

On This Topic



Sixty Years of Korean Social Movements

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Abstract

South Korea has witnessed major social movements about every 20 years. In the period since liberation in 1945, the April 19 Revolution of 1960 and the 1980 Gwangju People's Resistance significantly impacted modern Korean social movements. Alongside with rapid industrialization, Korean democratization has been touted repeatedly as the major South Korean achievement since the 1960s. From the latter half of the 20th century, Korean democratization movements continuously focused their attentions on the twin themes of national unification and class problems. Since the demise of the democratization movement, Korean social movements have faced new challenges and tended to differentiate into various areas. The successors to Korean social movements face the task of pursuing change in totally different conditions than before. A series of candlelight vigils have developed activism at a fundamentally different level so as to change the definition of social movement itself. Even as the younger generation plays the central role in raising the questions of these movements, the South Korean population composition is paradoxically aging. Most importantly, all of these issues and challenges are not limited to Korea as before, but are also closely linked to the issues facing other regions and countries, both neighboring and remote. Outlining the trajectories of the twin issues of national and class problems that post-liberation social movements have pursued, this essay focuses on underclass and women's issues as two particularly important areas of focus that have lasting significance for the future of Korean social movements.

Keywords: social movements, democratization, labor, unification, April 19 Revolution, May 18 Resistance, candlelight vigils, class, feminism

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Introduction

Social movements in Korea, at least for the period since liberation in 1945, have experienced major turning points about every 20 years. There was the April 19 Revolution in 1960,¹ the May People's Resistance in 1980,² and the series of candlelight vigils in the 2000s. This year marks the 60th anniversary of the April 19 Revolution of 1960 and the 40th anniversary of the 1980 Gwangju People's Resistance, and it is self-evident that these two events have had a significant impact on the development of modern Korean social movements since liberation. Since the June 1987 democratization struggle, which emerged through a series of movements following the May 1980 Resistance, Korean society has maintained the so-called 87 regime, despite the major changes that have occurred in Korean society over those intervening decades.

The key concept these social movements have pursued and advocated

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1. References to April 19 are largely divided between "righteous uprising" (*uigeo*) and "revolution" (*hyeongmyeong*), according to how that event is defined and understood. The phrase "April 19 [Student] Uprising" (*sa-il-gu [haksaeng] uigeo*) has a long tradition, but the term "revolution" has been widely used since the 1980s (M. Kang, et al. 1983; Han, et al. 1983; Sawol hyeongmyeong yeonguso 1990). It has also been referred to as a "people's resistance" (*minjung hangjaeng*) (Hanguk yeoksa yeonguhoe sawol minjung hangjaeng yeonguban 2001). In North Korea, it is known as the "people's uprising" (*inmin bonggi*). Most recently, Lee Wan-beom offers some eclectic alternatives with "civil revolution of spring 1960" and "azalea political revolution" (W. Lee 2019, 253–254). This article refers to it by its most widely used terms, April Revolution (*sawol hyeongmyeong*) and April 19 Revolution (*sa-il-gu hyeongmyeong*).
 2. As with the events of April 19, there has been a long debate about the nature and naming of May 18. As with April 19, it was at first referred to as the May 18 "righteous uprising" (*uigeo*) in the sense of it being a successor to that of April 19. But unlike with April 19, the term "people's resistance" is more widely used than "revolution." The official South Korean government term is the "democratization movement" (*minjuhwa undong*). According to Jo Jeong-hwan (2009, 168), it was "officially recognized as a democratization movement and publicly admitted as a people's resistance," which led to the compromise term of, "people's resistance for democracy" (see also, H. Kang 2004a, 134; J. Kim 2019, 299). Kim Jeong-han (2013, 4) proposes an "insurrection of the masses" based upon the concept of the multitude by Antonio Negri and others. Although this article adopts the term popularly used, it will sometimes use the term "May (People's) Resistance," depending on the context, in that the term "Gwangju people's resistance" has a meaning limited to the geographical region of Gwangju.

is democracy.³ Along with industrialization, democratization is repeatedly mentioned as the major Korean achievement since the 1960s. The democratization efforts pursued by Korean social movements since Korea's liberation in 1945, and the achievements they have attained, are recognized not only in Korea but at the global level.⁴ Furthermore, attempts have recently been made to generalize and understand Korea's democratization movement in East Asian and global contexts.⁵

The primary objectives of the democratization movement pursued by Korean social movements in the second half of the 20th century may be summarized under two themes: national issues (*minjok munje*)⁶ and class problems. Simultaneous resolutions of these problems remained unfinished tasks with the end of Japanese colonial rule and the resulting political situation after liberation (*haebang jeongguk*). These two themes, established

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3. In this regard, the terms “social movement” and “democratization movement” are understood in the same sense but I alternate their use in this article according to context.
 4. For example, presidential impeachment and regime change in 2016–2017 in Korea have frequently been contrasted with the seeming democratic retrogression in the West, the source of democracy. Meanwhile, in their annual democracy report, *Democracy Facing Global Challenges*, by the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Institute at the University of Gothenburg, (South) Korea is ranked in the top 10 percent in the Liberal Democracy Index (LDI) (Lürmann, et al. 2019, 11).
 5. The song “March for the Beloved,” symbolizing the events of the May 18, 1980 Resistance, has been called the “Korean Wave (*hallyu*) of democracy,” with distribution to China, Taiwan, Japan, Thailand, and Cambodia, and also heard in the Hong Kong protests of 2019. George Katsiaficas has compared the May 18 Resistance with the Paris Commune of 1871, noting their similarities and differences (Kachiapikaseu 2002). His argument was then cited by and found support among later researchers (H. Kang 2004a, 136–138; H. Jo 2009, 224–226). Kim Jeonghan also evaluates the events of April 19 and May 18 as possessing global universality. In Asia, he argues, May 18 Resistance was inherited by the protesters of the Tiananmen uprising in Beijing in May 1989, just as the people's power movement in the Philippines was reproduced in South Korea in June 1987 (J. Kim 2019, 302–303, 310–311). Katsiaficas goes on to mention the impact of the May 18 Resistance on democratic movements in such Asian countries as the Philippines, Myanmar, China, Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia (Kachiapikaseu 2002, 242–244). Along these lines, Yi-Jinkyung also points out that South Korea's candlelight vigils played a leading and powerful role in network-based mass movements in Greece, Algeria, Egypt, the United States, France, Hong Kong, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt, and Chile (see Yi-Jinkyung in this issue).
 6. I deal here with the national issues caused by the arbitrary division of the Korean Peninsula by the USA and USSR in 1945 and the subsequent national division.

later as the ultimate goals and values of Korean social movements, became in turn the main tasks of the 1987 regime. Since the 2000s, Korean social movements have faced new challenges on a different level than previously, and thus Korean social movements in the post-liberation sense have been relegated to history. This article first outlines the trajectories of the twin issues of national and class problems that traditional social movements have pursued, and then focuses on underclass and women's issues as two particularly important areas of focus that have emerged since the 2000s.

History and Orientation of the Korean Democratization Movement

Nation and Unification

With liberation in 1945, the emergence of a divided nation and two Koreas, and then the Korean War (1950–1953), South Korea found itself at the forefront of a Cold War in a global system led by the United States. The ideal of a unified nation-state became increasingly elusive with the entrenchment of national division and South Korea's deepening dependence on the United States. In South Korea, discussions on the national movement were dismissed and discourses on such things as independence (*jaju*) and unification became taboo, while debates on national issues were dominated by anti-communism rather than unification, and a Korea as a *bastion of freedom* rather than as a third-world country. Against the backdrop of overwhelming American aid and the breakdown of relations with Japan, Syngman Rhee's administration mobilized and manipulated nationalism politically by creating a series of symbols and events, while thoroughly blocking all possibilities beyond that of hegemonic national unification based on military force, a notion that expanded rapidly in the course of the Korean War. As seen in the severe repression of the concept of peaceful reunification as proposed by the Progressive Party (Jinbodang) of Cho Bong-am in the late 1950s, the Rhee regime never tolerated any idea on unification that ran contrary to the so-called northward unification theory (*bukjin tongillon*).

The April Revolution of 1960, understood as the event that precipitated the collapse of the Rhee regime, emerged out of anger with and protests against perceived electoral fraud by that administration, regardless of the concrete reality behind such perceptions. The April Revolution has mostly been understood as a movement led by university students, especially in Seoul, until more contemporary historiography has critiqued the Seoul-centrism and university-centrism implicit in such an understanding.⁷ In this sense, the April 19 Revolution is regarded as a political struggle that toppled a ruling power and which was motivated by the vague ideal of Western parliamentary democracy. However, the fervor of victory following the political struggle that culminated in Rhee's resignation also led to the engagement of college students in the *hagwon* democratization movement on campuses, and at the national level to participation in such things as the new lifestyle movement (*sin saenghwal undong*), rural enlightenment movement, foreign goods boycott campaign, and voter enlightenment campaign.

In the July 29, 1960 national elections that followed the April Revolution, the opposition Democratic Party (Minjudang) won a landslide victory, while the Progressive Party suffered an equally crushing defeat, an event that prompted college students to realize the limits of social movements that appealed to the *hagwon* democratization and enlightenment movements. Sensing the "caliginous drift of counter-revolution" following the 1960 elections, college students sought an alternative means of overcoming national division outside the national reunification movement (Park and Kim 1991, 90–95). In fact, overcoming national division and establishing an independent unified state was one of the main challenges facing social movements in this period. With the ouster of the corrupt Rhee regime, the task of democratization seemed to be under way, and the cause of national reunification became the most visible issue, especially in light of the fact that the class movement remained amorphous in the absence of any real

7. See the discussion below on the underclass. Lee Wan-beom (2019, 230) notes that the protests at that time began in local areas, including Masan and Busan, and that college students were not the only ones who participated in the protests, based on statistics on the victims.

progress in full-fledged economic development. It was in this context that students, progressive intellectuals, and social activists led efforts to organize the Central Council for National Unification and Independence (Minjatong; CCNU) and the Federation for National Unification (Mintongyeon; FNC), as is demonstrated in the student manifesto on the first anniversary of the April Revolution, which proclaimed that they were endeavoring to mobilize every group, irrespective of ideology, to promote inter-Korean exchanges in a step-by-step manner (Park and Kim 1991, 103).

This national movement did not necessarily raise the issue of national unification. At the same time, it faced the challenge of being subjugated to the United States and the establishment of national independence. In February 1961, the students of the FNC proclaimed the economic agreement between Korea and the United States to be an “unequal, humiliating treaty” and organized a struggle committee. In May, the students affiliated with the FNC adopted a resolution proposing inter-Korean student talks, with the Progressive Party and social groups expressing their full support, and a large-scale protest movement was carried out under the slogan, “Go Northward, Come Southward” (*Gaja bukeuro, ora nameuro*).

Even though criticisms were heard that students should have been concentrating on their studies, that they were engaging in politics, that they were sentimental and blind in their pursuit, such criticism did not undermine the cause of the movement to protest national division and pursue an independent, unified state. Such student activism extended and enriched the Korean people’s understanding of democracy and contributed to the country’s democratization and national unification movements. The problem was rather the bias of the political struggle in this movement. Although the popular response to the national reunification movement that developed during this period reflected not only the desire for reunification but also the needs of the nation’s impoverished, the democratization movement of this period paid little attention to the latter. The obsession with the fetish of state power had made the democratization movement insensitive to the realities of the popular movement, including that of labor. This eventually became a major limitation of the democratization movement.

The May 16 military coup in 1961 could not ultimately thwart the

progress of this national movement, even if it could temporarily suppress it. The so-called June 3 Movement, which was led by students and citizens from March to June 1964, was a succession of the earlier national independence movement led by students that followed in the wake of the April 19 Revolution in that it protested the Japanese neo-imperial occupation of Korea and any normalization in Korean-Japanese relations. This movement was the first since April 19 and the largest popular movement until the 1970s, and constituted a major facet of the democratization movement of the 1960s. At the same time, the movement regarded itself as a popular manifestation of protest against social poverty and inequalities, insisting such problems took precedence over economic growth, while demanding a return to the civil democracy that had been crushed by the 1961 military coup (Jong-o Lee 1989, 335).

The military regime, which had suppressed the June 3 movement by proclaiming martial law, attempted to subdue the initiative of the social movement by announcing a series of trumped-up organizational incidents (*jojik sageon*), beginning with the People's Revolutionary Party incident in 1964.⁸ These incidents, which were reported to be directly or indirectly linked to North Korea, the military regime in South Korea attributed to a heightened policy of aggression by North Korean, which included several armed North Korean guerrilla incursions into the South in the late sixties (H. Jo 1993, 98–100). In addition, the ruling military regime in South Korea reinforced its suppression of press freedoms and repressed the autonomy of the country's universities in the name of media regulation and school *stability*. This oppression of universities repeatedly triggered closure orders for institutions and the mobilization of the troops to prevent demonstrations, while the government's suppression of the national media

8. In 1965, a year after the formation of the People's Revolutionary Party (Inmin hyeongmyeongdang) was announced, the case of Seoul National University's *Minbiyeon* (Society for the Study of Comparative Nationalism) occurred, which was followed by the incident of the Berlin-based so-called North Korea Operations Team to the South (*Bukhan daenam gongjagdan sageon*). In 1968, the South Korean government broke the story of the Unification Revolutionary Party's (Tongil hyeongmyeongdang) underground espionage network, and the following year that of a United Kingdom-based international espionage operation.

triggered widespread opposition, represented by the media democratization movement for the protection of freedoms of the press. The suppressive actions of the military regime in South Korea culminated in the October Restoration (*yusin*) of 1972, which followed the passing of the anomalous three-term constitutional amendment in September 1969 for prolonging the rule of Park Chung-hee.

It was in this context that the democratization force of the late 1960s and 1970s, the so-called *jaeya*, emerged. This was a loose group of liberals, progressives, intellectuals, social activists, and religious leaders united under the cause of anti-dictatorship. The *jaeya* democratization movement gradually strengthened its position by declaring the national cause for democracy in terms of freedom of the press, the autonomy of the nation's universities, and the guarantee of people's basic rights. In 1970, the Nixon Doctrine, which proclaimed a *new strategy for peace*, was announced, and the following year, the sea-change in the East Asian geopolitical situation caused by the improvement of United States-China relations resulted in the relative relaxation of state repression and the revitalization of social movements in Korea. In 1971, the *jaeya* democratization movement, led by dissident intellectuals and the middle class, created an open organization called the National Council for the Protection of Democracy (Minju suho gungmin hyeobuihoe; NCPD). As the first coalition of anti-government intellectuals since the May 16 military coup, the NCPD, whose basic goal was to resist the destruction of liberal democracy, human rights abuses, and the suppression of prisoners of conscience, developed and diverged into several national coalitions for democracy and national reunification during the 1980s after the National Assembly for the Restoration of Democracy (Minju hoebok gungmin hoeui; NARD), which combined with Christian democrats in the wake of the Democratic Youth and Student Union (Mincheong hangnyeon) incident of April 1974.

The *jaeya* social movement always encompassed something more than the formal organization into which it developed during the 1970s. Progressive young students, intellectuals, members of the middle class, and religious figures all flocked under the *jaeya* banner, protesting the anti-democratic measures of the military dictatorship, and sympathizing

with the national cause of defending (or restoring) democracy. Hence, its organizational substance was comprehensive and rather vague. Within it were found many differences (and consequent confrontations) of opinion regarding democracy and democratization.

Taking the national issue as an example, the senior, more conservative group of this *jaeya* opposition tended to understand democracy as a means of winning the race against North Korea. The March First Declaration on the Salvation of Our Country (*Sam-il guguk seoneon*) of 1976 declared “national reunification is now the fundamental task that this country bears,” and “democracy is a strength to be cultivated in the fierce competition with the communist regime of North Korea.” Democracy and national unification in this sense were supported by the modernization ideology of *growth-firstism*. On the other hand, other members of people in the lower strata of the *jaeya*, or who were only loosely affiliated with it, tried to find alternative approaches to this issue. Regarding the reality of division as the ultimate impediment to democratization, they came to consider the condition of division as originating from, and sustained by, the United States. They recognized that the task of democratization was closely related to the achievement of national autonomy and unification.

In the 1980s, the national movement entered a new phase. The decisive momentum was the emergence of the democratization movement, symbolized by the so-called Seoul Spring, the people’s resistance in Gwangju, and the violent suppression of the latter by Chun Doo-hwan’s military regime in 1980. The role of the United States and its interventions emerged as a hot issue following the May Resistance and the subsequent establishment of the military regime. The popular image of the United States in the late 1970s, when that country was viewed as a barrier to Korea’s democratization, led to full-fledged criticism of and resistance to the United States and its policies.

The national movement of this period understood the United States from the perspective of Marxist-Leninist ideas on imperialism, even as it tried to connect with the North Korean regime to develop the democratization movement in the South. Arson incidents at the United States Information Service (USIS) facilities in Busan and Gwangju in March

1982, the burning of the Stars and Stripes by Kangwon National University students in April 1982, and protests against Team Spirit (a joint US-South Korea military training exercise) were the prelude to a struggle against *American imperialism*, with the occupation of the Seoul USIS building in May 1985 being a breakthrough in this anti-American independence movement. At the same time, the idea of “knowing North Korea properly” (*Bukhan baro algi*), a notion that had been taboo in both theory and practice since national division, began to take the form of a campaign, and it was also during this period that *Juche* ideology, along with the Marxist-Leninism, exercised considerable influence on the social movements of South Korea.

People and Class

Beginning with the outbreak of the Korean War, the 1950s is often referred to as the dark age of Korean social movements. The defeat of the left and other progressive camps under the US military occupation, the establishment of a South Korean government, and then the annihilation of the left during the Korean War, made South Korea a one-dimensional society ruled by a dominant anti-communist ideology. South Korea sat on the East Asian frontier during an era of global Cold War. In this milieu it was often dangerous to disclose even the word of capitalism, or to endeavor to understand workers and peasants through class paradigms. The populace was mobilized from above towards the service of autocratic politics. Although protests by society's lower strata intermittently erupted, popular movements, including the labor movement, were severely oppressed during this time in the name of “anti-communism and the national interest.”

The April 19 Revolution of 1960 brought about a major change in this political landscape, marking the beginning of the 1960s. The revolution, which began as a protest against dictatorship and rigged elections, had a profound impact on every sector of Korean society. Across the country, suppressed workers protested low wages and poor working conditions, and the year 1960 became the most active time for the organization of labor unions by then since the establishment of the South Korean government in 1948. Intellectual unions led by teachers, financial and journalist unions

belonging to the educated middle class, not to mention manual workers' unions, emerged. Nevertheless, discrimination and social segregation persisted, between the students and intellectuals who had led the April 19 Revolution, and the people more broadly, at this time represented by the labor movement.

After the April 19 Revolution, the student movement became involved in the unification movement, which had been explored through a three- to four-month transitional period devoted to college democratization and the national enlightenment campaign (*gungmin gaemong undong*). The mainstream of the student movement was immersed in the unification movement, with little interest in the rural enlightenment campaign or the labor movement. This orientation toward the national unification movement overwhelmed commitment for the *people*. So was the movement led by the so-called *hyeoksingye* progressive intellectuals. Like the student movement, it remained largely unaware of popular movements because it was primarily interested in political issues, and, with some exceptions, it was also not involved in the labor movement (H. Park 1988, 346–347).

In the early 1960s, before the emergence of the country's economic development plan, it was the state formation that took precedence in South Korean society. A consensus then formed that it was urgent to develop the country's sluggish market economy through state planning from above, a strategy the military regime also employed as a way of establishing its own legitimacy. Until at least the 1970s, intellectuals and college students also joined the national modernization project initiated by the military regime and the government's promotion of economic development.⁹ The push for industrialization from above by the military regime starting in the 1960s brought the state full control over labor. In August 1961, shortly

9. Ogle (1990, 80, 157) has acknowledged that Korean workers had eight years of freedom under Park Chung-hee's first government (1963–1971), which is in contrast with the situation under Park's second government after 1971. Ogle's claim is supported by the increase in real wages during this first period, far surpassing productivity, especially at the end of the period. The judgment that the 1960s represented a distinct political situation, characterized by "soft authoritarianism" or "a brief democratic interlude," has also been mentioned by several scholars (Im 2011, 234; Chang 2015, 4). See also, Nam (2009, 6–7).

after the military coup, the reconstruction organizing committee appointed by the military regime organized top-down trade unions by industry and the Federation of Korean Trade Unions (Daehan nodong johap chong yeonhaphoe; FKTU). Two years later, in April 1963, the Labor Union Act was revised to ban labor unions from political activities.

After the Korea-Japan Agreement was signed in 1965 normalizing relations between these two countries, the South Korean labor sector began to suffer the double oppression of domestic and foreign capital, with foreign firms, including Japanese ones, entering the Korean market. This domination of domestic and international capital, and the active intervention of state power, caused a massive backlash on the country's workers.¹⁰ Furthermore, these economic struggles created ripe conditions for political struggle.¹¹ In the wake of the so-called period of high growth, the state accelerated its opening to foreign capital to spur export growth, further clamping down on labor, in order to avoid slowing economic growth and recession, resulting in the gradual growth in labor resistance.

The social movements of the time still maintain some distance from the world of workers and people. For example, the Unification Revolutionary Party (Tongil hyeongmyeongdang), a representative illegal organization of this period, had hardly any direct links with the working class, even if it recognized the need to politicize the working class and organize it into a political party. The well-known fact that Jeon Tae-il, a garment worker in Seoul Cheonggye market who immolated himself in November 1970, yearned eagerly for a college student friend demonstrates this. Jeon's self-immolation reminded the students, intellectuals, and religious figures who

10. Some examples include disputes in foreign-invested companies due to loans or direct investment since the mid-1960s, the struggle against the Korea-US Administrative Agreement and the Korean Service Corps (KSC) in the US Army Agreement, including the struggle for the revision of labor laws (1965–1966), the fight against the enactment of the Capital Market Development Act (1968), and the struggle against the Special Provisional Act for Trade Unions and Labor Disputes in Foreign-invested Companies (1969). See Jang Myeong-guk (1985, 126–127) and Hagen Koo, et al. (2015, 96–97).

11. This attempted political struggle led to a campaign to create the tentatively named Democratic Labor Party (Minju nodongdang) within the FKTU, or to engage in political activities in 1970 (Koo, et al. 2015, 93–96).

led the democratization movement that the genuine spirit of *protecting democracy* lay in the defense of civil rights. After the self-immolation incident, followed by the Gwangju Grand Complex Incident (*Gwangju daedanji sageon*) in August 1971, the democratization movement began to commit itself to the laboring class.

The democratization movement, motivated by the Seoul Spring in 1980, the Gwangju People's Resistance and the Chun Doo-hwan regime's violent crackdown of it, brought a new awakening to the labor movement. Against the backdrop of the severe oppression of the labor movement by the Chun Doo-hwan regime,¹² the people's movement, including the labor movement, in the first half of the 1980s seemed to remain relatively sluggish. However, the number of college students increased sharply in 1980 due to the government policy of liberalizing college entrance quotas, and the reach of the social movement began to expand rapidly, especially as many activists who had been involved in the popular movement were remobilized in the wake of the so-called appeasement or decompression phase (*yuhwa gugmyeon*) from 1983.

With the spread of Marxist-Leninism and North Korean *Juche* ideology to college campuses in South Korea, radical ideologies preached political struggle based on the hegemony of the working class. The activist movement of the 1970s was now criticized for having been reform-oriented and economic-centered. The previous era's approach of stressing activism in factories (*hyeonjangnon*), which used to be intermittent and dependent on individual decisions, now became a factory activism (*gonghwal*) in which college students should participate. The resulting worker-student alliance (*nohak yeondaee*) and students-turned-labor-activists (*hakchul nodongja*) became icons of this period (Kim and Nam 2012). As it was difficult for students and intellectuals to adapt to the tough factory environment, the emphasis was placed on the dedication to live with the workers, as well as

12. Many social activists and labor activists who worked in the opposition and democratic labor groups in the 1970s were brought to Samcheong Training Corps (*gyoyukdae*) in the name of *social cleansing* and the revised labor law reinforced the requirements for the establishment of labor unions, abolished the union shop system, and established a notorious new clause banning third-party intervention.

the moral character (*pumseong*) of *Juche* ideology.

The ideological radicalization spearheaded by the student movement spread the radical lexicon of class, revolution, organization, and strategy to the labor scene. In addition to its dedication to the democratization of Korean society, the student movement also regarded the labor movement as a means of achieving its goal of revolutionary transformation (Jang-jip Choe 1992, 248–249). The labor masses were inspired by a transformative social atmosphere in pursuit of democratization, as well as by the belief that their own interests might be substantiated. Under the banner of “worker-student alliance,” numerous social movements appeared during this period, including the Guro alliance strike in June 1985, the joint worker-student struggle of the Cheonggye Garment Workers’ Union, the union strike at Daewoo Motors, and the May 3 Incheon democratic uprising of 1986 and others.

Democracy after Democratization

As we have seen, the two themes of nation/unification and class/people converged into the grand narrative of democratization around the mid-1980s. A fierce debate had evolved in Korean social movements over the question of which of these two tasks should be given priority. At the core of the theoretical struggle that emerged in the early 1980s and culminated in the 1985–1986 debate on social formation (*sahoe guseongche nonjaeng*) centered on this very question. Despite the differences in their various arguments, all facets of the democratization movement shared the common goal of overthrowing the military dictatorship, towards which they dedicated their combined resources, suspending or sacrificing the tasks inherent in class and national struggles.¹³

The labor movement’s emphasis, by both its leadership and the rank-and-file, on political struggle actually turned to the overthrow of the

13. This situation in the mid-1980s is reminiscent of the colonial social movements of the 1920s, sixty years earlier. The socialist/radicalists who had led the social movement in the mid-1920s provide a historical lesson regarding the decline of mass movements from the late 1920s, a result of concentrating all their resources into a united front movement with the middle class in the name of anti-Japanese political struggle.

dictatorial regime, resulting in the paralysis of the daily routine and activities of the trade unions. In this regard, the rebranding at this time of the three slogans of the democratization movement—nation, people, democracy—as independence, democracy, and unification is highly suggestive. Although the *people* were integrated into *democracy* to emphasize the fact that democratization was not merely a matter of procedural democracy but an orientation toward social equality, and the *nation* was subdivided into independence and *unification* to emphasize the fact that democratization was not simply concerned with domestic dictatorship,¹⁴ it actually meant that the *people* were removed from the democratization movement.

All the democratization movement's focus on overthrowing the military dictatorship eventually led to the victory of that movement with the June 29 Declaration of 1987. However, in a fact of historical irony, the democratization movement lost ground by achieving its political goal of overthrowing the military dictatorship. The end of the military dictatorship also marked the end of a democratization movement that went back to the 1960s, and it also meant the demise of the grand narrative of popular activism developed through nationwide support and participation.

What is left of the space the democratization movement once occupied? As the national and class movements, unification and labor movements were subsumed under the democratization movement, they all became separated from each other, each left facing its own contradictions. Furthermore, they were faced with the new challenge of adapting to the changed environment. It was not easy for the unification movement to escape the inertia of those movements that had been centered on political struggle, and the same was true of the people's movement. Regardless of its intentions, the unification movement was frequently reduced to mere slogans, or to a single-sector movement that *specialized* only in unification (Baek 1994, 152). The movement for the nation, which had arisen through

14. See Baek Nak-cheong (1994, 148–149). As suggested by the fact the national slogan was reformulated as *independence and unification*, the national movement had concentrated on promoting relations with North Korea, such as the campaign for “knowing North Korea properly” or the appeal for inter-Korean exchanges, criticizing the United States as imperialist, or criticizing the misguided approach of the government policy on North Korea.

opposition to the subordinate state of the nation, and simplified its sphere of movement by just *promoting unification*, faced various challenges, such as all forms of oppression and human rights abuses and the distortion and even concealment of history, beginning with the history of the Japanese colonial period and national division, among others.

The labor movement was in a similar situation. It is well known that the workers' struggle, which took place in July-September just after the June 29 Declaration in 1987, was led by workers themselves, rather than intellectuals and students. Therefore, the era of worker-student alliance ended around 1988 with the completion of factory activities by students and intellectuals. The workers' struggle demonstrated that the labor movement was not a struggle for political power in the realm of the state, but rather a struggle for economic justice and equality to secure a humane life in the realm of the market. In fact, they were "angry at their damaged self-respect, conscientious of wrongful behavior," and eager to make further cultural demands. For example, rather than simple compensation for wages or the payment of bonuses, they protested the unfair tyranny of capital or violence against colleagues, raged at the suppression or abuses against human rights by power (Byeon 1993, 126-128), and gave greater value to worker solidarity.

In fact, these values have long been an inherent tradition of the Korean labor movement. In her study of workers at the Korea Shipbuilding and Engineering Corporation in the 1960s, Nam Hwasook pointed to the workers' critical attitude toward pre-modern master-slave relations and emphasized the high level of self-assertion, equality, and dignity shown by them (Nam 2009, 95, 99-100).¹⁵ Hagen Koo also showed that the "inhumane conditions" of workers was undoubtedly the real source of the labor struggle by female workers in the 1970s, while Kim Keongil referred to the respect for human rights or commitment to collective action and organization demonstrated by the workers (Koo 2001, 98; K. Kim 2006, 165-175).

15. Similarly, Kim Keongil's research in the Daegu case points to the workers' sympathetic solidarity, pride, egalitarianism, dedication to human rights, and orientation towards justice (K. Kim 2009, 451-453).

Further, Koo emphasizes that since the 1980s, workers of Hyundai Heavy Industries have valued the trust and pride of the working class, protesting discrimination against uneducated workers (Koo 2001, 173). The virtues of placing emphasis on alternative values such as human rights and dignity, belief in justice, comradeship, morality, and a devotion to the group, rather than fetishized power or material interests, has been an inherited trait of the Korean labor movement throughout its history.

Emerging Issues in Recent Studies

Since the demise of the democratization movement, Korean social movements have tended to differentiate into various areas. While discrimination and exclusion against women and social categories such as migrants, refugees, the disabled, and sexual minorities are emerging as primary areas of concerns, the issues are expanding to encompass the realms of culture and education, human rights, consumption, and environmentalism and climate change. Here I will examine two, that of the underclass and women, that are particularly important areas of focus among Korean social movements.

Role and Significance of the Underclass

The underclass referred to here is a category that overlaps with, but is distinct from, the people or classes already discussed. If we take class to refer to students, workers, or peasants in official or organized groups, the underclass means the urban poor, casual workers, the unemployed and others who do not belong to or are excluded from these former groups. Antonio Gramsci and Gayatri Spivak referred to this social stratum as “subaltern,” while before that Karl Marx called them the lumpen proletariat. Antonio Negri identified them as the “multitude,” Gilles Deleuze highlighted them by the name of “nomads,” Slavoj Žižek mentioned them as the “subject of the real,” while Giorgio Agamben presented them as “homo sacer.” In Korea, Ham Seok-heon, early on in the 1970s, presented the term SsiAl (씨알)

을) as the equivalent of sangnom (commoners) in vernacular Korean, 民草 (grassroots) in Chinese character, or 'people' in English (Ham 1970, 15-19). Kim So-jin evoked them in a 1995 novel titled *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (*Yeollin sahoe-wa geu jeokdeul*) as *babpulttaegi* (literally, an errant grain of cooked rice, here denoting a humble and socially insignificant person).¹⁶ This category of the underprivileged is sometimes described as *gicheung minjung* (D. Kim 2003) or *hacheungmin* (W. Kim 2006; J. O 2014).

In recent years, researchers have been paying greater attention to the role of this underclass and its implications in the April 19 Revolution or the May 18 Resistance. The first study that emphasized the participation of this class in the April 19 Revolution appeared in 1980, twenty years after the events.¹⁷ A decade later, Han Sang-jin (1990) regarded their participation as the re-emergence of the *people*, defining them as *gicheung minjung*, a trend carried on by Park Chan-ho (1991), Jeong Yong-uk (1998), Lee Eun-jin (1999), and Jeong Chang-hyeon (2006). Around the fiftieth anniversary of the revolution, in April 2010, the events became the focus of scholars in various academic disciplines, including by O Je-yeon (2010; 2014) and Lee Sang Rok (2011) in history, Gwon Bodeulae (2012) and Kim Mi Ran (2010) in Korean literature, Lee Seoung Won (2009), Simokawa Anyana (2014), and Choe Jeong-un (2016) in political science.

Most members of the underclass that participated in the protests had temporary, precarious employment, such as peddlers, clerks, waiters, tailors, service employees, rag-pickers, shoeshiners, newspapermen, petty and organized criminals, prostitutes, and the like. Their participation is revealed through figures or official police records on deaths, casualties, or other incidents (Y. O 2010, 216; Seoung Won Lee 2009, 195-196; J. O 2014, 138, 153-158). Their participation is also confirmed in the March 15 Masan

16. Kim was skeptical an ideal world could be realized on earth, saying, "No matter what world is opened, it is just a crowd of images (*gunsang*) that cannot escape alienation" (So-jin Kim 2002, 14).

17. Kim Sung-hwan (1980) claimed that the urban poor played the most important role in the April Revolution based on an analysis of casualty data of the participants. At the time of the Seoul Spring in 1980, Kim challenged the conventional notion that college students played an important role in the events of April 19. See also Lee Seoung Won (2009, 197) and O Je-yeon (2014, 139).

uprising that precipitated the April Revolution (Eun-jin Lee 1999, 99–121; 3·15 uigeo ginyeom saeophoe 2004, 425; Seoung Won Lee 2009, 198–199; J. O 2014, 146–150). O Je-yeon argues they possessed similar socio-economic status to the vocational males comprising the urban lower-class, while emphasizing the participation at demonstrations of working students (*gohaksaeng*) and night high school students who earned a humble living as newspaper vendors or by selling their blood (J. O 2014, 141–142).

The voluntary and radical members of the underclass led the amorphous protests at the forefront. Through their participation in protesting the oppression of the dictatorship and socioeconomic hardships, April 19 became a revolution that overthrew the existing order.¹⁸ However, the establishment and college students recognized this participation of the underclass as an element of *destruction* and *confusion*, and so took the lead in restoring and establishing social order. Thus, the voices of the underclass in the April Revolution were forgotten until recently. A year after the revolution, in the wake of the military coup by Park Chung-hee in 1961, some of these underclass citizens became the most direct victims of “gangster purge,” “social cleansing,” and “national reconstruction” campaigns (Seoung Won Lee 2009, 202; G. Han 2015, 386–387). The myth of April 19 as a revolution led by college students thereby became established as history.

They were the dregs of society that, in those hard-to-live times, overcame their most difficult and disgusting lives without abandoning the path of learning, leading their own households only by themselves. Their brilliant vision, even though life was tough, was the sharpest spearhead for crushing and destroying the strongholds of dictatorship. Yet there is no record of them. Their testimony is scant as well. In order to write about them, we have no choice but to employ the writings left by the students who worked with them (Y. Hong 2010, 255).

18. O Je-yeon mentions that the lower-class urban dwellers who led Masan’s March 15 uprising had not yet expressed their class hostility toward the wealthy during this period. By contrast, twenty years later, the urban minority in the 1979 Buma (Busan and Masan) uprising openly attacked the rich, as well as destroying and torching public buildings (J. O 2014, 150).

O Je-yeon has asserted that if the April Revolution were the driving force behind the Korean democratization movement, the reinstatement of young working students and the urban lower-class, who had disappeared from historical memory despite the important role they had played in the April Revolution, should proceed widely throughout the historiography of the April Revolution and the Korean democratic movement more broadly (J. O 2014, 168). Lee Seoung Won (2009, 202–203) has also argued that a new understanding and interpretation of their participation from the democratic perspective was inevitable, asking to what extent the democracy that proceeded the revolution could be called democratic if the most active participants in the events of April 19 were later excised or excluded from history.

This participation by the underclass is likewise found in the 1980 Gwangju Resistance. Similar to April 19, they are also identified through records on detainees and deaths (Jeong-ro Lee 1989, 24; H. Kang 2004a, 140; Jeong-un Choe [1999] 2012, 65), and mainly worked as day laborers, construction workers, carpenters, newspaper vendors, shoe cleaners, peddlers, and pub or restaurants employees (Jong-cheol An 2001, 293; H. Kang 2004a, 141). They were “the primary figures of the Gwangju uprising, both in terms of their numerical composition and their dedication to the struggle” (Jeong-ro Lee 1989, 24). After the retreat of the martial law troops, they emerged as the leaders of the uprising, serving as the main force of the so-called civilian army, and defended the provincial government building to the death (Jeong-ro Lee 1989, 24; Jong-cheol An 2001, 293).

Similar to underclass in the April 19 Revolution, they had a certain sense of distance from and criticism of the college students or prominent figures in society. In their oral testimony published some ten years after May 18, they said, “Those who fought to the end were not college students or professors or those who gave token support to human rights organizations, but rather the poor and miserable, those without learning, orphans, bullies” (Hyeonsayeon 1990, 305). Na Il-sung, a furniture worker who participated in the uprising at the age of 19, recalled that he basically came to distrust the students because of the sense of betrayal caused by the fact that the students almost all fled during the May Resistance, while they were the only ones

who fought to the end (Hyeonsayeon 1990, 305, 485; D. Kim 2003, 118).

Finally, as with April 19, they have also been ignored and forgotten by history, to the benefit of college students and the privileged. In their imprisonment following the end of the resistance, these underclass participants revealed their feelings that college students were “selfish and arrogant rather than displaying an exemplary attitude,” and that it was difficult for them “to control their anger and sense of disillusionment with those who were socially recognized” (Hyeonsayeon 1990, 299, 316–317; D. Kim 2003, 113–114). Kang points out the paradox of how those who played leading and key roles in the May 18 Resistance were then excluded from the achievements of that resistance and subsequent democratization (H. Kang 2004a, 143).

The participation of the underclass in Korea’s social movements is not limited to these two cases. Their role has also been highlighted in the so-called Buma Uprising of the fall of 1979, which is said to have prompted the fall of Park Chung-hee’s Yushin regime (W. Kim 2006, 431; Cha 2014, 226–228; Seon-mi Kim 2016, 112). In the documentary film, *Yusin-ui chueok* (Memories of Yusin; 2012), directed by Lee Jung-hwang, Seo Joong-seok and Lee Eun-jin also mention the underclass. Such participation has already been confirmed in the June 1987 democratization movement (Gisayeon 1987; Yun 1988, 252–253; J. O 2017, 486). And as already mentioned, the novelist Kim So-jin portrayed them with the term *babpulttegi* in the so-called self-immolation political situation (*bunsin jeongguk*) of May 1991 (So-jin Kim 1995).

In her study of the candlelight vigil that led to President Park Geun-hye’s impeachment in 2016–2017, Lim Miri also mentions them, asserting that even with regime change, these urban underprivileged remain noncitizens, dreaming of overthrowing the whole world and creating it anew. Violence is the only language that gives them voice, making audible those whose voices are normally muted to the world though they speak in the same tongue (Lim 2019, 47–49). Explaining their absence at the candlelight vigils, that they could not stand or had no reason to stand in an arena from which violence was cut off, she points out how those citizens who participated in the vigils were neither aware nor interested in the absence of the underclass (Lim

2019, 50–51).

In her description of the urban lower-class, Lim Mi Ri says they are similar to Giorgio Agamben's "homo sacer" in that they are excluded from the state and placed in a "state of exception" (Lim 2019, 48). As Lim's study show, recent studies have emphasized the meaning of the existence of the underclass, mainly from Western theoretical perspectives, as shown by the references to Giorgio Agamben or Carl Schmitt. Lee Seoung Won shed light on the implications of their participation in the April 19 Revolution based on subaltern theory. Citing Slavoj Zizek and Ernesto Laclau, especially the latter's "disposition," "antagonism," and "hegemony," Lee attempted to analyze the meaning of the April Revolution and the limits of Korean democracy by categorizing the revolutionary participants into *recognized* and *unrecognized*, paying attention to the fact the underclass remained *unrecognized* in the course of the April Revolution and in the Korean society that followed (Seoung Won Lee 2009, 182–189).

Kim Doo-sik proposed two types of frames for analyzing the social processes of the May Resistance in which the various social relationships and cultural traditions of the participants are embedded. They include a democratization frame centered on mainstream social activists and opposition *jaeya* figures, and a contrasting frame of equality and brotherly love formed through the resistance and centered on the urban lower-class (D. Kim 1998; 2003, 129). If the former democratization frame is strongly characterized by the outward orientation of the end of military dictatorship and the struggle for democratization, the latter, manifested through the period of resistance, reflects a social identity based on the community's daily life in the region. This people-centered frame of resistance that repels various forms of discrimination can be seen as a challenge to vested interests by representing the interests of the urban lower-class in the local community. In this sense, May 18 meant the structural realignment of pluralistic social identity and local social relations (D. Kim 2003, 111, 128).

As another approach to the May Resistance, Choe Jeong-un proposes the term "absolute community." The term for expressing the state of the local citizenry who fought in unison in the face of the brutality and massacres of the military and martial forces contrasts with the traditional pre-resistance

community, which was dominated by everyday hierarchies and class order. The people who contributed most to the formation of the community, which brought about “a dramatic sense of unity and liberation,” were the urban lower-class who had been “pushed to the margins” in traditional communities (Jeong-un Choe [1999] 2012, 188–189, 199–200). Citizens “born again in an absolute community” experienced the struggle of the moment as “exhilarating (*sinmyeongnaneun*) self-creation” (Jeong-un Choe [1999] 2012, 196). Although the word “absolute community” itself had actually been used before (S. Jeong et al. 1990, 273), Choe Jeong-un used the term to express the sense of freedom and whole community achieved through struggle in a sense that contrasted with traditional Korean notions of community. He intended to describe the “reality of non-reality” (Jeong-un Choe et al. 2014, 353–356, 359) wherein dreams seem to mix with excitement, love, hatred, and fear as the notion of personal consciousness and private property disappeared.¹⁹

Recent interpretations of the May Resistance are sometimes based on Deleuze’s communism. Yi-Jinkyung and Jo Won-gwang focus on the flow of small groups during the May Resistance and how they formed differently from existing social organizations defined by social status, reputation, name, and career. It was a case of the formation of a collective body, structured through sharing the popular affect. It was a “non-personal formation” in that it worked by clearing and invalidating names and status, rather than acting on name or status, and the revolution that proceeds in this way, the authors argue, is a *nameless revolution*. Since no established status or career has guaranteed the authority of a leader, anyone can become a leader, and in fact, small groups led by countless leaders repeatedly formed and dismantled (Yi-Jinkyung and Jo 2009, 148–149). They also defined the features of people-

19. The following year, Jeong Gwa-ri referred to this period of Gwangju as the “community of rice (*bap*) and blood.” *Bap* is a community of doing (*ham*) and hurt in that *bap* denotes suffering and labor, while blood denotes sacrifice and hurt (G. Jeong 2000, 227; Soon-mi Han 2019, 479). More recently, Eun Woo-geun has suggested the term “life community” in the sense that people shared blood and rice in the May protests (Eun 2019, 375–378). There are such allegations in Choe Jeong-un’s term of absolute community, but Eun Woo-geun’s life community is marked by mystical and theological elements.

formation, structured by the gathering of specific activities and abilities at that time, as “non-personal singularity,” following Deleuze and Spinoza’s example. They ask themselves whether the word *revolution* is appropriate, if that revolution is defined as the subversion of the existing order from the fundamental rather than replacing the existing order with a new one. They argued that the mass struggle in Gwangju went much further than we commonly think (Yi-Jinkyung and Jo 2009, 149–153). In an extension of this problematic, in this issue Yi-Jinkyung reviews the series of candlelight vigils since the 2000s.

Kim Jeong-han compares the underclass in the Gwangju popular protests to the “demos” spoken of by Jacques Rancière, or the “homo sacer” of Giorgio Agamben (J. Kim 2016, 164–165). In addition, by mobilizing the theories of French structuralism of Louis Althusser and Étienne Balibar, he typifies the three blocs of power over the Yushin Constitution in the May 18 People’s Resistance. These were the power bloc of protecting the constitution represented by Chun Doo-hwan, that of reforming the constitution advocated by Kim Dae-jung and Kim Young-sam, and that of establishing the constitution expressed by the people’s community in Gwangju after May 22. Kim asserts that the power of the *mob*, led by members of the underclass, had the power to ignite the constitutional potential inherent in the civilian army, overcoming the erosion of the struggle by the reform-oriented constitution bloc, and recouping its power against the protecting constitution bloc. According to Kim, this third bloc created autonomous spaces for the multitude that produced a power bloc of revolutionary self-government and political collective intelligence and will (J. Kim 2013, 170, 181–186). The people who actually participated in the armed struggle as the main body of the May Resistance, he argues, differed from the generally accepted notion since the late 1970s. Borrowing Carl Schmitt’s notion of “exceptional state,” Kim argued that the “people with guns”—the extreme of resistive subjectivity—showed an exceptionality beyond the design of domination (protecting the constitution bloc) and the imagination of intellectuals (reforming the constitution bloc) (J. Kim 2013, 240–241).

Gender and Feminism

Traditionally, the primary actors in social movements have been men. Korea is no exception. The role of women in leftist social movements during the Japanese colonial period, it has been suggested, was only for use as police shields or as keepers of activist refuges, at best, or else to serve as liaisons between male activists (K. Kim 2007). In her case study of the Korea Shipbuilding and Engineering Corporation, Nam Hwasook emphasizes the male worker's sense of dignity and manliness in the 1960s. Their discourse was a deeply gendered one, and as heads of household, it was anchored in an evolving masculine subjectivity of workers (Nam 2009, 10).

This is also evident in the 1979 Buma Uprising. Cha Seong-hwan argues that the Buma Uprising was masculine in two ways: that men played a central role rather than women in the uprising, and that the uprising itself was extreme, aggressive and violent, thus taking on masculine violence. The history of the resistance movement is largely masculine in that men have played central roles, which reflects the impact of a male-dominated patriarchal society. Indeed, when women are exposed to protest or to violence (mainly by the police), male participants are content to respond to social expectations that they should protect weak women (Cha 2014, 278–279).

A similar pattern can be found in the candlelight vigils of May 2008. Facing the threat of police crackdown, men in reserve military uniforms shouted for women to fall back because the situation was dangerous and it was feared the women might be hurt. Nevertheless, for women who still showed a willingness to participate, the men cast them dubious glances, unsure they were up to it.²⁰ As men claim to be the protectors of women, they express doubts about and distrust in the abilities of women activists. In addition, as Cha Seong-hwan noted in his study of the Buma Uprising, it is often suggested that men are at the forefront of attack while women occupy a supporting position (Cha 2014, 279). In the demonstration process,

20. This account is derived from the entry of a female blogger, Dalgun, who participated in the candlelight vigils. "I don't want to be protected by the military reserves," <http://blog.jinbo.net/dalgun> (Han and Heo 2010, 42).

women play a supporting role for men and are faithful to the existing gender roles, such as carrying stones, preparing food, and treating the injured (Eun-jin Lee 1999, 110–112). This has been a consistently repeated pattern of the history of Korean social movements since the late nineteenth-century Patriotic Enlightenment Movement. In this regard, Kim Young-hee notes how women's voices were rarely heard until the early 2000s when the memories of those who were accused and resisted state violence were published officially. The history of resistance was literally passed down by men, with women appearing only as unequal partners and portrayed as performing fixed gender roles expected of women in organizational activities or resistance movements (Y. Kim 2018, 167).

This stereotyped role of women in social movements is often said to be the product of the Confucianism and patriarchy that characterized premodern Korean society (Koo 2001, 19–20; Chun 2003, 67–72). Motherhood ideology and female sexuality have also contributed significantly to reproducing the stereotyped image of women in social movements. Speaking of the latter, *gisaeng*, prostitutes, and bar hostesses have constantly been noted as participants in large-scale protests that were fully supported by the nation since the Japanese colonial period, such as the March First Movement (1919), June 10 Movement (1926), April Revolution (1960), Buma Uprising (1979), and May Resistance (1980).

Kim Young-hee has insisted that underclass participation in the May Resistance is often mentioned, but significantly, it is bar waitresses or hostesses who are most often commented upon. These latter are mentioned more than ten times in *Beyond Death, beyond the Darkness of the Age* (Hwang Seok-young, Lee Jae-ui, and Jeon Yong-ho), the most widely known record of the May Resistance. This is described in a way that even these underclass women participated in the resistance, making their fellow citizens solemn. Kim Young-hee asserts that the fact women have been mentioned repeatedly, but never as *workers*, reminds us of the representational gaze that surrounds the May Gwangju community (Y. Kim 2018, 170). It goes without saying that the gaze referred to here means the male gaze on female sexuality. It is true that the participation of underclass females had the effect of ostentating the scale and significance of the movement, but in the process,

male intervention into female sexuality has the effect of unilaterally targeting women sexually.

The problem of maternal ideology is more complex than that of sexuality. The role of mothers in social movements is the most stereotyped in the restricted image of woman. In a recent forum on the May Resistance of 1980, many participants questioned the tendency to limit women's roles in the resistance to maternal ones. As mentioned in the reference to "maternal values" and "primitive and emotional language" (Yi 2012, 334–335), women in the May 18 narrative are frequently represented by the image of the mother. Kim Young-hee points out how, in the narrative of the memory of May 18, the main body of resistance is divided by gender, and composed primarily of males. It is typical that women's political activism and resistance movements are confined to gender boundaries, similar to interpreting women's involvement in issues related to food or rearing during the 2008 candlelight rallies against American beef imports as a social practice of motherhood (Y. Kim 2018, 180–181). In the same recent forum mentioned above, an attendee named Lee Hwa-kyung, who experienced the events of May 18 as a Jeonnam Girls' High School student, mentioned how the May 18 narrative, which memorializes and exalts the "male subject with a gun," excludes and marginalizes women. "Packing fist-rice (*jumeogbap*) and shrouding the bodies was what we had to do as human beings, however, if this is read as a myth of maternity in a way that mothers are great, the role of women is bound to be reduced and distorted, supporting male patriarchal ideology."²¹

This maternal ideology, however, did not always carry negative implications for social movements. Over a century ago, *Mother* (*Mat'*, 1906) by the Russian writer Maksim Gor'kii became a classic of socialist realism. Lee So-seon, the mother of Jeon Tae-il, who immolated himself in November 1970 in Cheonggye Market, stepped into the labor movement under the motive of maternal ideology, but lived far beyond that through her subsequent commitment. Through testimonies by five members of the May 18 Bereaved

21. Feeling her tongue had been "executed" at that time, she decided not to speak out, however, she later ironically became a writer (Yi 2012, 338–339, 342–343; Y. Kim 2018, 178–179).

Family Association (5·18 Yugajokhoe), Kim Goo-Yong and others examined how women and mothers of the May Resistance transformed their traditional patriarchal gender values and norms into active, conscientious subjectivity and agency. With a critical sociopolitical agency, historical perspective, and practical orientation, they were able to share the sufferings of the bereaved mothers of the Sewol ferry disaster under the theme of “Salve Democracy, Sing Unification,” thereby implementing the political potential of maternity (Kim, Kim, and Park Haekwang 2016, 18–20, 25).

Such a distorted and reserved approach to the role of women in research on social movements has gradually changed since the 2000s. Epitomizing the main currents of the 1960s as the dichotomy of wholesome modernization vs. vanguard student schemas, Charles Kim has asserted that the two schemas rested on competing patriarchal visions of the nation that relegated virile, patriotic young women to supporting roles. The gendering of the schemas, he insisted, was the product of postcolonial and Cold War cultural exigencies and reinforced the male-centered narrative of national history (C. Kim 2017, 4). Through an analysis of one of the most widely read magazines of the time, *Yeowon* (Women’s Garden)—a rare attempt for studies of this period—he tried to discern the subtle, but significant, approaches of that magazine’s enabling, wholesome strategy, which is contrasted with the austere, vanguardish sensibility put forth by the regime. Despite these differences, however, Kim concludes that the two modes complemented each other within an optimistic developmentalism (C. Kim 2017, 193). Finally, he examined the narrowed gender gap evident in two films of the early 1960s. He contrasted the liberal, postcolonial traditionalist depictions of the emerging young generations in these two films with the more conservative ones of the same period (C. Kim 2017, 204).²²

Meanwhile, simply noting women’s marginalized, reserved role, or their stereotyped representation in social movements, is one thing, but actively interpreting or pursuing it as an object of research is another. In a widely known book on the formation of the Korean working class, which focused

22. Recent studies on the April Revolution have also shed new light on the participation of grandmothers in the Masan protest (J. O 2014; S. Hong 2017).

mostly on female workers in the 1970s and early 1980s, Hagen Koo stated that it was important to recognize the importance of social status, or *sinbun*, in explaining the formation of worker identity and class consciousness. Nevertheless, he understood that gender represented one dimension of status, albeit an important one (Koo 2001, 127). Furthermore, on the causes that made women's roles peripheral and inconspicuous in at least pre-1987 research on labor movements, he argues that myopic historical vision plays an equally important role.²³

In retrospect, feminism and gender issues in Korean society has advanced at a surprising pace since the latter half of the 2010s, even such shifts had been in motion before that time. In the 2010s, a new phenomenon emerged called *feminism reboot*, as could be seen in a series of events, including the emergence of Megalia in 2015, a misogynistic murder in Seoul's Gangnam Station in 2016, the subsequent claims of sexual violence, the continuing ramifications of the Me Too Movement, and the protest rally at Hyehwa Station in 2018. The emergence of young-young feminists, who connect online and communicate with each other at offline protest sites, simultaneously shows the wide spectrum of Korean feminism and the complex contradictions accompanying it.

One of the 13 founding members of the radical feminist group Femidangdang, created in 2016, recalled an embarrassing experience at the 2016 candlelight vigil against President Park Geun-hye. She and her colleagues, who expected to be treated as fellow citizens with the participating demonstrators, had to face the hostile attitudes of some protesters and SNS users towards female feminists. These activists argued that "feminism completes democracy" or "democracy cannot go without feminism," but to no avail. Recalling the events of that time, this participant noted, "I felt that all of society was attacking us" (Silva 2020, 16). Despite such a backlash by the male-dominated society,²⁴ Kim Eun-ju points out

23. In a footnote, Koo expresses some sympathy with Cho Uhn's comment that his "myopic historical vision" itself might be a result of "gender blindness," though he mentions his belief that gender bias is only part of the story (Koo 2001, 185).

24. The confrontation was not only between men and women; there also was internal division in the feminist movement according to the priorities the feminists had defined for themselves.

that Korean feminism, as *K-feminism*, has acquired a synchrony with global feminism. She termed the spread of Korean feminism a *feminist tsunami* in that it possessed a futuristic vision and which uncovered the modern problems that had not been solved.²⁵

These changes also affected the understanding of women's roles in and significance for social movements. As Kim Young-hee aptly pointed out, the proliferation of women's problems has had the effect of changing the position of women in the memory and discourse of the May Resistance, but at the same time, the results of the accumulated movements have again triggered a new momentum regarding the *women question* (Y. Kim 2018, 190). In this respect, the May Resistance became a central venue for the active analysis and interpretation of women. There are two levels of questioning the role and meaning of women in the May Resistance.

One is the issue of the exclusion and marginalization of women by men. The first memoir by a female participant in the events of May 1980 appeared in 1991, more than a decade after the May Resistance. But only relatively recently have women's voices in the May 18 narrative begun to emerge in earnest. Three have appeared at roughly ten-year intervals (Owol yeoseong yeonguhoe 1991; Gwangju yeoseong huimang poreom, Gwangju jeonnam yeoseong danche yeonhap, and Owol yeoseongje chujin wiwonhoe 2010; Yi 2012). The most recent 2012 oral data collection originated from the critique of the "male-centered bias in the narrative of May 18" that began to emerge from the early 1990s (Y. Kim 2018, 176).

Kim Kyeong-rye, who attended the presentations published under the auspices of the Gwangju jeonnam yeoseong danche yeonhap (Yi 2012), asserted that "we cannot properly hear about the experiences of women, but only the perspective of male-dominated and patriarchal structure."

Against the *intersectional* feminist group that criticizes the biological essentialism of the so-called TERF (trans-exclusionary radical feminism) were groups, such as Womad or Uncomfortable Courage, that seek to focus on *women-only* issues as the priority and emphasize the biological woman as the subject of struggle (Woo 2018, 79–80; Lim 2019, 41–43; Rademacher 2019, 43; Silva 2020, 12–13).

25. Kim Eun-ju, "Segye-reul saranghaneun him-euro byeonhwa sikija" (Let's Change the World through the Power of Love), *Hankyoreh*, January 3, 2020.

Most of the women who were active at the time of the resistance now occupied private spaces, while other women active in civil campaigns such as consumer cooperatives are angry with the heroes of May 18, for “I tried so hard at that time that I wasn’t well appreciated, and the whole experience left me fragmented.” Adding that such anger can be found “among the May 18 participants, between men and women, and between women,” she also notes, “If the ample resources of the May 18 movement we have are locked in a male-centered, reputational, standardized official history, we will lose more” (Yi 2012, 368–370; Y. Kim 2018, 177–178).

The other is the intra-women issue, i.e., the question of which strata of women played the central role in leading and organizing the resistance. Here there are two opposing views. Traditional approaches have emphasized the role of progressive intellectual women leading cultural and local youth organizations (Jin An 1991; C. Lee 1991). More recent studies have examined the significance of the urban lower-class, to include the working class (H. Kang 2000; 2004b; Eun-ju Lee 2000). Many of the women referred to in the latter studies are workers affiliated with trade unions, demonstrating the intersectionality of the struggle against the dual oppression of the underclass and of women.

The Tasks of Social Movements and Composition of this Special Issue

In the 2012 oral history mentioned above (Yi 2012), Yoon Cheong-ja, who participated in the May Resistance as a union member at Honam Electric Company, recalled as follows:

I came to realize that those who were educated, those with vested interests, would never take responsibility ultimately. Gwangju was in torment, because the intelligent managed to save their children, while the dregs were allegedly left to die. The history of our Gwangju bloomed over the sacrifice of the nameless, those who were not recognized in society even once. [...] When my fellow workers visit me, we go to Mangwol-dong [cemetery] together in silence. They have the annual ceremony

[commemorating May 18] and many locals come here in crowds and shout, make a fuss and go away, but that has little to do with the spirit of Gwangju. Its history emanates from the noble footsteps taken by the participants, not from the minds of great individuals. [...] I may be a nobody, but have always kept pride deep in my heart. I've never had any status, but I should carry on. That is how I can repay my friends who left before me. Democracy is not something we can get for nothing, and it is the powerless who quietly preserve history unnoticed (Yi 2012, 116-119).

Saying that Gwangju's proud history of democracy blossomed "at the expense of the nameless, whom society has never known," Yoon remarks that it is the weak who are, unseen, keeping history. In retrospect, for the past sixty years, ever since the April Revolution, Korea's democratization movement has developed with a persistence and fortitude rarely found anywhere else. The vision and enthusiasm for transformation, which has been erupting in South Korea for over sixty years, demonstrates both a constant defiance against the ruling power and an unrelenting commitment to change.

A year after the fall of the Syngman Rhee dictatorship in April 1960 came the May 16 military coup. However, only half a year after this, around the end of 1961, the social movement camp had already been reorganized. The challenge to the Chun Doo-hwan regime began a year after the launch of the Fifth Republic in March 1981 and in the immediate wake of the May Resistance of 1980 and in the face of the massacres by the new military regime. It took more than twenty years for the military regime to collapse, triggered by inner power struggles, and it took another eight years for the new military regime of 1980 to surrender to the June 29 Declaration of 1987. However, the May 16, 1961 military junta was in control for only six months, and from the point of view of the democratization movement, the new military power in 1980 also began to shake less than a year after its installation.

Despite the huge changes that Korean society has experienced over the last sixty years of democratization, Korean society still faces many challenges: the reconciliation between and coexistence of the two Koreas,

the establishment of a unified state, inequalities in wealth and distribution, generational and gender discrimination, respect for the rights of minorities, including sexual minorities, tolerance towards immigrants and refugees, the problem of racial exclusivity, and the recent crises of climate change, the environment, and global pandemics.

Nevertheless, the successors to Korea's social movement face the task of pursuing change under totally different conditions from the past. Since the 2000s, a series of candlelight vigils have developed in a fundamentally different way from past social movements in terms of their composition and the issues and demands at play, as well as in the ways of leading and demonstrating, so as to change the definition of social movement itself. As Yi-Jinkyung in this special issue points out, the sharing of ideas and the activism pursued through the internet and social networking, as well as through other networks, now enables a wider range of individual responses and mobilization that was not previously possible. It is mainly the younger generation playing the central role and raising the issues addressed by these movements, ironically as the nation's population is actually aging. At the time of the April 19 Revolution, the median age of Koreans was in the teens, and it was in twenties at the time of the events of May 18, 1980, but the median age of Koreans in the 2020s is expected to be in the forties or older.

But above all, all of these issues and challenges are not limited to Korea as before, but are also closely linked to neighboring—even distant—regions and countries, as demonstrated by current scenes of global pandemic. It is now neither possible nor desirable for Korean society to stand alone on these global, interlocking issues, especially as regards immigrants, refugees, emissions, climate change, and global disease. Human and nature's demands for change face a variety of challenges, but the frontline against them is expanding and is infinitely open. What to pursue on this open horizon is a task resting on the shoulders of the living here and now.

To this end, this special feature introduces eight papers, including this introductory one. Participants refer to various disciplines such as history, cultural studies, sociology, political science, and anthropology, and subjects ranging from classical themes of Marxism, the labor movement, and the student movement to the recent candlelight vigils and minority issues,

and media culture. Each author's naming of major events and movements during the 60 years of the social movement, including April 19 and May 18, were left intact in this special feature, in respect of each participant's understanding and evaluation on them.

From the perspective of the entire Korean Peninsula, which covers the two Koreas in terms of space, over 100 years of time-span in time, from the 1920s to the latest, Vladimir Tikhonov asserts that socialism as counter-hegemonic ideology (South), or official ideology (North), has been playing a defining role in shaping two Koreas, though having been politically excluded and suppressed for a large period (South), or having been struggling with the top-down authoritarian leftist corporatism under the garrison-state mechanisms of societal control (North). This paper can be interpreted as another version of introduction to the Korean social movements, in that it overviews the whole Korean social movement under the theme of socialism. He emphasized that socialism and Marxism of both Korean states eventually were to come into conflict with the dominant official ideologies of nationalistic mobilization, be it South Korea's anti-Communist orthodoxy or North Korean *Juche* ideas, locked in military confrontation and in the pattern of mutually competitive developmental authoritarianism. While examining the concrete manifestation of socialism at each period by five distinguishing periods, he continued to show the continuum of socialism and its impact in Korea. Accordingly, if the first generation of social democracy is represented by Cho Bong-am in South Korea after liberation, Young-bok Shin and Seong-jun Park form the second generation, and Shim Sang-jung and her colleagues of the Democratic Labor Party inherit them as the third generation. Admitting that a number of socialist discourses ended up as thought-provoking dissident narratives, of importance for the general evolution of the ideological landscape but never adopted for policy implementation, he challenges to the ambitious project of demystification, or disenchantment of socialist ideology that has widely been accepted in contemporary Korean society. It also demystifies the socialist ideology popularized in Korean society. In this regard, South Korean Liberation Strategy Party or South Korean National Liberation Front (Nam Min-jeon, South Korean National Liberation Front), which has been

tabooed by South Korean academia by anti-communism ideology, acquires academic citizenship, while Bang Jeong-hwan or Lee Hyo-seok's literature of colonial period is reinterpreted through the prism of socialism. As socialism has been functioning as the central counter-hegemonic discourse of the Korean modernity, he asserted, the struggle for socialist project constitutes the principally important part of Korea's modern and contemporary history.

Korea's social movement and democratization movement at least during the time span of the April 19 Revolution of 1960 to the June 29 Declaration of 1987 are characterized by the leadership role played by students. Attending to this point, Kim Jun's paper delves into the question of how the student movement could be sustained for such a long duration. While it may be explained by multiple factors operating in complexity which are irreducible to a single dominant one, he accentuates that the existence and role of ideological circles of students figured prominently. Researches on this topic have been produced in volume since the 2010s, and his study is differentiated from the preexisting ones for adopting a longitudinal and holistic approach in analysis. For him, members of the ideological circles acted as the most important tier of leaders, planners, and participants in the student movement through its deployment for an extended period. Because those circles were instrumental to cultivating the next generations of the student movement and prolonging its vitality and tradition, there was an implicit consensus that they should be preserved till the end and therefore, they did not function as an apparatus for struggle at the forefront. He divides the period from the 1950s to the 1980s into four subperiods and examines the circles' role and significance in social movements in each subperiod. He argues that the era of ideological circles closed in 1987 with the so-called end of democratization. Their status as secretive political cliques eroded gradually with the growth of open organizations, as the popular basis of the student movement expanded. The ideological circles aggregated students' demands and yearnings for democratization, formulated the framework of knowledge for resistance, and produced leading activists of the anti-government movement. The author notes that they provided the organizational basis for resistance and offered strategies of actions and knowledge for cognitive praxis. These caused cracks to the

monolithic anti-communist ideology stressed by the dictatorial regimes of Korea, and were pivotal in making socialist thought in a broader sense have hegemony in the arena of social movements. He points out that although the circles were resolved suddenly by the internal voluntary decision at the epitome of victory, instead of perishing from failures or being disintegrated by external power, they left a potent and lasting legacy and tradition in Korean society. They made a critical contribution to the accomplishment of the transition to democracy by successfully challenging dictatorships of the past, as symbolized by the 'Great Struggle for Democratization of 1987', and provided the historical legitimacy for democratic and progressive forces that participated in the democratization movement. He asserts that this historical heritage procured human resources for the foundation of deepening democracy albeit some refractions and offered a new paradigm for change.

Hannes Mosler attempts to elucidate 1960 April Revolution from the perspective of West Germany. Adding that how the April Revolution have been reflected in the German press and politics has not yet been investigated academically despite the intriguing parallels between the two countries' geopolitical dilemma of the time, he raises three questions in this paper: evaluation of the German press and diplomatic corps on President Rhee Syngman's rule of South Korea, their Assessment of the significance of the student movement, and finally their explanation of the reasons for the April Revolution and projection of its effects. Based upon primary historical sources such as media reports, government publications, the Bundestag materials, and diplomatic cables, he analyses evaluations and interpretations in press, diplomatic corps during the mid-1950s to late 1960s under the wide context of the Rhee government. Discussing the background of the Revolution, he mentions that it is a kind of democratic vaccination of the Koreans that became important for the ensuing democratization movements, and further providing another vantage point in the constitution on which people could base their demands. It has been often said that the outbreak of the Korean War has led to Japan's economic revival, he extends its impact on global dimension, discussing the historical relationship between Korea and Germany. He asserts that the Korean War triggered a worldwide surge in demand for industrial goods, raw material,

and capital: West Germany's economy as well as Germany's sovereignty and rearmament benefited from the Korean War. Letting alone to what extent it explained Germany's "economic miracle at the Rhine," he mentions that Germany experienced strong economic growth shortly after the war. His discussion on the assessment of the significance of the student movement is also noteworthy. Such cable reports of Ambassador Hertz as "mostly non-academic hooligans with partly dangerous appearance" reminds and confirms us of the presence of the underclass mentioned earlier. He also pays attention to the fact that historic student movements in Germany and contemporary student uprisings worldwide are frequently referred in depicting and evaluating the April Revolution. Its international influence has far reached to Turkey, Hungary, and Japan and further its impact is still palpable even at the time of late 1960s. He emphasizes that the April Revolution was one of the beacons of student movement around the world when Germany's famous student movement of 1968 had yet to be born. As he mentions at the end of his article, his discussion contributes to another fact to the research on the April Revolution.

Kim Won's paper applies the concept of minorities, a recently emerging topic in the academic circles, to the Cold War era and calls attention to the forgotten history of minorities who crossed the borders of nation-states in the East Asian regions, rather than a country-specific context. He criticizes that existing studies on minorities have turned a blind eye to minorities who existed outside the boundary of nation-states or in the crevices of national borders and made them invisible, thus being conducted with only individual countries in mind and limited to 'democracy of citizens.' In this sense, he notes, the collective representation of democracy since the 1987 regime has been fictitious to minorities. The democratic state which succeeded the 1987 regime is far from a symbol of democracy transcending races and ethnicities, religions, nations, classes, and borders, and only functions as a barrier to venturing a discourse on them. Democracy was obtained at the level of individuals who were sovereign citizens, but the democratized state and individuals made an implicit collusion in that outsiders and minorities who were external to the law and institutions of the state were subjected to silence and exclusion. Starting off with this awareness, he examines various

groups of transborder minorities during the Cold War period, such as stowaways, repatriates, anti-war military asylums, nuclear bomb survivors in Korea, wartime sex slaves for the Japanese army, stateless ethnic Koreans in Okinawa, and overseas adoptees. For him, remembering the border-crossing minorities of both Koreas of the Peninsula, mainland Japan and Okinawa, and the United States, and imagining the possibilities they were unable to realize in their lives cannot be practiced within the history of a singular nation-state. This may not be a venture of a social movement which is usually collective in form, but he seeks to break with universal history showing empathy with victors and write an anti-history toward minorities as an alternative history which would shake the grammar of nation-states by gathering and collating the stories of the departed, the shattered, as Walter Benjamin once noted.

Jong Bum Kwon attempts to show progressive politic's impasse and failure to imagine an alternative to neoliberalism and a future after the "post-IMF." He reveals a disorienting picture of contemporary Korea by juxtaposing the Red Devils and candlelight youth on the one hand and workers of iron on the other. He examines the politics of memory in Korea at the turn of the twenty-first century, with particular emphasis on the cultural forms and practices of protest in male-dominated, heavy industry unions. Focusing on the nearly two years of Daewoo Struggle that had begun in February 2001, he, as a participant observer, documents a detailed ethnography of the subjectives and experiences of what is arguably the last generation of male factory workers whose work identities and expectations were formed under authoritarian, developmental regimes. By suggesting that labor's performances of dissent may be understood as farce, he questions the notion of Lukácsian notion of class consciousness, though he does not intend to malign participants' political consciousness. Instead of over-simplification of class consciousness, he proposes the complexity, indeterminacy, and affective dimension of human behavior and motivation. He meticulously described the informal activities of the rank-and-file workers, the laid-off workers, or active member of performance circle at such various places as the church yard, billiard parlors, drinking and eating establishments, and the protest tent, to say nothing of the

demonstration sites and the union offices. Ethnographical narratives on the labor musics, song books, stylized movements (*yultong*), or the shelter have also been reviewed. Instead of solidarity or loyalty, he invokes the *Chǒng, maǔm* (heart-mind) or *t'ongham* (understanding), from the traditional Korean cultural repository, the peculiar elements of the Korean culture and explains them in the context of ethics, senses or emotions of the cohabitation, suffering, solace, mutual attachment, care, or obligation. Based on revisionist, post-modernist approach, he epitomizes the current situation as farce, a poor imitation of former mythic glory and envisions the future of progressive politics from the creation of new myths, of new memories.

Yi-Jinkyung examines transformations in the subjectivity, mode and character of the candlelight demonstrations between 2002 and 2019. In contrast to a number of existing studies that regard particular instances of the candlelight movement as isolated episodes, Yi-Jinkyung approaches the demonstrations of 2002, 2008, 2016-17 and 2019 as a series of successive phenomena. From this perspective, Yi-Jinkyung treats the three mass movements that occurred in quick succession in 2002 as a 'prelude' or 'overture' of events to come, with the 'junior high school anti-US protest' that began in November of that year and continued through January 2003 serving as the archetype for the entire series of candlelight demonstrations. It is with this musical conceit that he connects the candlelight demonstrations that would follow, with the 2008 candlelight demonstration, the so-called 'Mad Cow' protest against US beef imports, being likened to a variation on a theme in the manner of 'toccata and fugue', while the candlelight demonstration for the impeachment of the president in 2016-17 more closely resembles the mode of the 'passacaglia'. Together with the luminescent metaphors that he employs in the opening of the article (when he speaks of the 'flashes' and 'minor lights' of the candlelight demonstrations), these musical allusions, with their elegance and explanatory power, are exemplary demonstrations of the humanities at their best. With reference to the theories of Spinoza, Foucault, Ranciere as well as Deleuze and Guattari, Yi-Jinkyung sheds light on various phenomena that appeared in the candlelight demonstrations, such as their liquid-like flow, the affects of love and passion that surfaced within them, their flexibility/

variability, as well as their decentralized and multiphonic nature, qualities that differentiate them from social movements of the past, centered around organization, leadership and ideology. Contrasting these two dichotomous forms of social movement by use of notions informed by the above theorists (the solid and liquid, molarity and molecularity, representative homogeneity and expressive diversity), he puts forward the argument that the candlelight demonstrations herald the emergence of new subjectivities and actors, a new form of 'the masses' that moves and struggles via rhizomatic networks, a transformation made possible by the new media environment in which they operated, with the internet and mobile technology becoming widespread in Korean society in the 2000s. He also argues, displacing the prevalent view that judges a social movement as a success or a failure based on visible results, that the 'result' of the mass movement is immediately imprinted upon the body of the masses. Treating the movement as a 'mise en scene,' Yi-Jinkyung extricates his positionality (or stance) as evidenced in his attention to the 'aesthetic quality of the demonstration' and his construal of a demonstration as 'a finished product and composition.' At the same time, Yi-Jinkyung substantiates his claim that mass struggle engenders transformations in the masses themselves, generating new forms of collectivity and action by carefully noting the participation of people who were previously not considered as political subjects at all. In other words, he argues that we must pay attention to the intelligence, perception, memory, and habitus of the new body in the process of transformation, since the transformation of the masses themselves is the most important and primary fruit of the social movement.

Finally, Hieyoon Kim focuses *1987: When the Day Comes* (2017) as an example of prioritizing ordinary citizens' role in South Korea's democratization. As scholars of media culture, she analyses the sensual, visual, and aural aspects of the film *1987* and emphasizes the archival effect by analyzing its specific mode of integration and meaning in the context of re-democratization. She recommends us to read the film in the context of remix culture, which leads us to consider the film's integration of materials from different times and spaces. Furthermore, she juxtapose the film's ending against two documentary films, *The Six Day Fight in Myong Dong*

Cathedral (1997) and *Yongsan* (2010), to consider more relevant historical imaginations that are made possible by cinema in our time. As she contrasts the event time of the protest and filmic time of recording in this comparison, she considers the role film technologies play in determining what and how a society remembers and what and how it forgets. She asserts that the particular fragments from the past are compiled and ordered, thereby draw the viewer into a coherent historical narrative. Just as I have already mentioned on the underclass, she also indicates the paradox of democracy, marginalizing the most vulnerable group of the low-class laborers and poor evictees living on the edge of contemporary Korean society. She declares that the film *1987* ultimately fails to push back against historical transparency in its construction of a seamless history of linear causality, though it does not oppose the hope for re-democratization that crystalized in the 2016–2017 Candlelight Movement. Evoking av materials and strategies such as remix, video mashups, memes, and parodies in the landscape of protest culture, she emphasizes that its participants mobilize those ones as part of civic imagination, to see themselves as political agents capable of making a change. By highlighting the film *1987* that limit our civic imagination, she urges us to confront the paradox of democracy and cultivate civic conversations and renew our imagination of politics in an era when the people's disillusionment with representative democracy is challenging the system.

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