

## Film Culture, Sound Culture

### *Setting, Cinematography, and Sound*

In *Madame Freedom*'s (1956) penultimate scene Mme Oh dances with her married lover, Mr. Han, in a Western-style hotel room. It is an intimate study of erotic desire, as the lovers hold each other close and gaze into each other's eyes, murmuring sweet nothings. Romantic music emanates from an unseen source, guiding the couple's movements and stimulating a passion that breaks all the rules of respectable behavior. A gliding camera gracefully tracks their dance around the room and enhances the rhythm of their bodies, while Western décor, including a symbolically blazing fireplace and a large bed, helps visualize the characters' feelings and suggests the modernity of their actions. It is a masterfully constructed scene in which setting, cinematography, and sound work together seamlessly to express the final moments of Mme Oh's morally ambiguous freedom (figure 13).

This chapter explores *Madame Freedom* through the lens of poaching, which was introduced in chapter 3 as one of the defining features of *budae jjigae* cinema. The hotel room scene is constructed out of bits and pieces of "elsewhere," from the Latin music on the soundtrack to the Scotch plaid upholstery of the club chairs to the passionate embrace so reminiscent of Hollywood. This subtle cinematic pastiche is evident throughout the film.

Poaching was a central mode of South Korean cultural production during the 1950s. Michel de Certeau developed the concept of poaching as a way to explore the agency of cultural consumers in relation to the much greater power of cultural producers. Through poaching, active consumers transform a text from a closed system of fixed meanings into a "reservoir of forms," a more or less open pool of resources that consumers can draw upon to construct new meanings that address their specific social situations.<sup>1</sup> Henry Jenkins has extended this line of thought,



FIGURE 13. *Budae jjigae* cinema: Mme Oh and her lover, Mr. Han, dance to Latin music amidst a hotel room's Western décor. (Courtesy KOFA)

suggesting that textual poachers have the ability not just to make new meanings, but to become full-fledged cultural producers in their own right: by taking bits of existing texts and reassembling them, they can create new texts that engage with, but are not identical to, their source material.<sup>2</sup> For both de Certeau and Jenkins, poaching entails transformation and reinvention. It involves removing something from its original context, resituating it, and investing it with new meanings—turning American Spam, as it were, into a component of Korean *budae jjigae*. The concept of poaching intersects with Homi Bhabha's notion of mimicry to remind us that even within highly unequal relations of power, there can still be agency on the part of weaker parties, and that acts of copying often combine admiration with a sense of pugnacious challenge. In colonial and postcolonial contexts, especially, poaching can result in both “resemblance and menace.”<sup>3</sup>

Poaching, of course, is central to the work of imagination and creation. As Jonathan Letham argues in “The Ecstasy of Influence”—an essay constructed out of passages culled from other writers—“appropriation, mimicry, quotation, allusion, and sublimated collaboration consist of a kind of *sine qua non* of the creative act, cutting across all forms and genres in the realm of cultural production.”<sup>4</sup>

Plagiarism and creativity, in other words, go hand in hand. Film historian Miriam Hansen has argued that poaching has long been a central tactic among non-Western filmmakers eager to explore the modernization of their societies. In the 1920s and 1930s Hollywood offered filmmakers around the world a ready-made language of “vernacular modernism”: its films served as reservoirs of stories, characters, and cinematic conventions that could convey the varied experiences of modernity, from its “liberating impulses” to its “pathologies.” In poaching from these reserves, local filmmakers indigenized Hollywood conventions, combining them with local forms of cultural expression and with other imported idioms, and using them to represent their new social and material conditions. Hansen emphasized cinema’s ability to convey the “sensory-reflexive horizon” of modernity—new sights and sounds, new states of mind, new bodily experiences—and to make that vicariously available to moviegoers. By doing so in crowded public theaters, films fashioned modernity as a collectively shared social condition, rather than as mere individual experience.<sup>5</sup>

As a number of scholars have shown, poaching was a widespread practice among Golden Age filmmakers. Working within what Kathleen McHugh has described as a “global network of cultural influences,” they made films characterized by a rich aesthetic hybridity and deep veins of ambivalence. Filmmakers routinely borrowed elements from Hollywood films—iconic images, generic conventions, character types—via acts of creative appropriation and cross-cultural adaptation that reworked their meanings to suit new contexts and audiences. Such acts of “strategic ‘thievery,’” as Hye Seung Chung and David Scott Diffrient dub them, helped fuel the robust cultural production of the 1950s and 1960s. They also expressed what Andre Schmid has called, in a different historical context, South Korea’s fraught geopolitical location “between empires.”<sup>6</sup>

Poaching involves the act of reception as well as production, and so it invites attention to film history as well as to film form. What interests me in this chapter is the textual poaching in Han Hyung-mo’s work, specifically *Madame Freedom*. Where in the film can we see the formal traces of other cinemas? The simple fact of poaching is less interesting to me, however, than the historical and cultural specificity of the act. What were the conditions obtaining in Korean film culture of the 1950s that made textual poaching a compelling creative strategy? What kinds of aesthetic reserves did Han tap into, and what were the historical conditions that made them available? Ultimately, this chapter explores how poaching made possible the expression of sentiments and ideas that might otherwise have been difficult to convey.

I focus here on Han’s textual poaching in relation to postwar Korea’s film culture and sound culture. I take the term *film culture* from Alan Higson, who uses it as a way to move beyond the national limits of *film industry* and *national cinema*.<sup>7</sup> Film culture is a transnational category, in that it includes all the films in circulation within a given market, foreign as well as domestic. As a concept, it makes visible the

cosmopolitan dimension of film consumption that exists in most countries. Film culture is also a transmedia category that includes material and discursive factors that affect the production, distribution, exhibition, and reception of films, such as import regulations and newspaper reviews. I am using *sound culture* as a parallel concept to refer to the foreign and domestic music in circulation within South Korea, as well as the factors that shaped its production, distribution, and consumption, such as radio stations and listening venues. Both film culture and sound culture, in turn, are subsets of the larger public culture discussed in chapter 3.

Colonialism, the Korean War, and the Cold War had rendered South Korea's film and sound cultures surprisingly cosmopolitan by the 1950s, rich with material that had originated elsewhere. Han treated these film and sound cultures as reservoirs of aesthetic possibility from which he could poach at will. By doing so, he produced a cinematic style that was cosmopolitan both in flavor and in its material groundings. He was also able to assemble the textual material necessary to imagine South Korea's integration into the Free World. In *Madame Freedom*, South Korea's growing bonds to the larger noncommunist world find expression not so much through dialogue as through the visual and aural registers of film form—that is, through a distinctly cosmopolitan style. The connection to the Free World becomes, for the viewer, something seen, heard, and felt, rather than apprehended intellectually. This sense of union slips under the mind's radar as it is absorbed through the senses, accompanied by cinematic pleasure.

This chapter focuses on Han's relationship to Japanese films, Hollywood films, and recordings of Western music. It argues that Han created an emotionally and sensuously rich representation of modernity by appropriating elements of setting, cinematography, and sound from texts that were already in circulation within South Korea. It poses two questions about film style. First, how did Han use these stylistic elements expressively: what meanings do they carry within *Madame Freedom*? Second, how can we read these stylistic elements as historical evidence: what can they tell us about South Korea's historical-material situation as a modernizing country?

#### CONDITIONS OF POSSIBILITY FOR POACHING

In the years after the Korean War, filmmakers were searching for an expressive language capable of conveying their contemporary experience of modernity. To many filmmakers, existing Korean styles seemed exhausted and outmoded, incapable of conveying the new world that was taking shape around them. Cinematographer and director Kang Beom-gu spoke of this turn away from indigenous styles in an interview many years later. "As for Korean topics or modes of expression," recalled Kang, "back then, they were regarded as a little old fashioned, and weren't highly regarded." On top of that, the limited domestic film production in the late 1940s and early 1950s meant that "there weren't many Korean films that we could use for

reference.”<sup>8</sup> Filmmakers instead looked outward to the cinemas of others countries for stories, genres, characters, and styles that could help them explore their own society with fresh insights.

The accessibility of new cinematic languages within postwar film culture, however, was constrained by geopolitics. The Cold War had rendered the communist film cultures of the Soviet Union, China, and North Korea illegitimate as sources of creative inspiration and as models of modern film language. During the occupation years, the US military government halted the production of leftist films and removed from circulation all films from communist countries.<sup>9</sup> Syngman Rhee’s government extended these prohibitions and implemented a censorship system that forbade the expression of anything that could be regarded as sympathy towards communism in general and North Koreans in particular.<sup>10</sup> The experience of colonialism, in turn, rendered Japan’s cinema highly problematic as a source of expressive language. Rhee sought to delegitimize Japan as a model of modernity that South Korean cultural producers should look towards, and he made the eradication of “Japanese things and ways” (*wae-saek*) an important part of his cultural decolonization efforts. Japanese popular culture was effectively banned by means of censorship laws that prohibited “unhealthy and immoral” works of art, a category that encompassed Japanese popular music and publications.<sup>11</sup> Japanese films were regarded as particularly threatening, given their historical use as conveyors of imperial ideology and the extremely high quality, and thus attractiveness, of contemporary productions. As a result, Japanese films were not legally imported into Korea for commercial exhibition until 1998. Rhee’s government also limited the representation of Japan in Korean films, banning Korean-Japanese romances, the inclusion of footage shot in Japan, and most uses of the Japanese language.<sup>12</sup> The complete erasure of Japan from postwar film proved impossible, however, and throughout the 1950s and 1960s Japanese cinema continued to have a subterranean presence within Korea’s film culture.

American models of cultural modernity, in contrast, were widely available and publicly championed within postwar film culture. The provision of South Koreans with a language for thinking about modernity was, in fact, a central objective of the cultural Cold War. USIS newsreels, documentaries, and educational films were widely exhibited via mobile units and screened in most commercial theaters before the feature presentation. These films presented attractive visions of Americanized modernity: they educated Koreans about American history, culture, and institutions; showcased American reconstruction efforts in Korea; highlighted modern developments within South Korea; and promoted Cold War values such as democracy and freedom.<sup>13</sup> South Korean writers and filmmakers, as discussed in chapter 3, were closely involved in producing and localizing this material for Korean audiences. Working together, Americans and South Koreans constructed America as an acceptable embodiment of modernity within South Korea’s film culture.

This search for a politically acceptable cinematic language of modernity intersected with a fairly cosmopolitan film culture and sound culture. While Hollywood films dominated the commercial market, they shared that space with smaller numbers of films from other countries, including the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Austria, Spain, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Venezuela, Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico.<sup>14</sup> Some of these films had an impact far beyond their small attendance figures. Neorealist pictures from Italy, such as *Bicycle Thieves* (1948, Vittorio De Sica) and *Paisan* (1946, Roberto Rossellini), found favor with film critics who appreciated their social criticism and directors who admired their low-budget artistry, although they often played to half-empty theaters. French melodramas, in turn, were popular with filmmakers and audiences alike.<sup>15</sup> The commercial market did not comprise the entirety of Korea's film culture, however: a robust black market in films operated throughout the late 1940s and 1950s. This involved films from Allied countries that had escaped confiscation by the Japanese in 1941; films from communist countries that had escaped confiscation by the US military occupation government in 1946; contemporary commercial films from Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong that were smuggled into Korea; and American documentary and features film that were stolen from the US Army Picture Service in South Korea.<sup>16</sup> Korea's sound culture likewise contained music, both live and recorded, that had originated in diverse countries and was accessible through commercial, military, and black markets.

#### SETTING: CREATING A GENDERED GEOGRAPHY OF MODERNITY

Han Hyung-mo made films that imagined modernity in spatial terms. He often created a gendered geography of modernity, using physical settings to express how modernity was inhabited differently by women and men. Han made metropolitan films at a time when the city was associated with progress and when it was the site in which Korea's ties to other countries were most visible. He often announced these urban settings in his films' opening shots. The credit sequence for *A Female Boss* (1959), for instance, features a bird's-eye view of the iconic Myeongdong rotary in Seoul, surrounded by multistory buildings and bustling with automobiles, while *Hyperbolae of Youth* (1956) opens with a panorama of Busan's waterfront followed by a montage of busy street shots. These cities, in turn, are home to myriad smaller public spaces that female protagonists inhabit with ease and in which they often engage with bits of foreign culture. In *The Hand of Destiny* (1954) Margaret works in a bar, attends a bicycle race and a boxing match, and plays miniature golf. In *My Sister Is a Hussy* (1961), Sun-ae and her sister stroll through a city park and patronize a photography store. In *Hyperbolae of Youth* Mi-ja enjoys a picnic with American food at a crowded beach. *Men vs. Women* shows a female obstetrician, Dr. Yun, walking through the urban streets during the day and night, working in a Bauhaus-style hospital, and performing surgery in a technologically

advanced operating room. Han's female characters lay claim to the city, with all its associations of modernity, as a social space they can legitimately inhabit.

In *Madame Freedom* Han creates settings that express Mme Oh's efforts to live outside the familial order and that open up space for a critique of patriarchy; they also allow for the imagination of alternative social relationships. In its mapping of story and character onto space, *Madame Freedom* bears a strong resemblance to a film by Japanese filmmaker Ozu Yasujiro. Ozu is often hailed as the quintessentially Japanese director. In his large body of films made between 1927 and 1962, he captured the rhythms and emotions of daily Japanese life by means of a distinctive style built around the static shot and slow editing tempo. While some scholars have read his films as repositories of traditional Japanese values and aesthetics, recent scholarship has emphasized the extent to which his postwar films explore Japan's transformations under the influence of America. Alastair Phillips argues that Ozu's home drama films, such as *Late Spring* (1949), *Early Summer* (1951), and *Tokyo Story* (1953), grapple directly with Japan's postwar social changes, including increased urbanization, new patterns of work, and changes in family structure. Phillips proposes that, far from being expressions of unvarying tradition, these films capture the experiences of postwar modernity as it was unfolding.<sup>17</sup>

Phillips suggests that Ozu played out the tensions between tradition and progress by constructing dynamic relationships between women and space. Ozu repeatedly crafted films about modern young women who negotiate between long-standing social expectations for marriage and submission to the patriarchal family on the one hand, and new opportunities for work, pleasure, and independence on the other. Phillips argues that Ozu used setting to grapple with women's shifting social roles, creating a gendered spatial logic that is central to the films' structure: they are simultaneously domestic films that privilege the spaces of the home and urban films that depict the city as a site of new opportunities for work and leisure. While Ozu's modern young women live in traditional Japanese houses, they also occupy Western-style living spaces, work in modern offices, socialize in urban cafés, walk through city streets, and achieve even greater mobility on trains. The constructions of "female social space" are central to the films' depiction of the tensions surrounding modernity, insofar as they serve as stages for female friendship, which in turn offer opportunities for open debates about the competing values of tradition and modernity. In these films, Phillips suggests, "feminine space becomes *the* field in which the contemporary and the traditional were fought over."<sup>18</sup>

*Madame Freedom* echoes the story and gendered spatial logic of *The Flavor of Green Tea over Rice* (1952), which predates the publication of Jeong Bi-seok's serial novel by two years and the release of Han's film by four. Both *Madame Freedom* and *Green Tea* tell the story of a middle-class urban housewife who inhabits the overlaps between tradition and modernity and between Asian and Western cultures. Like Han's Mme Oh, Ozu's Satake Taeko feels bored with her husband and stifled in her arranged marriage, and she, too, seeks pleasure and excitement outside her



home. She also has a niece who dismisses arranged marriages as old-fashioned and sets out to forge her own relationships based on love. Both films tell their stories by locating their protagonists within a series of physical spaces marked as modern and/or Western and by showing how, when occupying these spaces, these women behave in ways that violate traditional gender norms. Both films present these spaces as creating new opportunities for women: for paid work, for the development of a new social identity, for consumption, for leisure, for female friendship, and for individualism. Physical settings help define what modernity offers a woman and what its costs might be.

By comparing specific scenes we can see how Han, like Ozu, creates a network of spaces in which patriarchal values are called into question. Both *Madame Freedom* and *Green Tea* include early scenes in which the female protagonist, having left her home, drives through the city in the back seat of a taxi. The scenes include a pair of shots that are similar in size and composition, with the protagonist, dressed in traditional clothes, sitting on the right side of the frame in a medium shot as a female friend, dressed in stylish Western attire, sits on the left. Each scene locates the women within an urban space that is both modern (there are multistory buildings, buses, and cars visible through the windows) and host to an American military presence: a PX (post exchange military department store) in *Green Tea* and US military jeeps in *Madame Freedom*. The films thus bestow automobility upon their female characters, enabling them to navigate modern, urban, Americanized space confidently and safely, rather than being overwhelmed or threatened by it. This automobility enables the women to escape from family obligations and pursue pleasure instead: in *Green Tea*, Taeko and her niece talk about going to a French movie starring Jean Marais, while in *Madame Freedom* Mme Choi whisks Mme Oh off to a women's luncheon.

Each film creates a domestic space that expresses the tensions between husband and wife, and between Japanese/Korean and Western culture. The room associated with the husband in each film—a home office—is visually aligned with traditional and national culture. In *Green Tea*, Mr. Satake wears a kimono while sitting on a tatami matted floor. In *Madame Freedom* Professor Jang wears a padded *hanbok* while he works on his Korean manuscripts, a graduation photograph on the wall identifying him as a scholar—a high-status position in Confucian culture—and a scroll with Chinese characters signaling Korea's history of Sinocentrism. The rooms associated with the wives, in contrast, are identified with Western culture. In *Green Tea* Taeko broods over her unhappy marriage in a bedroom decorated with visually overwhelming Western décor, including a bed, chairs, chintz upholstery, a tall bureau, and flowered wallpaper. *Madame Freedom* identifies the living room as the wife's space. While the furniture is Korean, Madame Oh uses this space to store her new Western-style clothes, to put on her makeup, and to use her shiny electric iron, making this room a site of incipient westernization. In both films the visual contrast between the westernized space of the wife and the Korean/Japanese





FIGURE 14. The Western-style clothes shop in Ozu Yasujiro's *The Flavor of Green Tea over Rice* (1952).

space of the husband suggests that the wife is challenging her husband's authority from within the home, by creating a culturally separate space for herself.

Both films remove the unhappy wife from this home and send her into a commercial shop that sells Western-style fashions. Compositionally these spaces are very similar, with plate-glass storefront windows, double glass doors, glass display cabinets, a saleswoman to the left, and a mannequin dressed in Western clothes (figures 14 and 15). These shops are run by competent businesswomen who take the upper hand with their husbands. In both, the wives encounter the material objects of Western culture and imbibe the values associated with it, including the freedom that comes from earning one's own money. Within this feminized social and professional space, the protagonist is encouraged to pursue her individual desires in ways that erode the authority of her husband: Madame Oh flirts and makes dates with men, while Taeko plots a secret vacation away from home.

Both films locate their female characters within a series of public commercial spaces devoted to leisure and entertainment. In *Green Tea*, various female characters eat at a noodle shop, attend a bicycle race and baseball game, and visit a pachinko parlor. In *Madame Freedom*, Mme Oh spends time in restaurants, a coffee



FIGURE 15. A similar layout in *Madame Freedom's Paris Boutique*. (Courtesy KOFA)

shop, a nightclub, and a hotel room. In each of these public spaces the women shed their roles as “wise mother, good wife” and affirm alternative identities as friends and lovers. In one pair of scenes, the wives attend a social gathering with a group of female friends: Mme Oh a luncheon of school alumnae, and Taeko a trip to a spa with her girlfriends. Although neither of these spaces is markedly Western, both films suggest that when women socialize together they encourage each other to push at the boundaries of acceptable feminine behavior. These female social circles are presented as an alternative to the family, linking women to each through consumption, leisure, and the bonds of friendship. In *Madame Freedom*, the women smoke cigarettes, drink beer, comment on each other’s expensive jewelry, discuss the need to earn their own money, and make plans to go dancing with men who are not their husbands. In *Green Tea*, they drink sake, one of them to excess; Taeko lies to her husband about her activities when he calls on the phone, and all the women mock him as a dullard. In each film, these female social spaces create opportunities for overt critiques of patriarchy, as the women complain about the “tyranny” and “harsh” authority of husbands. In each film, a woman voices the wish to be free of this authority: “What’s the use of husbands?” asks Mme Choi in *Madame Freedom*, while Taeko laments, “I wish my husband would go far away.” Within these settings women can express their disaffection with patriarchy and

forge same-sex relationships that stand as alternatives to the arranged marriages in which they are suffering.

After depicting these female forays into the public sphere, both films include a somber scene in which the husband returns home from work only to be informed by a maid that the wife is absent. Like the shots set in the taxis and shops, these shots are compositionally very similar: the husband stands to the right and the maid faces him on the left, with both characters separated from each other and isolated within rectangular spaces created by doorways, gridded screens, and other architectural elements. Each film also includes a subsequent shot that reveals the emotional cost of the wife's abandonment of the home. In *Madame Freedom* the young son articulates his own sadness and suggests the negative impact of his mother's actions: "Mom always comes home late, I hate it." In *Green Tea*, Ozu uses poignant music, rather than dialogue, to express the husband's sorrow. These scenes function as critiques of the women's behavior, expressing the feelings of loss that modernity's disruptions generate. They are also powerfully affecting and contribute to each film's ideological complexity.

Han, like Ozu, uses physical setting to define what it means for a woman to become modern. In both films this transformation entails increased mobility within urban space, a remaking of the home to satisfy women's desires, challenges to patriarchal authority, and the assertion of a woman's individual will. For male characters, it means emotional loss. While the visual and thematic parallels between Han's and Ozu's films are striking, the historical-material relationship between these two films is much less clear. If style is a form of historical evidence, of what historical relationship are Han's settings evidence? Was Han familiar with Ozu's work? Did he ever see *Green Tea*? Did he intentionally poach stylistic elements from that film? The attempt to answer these questions does not turn up a definitive answer. It does, however, point to the secret history of Japanese cinema's presence within postwar South Korean film culture.

#### JAPAN IN POSTWAR KOREAN FILM CULTURE

It would not have been possible for Han to see *The Flavor of Green Tea over Rice* in a Korean theater, given the de facto ban on the import and exhibition of Japanese films. Despite this absence, however, Japanese films continued to have what Jinsoo An has called a "phantom" presence within postwar Korean film culture.<sup>19</sup> This presence was both a legacy of colonial relations and a result of postwar conditions.

Japanese films certainly existed as a memory for Han, a result of the intertwining of the Korean and Japanese film industries during the colonial era. It is quite possible that Han encountered Ozu's earlier films in a Korean theater when he was in his teens and twenties. Korea served as an important market for Japanese films during the colonial period, and Japanese studios owned the best theaters. The colonial Japanese population constituted the primary audience for these films,

and it was large enough to make Korea a profitable market. Shochiku, the studio that produced Ozu's films, had been a major player in the Korean film industry since the 1910s, and since Ozu's films were good earners for Shochiku in Japan in the 1930s and 1940s, it seems likely that they played in Korean theaters as well, where a young man interested in a film career might have seen them.<sup>20</sup> It is also possible that Han encountered Ozu's films in the four years he was in Tokyo studying cinematography during the Pacific War.

South Korean filmmakers of the 1950s were also engaged with contemporary Japanese cinema, to a surprising degree. Despite the widespread resentment of the Japanese, many filmmakers felt a shared professional and creative bond with their Japanese counterparts. The shared experiences produced by the colonial encounter often made the films of Japan seem more culturally proximate than those from America and Europe that filled local theaters.<sup>21</sup> Korean filmmakers kept abreast of postwar developments in Japanese cinema by reading Japanese books, technical manuals, and film magazines, including *Kinema Junpo*, *Scenario*, *Eiga Geijutsu*, and *Eiga Hyoron*, which were carried into Korea by travelers and smuggled in through the black market. Screenwriters, directors, cameramen, lighting directors, and others devoured these publications, gathering together and sharing them as in a study group.<sup>22</sup> These print publications became an important part of South Korean film culture and one of the most important ways that Korean filmmakers advanced their professional education. Filmmakers and technicians who could read Japanese occupied a privileged position within the South Korean industry. Screenwriter Kim Ji-heon recalled years later that South Korean filmmakers were "very much" influenced by Japanese films, which they considered to be much more "advanced" than their own productions. Kim considered Japanese writers to be his "teachers" because their screenplays were full of original ideas and techniques, and he described his relationship with them as "almost like a comradeship" because of the shared history of living and studying together during the colonial era. Kim rejected a narrow sense of nationalism in favor of the artist's more cosmopolitan perspective, asserting that "if you do film, there is no border" because filmmakers of all nationalities have "film as a common ground."<sup>23</sup>

Han Hyung-mo was among those in the industry who could read Japanese. Committed as he was to stylistic and technological innovation, he almost certainly read contemporary Japanese film magazines, in which case he would likely have come across *Green Tea*: these publications carried numerous articles about the film in 1952, along with reviews, stills, production photographs, and even the entire script.<sup>24</sup> Han might also have encountered *Green Tea* or print coverage of it while in Japan: he made several trips to Japan during the 1950s to avail himself of advanced film technology and services that Korea lacked, including one in 1954 that might have afforded him an opportunity to see Ozu's film or read print coverage of it. (After attending the Asian Film Festival in Tokyo in 1957, Han was reportedly able to travel to Japan quite freely).<sup>25</sup>

This illicit engagement with Japanese print culture led directly to widespread poaching of Japanese screenplays. Cold War cultural entrepreneur Oh Young-jin was among the first to identify and condemn this practice, asserting in a 1958 newspaper article that 50 percent of the films being planned or in production “were stolen from the narratives of French or Japanese films.” By the early 1960s such poaching had become a widespread practice and an open secret within the industry, with one observer estimating that 80 percent of Korean films contained material plagiarized from Japanese sources. Lee Hyung-pyo, who worked as a writer and director during this period, recalled that Korean screenwriters read the scripts published in Japanese film magazines and “copied those scenarios exactly,” with the result that South Korean movies were “exactly the same as the Japanese ones.” He was blunt in his evaluation: “So that’s stealing.” According to a 1999 documentary, producers would hire screenwriters who could read Japanese, who then rushed to get hold of the latest film magazines and competed with each other to translate the scripts as quickly as possible. Sometimes prints of Japanese films were smuggled into South Korea, which meant that filmmakers could copy their visual style as well their narrative elements.<sup>26</sup> One of the most famous and influential South Korean films of the early 1960s, Kim Kee-duk’s *Barefoot Youth* (1964), plagiarized the screenplay of Ko Nakahira’s *Purity Stuck in the Mud* (1963) and may also have copied elements of that film’s visual style.<sup>27</sup> Given the paired institutionalized practices of smuggling and textual poaching, it is thus possible that Han Hyung-mo saw a print of Ozu’s *Flavor of Green Tea over Rice* that had found its way into South Korea.

A number of conditions made such poaching an attractive option for filmmakers. The booming South Korean film industry generated a huge demand for stories, but lacked the screenwriting talent to meet that demand. Financial motives also came into play: copying an existing script was much cheaper than paying a screenwriter to produce an original one. Shared histories created their own incentives. Lee Hyung-pyo pointed to cultural proximity and the similarities of “lifestyle and emotions”—rooted in the experience of colonialism—to explain the attraction of Japanese films.<sup>28</sup> The two countries also shared the more recent experience of navigating an American modernity introduced through military occupation. Both countries found their patriarchal gender norms, and the custom of arranged marriages in particular, challenged by the influx of Western ideas.<sup>29</sup> Japanese films were also attractive because they performed much of the work of localizing American cultural trends: a Japanese youth film, for example, was easier for Korean filmmakers to digest than the James Dean original. As in the colonial era, Japanese films served as portals through which American cinematic conventions entered into Korea. These layered, shared experiences of Japanese colonialism and American political and cultural hegemony, in combination with the uneven development of the Korean film industry, created conditions in which poaching from Japanese films became an easy and attractive option. Japanese films offered Korean

filmmakers a reserve of stories and characters through which they could imagine their own experiences of modernization and social transformation. The fact that poaching from this reserve was both widespread and controversial suggests the ambiguities of Korea's postcolonial, Cold War relationship with Japan.

While Han may have been inspired by the settings in Ozu's *Flavor of Green Tea over Rice*, he certainly did not poach the film's plot wholesale. The endings of the two films are substantially different. Ozu's film ends with the unambiguous redomestication of the wayward wife, as Taeko realizes the error of her ways and verbally proclaims the wisdom of her husband's views on marriage—much as in Jeong Bi-seok's novel. Her transformation takes place in the kitchen of her home—a room she had not previously occupied—as she goes about making her husband the simple dinner he desires, the green tea over rice of the film's title. Doing so involves stepping around a large can of American Wesson oil and rejecting the packaged white bread and packaged ham stored inside the enormous refrigerator, and instead immersing her hands in a simple bucket that holds a pleasingly odiferous pickling paste. Taeko's return to her proper role as wife thus involves a degree of re-Japanization as well as redomestication, as she embraces the traditional foods that her husband craves. Han's version of the story, of course, includes no such visual restoration of Mme Oh to a nationally inflected domestic sphere and no verbal assent to her husband's patriarchal authority.

While Ozu's film may have offered a catalogue of settings that Han could use to signal Mme Oh's movement into the public sphere and into a modern sense of selfhood, it did not offer a full panoply of stylistic moves to capture her experience of modernization. For that, Han had to look to the era's other great modern cinema—Hollywood.

#### CINEMATOGRAPHY: HOLLYWOOD AND THE FEELING OF MODERNITY

*Madame Freedom's* visual style differs significantly from that of *Flavor of Green Tea over Rice*, most notably in its cinematography. Ozu, of course, was famous for his highly restrained use of camera movement: he typically positioned his camera low to the ground and moved it very little. Although *Green Tea* has more camera movement than many other Ozu films, it is still quite modest. *Madame Freedom*, in contrast, was groundbreaking in its use of mobile cinematography. From the opening moments to the last shot, there is hardly a scene that doesn't involve a tracking, following, craning, or otherwise moving camera. This movement is breathtaking in its relentlessness and its visual prominence. While the camera had certainly moved in earlier films, no Korean director had ever achieved the ceaseless movement that Han did in *Madame Freedom*.

In South Korean film culture of the 1950s, different styles of cinematography had clear national associations: South Korean filmmakers identified a static



camera with Japan and a mobile camera with America. When Hollywood films came rushing back into South Korea in 1945, after a hiatus of several years during World War II, they impressed filmmakers with their elaborate movements in which a camera, located on a cherry-picker-like crane, glided fluidly up and down and side to side. This delicate, sophisticated camera movement struck them as the stylistic element that most distinguished Hollywood films from their colonial Japanese predecessors. Remembering those years, Kim Kee-duk made the contrast with Japanese cinema explicit. He observed that the “camera moved about so freely in Hollywood films. But people like Ozu Yasujiro in Japan stuck to a fixed camera.”<sup>30</sup> The terms “fixed” and “free” suggest a layer of meaning beyond mere cinematography: to be “fixed” was associated with the past and the constraints of colonialism, while to be “free” was associated with a sense of future possibility that modernization was opening up.

Most colonial-era Korean films of the 1930s and 1940s had indeed displayed limited camera movement, in keeping with the dominant Japanese aesthetic. While they include some panning, tracking, and tilting shots, these movements tended to be modest in scope and utilitarian in function: they were typically deployed in the service of the narrative and functioned as an alternative to editing. They did not, by and large, call attention to themselves, nor were they richly expressive. Rather, they were used to reveal landscapes and large spaces, to show a group of people, to locate characters within a physical space and follow them as they moved through it, and to link characters to each other and to objects. Such limited camera movement was part of a Japanese-derived stylistic repertoire that valorized a stately pace, emphasized long takes and compositions in depth over editing, and eschewed close-ups in favor of long shots and high-angle camera positions.<sup>31</sup> This Japanese-inflected style of cinematography continued as the default in most South Korean films of the 1950s. According to Kim Kee-duk, the fixed camera was regarded as the “textbook” style. Cinematographers and directors believed that ostentatious camera movement would be confusing to viewers, and unless there was “a strong reason for it,” says Kim, they regarded it as “a great taboo.” Camera movement was also constrained by the lack of equipment. No In-taek describes how the “dolly” shots in the 1955 period film *Sad Story of an Executioner* were created using pillows: “we sat a [camera] man on a cushion and pulled him back . . . [while] the lighting team sat on the cushion crouching and holding reflectors and moved along with the camera.”<sup>32</sup> Colonial legacies and postwar shortages thus combined to make dramatic camera movement a rarity.

Han Hyung-mo, as a brilliant technician and master cinematographer, pushed against these constraints. Seeking greater visual mobility for *Madame Freedom*, Han arranged for the construction of Korea’s first camera crane. The story of the crane’s construction has become legendary within the film industry. According to art director No In-taek, Han brought his camera to a machine shop for repair and made the acquaintance of three men who had money to invest and were interested



in film production: Bang Dae-hun, Eom Mun-geun, and Lee Rae-won. Han persuaded them to finance his film, and together the three investors created Samsung Productions. Given their experience with machining tools, Han asked if it was possible to manufacture a crane according to his specifications. When they assented, Han gave them the design of what he wanted, and within a week he had his crane. The result was a long, ladder-like contraption with a platform at one end that held the camera and two operators, and a heavy steel counterweight at the other that allowed the platform to be raised and lowered. This was attached to a rotating, turntable-like base that enabled the camera platform to swing horizontally. This base, in turn, could be mounted on a wheeled dolly. The entire apparatus thus enabled the camera to move in three directions smoothly and simultaneously: up and down, side to side, and backwards and forwards. While the crane mechanism was custom-built by Han's investors, the dolly was improvised out of a handcart that rested on four US Army helicopter wheels, most likely purchased on the black market. Han's elegantly mobile camera, so vital to *Madame Freedom's* exploration of South Korean modernity, literally rested on resources poached from the US Army.<sup>33</sup> *Budae jjigae* cinema, indeed.

Han used this piece of technology to produce highly expressive camera movements that were central to *Madame Freedom's* exploration of modernity. Where Han employed Ozu-like settings to convey a new geography of modernity, he used a style of cinematography poached from Hollywood to express the *feeling* of modernity. Contemporary viewers understood this link between movement and modernity, with newspapers noting that the film's "flexible camera movement" contributed significantly to its "exact portrayal of the modern lifestyle."<sup>34</sup> More precisely, mobile cinematography was central to the film's ability to convey what Miriam Hansen called the "sensory-reflexive horizon" of modernity. In Han's hands, camera movement captured the sensuous and emotional dimensions of modernity. Han used it to express the heady rush of Western culture into postwar Seoul, and in freeing the camera from the tripod, he translated a dynamic social reality into a visceral cinematic experience. Han's camera movements gave form to the freedoms so intensely desired in the 1950s and yet also feared. The result was an immensely appealing sense of movement and excitement.

Han employed an "excessive" style of cinematography in *Madame Freedom*, which is to say that the camera's movements exceed the demands of the narrative and call attention to themselves. Such excess expands the camera movements' expressive capacity. The film's single most famous shot is a minute-and-a-half-long crane shot that depicts Mme Oh's entry into a Western-style dance hall with her neighbor Mr. Shin (video 1). Han uses a spectacularly mobile camera to fully explore this quintessentially modern space. The shot begins as a medium shot of a trumpeter soloing on a stage in a large dance hall. The camera slowly dollies backward, revealing first a complete band and then a crowded floor of men and women dancing in each other's arms. From here the camera rises and pivots to catch Mme



VIDEO 1. Clip from *Madame Freedom*.

To watch this video, scan the QR code with your mobile device or visit  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/luminos.85.1/>



Oh and Mr. Shin as they enter the club to the left of the stage. It then cranes down and dollies back to follow them as they walk through the club, and then cranes up again as they sit down at a table to the right of the stage. The shot ends, finally, with a pan to the left that recenters the shot on the band and thus returns the camera to where it began. The scope of the camera's movement reveals a vast set that includes a stage, dance floor, tables, columns, and about thirty people. It is a fully realized physical and social space. This shot was a technical masterpiece and a newsworthy display of technological modernization. Working in the bombed-out remains of the Yongsan train station, Han took several days to set up and execute the shot, with reporters and photographers from numerous publications—including *Yŏwŏn*—present to document the crane at work.<sup>35</sup>

The shot comes at an important moment in the narrative. This is Mme Oh's first date with her handsome young neighbor, her first visit to a Western-style place of leisure, and her first attempt at Western dance. The camera's movement is strongly associated with Mme Oh, although it is not an optical point-of-view shot from her perspective. Her presence in the nightclub motivates the shot, and the camera expresses her emotional state: her awe at entering such an exotic space for the first



VIDEO 2. Clip from *Madame Freedom*.

To watch this video, scan the QR code with your mobile device or visit  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/luminos.85.2/>



time and her curiosity about everything in it, from the musicians to the dancers to the decoration of the space itself. More importantly, the camera's mobility works as a visual metaphor for the story arc of her liberation: it offers a visual correlative to her physical movement out of her home, her social movement out of her role as wife and mother, her cultural movement out of Confucian values, and her existential movement into a new sense of herself as an autonomous individual and sexual being. The camera movement thus helps to express her transformation into a modern woman. It expresses the personal freedom that is Mme Oh's defining characteristic.

Other scenes also contain highly expressive camera movements. In a brief but stunning shot that introduces the Paris Boutique, Han uses mobile cinematography to construct the viewer as a modern, urban, desiring subject in his/her own right—a position that is similar to but distinct from that of Mme Oh (video 2). The shot begins with the camera positioned above a street bustling with jeeps and buses. It cranes down to reveal a block of shops crowded with signs, moves laterally at eye level across a sidewalk jammed full of pedestrians, and comes to rest in

front of the shop's plate glass window. Western luxury goods, including high heel shoes and a man's plaid shirt, completely fill the screen as the frame of the shot aligns with the frame of the window. This camera movement stands out because it is wholly disembodied, unmotivated by any character's movement or emotional state: it exists for the viewer alone. The mobility that has been associated with Mme Oh here belongs to the viewer and by implication to the society of which the viewer is a part.

With this crane shot, Han constructs the viewer as a modern subject who feels a range of sensory emotions: visual command over an urban street, a social sense of being immersed in urban space, the physical feeling of being jostled by passersby, the psychic state of anonymity, and, perhaps most powerfully, a covetous desire for the Western goods in the window. This sense of urban modernity was enhanced by a sense of realism: only half the people on the sidewalk are hired actors, and the rest are real people who happened to be on the street in the fashionable neighborhood of Myeongdong as the scene was being filmed.<sup>36</sup> This shot thus immerses the viewer in a very real, very fashionable landscape and vicariously transforms the viewer into one of the well-dressed pedestrians. When the camera pauses in front of the store's display window, it is as if the viewer is pressing his/her nose up against the glass and admiring those high-heeled pumps. The shot thus animates the desire for small luxuries that was widespread amidst the intense poverty after the war. Han's mobile camera produces in the viewer the exhilarating feelings of being modern that Mme Oh is in the process of seeking out. In its combination of urban immersion, anonymity, visuality, and desire, this crane shot positions the viewer as a South Korean version of the nineteenth-century French *flâneur*, the quintessentially modern subject who strolls the city, gazes at what is new and different, and takes pleasure in the sights on display. Like the crane shot in the nightclub, it immerses the viewer within what Miriam Hansen called the "sensory-reflexive horizon" of modernity.

This shot, like that in the dance hall, was itself a modern event. It was the first shot Han filmed using his crane, and it entailed constructing a ninety-foot-long rail in the middle of the street, onto which Han installed the dolly, crane, and camera. The act of filming turned into a public event, with crowds gathering to observe the wonderful new piece of modern and heretofore foreign technology that Han was mastering and indigenizing. This shot also became central to the marketing of the film. Because the crane shot was so new to South Korean cinema and the setting so fashionable, Han included this shot in the film's preview trailer, convinced that it would pique the public's interest. It did, and among the filmgoing public the mobile camera became, according to No In-taek, "a hot topic at the time."<sup>37</sup>

Many other characters in the film are also associated with camera movement, thus suggesting visually that Madame Oh is not alone in her desire for escape and transformation. Virtually all of the main characters in the film are engaged in some version of her quest, and they, too, are presented via camera movements.

Miss Park, for instance, is introduced via a tracking shot into her face as she talks to Professor Jang on the telephone in her modern office, which is followed by a second tracking shot as she walks back to her desk. While these camera movements are modest, they establish her ease and comfort within a westernized physical and cultural space: they reveal that she wears chic Western fashions, is adept at using modern office technology like a telephone and a typewriter, works with an American man, and is not above flirting with a married man. As the romantic relationship between Miss Park and Professor Jang progresses, the camera moves with them, accompanying them on walks through the city's parks. The couple is accorded two spectacular crane shots outside Miss Park's home. In the first, Professor Jang is dropping Miss Park off after a chaste date: as they linger on the street, the camera eases down from a twenty-foot-high overhead shot to frame the couple in an intimate two-shot, which becomes a deep-space shot as Miss Park departs up a staircase and glances coyly back at the professor. This camera movement expresses the couple's growing intimacy, with the move in to closer framing visually expressing their emotional closeness. This shot is mirrored by a second one later in the film, when Miss Park tearfully tells Professor Jang that she is ending the relationship because it will only cause suffering for others. Now the camera begins in the intimate two-shot of Miss Park and Professor Jang, and cranes up, back, and away before stopping about twenty feet in the air. Here the emotional resonances are the opposite, as the camera movement conveys the sadness of both characters at their separation.

Paying attention to the expressive use of camera movement alters our understanding of the film's character system and story. No longer is this a film about Mme Oh as a unique figure encountering modernity and remaking herself in the process. Instead, we can see how virtually all the adult characters are engaged in some version of self-modernization. The camera's constant movement, especially with the "excessive" crane shots, is a formal device through which Han expresses modern desires—for sexual freedom, for individual autonomy, for new experiences, for emotional authenticity—that extend beyond Madame Oh and into the other characters. We can thus read these crane shots as visual metaphors for a collectively held desire for movement and change. The film becomes less a study of one woman's transgressions and more a film about a society in transition.

The only character who is not represented by a moving camera is the film's lone innocent casualty of modernity, Mme Oh and Professor Jang's young son. In a pattern repeated throughout the film, a dramatic crane shot involving one of the parents is immediately followed by a resolutely static shot of the boy alone at home, sadly studying or sleeping at his low Korean desk. Unlike the adult characters, this child cannot partake of the freedoms afforded by Western modernity. He remains the dutiful Confucian son, even as his mother and father experiment with new social identities, and as such he serves as an emblem of that which may be lost if the Confucian social order crumbles. By using an Ozu-like style



VIDEO 3. Clip from *Madame Freedom*.

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of cinematography—a static camera positioned roughly at the eye level of someone sitting on the floor—Han expresses these “old-fashioned” values visually. And like the previously discussed scene of Professor Jang feeling sadness at his wife’s absence, these are emotionally powerful shots that contribute to the film’s ideological complexity. Han, however, is not deeply interested in the son’s experience, and the camera does not invite the viewer to share his perspective for more than a few seconds. While the son does function as an object of the viewer’s pity and thus helps to construct Mme Oh as a “bad mother,” the film is not very interested in a character who is not caught up in the possibilities that modernity offers.

The film’s sophistication lies in the way that it so perfectly marries form to content: it uses camera movement to express social roles destabilized and in flux, and to capture the accompanying surge of feelings and desires. This marriage is made most clear in the film’s penultimate scene, which is built around a nearly three-minute-long crane and dolly combination that captures Madame Oh as she is about to consummate her love affair with her boss’s husband (video 3). The shot begins with the camera positioned high outside an illuminated hotel room at night, looking down and through the window as Madame Oh and her lover

Mr. Han dance cheek to cheek. The shot parallels the earlier crane shot in the nightclub, in that it explores the consequences of Mme Oh's decision to go out in public rather than stay at home. In a technically masterful movement that predates by four years the famous opening of Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960), the camera slowly cranes down through a seemingly closed window and into the hotel room. It follows the couple as they dance around the Western-style living room, towards a symbolically blazing fireplace, and past an open doorway through which a bed is prominently visible. The camera pauses as the lovers nuzzle and embrace, their passion building, and then moves into a close-up as Mme Oh closes her eyes and lifts up her face to receive a lengthy kiss. As the lovers turn their faces away from the camera, the frame centers on Mme Oh's white hands massaging her lover's dark-suited shoulders, suggesting that it is *her* passion that is driving this action forward. At this point the camera discreetly moves away from the couple, only to slide over to the bedroom doorway again and pause before the bed, thus signaling that this is where they will soon end up. Like the crane shot in the nightclub scene, this is an instance of cinematographic excess that uses dramatic camera movement to express the new freedoms that modernity enables. And like the shot of Professor Jang bidding a longing farewell to Miss Park, it is immediately followed by a static shot of their son alone at home.

For Han, this lengthy camera movement was vital to the scene's emotional impact. Han believed that when there is a cut from one shot to another within a scene, it creates the possibility that the building tension will be "interrupted." So he told his crew, "let's make it happen in one cut" so that "the emotional flow is not broken."<sup>38</sup> Han used the moving camera here to express the emotional complexity that accompanied women's shifting gender roles: the scene conveys a sense of anxiety as well as liberation. To the extent that the camera tracks the movements of the lovers' bodies and moves closer as their feelings become more intense, it visualizes their growing intimacy and passion. However, the camera movements also have a voyeuristic dimension. The shot begins outside the hotel room, peering in through the window like a Peeping Tom, and at various moments it moves independently of the lovers, as when it looks into the bedroom. These movements suggest the existence of an unseen observer and thus the possibility of being watched—and judged. The disembodied camera movement, which suggested a widely shared consumer desire in the earlier shop-window scene, here suggests the possibility of surveillance. If the disembodied camera movement implies the existence of "society," which includes the viewer, then this scene raises the possibility of social condemnation of the lovers' actions. Han's editing reinforces this possibility. He crosscuts this scene with one of Professor Jang reading a letter informing him of his wife's betrayal, and concludes it with a pair of sharp cuts to shots of Mr. Han's wife (and Mme Oh's boss) barging into the hotel room as the lovers embrace on the bed, flipping on the lights, and slapping Mme Oh across the face, twice. Through this editing pattern, the disembodied camera movement retroactively takes on



the condemnatory perspective of the betrayed spouses, who are revealed to have known about their spouses' actions.

No In-taek remembered this shot, like the film's other instances of mobile cinematography, as being "a big issue" within the industry at the time. Other cinematographers wanted to know how Han had passed a large camera, crane, and dolly through a seemingly closed window and into a hotel room. The trick, which was standard practice in Hollywood and perhaps Japan as well, was to remove the glass from the window and build the exterior wall out of two pieces that could be pulled apart as the camera seems to go "through" the window and into the room. Han perhaps learned this technique from reading foreign film manuals and magazines.<sup>39</sup>

#### HOLLYWOOD IN POSTWAR SOUTH KOREAN FILM CULTURE

Han's style of cinematography, in addition to being thematically expressive, can also be read as historical evidence of South Koreans' relationship to Hollywood during the colonial and postcolonial periods. Han's intentional textual poaching of this style of cinematography from Hollywood films was recognized by his peers. Han openly admired Hollywood's mobile cinematography and made clear his intention to make it his own. According to Noh In-taek, the art director on *Madame Freedom*, Han was inspired by the sweeping camera movements he had seen in a Hollywood Western and set out to "graft" that camerawork onto his own film.<sup>40</sup> Kim Kee-duk, in turn, recalled that the paired crane shots of Miss Park and Professor Jang were inspired by the famous Atlanta train station shot in *Gone with the Wind* (1939) in which "the camera pulls back endlessly," an emotionally dense shot in which the camera's movement captures both the material carnage of war and Scarlett O'Hara's subjective feelings of horror as she perceives it.<sup>41</sup>

Such textual poaching was enabled by Han's deep familiarity with Hollywood films, which had been an essential part of Korea's film culture since the 1910s. According to Brian Yecies and Ae-gyung Shim, the ten years from 1926 through 1935, which coincided with Han's childhood and adolescence, saw the import into colonial Korea of 5,626 non-Japanese films—of which 5,078 were American. By 1934 Hollywood films had achieved a dominant market share of as much as 62%. Exposure to Hollywood films was not the only issue, however: equally important were the meanings that adhered to these films within the colonial context. While both Japanese and American films were easily accessible, Korean viewers had a strong preference for American films. Japanese films were shown in theaters that catered to Japanese audiences composed of colonial officials, military personnel, businessmen, and expatriates. Korean-owned theaters that catered to Korean viewers, in contrast, typically shunned Japanese films, with the result that "twenty million Koreans were watching foreign films almost exclusively." In other words,

Korean audiences chose to watch American films instead of Japanese ones. At a time when Japanese and American films filled theaters, the choice of which film to watch may very well have carried political implications. American films were no doubt popular in Korea, as in most other parts of the world, for their intrinsic entertainment qualities and high production values. They also seem to have been valued for their extrinsic quality of simply being not Japanese. At a historical moment when Japanese films were often imbued with imperial values, American films may have taken on extra meanings through the absence of that content. As Yecies and Shim surmise, "One might ask whether the watching of thousands of Hollywood films during the Japanese colonial period constituted, for Korean audiences, a form of passive resistance, or at least a temporary escape from their harsh reality."<sup>42</sup> Hollywood films thus likely carried a layer of meaning that was constructed by viewers located in the historically specific condition of colonial spectatorship. Japanese authorities banned the import and screening of Hollywood films completely after the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, when Japan was at war with the United States. By the time the legal imports resumed in 1946, Hollywood films had been absent from Korean theater for a period of less than five years.

American films swept back into South Korea's film culture following liberation. Korea's film market was in an initial state of chaos after the colonial film system collapsed, and a black market emerged that made older Hollywood films, as well as those from the Soviet Union and Europe, available in theaters. The US military government soon established control, suppressing the screening of Soviet and leftist films and confiscating films that had not been approved by its Department of Public Information.<sup>43</sup> The legal import and distribution of Hollywood films began in April 1946, with the establishment of a Seoul branch of the Central Motion Picture Exchange (CMPE), which was headquartered in Tokyo. The CMPE was a partnership between the US military, the US State Department, and the major Hollywood studios, and it served as the exclusive importer of Hollywood films into South Korea from 1946 until 1951. The CMPE had a dual mission. Politically, it was part of SCAP's (Supreme Command of the Allied Powers) reorientation efforts in the occupied territories, and it distributed only films that the Army had approved for that purpose. The Army's Civilian Affairs Division selected films with an eye towards selling democracy, educating Koreans about American history, culture, and values, and encouraging identification with the US. Using film, it hoped to establish America as a model for South Koreans to emulate as they made the transition from colony to independent nation. The CMPE was thus an instrument of the cultural Cold War, as well as of postwar reorientation. The entertainment value of these films was crucial, and the Hollywood studios purposefully selected films that could "avoid the flavor of propaganda." These films also served as "bait" to draw Koreans into theaters where they would see official newsreels and informational/propaganda films that extolled the American presence in South Korea and the fight against communism. Commercially, the CMPE worked to restore

Hollywood's access to the East Asian markets that had been closed to the US during World War II. It reintroduced Hollywood films into South Korean theaters and carved out a privileged market position for them, setting low ticket prices that drew in large audiences and establishing single-feature screenings that ensured profitability for theater owners. As a result of this joint effort between Washington and Hollywood, American movies saturated South Korean theaters after 1946 and assumed a dominant position within the market. Once securely established, this favorable market position was maintained after the CMPE shut down operations in 1951 and South Korean companies took over the profitable business of importing and distributing Hollywood films.<sup>44</sup>

The CMPE and South Korean importers maintained a steady flow of Hollywood films into South Korean theaters throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s. About 145 Hollywood films were approved for exhibition during the occupation years of 1946–48, and about 84 in 1949–53. After the conclusion of the Korean War, this flow turned into a torrent, with 1,264 Hollywood films imported between 1952 and 1961.<sup>45</sup> Many of the most popular films were released multiple times. The Hollywood films imported during these years were drawn from studios' backlog of productions from the 1930s and 1940s, as well as from current releases. They came from across the genre map, and included musicals, Westerns, melodramas, films noir, comedies, and war films. Some of the films were B pictures and lesser-quality productions from both major and poverty-row studios; others were among the best films Hollywood ever made.

As in other dimensions of the cultural Cold War, gender played a significant role in the choice of films to import. As Sueyoung Park-Primiano has shown, one of the goals of the Army's Civilian Affairs Division was "to promote the equality of women as part of American democracy," and as a result quite a few of the films included in the reorientation program in the late 1940s contained powerful depictions of American women. These included *The Farmer's Daughter* (1947), which tells the story of a Swedish American woman elected to Congress and which was "likely selected for release in South Korea for its strong portrayal of a woman at home, at work, and in the service of the public, all topics identified as suitable by the CAD."<sup>46</sup> Later imports presented women as working professionals (*Woman of the Year* [1942]), hardy pioneers (*Shane* [1953]), factory workers (*Carmen Jones*, 1954), sexual aggressors (*Written on the Wind* [1956]), glamorous socialites (*Rear Window* [1954]), and strong-willed individuals who stand up to patriarchal Asian men (*The King and I* [1956]).<sup>47</sup> Hollywood films thus sometimes complemented Washington's efforts to "modernize" Korean women's social roles, and Korean filmmakers likely looked to these films for inspiration as they crafted the *apès* girl characters who figured so prominently in the "feminine '50s" productions.

Korean filmmakers embraced these Hollywood pictures as sources of new ideas, treating them as style manuals and storytelling guides. For Ma Yong-cheon, who worked as the assistant lighting director on *Madame Freedom*, Hollywood films

stimulated filmmakers' "interest in film and their dreams." Unlike Japanese films, they served as inspirations rather than as models to be copied exactly, because they were "incomparable to Korean movies in their tremendous extravagance and large scale." No South Korean filmmaker had the resources to reproduce what he saw in a typical Hollywood film, and elements of décor that were common in Hollywood films, such as rugs and chandeliers, barely existed in postwar South Korea. Instead, said Ma, "ambitious filmmakers took a studious approach." They watched for technical and formal innovations, taking notes "that the lighting worked this way in a scene and the camera angle worked this way in another scene, and the camera moved this way for such an emotional expression." The basic techniques of classical Hollywood style, including continuity editing, had already been absorbed via Japanese cinema in the 1930s and 1940s. Lee Hyung-pyo, who began his career working with USIS and UNKRA before becoming a screenwriter, cinematographer, and director, recalled that Korean filmmakers looked to Hollywood films as a "textbook" of more advanced techniques. "In the '50s," said Lee, "we mostly watched foreign films. Because we were trying to learn something." The films of Billy Wilder and Marilyn Monroe, *Love in the Afternoon* (1957), *Some Like It Hot* (1959)—these were "splendid" films that Lee said "inspired" him, and he applied the lessons learned from them to his own films, "tweaking" them as necessary. Lee went even further in explaining his relationship to Hollywood. "What is art?" asked Lee rhetorically. "Art is imitation. Aristotle said so. . . . Imitating something is art. What we learn, directly and indirectly, subconsciously, these are all imitations. . . . So I was influenced a lot from the American movies. From topics to directing or even usage of music. . . . Then camera technique. And then composition, screen, all of them I learned from those American movies." Cinematographer and director Kang Beom-gu recalled that Hollywood films offered models for how to combine social engagement with popular appeal. He remembered that *On the Waterfront* (1954) made a big impression on South Korean filmmakers in the 1950s who were attracted by its story about an ordinary man who resists an oppressive authority. They saw the film as a powerful work of social criticism that also worked as commercial cinema, with big stars, good acting, and a dramatic story.<sup>48</sup> One can see signs of the lessons learned across 1950s cinema, as in Shin Sang-ok's recreation of Deborah Kerr and Burt Lancaster's surfside kiss in *From Here to Eternity* (1953) in his film *Flower in Hell* (1958).

Han Hyung-mo seems to have poached not so much specific scenes from Japanese and Hollywood cinema as elements of style. The appeal of Japanese cinema for Korean filmmakers lay in its familiarity. They valued Hollywood cinema, in contrast, for its difference. These films offered a formal language for expressing ideas that broke with the legacies of Japanese colonialism and that involved new ways of thinking and living. Han drew on both of these vernacular modernisms in order to convey the complexities of South Koreans' experience of layered modernity in the 1950s. While he shared with Ozu a spatial vocabulary for depicting

women's changing social ambitions, he looked to Hollywood cinematography, in turn, for a vocabulary to capture the exhilarating emotional dimension of modernity, its anxieties as well as its freedoms and desires. These two cinematic vocabularies intermingled in *Madame Freedom*, creating—like *budae jjigae*—a uniquely South Korean work of film art.

### SOUND AND MUSIC

Han was as creative in his use of sound as he was with the visual elements of cinematic style. Most Korean films in the 1950s were shot silent and had their sound and dialogue dubbed in during postproduction. But while most of these films have fairly simple soundtracks, Han used sound and music in sophisticated ways. Like cinematography, sound was a dimension of filmmaking in which Han was an important modernizer. Here, too, Han acted as a textual poacher, taking what he needed from Korea's rich sound culture. Of particular interest to me here are Han's political uses of sound: how he used sound and music to express South Korea's affiliations and disaffiliations within a Cold War landscape. Han used sound and music to create a soundscape of modernity that suggested South Korea's integration into, and cultural contiguity with, the Free World.

Han began working creatively with sound effects in his first feature film, *Breaking the Wall* (1949), which told a story of family conflict set during the Yeosu-Suncheon Rebellion of 1948. Han took great pride in the film's innovative sound design, which he achieved by poaching from Hollywood films:

Since it was the first military film in Korea, I had a hard time in recording the sound of gunshots. First, I copied 10,000 gunshot sounds from Western movies produced in America. From this, I selected 1,000 bullet sounds and I used them in the sound film containing the dialogue. It took over 40 days to complete just the sound edit.<sup>49</sup>

Han doesn't say exactly how he copied this improbably large number of gunshot sounds, but it is possible that theater owners or importers let him record directly from the films in their possession. This episode allows us to see how poaching involves indigenization rather than mere copying, and how the meaning of sound changes as it moves out of American films and into Korea's film culture. The sounds of these gunshots were taken from Hollywood Westerns, where they had perhaps been fired at a "savage" Indian or a cattle rustler who was blocking the spread of "civilization" on the American frontier. In poaching these sounds, Han stripped them of their nineteenth-century frontier associations and repurposed them to dramatize a twentieth-century South Korean story about a family riven by the ideological conflict with communism—a very different struggle between "savagery" and "civilization" and one that implies the existence of a very different "frontier." The film's most poignant sound was perhaps found at the film's climactic moment, when the communist partisan shoots his brother-in-law in the chest

at point blank range—a melodramatic sound designed to prove the moral bankruptcy of communism.

Han was pioneering in the use of music as well, employing it in many different capacities over the course of his career. Han helped launch the musical as a South Korean genre with *Hyperbolae of Youth*, which incorporated musical numbers into its romantic comedy story line. Han made music a central narrative element in *I Am Alone* (1958), a melodrama whose story is built around the writing, composing, performing, broadcasting, and hearing of the eponymous song. Han frequently included scenes of characters dancing to music in settings that varied from a stately theater in *Because I Love You* (1958) to a seedy nightclub in *The Heaven and the Hell* (1963). Han began including stand-alone musical performances in *Breaking the Wall*, which included a special appearance by the popular singer Hyeon In.<sup>50</sup> His last two films are full to the brim with musical performances. In *Let's Meet at Walkerhill* (1966), he uses the narrative device of two country bumpkins traversing Seoul in search of a lost daughter and girlfriend to survey Seoul's popular music scene. Han's final film, *The Queen of Elegy* (1967), was a biopic of singer Lee Mi-ja that dramatized the hardships of her life and her path to stardom, and it, too, consisted largely of performances set in nightclubs, radio studios, and concert halls.

*Madame Freedom's* sound design is quite extraordinary. Han embedded his characters within a soundscape of modernity that he created by combining bits of foreign sound and music poached from South Korea's sound culture with other, indigenous sounds. This soundscape works in tandem with and complements Han's settings and cinematography. Dialogue plays an important role in the film as sound. Characters regularly insert English words and phrases into their speech, with the younger, more Americanized ones doing so more frequently: Mr. Shin says "Good morning" and "I love you" to Mme Oh and offers her "whiskey," while she asks him to teach her the "skate waltz." Miss Park orders "coffee" at a café with Professor Jang and gives him a "present." He, in turn, refers to her as "Missu" Park, using a Korean pronunciation of the English honorific. The value of these words resides in their sound as well as in their meaning: what matters most is that they are English words and thus mark the speaker as conversant, literally, with American culture. Han's incorporation of select English words stands in implicit contrast to the ban on the public displays of the Japanese language, which was an important factor in keeping Japanese films out of Korean theaters, and by extension with the efforts to limit Chinese characters within print culture.<sup>51</sup> The sound of the English words, like the sound of the gunshots in *Breaking the Wall*, carries its own political associations, suggesting an affiliation with America that is displacing the colonial relationship with Japan and the even older cultural relationship with China.

Han uses sound effects to embed his characters in urban modernity. This can best be seen in the Paris Boutique, which functions as a key node in the film's soundscape as well as its spatial system. In the many scenes set here, Han suffuses

the shop with a muted cacophony of honking car horns and traffic noises. This urban symphony carries into the shop from the street, despite the closed doors that might logically keep it out. These traffic sounds are pervasive and surround the characters, functioning as an auditory complement to the Western goods on display. Han uses sound to create a richly layered sensory environment in the shop, in which the visual and the aural complement each other and work together to express the experience of modernity in multiple modalities. These sound effects may have been poached from Hollywood films, like the gunshots in *Breaking the Wall*. They may also have been taken with permission from recordings made freely available by the US State Department's Voice of America (VOA), which kept a recording library that included fifty-six records of sound effects that commercial filmmakers could borrow. Many filmmakers used this library to create their soundtracks, borrowing sounds of industrialization, transportation, and modern violence: according to sound designer Choi Hyeon-rye, the most popular effects were "the sounds of a car, airplane, guns, and machinery." For Lee Kang-cheon's *Piagol* (1955), an anticommunist film about North Korean partisans behind the lines in South Korea, sound designer Lee Sang-man used the VOA's gunshot sounds in a scene where the brutal communist captain kills a wounded comrade and again at the end when the heroine kills the captain before turning herself in. Choi used the library extensively when he created the soundtrack for Shin Sang-ok's *Flower in Hell*, which featured the sounds of car horns honking, doors slamming, and tires screeching; police sirens wailing; trucks accelerating and shifting gears and crashing; the whistling and chugging and clacking of steam trains; and ultimately, the exchange of handgun shots and machine-gun fire. Choi reports that filmmakers had access to sound-effects recordings from the colonial era, but they were mostly the sounds of sliding doors, wind, and rain—in other words, culturally Japanese sounds and sounds of nature.<sup>52</sup> While filmmakers used these Japanese sounds, they did not help them represent postwar modernity. For modern sound, they used American resources.

Han's use of music in *Madame Freedom* was even more nuanced. Working with his highly skilled music director Kim Yong-hwan, Han produced a remarkably rich tapestry of music: the film incorporates about thirty-five distinct pieces of music, some only a few seconds long, others several minutes in duration. Three songs appear as musical performances; the rest are heard on the soundtrack as diegetic and nondiegetic music. The variety of musical traditions used in the sound design is remarkable. Han includes one Korean *trot* song, "Saturday for Avecs," which is performed in an extended musical number by the well-known singer Baek Seol-hui at the women's luncheon. *Trot*, similar to *budae jjigae*, is a hybrid Korean cultural form with roots in American, European, and Japanese musical traditions; John Lie describes it "something of a halfway house . . . new and different enough to be interesting, old and familiar enough to be soothing."<sup>53</sup> Han also includes American popular standards by George Gershwin and Richard



Rodgers, a bit of blues written by African American composer W. C. Handy and performed in a hot jazz style by African American trumpeter Erskine Hawkins, and several big band arrangements reminiscent of Glenn Miller. One song has its origins in Mexican folk music, another in the traditions of the European gypsies. There is an Eastern European waltz and a Czech polka, plus a wide variety of Latin music, including Argentine tango, Mexican bolero, and Cuban mambo. The film includes music produced by writers, composers, and performers from around the world: Mexican songwriters Manuel Ponce and Consuelo Velazquez, Spanish-born Cuban bandleader Xavier Cugat, Cuban-born Mexican band leader Damaso Perez Prado, Hungarian-French composer Joseph Kosma, Anglo-Italian conductor Annunzio Paolo Mantovani, and Russian-Jewish American crooner Eddie Fisher. Much of this music is diegetic: the characters play records in their room, hear their neighbor's music in the street and in their own home, work in an office where music plays in the background, listen to music in cafés, are serenaded by a singer over lunch, and dance to live and recorded music in dance halls. The film's characters thus inhabit an extraordinarily cosmopolitan musical world—into which Han invites the film's viewers.

Han's technical skill with music is on full display. Han creates nondiegetic sound bridges to ease the viewer across cuts and from one scene into the next, as when Mme Oh departs her home for the first time and crosses into the street, a key transition that is unified through a jaunty tune. This music will reappear alongside the dramatic crane shot into the Paris Boutique's window, suggesting the optimistic possibilities of her work outside the home. He inserts short pieces of nondiegetic music to help convey the meaning of a scene. When Mme Oh secretly watches Mr. Shin kiss her niece in the street, a burst of dark and dramatic music, heavy on strings and oboe, accompanies her scowling look and suggests that she is feeling a combination of social disapprobation and jealousy. Han blurs the distinction between music and the human voice, as when Madame Choi's suicidal collapse on a dance floor is accompanied by shrieking strings that mimic the sound of human cries. Han and his music director clearly selected the music with deep knowledge. They add emotional depth to individual scenes by choosing songs whose lyrics—sometimes heard, other times not—are aligned with story events. When Miss Park, for instance, initiates her relationship with Professor Jang by arranging a date over the phone, the music and lyrics of Dee Lippman's "That's the Chance You Take" can be heard in the background. This song is about taking a chance with a new love that may bring laughter or tears, both of which Miss Park will experience in her relationship with Professor Jang. While most members of the film's audience were unlikely to understand these English lyrics, the song significantly enriched the emotional content of the scene for those sophisticated few who did.

Han uses all this music expressively. Han opens the film with a bit of musical foreshadowing, before the story even begins. He bookends the film with a distinctive rendition of Joseph Kosma's "Autumn Leaves," which features descending



VIDEO 4. Clip from *Madame Freedom*.

To watch this video, scan the QR code with your mobile device or visit  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/luminos.85.4/>



piano scales and arpeggios that mimic the falling leaves of the song's title and thus suggest the ending of something. We first hear the song during the opening credits, where it sets a somewhat somber tone that gradually dissipates. The song returns, however, in the film's concluding scene, as Mme Oh walks through the nighttime streets after being caught in the hotel with her lover and while she is being berated by her husband. The first usage thus foreshadows Mme Oh's experience of romantic loss and moral decline that by the end of the film has come to fruition.

Han puts music in the service of his exploration of an emerging social modernity. Two brief pieces of music set the story in motion and introduce its theme of westernization. In the film's second scene, following the brief squabble with his wife over helping with his son's homework, Professor Jang has retreated into his office to work on his manuscripts (video 4). His scholarly work on the Korean language is soon interrupted, however, by music wafting in through an open window: a brief burst of W. C. Handy's "Saint Louis Blues," followed by a longer portion of Franz Lehár's "The Merry Widow Waltz." Professor Jang tries to ignore the music, but cannot—it is too present. These songs function like aural counterparts to the

shiny electric iron in the previous scene, and they, too, suggest that Western culture is already insinuating itself, unbidden, into the Korean home before Mme Oh takes her job. Paying attention to music, as to cinematography, reveals the film's complex attitude toward modernization: music tells the viewer that the influx of Western culture and values is unstoppable and not simply a matter of one woman's choices. Unwilling to confront this intrusion himself, Professor Jang instructs his wife to send their son to tell the neighbor, Mr. Shin, to turn the music down; the boy agrees, since the music is disturbing his studying as well. Mr. Shin lowers the volume, but only after the boy makes clear that the request comes from his mother rather than his father. The music thus implies an erotic relationship between Mr. Shin and Mme Oh before they ever occupy the same visual frame. While this Western music alienates the male members of the household as they try to fulfill their socially respectable roles of scholar and student, it introduces the possibility of a new social identity—lover—for Mme Oh.

As the story progresses, "The Merry Widow Waltz" develops into a musical motif that marks Mme Oh's growing romantic relationship with Mr. Shin. Each time it returns, Han toys with the distinction between diegetic and nondiegetic music: what initially seems to be soundtrack music is shown to emanate from Mr. Shin's record player (a sound trick that John Ford used to great dramatic effect in *Stagecoach* [1939]). The song proves irresistibly attractive to Mme Oh, drawing her out of her role as wife and mother and enticing her into defiantly modern acts. When she hears it in the street one evening after walking home with Mr. Shin, she pauses and thinks fondly of the young man, who has just complimented her on her beauty. The next time she hears it, she diverts from her homeward path and enters Mr. Shin's home, where she asks him to teach her how to dance. She hears it a third time as she sits angrily in her house following her husband's derailment of her date with Mr. Han, and again the song lures her into Mr. Shin's home. Once there, she boldly asks for a drink of whiskey and for further dance instruction: she wants to enact with her body the ideas of romance that are present in the music and so notably absent from her marriage. As their dance hold turns into a cheek-to-cheek embrace, Mr. Shin dips her low and out of the frame for what seems to be a passionate kiss, until they are interrupted by the sound of her son's voice calling Mme Oh back home. In this scene, sound orchestrates Mme Oh's shifting relationship to her home and the social roles she must play there: "The Merry Widow Waltz" lures her out of her home and her role of wife and mother; the sound of her son's voice, in turn, reels her back in.

Han creates a second musical motif to signal Professor Jang's developing extra-marital relationship with Miss Park. Here Han uses music less as an enticement to modern action, and more as an expression of modern feelings. This motif is composed of multiple iterations of a lush and romantic light-classical orchestration of strings. The motif is introduced as diegetic music when Mr. Shin teaches Mme Oh to dance in his room, which then wafts over into the adjoining house as

a dejected Professor Jang returns from work to find his wife absent and his son untended. In this initial appearance, the music conveys the husband's sad sense of abandonment as his wife sheds her domestic role. The music reappears when Miss Park and Professor Jang stroll together in a park, and then again as an accompaniment to the dramatic descending crane shot as Professor Jang tenderly bids Miss Park good night outside her house. These iterations suggest their growing feelings for each other and the possibility that this freely chosen and emotionally satisfying relationship might replace Professor Jang's failed arranged marriage. The motif's final reprise comes in the form of George Gershwin's "Someone to Watch over Me," which accompanies the parallel ascending crane shot outside Miss Park's house as she breaks off the relationship with Professor Jang. Here the lush strings—as well as the implied but unheard lyrics—suggest the sadness of these platonic lovers as they give up the possibility of "watching over" each other with tender care.

Han creates a third musical motif to mark his characters' embrace of a modern *enjoi* lifestyle centered on dance. When his characters are in the act of dancing, talking about dancing, or even thinking about dancing, Latin music can usually be heard on the soundtrack. When Mr. Shin calls Mme Oh from a café and invites her to go dancing, the famous tango "La Cumparsita" can be heard in the background. When Mme Oh goes to the dance hall with Mr. Shin, the band performs the mambos "Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White" and "Que Rico el Mambo." When Mme Oh waits impatiently for Mr. Han in a café so they can go dancing, she listens to the bolero "Bésame Mucho." And in the hotel room where Mme Oh and Mr. Han go to consummate their affair, they dance to Pablo de Sarasate's "Gypsy Airs." Latin music marks Mme Oh's movement out of a social order and identity centered on the home and into a public space that operates according to different rules. With its invitation to dance, the music suggests new possibilities for an embodied life. It signals leisure rather than endless domestic chores, the satisfaction of individual desires rather than dutiful service to others, and the possibility of romance with a freely chosen partner. Its exotic, foreign sound serves as an invitation to inhabit, if only temporarily, a new world that has suddenly opened up within Seoul.

Like the settings and the mobile cinematography discussed earlier, the presence of all these Western songs on *Madame Freedom's* soundtrack was a result of textual poaching. Most South Korean filmmakers in the 1950s had neither the money nor the equipment to compose, perform, and record original songs. Instead, they used preexisting music—from foreign albums, Korean rerecordings of foreign albums, and soundtracks of foreign films—and transferred it to the film's soundtrack.<sup>54</sup> *Madame Freedom's* music director, Kim Yong-hwan, who worked in radio as well as film, was known as the best in the industry for "selecting the songs."<sup>55</sup> All the Western songs in *Madame Freedom* were taken, without permission, from other sources. Kim poached widely from contemporary music to create the soundtrack for Han's film. He took "Autumn Leaves" from a recording by pianist Roger Williams

that was released in the United States in 1955 and became a number one hit, selling over two million copies.<sup>56</sup> He used Erskine Hawkins's 1950 recording of "Saint Louis Blues," Eddie Fisher's 1952 recording of "That's the Chance You Take," Perez Prado's 1955 recording of "Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White" with Billy Regis on trumpet, Leo Diamond's 1955 recording of "Melody of Love," David Rose's 1954 recording of "Someone to Watch over Me," and Xavier Cugat's 1951 recording of "Gypsy Airs." Many of these songs were hits that topped the Billboard charts in the United States and found popularity in other parts of the Free World. These acts of textual poaching often involved material poaching, as well: as was the case with the US military helicopter wheels that formed the foundation for Han's crane, many of these recordings would have been acquired on the black market.

*Madame Freedom's* soundtrack constitutes a survey of music that was popular in the United States and the West in the 1940s and 1950s. As such it functions as an aural expression of Cold War cosmopolitanism. With its globally sourced songs, it gives musical form to the idea of South Korea's integration into a free world that includes America, Europe, and Latin America. The soundtrack creates, for the film's characters and its viewers alike, an experience of temporal and cultural contiguity with the West. Through music, Han creates Seoul as a city that is fashionably up-to-date with cultural trends in New York, Mexico City, Havana, and London. The soundtrack's contemporaneity ushers its auditors into a temporality of cultural modernity that is shared with the inhabitants of those Western metropolises. Han uses music to embed South Korea as one node within a network of modern locales. E. Taylor Atkins has commented on the powerful ability of music to create a shared sense of time. Writing about the global popularity of jazz earlier in the century, he noted that the music "represented nothing more profoundly than the coevalness of modern time: as they listened and danced to jazz, people imagined that they were experiencing modernity simultaneously with their counterparts in distant lands."<sup>57</sup> Han's cosmopolitan soundtrack accomplishes something similar. It allows the film's characters—and viewers—to experience their incorporation into the Free World system as pleasure, imagination, and emotion. Such a claim of coevalness has political implications in a postcolonial society, suggesting that the "backwardness" that Japan invoked to justify its colonial project has been overcome.

Such poaching of popular Western songs was, like the remaking of Japanese films and the borrowing of Hollywood techniques, standard film industry practice in the 1950s. Particularly popular were the songs of Rodgers and Hammerstein, who were at the peak of their success in the United States in the 1950s and whose Asia-Pacific-themed musicals were major producers of Cold War Orientalism.<sup>58</sup> In *The Widow* (1955), for instance, director Park Nam-ok uses an orchestral version of "Some Enchanted Evening" from *South Pacific* (1958) to express a young widow's romantic longings, weaving it throughout the film as a motif that reappears at key moments. Shin Sang-ok used the same song to similar effect in *A Sister's Garden*

(1959), and he concluded that film and *A College Woman's Confession* (1958) with a medley of music from Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II's *Show Boat* (1936, 1951) that included a few bars of "Ol' Man River." Shin also used Perez Prado's "Mambo #5" in *Flower in Hell*, and reportedly included George Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" in the soundtrack of his first film, *The Evil Night* (1952).<sup>59</sup> In each of these films, Western popular song signals the modernity of the films' characters, especially its female ones, as they try to renegotiate their place in the world.

Filmmakers' use of Western music must be understood within the broader context of postwar sound culture. By the 1950s Koreans had some familiarity with Western music. Members of the educated middle class had embraced European classical music during the colonial era, and American jazz, blues, and dance music had gained popularity as a "modernist counterculture" to imperial Japanese culture.<sup>60</sup> The US military became a major disseminator of American music during and after the Korean War, through live USO and Eighth Army Shows, the Armed Forces Korea Network (AFKN) radio station, and as a source of pilfered records.<sup>61</sup> Yet it was not always easy for ordinary Koreans to hear Western popular music in the 1950s: most ordinary Koreans did not have access to the US military base shows, few foreign albums were legally imported, those available on the black market were expensive, and Korean radio stations did not play many Western songs. One major venue for this music was the music cafés in downtown Seoul, which attracted more educated patrons such as college students, writers, poets, musicians, and members of the film industry. Each café specialized in a different type of music—the Dolce, for instance, played "light music" such as movie soundtracks and songs by Elvis Presley, Paul Anka, and Pat Boone.<sup>62</sup> These cafés often shared their albums with filmmakers. Han took more than songs from these music cafés, however: he also took Kim Jeong-rim, the actress who plays Mme Oh. Kim was a hostess at the famous Renaissance café in Myeongdong, which specialized in Western classical music. Han valued Kim not for her acting ability, which was limited, but as a minor celebrity and real-life *après* girl strongly associated with Western culture and lifestyle. She was an object of interest in her own right—a "center of curiosity," as one member of the film's crew described her—and Han counted on her to pull in viewers.<sup>63</sup> Other films also drew inspiration from the music cafés, including Gwon Yeong-sun's *A Drifting Story* (1960): set in the fictional Madonna café, it featured American album covers prominently in its decor and hosted a soundtrack full of Western songs. These movies functioned as widely accessible vehicles for popular Western songs, and thus as integral parts of Korea's sound culture as well as its film culture. By bringing this music into his films, Han made it available to a far larger audience than could frequent the downtown music cafés, while also embedding it in a Korean context rather than the English-language world of AFKN. The presence of these exotic songs likely contributed to the films' appeal, serving as a crucial part of the entertainment they provided for audience members, who should thus be understood as "auditors" as well as "viewers." Historians of Korean popular

music have argued that Western music was not very popular among Koreans in the 1950s.<sup>64</sup> Locating movies within Korea's sound culture, however, suggests that this music was more accessible to Korean audiences than the history of live performances and broadcast radio suggests.

Han's poaching of Western music in *Madame Freedom* was not appreciated by all the film's viewers. One newspaper reviewer, for instance, complained about "the appropriation of unnecessary songs and dances, which are a poor imitation of American movies."<sup>65</sup> The reviewer here implies that such acts of poaching are undignified and untrue to Korea, not unlike what a critical viewer might see Mme Oh herself as doing: senseless copying of a foreign model that is not appropriate for Koreans. Such a comment implies a cultural nationalist framework: a South Korean movie should express an exclusively South Korean cultural world. But that is not what *Madame Freedom* does.

The Free World exists in *Madame Freedom* as an absent but structuring space. Travis Workman has written about the role of such unseen spaces—what he calls *topos*—in postwar Korean melodramas, focusing on the traumas of the Korean War that are not represented directly on screen but that undergird many story lines and characterizations.<sup>66</sup> In *Madame Freedom* and other Cold War cosmopolitan films, the Free World is just such a *topos*: a place that is not directly represented but whose existence is continually suggested by visual and aural style. While the film's narrative remains focused on Mme Oh's peregrinations through Seoul, its formal properties suggest the presence of a larger world that invests her actions with additional, unarticulated meanings. Through setting, cinematography, and sound, the film suggests South Korea's affiliations with the unseen capitalist, democratic, Western world beyond its borders.