

Introduction

In 1965, Yi Manhŭi, a prominent South Korean filmmaker, was arrested for violating Anti-communist Law with his humanistic portrayal of North Koreans in *Seven Female POWs* (*Ch'irinŭi Yŏpŏro*), a feature about the Korean War. The censorship authorities required him to change the plot and refilm almost every scene before it could be released to the public. This unprecedented demand for a complete revision of the film—not to mention the director's imprisonment—sparked a debate among South Korean film workers about the country they lived in. How could this be a democracy, they wondered, when the state suppresses our constitutionally protected freedom of expression? This question burned with urgency, but it was not new. It had cropped up repeatedly in the field of cinema over many decades, from the institutionalization of representative democracy under the US occupation (1945–48) through a series of autocratic regimes until the late 1980s. During this period, various film workers reckoned with the gap between the judicial construction of statist democracy and their experience of the social fabric, and this reckoning powerfully informed their work. Individually and collectively, they asked: In a society in which democracy means only regular elections, what other qualities or visions of democracy could be, or should be, evoked through cinema? What possibilities might such renditions of democracy hold for a society currently experienced as undemocratic? How might cinema redefine the meaning and practices of democracy in South Korea?

This book examines a group of film workers who sought to answer such questions in their work, exploring visions of democracy that emerged through cinema in Cold War South Korea, roughly from the peninsula's liberation from Japanese rule in 1945 to the official end of the military control in 1987. Starting with the US occupation, with its purported goal of democratizing the former Japanese colony, successive political regimes portrayed democracy as a vague promise of national security and prosperity. Enlisting motion pictures as a conveyer of this obscure notion, powerful people and institutions circumscribed the medium

with anti-communist and nationalist mandates. The actors featured in this book took issue with cinema's alignments with authoritarian forms of state power and the ideologies of national security and modernization on which they rested. Through an array of cinematic expressions, methods, and practices, they reconfigured film as an arena through which democracy might be thought, experienced, and enacted differently from the norm. These actors included film critics calling for a more equitable system, teachers creating grassroots film networks, filmmakers reinventing the right to express themselves, women activating a new film language and platform against misogyny, and students changing the representation of the marginalized and the dispossessed. Inside and outside the limited domain of their industry, these film workers experimented with cinema as a means of struggling for what they believed was—or could be—democracy in action.

From their stories, this book theorizes a generative space that I call celluloid democracy. In South Korea, celluloid democracy embodied radical aspirations for cinema as an inclusive and just terrain. From urban theaters to classrooms and university campuses, it emerged out of the film workers' engagement with, and dynamic theorization of, two key issues that this book explores: representation and distribution. The film workers challenged the state's control of the media through both censorship and patterns of selective support that regulated what was representable on screen. The political rulers justified their power to regulate cinema by citing the necessity of building and protecting the nation. To the film workers, this power neither represented the citizens nor allowed citizens to represent themselves. Rather, the state's control repressed the medium's capacity to document the lives of all members of society and to bring them closer to each other. The film workers viewed the state's repression as a barrier to the imagining of a more open and inclusive realm of representation in cinema, and this reckoning informed their work. From making the un- and underrepresented visible in the public sphere to circumventing the state's censorship, they struggled to lift the restrictions on who could be represented and how. This effort to expand cinematic spaces coincided with South Korean film workers' push against the state's unilateral distribution of resources for film production and exhibition. Asking who determined what would be allocated to whom and why, they uncovered troubling patterns in the ways powerful leaders enforced certain protocols and rules to maximize their exploitation of cinema and govern the population. At times, they interrupted the normalized patterns of monopoly by bending the rules to their own ends. I argue in this book that celluloid democracy evolved as a mode of cultural practice anchored to ethical and aesthetic concerns that challenged undemocratic representation and distribution. This practice foregrounded a utopian vision of democracy in which the ruled could represent themselves and exercise their rights to access resources free from state suppression.

The radical potential of celluloid democracy was intertwined with South Korean film workers' reconfiguration of cinema as an ecology of social, technological, and discursive components that together constituted a dynamic system. This reconfiguration was vital in their challenge to the boundedness of the medium, which was ruled by the state and the market, two hegemonic powers that together tied the medium to their priorities, policies, and perspectives. The film workers studied in this book constructively examined and pushed back against the controlled borders of cinema as an instrument and the assumptions that enabled such control. In so doing, they developed a more capacious notion of cinema, one that encompassed not only moving images and the devices associated with them, but also people and their relations, as well as the diverse discourses that inevitably surrounded production, distribution, and consumption in the public sphere. Despite their differences in background and position, these film workers all refused to treat cinema as a closed and unchanging apparatus; instead, they considered it a medium that was expansive and constantly in the making. This new way of seeing cinema encouraged them to upend the hierarchies within it by building a more horizontal, network-based filmmaking practice and a dialogical relation between producers and viewers. Diverging from the dominant notion of cinema, this ecological conception was ultimately intended to generate an equitable and open community for all participants.

The ecological view of cinema was not crystallized in clearly written manifestos and highly sophisticated concepts. Rather, film workers groped their way gradually toward a deeper understanding of the conditions that determined what they identified as crises of cinema and democracy. In response to these crises, they enacted a diverse and resistant notion of cinema as an ecology, and through this enactment, the film workers attempted to change their own world from within the frames, spaces, and networks of celluloid. Their attempts might be seen as transitory and liminal. They might not have been inherently revolutionary. Yet, the imaginations and connections they sparked should be considered radical potentialities, capturing a sense of futurity during the trying time examined in this book. Stuart Hall writes:

No project achieves "hegemony" as a complete project. It is a process, not a state of being. No victories are permanent or final. Hegemony has constantly to be "worked on," maintained, renewed, revised. Excluded social forces, whose consent has not been won, whose interests have not been taken into account, form the basis of counter-movements, resistance, alternative strategies and visions . . . and the struggle over a hegemonic system starts anew. They constitute what Raymond Williams called "the emergent"—and are the reason why history is never closed but maintains an open horizon towards the future.¹

In the critical tradition of Hall and Williams, the responses of Korean film workers can be seen to have modeled practices that prioritized the process of becoming.

Following Hall, I argue in this book for the importance of recapturing cultural imaginings that reject the closure of history and invest in the struggle toward an open future. While the sense of futurity was not destined to endure during the lives of all the subjects in this book, their visions remain a vital resource, ripe for reuse and further cultivation.

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Over the past two decades, scholars have examined many layers of Cold War South Korea to challenge the “official” narrative of the period as one of an ideological contest between capitalist and communist powers. They have turned their eyes to everyday experiences of the Cold War, from the country’s troubled decolonization bound up with the post-1945 global order to the Korean War and other forms of violence.² This attention to the everyday has revealed a dimension of struggle that extended across all corners of society. The armistice agreement in 1953 may have ended the three years of devastating war, but the national division backed by two superpowers continued to force Koreans to live with endless tension. South of the 38th parallel, a series of right-wing regimes with US support waged anti-communism as a political tactic to maintain their influence. Posing threats to the physical survival of individuals and the social survival of communities, their use of anti-communism magnified fear and anxiety via the mass media and information agencies, leading to the normalization of an array of surveillance systems across the country.³ Beyond South Korea’s transition to democratic polity and the “official” end of the Cold War, starting in the late 1980s, the division has thrust the country into a state of permanent conflict—not simply in border areas but also in daily life. Even at the time of writing, South Koreans continue to live with the remnants of authoritarian rule that persisted through democratization, from the antagonistic public discourse provoked by the powerful ultra-right wing’s corporate media groups to the effective anti-communist mandate.⁴

In approaching the complex and multifaceted experiences of Cold War South Korea, scholars have paid particular attention to culture as a battlefield that did not replace physical combat but was waged with “soft power.”⁵ Much of this discussion has uncovered links of patronage, popular culture, and coercion through which the United States sought to influence intellectual discussion and win the hearts and minds of Koreans.⁶ Despite these scholars’ extensive analysis of new archival sources and genres, they have tended to view culture as a supplementary ground on which powerful people advanced their goals and built support for specific visions of modernization, development, or freedom. Recent studies have expanded this limited definition of culture as a mere container of political ideologies instilled by the US and South Korean powers. Drawing on a range of literary works, audiovisual material, and understudied archival collections, these studies have illuminated how Koreans navigated the uneasy

relation between superpower conflicts and their home; experienced transnational cultural interactions; and undermined the prepackaged political, aesthetic, and ideological scripts.⁷

In what might be called the cultural turn in the study of Cold War South Korea, cinema is not uncharted territory. Yet the discussion of Cold War cinema, and of pre-1990s film generally, has focused narrowly on a small set of canonical texts, genres, and filmmakers, leaving other important aspects of film culture largely unexamined.⁸ Although the recent global success of Korean cinema has fostered newer scholarship in the discipline of film studies, which has long marginalized non-Western cinema, it has also exaggerated a tendency in the field to privilege so-called contemporary cinema. This gap has been addressed by scholars who reexamine the established texts and genres with fresh lenses or explore previously undervalued areas of interest. For instance, Steven Chung, in his work on the well-studied filmmaker Shin Sang-ok, has decentered the discourse of auteurship by tracing the transformation of film genre and industry vis-à-vis Cold War politics.⁹ Jinsoo An investigates the representation of colonialism in South Korean cinema from 1945 through the 1970s through the lens of shifting diplomatic relations with Japan and with a focus on newly developed genres.¹⁰ Bringing light to the 1950s as a rich site of cinematic tradition, Christina Klein, in her study of the postwar filmmaker Han Hyung-mo, examines how Han's distinct styles evolved through both encounter and struggle with the new cultural order of the Cold War.¹¹ Meanwhile, studies of a broad network of Cold War cinema have produced a new understanding of interactions not only between the US and South Korean governments but also among cultural producers, ambassadors, and consumers: most notably, Sang-joon Lee historicizes the rise and fall of networks of postwar film producers, policy makers, and entrepreneurs with regard to the US strategic expansion of cultural Cold War in Asia.¹² Taken together, these scholars have significantly stretched conventional definitions of Cold War cinema. Rather than seeing cinema as subjected to the political goals of the Cold War regimes, they look afresh at genres, styles, and networks as generative sites in which Koreans' agency emerged and evolved during this time.

Celluloid Democracy builds on and extends this recent work in three ways. First, it explores how South Korean film workers radicalized cinema as a means to change the status quo. I examine a wider spectrum of political configurations of cinema that reimagined the medium, intervened in the public sphere, and functioned as a catalyst to change the world. In so doing, I demonstrate that Cold War South Korea's geopolitical condition—in close alignment with the US and isolated from anti-colonial and anti-capitalist alliances—offers a different vantage point from which to define what “progressive” film discourse and practice means, and so to broaden the current understanding of film activism geographically, topically, and conceptually.

The use of cinema by political groups and movements has been well-documented in the context of the northern hemisphere. Most discussions have centered on certain kinds of producers (militant, anti-capitalist, workers' film), topics (amateur social issues film), media (portable cameras), or any other differences from the mainstream.¹³ When it comes to historical studies of film activism outside the West, however, little has been discussed beyond a few established topics such as third cinema, an anti-colonial and anti-capitalist film movement that thrived in 1960s and 1970s Latin America.¹⁴ The lack of discussion of non-Western film movements can be seen, for instance, in a comprehensive collection of film manifestos of all kinds that includes a section on decolonization but attends only to texts published under the broad influence of third cinema.¹⁵ While newer scholarship has increasingly diversified the geographical boundaries of the emergence and exchange of progressive film practices amid the digital turn in social activism, the study of film activism has developed, as Chris Robé and Stephen Charbonneau point out, in an "uneven" manner.¹⁶ The post-1945 history of the Korean film movement has rarely been examined in the Anglophone world, and when it is discussed, scholars have often privileged a group of student filmmakers in the 1980s whose practices were inspired by both the local prodemocratic movement and guerrilla filmmaking in Latin America.¹⁷ This book brings to light earlier endeavors to radicalize cinema that often go unnoticed. Although I spend the last chapter on the student filmmaking of the 1980s, this book reveals that several important ideas of the era—about cinema as an instrument of social transformation, the divergent aims of realizing a more just representation and a more just distribution, and revolutionary film aesthetics—had already been debated by other film workers and artists in the previous decades.

Expanding the scope of the history of film activism also demands a rethinking of how we define activism. Activism often refers to direct action in public spaces, such as sit-ins, strikes, riots, and other forms of civil disobedience. Almost none of the actors analyzed in this book engaged in such direct action on a regular basis, nor did they identify as activists. But the term activism is useful because, as Todd Gitlin explains, "It reminds us that the world not only is but is made."¹⁸ The active making of the world involves an action geared toward something better than what one faces and inhabits; this action might not lead to the hoped-for difference, but without taking such steps it would be impossible to identify what such a difference could be and how to move toward it. Drawing on this notion of activism, this book turns to the wide spectrum of expressions through which Korean film workers pushed back against the status quo and articulated their aesthetic and political subversion. For instance, producers and audiences of the many cultural events that transpired during the Cold War interacted in new and transformative ways, beyond the rigid and narrow political aims of the state that regulated them. The cinematic discourses and practices by film workers discussed in the book underscore that there was rarely a "one-way transmission" of

superpower models (or authoritarian models) at the level of culture. Film workers did not meekly receive the top-down attempts to influence them, but rather deformed and reformed the models that were handed down, making them their own. Film programs for certain “official” purposes had unintended effects, as Korean filmmakers sought to reappropriate spaces and concepts offered by the US and its proxies on their own terms.

It is crucial to attend to the variety of these expressions because taking an action could have different stakes for those who lived under the state’s strict regulation. Korean critics needed to work around notorious censorship practices to speak their minds (Chapter 1). Grassroots film networks had to operate under the guise of depoliticized book clubs (Chapter 2). Veteran and novice filmmakers alike faced threats, such as arrests, due to the decisions that they made (Chapters 3, 4, and 5). Because even what might be seen as “indirect” expressions of subversion could work against them, the actors considered in this book needed to find other relevant and creative ways to express themselves. Throughout this book, I emphasize the importance of understanding the emergence of such modes of expression, even when they appear “quiet,” as an engagement with unjust and precarious conditions—to see how people used their agency and invented expressions that would not be caught by the authorities but that nonetheless spoke.¹⁹

Second, this book captures a set of visions for democracy that emerged as film workers navigated and undermined the ideological and material constraints set by the US and the South Korean states. The subjects analyzed in this book devised ways of thinking about democracy that were bound neither to a political institution nor a prodemocratic movement. Breaking with the pervasive tendency to equate democracy with its superficial features—most prominently elections—they articulated democracy from within their experiences of injustice related to representation and distribution in the field of cinema at various junctures in Cold War South Korea. For instance, filmmakers and critics rejected the vague promise of democracy in their intervention in the American domination of local film markets and resources during the US occupation (Chapter 1). Against the South Korean state’s patronizing monopoly of cinema as its apparatus, teachers activated horizontal networks of audiovisual education to increase access to film materials and literacy (Chapter 2). Facing repression of the right to express themselves, veteran filmmakers refused to be fooled by the state’s arbitrary application of constitutional freedom (Chapter 3). Young filmmakers reinvented the modes of production and exhibition in the hope of creating a new cinema for women in a misogynistic society (Chapter 4) and of bringing the voices of the disadvantaged—especially poor urban workers and peasants—to the screen (Chapter 5).

These alternative visions for democracy through cinema have hitherto been ignored or dismissed as impotent in the historiography of South Korean democracy, which centers on institutional politics. Within and outside the country, South Korea has been widely celebrated as a latecomer that joined the so-called third

wave of democratization in the 1980s.²⁰ This narrative, however, has tended to measure South Korea's transition against a Western standard that emphasizes progress through representative governance, liberal civil rights, and certain forms of participatory engagement.²¹ This tendency has encouraged an abstract notion of democracy as either an imported political institution or a destination for collectively organized actions against authoritarianism.²² Particularly in the latter perspective, which has prevailed in recent years, the history of democracy has been coupled with the popular codification of an image of a homogeneously potent and resilient entity, collapsing the various groups of participants and their democratic visions into a singular national group.²³ These tendencies in the historiography of South Korean democracy have been challenged in various ways. For instance, Charles Kim reexamines the student movements of spring 1960—which are commonly called the April Revolution—and portrays them not as a messianic explosion of revolutionary youth but as a broad demand to address the precarious economic and social conditions of the postwar era.²⁴ Namhee Lee expands the scope of the prodemocratic movement to a wider imagination of the “minjung” (a term used to denote the “people”) by students and intellectuals from the 1960s to the 1980s.²⁵ The vitality of minjung, marked as a subject of history, gained currency not only in political rhetoric but also in music, art, literature, philosophy, and theology, which together generated vibrant visions of an equitable society.

With a focus on film, I join the growing chorus of historians who have disarticulated the seemingly coherent democratization movement. As the rest of the book reveals, many film workers sought out something different, a more just definition of the “democratic” terms bandied about by the US and South Korean states, like “freedom,” “equality,” and “development.” In a sense, their struggle revitalized radical politics through its capacity to put these terms into practice in counter-normative ways. This does not mean they always succeeded at upending the status quo—that is, the capitalist, nationalist, anti-communist, and patriarchal system. While some creators of celluloid democracy identified such inversions in their planning, their experiments with celluloid and democracy meant that the relationship between the ways these terms were realized within their space and the status quo was complex and multifaceted. I claim that the spaces of celluloid democracy were fruitful places from which to think differently and imaginatively about democratic terms when such thinking was oriented to changing the world.

Last but not least, this book considers how the archives and memories of film workers have been shaped by the Cold War and its ongoing impacts. The task of writing a Cold War history of Korean cinema involves the methodological challenges of accessing the lost materials and often ephemeral sites (e.g., unarchived film prints, production documents, periodicals, mobile theaters, and networks of film viewers). For instance, the film workers—the non-state actors—I write about are invisible in almost all the national archives of the United States and South Korea. Rather than writing against this invisibility as violence inflicted by people

in power against so-called ordinary film workers and their historical existence, I mine the absence by describing as fully as possible the conditions that produced it.²⁶ Writing with the absence involves a set of inquiries that this book addresses: What do the workings of the archives, particularly those of the state, tell us about society, the nature of its institutions, and the fabric of the relationships between the state and its citizens? Public access to state archives has been deemed a hallmark of “democratic” societies, but what does democracy mean here when these archives do not hold space for, or provide access to, “the demos”—the people? And how might an exploration of celluloid democracy enable a new understanding of Cold War archives or the production of new collections of knowledge?

In my response to these questions, I highlight that the absence of many of the figures traced in this book in official archives is an index of the vertical relationships enacted between the South Korean state and the population. In Cold War South Korea, political leaders sought to instill a patriarchal nationalism that normalized a hierarchical relationship between the leader and his people. Tapping into the anti-colonial sentiment of the public, Syngman Rhee (in office, 1948–60) branded himself the father of the nation (“*kukpu*”) whose life had been dedicated to its independence since the early colonial era.²⁷ Park Chung Hee (in office, 1961–79) diluted his militaristic background with a constant showcasing of his family as an ideal model in which he played the role of a resourceful and unpretentious father. This image of Park was reproduced by the print and audiovisual media, most notoriously in coverage of his site visits to factories and farming villages that depicted him as the leader of a nation of ancestral families.²⁸ The archive of the South Korean government features this patriarchal gaze of the state upon its population. This gaze is inscribed in the conditions of the absence at all levels: from its structure (organized by the bureaucratic ladder up to the president) to its content (proposals, reports, letters sent to higher authorities).²⁹

The absence of Korean film workers in official archives also proves the vertical relationships between the US and South Korea. The US archives contain a myriad of papers on how anti-communism and the evangelization of democracy fueled American action on Korea (or the Koreas); as the new hegemon of the so-called free world, the US regarded South Korea as an essential East Asian post that had to be “saved” from communist expansion. These archives reflect the fact that US hegemony in South Korea grew through a combination of imperial intervention and involvement in nationalist modernization projects. The Koreans’ reasons for working with Americans evolved as they sought external assistance in achieving internal and international political goals. Their interaction with the US power shows that American assistance at times—especially during the postwar era—did not deny their agency but rather recognized it. Nevertheless, it cannot be disputed that the hierarchies between nations structured the integration and interdependence that characterized the US-Korea relationship.³⁰ These hierarchies set up not only American action in Korea but also the absence of Koreans in the US archives:

the film distributors and exhibitors who operated under the American military government during its occupation, the teachers who worked with the American audiovisual education specialists in the early postwar era (1954–61), and so on.

By pressing at the limits of archival documents, I hope to elucidate the intricate connections between the archive and the Cold War construction of knowledge that dictate the official invisibility of the actors in my study. Grappling with their historical invisibility involves not so much restoring what is missing in the archive. Rather, it requires us to think outside, not just along, the borders of the institutional archives to imagine and amplify the strivings of the film workers.

Knowledge is often embodied rather than being an external material trace of the Cold War, belonging to what Diana Taylor has called the repertoire rather than the archive.³¹ Between 2017 and 2019, I conducted a series of in-depth interviews in South Korea in the hope of encountering the repertoire of film workers as cultural producers during the Cold War. This process threw into relief my limitations as a scholar of the northern hemisphere, where Eurocentric knowledge and methods have been normalized as ways of studying others in different parts of the world. In fact, my interview trips opened up a long journey of unlearning that has ignited my thinking about what Walter Mignolo terms “epistemic injustice” over the years.³² When asked to share their stories, none of my interlocutors believed at first that their ideas or actions in the past were interesting enough to be matters of scholarly concern, and many seemed to have trouble articulating themselves. It took me a while to recognize that I was using my own parameters of what counts as knowledge and how it should look while listening to them; within the limits of these parameters, their struggle to speak about the past was mistakenly seen as their difficulty. But what seemed to be their reserve or passivity was actually my own incompetence at understanding their reticence—including pauses and silences—as legitimate forms of expression.

Moreover, their reticence to speak was predicated on the particularities of my field site, where the “legacy” of the authoritarian era is not a cliché. After all, South Korea is one of the few places in the world where the anti-communist National Security Law is still in effect. Many of my older interlocutors often detoured, digressed, or whispered to me when speaking about things they deemed sensitive and subversive. During the interviews, I thus learned to position myself above all as a listener by abandoning several practices that are customary in academic oral history work. For instance, I brought no pre-scripted questions to the meetings so that the participants in the dialogue would not feel rushed to “provide” or help me “extract” allegedly useful “information.” I also tried to pay close attention to all the sequences and rhythms of their sounds, including silence; to their speaking traits; to their facial expressions; and to their construction (and destruction) of narratives. This practice helped me work against some of the formal processes of oral history—evaluating their capacity as “informants” and transcribing their words—that often operate under an assumption of the scholar’s position as a more

capable knowledge-producer. Simultaneously, it worked as a reminder that their eagerness to build an intergenerational dialogue has given life to this book. Without my interlocutors' willingness to translate the breadth and depth of their experiences, celluloid democracy would have been incomprehensible to anyone who, as I do, has long taken democracy for granted. Their stories can generate a sense of immediate and concrete copresence through which experiences of different times and spaces become accessible. In the chapters that follow, I highlight this sense of copresence by allowing the experiences of my interlocutors to enter the conversation in the present.

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The book focuses on five junctures of celluloid democracy in which Korean filmmakers, distributors, and exhibitors reshaped cinema in radically empowering ways against the backdrop of political uncertainty. Although the following chapters move along a roughly chronological path marked by the critical phenomena of Cold War South Korea, they explore ideas and practices that exceed the limits of the statist notion of democracy and the cinematic medium.

The first two chapters consider how Koreans conceived democracy in a distinctively different way from the political power's configuration in the name of independent nation-building. Drawing on a range of sources, from American administrative records to Korean print media, Chapter 1 discusses how an array of film workers, especially filmmakers, critics, and bootleggers, assessed the US occupying power's faux promise of democracy. Their observation of US film policy and its governance blossomed into a new discourse that addressed the colonial violence reanimated by the US maintenance of the prewar Japanese system in Korea. I show how this discourse appeared in response to various forms of colonial violence that not only diverged from but also resembled the Japanese regulation of cinema, thus revealing the contradiction in American exceptionalism. In tandem with this discourse, Koreans' bootlegging also revealed the US monopoly on what the Koreans perceived as their infrastructure and resources. I demonstrate that their piratical activities redressed unrealized economic and political justice in the US occupation zone, intervening in the American approach to cinema as an instrument of social control. This chapter argues that Koreans conceived of democracy not through the American mission of democratization but through their experience of its ambiguous and even oppressive version of decolonization, which they contested through production of anti-colonial discourse and piratical distribution.

This critical take on the "origin" of Korean democracy as a mere American import leads into Chapter 2, which considers another iteration of Koreans' intervention in the abstract notion of democracy. The chapter contemplates a set of visions of democracy that emerged from postwar teachers who worked as primary media practitioners in the classroom. Although hitherto neglected in our production-centered history of postwar cinema, these teachers, on the front lines

of reforming education, realized the potential of audiovisual (AV) media for social empowerment and building community. I explore their work in the context of the broader instrumentalization of Cold War cinema by both American and Korean leaders. Unlike the political elites, who treated AV media mainly as a carrier of information, these teachers retooled cinema as a modality for forming new social relations and interactions in the classroom. They also built new local grassroots networks to increase the accessibility of AV media for other teachers. Counter to the government's unilateral distribution of film resources that denied equitable and inclusive access, their networks foregrounded a sense of collaborative, open community among local groups of teachers. Bringing these works together, I show how these teachers carved out spaces where democracy was seen not as a mere institution but as a set of values, sensibilities, and responsibilities that had to be cultivated in tandem with South Korean youth.

The remaining three chapters focus on filmmakers who actively responded to the conditions of constitutional autocracy that constrained what they believed to be democratic virtues. In Chapter 3, I use the scandalous censorship of *A Day Off* (*Hyuil*), a feature by Yi Manhŭi (Lee Man-hee), to analyze the boundaries set around cinematic freedom by the Cold War state in the late 1960s. Whereas scholarship on this film has until now relied on the conventional dynamic of the “oppressed” and the “oppressor” in censorship, I consider the complexity of *A Day Off* within the context of the changing protocols and rules of censorship in the mid-1960s. The shift to a process that involved multiple reviews of scripts and films initiated a critical conversation among filmmakers and critics about whether the right to free expression was contingent upon the political regime's contradictory notion of democracy. Taking a cue from their acute sense of trouble in their world, I reassess the revision process for *A Day Off* and the choices made by the filmmakers. In close readings of its three available texts, I highlight, on the one hand, a dialogical relation of filmmakers and censors that not only regulated but also constructed what could be said and shown in cinema. On the other hand, I focus on the unprecedented decisions of the filmmakers in response to the constraints on their freedom: shooting ahead of the state's approval and withdrawing public release. By casting light on these acts, I demonstrate that the filmmakers invented new ways to rise above the confined terrain of alleged constitutional freedom; their circumvention of the state's protocols and rules may not have resulted in a more collective challenge to state power, but, I argue, it nonetheless called attention to, tested, and ultimately refused the state-sanctioned version of freedom and its undemocratic condition.

Chapter 4 turns to the first South Korean women's film collective, Khaidu (K'aitu), as a critical force that opposed the patriarchal and repressive culture of the 1970s under the rule of Park Chung Hee. As part of the crest of aesthetic and political movements of the 1970s, Khaidu's search for an alternative cinema—what it called “silhŏm”—intervened in both conventional cinema and South Korea's

misogynistic society. The collective's silhöm tackled the dominant modes of mainstream cinema through its promotion of collaboration-centered production, nonnarrative cinema, and intermedial experiments. Simultaneously, its silhöm expanded to attend to the representation of women in cinema as a textual space and a field of labor. Through organizing a symposium and a performance that provoked a new conversation about women's cinema, Khaidu countered the structural suppression of women's voices and agency in public. By tracing the collective's two-fold objective and its realization, I reveal how the Khaidu filmmakers resisted a thoroughly masculine world as well as modes of democracy that were conducive to patriarchy. Their silhöm, I claim, articulated previously unheard ideas about cinema and feminism into practice and launched new forms of activism.

The last chapter studies how a college film club, the Seoul Film Collective (Söulyöngchwachipdan, SFC), combated a pervasive distrust of the media in the 1980s. The SFC members made and screened their films at a time when all media were rigidly regulated by the government and no criticism of government policy was ever approved for broadcasting. Like Khaidu, the SFC tackled the conventional mediascape but with a different concern: the media's under- and misrepresentation of the dispossessed—the workers and peasants—in a rapidly urbanizing and capitalistic society. This concern shaped their experimentation with film language and production modes to propose a “new cinema” that allowed diverse voices from the margins of society to enter the domain of representation. It also informed the way they innovated an independent network of film distribution and exhibition that would generate a sense of community. This network, despite its short life, disrupted the division of film production and exhibition, and ultimately the market-oriented, state-sanctioned distribution system. Taken as a whole, the SFC's work invites us to see how young filmmakers pushed back against the logics of the state and the market that shaped cinema as an instrument of these hegemonic powers.

To put together the terms “celluloid” and “democracy” is to seize upon a palpable conjunction in all the cinematic discourses and practices above. I end this book with a short note on two recent films that prompt a critical thinking of what such a conjunction means and can do in the so-called post-authoritarian South Korea. With the official end of dictatorship in 1987 and the transition to the first civilian rule in 1993, the country's democratization has widely been received as a success. This perspective has gained more currency in recent years with the Candlelight Movement (2016–17), which contributed to the unprecedented impeachment of the incumbent president via a democratic process. This successful removal from power has been added to the established narrative of democratization as a marker of the progress of South Korean democracy. I propose a pause to contemplate the danger of such triumphalism with two relatively recent films: *1987: When the Day Comes* (2017) and *Yongsan* (2010). The former, a success at the box office, provides a rigorous construction of the past struggle that contributed to the country's

democratic transition. Yet, its celebratory narrative tends to shut down any potential of celluloid democracy that might still be relevant for radicalizing democracy beyond the institutional realm. In contrast, *Yongsan* elicits questions about our pattern of representing democracy as a complete system, inviting us into a new space of celluloid democracy that pushes us to face our responsibilities: to refuse to repose in democracy as a mere institution and to reject the comfort of living in democracy when the monolithic power of the state and the capital are deeply fracturing our lives.

Celluloid Democracy is intended to open a conversation about what kind of world a group of South Korean film workers wanted to struggle for, and the roles they saw for cinema in this struggle. The creators of celluloid democracy chose to imagine a different world and to do what was within their power to realize it. Although this book's focus is on Cold War South Korea, the ideas and practices of film workers may help us reignite or reconnect with the urgency of radicalizing cinema and democracy. Virtually everywhere, we face government censorship, blockages of public expression and access to public resources, and institutionalized patriarchal and other hegemonic codes that appear natural and sensible. While we may be frustrated at the blatant hypocrisy of increasingly expansive autocratic rule in the guise of democracy, we need to attend to any spaces in which the different imagination of social fabric might be flourishing. This book brings a few such spaces from the past into our time in the hope that we will be able to learn from them how to tirelessly question the status quo and imagine how the world could be otherwise.