The marketing materials for both the Korean and Hong Kong versions, while downplaying their status as a coproduction, emphasized the cosmopolitan story line and international filming locations. Malaya figured prominently in reviews as a setting and a filming location, with one Hong Kong article breathlessly claiming that “the filming crew traveled over five thousand kilometers to capture the distinct scenery and landmarks for the big screen.” Korean reviewers, while sometimes lukewarm about the film as a whole, praised the cultural exchange motif. One noted that the film was “saved” through its inclusion of the “sentiments of Malaya,” while another noted approvingly that the filmmakers did “seem to have put a lot of effort into capturing the exotic scenery down there.” Another, picking up on the travel and international friendship themes, astutely noted that the film looked best “if thought of as a Korea-Malaya friendship tourist film.” As a “touristy” film, *Because I Love You* offered a vicarious trip to a fellow Free Asian country, a broadening experience that reviewers welcomed.¹⁰²

Because I Love You offers a variation on the cosmopolitan impulses and aesthetics of the period. Although it features Korean dance as its spectacle, and thus taps into cultural nationalist sentiments, it treats traditional culture as a means of forging ties with other Free Asian people. In its story, themes, and settings, as well as its mode of production and distribution, and reception, Han’s film harmonized with the combined nation-building and bloc-building efforts of Rhee’s government and the Asia Foundation.

Han’s spectacle-heavy, Cold War cosmopolitan style gave visual expression to Koreans’ desire both to embrace Free World cultural trends and to make themselves visible to their Free World allies as the possessors of their own rich heritage. As a period style, it emerged out of a diverse array of transnational networks: colonial military and education systems, the US military entertainment complex, cultural diplomacy tours, international film festivals, coproduction agreements, and commercial distribution networks. It is thus historical evidence of Korea’s

growing enmeshment with the Free World. Han put the modern Korean woman at the center of this process. In centering his spectacles on female characters, Han extended the parameters of the modern Korean woman beyond the sexually liberated woman to include the physically powerful athlete, the professional performer, the competent businesswoman, and the international cultural emissary.