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Contemporary Korean Cinema: Challenges and the Transformation of 'Planet Hallyuwood'

Brian Yecies

University of Wollongong, byecies@uow.edu.au

Ae-Gyung Shim

University of Wollongong, agshim@uow.edu.au

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CONTEMPORARY KOREAN CINEMA: CHALLENGES AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF 'PLANET HALLYUWOOD'¹

By BRIAN YECIES and AE-GYUNG SHIM

This article examines how the South Korean cinema has undergone a transformation from an 'antiquated cottage industry' in the 1980s into a thriving international cinema—albeit with a host of new challenges and tensions—in the 'post-boom' years of the 2000s right up to the present. Its analysis of film culture in the 1980s sets the stage for the Korean cinema's transnational development over the last decade, and points to a longer historical continuum involving the 're-emergence' in the 1980s of a 'cinema of quality' that was marked by widespread critical acclaim. Additionally, this article canvasses the key issues and concerns addressed in the thought-provoking pieces included in this special themed issue of *Acta Koreana* and how they elaborate on the dynamic and complex links between the Korean cinema's pioneering developments in the aesthetic, textual, industry, audience, critical, policy and historical fields, and their impact on the transformation of what we have come to call 'Planet Hallyuwood'.

Key words: Korean Cinema, Planet Hallyuwood, Hallyu, Korean New Wave, New Korean Cinema

In this introductory article, we examine how the South Korean (hereafter Korean) cinema has undergone a transformation from an 'antiquated cottage industry' (Huh 1989, 4) in the 1980s into a thriving international cinema—albeit with a host of new challenges and tensions—in the 'post-boom' years of the 2000s right up to the present. First, a general overview of the 1980s sets the stage for the Korean

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cinema's transnational development over the last decade. Although the important and timely book edited by Shin and Stringer (2005) focuses primarily on the 1990s and the advent of a 'New Korean Cinema', this epithet can legitimately be applied to a longer historical continuum involving the 're-emergence' in the 1980s of a 'cinema of quality' (Gilmore 1989, 21)—the beginnings of an international film industry phenomenon also known as the 'Korean New Wave' and marked by widespread critical acclaim.²

Second, we canvass the key issues and concerns addressed in the thought-provoking pieces included in this special themed issue. Combined, the articles brought together in this special issue of *Acta Koreana* elaborate on the dynamic and complex links between the Korean cinema's pioneering developments in the aesthetic, textual, industry, audience, critical, policy and historical fields, and their impact on the transformation of what we have come to call 'Planet Hallyuwood'. A fusion of Hollywood and *Hallyu* (the Korean Wave), this term delineates the notable similarities between the Korean cinema and Hollywood productions in terms of the use of universal story lines and conventional genre construction, high production values and vertical integration (across the production, distribution, and exhibition sectors).

Since the early 2000s, *Hallyu*—a veritable tsunami of popular cultural content represented through film, television, music and print—has been exciting fans and critics alike in Japan, China and Southeast Asia, as well as parts of the Middle East, Europe, and North and Latin America. Critical and popular attention has focused on the production, consumption and export of these popular and conspicuous cultural forms and their diverse genre, narrative and aesthetic contents, which have played a valuable role in familiarizing domestic and overseas audiences with Korean cinema, just as Korean cinema has given exposure to these other forms. Valuable insights on this dynamic cultural phenomenon can be found in a number of other studies, notably the collection edited by Chua and Iwabuchi (2008), *East Asian Pop Culture: Analysing the Korean Wave*. It is hoped the articles in this themed issue of *Acta Koreana* will supplement the essays in the former volume, which focuses primarily on television.

Apart from its industrial context, the term 'Planet Hallyuwood' also takes us beyond an oversimplified understanding of its development from a neocolonialist pan-Asian perspective. That is, it is imperative to maintain a critical distance from

² In October and November 1994, the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London, in association with the Korean Motion Picture Promotion Corporation (Seoul), held a landmark festival that featured notable films by directors Im Kwon-Taek, Jang Sun-Woo, Kim Ui-Seok, Lee Myung-Se, and Park Kwang-Su—five quintessential 'Korean New Wave' filmmakers. See: Rayns, Tony. 1994. *Seoul Stirring: 5 Korean Directors*. London: Institute of Contemporary Arts.

the notion of cultural imperialism within Asia's cultural markets, which all of the contributors in this special issue achieve with great care. Henceforth, the term and concept does more than appeal to the fusion of homogeneous cultural identity of Asian culture into a Hollywood-style Korean creative and culture industry. This depicts Hallyu's formidable goal of avoiding a similar type of replication of uniformity best known by the global Hollywood industry. Thus, the term 'Planet Hallyuwood' can be read as a counter to worldwide cultural standardization by global media outputs, and further as a localized 'cultural proximity', which is created by such rich factors as local culture, language difference, and local market strength, as well as other cultural variables.

Exploring the material conditions that underlie the somewhat slippery label of Planet Hallyuwood opens up new possibilities for understanding the contemporary Korean cinema—the cinematic component of *Hallyu*. The range of issues explored here will provide fundamental insights for scholars working in Korean and cultural studies, film and new media, sociology, and history, among other academic fields, as well as for policymakers and film industry practitioners. Each article brings us closer to understanding the complex economic, historical, industrial, technological and political variables that have defined the Korean cinema, reminiscent of the ways in which 'Planet Hollywood' (Kipen 1997; Stenger 1997; Olson 1999), 'Planet Bollywood' (Desai 2005; Dwyer 2006) and 'Planet Hong Kong' (Bordwell 2000) have been conceptualized elsewhere. In turn, we hope this eclectic collection will inspire a deeper appreciation of the development of Korea's cultural and creative industries among a wider readership.

CINEMA OF DISTINCTION

In 1989, *Koreana*—the quarterly journal published by the Korea Foundation with a focus on Korean art and culture—published a special issue on the Korean cinema. Aiming to inform its international readership on a range of related topics, the nine pieces in this issue discussed film genres, directors, industry statistics and key concerns, in addition to presenting a brief history of the Korean cinema since 1919. What made this issue so distinctive was the multiple views it offered by specialists inside as well as outside the industry and the snapshot it gave of what Geoffrey Gilmore, then head of programming at the UCLA Film and Television Archive, termed the 'New Korean Cinema'.³ Tadao Sato, the well-known

³ Shortly after the publication of these remarks (Gilmore 1989), Gilmore became the long-standing director of the Sundance Film Festival—the biggest independent (non-major Hollywood studio) film festival in the US.

Japanese cinema scholar and critic, was also a notable contributor.⁴ Among the views expressed in this important collection was an awareness of the acute burdens facing Korea's national film industry—including a lack of financial resources, inadequate manpower and studio facilities, a disorganized film distribution network, and a restrictive censorship regime maintained by a heavy-handed government.

Under the military regime headed by General Chun Doo-hwan (1980–1988), the Korean government sought to increase the protection accorded to the film industry and the arts in general while simultaneously opening up the market to free competition. A new generation of hopeful artists and filmmakers began contemplating pathways for making films. One group of fledgling filmmakers, calling themselves the *Yeongsang Sidae* (Visual Generation) and looking to the British 'Free Cinema' and the French 'New Wave' (La Nouvelle Vague) movements as models, created a manifesto that disconnected them from previous generations of filmmakers. Despite, or perhaps because of, a lack of freedom of expression and limited aesthetic and narrative models to emulate, these aspiring filmmakers found new spaces for thinking about the form, style and purpose of cinema. Like-minded cinephiles and supporters such as Chung Ji-young, Chung Sung-ill, Huh Moon-young, Jang Gil-soo, Kang Han-sup, Kim Hong-joon, Park Kwang-su and Shin Chul gathered at special screenings, such as those that began in Seoul in 1977 at the French Cultural Center and in 1978 at the German Cultural Center, where they were able to freely share ideas on film (Kim 2007, 259). These embassy centers played an important role in exposing Koreans to the diversity of foreign film culture and to the general study of cinema. Many members of this 'cultural centre generation' have gone on to become the Korean cinema's leading directors, producers, critics, festival organizers, scholars, and policy and cultural diversity advocates.

Despite this early flowering, one of the chief obstacles that continued to plague the industry was the censorship of both domestic and foreign films. All films were closely reviewed by Korea's primary censorship organization, the Performance Ethics Committee (hereafter PEC), which began censoring films in 1979. The PEC primarily targeted domestic films with political themes, particularly material showing communism and North Korea in a positive light, before their public release. Anticommunism as a national ideology was alive and

⁴ See *Koreana* Vol. 3, No. 4 (Winter 1989), available by searching for the subject 'cinema' under Back Issues on the Koreana home page at: <http://www.koreana.or.kr/months/album.asp?lang=en>. The color photo montage in "Parade of Artists" (pages 41–44) depicts a scene from *Why Has Bodhi Dharma Left for the East?* (1989) and directors Bae Yong-gyun, Im Kwon-taek, Lee Chang-ho, Lee Doo-yong, Bae Chang-ho and Park Chul-soo—the leading directors of the time.

well in this pre-Sunshine Policy era before relations between the two Koreas thawed a little as the result of some constructive dialogue.⁵

At the same time, two main policy instruments were used to control the entry of foreign films and limit their exposure to local audiences. First, in order to restrict the consumption of foreign media content—and probably to manage its heavy workload—the PEC censored foreign films one at a time, involving a two- or three-month approval process for each film. In turn, the distribution process for both domestic and foreign films was hindered as a result of the bottleneck that this system created. Second, an import quota, launched under the Syngman Rhee government in the late 1950s, gave excessive protection to the domestic market by allowing only a relatively small number of US films, and a handful from other countries, into the local market.⁶ Between 1975 and 1984, according to industry statistics published by the Korean Motion Picture Promotion Corporation, an average of only 33 foreign (primarily Hollywood) films were imported into Korea per year.

Thus, apart from cultural film screenings at various foreign embassies in Seoul and the black market trade of videotaped movies, Korean filmmakers and the general public were largely prevented from engaging with foreign cultural material. Nevertheless, these ‘underground’ viewing practices helped to generate the informal creation of a primitive but avid cinephilia culture in Korea.

In 1988, seeking to develop closer ties with the US, the government of newly elected President Roh Tae-woo (1988–1993) granted Hollywood distributors unprecedented access to the Korean market by terminating film import quotas. Almost immediately, MPEA member companies (Universal, Paramount, MGM/United Artists, and 20th Century Fox) opened branch offices in Seoul and began directly distributing their films (Hollinger 1988).⁷ As a result, Korea’s ‘under-

⁵ Between 1998 and 2008, under the presidencies of Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun before Lee Myung-bak was elected president of South Korea, the Sunshine Policy was the name given to South Korea’s official reunification policy in relation to North Korea.

⁶ In addition, a Screen Quota System (hereafter SQS) had been in place since 1966, requiring all cinemas to screen local films for a minimum of 146 days per year. However, the SQS remained largely ineffective for nearly thirty years until the establishment in 1993 of a Screen Quota Watchdog, which effectively monitored the number of foreign and domestic films exhibited at commercial cinemas. This agency, the predecessor of the Coalition for Cultural Diversity in Moving Images (CDMI), ensured that the SQS was working. However, in July 2006, as a result of four decades of relentless pressure from the Motion Picture Association of America, the SQS was reduced by half as the result of free-trade agreement discussions with the US.

⁷ In return, the Roh Tae-woo government negotiated lower tariffs for items intended for export to the US, such as Korean automobiles, computer parts, and telecommunications equipment.

ground' cinephiles now had greater access to a range of Hollywood and other foreign films, which they eagerly consumed.

From the late 1980s, the Korean film industry began a process of two-way expansion—from the outside in and the inside out—with the number of foreign film imports reaching 2,705, or an average of 338 films annually between 1989 and 1996.⁸ Even more significant changes came with the formal removal of censorship regulations and practices. In 1996, under the government of Korea's first civilian president, Kim Young-sam, the South Korean Constitutional Court declared film censorship to be illegal. Since this landmark ruling, new spaces for freedom of expression have opened up and censorship is now considered a tool of the authoritarian regimes of the past. The government replaced the PEC with a rating system, providing less restrictive and negotiable classification possibilities. Suddenly, the bottleneck of creativity burst open, providing a vital impetus for both arthouse and commercial filmmakers to pursue fresh ideas. It is precisely this moment that, in the view of most commentators, marks the beginnings of the Korean cinema's latest Golden Age. Within a relatively short period, a brood of talented filmmakers and writers began drawing local, regional and international attention to a host of new cinematic possibilities—a homegrown inventiveness which prior to 1996 had been stifled under the Motion Picture Law.

Decades of military dictatorship, preceded by three years of occupation by the United States Army and thirty-five years of Japanese colonial rule, had kept the Korean 'CinemaTiger' in a state of slumber.⁹ What has followed could not form a starker contrast with the restrictive conditions of the past. Since the advent of democratic government, successive waves of popular Korean culture (aka *Hallyu*)—driven initially by the export of television soaps and K-pop (Korean popular) music, and then by the production of fresh and diverse screen genres, local narratives and aesthetic styles—have made lasting impressions on audiences across the globe.

After 1996, conditions were ripe for the production and exhibition of an increasing number of domestic films by directors such as Lee Chang-dong, Kim Ki-duk, Lee Myung-se, Im Sang-soo, Park Chan-wook, Hong Sang-soo, Lim Soon-rye and Kim Ji-woon, to name only a few. A bevy of rising stars and the proliferation of 'savvy' domestic film companies, as well as the bolstering of the quasi-governmental film promotion and development agency, the Korean Film

⁸ This figure is derived from various issues of *Korea Cinema* between 1985 and 2007 (Seoul: Korean Motion Picture Promotion Corporation/Korean Film Commission) and *Korean Film Observatory* (2001–2007), the quarterly KOFIC trade journal covering the local film industry and policy issues.

⁹ For a wider discussion of the 'CinemaTiger', see Yecies (2010).

Council (hereafter KOFIC), have also helped the industry to win the lion's share of the domestic market as well as an international reputation.¹⁰ By global standards, the dominance of Korean film in its own domestic market is an extraordinary cultural triumph, one shared with few other national cinemas—notably China, France, India, Japan and the United States. The continuing momentum of Korean film on its home turf is the result of a proactive government film policy, strong audience support for local films, and the offering of a range of dynamic genres that continually aims to exceed audience expectations.

By 2000, high-quality local films were flowing outward to the export market, enabling aesthetically provocative filmmakers and their genre-bending commercial, art-house, and independent films to connect with international audiences at key festivals. Thus, the cinematic component of the Korean wave had well and truly matured, but on Korean terms and in a Korean way. Henceforth, all the major film festivals—Berlin, Cannes, Hong Kong, Melbourne, Rotterdam, Tokyo, and Venice—could not get enough of Korean films, soliciting the industry's latest productions and scheduling special retrospectives. Simply put, over the past decade it has been Korea's turn to be in the global spotlight, as the national cinemas of Japan, China and Hong Kong have been in the past.

However, the burgeoning of Korean cinema has also attracted a new set of challenges. Since 2006 new pressures have been testing the international stature and future development of the Korean film industry. Extreme levels of competition between domestic art-house and commercial films, piracy and illegal downloading, and the halving of the Screen Quota System (SQS) (as well as other government policy changes) have caused a significant loss of profits, paying viewers, and domestic and international DVD and cable-TV markets. Also, the number of films exported has shrunk. Whereas in 2008 a total of 354 films were exported, this figure slipped to 279 in 2009 (although still much higher than the 38 films exported in 2000).¹¹

Additionally, there have been two major changes at KOFIC which have caused major disruptions for this central policy and promotion agency, and also for the whole of the non-commercial side of the local industry. Chairperson Kang Han-sup and his successor Cho Hee-moon were both forced to relinquish their posts because of their mismanagement of the organization. However, since March 2011, the new chairman, Kim Ui-seok, best known for directing the comedy *Marriage*

¹⁰ In 2006, 61.2 percent of all films screened in South Korea were locally made, and in the first half of 2010, local film openings maintained almost half—47.5 percent—of market share. See: *Korean Cinema 2000*, 265; *Korean Cinema 2006*, 495; and *Korean Cinema Today* (July-August 2010): 5.

¹¹ *Korean Cinema 2004*, 297; *Korean Cinema 2009*, 42; *Han'guk Yŏnghwa* Vol. 1 (March 2010): 42.

Story (1993), has been reversing the damage done to KOFIC's image by proactively expanding its domestic and foreign support programs—no small feat under the current conservative government of Lee Myung-bak. Thus, behind the scenes, the Korean film industry has been experiencing numerous challenges as the downside of its almost overnight success—not the least of which has been increased global popularity alongside decreasing profits. This turning of the global spotlight on Korean cinema is just one of many chapters in Planet Hallyuwood's century-long history.

The articles collected in this special issue on the Korean cinema seek to deepen our understanding of the Planet Hallyuwood phenomenon by looking beyond widely known and award-winning films such as Park Chan-wook's *Old Boy* (2003), Kim Ki-duk's *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter, and Spring* (2003), Bong Joon-ho's *The Host* (2006), and the other usual suspects such as the work of the 'local hitmakers' and 'global provocateurs' covered so thoroughly between Paquet (2009) and Choi (2010).

Darcy Paquet's reflections on the transformation of the Korean film industry launch the collection with a privileged overview of the key issues driving the recent progress of the Korean cinema. In "An Insider's View of a Film Industry in Transition: Meditations on the Contemporary Korean Cinema", Paquet first asks what makes the Korean cinema unique and then goes on to consider a variety of pertinent issues: the commercial vs. the arthouse auteur, independent documentary traditions, low-budget filmmaking initiatives, and the search for good stories and screenwriters. For readers unfamiliar with the author and his work, Paquet is most well known for founding the website Koreanfilm.org, one of the foremost English-language sites on Korean cinema. He is also the author of *New Korean Cinema: Breaking the Waves* (2009), currently writes for *Screen International* and *Cine21*, and consults for the San Sebastián International Film Festival (Spain) and the Udine Far East Film Festival (Italy).

What makes Paquet's insights so valuable and complementary to the other eight academic studies in this issue, and why they deserve to be republished, albeit as abbreviated versions of earlier essays in *Korean Cinema Today*—the trade magazine published by the Korean Film Council (KOFIC)—is his ability to communicate an acute sense of how filmmakers at both the center and on the periphery of the industry have contributed to the Korean cinema's recovery following the slump of 2006/2007. This post-crisis 'recovery of ground', as Paquet sees it, reveals the nuances of Planet Hallyuwood's ongoing evolution.

The study on the Korean actor–star Song Kang-ho by Brian Yecies, offers an intimate exploration of the trajectory of Song's on-screen performances from the release of his fourth film, *Number 3* (1997) to one of his most recent and popular

feature films, *Thirst* (2009). Presented as a case study, “Somewhere Between Anti-Heroism and Pantomime: Song Kang-ho and the Uncanny Face of the Korean Cinema” reveals new insights about how this representative actor’s diverse screen personae have enabled audiences to peer into a cinematic surface that reflects an entertaining mix of anti-heroism and pantomime. What we find beneath Song’s diverse wardrobe and stylistic repertoire is a human being with everyday problems and concerns. Through a discussion of memorable and significant items in Song’s filmography—which parallel the rise of the contemporary Korean cinema, and that of a canon of internationally renowned commercial directors—Yecies shows how Song’s characters reflect a depth of human feeling and compassion modulated by a comic undercurrent. These disparate elements are held together by the tension between the overlapping layers that constitute his personae as well as by his signature verbal and non-verbal cues. By investigating the contemporary scene through Song’s professional biography, we learn more about how the star phenomenon has fuelled the ascent and expansion of the Korean film industry from its local origins to its present global configuration.

Perhaps the most detailed article in the present volume—and probably anywhere else on the subject—is Seo Jeong-nam’s analysis of Kim Jee-woon’s critically acclaimed *A Tale of Two Sisters* (2003). With a special focus on the narrative and characters, Seo shows how and why this production can take a place among the most important genre films in the 2000s Golden Age of the Korean cinema. Essentially, *A Tale of Two Sisters* created new possibilities for Korean horror movies—seen not as a monolithic category or type of film, but as a hybrid, genre-bending text defined both by its audience and its narrative structure and use of filmic conventions.

Seo’s analytical approach clearly reveals how *A Tale of Two Sisters* offers a vastly different structure to that of the classic novel (*Changhwa Hongnyŏn chŏn*) on which it is based. In doing so, this article gives new energy to the inexorable links between Korean cinema and Korea’s long-standing literature traditions. The shot-by-shot segmentation (scene analysis) that Seo sets out in the appendix to his article will be an invaluable study tool in its own right for students and scholars of Korean cinema anywhere in the world.

Building on the distinctiveness in the first three articles, Pil Ho Kim and C. Colin Singer offer a groundbreaking conceptualization of three pivotal periods of queer cinema in Korea: the ‘Invisible Age’ (1976–1998), the ‘Camouflage Age’ (1998–2005), and the ‘Blockbuster Age’ (2005–present). Their analysis of the narrative, audience, and critical reception surrounding two watershed films from the Invisible Age, *Ascetic: Woman and Woman* (1976) and *Broken Branches* (1995), is used to compare and contrast the same elements in the popular films *Memento*

Mori (1999), *Bungee Jumping of Their Own* (2001), and *Road Movie* (2002), produced in the Age of Camouflage. While in the first period the broaching of queer themes such as lesbianism went virtually undetected by local audiences, the three films from the middle period are representative for the strategies adopted by their filmmakers to underplay their homosexual content by concealing it within innocuous genre conventions of horror and romance. These writers and directors used this strategy as a means of conciliating—and perhaps circumventing—Korea’s media rating board as well as homophobic responses in the mainstream media.

Finally, Kim and Singer demonstrate how films across both the commercial and independent arthouse spectrum evoke core sentiments and modes of social, cultural and political expression embraced by the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) movement in Korea from the mid-1990s to the present. Their case studies of the blockbuster film *The King and the Clown* (released in December of 2005)—which attracted a total nationwide audience of 12,302,831 (*Korean Cinema 2006*, 496)—and the low-budget digital film *No Regret* (2006), reportedly made for about USD \$100,000, illustrate some of the ways in which LGBT-themed films have given mainstream genre films a run for their money. Indeed, *The King and the Clown* was second (by a mere 2.9% difference in admissions in Seoul) to Bong Joon-ho’s international sensation *The Host* (released in July 2006); while director Leesong Hee-il’s first feature film *No Regret*—Korea’s highest grossing independent film at the time—went some way to naturalizing homosexuality (partly by the film’s portrayal of full-frontal male nudity).

In terms of cinematic eye candy, no feature-length animated film can top *Wonderful Days* (2003, released in the US as *Sky Blue*). For its time, *Wonderful Days*, produced by the directorial quartet of Moon S. Kim, Kim Sung-ryong, K. S. Hwang, and Lee Seog-yon, was the most expensive Korean film ever made, taking its production team around five years to complete. At the same time, given the high profile and hype that preceded its release, *Wonderful Days* is perhaps the most spectacular ‘failure’ to hail from the contemporary Korean cinema. With this consideration as a starting point, Daniel Martin’s “How *Wonderful Days* Became *Sky Blue*: The Transnational Circulation of South Korean Animation” delves into the production, release and reception history of *Wonderful Days* and sets this intriguing case study against the backdrop of a brief history of animation in Korea—both before and after the Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (hereafter MCST) designated the ‘OSMU’ (one source multi-use) strategy as the core of its policy for developing and maintaining the sustainable

production of film animations and related products and distributing them around the globe.¹²

The chief value of Martin's study lies in his analysis of the transformation of *Wonderful Days* into *Sky Blue* and how this process was symbiotically influenced by the marketing and critical reception of the film in the USA and UK. Oddly—or perhaps not so strange after all, given the enormous popularity and global dominance of Japanese animation—this transformative process involved both the intentional and unintentional masking of the film's Korean identity. Through an explanation of these developments, readers will gain an alternative view of *Hallyu* and Planet Hallyuwood—albeit one that reveals the limitations of the Korean wave—when different sources of light are turned on it from beyond Korea's national borders.

Gord Sellar's article, "Another Undiscovered Country: Culture, Reception and the Adoption of the Science Fiction Genre in South Korea" offers a different take on the genre-bending question from the approach taken by Seo Jeong-nam, and Pil Ho Kim and C. Colin Singer. Sellar takes us beyond the often oversimplified issues of industrialization and their impact on the Korean film industry by investigating a range of successful (and unsuccessful) films that have attempted to 'Koreanize' science-fiction (hereafter sci-fi) material. His study of recent Korean sci-fi films includes *2009: Lost Memories* (2002), *Yesterday* (2002), *The Resurrection of the Little Match Girl* (2002), *Save the Green Planet* (2003), *Natural City* (2003), and *The Host* (2007), and associated issues of production, distribution, and consumption.

As Sellar suggests, a set of definitive strategies lies to hand for overcoming the cultural barriers that have previously hampered the creation and depiction of localized traditions within these and other Korean sci-fi films. Without giving too much of his conclusion away, Sellar suggests that Korean sci-fi filmmakers need to upskill themselves with the genre's core tropes, and continue pushing the genre-bending boundaries even further—perhaps by utilizing the kind of narrative innovations that have so stimulated audiences of Chinese, Indian, French and other foreign films. By adopting such strategies, Korean filmmakers will be in a position to develop a unique glocalised storytelling language that is free from post-colonial nationalist–historiographic discourse, banal genre con-

¹² The OSMU production and promotion franchise strategy involves spinning off a variety of products (pencil cases, shoes, backpacks, television series, etc.) and creating tie-in campaigns (kid's happy meals, product endorsements, cross-media applications, etc.) from a single animation program and/or group of characters. Since about 2005, the MCST has required that all creative and cultural content funding applications for animation projects include a detailed OSMU strategy plan.

ventions and narrative forms, and a lackadaisical tendency to rely on Korean geographical settings as markers for 'local culture'. In other words, the sci-fi sector of Planet Hallyuwood offers fertile soil with ample potential for lush growth.

Ae-Gyung Shim's "Anticommunist War Films of the 1960s and the Korean Cinema's Early Genre-bending Traditions" analyzes specific filmmaking trends under Park Chung-hee's totalitarian military government in order to show how the contemporary Korean cinema's fresh approach to genre-bending has evolved over the last half century. Shim shows how the Korean cinema has developed hybrid narrative conventions that mix the local and the global (mainly Hollywood) through dynamic cultural and artistic processes of assimilating, modifying and re-creating. Whilst a similar case could be made for contemporary film industries around the world, Shim's investigation reminds us that the so-called New Korean Cinema did not spring forth fully formed. In fact, Korean filmmakers have been able to draw on the rich legacy of many thousands of films from the US shown on public exhibition and dating back to the early 1910s. With this in mind, Shim analyzes some of the major genre-bending practices adopted by filmmakers in the 1960s to overcome the creative challenges and limitations imposed by a national mandate to produce propaganda films with a heavy ideological and anticommunist bias.

A companion piece to Ae-Gyung Shim's historically based article, and one that eagerly accepts the task of fleshing out the inner technical workings of *Hallyu* and its cinematic manifestations, is Theodore Hughes' "Planet Hallyuwood: Imaging the Korean War." Hughes' insightful analysis of the Korean War as it is represented in Kang Che-gyu's *T'aegŭkki* (2004) and Pae Hyŏng-jun's *Once Upon a Time in Seoul* (2008) identifies an anxiety located at the intersection between the technology of film and the newly celebrated success of the Korean cinema. Through his reading of these films and their intra-industrial associations, we can see how this anxiety is manifested in two overlapping tensions: between the technological and the emotive; and between the antiwar genre and a masculinist (and commercial) aspiration to exhibit action and violence. In this way, Hughes probes the ways in which these films engage the transnational links between human agency and technology, and thus Korea's foray into the planet's creative and cultural production market that has traditionally been dominated by Hollywood.

Doobo Shim's article "Whither the Korean Film Industry?" concludes this special issue with a political-economic analysis of the remarkable but understudied internal changes that have transformed the face of the Korean film industry. For Shim, the industry's commercial accomplishments are far more complex than the narrow story that is often told in the trade and popular press of

its underdog struggle against American cultural imperialism within a local vs. global paradigm. To reveal the distinctive character of Korea's active role in the media globalization process, Shim invokes the notion of 'cultures of production' (du Gay 1997) as a framework for explaining how important developments, including ownership and vertical integration processes, have shaped the Korean film industry in the 2000s. Perhaps where Shim's analysis matters the most to this complex story is his clear view of how *Hallyu* has unfolded overseas—indeed where Planet Hallyuwood lies in orbit.

Clearly, the articles comprising this collection have only scratched the surface of what remains a fascinating story in the making. There is still an enormous amount of investigative work to be done, for instance, on the points of convergence and divergence between Planet Hallyuwood and other major international cinemas such as 'Planet Hollywood', 'Planet Bollywood' and 'Planet Hong Kong'. Digital cinema, new production practices, and new technologies such as 3D in the commercial and home theater environments need further exploration, as well as the roles that film festivals, independent/arthouse filmmaking, and fandom are playing in the expansion of Korea's national film and digital media industries. Also, the strategic pursuit and facilitation of international co-productions through collaborative ventures and industry networking events and business summits are an important part of this dynamic story. Taken together, all of these issues and new developments point to a Planet Hallyuwood in flux, and also to a stimulating dialogue that we hope this special issue of *Acta Koreana* will help keep alive for years to come.

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BRIAN YECIES (brian_yecies@uow.edu.au) is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Media and Cultural Studies at University of Wollongong, Australia.

AE-GYUNG SHIM (millduke@yahoo.co.kr) is a Korean Foundation Post-Doctoral Fellow at University of Wollongong, Australia.

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