Cinematizing Chinese Opera, Performing Chinese Identities, 1945–1971

by

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To my parents,

my middle school music teacher Chan Nga-yuan,

pipa maestro Lam Fung,

and

those who witnessed the rise and decline of Chinese opera on film

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Glossary

Alishan fengyun	阿里山風雲
An Shi zhi luan	安史之亂
Bailian chi fanzhou	白蓮池泛舟
Baishe chuan	白蛇傳
Ban huangdi	扮皇帝
banqiang ti	板腔體
banshi	板式
Baolian deng	寶蓮燈
beiju	悲劇
bendi ren	本地人
bianzou	變奏
bo chang	播唱
boyin xiaojie	播音小姐
bongji gwanfa	梆子滾花
buchong yueju	補充樂句
Bu san	不散
caicha diao	採茶調
caidiao	彩調
cai qiao	踩蹺
caise geju dianying	彩色歌劇電影
caizi	才子
Caoqiao jiebai	草橋結拜
chalou	茶樓
chayuan	茶園
changjuan	長卷
changduan	唱段
Changmen yuan	長門怨
changqiang	唱腔
Changsheng dian	長生殿
chaochao xuanzhu	超超玄著
chaoju pian	潮劇片
chaoyi xiangwai	超以象外

chatjitching	七字清
che diao	尺調
chengshi hua	程式化
chunshui lübo ying xiaoqiao	春水綠波映小橋
chuan	傳
chuanqi	傳奇
cipai biange	詞牌變格
Cuicui guniang	翠翠姑娘
Daguanlou	大觀樓
Da hongpao	大紅袍
da paichang jianghu shiba ben	大排場江湖十八本
daqu	打曲
da tuanyuan	大團圓
da xi	大戲
Da xue	大學
Daxue zhi dao	大學之道
Da zuixia	大醉俠
Dinü hua	帝女花
diyige wunian jihua	第一個五年計畫
dizi	笛子
dianguang yingxi	電光影戲
Dianying diyi ting	電影第一廳
dianying jishu	電影技術
dianying xiquhua	電影戲曲化
dianying yishu	電影藝術
dianying yuan	電影院
diaomen	調門
diaoxing	調性
Diau Charn	貂蟬
dingbaan	叮板
Dingjun shan	定軍山
Doufu xishi	豆腐西施
duqu	度曲
duwu siren	睹物思人
duiban	對板
duizhang	對丈
erhu	二胡
erhuang	二黃
faansin yiwong	反線二黃
fanchuan	反串
Fanpo nong	番婆弄

fangman jiahua	放慢加花
fei zhishi jieceng	非智識階層
fenming xidu yiqi	分明係度依泣
fengguang yinyue gushi pian	風光音樂故事片
fengjian	封建
Fengmen biyu	逢門璧玉
Fengyi ting	鳳儀亭
fujia qiang	附加腔
funü	婦女
ganqing biaoxian	感情表現
ganwu	感物
ganwu	感悟
Gaoshan qing	高山青
gaohu	高胡
geji	歌姬
geming yangbanxi	革命樣板戲
genü	歌女
getan nüling	歌壇女伶
geren mingyun	個人命運
gewu ju	歌舞劇
gezaixi	歌仔戲
gongfei	共匪
gongwei pian	宮闈片
guban	鼓板
gushi	故事
gumu shiniang	瞽目師娘
guai bu ru er	怪不入耳
guantou yinyue	罐頭音樂
Guangdong wenshi ziliao	廣東文史資料
Guangdong xiju shilue	廣東戲劇史略
Guangdong yinyue	廣東音樂
guifan de zhidu	規範的制度
Guifei zuijiu	貴妃醉酒
Guilin shanshui jia tianxia	桂林山水甲天下
guiyuan shi	閨怨詩
Guofangbu yanjudui	國防部演劇隊
Guoli geju xuexiao	國立歌劇學校
guomen	過門
guoyu Huangmeidiao dianying	國語黃梅調電影
Hai Rui baguan	海瑞罷官
haiwai zhi tongzhan xuanchuan	海外之統戰宣傳

hanfu	漢服
Han'gong qiuyue	漢宮秋月
hansuan xiang	寒酸相
Han Wudi menghui Wei furen	漢武帝夢會衛夫人
hangdang	行當
haoqing	豪情
he diao	河調
heshou	賀壽
hongling	紅伶
Honglou meng	紅樓夢
hongpao xi	紅袍戲
huqin	胡琴
Hua die	化蝶
huagu	花鼓
huaju	話劇
Hua Mulan	花木蘭
huashuo	話說
Hua wei mei	花為媒
huayan jiujia	花延酒家
Hua yanying	花艷影
hua yang zachu	華洋雜處
Huansha xi	浣紗溪
Huangmei diao	黃梅調
Huangmei xi	黃梅戲
huo gong	火攻
huo yao	貨腰
jiben duanshi	基本段式
ji dao	技導
Jisheng fu	寄生附
jiti dingpiao	集體訂票
jiti huiyi, Xianggang jiazhi	集體回憶，香港價值
Jiafeng xuhuang	假鳳虛凰
jia hua	加花
jiashi	架式
Jiating aiqing gequ	家庭愛情歌曲
jianghu shiba ben	江湖十八本
Jiangshan meiren	江山美人
jie ban	揭板
jiegou bianhua	結構變化
jiegu yujin	借古喻今
jieti fahui	借題發揮

jie zi	借字
jinbu huaju gongzuozhe	進步話劇工作者
Jinlü yi	金縷衣
jinghua	淨化
jingsin	正線
jiu dongxi	舊東西
jiujia	酒家
juben zhongxin zhuyi	劇本中心主義
juyuan	劇院
junzi youli	君子有禮
kuangren cheng	狂人城
kaichang	開場
kai luo	開鑼
Ku fen	哭墳
Kunju chuanxisuo	崑劇傳習所
langman zhuyi	浪漫主義
lao	撈
laobao	老鴇
laozong	老總
lizhou	立軸
liantao	聯套
Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai	梁山伯與祝英台
liangxiang	亮相
Liang xiongge	梁兄哥
Liang Zhu aishi	梁祝哀史
Liang Zhu henshi	梁祝恨史
liaokou sao	寮口嫂
Liaozhai zhiyi	聊齋誌異
Lingnan badaqu	嶺南八大曲
lingying shuangqi	伶影雙棲
Liu Hai yu xian	劉海遇仙
Liu sanjie	劉三姐
Liuyue xue	六月雪
Longmen kezhan	龍門客棧
Loutai hui	樓臺會
lutou	露頭
Lun xiqu dianying	論戲曲電影
Lun yu	論語
luogu	鑼鼓
Luo shen	洛神
luo yin	落音

maanban / man ban	慢板
maiqiang	邁腔
Maishen zangfu	賣身葬父
Maosai dunkai	茅塞頓開
maotai	茅台
meilai yanqu	眉來眼去
meimei qiang	妹妹腔
meixiang	梅香
mei yu	美育
mixin	迷信
miaoxie yinyue	描寫音樂
minzu fengge	民族風格
minzu jingshen	民族精神
minzu shi de gequ	民族式的歌曲
minzu tese	民族特色
Minghua yanying	名花艷影
mingling	名伶
Mingyue qianli ji xiangsi	明月千里寄相思
mingzhao	命招
modeng	摩登
moluo	沒落
mubiao	幕表
muqu	母曲
mui tsai	妹仔
nanguan	南管
neizai de xinli huodong	內在的心理活動
nü ban nan zhuang	女扮男裝
Nüer buxu chu guifang	女兒不須出閨房
Nü fuma	女駙馬
Nü jie	女戒
paotou lumian	拋頭露面
pei yin	配音
pipa	琵琶
Pipa yuan	琵琶怨
pipa zai	琵琶仔
ping	評
ping ci	平詞
pingju dianying	平劇電影
pojiu lixin	破舊立新
Puqing xiyuan	普慶戲院
qi	氣

qiban shiziju	起板十字句
qi chang	齊唱
qidiao	起調
qianjin	千斤
qiang	腔
qiangdiao	腔調
qieban	切板
qin	琴
Qinhuai shijia	秦淮世家
qinqin	秦琴
qing	情
qingbai	清白
Qing bai lei chao	清稗類鈔
qingjiao	清醮
qingjie	情節
Qiusuo rensheng yishu de zhendi	求索人生藝術的真諦
qu	曲
qugao hegua	曲高和寡
qupai	曲牌
qupai biange	曲牌變格
quwu cunjing	去蕪存菁
Queqiao sizan	鵲橋四贊
qunzhong gequ	群眾歌曲
renlei jingshen	人類精神
renqing	人情
san ban	散板
sancong side	三從四德
san fa	散髮
san gang	三綱
Sanlun chefu zhi lian	三輪車夫之戀
sanxian	三絃
San xiao	三笑
Shanbo linzhong	山伯臨終
Shandi fengguang	山地風光
Shan'ge huanghou	山歌皇后
Shandong zajiao Mu Guiying	山東紮腳穆桂英
shangchang men	上場門
Shangwu yinshuguan	商務印書館
shehui daode	社會道德
shehui xianshi zhuyi gaizao	社會現實主義
shehui zhuyi gaizao	社會主義改造

shenduan	身段
Shengsi hen	生死恨
shen zai gezhong	神在箇中
shengong xi	神功戲
Shengsheng man	聲聲慢
Shiba xiangsong	十八相送
shifu	師傅
shigong diao	士工調
shijia zidi	世家子弟
Shi jing	詩經
Shimian maifu	十面埋伏
Shiwu guan	十五貫
shizi diao	十字調
shuqing de changfa	抒情的唱法
Shushang de niaoer cheng xiangdui	樹上的鳥兒成相對
shusheng	書生
shuixiu	水袖
shuo	説
si da ming dan	四大名旦
si da meiren	四大美人
si da shengqiang	四大聲腔
Siji ge	四季歌
Siji huakai	四季花開
siping diao	四平調
sizhu	絲竹
siukuk	小曲
songzi	送子
suipian dengtai	隨片登台
tanci	彈詞
Tan qinglang	探情郎
tanyan weizhong	談言微中
tangbu	趟步
tanghui	堂會
Taohua jiang shi meiren wo	桃花江是美人窩
tigang	提綱
tigang xi	提綱戲
Tiannü sanhua	天女散花
tian shang tiantang, di xia Su Hang	天上天堂，地下蘇杭
Tianya genü	天涯歌女
Tongchuang sanzai	同窗三載
tongyi zhanxian gongzuo	統一戰線工作

tu changfa	土唱法
Tuhua ribao	圖畫日報
waisheng ren	外省人
wanjia	玩家
wanneng laoguan	萬能老倌
Wanshi liufang Zhang Yuqiao	萬世流芳張玉喬
Wang ge Liu ge	王哥柳哥
wenming xi	文明戲
wenyi	文藝
woguo yingtan	我國影壇
wuchan jieji	無產階級
Wudi Yangjia jiang	無敵楊家將
Wu sheng bu ge, wu dong bu wu	無聲不歌，無動不舞
wutai yishu dianying	舞台藝術電影
wu wenhua de jiating funü	無文化的家庭婦女
wuxia shen'guai pian	武俠神怪片
xi	戲
Xi feng	戲鳳
xiju xing	戲劇性
xi mi	戲迷
xiqu	戲曲
xiqu dianyinghua	戲曲電影化
xiqu gaige	戲曲改革
xiqu pian	戲曲片
xi qu zhe	習曲者
xi ru rensheng	戲如人生
xitai	戲台
xiyuan	戲院
Xixiang ji	西廂記
xi zhong xi	戲中戲
xiachang men	下場門
xiayu pian	廈語片
xiandai baihuawen	現代白話文
xiandao de yingyue	先導的音樂
xiansheng	先生
xianshi zhuyi	現實主義
xianxia diao	弦下調
xianghu yingyong	相互應用
Xianglin sao	祥林嫂
xiao	簫
Xiaofeng	小鳳

Xiaocheng zhi chun	小城之春
xiaosheng	小生
xiao xi	小戲
xieshi	寫實
xieyi	寫意
Xin renshi, xin zuofeng	新人事，新作風
Xin wutai	新舞台
xingti biaoyan	形體表演
xiucai	秀才
xuanchuan chuchuang	宣傳櫥窗
Xuangong yanshi	璇宮艷史
xuanlü runshi	旋律潤飾
yanchang	演唱
Yangchun baixue	陽春白雪
yangge	秧歌
yanggu	羊牯
Yang guifei	楊貴妃
Yangmen nüjiang gao yuzhuang	楊門女將告御狀
Yang Naiwu yu Xiao baicai	楊乃武與小白菜
yangqin	揚琴
yang san	洋傘
yang wei zhong yong, gu wei jin yong	洋為中用，古為今用
yehu	椰胡
Ye su	夜訴
Yezhu lin	野豬林
yi	義
yiban sanyan	一板三眼
yiban yiyan	一板一眼
yishu gequ	藝術歌曲
yiwei	意味
yixiang	意象
yindang gequ	淫蕩歌曲
yin'gong	陰功
Yinhai xiyuan	銀海戲苑
Yinhan shuangxing	銀漢雙星
Yinyue ganbu xunlian ban	音樂幹部訓練班
yinyue gongzuozhe	音樂工作者
yinyue jia	音樂家
yinzi	引子
yingxi	影戲
Yingxi juben zuofa	影戲劇本作法

Yingxi zazhi	影戲雜誌
yingxing	影星
Yingye xiezhen	營業寫真
youle chang	遊樂場
yulan jie	盂蘭節
Yule changpian	娛樂唱片
yuan ban	原板
Yueju (a.k.a. Shaoxing xi)	越劇 (a.k.a. 紹興戲)
yueqin	月琴
zaju	雜劇
Zai Yan'an wenyi zuotanhui shang de jianghua	在延安文藝座談會上的講話
zhanxiang	站相
Zhao hun	招魂
Zhaojun yuan	昭君怨
zhezi	折子
zhen	真
zhenqing shigan de bianyan	真情實感的表演
Zhengchang waijiao guanxi	正常外交關係
zhengtong	正統
Zhengfeng xuexi zongjie baogao	整風學習總結報告
Zhengwuyuan	政務院
zhi	志
zhi diao	徵調
Zhiqu weihushan	智取威虎山
zhong	忠
Zhongguo dianying chubanshe	中國電影出版社
Zhongguo dianying dansheng di	中國電影誕生地
Zhongguo yingxi tan	中國影戲談
zhonghu	中胡
Zhongyang renmin zhengfu weiyuanhui	中央人民政府委員會
Zhongyang xunlian tuan	中央訓練團
zhudiao	主調
zhongzhen	忠貞
Zhufu	祝福
zhuti qu	主題曲
zhuanqu	撰曲
zhuoyin	濁音
zi ming qinggao	自鳴清高
ziran	自然
ziyou fazhan	自由發展

ziyou lian’ai	自由戀愛
ziyou yingren	自由影人
zou yuanchang	走圓場
zuguo	祖國
zuji	祖籍
zujie	租界
zui minglang de xuanlü biaoqing	最明朗的旋律表情
zuogong	做功
Zuo yingxi	做影戲

Notes on Romanization and Translation

Despite Hanyu pinyin being the dominant system for romanizing Chinese characters, English spellings of Chinese names and terms have been far from consistent. There have been historical, political, or scholarly reasons underlying the preference of a specific system (e.g. Gwoyeu Romatzyh, the Wade-Giles system, the Yale system, Tongyong pinyin, Hanyu pinyin, etc.) for romanizing Chinese characters as spoken in Mandarin in Mainland China, Taiwan, or other Chinese localities. On top of that, there exist other systems for romanizing Chinese characters as spoken in Cantonese, Wu dialects, Min dialects, or other regional languages.

In this dissertation, I follow current Chinese studies convention of using Hanyu pinyin for romanizing Chinese characters, albeit with two exceptions. First, for Chinese names, unless the mentioned person has a better-known name in English, the Wade-Giles system and the Hong Kong Government Cantonese Romanization system are chosen for romanizing the names of a Taiwanese and a Hongkonger/Cantonese respectively. Second, for Cantonese opera terminologies, I follow Bell Yung's adoption of the Yale system in *Cantonese Opera: Performance as Creative Process*.

For the original Chinese characters of romanized names and terms, see Glossary/Index.

All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

Abstract

On stage and on film, Chinese opera persisted in being an important means of articulating Chinese identities during the mid twentieth century, a turbulent period in modern Chinese history. In this light, my dissertation investigates how Chinese opera on film illuminated the moments when cinematic technology deterritorialized the circulation of cultural and musical meanings within and beyond traditional contexts. I argue that in similar temporalities but under disparate political regimes, Chinese people in Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Southeast Asia deployed Chinese opera to cinematize Chineseness.

My investigation consists of three parts. In part one, I first reveal that in the existing scholarly literature on Chinese cinema, there are notable tendencies to conceive of Chinese opera as the national essence. I then give nuance to such tendencies by illustrating Chinese opera as an evolving system of key symbols that, despite being mediated by cinematic technology, retained various longstanding discourses and practices for the construction and renewal of national subjectivities among Chinese people. I highlight how Chinese opera was entangled in Chinese cinema's critical and ontological discourses as a performing art and a cultural form. In part two, I demonstrate how *The Butterfly Lovers* migrated from stage to cinema and became *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* (1953) and *The Love Eterne* (1963), such that a Chinese traditional story par excellence was subject to both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic articulations of Chineseness, without losing touch with Chinese opera's representational idiom and performance conventions. In part three, I use *The Sorrowful Lute* (1957) to exemplify how, as cultural critique, film remaking could prompt Chinese people to use their social and experiential knowledge of Chinese opera to negotiate the Chinese self against the Western other. Overall, I posit that Chinese opera on film manifested the evolvement of Chinese nationalism from a top-down ideological construct masterminded by politicians and intellectuals, into a strongly contested undertaking of identity formation that involved members of all social strata.

Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 The Genesis of Cinematizing Chinese Opera

Before film, television, and popular music have become inseparable from the everyday life in "modernity at large" in the late twentieth century and onward, Chinese opera (*xiqu*) played an indispensable role in Chinese societies, condensing social, cultural and historical experience into a synthesis of singing, acting, dancing, and storytelling.[1] As a performing art, Chinese opera combines *xi* ("literary-theatrical drama") with *qu* (poetic verse and singing) and other entertainment forms such as acrobatics, martial arts, ballad singing, and slapstick. It has evolved into a figurative display of sonic, somatic, and visual features and meanings after centuries of development. As a cultural form, Chinese opera embodies collective knowledge and experience of China's historical past and sociopolitical present. It mediates the construction and negotiation of Chinese identities—be they local, regional, or national—by affective and discursive means.

Around the mid nineteenth century, Chinese opera made a visual turn marked by the emergence of individualized performance styles and experimentation with costumes, adornments, and role-type combinations.[2] It preceded the visual modernity in fin-de-siècle

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[1] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 3-4.

[2] For details, see Joshua Goldstein, *Drama Kings: Players and Publics in the Re-creation of Peking Opera, 1870-1937* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 17-56, 116-133; and Laikwan Pang, *The Distorting Mirror: Visual Modernity in China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 89-91.

China, wherein film—as the electric-light shadow play (*dianguang yingxi*)—precipitated Chinese people into a sensorial experience that not only challenged longstanding assumptions about dramaturgy, but also prompted the differentiation between the Chinese self from the Western other.[3] Film was therefore not a merely dispensable embellishment but, as Rey Chow argued, a "Western thing" whose presence necessitated fundamental adaptation and acceptance.[4] It was conductive to an epochal dislocation of various "predominant sign[s] of traditional culture" including "that traditional holder of the monopoly to narrative, the verbal text."[5]

Deploying Chinese opera as a resource for nationalizing Chinese filmmaking and film spectatorship was indeed more than a matter of commodification, foreign impact, or indigenous logic.[6] Fei Mu (1906–1951), for instance, actively inquired into the potential of cinematizing Chinese opera (*xiqu dianyinghua*), with the belief that "Chinese cinema cannot but express its own national style."[7] By referring to Chinese opera as one of the major foundations for Chinese

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[3] For details, see Hou Yao, *Yingxi juben zuofa* (Shanghai: Taidong tushuju, 1924), 4-8. See also Paul Clark, "The Sinifiication of Cinema: The Foreignness of Film in China," *Cinema and Cultural Identity: Reflections on Films from Japan, India, and China*, ed. Wimal Dissanayake (Lanham and London: University Press of America, 1988), 175; Victor Fan, *Cinema Approaching Reality: Locating Chinese Film Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 25; and Pang, 89. My use of the term "Chinese opera" as the English translation of *xiqu* refers to the etymology of the word "Chinese," which shows "Chinese" being a nomenclature pertaining to the classification of nations since the late sixteenth century. For details, see "Chinese, adj. and n.," *OED Online*, accessed January 29, 2017, <http://www.oed.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/Entry/31770?redirectedFrom=chinese>; and "people, n.," *OED Online*, accessed December 17, 2015, <http://www.oed.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/Entry/140404?rskey=F2UC58&result=1&isAdvanced=false>.

[4] Rey Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity: The Politics of Reading Between West and East* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 27.

[5] Rey Chow, *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography, and Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 18.

[6] For details about the remarkable presence of *xi* in twentieth-century Chinese cinematic discourse, see, for example, Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar, *China on Screen: Cinema and Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 51; and Xinyu Dong, "China at Play: Republican Film Comedies and Chinese Cinematic Modernity" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2009), 1-12.

[7] Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2004), 110. For details about *Spring in a Small Town* in relation to Fei Mu's exploration of cinematic poetics in a national style, see David Der-wei Wang, *The Lyrical in Epic Time: Modern Chinese Intellectuals and Artists through the 1949 Crisis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 290-309.

filmmaking, this influential director of the classic *Spring in a Small Town* (*Xiaocheng zhi chun*, 1948) treated Chinese opera not only as an established set of cultural and affective indexes, but also as an aesthetic framework that countered the dominant trend of representationalism.[8] He was in principle a follower of Chinese drama theorists such as Wang Guowei (1877–1927) and Wu Mei (1884–1939), who suggested that Chinese operatic renderings of *zaju* (Yuan drama) and *chuanqi* ("marvel tales") epitomized the essence of reality in Chinese traditional culture by espousing the notions of *zhen* (real, true, or genuine) and *ziran* (naturalness or spontaneity) for the truthful reflection of *qing* (sentiment, feeling, or emotion).[9] Fei was also in practice responding to film theorists such as Gu Kenfu (circa 1890s–1932) and Hou Yao (1903–1942), who believed—without taking mimesis or photographic indexicality into account—that the photographic moving image was capable of reifying and intensifying the phenomena of life, thereby suspending one's reasoning and surrendering one's rational belief to affective experience.[10]

1.2 Performing Chinese Identities through Cinematizing Chinese Opera

This dissertation investigates how, during the mid twentieth century, Chinese opera and film mutually sustained each other as the cultural forms that closely associated themselves with Chinese people's everyday life. I argue that music was crucial to cinematizing Chinese opera, as it offered a particular set of sonic (i.e., those that are expressed and understood as and through

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[8] Wang, 280, 307. See also Yueh-yu Yeh, "Historiography and Sinification: Music in Chinese Cinema of the 1930s," *Cinema Journal*, vol.41 no.3 (Spring 2002), 85.

[9] Goldstein, 137-141. For how the notion of *qing* is associated with the notion of *zhen*, see, for example, A. C. Graham, *Studies in Chinese Philosophy and Philosophical Literature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), 59-66; and Wai-yee Li, *Enchantment and Disenchantment: Love and Illusion in Chinese Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 61-62.

[10] Fan, 35-36.

sounds), non-sonic (i.e., those that depend on words and visuals to have their meanings communicated and understood), and mixed (i.e., those that integrates the sonic with the non-sonic) features and meanings that used to be widely circulated and highly perceivable among Chinese people.[11] This phenomenon is best exemplified in the immense past popularity of Chinese opera film (*xiqu pian*), a film style that embodies the cultural logics of Chinese traditional conducts by integrating "formularized" (*chengshi hua*) singing voice, stylized dialogue, instrumental accompaniment, and bodily movement, into camera movement, film editing, and cinematic mise en scène.[12] I contend that Chinese opera—as a performing art and a cultural form—was entangled in Chinese cinema's critical and ontological discourses, when Chinese people participated in the production, consumption, and negotiation of meanings through engaging with various forms of Chinese opera on film, including Chinese opera film, Mandarin "yellow plum" musical film (*guoyu Huangmeidiao dianying*), and Chinese operatic

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[11] See also Joseph Lam, "Music and Male Bonding in Ming China," *Male Friendship in Ming China*, ed. Martin Huang (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 79-81.

[12] Po Fung, a past Research Officer of the Hong Kong Film Archive, once mentioned in a personal conversation (in March 2015) about how Chinese opera film should properly be classified. Po claimed that Chinese opera film is "Chinese opera on film" and hence should not be considered a film genre. According to Po, the term "film genre" belongs to and is part of the discourse on the ontology of the photographic image proposed by André Bazin. In Po's own words, a genre film should be "something to be created by deploying film language at the very beginning." In this sense, Po argues that the making of Chinese opera film is "a translation from Chinese opera's musical-theatrical language into the film language," in which the translated musicality and theatricality on film are by nature "in conflict with [the notion of] narrative film as mimetic." Similarly, in *Sounding the Modern Woman: The Songstress in Chinese Cinema*, Jean Ma (2015: 7) states that "[o]pera film can be distinguished from singing films (*gechang pian*) for their fluid alternations between singing and speaking within an integral musical structure, as opposed to the incorporation of discrete musical numbers," although "the use of songs or arias as a means of expressive punctuation is common to both of these types of films." I therefore classify Chinese opera film as a film style instead of a film genre, because the former emphasizes on the aspect of technical articulation. According to David Bordwell (1999: 4), a film style is "a film's systematic and significant use of techniques of the medium," in which "[t]hose techniques fall into broad domains: mise en scène (staging, lighting, performance, and setting); framing, focus, control of color values, and other aspects of cinematography; editing; and sound." Genre film is rather, as stated by Rick Altman (1998: 6), "produced after general identification and consecration of a genre through substantification, during the limited period when shared textual material and structures lead audiences to interpret films not as separate entities but according to generic expectations and against generic norms." For details, see David Bordwell, *The History of Film Style* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), and Rick Altman, "Reusable Packaging: Generic Products and the Recycling Process," *Refiguring American Film Genres: History and Theory*, ed. Nick Browne (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 1-41.

"play within a play" (*xi zhong xi*) on film; they reestablished or renewed their identities based on the recognition or belief accepted by their national, regional, or local cohorts, as well as the economic or cultural properties they shared with those cohorts.

The cinematization of Chinese opera was most vibrant when Chinese localities were essentially affected by three political events: first, the Chinese Civil War between the 1930s and 1940s, which led to the formation of two co-existing one-party authoritarian states in, respectively, Mainland China and Taiwan; second, the ongoing contest for national legitimacy and international recognition between Mao Zedong (1893–1976)/the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975)/Kuomintang (KMT); and finally, the centralization of executive power and the absence of representative democracy in Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. These events distinguished the highly deterritorialized (in terms of both production and circulation) Chinese opera on film from many coexisting cultural forms during the mid twentieth century, when the construction and negotiation of Chinese identities were notably subject to various forms of state control by the CCP, KMT, and British colonial governments.[13] As I will illustrate throughout this dissertation, the cinematization of Chinese opera provincialized the construction, maintenance, and renewal of preexisting cultural objects and meanings among Chinese people of different social, cultural, political, and linguistic backgrounds.[14] With the exception of those film versions of

[13] Here, the notion of "deterritorialization" refers to Arjun Appadurai's explication of/in *Modernity at Large* (2008: 8): "[Deterritorialization] applies […] to ethnic groups, sectarian movements, and political formations… [It] creates new markets for film companies, impresarios, and travel agencies, which thrive on the need of the relocated population for contact with its homeland. But the homeland is partly invented, existing only in the imagination of the deterritorialized groups, and it can sometimes become so fantastic and one-sided that it provides the fuel for new ethnic conflicts."

[14] Here, the notion of "provincialization" refers to Dipesh Chakrabarty's famous project of *Provincializing Europe*. For Chakrabarty (2000: 46), "[t]o attempt to provincialize this 'Europe' is to see the modern as inevitably contested, to write over the given and privileged narratives of citizenship other narratives of human connections that draw

Chinese operatic "revolutionary model plays" (*geming yangbanxi*) that originated in the centralized implementation of strict, radical, and oppressive cultural policies during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) in Mainland China, Chinese opera on film manifested various distributed modes of cinematization of Chinese opera facilitated by the development of mass communication in general and the technology of filmmaking and film exhibition in particular.

1.3 Research Method and Chapter Structure

Divided into seven chapters including this introduction and the conclusion, this dissertation examines the cinematization of Chinese opera on historical, ethnographic, and analytical bases. Chapter two contextualizes film as a modern technological medium, through which Chinese opera became a traditional cultural form whose discourses and practices were subject to a new mode of identity articulation. I first review the ways Chinese film scholarship presumed Chinese opera as an objectified or essentialized means to affirm Chineseness. I then theorize Chinese opera as an evolving system of "key symbols" that preoccupied the intersubjective Chinese self within mid-twentieth-century Chinese cinemascapes and musikscapes.[15] Chapter three presents three cases that show the significant roles of Chinese

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sustenance from dreamed-up pasts and futures where collectivities are defined neither by the rituals of citizenship nor by the nightmare of 'tradition' that 'modernity' creates."

[15] Sherry B. Ortner, "On Key Symbols," *American Anthropologist*, vol.75 no.5 (Oct., 1973), 1338-1346. In "Music, Sound, and Site: A Case Study from Southern Song China (1127–1275)," Joseph Lam defines musikscape as an "exclusive and intellectual" construct, in which people "can effectively and intellectually make sense of sound worlds, actual or imagined[,]" through "selectively constructing orderly and meaningful musical sites." According to Lam, musikscape "[is] geographically and physically anchored but […] transcend[s] the material world," operating "selectively and exclusively […] according to culturally and historically specific aesthetics, ideologies, and contextual constraints" that "particularized repertoires, performance practices, compositional styles, and other details that participants operating in the site would intellectually and socially embrace as musical, or sonically expressive and desirable." For details, see *New Perspectives on the Research of Chinese Culture*, eds. Pei-kai Cheng and Ka Wai Fan (Singapore: Springer, 2013), 102-105.

opera within these Chinese cinemascapes and musikscapes. I look specifically into two historic *xiyuan* ("playhouses") in Beijing and Hong Kong, the personal recounts of mid-twentieth century Chinese film music production by *pipa* (pear-shape plucked lute) maestro Lui Pui-yuen (1933–) and film actress Cheng Pei-pei (1946–), and the audiences of several exhibition programs of Chinese opera on film curated by Hong Kong Film Archive and China Film Archive between September 2014 and June 2017. I juxtapose ethnographic description with historical data and critical self-reflection in order to identify some empirical analytic devices and vocabularies for uncovering various traits of Chinese opera on film.

Chapters four and five discuss how the Chinese traditional story of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai (a.k.a. *The Butterfly Lovers*) was set to two quintessential forms of Chinese opera on film, namely Chinese opera film and Mandarin "yellow plum" musical film. Knowing that this story has been recognized for its long history of retelling and its embodiment of Chinese people's wisdom, virtue, and pursuit of love, I take a particular interest in how, being politicized by the CCP, KMT, and their onlookers, it was transformed into hegemonic and counter-hegemonic articulations of Chineseness during the mid twentieth century. In chapter four, I pay attention to the history of this story as a classic Yue opera (*yueju*, a.k.a. Shaoxing opera, *Shaoxing xi*) play that, being the core constituent of a PRC "film of stage art" (*wutai yishu dianying*) during the 1950s, helped standardize artistic and cultural reform protocols within the Mainland while displaying national pride and soft power beyond the Mainland. I first reveal how, originated in the Yue opera reform initiated and led by actor-singer Yuan Xuefen (1922–2011) during the 1940s, the hybridity in the film's visual, musical, theatrical, and narrative elements was subject to the tension between modernization and traditionalism. I then explore how, under the impulses of modernization, urbanization, and left-wing nationalism, the Yue

opera reform anticipated the film's cultural and political magnitude by situating the film in the debate on cinematizing Chinese opera and operatizing (Chinese) cinema (*dianying xiquhua*), which concerned the establishment of an indigenous mode of filmmaking in the PRC during the Mao regime. In chapter five, I rather scrutinize *The Love Eterne* (1963) as a film that appropriated Huangmei opera (*Huangmei xi*) for portraying the same story as a Chinese simulacrum. Through the lens of composer Chou Lan-ping, film directors King Hu (1932–1997) and Li Han-hsiang (1926–1996), and film actress Ling Po (1939–), I demonstrate why and how, as the film deterritorialized and reterritorialized Huangmei opera while implicating a critique of Chinese communism, it induced an intense public debate on (re)presenting Chineseness in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and to a lesser extent, Southeast Asia and North America during the 1960s. I refer to the notions of "nostalgia film" by Frederic Jameson, "surge and splendor" by Vivian Sobchack, and "refrain" by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, maintaining that the film initiated and sustained dialogues on what historical values, social practices, and aesthetic qualities established the quintessence of Chinese culture among Chinese people outside the Mainland.

Chapters six uses *The Sorrowful Lute* (*Pipa yuan*, 1957), a remake of *Love Me or Leave Me* (1955), to exemplify how Chinese moviegoers relied on their social and experiential knowledge of Chinese opera in order to negotiate the Chinese self with the Western other during the mid twentieth century. I first substantiate how, by Chinese operatic means, mid-twentieth-century Chinese film remakes of Anglophone musicals and music biopics were prescribed as cultural critique. I then examine the opening titles and first scene of *The Sorrowful Lute*, showing how a skillful treatment of Edward Elgar's (1857–1934) *Pomp and Circumstance March No.1 in D* and Li Jinhui's (1891–1967) *Peach Blossom River is the Beauty's Nest* (*Taohua jiang shi meiren wo*) would warrant the film as critical of both Hollywood and Mandarin filmmakers. I

next analyze how, with a critical attitude, the theme song of *The Sorrowful Lute* alluded to the particular social relationships, gender roles, and moral values upheld by the film's main characters, thereby precipitating Cantonese opera into moral, cultural, and artistic superiority over cabaret. Having in mind that *The Sorrowful Lute* shares its Chinese title (i.e., *Pipa yuan*)—which was initially a wordplay grounded in late-nineteenth-and-early-twentieth-century Chinese prostitution culture—with both its Hollywood original and its theme song, I assert that the theme song under scrutiny not only displaced the individualistic aspirations conveyed in many production numbers of the Hollywood original, but also complemented the patriotic sentiment elicited from the film's two extensive Chinese operatic "play within a play" scenes, wherein "the Four Great Beauties" (*si da meiren*) embodied "tradition-within-modernity" on and through the silver screen as a manifestation of mid-twentieth-century Chinese cinemascapes and musikscapes.[16]

[16] See also Prasenjit Duara, "The Regime of Authenticity: Timelessness, Gender, and National History in Modern China," *History and Theory*, vol.37 no.3 (Oct., 1998), 295-306.

Chapter 2

The Connection Between Chinese Opera and Chinese Cinema in Mid-twentieth-century Sinophone World

2.1 Historical Context

During the early twentieth century, Chinese cultural elite were living in a world where the prominence of and inseparability between Chinese opera and film induced two interrelated questions in theory and practice: first, how Chinese opera could help nationalize Chinese cinema; and second, how film could help modernize the national Peking opera.[1] There were playwrights and filmmakers who, with the belief that Chinese opera was the epitome of traditional culture, theorized and actualized Chinese opera as an artistic and pragmatic model for Chinese filmmaking.[2] There were also stars who "lived as both actor-singers and electric shadows" (*lingying shuangqi*), gaining their fame from members of different social strata.

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[1] See Genü hong mudan, advertisement, May 8, 1931, *Shenbao*; Zhou Jianyun, "Genü hong mudan duiyu zhongguo dianyingjie de gongxian ji qi yingxiang," *Genü hong mudan tekan*, (Shanghai: Dadong shuju, 1931), 9-19; Su Shaoqing, "Guan zhongguo yousheng dianying *Genü hong mudan* zhihou,"*Genü hong mudan tekan*, (Shanghai: Dadong shuju, 1931), 48-49; Wu Xiahu, "Pili yisheng zhi guochan yousheng dianying," *Genü hong mudan tekan*, (Shanghai: Dadong shuju, 1931), 49; Qi Rushan, "Guoju paishe dianyinghua chugao," *Guoju mantan sanji* in *Qi Rushan quanji*, vol.3 (Taipei: Wenyi chuangzuo chubanshe, 1964), 7-28; Fei Mu, "Zhongguo jiuju de dianyinghua wenti," *Shiren daoyan Fei Mu*, ed. Wong Ain-ling (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Critics Society, 1998), 82; and Mei Lanfang, *Wo de dianying shenghuo* in *Mei Lanfang quanji*, vol.4 (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2001).

[2] Geremie Barmé, "Persistence de la tradition au 'royaume des ombres,' Quelques notes visant à contribuer à une approche nouvelle du cinéma chinoise," *Le Cinéma Chinois*, ed. Marie-Claire Quiquemelle (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1985), 113; Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2004), 17. Although the critical/theoretical writings on film by Walter Benjamin, André Bazin, and Christian Metz first appeared in the 1930s (Benjamin), 1950s (Bazin), and 1960s (Metz) and were soon incorporated into the classical film theory repertoire, neither Benjamin, Bazin, nor Metz seemed to have any exposure to the cinemas outside Europe and North America at the time they developed their critical/theoretical ideas on film. Contrarily, as Xudong Zhang mentions in *Chinese Modernism in the Era of Reform* (1997: 236-237), there was "[a] scarcity of systematic Chinese translation, let alone writings, on modern Western film theory" in the PRC until the 1980s, and the Fifth Generation

Legendary Peking opera actor-singer Mei Lanfang (1896–1961) was among those who actively involved in Chinese experimental filmmaking on the one hand, and keenly explored the representational potential of the moving image for redefining the traditionality of Chinese opera on the other hand.[3] During the late 1910s and early 1920s, he collaborated with the Commercial Press (*Shangwu yinshuguan*) on several silent Peking opera documentary shorts, contributing his performance capabilities to the precursor of Chinese opera film. He later became the principal actor-singer of *Eternal Regret* (*Shengsi hen*, 1948), a Peking opera film (*pingju dianying*) directed by Fei Mu (1906–1951), one of the most esteemed Chinese filmmakers of all time. They used the most advanced cinematic technology of the time to render a Ming *chuanqi* "marvel tale" into an artistic experiment that condemned Japanese expansionism and propagated Chinese patriotism.[4] This blending of traditional and modern elements echoed the broader representational practices in which the idea that the modern Chinese nation existed prior to its citizens was ratified with authority and moral justification.[5] It formed the basis for a lasting

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filmmakers were among the PRC pioneers who "chose [a] depth model which derives heavily from André Bazin's cinematic ontology, on the one hand, and Christian Metz's semiotic theory, on the other." Moreover, Hong Kong and Taiwanese New Wave filmmakers such as Tsui Hark (who studied film at University of Texas at Austin as an undergrad), Patrick Tam (who took a film course in San Francisco before moving from the TV industry to filmmaking), Ann Hui (who studied film at the London Film School for a master's degree), and Edward Yang (who attended the Film School of the University of Southern California briefly) were among the earliest Chinese filmmakers who received formal training in classical film theory. Actually, the Beijing Film Academy did not offer any film production courses until 1955, and the same applied to those tertiary institutions in Hong Kong until the late 1970s and in Taiwan until the early 1980s.

[3] My use of the term "experimental" follows Holly Rogers's argument that "[e]xperimental film is a slippery category" (2017: 1). According to Rogers, "Relative to era, audience, culture[,] and technology, the sheer variety of visual and sonic combination makes a coherent understanding of what constitutes audiovisual film experimentation hard to pin down" (ibid.). Mei Lanfang was in no sense an experimental filmmaker (like Salvador Dalí or Andy Warhol, for example), and yet since the late 1910s until his death, he had been among the very few Chinese artists who gained first exposure to the latest cinematic technology and techniques.

[4] David Der-wei Wang, "Fei Mu, Mei Lanfang, and the Polemics of Screening China," *The Oxford Handbook of Chinese Cinemas*, eds. Carlos Rojas and Eileen Cheng-yin Chow (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 66.

[5] Prasenjit Duara, "The Regime of Authenticity: Timelessless, Gender, and National History in Modern China," *History and Theory*, vol.37 no.3 (October 1998), 292-295.

debate on the national essence of Chinese cinema, as it remained relevant to the fields of Chinese filmmaking, film criticism, and film historiography throughout the mid twentieth century.[6]

2.2 Chinese Opera in Chinese Film Studies

In comparison with (ethno)musicology, art history, and comparative literature, film studies is a relatively new humanistic field of scholarly inquiry. Aside from a handful of critical essays and film theories authored by native filmmakers and cultural critics since the 1920s, studies of Chinese cinema were scarce and mostly conducted by historians until a new generation of film scholars started developing an interest in analyzing Chinese films during the 1980s.[7]

Interestingly, Chinese opera had been a key subject in such discourse on Chinese cinema. In April 1921, the essay "Discussion on Chinese Shadow Play" (*Zhongguo yingxi tan*) was published in the inaugural volume of *Shadow Play Magazine* (*Yingxi zazhi*), the first Chinese film magazine in history. It evaluated the silent Peking opera documentary short *Heavenly Maiden Scattering Flower Petals* (*Tiannü sanhua*, 1920). In 1958, the essay collection *Discussion on Chinese Opera Film* (*Lun xiqu dianying*) became one of the earliest books on

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[6] Victor Fan, *Cinema Approaching Reality: Locating Chinese Film Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 25; Barmé, 125-126. Established in 2005, the expansive permanent exhibition halls of the China National Film Museum in Beijing best demonstrate the exclusiveness of Chinese opera's visual and aural features in the first Chinese silent, sound, and color films. The foreword of a recent Chinese opera film retrospective exhibition program curated by the Chinese Taipei Film Archive on July 17–24, 2014 makes such emphasis even more explicit: "Chinese opera film, or what we generally regard as 'elements of Chinese opera,' created numerous records of the first in the historical development of Chinese cinema. Within the Greater China, the first film, the first sound-on-disc film, the first color film, and the first Taiwanese-dialect film, etc., are all related to Chinese opera. The last Taiwanese-dialect film produced in Taiwan is also derived from Chinese opera." In scholarly publications, one can easily notice similar emphasis being made in the introductory or core chapters of surveys of or companions to Chinese films, such as Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu (ed.), *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2004), Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar, *China on Screen: Cinema and Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), and Carlos Rojas and Eileen Chow (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Chinese Cinemas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[7] Rey Chow, *Sentimental Fabulations: Contemporary Chinese Films* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), ix.

Chinese cinema published by the China Film Press (*Zhongguo dianying chubanshe*). In 1972, Jay Leyda completed the first book-length survey of Chinese cinema written in English, in which he discussed about Ouyang Yuqian (1889–1962) and Mei Lanfang at an exclusive length comparable to those excerpts on Mao Zedong (1893–1976) and Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975). In 1987, Paul Clark established himself as a pioneer of Chinese film studies who wrote in his *Chinese Cinema: Culture and Politics since 1949* about Chinese opera film as, in conjunction with film adaptations of dance dramas and musicals, a matter of national style.

While Geremie Barmé published an article in 1985 calling for a new scholarly approach to Chinese cinema, he nevertheless insisted on investigating the interrelationships between Chinese film, Chinese opera, and Chinese literature. He posited that Chinese film remained strongly influenced by Chinese opera during the 1980s, and he tried to explicate his proposition through analyzing a few examples.[8] This endeavor was much recognized by his fellows, but one had to wait until the early 2000s to see similar discussions in Chinese film studies. Yingjin Zhang, for instance, was driven to identify "in predominantly *cultural* and *historical* terms [emphasis in original]" the national essence of Chinese cinema based on Andrew Higson's concept of national cinema.[9] He perceived the cinematic display of Chinese operatic ambience as a powerful showcase of Chinese national characters. More specifically, he regarded linear plots punctuated by coincidence, contrastive characterization, traditional symbolism, and exaggerated acting as elements not only common in Chinese opera but also characteristic of Chinese film.[10]

[8] For details, see Barmé, 113-128.

[9] Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema*, 5.

[10] Ibid., 141, 148.

Sheldon Lu and Emilie Yeh instead conceived of film as a symbolic language that facilitates Chinese people to preserve, renew, and create a sense of "nationhood as an imaginary unit."[11] They assumed the existence of a single Chinese cinematic discourse, claiming that Chinese film exists some persisting features that reveal the history of its production and reception, while Chinese film genres of different periods embody the interrogation of identity and subjectivity through responses to unique social circumstances.[12] In narrower terms, Yeh stated that early Chinese sound films treated Chinese opera as an indigenous art and cultural form that was capable of representing the essence of Chineseness.[13] She also noted that contemporary Chinese filmmakers such as Tsui Hark (1950–) and Ann Hui (1947–) from Hong Kong, Zhang Yimou (1950–) and Chen Kaige (1952–) form Mainland China, and Hou Hsiao-hsien (1947–) from Taiwan, are keen to deploy Chinese opera as a marker of cultural authenticity.[14]

Seeking an empirical approach to understanding the relationship between cinema and national identity, Chris Berry believed that Chinese cinema attempts to solicit recognition of national membership within a contingent and performative collectivity that consists of both filmmakers and audiences.[15] He viewed filmmaking as a form of national pedagogy that seeks to shape, inform, and educate citizens who select, interpret, and evaluate movies based on everyday

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[11] Sheldon H. Lu and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, "Introduction: Mapping the Field of Chinese-language Cinema," *Chinese-Language Film: Historiography, Poetics, Politics*, eds. Sheldon H. Lu and Emilie Yueh-Yu Yeh (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 3.

[12] Ibid., 2-3, 12, 14-15, 17

[13] Yueh-yu Yeh, "Historiography and Sinification: Music in Chinese Cinema of the 1930s," *Cinema Journal*, vol.41 no.3 (Spring 2002), 83.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Chris Berry, "If China Can Say No, Can China Make Movies? Or, Do Movies Make China? Rethinking National Cinema and National Agency," *Modern Chinese Literary and Cultural Studies in the Age of Theory: Reimaging a Field*, ed. Rey Chow (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 166, 170, 173.

discourse and life experience. He therefore tried to trace and describe "the cinematic invocations of the nation."[16] His later hypothesis of the "operatic mode" was an effort as such, as he gave reasons for shadow play (*yingxi*) being the living core of Chinese cinema during the mid twentieth century, when interactions between Chinese opera and film took place and engendered representations that were "at once cultural familiar, hybrid, and locally distinct."[17]

Based on a post-Marxist framework of hegemony and antagonism, Shu-mei Shih also viewed Chinese cinema as a manifestation of Chinese identities. By referring the Sinophone objects of study to "*the Sinitic-language communities and cultures outside Mainland China as well as ethnic minority communities and cultures within Mainland China where Mandarin is adopted or imposed*, [emphasis in original]" she conceptualized the Sinophone as a realm wherein people long for, reject, and/or become apathetic to various real or imaginary constructions of Chineseness.[18] She proclaimed that Sinophone articulations on the one hand

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[16] Berry, "If China Can Say No, Can China Make Movies?," 173.

[17] Berry and Farquhar, 48. Some Chinese scholars and film critics refer to *Shiwu jiyuan*, a ten-volume companion including records about various artifacts published during the Song dynasty (960–1279), as the origin of *yingxi* as a term and a concept. According to the author Gao Cheng (?–?), "Generations of people have passed on the saying that *yingxi* originates from the death of Lady Li (?–?) during the reign of the Emperor Wu (141 BC–87 BC) in the Han dynasty, when [Li] Shaoweng (?–?) from the Qi region claimed to the Emperor that he could induce [the presence of] Lady Li's spirit. The Emperor missed the Lady very much, and he had no alternatives but letting [Shaoweng] to do so. Shaoweng set a square screen during nighttime and asked the Emperor to sit somewhere else and look toward the screen, [so that he could] see the imagery that appears very similar to the Lady herself. [The Emperor] did not know about the trickery before his watching; since then there exists *yingxi* in the human world."

[18] Shu-Mei Shih, "Introduction: What is Sinophone Studies?," *Sinophone Studies: A Critical Reader*, eds. Shu-mei Shih, Chien-hsin Tsai, and Brian Bernards (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 11. In a recent article published in *The Economist* entitled "How a Dialect Differs From a Language?," journalist-and-author Robert Lane Greene proposes two criteria distinguishing languages from dialects, which are (1) the social and political and (2) comprehensibility. From the point of view based on the first criterion, Lane states that "languages are typically prestigious, official and written, whereas dialects are mostly spoken, unofficial and looked down upon." In this sense, Mandarin is the only candidate of language because of its affinity to the modern vernacular written Chinese (*xiandai baihuawen*), which had been under standardization during and after the May Fourth Movement in 1919, marked by the 1930 decree from the ROC government's Central Committee of Propaganda that all Chinese sound films be made in Mandarin, and the 1932 official National Language Committee's legitimization of Mandarin as the (sole) national language (for details, see Shu-mei Shih, *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China, 1917-1937* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 68-72; and Fan, 158). For the second criterion, Lane uses the distinctiveness among Cantonese, Shanghainese, and Mandarin to suggest why "most Western linguists classify them as Sinitic languages, not dialects of Chinese" while hinting at the potential

project possibilities of symbolizing Chineseness without reification, and on the other hand contain an anticolonial intent against the hegemonic Mainland Han Chinese culture.[19] In other words, Sinophone articulations obtain "a form of precise discursive presence" that contributes to "[an] 'experience' of the limit of all objectivity."[20] She argued for the antagonistic nature of the Sinophone, thereby provoking her readers into locating the hegemonic articulation of Chineseness as a particular social and cultural force that assumes a radically incommensurable representation of certain totality.[21]

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annoyance of such classification to nationalists (for details, see Jing Tsu, "Sinophonics and the Nationalization of Chinese," *Global Chinese Literature: Critical Essays*, eds. Jing Tsu and David Der-wei Wang (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010), 98-99). Even though those who prefer to regard the Chinese language as a single language of dialectal variations instead of a family of Sinitic languages are not necessarily nationalists, such preference creates an impression of regarding Mandarin—labeled as the "common speech" *putonghua* in the PRC, the "national language" *guoyu* in Taiwan, and "Chinese language" *huayu* in Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, and some other Chinese overseas communities, which is the successor of imperial "speech of officials" *guanhua*—as the original.

[19] Shu-mei Shih, *Visuality and Identity: Sinophone Articulations Across the Pacific* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 30, 35. In *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography, and Contemporary Chinese Cinema*, Rey Chow also speaks of a kind of colonialism (1995: 62) very similar to that identified by Shih: "In the history of modern Western imperialism, the Chinese were never completely dominated by a foreign colonial power, but the apparent absence of the 'enemy' as such does not make the Chinese case any less 'third world' (in the sense of being colonized) in terms of the exploitation suffered by the people, whose most important colonizer remains their own government."

[20] Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Toward a Radical Democratic Politics* (London and New York: Verso, 2001), 108.

[21] Ibid., x; Shih, *Visuality and Identity*, 30. See also Yingjin Zhang, "Review: *Visuality and Identity: Sinophone Articulations Across the Pacific*," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol.68 no.1 (2009): 281. In *Visuality and Identity*, Shih states, "If we posit that the Chinese discursive field envisages a list of necessary and fixed identities for ideological and political purposes, Sinophone articulations introduces difference, contradiction, and contingency into those identities" (2007: 35). What she regards here as "the Chinese discursive field" is somewhat ambiguous despite its suggestiveness of the connection to the Chinese state discourse(s). In the Hung Leung Hau Ling Distinguished Fellow in Humanities Forum on "Sinophone Hong Kong: Issues and Debates" held at the University of Hong Kong on December 5, 2015, she elaborates on the potential of deploying the notion of Sinophone articulations in different geopolitical contexts (e.g. Sinophone Hong Kong, Sinophone Caribbean, and Sinophone Southeast Asia etc.), by which those hegemonic articulations that lead to those Sinophone articulations are very often but not necessarily rooted in China. The concise description of Sinophone Hong Kong in her paper abstract also demonstrates the necessity of locating particular hegemonic force(s) while applying the notion of Sinophone to certain critical framework: "Sinophone Hong Kong predominantly operates in Cantonese, a language whose speakers perceive to be threatened with erasure by Mandarin's rising hegemony. This linguistic struggle happens in a context of other non-Sinitic languages such as English and Tagalog."

Through Shih's geopolitical scheme, one could view the commoditized Chinese opera on film created outside the Mainland as antagonistic to the hegemonic or hegemonized counterpart endorsed or controlled by the state power of the People's Republic (PRC). This commoditized manifestation was potentially the Sinophone object par excellence, because its highly perceptible musical-linguistic features induced a pronounced and immediate effect of distinction between Sinitic languages, thereby calling into question the (logocentric) linguistic uniformity that was reinforced by print culture.[22] Subject to commercial competition and without direct state intervention, it allowed for a high degree of "self-fashioning" among those collaborating artists.[23] Moreover, it consisted of various kinds of musical and linguistic enunciations that were associated with specific ethnic, linguistic, national, regional, or local communities "not only in musical contexts but also in a wide range of public discourses."[24] Chinese operatic singing and speech delivery, noticed Paul Clark, had indeed been "in their conventional, local languages, in a rare concession to regionalism in Chinese films after 1949."[25] Yet, despite their effectiveness of

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[22] Song Hwee Lim, "The Voice of the Sinophone," *Sinophone Cinemas*, eds. Audery Yue and Olivia Khoo (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 63.

[23] "Self-fashioning" refers to Stephen Greenblatt's notion that "[s]elf-fashioning is in effect […] the cultural system of meanings that creates specific individuals by governing the passage from abstract potential to concrete historical embodiment." According to Greenblatt, "[Self-fashioning] derives its interest precisely from the fact that it functions without regard for a sharp distinction between literature and social life," as well as "invariably crosses the boundaries between the creation of literary characters, the shaping of one's own identity, the experience of being molded by forces outside one's control, the attempt to fashion other selves." Although Greenblatt theorizes self-fashioning through the subject of sixteenth-century English literature, I find his theorization no less meaningful to understanding the multifarious formulaic stylization processes of Chinese opera vocal performance from late-nineteenth century and onward regarding issues of identity (note: my assertion here follows Joshua Goldstein's observation that "star-centered individualism was not yet an issue in the 1860s and 1870s" (2007: 28) until 'stars' such as Cheng Changgeng (1811–1880), Tan Xinpei (1847–1917), and Li Chunlai (1855–1924) increasingly demonstrated respective tendencies). For details about Greenblatt's theorization, see *Renaissance Self-fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 1-9.

[24] Christian Utz and Frederick Lau, "Introduction: Voice, Identities, and Reflexive Globalization in Contemporary Music Practices," *Vocal Music and Contemporary Identities: Unlimited Voices in East Asia and the West*, eds. Christian Utz and Frederick Lau (London: Routledge, 2013), 1.

[25] Paul Clark, *Chinese Cinema: Culture and Politics since 1949* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 108.

connecting historical images and local/regional experiences with contemporary lives and national imaginations, these enunciations were dismissed by many Chinese politicians and intellectual figures of the early-and-mid twentieth century as either a provincialist barrier to the formation of national identity, or a trivial matter that undermined ideological concern. Chinese opera on film was thus a matter of cultural legitimacy and political conviction.

2.3 Rethinking the Symbolic and Discursive Aspects of Chinese Opera on Film

The aforementioned approaches to Chinese cinema are comprehensive and well-developed, but they uphold some problematic assumptions about the national essence of Chinese cinema. Prasenjit Duara once alerted modern Chinese studies scholars to the danger of conceiving the Chinese nation as "a relatively recent development, one that made the transition from empire to nation only the turn of the twentieth century," noting that Chinese nationalists and ordinary people generally viewed China as "an ancient body that has evolved into present times."[26] He acutely challenged assumptions such as "the national and the modern territorial national-state [being] part of a Western package called *modernity*, as was cinema, which followed hot on their heels. [emphasis in original]"[27] He suspected that by accepting Chinese declarations of universalism at face value, one would reinforce the othering of China in descriptions or interpretations of China's encounter with Western nation-states.[28] He was wary of the colonial(ist) formation of what Naoki Sakai described as "a symmetrical equivalent to the

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[26] Prasenjit Duara, "De-constructing the Chinese Nation," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no.30 (1993), 1.

[27] Berry and Farquhar, 2. See also Lu and Yeh, 2.

[28] Duara, "De-constructing the Chinese Nation," 3-4.

history of Western thought or of Western philosophy."[29] He was also sensitive to how Chinese people recognized or responded to ideological or cultural representations in many ways which generated "a critical power in society that [was] potentially resistant to totalizing ideologies."[30]

But then how could one study Chinese cinema without assuming the a priori existence and hence inheritance of national essence on film? Duara's analytical division of the Chinese nation into the discursive and symbolic realms may be useful for creating meaningful responses here. Based on Duara's terminologies, when the nation is identified as a product of the rhetoric and ideas, one would situate film critics and theorists but also others—ranging from cinephiles to politicians—who are interested in promoting, despising, or chatting about filmmaking and moviegoing in the discursive realm; when the nation is viewed as an embodiment of cultural signifiers, one would regard cinema as an ensemble of cultural practices that contributes to the symbolic realm; when a synthesis of such discursive and symbolic realms is made, one would understand through cinema what the nation could mean and how it could be imagined.[31] The connection between cinema and the nation's discursive realm seems obvious, but that between cinema and the nation's symbolic realm requires further scrutiny. This impression provides an opportunity for rethinking why and how, noted for its extensiveness and exclusiveness during the mid twentieth century, the cinematization of Chinese opera was sustained as a means to participate in a national culture or, in a psychoanalytic sense, a kind of fetishism wherein the

[29] Naoki Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity: On "Japan" and Cultural Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 48.

[30] Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 16.

[31] Ibid., 14-15.

process of loss, substitution, and identification was at play in the formation of a national subject.[32]

2.4 Cinematizing Chinese Opera: My Hypotheses

Since its emergence during the Yuan dynasty, Chinese opera had been conveying social, political, and religious messages as a means of mass communication, ritual performance, entertainment, and education. It was instrumental in shaping the identities of its audiences:

> First, operatic performances had always been an integral part of religious ceremonies, calendrical festivities, and rites of passage in Chinese society. And in some parts of China at least, this ritual function remains largely unchanged today despite the drastic political, social, and economic changes since the turn of the century. Secondly, the operas served for centuries as a source of information and an arbiter of moral standards and social behavior for their audiences, the majority of which were illiterate or semi-literate; it was thus an important medium for mass communication and education. In recent decades, the importance of this function has been reduced by the rise in the level of literacy and the flourishing of other mass media such as cinema and television.[33]

Despite the radical changes in cultural environment, Chinese opera retained its accessibility for Chinese people of the mid twentieth century. With an extensive repertoire derived from folklore, literature, and historical chronicles, it was "a form of repressions and reconstitutions" that facilitated Chinese people to perceive a believable self-image of the past at present.[34] It prescribed a civil society characterized by particular experiences of temporality (e.g. seasonal cycles), observable connectors to the past (e.g. historical monuments), and ethical questions (e.g. "just or unjust," "right or wrong," "shame-ful or shame-less," and "good or bad").[35] It also

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[32] Ibid., 7-8; Rey Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity: The Politics of Reading Between West and East* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 26-27.

[33] Bell Yung, *Cantonese Opera: Performance as Creative Process* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 8.

[34] Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation*, 80.

[35] For details, see Haiping Yan, "Theatricality in Classical Chinese Drama," *Theatricality*, eds. Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 67; and Kristine Harris, "*Two Stars on the Silver Screen*: The Metafilm as Chinese Modern," *History in Images: Pictures and Public Spaces in Modern China*, eds. Christian Henriot and Wen-hsin Yeh (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, 2012), 214-215.

sustained certain national commonalities through recurrent disposition of narratives, role types, stock characters, facial makeups, costume designs, and mise en scène settings, as well as conventionalized treatment of acrobatics, stylized gestures, and choreographed steps. It established the notion of *xi* (hereafter, "literary-theatrical drama") as the basis for Chinese cinematic practices, wherein the display of expressive competence or virtuosity evoked an imaginative reality or an intensification of experience among the audience.[36] Moreover, it demonstrated how Chinese "key symbols"—symbols (including things and abstractions, nouns and verbs, single items and whole events) that were important to Chinese people by the means of positive or negative reactions—could be incorporated into stage or cinematic performance that reflected Chinese people's cultural focus of interest.[37]

One could therefore refer to Chinese opera as an evolving system of Chinese "key symbols," through which not only Chinese cinema could create and disseminate performative renderings of social lives that are accessible to Chinese people, it could also offer a convenient vehicle for Chinese people to identify themselves with a wide spectrum of traditional media and objects.[38] Expressed somewhere in public and surrounded by more elaboration or restrictions

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[36] This statement is based upon my observation from monographs on various facets of modern Chinese culture, including but not limited to cinema and theater. For those on cinema, see, for example, Xudong Zhang, *Chinese Modernism in the Era of Reform* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 222; Zhen Zhang, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen: Shanghai Cinema, 1896-1937* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 310; Xinyu Dong, "China at Play: Republican Film Comedies and Chinese Cinematic Modernity" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2009), 1-2; Jeremy E. Taylor, *Rethinking Transnational Chinese Cinemas: The Amoy-dialect Film Industry in Cold War Asia* (London: Routledge, 2011), 11, 51, 56; and Xiangyang Chen, "Operatic Imagination: Vernacular Chinese Film Culture in a Hong Kong-China Nexus 1933–1985" (PhD diss., New York University, 2012), 35-36; and Fan, 162-184. For those on theater, see, for example, David Der-wei Wang, *The Lyrical in Epic Time: Modern Chinese Intellectuals and Artists through the 1949 Crisis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 271; and Yan, 75.

[37] Sherry B. Ortner, "On Key Symbols," *American Anthropologist*, vol.75 no.5 (Oct., 1973): 1339. For Ortner, "anything by definition can be a symbol, i.e., a vehicle for cultural meaning" (1973: 1339), and "key symbols may be discovered by virtue of a number of reliable indicators which point to cultural focus of interest" (ibid., 1344).

[38] See also Paola Iovene, "Chinese Operas on Stage and Screen: A Short Introduction," *The Opera Quarterly*, vol.26 nos.2-3 (2010), 192; and Judith Zeitlin, "Introduction: Toward a Visual Culture of Chinese Opera," *Performing Images: Opera in Chinese Visual Culture* (Chicago: Smart Museum of Art of the University of Chicago, 2014), 14.

than other similar cultural phenomena, Chinese "key symbols" bespeak how Chinese people "discover, rediscover, and transform their own culture, generation after generation" with *qing*.[39] In this light, the *xieyi* ("portraying ambience") style that facilitated truthful expression of *qing* became more than a matter of portraying subjunctive mood based on particular aesthetics of realism.[40] It manifested and sustained "the symptoms of prominent affective tendencies" that, as Rey Chow contends, were connected to "foundations and practices of social interaction."[41] It generated a strong sense of cultural intimacy that urged Chinese filmmakers to deploy Chinese opera for an effective communication with the audience:

> The *xieyi* style of "literary-theatrical drama" is a cultural heritage from our ancestors. Its contribution to substantiating national spirit (*minzu jingshen*) and social morality (*shehui daode*) is remarkable, and [we] must never overlook its significance. Furthermore, our nation is backward in every aspect, and only our arts can make us proud. [Our arts] enable us to [...] look beyond objective/objectified phenomena (*chaoyi xiangwai*) while conceiving the spirit at the core (*shen zai gezhong*); this is of course [a manifestation of] ingenuity and refinedness (*chaochao xuanzhu*).[42]

Within the context of Chinese filmmaking in Guangzhou and Hong Kong during the 1930s and 1940s, Mak Siu-ha (d. 1941) stressed that music provided a historical basis for the *xieyi* style of "literary-theatrical drama." Similarly, Ouyang Yuqian claimed that the use of Chinese operatic singing (*qiangdiao*) was key to sketching a simple and straightforward narrative on film. For Mak and Ouyang as well as Mandarin filmmakers such as Fei Mu and Zhu Shilin (1899–1967), the *xieyi* style was dichotomous to *xieshi* ("describing reality") and could be traced back to art

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[39] Ortner, 1339. See also Chow, *Sentimental Fabulations*, 23.

[40] Weihong Bao, *Fiery Cinema: The Emergence of an Affective Medium in China, 1915–1945* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 12; Clark, *Chinese Cinema*, 107; Fan, 179, 181, 184. See also Victor Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1986), 101.

[41] Chow, *Sentimental Fabulations*, 17.

[42] Mak Siu-ha, *Guangdong xiju shilue* (Hong Kong: Zhongguo wenhua xiejinhui, 1940), 2.

and literary criticism during the Tang dynasty.[43] This historical foundation, together with aesthetic values grounded in traditional notions such as *yixiang* ("imagery"), *haoqing* ("broadness and openness in expression of *qing*"), *zhi* ("will"), and *qi* ("cosmic energy"), gave these Chinese filmmakers confidence in embracing *xieyi* as a national style by and for Chinese people.[44]

Integral to and reflective of communal practices such as rituals, linguistic communication, and observances of kinship, Chinese opera contained "a fluid complex of cultural signifiers" for Chinese people—who were conscious of their culture(s) and identities at multiple levels in both imperial and modern times—to participate in a national culture and articulate their understandings of the wider cultural and political order.[45] It brought in different viewpoints (of the playwright, the actor-singer, the accompanist, the troupe owner, the audience, etc.) through various media (such as print, performance, audio and video recording, etc.) and channels (including music-making, writing, instruction, gossip, etc.). Consequently, Chinese opera introduced some boundaries that guided Chinese people to identify themselves with groups of different sizes. A boundary as such would be flexible and inclusionary when its formation was intended for group identification but did not prevent a group from sharing or adopting—self-consciously or not—the practices of another; it would however become a principle of national

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[43] The Chinese traditional *xieyi* aesthetics have been situated in a dichotomy against *xieshi* for more than a millennium. In the context of Chinese opera, Haiping Yan implicates the notion of *xieyi* by claiming that "Chinese music-drama aims not only to pull audiences out of their regular state of mind but also move them to another sphere where surprises and wonders are registers of another kind of 'truth,' deeply mediated by or buried in what is real" (2004: 76). She argues that "these 'feelings' […] are grounded in the historically conditioned and dialectically transformative ethical questions which […] is not much about 'finding out what is' as about 'what ought to be'"(ibid., 76-77), and therefore "Chinese music-dramas are organized and operate as 'spheres of feelings'" in certain way which "the 'moving and moved feelings' that realize the aesthetic ideals of Chinese music-dramas are energies *knowingly* gestured, gathered, felt, imagined, and inhabited by both performers and audiences [and hence] living sites of theatricality in Chinese performing art" (ibid., 86).

[44] For details, see Fan, 164-165.

[45] Duara, "De-constructing the Chinese Nation," 14.

formation when it attempted to convert the self-consciousness of a particular group into a social force that unified other groups. That means a dominating group could perceive an expressive element of Chinese opera—such as a vocal type (*qiang*)—as an exclusive instead of adaptable constituent of social relations. Such perception would create a totality that introduced negativity, division, or antagonism to the society, calling for certain reconfigurations of political space.[46] It would collapse the projection of a unified national image, as it would induce and expose increasing contradictory thoughts and practices to the society:

> Above all, the most serious weakness [of Yue opera film *Xianglin the Sister-in-law* (*Xianglin sao*, 1948)]] is [the chosen] language for dialogues; it entirely deploys Shaoxing dialect. Although Yue opera has a big audience in Shanghai, such audience is restrictedly from the middle and lower classes. Except for those fellow countrymen from Shaoxing, [the sounding of those dialogues] is strange and impenetrable to one's ears (*guai bu ru er*). [I] hope those actors who aim to improve Yue opera would learn the pronunciation of the national language [i.e., Mandarin], so that they would achieve a more ideal outcome. Otherwise, other than those Yue opera fans from Shanghai and those regions near Hangzhou and Shaoxing, [any films similar to *Xianglin the Sister-in-law*] would be difficult for [Chinese] people of other regions to welcome.[47]

On film, Chinese opera demonstrates how its preexisting musical-theatrical conventions can directly affect the execution of cinematography and film editing, such that music is integrated into the captured performing body, effectuating historically-constructed and socially-maintained meanings and feelings.[48] Chinese opera on film therefore displays "*the expressive dimension of the strategic articulation of practice* [emphasis in original]" to the extent that the movie camera induces various ways of seeing that are not based on a mirroring relationship between the viewer and a given character.[49] According to Jubin Hu:

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[46] See also Laclau and Mouffe, 111-117, 130.

[47] Xiao Wan, "*Xianglin sao* guanghou gan," *Yingju*, Vol.32 (1948), 13.

[48] Fan, 184. See also Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 152-156.

[49] Edward L. Schieffelin, "Problematizing Performance," *Ritual, Performance, Media*, ed. Felicia Hughes-Freeland (London: Routledge, 1997), 199.

> Filmmakers also adopted techniques of expression from [Chinese] opera which clearly enriched the power of expression of their filmmaking. Taking *Spring in a Small Town* (1948) as an example, the use of multiple points of view clearly reveals the operatic influence on the film. The leading character in the film is the wife, and thus her point of view predominates. Even when she is absent and therefore unable to know what is happening, her voice is often heard in voiceover, showing that she is the film's main narrator. However, sometimes the point of view swiftly jumps to that of other characters. Flexible and diversified points of view are in fact one of the characteristics of [Chinese] opera, and Fei Mu apparently borrowed this in his filmmaking. Another related issue, connected with point of view, is the use of monologue in the film in order to tell the story through the heroine's subjective point of view… Fei Mu also used props that often appear in [Chinese] opera to achieve particular artistic effects… Even behind the scenes, the director was borrowing various methods from [Chinese] opera film… For example, Wei Wei, the actress who played the heroine, had an optimistic temperament quite different from the heroine's gloomy disposition. At Fei Mu's suggestion, she imitated gestures and movements from Chinese opera and was able to bring the melancholy heroine to life.[50]

David Der-wei Wang's discussion of *Eternal Regret* further exemplifies how, in order to (re)present something culturally significant to Chinese people, Chinese filmmakers attempted to integrate Chinese operatic elements with techniques of cinematic staging and cinematography.[51] According to Wang, the director Fei Mu began shooting the climactic scene "night soliloquy" (*Ye su*) by first asking the principal actor-singer Mei Lanfang to interact with a loom "in a style of acting that otherwise programs a given experience into conventions [of Peking opera]."[52] For this, Wang regarded the loom as "both a realistic object and a tool with which Fei shocked his cast and audience into a cinematic re-vision of traditional theater."[53] Wang argued that Mei was

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[50] Jubin Hu, *Projecting a Nation: Chinese National Cinema Before 1949* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), 188-189. See also Chris Berry, "Sexual Difference and the Viewing Subject in *Li Shuangshuang* and *The In-Laws*," *Perspectives on Chinese Cinema*, ed. Chris Berry (London: BFI Publications, 1991), 38.

[51] For "cinematic staging," I refer to Sergei Eisenstein's notion of *mise en cadre*. According to Eisenstein, "Sculptural details seen through the frame of the *cadre*, or shot, transitions from shot to shot, appeared to be the logical way out for the threatened hypertrophy of the *mise en scène*. Theoretically, it established our dependence on *mise en scène* and montage. Pedagogically, it determined, for the future, the approaches to montage and cinema, arrived at through the mastering of theatrical construction and through the art of *mise en scène*. Thus was born the concept of *mise en cadre*. As the *mise en scène* is an interrelation of people in action, so the *mise en cadre* is the pictorial composition of mutually dependent *cadres* (shots) in a montage sequence." For details, see Sergei Eisenstein, "Through Theater to Cinema," *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, ed. and trans. Jay Leyda (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Book, 1977), 15-16.

[52] Wang, *The Lyrical in Epic Time*, 287.

[53] Ibid.

moving around the loom while singing some "arias" and performing some stylized gestures, so as to "play out a fundamental Chinese lyrical motif—from *ganwu* (feeling the object) to *ganwu* (epiphany)."[54] Wang thus understood the loom as a Chinese "key symbol" or, in his own words, "a quintessential token of female productivity in ancient China" that motivated Mei's feeling and movement as well as reminded the audience of the gratuitous labor Mei personified.[55] Noticing that Fei used the movie camera to track Mei's performing body "horizontally at a pace in response to the tempo of his singing," Wang also posited that Fei's camerawork "[was] not merely a display of optical agility [but] act[ed] as a conduit through which a new configuration of perceptions [came] into sight."[56] Here, Wang suggested visuality being a representational and communicational matter attuned to preexisting ways of seeing but adaptable to new perceptual possibilities.

The *xieyi* sublimation of reality prescribes a sense of "drama as life" (*xi ru rensheng*) to Chinese opera on film. It also renders "literary-theatrical drama" into timely but sensationalized turning points, chances, and prophetic events that, by the rhetorical means of "hearsay" (*huashuo*), always refer to the distant, recent, or imagined past (i.e., *gushi*) in various forms of commentary (*ping* and *shuo*) and transmission (*chuan*).[57] This adherence to the tradition of

[54] Ibid., 288.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Commentary (*ping* and *shuo*): *pinghua*, which "comments on sayings"; *pingtan*, which "comments while plucking strings"; *shuoshu*, which "speaks from writing" etc. Transmission (*chuan*): *chuanqi*, which "passes on the marvelous"; *chuanshuo*, which "passes on the sayings/persuasion/happiness" etc. In his book chapter on Ming writer Ling Mengchu (1580–1644), Patrick Hanan (1977: 87) proposes the notion of "simulated context" for explaining how the matter of transmission characterizes both Chinese oral literature and vernacular fiction: "'Simulated context' means the context of situation in which a piece of fiction claims to be transmitted. In Chinese vernacular fiction, of course, the simulacrum is that of the oral storyteller addressing his audience, a pretense in which the author and reader happily acquiesce in order that the fiction can be communicated. It is not only a '*mimesis* of direct address,' it is also a *mimesis* of direct reception. In fact, it imitates a complete linguistic situation." For details, see

allegorizing the past for commenting on or critiquing the present (*jiegu yujin*) is indeed significant to creating nodal points that, by putting longstanding issues of morality, social relationships, and cultural values in the spotlight, partially fix certain meanings across discourses on Chinese identities. In general, through maneuvering musical, dramatic, and cinematic devices in order to (re)connect story events together, each rendering of "literary-theatrical drama" superimposes "the sense of an ending" on the open-ended arrangement of story events.[58] It "does not aim to convey the pure essence of the thing, like information or report[,]" but "sinks the thing into the life of the storyteller, in order to bring it out of him [sic] again."[59] Following a story would be less important than apprehending how its well-known episodes prompt "a transition from within-time-ness to historicality [sic]" while leading to an end.[60] This is well illustrated in Kristine Harris's discussion of the Chinese operatic "play within a play" scene in *Two Stars on the Silver Screen* (*Yinhan shuangxing*, 1931):

> *Love's Sorrow* was a historical opera based on one of the most famous romances of the imperial era… it was an apt choice for inclusion in Lianhua's first sound film… The full impact of this scene depends on the film audience knowing the story of Concubine Mei, hearing the words of her aria, and understanding how her legend relates to the larger narrative transpiring in *Two Stars*. As Li Yueying sings Concubine Mei's lament at a garden balustrade in this Cantonese opera, we recall the opening scene of *Two Stars*, when Li, at her lakeside terrace, sang the lonely Cantonese love song that promoted the film crew to envision her as Concubine Mei. Audience foreknowledge of Concubine Mei's story, reinforced by the audible song lyrics, meant that contemporary viewers were most likely to recognize the strong, metonymic connections between *Love's Sorrow* and the story of *Two Stars*... Concubine Mei's story appears to mirror the story of Li Yueying in the film and novel, while Li Yueying's story in turn seems to mirror the story of the real-life singer, dancer, and movie star Li Minghui, along with her colleague Zi Luolan. This metafilmic scene of the actress performing in *Love's Sorrow* also heightens the plot tension of *Two Stars* for those familiar with the Tang dynasty story.[61]

Patrick Hanan, "The Nature of Ling Meng-ch'u's Fiction," *Chinese Narrative: Critical and Theoretical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 85-114.

[58] Paul Ricœur, "Narrative Time," *Critical Inquiry*, vol.7 no.1 (Autumn 1980), 179.

[59] Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov," *Illuminations*. ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 91-92.

[60] Ricœur, 178.

[61] For the complete analysis of this Chinese operatic "play within a play," see Harris, 211-220.

The display of *Love's Sorrow* in *Two Stars on the Silver Screen* shows how, by the means of Cantonese opera, Zi Luolan (1915–?) personated Concubine Mei (a.k.a. Jiang Caiping) as an honorable historical figure who—in contrast to her (in)famous "treacherous" rival Yang Guifei portrayed in Hong Sheng's (1645–1704) classic *The Palace of Eternal Life* (*Changsheng dian*) and many other traditional stories—died with sorrow and dignity during the An Shi Rebellion (*An Shi zhi luan*, 755–763).[62] The same narration strategy also created a mirror image of both the film character Li Yueying and the real-life film actress Li Minghui (1909–2003).[63] Here provides an example of how, aside from being peripheral to "print capitalism" created by elite writers, Chinese opera enabled an access to a realm that was responsive to both the formation of national consciousness and the reflection on social reality. Of course, as Chinese opera was projected on the silver screen, the cinematic apparatus—and the materiality of the moving image and the movie theater in particular—individualized those viewers who used to contribute to the conditions of what was being performed or presented through interactive means, interiorizing their negotiations of cultural and political values and meanings.

2.5 Facets of Mid-twentieth-century Chinese Cinemascapes and Musikscapes

Rather than being an autonomous cultural artifact, Chinese opera on film was integral to the cultural politics and communication associated with Chinese people of the mid twentieth

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[62] See also Lily Xiaohong Lee, "Jiang Caiping," *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Women: Tang through Ming, 618-1644*, eds. Lily Xiao Hong Lee and Sue Wiles (New York: Routledge, 2015), 168-170; and Sally A. Robin, "Yang, Honored Consort of Emperor Xuanzong of Tang," *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Women: Tang through Ming, 618-1644*, eds. Lily Xiao Hong Lee and Sue Wiles (New York: Routledge, 2015), 536-540.

[63] Concubine Mei, Zi Luolan, and Li Minghui were all known for their singing and dancing talents since their youth. On top of that, Zi Luolan and Li Minghui had a career path very similar to that of Li Yueying, although both Zi Luolan and Li Yueying were Cantonese actresses capable of Cantonese operatic and pop singing, whereas Li Minghui was a Mandarin actress specializing in Mandarin pop singing. See also Jean Ma, *Sounding the Modern Woman: The Songstress in Chinese Cinema* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015), 46-48.

century. The rivalry between Kuomintang (KMT) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was so fierce that it politicized the entire field of cultural production in Chinese localities within and beyond the Mainland. In Hong Kong, the British colonial government tried to stay politically neutral; neither KMT nor the CCP could exert direct political control, and yet film companies were still confined to a split over artistic direction and allocation of human resources.[64] Many film directors, scriptwriters, actors, and musicians had to declare their own political stance or affiliation in order to retain their own professional occupation. Tso Kei (1916–1997), for example, was labeled as a "right-wing" director due to his avid interest in Romantic literature and Hollywood cinema, and he did not receive credit for his direction of the "neutral" Cantonese opera film classic *The Flower Princess* (*Dinü hua*, 1959) as a consequence.

Similarly, a notable number of movies theaters in Hong Kong were owned by or leased to cultural agencies affiliated with either KMT or the CCP. The Astor Theater (*Puqing xiyuan*)—the first opera-cum-cinema theater in the Kowloon peninsula—was a main venue for those left-leaning stage productions and film screenings.[65] Because of the KMT-CCP rivalry, Chinese opera films from the Mainland such as *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* (1953, to be discussed in chapter four) could only be screened at the Astor Theater or other movie theaters of a similar

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[64] For details, see Sek Kei, "'Zuopai' yingye de zhengui ziliao," *Kenguang tuoying: Nanfang yingye banshiji de daolu* (Hong Kong: MCCM Creations, 2005), 196; and Poshek Fu, "Cold War Politics and Hong Kong Mandarin Cinema," *The Oxford Handbook of Chinese Cinemas*, eds. Carlos Rojas and Eileen Cheng-yin Chow (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 125. See also Ke Hu, "Hong Kong Cinema in the Chinese Mainland (1949–1979)," *Hong Kong Cinema Retrospective – Broder Crossings in Hong Kong Cinema* (Hong Kong: The Leisure and Cultural Service Department, 2000), 18-25; Stephen Wing-kai Chiu and Victor Kei-wah Shin, "Liang'an sandi de zhengzhi chayi yu wenhua jingji de ronghe: Yindu zai huayu dianying chanyelian de jiaose," *Xionghuai zuguo: Xianggang "aiguo zuopai" yundong*, eds. Stephen Wing-kai Chiu, Tai-lok Lui, and Sai-shing Yung (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2014), 169-196.

[65] According to Lee Siu-yan (2014: 116-120), the left-leaning Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions had often been renting the Astor Theater (and the Ko Shing Theater in the Hong Kong Island) for amateur Cantonese opera performances and other fundraising leisure activities. For details, see "Xianggang zuopai gongren de yueju yundong, 1950s–1970s," *Xionghuai zuguo: Xianggang "aiguo zuopai" yundong*, eds. Stephen Wing-kai Chiu, Tai-lok Lui, and Sai-shing Yung (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2014), 115-140.

political background (such as the historic and already-defunct Ko Shing Theater). One could not watch Hollywood movies at the same theater(s) due to the Big Eight's termination of movie supplies following the CCP's indirect intervention.[66] *The Love Eterne* (1963, to be discussed in chapter five) and all other Mandarin movies produced by Shaw Brothers Studio were not available for screening at the same theaters(s) either, since their contents were very often perceived as compliant with not only KMT's dictum of restoring Chinese traditional culture against CCP's eradication of it in the Mainland, but also the U.S. Cold War propaganda policy of alienating overseas Chinese from the CCP's anti-traditionalist ideology.[67]

Language preference for both film production and consumption had a remarkable impact on mid-twentieth-century Chinese cinemascapes as well. The 1930 decree from KMT's Central Committee of Propaganda required all Chinese sound films to be made in Mandarin, a Chinese lingua franca sanctioned by KMT's National Language Committee as the national language in 1932. This requirement was the ruling state's ambitious but impractical effort to nationalize and unify Chinese cinema, as "dialect" films—especially Chinese opera films—were found attractive to Chinese commoners and effective for distracting them from watching Hollywood movies:

> Because of using a dialect originated in the Eastern part of Zhejiang province, [Yue opera film *Sister-in-law Xianglin*] enhances the plot's regional character and pastoral atmosphere, expressing peasant characters more thoroughly so that audience would develop a particularly cordial feeling. Moreover, since [the deployed dialect] is common in Shanghai and Hangzhou areas, [the film] is more welcomed in various aspects than [those using] Mandarin originated from Beijing and therefore attracts more movie viewers... The use of dialect makes those non-intellectuals (*fei zhishi jieceng*) who initially had virtually no exposure to film— especially those local people—to willingly become movie viewers. For non-local sojourners (*waisheng ren*), if they once lived within Jiangsu-Zhejiang region, then they should also be able to understand those dialogues.[68]

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[66] Xu Dunle, "Kenguang tuoying wushiqiu," *Kenguang tuoying: Nanfang yingye banshiji de daolu* (Hong Kong: MCCM Creations, 2005), 64-65.

[67] Fu, "Cold War Politics and Hong Kong Mandarin Cinema," 126.

[68] Chao Yang, "Cong *Xianglin sao* kan Zhongguo yingju de xin daolu," *Pipan*, vol.1 (1949), 9. According to Jing Tsu (2010: 106), "[W]hen the Ministry of Education called the Congress on the Unification of Pronunciation in 1912, the question regarding which dialect should serve as the standard stirred up heated debates on the floor, ending in almost physical violence. At stake was the 'murky tone' (*zhuoyin*), a voiced phonation characteristic of southern dialect speakers. Proponents insisted that it is the heart and soul of the Chinese essence, without which the

Mandarin film production gained currency from KMT to the degree that it dominated the mainstream discourse through newspapers, magazines, and the radio, such that it could direct itself critically to the "dialect" film counterpart—first in linguistic but then in artistic, economic, political, technical, and technological terms—with virtually no ideological resistance. One could not neglect the elitist origin of Mandarin as a national language either, because this issue was closely connected to how May Fourth intellectuals promoted the modern vernacular Chinese written language.[69] Many early Mandarin films were indeed adaptations of contemporary literature or "civilized plays" (*wenming xi*) favored by politicians, intellectuals, and cultural critics due to their didactic social meanings. By contrast, many Cantonese films of the same period were adaptations or remakes of Cantonese operas or Hollywood musicals, which were disparaged by Mandarin filmmakers as vulgar and provincial in content, primitive in technique, and profit-oriented in production. Mandarin films were thus entitled "a prestigious and legitimate national art" under the hegemony of the Shanghai film industry, whereas "dialect" films became the "parochial trash" that failed to embody the nation-state as a unified production machine.[70] This dichotomy contributed to what Victor Fan regarded as "a permanent fixture in the theoretical debate during and after the [Second] Sino-Japanese War."[71]

southerner cannot survive for even one day." For details about "murky tone" and its regionality, see Xiaonong Zhu and Caiyu Wang, "Tone," *The Oxford Handbook of Chinese Linguistics*, eds. William S-Y. Wang and Chaofen Sun (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 503-515.

[69] In Mainland China, according to Suzanne Pepper's report, "women in the early decades of [the twentieth] century […] had an estimated literacy rate of 2 percent to 10 percent nationwide. Literacy rates among males are estimated to have ranged from 30 percent to 45 percent of their total number. These literacy rates are based on a definition which included those with knowledge of but a few hundred Chinese characters and who would today be classified as only semi-literate." For details about the rise of literacy rate in twentieth-century Mainland China, see Suzanne Pepper, "Education for the New Order," *The Cambridge History of China*, vol.14, eds. Roderick MacFarquhar and John K. Fairbank (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 185-217.

[70] Yingchi Chu, *Hong Kong Cinema: Coloniser, Motherland and Self* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon: 2003), 31.

[71] Fan, 161.

On top of the region-and-nation-wide conflicts among Han Chinese, between Han and non-Han Chinese, and between Chinese and non-Chinese, the ongoing civil war between KMT and the CCP exposed Chinese people to "the open, non-sutured character" that was absent in peasant communities during China's feudal and imperial past.[72] Nevertheless, as an ideological tool, Chinese opera still attracted serious attention at various moments of massive political unrest. Leading intellectuals such as Chen Duxiu (1879–1942), Liang Qichao (1879–1929), Wang Guowei (1877–1927), and Wu Mei (1884–1939) were all keen to historicize Chinese opera, albeit with vastly different agendas.[73] KMT and the CCP both treasured and promoted Chinese opera as a national performing art, albeit with polarized cultural and political values. National or nationalistic display became serious and important to sustaining the well-being of many Chinese filmmakers and Chinese opera actor-singers, while ordinary Chinese people were compelled to rethink their identities in their social lives. On stage and on film, both historical and fictional patriotic figures gained wide appeal across the political spectrum even if they simultaneously upheld and rebelled against the basic tenets of Confucianism such as the "three bonds" (*san gang*) and the virtues of loyalty (*zhong*) and righteousness (*yi*).[74] These figures were among the Chinese "key symbols" that signified invincible spirit and unwavering strength, reinforcing a "fictive ethnicity" while interrogating Chinese people about identity issues such as

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[72] Laclau and Mouffe, 124.

[73] For details, see Joshua Goldstein, *Drama Kings: Players and Publics in the Re-creation of Peking Opera, 1870-1937* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 134-153.

[74] The quantity of patriotic stories has been remarkably large in Chinese opera repertoire. The longstanding standard *Jianghu shiba ben* (*The Eighteen Plays from "Rivers and Lakes"*), for instance, includes at least three (out of eighteen) stories as such. The succeeding nineteenth-century Cantonese opera derivate *Da paichang jianghu shiba ben* (*The Extravagant Eighteen Plays form "Rivers and Lakes"*) even has at least eight (out of eighteen) stories as such. See also Chow, *Sentimental Fabulations*, 21-22, for her discussion on the possibility "to argue that *at the heart of Chinese sentimentalism lies the idealization of filiality*. [emphasis in original]"

patriotism.[75] At the same time, Chinese people engaged in their surrounding musikscape, wherein Chinese opera's culturally and historically specific aesthetics, ideologies, and contextual constraints, in addition to its disposition of sensory predilection, were instrumental in perceiving and negotiating Chineseness.[76]

The Great Red Robe (*Da hongpao*, 1965) provides a case for understanding this phenomenon. It shows why the portrayal of Hai Rui (1514–1587)—an eminent late Ming official whose uncompromising adherence to simplicity, fairness, upright morality, and scrupulous honesty earned him a lasting reputation as a model of governance—still mattered to Chinese people during the mid twentieth century.[77] Based on one of Cantonese opera's eighteen traditional plays (i.e., *jianghu shiba ben*), this cinematized "red robe theatrical drama" (*hongpao xi*) depicts how the red robe is embodied in Yam Kim-fai's (1912–1989) performance as a manifestation of patriotism. It highlights the red color as a Chinese "key symbol" of hotness, upwardness, brevity, and loyalty, which signifies Hai Rui's adamancy about severe punishment for official corruption. Yet, unlike the historical Peking opera play *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office* (*Hai Rui baguan*) arranged by Wu Han (1909–1969) a couple of years earlier, *The Great Red Robe* was not accused of allegorizing Emperor Jiajing (1507–1567) and Hai Rui as Mao

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[75] According to Etienne Balibar (2002: 96), "fictive ethnicity" is "the community instituted by the nation-state [as] an intentionally complex expression[,] in which the term fiction […] should not be taken in the sense of a pure and simple illusion without historical effects, but must […] be understood by analogy with the *persona ficta* of the juridical tradition in the sense of an institutional effect, a 'fabrication'." For Balibar, fictive ethnicity "is not purely and simply identical with the *ideal nation* which is the object of patriotism, but […] is indispensable to it, […] without [which] the nation would appear precisely only as an idea or an arbitrary abstraction." For details, see Etienne Balibar, "The Nation Form: History and Ideology," *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, eds. Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Walterstein, trans. Chris Turner (London and New York: Verso, 2002), 96-105.

[76] Yu Siu Wah, "Cong sige gangchan *Liang Zhu* banben kan dalu wenhua zai Xianggang de bentuhua," *Zhongguo yinyue yanjiu zai xinshiji de dingwei guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* (Vol.2), eds. Tsao Pen-yeh, Qiao Jianzhong, and Yuan Jingfang (Beijing: Renmin yinyue chubanshe, 2001), 1043; Lam, "Music, Sound, and Site," 104.

[77] For details about Hai Rui, see Ray Huang, *1587, A Year of No Significance: The Ming Dynasty in Decline* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), 130-155.

Zedong and his political adversary Peng Dehuai (1898–1974).[78] Being a peripheral and "innocuous" Hong Kong domestic production marked by the audibility of a localized traditional music flavor and the visibility of female-to-male *fanchuan* (cross-dressing, gender-crossing) performance absent in the Mainland during the 1960s, the film dissociated itself from the political turmoil triggered by the Gang of Four's denouncement of the Peking opera counterpart.[79]

Also produced in Hong Kong, *Four Blooming Flowers* (*Siji huakai*, 1970) was rather banned from public screening in Taiwan by KMT censors, who contended that the film's use of Bengbeng opera vocal tunes was a direct borrowing from *Flower is a Go-Between* (*Hua wei mei*, 1964), a PRC Bengbeng opera film.[80] Despite the fact that *Four Blooming Flowers* and *Flower is a Go-Between* were both film adaptations of *The Two Brides* (*Jisheng fu*), a short love story from Pu Songling's (1640–1715) renowned *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* (*Liaozhai zhiyi*), those censors insisted that music was the principal problem of *Four Blooming Flowers*. They disregarded the presumed sonic absence of Bengbeng opera in Taiwan since the late 1940s, and were indifferent to the fact that Li Han-hsiang (1926–1996) retained in *Four Blooming Flowers* a visual style that characterized those costume-drama films that were popular in Taiwan between the late 1950s and the mid 1960s. They did not reconsider the release of the film until after the

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[78] For details about the mentioned political turmoil, see, for example, Clive Ansley, *The Heresy of Wu Han: His Play "Hai Jui's Dismissal" and its Role in China's Cultural Revolution* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 134 pages.

[79] As Shi-yan Chao (2010: 152) points out, *fanchuan* "originally refers to the theatrical practice of female/male impersonation in Chinese opera," and is later in wider use due to its artistic connotation that distinguishes itself from other terms such as *renyao*, whose connection to the notion of dragging has been subject to social stigmatization.

[80] "Four Blossoming Flowers," *Hong Kong Film Archive Collection Items Online Catalogue*, accessed March 2, 2018, <http://ipac.hkfa.lcsd.gov.hk/ipac/cclib/search/showBib.jsp?f=e&id=655371350092805>.

movie sound tracks were all re-recorded as mainstream "yellow plum ditties" (*Huangmei diao*) that featured Mandarin lyrics, Chinese instrumental timbres, and Western functional harmony.

Subject to the disposition that structures (and is structured by) a habitus, one would take on particular moods (be they subjunctive, imperative, indicative, or interrogative etc.) when communicating the different attitudes that are embodied in one's sensorial experience. Literacy would not encumber such communication, but the sensitivity to the variegated construal of musical or linguistic sounds would, according to Judith Becker, affect one "to listen with a particular kind of focus, to expect to experience particular kinds of emotion, to move with certain stylized gestures, and to interpret the meanings of the sounds and one's emotional responses to the musical events in a somewhat (never totally) predictable ways."[81] Furthermore, through ritual(ized) procedures and practices over time, one's sonic (dis)comfort and (un)familiarity could affect or even reinforce one's judgment on identity issues such as sense of belonging. Technical and stylistic elements of music such as diction, instrumentation, and modal features could contribute to iconic processes that are, in Thomas Turino's words, "usually so automatic and constant that [they] happen low in focal awareness, [and yet] basic to our cultural classification of most things, including people's identities."[82] These musical elements could also serve as identity indexes, because they are very often attached to particular kinds of music that are being played and perceived in particular places by particular individuals or social groups. They therefore carry emotive power that is "directly proportionate to the attachment, feelings, and significance of the experience that they index."[83]

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[81] Judith Becker, *Deep Listeners: Music, Emotion, and Trancing* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 71. See also Naomi Cumming, *The Sonic Self: Musical Subjectivity and Signification* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 64-65.

[82] Thomas Turino, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 6.

[83] Ibid., 8-9.

In Chinese opera, role types are categorized according to acting style, acrobatic and choreographic act, and costume and makeup design. They consist of tokens that, confined to Confucian orthodoxy, associate a performing body with age limits and a sexual division of labor and power. Notwithstanding, their vocal characteristics are subject to regional/local/individual-specific usages of musical and linguistic languages. In regional operas in tempo-variant form (*banqiang ti*), *erhuang* is a common "mother tune" for creating "aria types." But still, aside from their similarities in musical form and structure, those "aria types" are sustained by interjections, tone patterns, and intricacies of colloquialism that characterize particular regional languages and their local variations. In some cases, an "aria type" as such can even be signature of a personalized style.[84] As such, Chinese opera's discursive and affective functions illuminate how, by putting different kinds of iconic and indexical elements together on a representational medium such as music, film, or oral literature, one could represent human identity as an ensemble of both the positions within particular communities and the overdetermined guises of those positions.

If the worldwide prevalence of classical film scores has been reinforcing the illusion of music and its subsidiary functionality as universal among different national and transnational cinemas, then Chinese opera on film has arguably presented one of the antitheses of such universality.[85] This proposition is based on the fact that Chinese opera deals with iconic and

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[84] Fong Yim-fen's (1928–) "invention" of *faansin yiwong* (or *fanxian erhuang*) is an example of this. For details, see Lee Siu-yan, "A Historical and Social Study of Fong Yim-fan's Cantonese Opera," (PhD dissertation, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2011), 66, 68.

[85] In the introduction of the special issue of *Ethnomusicology Forum* titled "Screened Music: Global Perspectives," Miguel Mera and Anna Morcom (2009: 9) mention that "[t]he dominant internationally received form of filmmaking has […] shaped discussions and defined the methodologies and functional models of screened music scholarship. While this work has, of course, been both valuable and necessary, *the lack of commensurate attention to other filmmaking, scoring or performing traditions has created a misleading imbalance*. *The focus on goal-oriented narrative structures, particular kinds of composers, ideas related to the concept of the 'leitmotif' and focus on semiotic analysis may eventually be understood as a consequence of these approaches*. [emphasis mine]" More

indexical elements of music that are culturally intimate. That means—to paraphrase Lawrence Zbikowski—those musical elements provide "sonic analogs for emotional and psychological processes" and hence "an ideal means of sharing attitudes and feelings among the members of a group."[86] They could be virtually inconceivable among non-Chinese audience but valuable to Chinese audience, as they facilitate one not only to distinguish the Chinese self from the non-Chinese other, but also to differentiate between Chinese people of different receptions on localism, regionalism, and national politics. The cognitive and affective experiences that typified Chinese opera on film were thus inseparable from mid-twentieth-century Chinese musikscapes, wherein Chinese people were exposed to an identity crisis originated in various representational and performative disturbances of the apparently absolute Chinese symbolic order.[87]

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recently, Elsie Walker's book-length study of Michael Haneke's movie sound tracks (2018: 13-14) shares a similar critical concern, albeit from a different perspective: "Though any list of cinematic sonic 'rules' would be inevitably reductive, there are certain norms that are worth emphasis here: the dominance of dialogue within a clear-cut hierarchy of film sound, with sound effects and music being subsidiary; the prevalence of sounds that are used for continuity, to 'hide' or suture cuts and provide a sense of coherence seamlessness; the sparing use of silence for unanswerable questions; the incorporation of music as a guiding presence to prompt identifiable emotional reactions and/or for its coherently pleasing or easily digestible qualities; and, above all, a close correspondence between what we see and hear, or an ultimate impression of audiovisual complementarity. *All these conventions are so common in contemporary, mainstream, Western-world cinema that they almost go without saying*, but Haneke's sound tracks frequently defy all of them. [emphasis mine]"

[86] Lawrence M. Zbikowski, "Music, Language, and What Falls in Between," *Ethnomusicology*, vol.56 no.1 (Winter 2012), 129.

[87] See also Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 168-169; and Laclau and Mouffe, 113.

Chapter 3

Mediating Between Chinese Opera and Chinese Cinema: Venues, Agencies, and (Re)Actions

3.1 Theoretical Background

First known in Chinese as the "electric-light shadow play," film was once a modern technology that alluded to an ancient form of storytelling and entertainment in theory but converged local experiences of taste, pleasure, and politics in a national form in practice.[1] It prompted Chinese people across geographical boundaries and regional differences to perceive Chinese opera as a national audiovisual artifact instead of a regionalized medium of cultural communication, facilitating the formation of the independent national self as opposed to the interdependent self that would comprise various communal identities.[2]

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[1] For details, see, for example, Zhou Jianyun and Wang Xuchang, "Yingxi gailun," *Zhongguo dianying lilun wenxuan (20-80 niandai)*, vol.1, eds. Li Pusheng, Xu Hong, and Luo Yijun (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 1992), 13-14. Although there exists some documentation of mid-nineteenth-century Chinese people being exposed to the magic lantern, this precursor of cinema was hardly—if not never—a nationwide popular entertainment in China. It was rather a mere manifestation of urban culture emerged in and belonged to those treaty ports under the control of European colonial powers, or a tool deployed by missionaries to illustrate gospel stories in city churches for arousing the religious interest of Chinese Christian women. The Taiping Rebellion between the 1850s and 1860s had caused a persistently negative perception of Christianity in China, and the magic lantern was generally perceived as a marvelous example of Western technology, instead of a source of optical illusions that was meant to be sensuous, corrective, enlightening, or phantasmagoric in Western social terms.

[2] Laikwan Pang, *The Distorting Mirror: Visual Modernity in China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 133-183. See also Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 8.

This cinematization of Chinese opera was particularly notable for causing a "paradigmatic displacement" of perception.[3] Chinese opera was no longer an ephemeral and perishing stage performance that took place within a spatial-temporality shared by performers and the audience.[4] It was rather an objectified and retroactive combination of mechanically-(re)produced audio and visual montages that originated in discrete time-space.[5] Its representational elements would still come into effect based on particular preexisting musical-theatrical conventions, but technical and technological specifics such as camera movement, focal length, and angle of view would intervene in this altered mode of perception.

One could therefore regard cinema as a platform for Chinese people to enjoy "literary-theatrical drama" in a technologized format.[6] The artificial darkness and invisible operation brought about by the cinematic apparatus were key to shaping the audience as a group of individualized viewers predisposed to "the reduction of the world to a separate realm of representation" (i.e., *gestell*, or enframing).[7] These features prescribed the magnified moving

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[3] Bruno Latour, "Technology is Society Made Durable," *The Sociological Review*, vol.38 no.51 (1990), 106-109. See also Michel Foucault, "The Confession of the Flesh," *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 194; and Weihong Bao, *Fiery Cinema: The Emergence of an Affective Medium in China, 1915–1945* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 29.

[4] See also Theodor W. Adorno, "The Form of Phonograph Record," trans. Thomas Y. Levin, *October*, vol.55 (1990), 59.

[5] See also Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 220-222, 226-237; and Francesco Casetti, *The Lumière Galaxy: Seven Key Words for the Cinema to Come* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 192.

[6] Zhen Zhang, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen: Shanghai Cinema, 1896-1937* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 308; Victor Fan, *Cinema Approaching Reality: Locating Chinese Film Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 156.

[7] Bao, 3. It is important to note here that the film exhibition practices in rural areas (i.e., countryside villages) of both Mainland China and Taiwan during the first and early second half of the twentieth century did not adhere to the architecture of cinema theater but to the open-air cinema, although members of rural populations might occasionally take short trips to those gradually-developed county-level towns (*zhen*) nearby to visit a cinema theater. For details, see Tina Mai Chen, "Socialist Geographies, Internationalist Temporalities and Traveling Film Technologies: Sino-Soviet Film Exchange in the 1950s and 1960s," *Futures of Chinese Cinema: Technologies and Temporalities in*

image to interpellate the audience as a national subject when the amplified film sound (including music) induced an inescapable mode of listening.[8] The cinematic apparatus also prompted the audience to follow a new social logic of public equality and anonymity through fare options, seat assignment, and instructions on moviegoing etiquette.[9] The technological conditions required for a film screening distinguished a movie theater from a Chinese traditional teahouse theater, where the calculated architectural design used to sustain the division of customers in accord with social statuses, knowledge levels, and aesthetic preferences.

While the mutual mediation between Chinese opera and film created new representational possibilities for Chinese people, the impression of Chinese opera being indigenous as opposed to film being foreign remained strong in Chinese culture until the late twentieth century. This phenomenon contributed to the cinematization of Chinese opera being a matter of expressive and nonviolent confrontation with what Arjun Appadurai posits as "the facts of unequal knowledge and the differential prestige of lifestyles" among filmmakers and moviegoers who engaged with the formation, maintenance, and renewal of Chinese culture.[10] As I will illustrate in this chapter, the cinematization of Chinese opera did not necessarily subscribe to any teleological histories of Chinese opera and film, but revealed the negotiation of cultural

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Chinese Screen Cultures, eds. Olivia Khoo and Sean Metzger (Bristol and Chicago: Intellect, the University of Chicago Press, 2009), 86-90; and Guo-Juin Hong, *Taiwan Cinema: A Contested Nation on Screen* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 18-31.

[8] See also Rey Chow, *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography, and Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 4-11.

[9] For details, see Poshek Fu, *Between Shanghai and Hong Kong: The Politics of Chinese Cinemas* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 34.

[10] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 12. Rey Chow's discussion on *The Last Emperor* (1987)—particularly the scene in which Pu Yi noticed his brother Pu Jie wearing yellow while they were practicing calligraphy together—provides another example of how twentieth-century Chinese people engaged with the expressive and nonviolent confrontation as such. For details, see *Woman and Chinese Modernity: The Politics of Reading Between West and East* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 11-12.

and historical values between the Chinese self and the non-Chinese other.[11] In this regard, I will first look into how *xiyuan*, a venue where one could attend either a film screening or a Chinese opera stage performance, had been sustaining a specific kind of intermedial spectatorship during the first three quarters of the twentieth century. I will then refer to my extensive interviews with Lui Pui-yuen (1933–), a *pipa* maestro who was once a leading film musician, and Cheng Pei-pei (1946–), a famous Chinese film actress who was known for her performances in Mandarin "yellow plum" musical films and *wuxia* swordplay martial arts films, for a critical overview of the adaptation/appropriation of Chinese opera within mid-twentieth-century Hong Kong film studio environment. I will conclude this chapter with an ethnographic study of several exhibition programs of Chinese opera on film curated by the Hong Kong Film Archive (HKFA) and the China Film Archive (CFA) between September 2014 and June 2017. I will use my experiential observation of audience behaviors to substantiate the intermedial spectatorship I postulated earlier.

3.2 *Xiyuan* in Beijing and Hong Kong: The Venue Where Chinese Opera Lived a Double Live

In 1902, Dashilanr, a famous old business district near to the Qianmen Gate in Beijing, was chosen as the site of *Daguanlou*, a two-story department store that intermittently operated a *xiyuan* and a cafe until a decade later, when it became the permanent home of China's first film exhibition hall. *Daguanlou* had been a leading venue for adopting the latest film exhibition devices until the late twentieth century, but was better known for its connection with Ren Qingtai (1850–1932), the founder of Fengtai Photography Studio who alleged to have hired Tan Xinpei

[11] See also Arjun Appadurai, "Why Public Culture?," *Public Culture*, vol.1 no.1 (Fall 1988), 6-7; and Jenny Kwok Wah Loh, "A Cultural Interpretation of the Popular Cinema of China and Hong Kong," *Perspectives on Chinese Cinema*, ed. Chris Berry (London: BFI, 1991), 166-167.

(1847–1917), the most esteemed Peking opera actor-singer of the time, to perform some excerpts of *Dingjun Mountain* (*Dingjun shan*) for the first Chinese film in history.[12]

Figure 3.01
Daguanlou in Dashilanr, Beijing: shadow play (upper left) and teahouse (*chayuan*, upper right) at "the Birthplace of Chinese cinema" (*Zhongguo dianying dansheng di*, lower middle)

[12] "Benjing xinwen: Daguanlou dianying shangjuan," *Jinghua ribao*, February 25, 1906, quoted in Huang Dequan, *Zhongguo zaoqi dianying shishi kaozheng* (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 2012), 132. Despite decades of scholarly debate on its existence, *Dingjun Mountain* and its alleged director Ren Qingtai are officially publicized as essential to *Daguanlou* being "the birth place of Chinese cinema." Early writings on the history or origin of Chinese cinema such as "Zhongguo yingju tan" (*Discussion on Chinese Shadowplay*) in the inaugural volume of *Yingxi zazhi* (*Shadowplay Magazine*), the first Chinese film magazine in history, "Zhongguo yingxi suyuan" (*Tracing the Origin of Chinese Shadowplay*) in *Zhongguo yingxi daguan* (*Filmdom in China*) published in 1927, and "Guopian nianpu" (*Yearbook of Chinese Film*) and "Dianying shiliao" (*Historical Sources of Chinese Film*) in *Xinhua huabao*, the promotional film magazine owned by the influential Xinhua Film Company of the mid 1930s, mention nothing about either *Dingjun Mountain* or Ren Qingtai.

Figure 3.02: "The First Film Exhibition Hall" (*Dianying diyi ting*) at *Daguanlou*

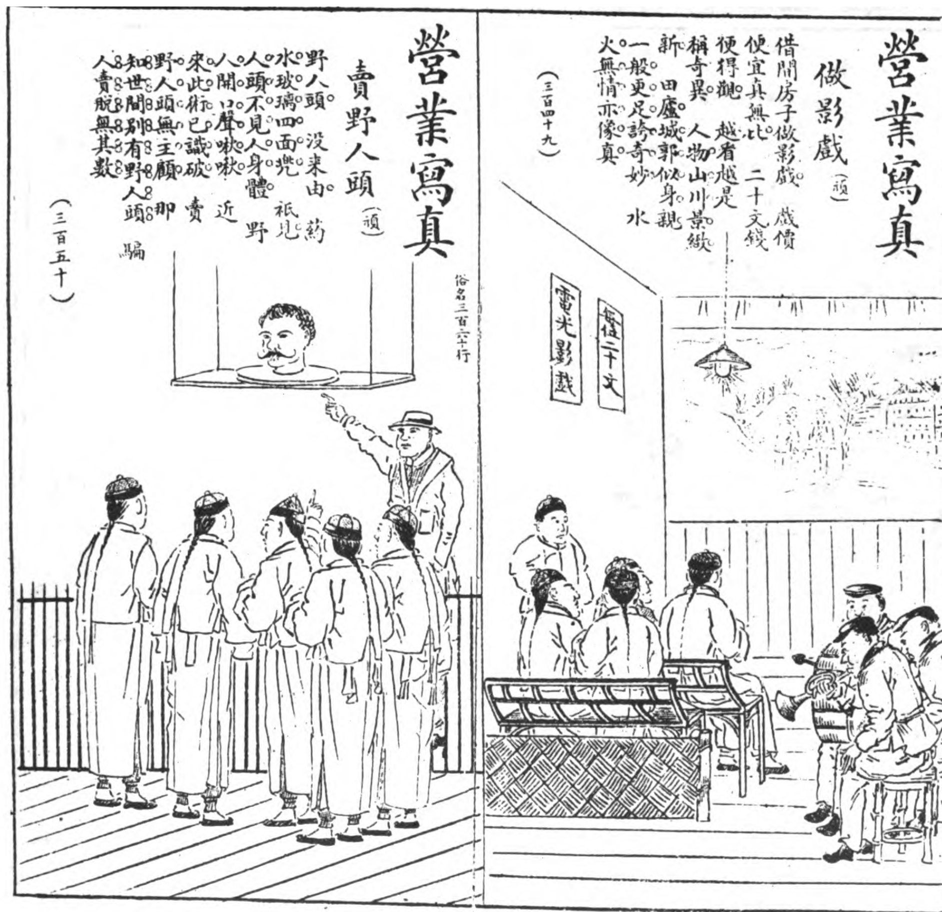

Figure 3.03: *Portraits of Business Operation* (*Yingye xiezhen*) in *Pictorial Daily* (*Tuhua ribao*), vol.175 (1909)

The historic appeal of today's *Daguanlou* (Figure 3.01) is affirmed not only by its architectural appearance and museological setting, but also by the endorsement from the PRC government since 2005, when the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film, and Television named it "the birthplace of Chinese cinema."[13] Its reconstructed first film exhibition hall (Figure 3.02) is indeed reminiscent of the illustration "Shadow Play Exhibition" (*Zuo yingxi*) published in the column *Portraits of Business Operation* (*Yingye xiezhen*) serialized in *Pictorial Daily* (*Tuhua ribao*) between 1909 and 1910. As shown in the right column of Figure 3.03, early film exhibition in China often took place at a rented chamber, wherein a customer (mostly male) did not necessarily sit on an arranged chair/bench facing the silver screen. He could smoke, drink tea, or converse with other customers as if he was in a teahouse wherein a Chinese opera stage performance was commonly provided for entertainment.[14] He could even be among those who either caused or suffered from unruly behaviors initiated by tea servers or tobacco vendors.[15]

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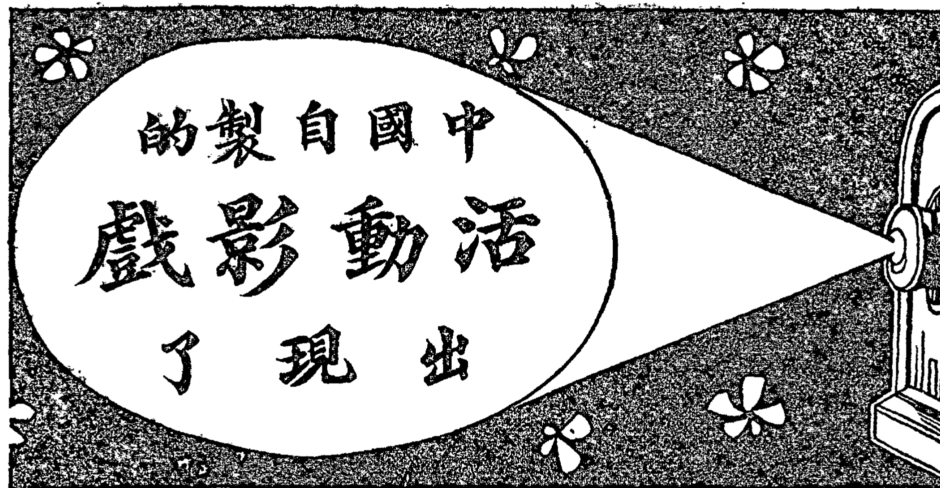
[13] Tian Ye, "Zhongguo dianying danshengdi: Beijing Daguanlou dianyingyuan," *Xiandai dianying jishu*, vol.1 (2006), 61-64. Tian's article includes two attachments, namely "Zhongguo dianying dansheng yibai zhounian beiwen" (*An Inscription About the Centennial of Chinese Cinema*), whose content is inscribed on a carved stone tablet attached to the outer wall of *Daguanlou* in 2005, a hundred year after *Dingjun Mountain* was allegedly made, and "Daguanlou yingxiyuan mingming wei 'Zhongguo dianying danshengdi' de lunzheng shuoming" (*The Naming of Daguanlou Shadowplay Garden as "The Birthplace of Chinese Cinema": Proof and Illustration*), a press released sanctioned by the China Film Archive in September 20, 2004, which concludes the conference on the issue of *Dingjun Mountain* in relation to the inscription about the centennial of Chinese cinema (*youguan Dingjun shan yu jianli Zhongguo dianying danshengdi jinianbei*) attended by film historian Cheng Jihua, researchers Li Suyuan, Hu Ke, and Zhang Jianyong from Chinese Film Art Research Center, researchers Zhu Tianwei from the China Film Archive, film scholar Lu Hongshi, the manager of *Daguanlou*, and Party Branch Secretary (*zhibu shuji*) Wang Xinsen.

[14] See also "Tianxia diyi qiguan, Meiguo dianguang daxi, Taixi geguo xian fashu," *Jinghua ribao*, February 18, 1905, quoted in Huang Dequan, *Zhongguo zaoqi dianying shishi kaozheng* (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 2012), 131.

[15] See also "Benjing xinwen: chayi qiaosuo," *Shuntian shibao*, September 5, 1913, quoted in Huang Dequan, *Zhongguo zaoqi dianying shishi kaozheng* (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 2012), 133; "Benjing xinwen: jiyong shoufa," February 11, 1914, quoted in Huang Dequan, *Zhongguo zaoqi dianying shishi kaozheng* (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 2012), 133.



商務印書館創製
中國活動影片用
中國文字說明簡
單明白婦孺皆曉
影片分教育時事
風景新劇古劇
五大類
家庭喜慶團體宴會
新式戲園都可適用
租售價目特別克己
另印詳表函索即寄
代攝代演亦可照辦遠
路租演須先期商議
如承惠顧請向上海
商務印書館活動
影片部接洽

商務印書館謹啓

Figure 3.04: "The Moving Shadow Play Made in China has Appeared!," an advertisement commissioned by Shanghai's Commercial Press in 1921 for the inaugural volume of *Shadow Play Magazine*, the first Chinese film magazine in history

The reconstructed first film exhibition hall in *Daguanlou* seems to have accentuated the connection between early film spectatorship in China and the concurrent teahouse experience of Chinese opera stage performance, as it spotlights an arrangement of Ming-style chairs and tea

tables in addition to a static image of Tan Xinpei performing *Dingjun Mountain*. Nevertheless, the illustration "Shadow Play Exhibition" also highlights the foreignness of film in early-twentieth-century China by demonstrating a contrast between the customers (who sit on "Western benches" and wear Qing-style skullcaps with the queue) and the film musicians (who sit on bamboo stools and wear ascot caps, playing a trumpet and a bass drum).[16] Furthermore, Chinese film production was negligible at least until Shanghai's Commercial Press claimed to have made "the first Chinese moving shadow plays" (see Figure 3.04 above), not to mention that historians have been questioning for decades whether Ren Qingtai had made *Dingjun Mountain* with Tan Xinpei.[17] These particulars nuance the status of *Daguanlou* as a historic *xiyuan*, because one would be more aware of the curatorial aspect that, by deliberately emphasizing the interconnections between cinema, Chinese opera, and Chineseness, makes a strong impression of cultural and spectatorial uniqueness to early Chinese cinema.

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[16] "Western benches" (*xishi zuodeng*) were indeed in use in *Daguanlou* as an exotic attraction during the 1910s. For evidence, see, for example, "Benjing xinwen: Gaizu yingye," *Shuntian shibao*, June 29, 1913, quoted in Huang Dequan, *Zhongguo zaoqi dianying shishi kaozheng* (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 2012), 133.

[17] In *The Distorting Mirror: Visual Modernity in China*, Laikwan Pang states that "[t]here were no magazines or newspapers specifically about cinema until the 1920s, and I have found little information about the first two decades of Chinese cinema in major cultural magazines or writings before the 1920s. I have to admit that in spite of my wishful thinking as a film historian, cinema was just not that popular among the Chinese masses in the first two decades after its appearance. Cinema culture in China did not fully develop until the 1920s" (2007: 166). My own archival study of Chinese film publications of the 1920s and 1930s at Shanghai Library's Early Modern Documents Reading Room (*jindai wenxian yuelanshi*) also suggests that, in terms of either scale or popularity, Chinese film production was no sooner comparable with the British, American, French, and Soviet counterparts, than when historical costume-drama film, *wuxia* swordplay martial art film, and various forms of Chinese opera on film started to proliferate in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

Figures 3.05: Sunbeam Theater in North Point, Hong Kong

Built in 1972, Sunbeam Theater (Figure 3.05) is another of the extremely few *xiyuan* that still exists today.[18] Unlike *Daguanlou* whose appeal lies in the assertion of historicity, Sunbeam Theater is currently one of the most important Chinese opera performance venues in the Sinophone world. It is located in North Point, a district on Hong Kong Island where many Shanghainese and Fujianese settlers live. What is lesser known about this *xiyuan* is that it was part of a movie theater chain owned by a Chinese Communist Party-affiliated film distributor until 1988.[19] It focused on screening movies during its early period of operation, but its original design meant to cater to theatrical performances as well:

[18] See, for example, Ling Woo Liu, "A Night at the Opera," *TIME Magazine*, week of September 22, 2008, accessed September 20, 2017, <http://content.time.com/time/specials/2007/article/0,28804,1642444_1842922_1842913,00.html>.

[19] Xu Dunle, "Kenguang tuoying wushiqiu," *Kenguang tuoying: Nanfang yingye banshiji de daolu* (Hong Kong: MCCM Creations, 2005), 14-17.

> In 1972, Bank of China made an investment on reconstructing the Building of Commercial Press in North Point as Kiu Fai Mansion. We therefore took advantage of this [opportunity] to reside Sunbeam Theater in the new Building. The original plan [for this] was to set up a "stronghold" in North Point for the "Double South" movie theater chain, where theatrical performances could also be staged. The construction process was supervised by Pan Jing'an (1916–2000), the chief (*laozong*) of Bank of China, and coordinated by Chen Kang, the vice-manager of Kiu Kwong Investment Company, and Xu Dunle, [the representative of] Southern Film Corporation. [The design of the Theater] referenced many large-scale theater halls (*juyuan*) in Beijing and Guangzhou. In the theater [hall], there were a large revolving stage and [a number of] dressing rooms, as well as first-class movie projector, acoustic device, and lighting equipment, not to mention those comfortable seats in newest style… When the Theater was about to be inaugurated, everything was ready except the lack of new films for screening due to the Cultural Revolution…[20]

Like the reconstructed Astor Theater mentioned in the previous chapter, Sunbeam Theater once played an important role in assisting Mainland Chinese artists—who were denied access to virtually all performance venues administrated by Hong Kong Urban Council until the 1980s—to reach Hong Kong audience.[21] Controversial or otherwise, Sunbeam Theater was where "revolutionary model plays" were available on film and on stage in Hong Kong before the Cultural Revolution ended in Mainland China.[22] It was such a circumstance that enabled Sunbeam Theater to retain the multipurpose functionality of *xiyuan*, when the demand for Chinese opera as a cultural form started to decline rapidly on the one hand, and the emergence of multi-screen movie theaters began to supersede movie palaces on the other hand.[23]

Without knowing the early history of Sunbeam Theater as a movie palace, one would probably assume Sunbeam Theater being no different from other Chinese opera performance venues such as Ko Shan Theater and Hong Kong Cultural Centre administered by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) since 2000. I found this assumption invalid as soon as

[20] Ibid., 94.

[21] Ibid., 76-81.

[22] "Xinguang lishi," *Sunbeam Spot*, accessed September 20, 2017, <http://www.sunbeamspot.com/?action=aboutus_history>.

[23] Wong Ha-pak, *Xianggang xiyuan souji: suiyue gouchen* (Hong Kong: Chung Hwa Book Company, 2015), 196-207.

I visited there for the first time, spending several hours in its Grand Theater Hall for a production of the classic *Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Honglou meng*) by Shanghai Yue Opera Company. I was first struck by how some audience members enjoyed chatting with each other more than watching or listening to what was (re)presented on stage. They spoke in an easily audible volume that would have been inappropriate in a concert hall or a movie theater. Their apparent disinterestedness in the onstage happenings was remarkable to the extent that commentaries on any aspect of the performance were peripheral to their small talks. I was then surprised by how, despite the inconvenience brought by inflexible seat arrangements, some people left their seats without restraint for restroom breaks, phone calls, or other minor matters during the performance. This conduct would be in principle impermissible in all LCSD-administered performance venues, where ushers and some "well-mannered" audience members would try to maintain some sort of orderliness. Notwithstanding, I did not notice any outward interference with that in Sunbeam Theater. Instead, I found that the audience behavior somewhat resembled how early-twentieth-century urban Chinese people visited a teahouse or a *xiyuan* for leisure.[24]

This epiphany inspired me to seek a better understanding of Chinese opera on film by learning more about the history of *xiyuan* as a multipurpose venue. Actually, more than a year after my first visit in July 2013, I passed by Sunbeam Theater again and made another "discovery." I was walking from the Hong Kong Film Archive to North Point (approximately two miles apart) after participating in a day of public talks and Cantonese opera film screenings. By the time I reached Sunbeam Theater, it was around 10 p.m. and there were very few people; no performance was scheduled that night and the small shop in the lobby—where local aficionados would stop by because of its impressive collection of Chinese opera multimedia

[24] See also Pang, 137-143.

products—was already closed. But while I was looking for information about upcoming Chinese opera stage productions, I was astonished by a couple of posters (see Figure 3.06 below) posted on an entrance pillar.

Figure 3.06: "Happy Morning Matinee Every Sunday at Sunbeam Theater Grand Theater Hall" (photograph taken on November 30, 2014)

One poster promoted "Sunday Happy Morning Matinee," a program that aimed to evoke the audience's "collective memory, Hong Kong value(s)" (*jiti huiyi*, *Xianggang jiazhi*). Using a historical photograph that provided a street view of early-twentieth-century Hong Kong Central

District as the background image, this poster however boasted about the Grand Theater Hall of Sunbeam Theater as a technological display. It described Sunbeam Theater as the only surviving thousand-seat movie palace in Hong Kong whose Dolby Stereo acoustic device, in addition to its high seating capacity and its big silver screen, could offer a mesmerizing cinematic experience. This interesting juxtaposition of visual and written information was meant to create a sense of nostalgia, as it was targeted at elderly frequenters of Sunbeam Theater—especially those enthusiasts of Chinese opera on film—who would have experienced the demise of movie palaces in Hong Kong since the 1980s.

Sunbeam Theater as a *xiyuan* is a rarity that still demonstrates Chinese opera living a double live on stage and on the silver screen. Following Chinese opera's "artistic turn" in the late twentieth century, a growing emphasis on Chinese opera's aesthetic, historical, and educational values has made the survival of *xiyuan* as a commercial theater increasingly difficult. In Hong Kong and Taiwan where commercial Chinese opera troupes have outlasted their Mainland counterparts for several decades, municipalized or state-owned performance venues have been replacing *xiyuan* as soon as those troupes started to shrink and rely on various forms of government subsidies in order to sustain their operation. Official agencies increasingly stipulate programming requests—involving practicalities such as duration, frequency, and seating capacity, as well as ideological considerations including artistic merit, historical significance, and educational benefit—to those troupes in exchange for higher scheduling priorities. They also issue instructions to followers of those troupes, such that the latter have to comply with concert hall etiquette like those who attend Western opera or modern theater performances.

Similarly, *xiyuan* as a movie palace began its downfall when movie attendance was generally in decline in Chinese localities outside the Mainland (where *dianying yuan*—literally

meaning “movie theater”—replaced *xiyuan* as a label during the mid twentieth century). Economic factors such as high operation and maintenance costs and the impact of worldwide multiplex initiatives, and cultural factors including the expansion of cable and satellite television and the emergence of videogames and video rentals, led to the disappearance of moviegoing as a quotidian collective activity involving a large audience.[25] One could get a feel of this disappearance from watching *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* (*Bu san*, 2003), in which Tsai Ming-liang (1957–) poeticized the recurrent screenings of King Hu’s (1932–1997) *wuxia* swordplay martial art film *Dragon Gate Inn* (*Longmen kezhan*, 1967) during the last days of the now-defunct Fuhe Theater in New Taipei.

The original meanings of *xiyuan* have become so historical or archaic that they have already lost currency. While there are some—mostly Cantonese speakers living outside the Mainland (in Hong Kong but also in Southeast Asia and North America)—who still say that they go to *xiyuan* watching “literary-theatrical drama” when they actually visit a megaplex for a movie, they mostly do not know why—aside from their use of a different Chinese spoken language—other Chinese people cannot make sense of that. Unless one learns from books, anecdotes, or museum exhibitions about the historical development of *xiyuan*, one would barely know how, as a venue where movies and Chinese opera stage productions shared not only the designation *xi* but also a number of viewing conventions (such as the ways of identifying the music of Chinese opera with regard to regionality, dramatization, and role-playing), *xiyuan* once epitomized the connection between Chinese opera and Chinese cinema.

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[25] David Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment* (Madison: Irvington Way Institute Press, 2011), 188-189.

3.3 Adapting/Appropriating Chinese Opera in Film Studios in Mid-twentieth-century Hong Kong

Figure 3.07:
Lui Pui-yuen (the tallest in the standing row), composer Chou Lan-ping (the fourth from the left in the sitting row), Cantonese opera “music master” Chu Ngai-kong (the first from the right in the sitting row), and other film musicians recording sound tracks for Mandarin “yellow plum” musical film *The Love Eterne* (1963) in Shaw Brothers Studio (photograph courtesy of Lui Pui-yuen and Yu Siu-wah)

In recent years, very few other than Chinese opera practitioners and enthusiasts are able to tell the differences between Chinese opera on film and Chinese opera on stage. There are many who perceive a Chinese opera film or a Chinese operatic “play within a play” on film as a documentation of stage performance, which obscures the fact that virtually all the music in these films are recorded before or after the shooting. There are also many who assume that the music of Chinese opera on film is at best an adaptation and at worst a truncation of the music of Chinese opera on stage. Problematic as they are from a scholarly standpoint, beliefs and assumptions as such have been sustained by televised variety shows and movies such as *Farewell My Concubine* (1993) in the late twentieth century and onward.

Currently in his eighties, Lui Pui-yuen (see Figure 3.07 above) is a representative living figure who knows in theory and practice how, in specific ways, the music of Chinese opera was treated on stage, in recording studios, and in film studios in mid-twentieth-century Hong Kong.[26] Born in Suzhou when sound film was still a technological wonder in China, he studied *pipa* playing with renowned players Xiao Yuege (1904–1998), Xia Baochen (1901–1957), and Wang Yuting (1872–1951) in Shanghai before he settled in Hong Kong in 1951. He got his first opportunity to work as a film musician when Ye Chunzhi (1926–1997), a young and prolific film composer of the time, expressed interest in collaborating with him in 1953. Yet, his initial lack of enthusiasm about film music kept him away from the film industry until he later joined his brother Lui Tsun-yuen (1931–2008) in working for Leung Lok-yam (1910–1989), a more senior film composer who had already established himself as a Mandarin pop song writer in Shanghai during the 1940s. He was then hired as a bandleader (and occasionally, a music instructor) by Shaw Brothers Studio, Motion Picture and General Investment Company Limited, Pathé Records (Hong Kong), Crown Records Limited (*Yule changpian*), and some smaller film companies and recording labels, until he migrated to the United States in 1973. He was close to many composers and Cantonese opera "music masters" (*yinyue jia*), and was a well-sought-after accompanist of Mandarin pop singers and Cantonese opera actor-singers.[27] These personal and professional ties

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[26] The content of this and the next five paragraphs are mostly based on an extensive private interview with Lui held on December 2, 2014 in the Department of Music at the University of Hong Kong, during which I was the facilitator. The attendees of this interview include Yu Siu-wa (an ethnomusicologist who has been close to Lui since the early 1970s), Ho Kang-ming (an experienced amateur pipa player), May Ng (the current research officer of Hong Kong Film Archive), Chen Chih-ting (a Chinese film music researcher), Chan Chi-chun (an ethnomusicologist and dizi teacher), and Po Fung, who later published a short report titled "Lui Pui Yuen and Hong Kong Film Musicians" in *Hong Kong Film Archive Newsletter*, issue 71 (February 2015): 20-21.

[27] Those composers Lui mentioned include: Yao Min (1917–1967), Kei Shang-tong (1919–2007), Wang Chun (1920–2001), Yuen Hon-wah (1922–2009), Chou Lan-ping (1924–1971), Wang Fu-ling (1925–1989), and Joseph Koo (1933); those Cantonese opera "music masters" Lui mentioned include Chu Ngai-kong (1922–1981), Lau Siu-wing (1923–2001), and Chu Hing-cheung (1924–); those Mandarin pop singers Lui mentioned include Yoshiko Yamaguchi (1920–2014), Wu Yingyin (1922–2009), Yao Lee (1922–), Koo Mei (1929–), Grace Chang (1933–),

made Lui no less significant than his more well-known colleagues in shaping the (musical) soundscape of Chinese cinema during the mid twentieth century.

As Lui himself pointed out, music occupied an understated part in Chinese film production, wherein a very small group of musicians, songwriters, and composers created vocals and instrumentals of similar but different genres, for movies but also for stage performances, studio recordings, and radio broadcasts. Like many of his past colleagues, Lui began his musical career as a performer of folk and traditional music, and then moved to cosmopolitan cities (i.e., Shanghai and Hong Kong) for more professional opportunities. He first accompanied Suzhou *tanci* narrative singing and played Jiangnan *sizhu* "silk and bamboo" ensemble music, and later performed other kinds of music, including Mandarin pop songs and Cantonese opera. He became familiar with modern technological media (i.e., gramophone, radio, and cinema) and developed connections with professional Chinese (of different regions) and foreign (mostly Filipino) musicians. Without any conservatory training, he faced the challenges of sight-reading, frequent modulation, and fixed-tempo playing:

> My playing was fine [as a newcomer], but it got awkward when [I was] required [to] use notations… I did not know how to read notations, but [the composer] still gave me a written copy of his song *A Visit to the Lover* (*Tan qinglang*) for preparation prior to recording… my preparation was fine but everything became a mess [during recording]… I always got the tempos and rhythms wrong…

Lui eventually tackled those challenges and took part in more than a hundred Mandarin and Cantonese movies (including Mandarin contemporary and "yellow plum" musical films, Cantonese opera films, etc.) as a principal instrumentalist. He not only played *pipa* and *qin* (seven-string zither) during recording sessions, but also coordinated with directors, composers, actor-singers, and other musicians on film scoring and film promotion matters. He became a

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Tsin Ting (1934–), and Ling Po (1939–); those Cantonese opera actor-singers Lui mentioned include Leung Sing-bo (1908–1981), Yam Kim-fai (1913–1989), and Pak Suet-sin (1928–).

bandleader after Leonard Ho (1925–1998), an important film producer under contract of Shaw Brothers Studio, sent him and playback singer Tsin Ting (1934–) to India for a concert tour that promoted *The Kingdom and the Beauty* (*Jiangshan meiren*, 1959), the second Mandarin "yellow plum" musical film directed by Li Han-hsiang (1926–1996). For more than a decade, Lui received the second highest salary within the hierarchy of film musicians (i.e., conductor/composer–bandleader–principal players–other players); composers would ask him to work through the disparities between regional styles brought by musicians of different performance backgrounds, and to evaluate the suggestions raised by those musicians:

> [We] always talked [about the music being played]… [We] always expressed opinions [on each other's playing]… "Your *zhonghu* (two-string alto bowed lute) playing is too loud; you should play softer"… What we did not like the most was—following what some Shanghainese would say—a kind of noisy arrogant display… "You cannot play like this [during rehearsal and recording sessions]"… When I was at Shaw Brothers Studio, I never emphasized myself being a soloist who played *Warm Spring, White Snow* (*Yangchun baixue*). Never! [I never highlighted fact that] I played *Ambush from All Sides* (*Shimian maifu*). Never! There was no such thing as "you are the best one." Not at all. There was a guy who behaved like that for his first time, and he never returned to the film studio again [as a result]. I met him several times [on different occasions]; he thought he was very smart and should be a leading musician, which made me wondered why he knew nothing [about being a film musician] but remained so pretentious… For those written [sic] scores, you must never make melodic embellishment (*jia hua*) or alter any instructions stated by the composer. Everything would be fine as long as you got the pitches, tempos, and rhythms correct; only the basics were important. For Mandarin pop songs, [you could] sometimes add a bit of timbral subtlety. If any of the musicians exerted too much of their own musicality on the overall playing, then I would say no to that. Some musicians liked to display their musical smartness, which was undesirable; the conductor would criticize me for that next time, not you.

Lui was conscious of the extent to which film composers (or in the case of Cantonese opera films, Cantonese opera "music masters" and principal actor-singers) were in charge of how music should be deployed in movies. Kei Shang-tong (1919–2007), for instance, preferred the timbre of "Northern" instruments such as *sanxian* (three-string fretless plucked lute with a soundboard covered by snake skin) and *yueqin* (plucked lute with a moon-shape soundboard), whereas Wang Fu-ling (1925–1989) avoided the use of "Northern" *yangqin* (Chinese dulcimer) but favored the *erhu* (two-string bowed lute) being played in the style of Yue opera. Wang was also known for his distinctive use of tonal harmony, his collaboration with Filipino musicians,

and his request for exactly fourteen instrumentalists during rehearsal and recording sessions, whereas Yao Min (1917–1967) was esteemed for writing tuneful melodic themes and interludes (*guomen*). Chou Lan-ping (1924–1971) was rather a good orchestrator whose writing of Chinese instrumental parts tended to be more idiomatic than his peers. These film composers dealt with similar musical materials due to generic restrictions (most obvious in the case of Mandarin "yellow plum" musical films), and yet their musical preferences required film musicians to ignore preexisting musical conventions and suppress personal or regionalized musicality, in exchange for stylistic cohesion as specified in the score or under the direction of a conductor:

> I didn't like some musical elements in Cantonese opera and [Cantonese *Guangdong yinyue* ensemble music]… I didn't like those noisy "big gongs and big drums"… Sometimes [those Cantonese local musicians] used saxophone… that [Cantonese "music master"] Chu Hing-cheung… he [played] saxophone occasionally, [which] I didn't like that much… Such practice was changed later… I don't know if that was due to my reflection [to those composers]… the music was better since then… what I hated the most was the use of jazz drums [sic]… that was absolutely unacceptable… I voiced my displeasure about that… they said I was right and they did not use [the drum kit] anymore, like [the case of] saxophone… Those were my opinions and it was not up to me to decide and make those changes…

Aside from these constraints on scoring and recording film music, film directors such as Li Han-hsiang and King Hu (1932–1997) still took control of matters such as sound editing, the choice of playback singers, and the use of song as plot device, cultural symbol, or constituent of diegetic music performance. They would indicate their musical needs to those composers, and provide firsthand musical materials (e.g. song-texts, personal collections of folk or Chinese operatic tunes in the form of transcription or long-playing record, etc.) or even hands-on demonstrations whenever necessary. On top of that, Cantonese opera actor-singers such as Fong Yim-fen (1926–) and Hong Sin-nui (1924–2013) would ask for tailor-made film songs (of either operatic or non-operatic styles) written by particular songwriters or "music masters." In rarer cases, a composer would invite an advanced musician like Lui to create an interlude or a solo parts, so as to add a specific regional or traditional flavor to the music.

In 1979, Wong Kee-chee (1947–2010) wrote a short essay titled "A Song in Every Film" for the proceedings of "Hong Kong Cinema Survey, 1946–1968."[28] By providing an overview of Chinese cinema within the framework of Chinese popular music (including Chinese opera genres such as Peking opera, Yue opera, and Cantonese opera etc.), he argued that there were at least seven factors that defined singing as the quintessence of Chinese sound films until the late 1960s:

1. The influence of Hollywood musical spectacles;
2. The "soft" and escapist status of musical films under chaotic sociopolitical circumstances;
3. The nostalgic sentiments evoked by periodized or regionalized musical sounds during those decades of mass migration;
4. The presentational similarity between (diegetic) film songs and Chinese opera excerpts (*zhezi*);
5. The popularity of modern songstresses and Chinese opera actor-singers;
6. The proximity of film production to radio broadcast and recording industry;
7. The historical continuity between Chinese opera and Chinese cinema in terms of acting, narrative structure, dialogue delivery, body movements, and mise en scène

Wong's argument not only complements Lui Pui-yuen's retrospection of mid-twentieth-century Chinese film music production, but also hints at the extent to which Chinese opera as music was mediated by the representational "languages" of modern technological media, the technical and stylistic elements of various kinds of Chinese and non-Chinese music, and the professional roles that film musician played:

> Now when I think about those film musicians [who worked with me in Shaw Brothers Studio], I feel like it is a pity that their names were not shown in film credits… you scholars can [sic] write about them [and let people know about] these "heroes behind the screen"… We were not casual musicians; we were formal recording musicians, serious and well-mannered. There was no such thing as *lao* (i.e., earning money or other advantages by improper means), never! We recorded sound tracks respectably [and] I was the leader. I never allowed my fellows to make a mess of [any rehearsal or recording sessions]… I always sought help [from Filipino musicians] whenever Western instrumental playing was needed… They were pretty proud, but then they were convinced [by my musicianship]… They looked me down in the first place… During earlier times [in the 1950s], the quality of playing among Chinese film musicians was very low, and I think their moral characters were also problematic…

[28] Wong Kee-chee, "A Song in Every Film," *Hong Kong Cinema Survey, 1946–1968* (Hong Kong: The Urban Council, 1979), 29-32.

Wong's argument also alludes to how Chinese filmmaking intervened the musical abstraction of Chinese identities. The mixture of Chinese folk, traditional, and operatic music and musicians contributed to a sonic and cinematic formation of imagined communities, wherein certain unified visions or sonorities of Chineseness were projected in some way that blurred local, regional, and national boundaries and differences:

> Those *wuxia* swordplay martial art films of the past are mostly based on either Peking opera or Cantonese opera. In earlier decades, many of those film actors and actresses were from Chinese opera troupes, and one can easily notice the affinity of their acting to Chinese opera stage performance. Traits of Cantonese opera [sic] are apparent in those films featuring Yu So-chow, for instance. She adapted acrobatic skills from Cantonese opera [sic] in order to perform in those action sequences… In *Come Drink With Me*, King Hu also conceptualized his filming based on his knowledge of Peking opera. [H]e developed a cinematic language that corresponds to Chinese opera conventions to a notable extent; his use of "gongs and drums" (*luogu*) provided him one of the best ways to demonstrate [dramatic] intensity… [M]y character "Golden Swallow" could be exemplary of the martial *dan* role type. Along with "Jade Faced Tiger," the other "Five Tigers" were all in reference to Peking opera role types… The use of music and theatricalized movements (such as hand gestures and stylized steps) in *The Lotus Lamp* adheres to Chinese opera conventions [as well]… Before filming its musical sequences, there were rehearsals led by Chinese opera teachers… Playback singers such as Tsin Ting recorded those songs before the filming process, [and] I had to follow the recorded soundtracks to sing and act during rehearsals. I was instructed to follow the phrasings and breathing points made by the playback singer so as to perfect the film's musical lip-synching… [One cannot separate] [t]he execution of theatricalized movements […] from singing while one is performing for a Mandarin "yellow plum" musical film [like *The Lotus Lamp*]. (S)he has to learn from the music in order to complement other aspects of performance.

The above account by Cheng Pei-pei—the principal actress in *Come Drink With Me* (*Da zuixia*, 1965) and *The Lotus Lamp* (*Baolian deng*, 1965)—further illustrates the mediated nature of Chinese opera on film.[29] Her impression of Yu So-chow (1928–2017), for instance, seems to be based on Yu's performances in Cantonese films of the 1950s and 1960s. Yu was a Beijing-born film star who received formal training in Peking opera and martial arts from her influential father Yu Jim-yuen (1905–1997). She introduced "Northern" style acrobatics to her colleagues and audiences in Hong Kong, although she had to rely on voice actresses who covered virtually

[29] The content of this and next paragraph are mostly based on a private interview with Cheng held on October 1, 2012 in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Part of this interview was published as translated transcription in the appendix of the article "King Hu's Cinema Opera in his Early *Wuxia* Films," *Music and the Moving Image*, vol.7 no. 3 (Fall 2014): 24-40.

all her Cantonese dialogues and singing parts.[30] Yu's cinematic persona was thus a technically and technologically synthesized construct that manifested the stylistic hybridization of Cantonese opera, instead of an exemplar of Cantonese opera's influence on Cantonese films as Cheng posited. More ironically, *Come Drink With Me* and *The Lotus Lamp* actually exposed Cheng—who was never trained as a Chinese opera actor-singer—to the technologized treatment of music and theatricalized movement in a way comparable to those Cantonese films that involved Yu:

> [King] Hu paid much attention to the duration and punctuation of acrobatic movements. By arranging the punctuation through careful placement of dialogues and (diegetic) silence, he created a sequence of climaxes within a scene… He [even] added those exclamations [appeared in the action sequences]. They are not natural expressions. Actually, I exclaimed whenever I executed those acrobatic movements in the action sequences. Nevertheless, the sounds I made were eliminated [during post-production]. I had to exclaim in order to provide myself strength to "fight." The audience can notice me opening my mouth when I was "fighting." To Hu, my "muted" exclamations contributed to the film's arrangement of "gongs and drums" percussion patterns… [Those instrumental sounds] were not created until Hu communicated with Chou Lan-ping; Chou had to follow the tempo and rhythm illustrated in the filmed action sequences in order to adapt Peking opera "gongs and drums" percussion patterns for the film… Hu incorporated his own sense of tempo and rhythm into Han Ying-chieh's action choreography through making specific requests as well as by film editing… He [always] visualized his sense of tempo and rhythm through camera movement, action choreography, and set design…

In addition to the practical details regarding the treatment of Chinese opera in *Come Drink With Me* and *The Lotus Lamp*, there are several value-laden issues that have plausibly shaped Cheng's thought about the connection between Chinese opera and Chinese cinema. Cheng noted that "[the history of] Chinese film began with transforming Chinese opera performance into cinematic representation," but argued that "if Mei [Lanfang] aimed to cinematize [Peking opera], [then] he probably had to perform in another way, making his

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[30] According to one of Yu's junior fellows Nancy Sit Ka-yin (1950–), Yu's dialogues and singing parts were mostly covered by Lai Kwan-lin (?–), although some of Yu's early Cantonese films used the voices of Leung Suk-hing (1914–1980), Lam Kar-yee (1927–), and Hui Ying-ying (1938–2000). For details, see "Dade dide weidu Guangdong hua bu lingguang," *Next Magazine*, May 16, 2017, accessed January 5, 2018, <http://nextplus.nextmedia.com/news/ent/20170516/511326>; and "Wen Li Kunlian jichang luyin, Yu Suqiu hanyou yuansheng pai *999 Liqi san xiongshou*," *Apple Daily*, May 16, 2017, accessed January 5, 2018, <https://hk.lifestyle.appledaily.com/nextplus/magazine/article/20171201/2_511475_0>. Lai, Leung, Lam, and Hui were all active in Hong Kong as film actresses during the 1950s and 1960s, and Lai, Leung, and Lam were first trained as Cantonese opera actor-singers.

performance more connected to everyday life." She believed that "Chinese film has become more distinct from Chinese opera since there was a [higher level of] cinematization marked by [both the mastery over] film editing and the departure from documentary tradition." She insisted that one should clearly distinguish those Mandarin 'yellow plum' musical films produced by Shaw Brothers Studio from those Huangmei opera films made in Mainland China, as she posited that "despite the [presentation of] episodic narrative, those Shaw Brothers productions are more connected to everyday life and include fewer theatricalized movements." For her, *Come Drink With Me* is an example showing a progress toward higher artistic standards in Chinese cinema, since "Chinese opera was [then] no longer a theatrical genre for copycat adaptation in cinema [but] became a source that provided elements for enhancing *wuxia* films as cinematic representation." After all, she regarded Chinese opera as a defining influence on Chinese cinema. She reiterated both the centrality of "literary-theatrical drama" and the importance of music in Chinese cinema during the early-and-mid twentieth century, but with a critical eye grounded in the cultural and artistic values of art cinema.[31] She felt that the theatricality of Chinese opera hindered the development of Chinese cinema, until cinematic technology and cinematographic techniques were better understood and deployed by filmmakers such as Hu, whose "unique technical mastery and sense of choreography" brought him the award of *Grand Prix de la Commission Supérieur Technique* in the 1975 Cannes Film Festival.[32]

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[31] In *Situated Listening: The Sound of Absorption in Classical Cinema*, Giorgio Biancorosso (2017: 204) notes that "[a]s is well known, both practitioners and theorists of the cinema have been reluctant to think of film in terms of drama." He thinks that "this is due the latter's association with the theater and persistent anxiety that the cinema be defined apart from it... [a] state of affairs [that] goes back as far as the early debates on cinema's specificity and relative artistic merits vis-à-vis other art forms."

[32] "CANNES CLASSICS – Back to the Beginnings of the Swordplay Movie with *A Touch of Zen*," *Festival de Cannes Website*, accessed October 20, 2015, <http://www.festival-cannes.com/en/article/61799.html>. During my fieldwork in Hong Kong in March 2015, I had a conversation with independent film researcher Po Fung, during which he made a relevant statement with regard to the conflict between the theatricality of Chinese opera and cinematic realism. For details, see chapter 1, footnote 12. In *Jia Zhangke, a Guy From Fenyang* (2014), Jia Zhangke

3.4 The Old and New Audiences for Chinese Opera on Film

What Cheng Pei-pei told me in 2012 crossed my mind again when I was attending a public screening of *The Kingdom and the Beauty* at the Hong Kong Film Archive two years later. The event was part of a retrospective film series featuring Run Run Shaw (1907–2014), the founder of Shaw Brother Studio (and the producer of both *Come Drink With Me* and *The Lotus Lamp*). Notwithstanding the curation's focus on Shaw's success in the Sixth Asia Pacific Film Festival and his contribution to Mandarin "yellow plum" musical film as a popular Chinese film genre, the attendees at the event cared most about the film itself and the charisma of its principal actress Lin Dai (1934–1964). Before the event formally began, I overheard many of them talking to each other about the kinds of movies they liked. One expressed her distaste for Cantonese opera film, as she claimed that "I am not going to watch a film as such" while responding to her peers about her plan for attending other HKFA public screenings (which included monochromic Chinese films as well as Hollywood classics and European art films). I also heard others chit-chatting about the similarities and differences between Cantonese opera film and Mandarin "yellow plum" musical film, with terms prescribed by the dichotomies between film stars (*yingxing*) and Chinese opera stars (*mingling*), between the hastily captured imagery and the spectacular one, between the old-fashioned and the renovated, and between the "tasteless" and the "tasteful," to name the most obvious. These casual conversations reinforced many of Cheng Pei-pei's views about the roles Chinese opera played in the development of Chinese cinema, albeit in more subjective and less technical terms.

(1970–), one of the best known Chinese Sixth Generation directors to date, is also shown to have commented on the "very theatricality," the "unnatural, deliberate quality," and the "detachment from everyday life" of those movies produced in Mainland China during the Mao era.

Between September 2014 and June 2017, I attended more than thirty other public screenings of Mandarin "yellow plum" musical films and Cantonese opera films at HKFA and a few other LCSD-administered venues.[33] I was aware of the frequent recurrence of conversation topics similar to those I mentioned above, but I also discovered how, as I will explain in the rest of this chapter, the spectatorial traits of those viewers were subject to two major factors. First, I noticed how, in terms of arousing perceptional responses, those individual musical sections or production numbers featured in musical films (and non-opera films) are different from the music that is prescriptive of and continuously integrated into the depicted actions and events in Chinese opera films. Second, I realized that baby boomers and their parents formed a stable and well-informed group of fans and critics, whereas younger viewers were oddities whose presence looked incompatible with this group. The fact that some fellow viewers often asked me (a Chinese man in his early thirties) "why you are here" and "why you are interested in this" underscored how the issue of age and generation could be significant to perceiving Chinese opera on film as a locus of Chinese identities.[34]

For the public screening of *The Kingdom and the Beauty* mentioned above, I was astounded by how some viewers overtly expressed their excitement while anticipating and following the film's numerous musical moments. However had I already gained some experience of Mandarin "yellow plum" musical film through attending the public screenings of *The Lotus*

[33] For the list of those public screenings I attended, see appendix, table 1.

[34] Since June 2010, HKFA has been screening Cantonese (and sporadically Mandarin) films of the 1950s and 1960s every Friday morning for the public at very low price (i.e., ~2.5 USD for adult ticket, ~1.25 USD for senior or student ticket). With purposes very similar to "Sunday Happy Morning Matinee" scheduled in Sunbeam Theater (see pages 49-50 for details), HKFA frequently selects Cantonese opera films and other forms of Chinese opera on film for these screenings. This arrangement facilitates the gradual reunion of some retired elderly locals who are somewhat distant from twenty-first century media culture but notably eloquent in the mid twentieth century counterpart. These locals are mindful of and enthusiastic about whatever opportunity to watch old Chinese movies on the silver screen, as I have seen many of them again and again not only in other public screenings such as those I described above, but also at HKFA's lobby and ticket office.

Lamp, *Madam White Snake* (*Baishe chuan*, 1962), *Lady General Hua Mu-lan* (*Hua Mulan*, 1964), *West Chamber* (*Xixiang ji*, 1965), and *The Three Smiles* (*San xiao*, 1969) at the same venue three months earlier, it was my first time witnessing viewers singing along with the film without constraint, an idiosyncrasy once mentioned by Taiwanese newspaper reporters during the early and mid 1960s. My intuitive response to that propelled me to leave the screening hall before the film ended, and yet I soon reflected upon why, while watching *The Magnificent Concubine* (*Yang guifei*, 1962)—a visually-similar historical costume drama epic also directed by Li Han-hsiang and produced by Run Run Shaw—with virtually the same group of viewers several hours earlier, some of them were confused or disappointed by the less extensive feature of the singing voice. As the female protagonist in *The Kingdom and the Beauty*, Lin Dai mesmerized the audience through lip-synching playback singer Tsin Ting and imitating Chinese operatic gestures such as "water-sleeves" (*shuixiu*) and "facial amplification" (*liangxiang*). I learned about how the deliberate use of pop-style vocals rendered some selected Huangmei opera stock tunes more accessible to those who favored old-time Mandarin popular songs and enjoyed humming some catchy ditties.[35] For me, this experience of Mandarin "yellow plum" musical film was an intense encounter with a mode of spectatorship that nuanced or even challenged institutionalized ways of seeing and listening—such as the male gaze and the passive listener—that are prevalent in contemporary reception of cultural forms. It directly influenced my analyses of Chinese opera on film as representation, since it pushed me not only to identify "key symbols" embedded in the music and the moving image, but also to explicate why and how those "key symbols" would come into effect among those who have been involved in establishing, sustaining, and transforming them for generations.

[35] For more details about the music of *The Kingdom and the Beauty*, see chapter 5, pages 136-137.

In a similar vein, I learned from the Cantonese opera film audience I encountered in Hong Kong about some movie-watching habits that seem typical among Chinese opera enthusiasts (*xi mi*). During the program "Iconic Heroines in Cantonese Opera Films" held in the last weekend of November 2015, I was amazed by how the audience weighed Chinese operatic elements against cinematic elements. There was disapproval of using close-ups that undermined the expressiveness of virtuosic showcases (*jiashi*) such as "stepping on the stilts" (*cai qiao*) and "scattering the hair" (*san fa*). Nevertheless, deficiencies as such did not hinder those viewers in admiring the way Yu Lai-chun (1923–2004) deployed both her mastery of acrobatic techniques and her singing's tragic undertone to bring a valiant female warrior to life from legend in *The Bound-feet Mu Guiying from Shandong* (*Shandong zajiao Mu Guiying*, 1959). One viewer told me prior to the screening how Yu's physiognomy played a part in shaping her unique vocal timbre, and I pondered after the screening how, without binoculars on hand, Yu's physical attributes could get noticed by someone who attended her past stage performances. There were also some exchanges of views on whether Cantonese opera film should be considered a modern form of Cantonese opera. Citing *The Invincible Generals of the Yang Family* (*Wudi Yangjia jiang*, 1961) and *The Yang Women Generals Issuing an Indictment to the Emperor* (*Yangmen nüjiang gao yuzhuang*, 1961) as examples, some viewers wondered if Yu So-chow—the actress Cheng Pei-pei mentioned during interview—should be treated as a Cantonese opera actor-singer despite herself lip-synching in all the Cantonese opera films she performed.

There were other behaviors that might make the Cantonese opera film audience look atypical or even strange. One could often see a viewer taking a restroom break when a movie character was singing a descriptive or commentary passage during a transition from one episode to another. It is also common to find a viewer leaving the screening room soon after the movie

has reached the denouement. Furthermore, some viewers would verbalize their own intense feeling for justice or compassion when the movie deployed panning and shot/counter-shot in conjunction with rhythmical "aria types" such as *chatjiching* and *bongji gwanfa*; this technical maneuver put a moralized plot into a particular perspective and created a strong sense of tension (be it from the drama, the music, or the moving image). Singing along with the movie was less frequent (and more difficult) than in the case of Mandarin "yellow plum" musical film, and some viewers did not hesitate to voice their complaints about such extraneous sounds with disgust.

In contrast, when I was in Beijing in March 2015 observing the program "Silver Sea, Opera Garden" (*Yinhai xiyuan*) curated by the China Film Archive, I found myself far less a stranger who tried to understand "idiosyncrasies" about the "proper" way of watching Chinese opera on film. Unlike the audience I encountered at HKFA, the CFA counterpart consisted of old and young Chinese opera enthusiasts who, like those undergraduate classmates I took a Chinese opera course with a decade earlier, courteously appreciated Chinese opera film as a national cultural heritage instead of a nostalgic or obsolete means for leisure. Despite the program's specialty (i.e., Chinese opera films of various regional genres), scheduling pattern (every Tuesday evening), and admission fee (i.e., ~3 USD), CFA seemed to be particularly concerned with issues about preserving and promoting Chinese traditional culture.[36] The arrangement of introductory lecture for each screening is exemplary of CFA's artistic and educational emphasis, since the invited speaker—be (s)he a Chinese opera actor-singer, a film director, a scholar, or a critic—would talk about Chinese opera film in relation to the cultural, historical, or artistic aspect of Chinese opera in modern times, emphasizing certain musical, thematic, or stylistic

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[36] "'Yinhai xiyuan' ying jiazuo: Wo guan zengshe xiqu dianying fangying zhuanchang," *China Film Archive*, *China Film Art Research Center*, accessed January 19, 2016, <http://www.cfa.gov.cn/tabid/532/InfoID/4946/frtid/529/Default.aspx>.

standards of stage performance for judgment of cultural, aesthetic, or even national values. In one of those pre-screening talks, I witnessed the director of *Legend of the White Snake* (*Baishe chuan*, 2007) explaining how Zhang Huoding (1971–), currently one of the most accomplished female Peking opera actor-singers in Mainland China, has inherited and illustrated on film the stylistic traits of Cheng Yanqiu (1904–1958), one of the "Four Great *dan* Actors" (*si da mingdan*) in the history of Peking opera. My experience of watching *Wild Boar Forest* (*Yezhu lin*, 1962) at CFA was no less informative in the same regard, as I sensed a kind of uneasiness which I did not have before; those "idiosyncrasies" I learned about at HKFA began to take effect in my perception of Chinese opera on film, and I started exploring how I should approach this cognitive and conceptual shift by writing this dissertation since then.

Chapter 4

Restaging Zhu Yingtai in Early Communist China: Yue Opera, Color Film, and "New Woman"

4.1 *The Butterfly Lovers* as a Cultural Translation of Traditional Chineseness

During the 1954 Geneva Conference, Zhou Enlai (1898–1976), the Premier and Foreign Minister of People's Republic of China (PRC), presented the story of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai (hereafter *The Butterfly Lovers*) to Western diplomats and journalists as the Chinese counterpart of *Romeo and Juliet*.[1] He meant to highlight the cultural and historical commonalities between the Chinese and Western worlds, thereby establishing a palpable connection between their citizens.

The Butterfly Lovers tells the story of Zhu Yingtai, a young lady who disguised herself as a male student in order to leave home and pursue further study.[2] Zhu first convinced her parents how, despite living in a society wherein women were confined to the domestic sphere, she could achieve her personal goals without sacrificing the traditional womanhood. She then traveled to Hangzhou and studied in a school there for three years. In the meantime, she got to know Liang Shanbo, a fellow student who she soon fell in love with. Before she returned home for family reasons, she earnestly asked Liang to visit her home and seek her "younger sister" as his wife in

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[1] Qian Jiang, *Zhou Enlai yu Rineiwa Huiyi* (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, 2005), 135.

[2] Wilt L. Idema (ed. and trans.), *The Butterfly Lovers: The Legend of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai – Four Versions, with Related Texts* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2010), xi.

the near future. When Liang finally came, Zhu was already obligated to marry a wealthy local playboy. Her parents refused to break the engagement, and she had no option but to follow the will of her parents. Liang soon died of rejection and longing. Later, when Zhu was on the way to her new and marital home, she passed by Liang's grave; there was a sudden change in weather, and the grave split asunder before Zhu jumped into it to join her beloved.

The Butterfly Lovers has appeared in many oral, textual, musical, theatrical, cinematic, and television versions since more than a thousand years ago. As Wilt Idema and Yu Siu Wa posit in their studies, this story has been exemplary and constitutive of not only Chinese folk and popular cultures but also Chinese social and political discourses.[3] Zhou Enlai's praise for *The Butterfly Lovers* should thus be taken seriously. On top of this, as Zhou referred *The Butterfly Lovers* to a new "film of stage art," one can imagine why he was so proud to tell Westerners about how New China had succeeded in blending Chinese traditional arts and performance with modern representational technologies and techniques. He strategically glossed over the fact that the film translated a stage production of Yue opera—a young Chinese opera regional genre in contrast to the classical *kunqu* opera and the national Peking opera—whose development during the 1940s was pertinent to the politically-charged Yue opera reform led by Yuan Xuefen (1922–2011), the film's principal actor-singer. He was also reticent about how the film responded to the contention between romance and filial piety in Chinese modernity by promoting gender equality and the freedom to love (*ziyou lian'ai*) while removing "feudal" (*fengjian*) and "superstitious"

[3] For details, see ibid., xi-xii; and Yu Siu Wah, "Cong sige gangchan *Liang Zhu* banben kan dalu wenhua zai Xianggang de bentuhua," *Zhongguo yinyue yanjiu zai xinshiji de dingwei guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* (vol.2), eds. Tsao Pen-yeh, Qiao Jianzhong, and Yuan Jingfang (Beijing: Renmin yinyue chubanshe, 2001), 1056.

(*mixin*) elements from both the earlier versions of *The Butterfly Lovers* and the past performance practices of Yue opera.[4]

Following Zhou's ambassadorial mission in Geneva, this film entered into international festival circuit. It received critical recognition in Karlovy Vary in the Czech Republic, Edinburgh in the United Kingdom, and Locarno in Switzerland. It later reached Chinese audiences as *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* (*Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai*, 1953), creating a lasting cultural phenomenon in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Southeast Asia. It inspired two students from Shanghai Conservatory of Music to compose *Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto* (1958). It also prompted Li Han-hsiang (1926–1996) to make *The Love Eterne* (1963), a Mandarin "yellow plum" musical film version of *The Butterfly Lovers*, with Shaw Brothers Studio in Hong Kong.[5]

In this chapter, I will explicate how, as a Yue opera film, *The Butterfly Lovers* was subject to nationalism, feminism, and communism as well as Yue opera's social origin and the associated mode of cultural acquisition that, to quote Pierre Bourdieu, substantiated "the whole relationship of the petite bourgeoisies to culture."[6] Together with *The Love Eterne* and the Cantonese, Taiwanese (*gezaixi*), and Teochew opera film versions (1958, 1963, 1963), it provides a compelling case showing how, aside from the creation and renewal of Chinese meanings throughout the film production process, mid-twentieth-century Chinese audiences from

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[4] Yuan Xuefen, *Qiusuo rensheng yishu de zhendi: Yue Xuefen zishu* (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2002), 7, 26-29, 137; Bai Hua, "*Xianglin sao* guang hou," *Guan hou*, vol.2 no.2 (1948), 14; Jin Jiang, *Women Playing Men: Yue Opera and Social Change in Twentieth-Century Shanghai* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 188. See also Haiyan Lee, *Revolution of the Heart: A Genealogy of Love in China, 1900—1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 16.

[5] For details, see Luo Guangda, "Zhongwai dianying jiaoliu de tuidongzhe," *Zhou Enlai yu dianying* (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1995), 186; and Xu Dunle, "Kenguang tuoying wushiqiu," *Kenguang tuoying: Nanfang Yingye banshiji de daolu* (Hong Kong: MCCM Creations, 2005), 35-37.

[6] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), 319.

different localities and communities perceived those meanings with socially differentiated knowledges and systems of interpretation. It exemplifies Chinese film culture as multifaceted, involving different modes of production, distribution, and consumption. It also demonstrates the potency of Chinese opera in nationalizing Chinese cinema, when local or regional values are offered as cultural ideals that lend support to the national frame through mass media and commoditization.

4.2 Translating a Stage Opening Scene for a "Film of Stage Art"

In 1954, Sang Hu (1916–2004) expressed enthusiastically about how, as a representational medium, film could uphold a sharp and powerful sense of rhythm. Being the first film director who retold *The Butterfly Lovers* as a Chinese opera on film (and more specifically, a Yue opera on film), he was driven to utilize the juxtaposition of film shots and the magnification of the moving image, with the hope to capitalize on "a favorable condition for compressing [narrative] time while putting Chinese opera on the silver screen."[7] He believed that a filmmaker (including himself) should obtain "the full right to demand for certain things which a stage production could not offer."[8] He was confident that he had successfully encouraged Chinese people to love their traditional culture, their motherland, and the newly established People's Republic as a consequence, especially after his "film of stage art" became the most watched Chinese film of the 1950s within and outside Mainland China.[9]

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[7] Sang Hu, "Yinmu shang de *Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai*," *Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai dianying tekan* (Hong Kong: Southern Film Corporation, 1954), the fifth paragraph.

[8] Ibid., the fifth and sixth paragraphs.

[9] See also Kwok Wai Hui, "Revolution, Commercialism and Chineseness: Opera Films in Socialist Shanghai and Capitalist-Colonial Hong Kong, 1949–1966" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2013), 141.

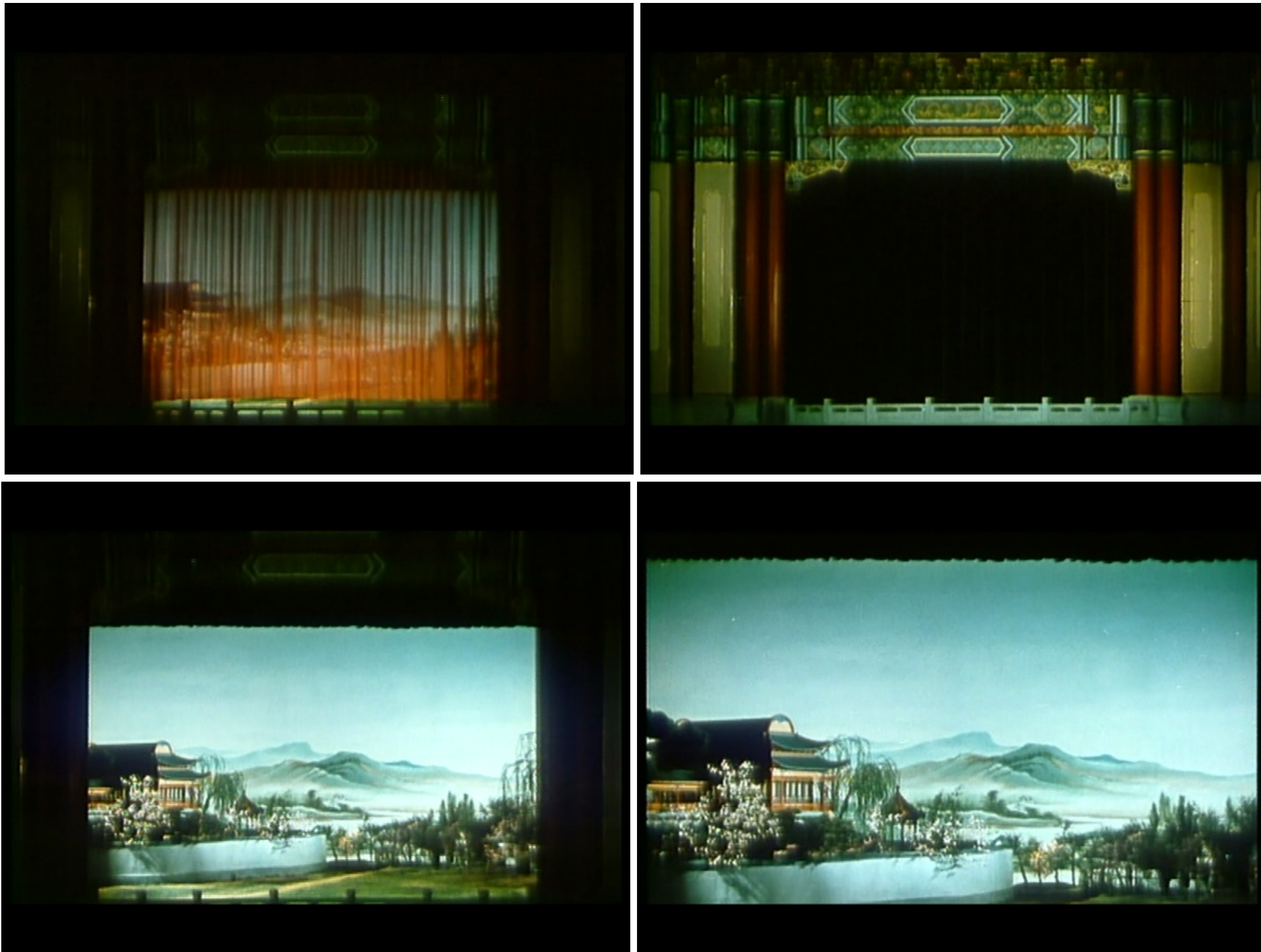

Figure 4.01: The opening sequence, the first shot

Figure 4.02: The opening sequence. the second shot

Figure 4.03: The opening sequence, the third shot

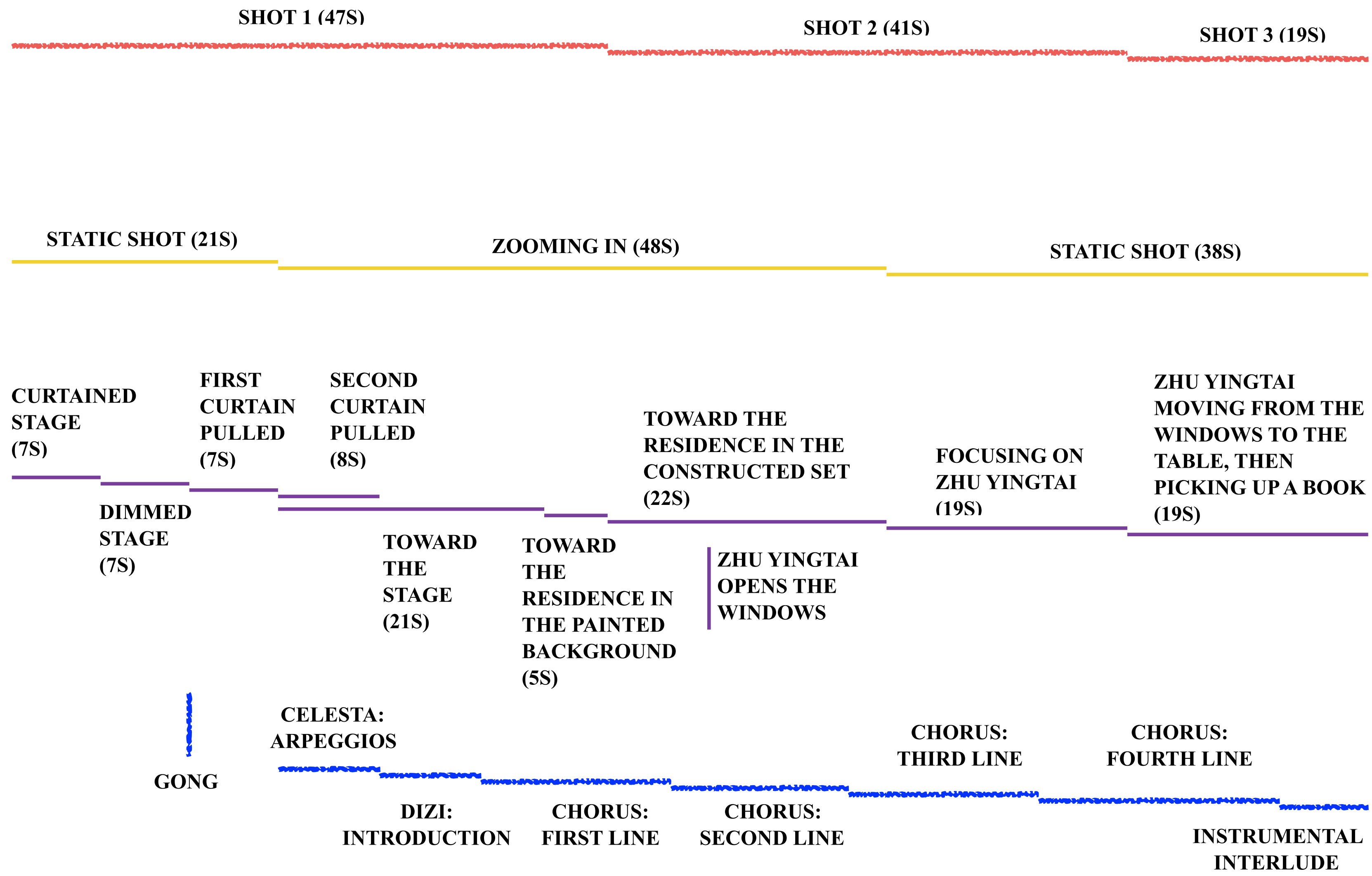

Figure 4.04: *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* (1954), the opening sequence
(Red: shot number; yellow: camera movement/position; purple: visual content; blue: musical feature)

Sang Hu's vision of Chinese cinema was indeed reified in his film's three-shot opening sequence. From there, one would first see a proscenium arch that is evocative of a Chinese classical stage (*xitai*) (Figure 4.01, upper half), and hear a gong strike signaling the beginning of a performance (*kai luo*).[10] For more than forty seconds, this first shot provides a frontal view, wherein the object of focus is flat and no moving object is shown within the field of view. One would then have a closer look—by the means of zoom-in—at the unveiled stage, whose backdrop is a Chinese landscape painting (Figure 4.01, lower half) evocative of the scenery of the prosperous area south of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River (i.e., Jiangnan).

The second shot (Figure 4.02) clarifies what the first shot attempts to (re)present: it shows a mansion as a replica instead of a painted image, such that one would reckon how—similar to the propose of illustrating a stage ritual in the first shot—the film renders the fourth wall perceptible and hence make explicit the film's direct association with Chinese opera. The second shot also refers to an earlier vocal line that indicates where the story takes place (see Figure 4.05 below), thereby introducing Zhu Yingtai as a graceful young lady personated by Yuan Xuefen.[11] Instead of offering the viewer a reverse-angle shot illustrating what Zhu should be looking at (i.e., young itinerant scholars, according to the corresponding vocal line), the

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[10] In Chinese social life, it has been common for one to refer the term *kai luo* ("to commence with the gong sound") to the commencement of a performance event that involves a notable time span ranging from a couple of hours to a year. Emblematic by nature, *kai luo* originally tells about how a Chinese opera stage performance begins onstage; it was later developed into a "root metaphor" (Ortner 1973: 1340) for various usages. In Chinese urban communities during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, it was typical of teahouse theaters (and, to some extent, movie theaters) to have an employee striking a small gong (*xiao luo*) while shouting out an announcement at the entrance front briefly before a performance (or a screening) began. Decades later, many performing arts companies transformed this practice into a mere metaphor, hence the emergence of popular terms such as *yueji kailuo* ("the commencement of the orchestra season") and *juji kailuo* ("the commencement of the theater performance season). The same metaphor has also been in wide use in sports journalism, especially in reports of large-scale sports events: *yingchao kailuo* ("the commencement of the English Premier League season"), *aoyun kailuo* ("the commencement of the Olympic Games"), and *maji kailuo* ("the commencement of the racecourse season") are among the most prominent examples.

[11] Sang Hu, "Yinmu shang de *Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai*," the sixth paragraph.

second shot shows how the character “follows” a non-diegetic strophe and performs some subtle but intensely expressive hand gestures and facial expressions. Without any extension of meanings, a reflective and immobile performing body as such becomes affective on film.[12] Yuan’s mastery of *zuogong* (i.e., an aestheticized kinetic display of “hands,” “eyes,” “body,” “hair,” and “steps”) becomes the center of attention and attraction even when the Chinese landscape painting from the interior occupies notable space within the field of vision; the affect is the expressed when the close-up tears the moving image away from the spatial-temporal coordinates of the diegesis:

> The style of playing and the formalized, minimal scenery […] preserve the essentials of an art of extreme refinement, combining drama, mime and opera, and dispensing with action, settings and props to an almost abstract degree. The most intimate and personal emotions are expressed mainly through a complex language of hand gestures: the copious sleeves of rich garments have a complete vocabulary of protest, alarm, adoration and grief. And what may seem strange at first is seen to possess a startling clarity.[13]

Yuan continues to act along the non-diegetic “opening number” in the third shot after she is shown to have turned back to the interior at the near end of the second shot. Choosing a reverse-angle medium shot for the third shot is significant here, because the choice is intended for providing a viewing angle unattainable in a stage production but within reach by the means of cinematography and film editing.

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[12] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 87.

[13] Gavin Lambert, “Chinese Classic,” *The Observer*, May 29, 1955. See also Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 96. As a term describing a depiction that visually puts the spectator in close proximity to the captured object(s), close-up has been understood mostly with regard to the field of vision from which the spectator is situated in the diegesis. Based on this understanding, what is illustrated in Figure 4.02 seems to be more qualified as captured in medium close-up or even medium shot. Yet, if one considers how, as suggested by what one could see from Figure 4.01, the film (attempts to) provide a point of view that assumes the viewer watching a stage performance from the best audience seat of a virtual theater, then either a medium close-up or a medium shot in the general sense would become a close-up here. Actually, in many public talks on Chinese opera film organized by the Hong Kong Film Archive in 2014 and 2015, I often heard of those guest speakers and attendees expressing their dissatisfaction with the use of close-up *as such*. They argued about such usage being “too cinematic,” as it took away many artistic and performative elements that “should actually be captured in a longer shot.” For details, see chapter 3, pages 62-67.

Desire for Schooling 思讀

慢中板 ♩ = 60-80

Composed by Liu Ruzeng
劉如曾曲

dizi 笛
(introduction 前奏)

chorus 齊唱
(first line 第一句)

上 虞 縣， 祝 家 村，

5
(second line 第二句)

玉 水 河 邊 有 一 個 祝 英 台，

9
(third line 第三句)

才 貌 相 全 她 只 見， 讀 書 人，

13
(fourth line 第四句)

南 來 北 往， 女 孩 兒

16

要 出 門 難 如 登 天。

[注] 齊唱，紗幕拉起時唱，歌唱時抒情，第一句寫景，第二句寫人，第三句較活躍，顯然是引起祝英台很多興趣，但第四句的「難如登天」卻將她甚麼興趣也打下了。

English Translation: [Remarks] Chorus; the singing begins when the linen screen is being pulled; lyrical singing; the first line depicts the scenery; the second line describes the character [Zhu Yingtai]; the third line is more lively, [as the scenery] obviously arouses Zhu Yingtai's great interest, whereas the idiom "*nan ru dengtian*" in the fourth line [means to] avert her interest whatsoever.

Figure 4.05:
The original score of the "opening number" *Desire for Schooling* (*Si du*), a trans-notated version

The continuous presence of the "opening number" since the first shot is also supposed to emphasize the film being more than a mere documentation of stage performance. It is by no coincidence that the "opening number" is non-diegetic overall, because Liu Ruzeng (1918–1999) intentionally arranged it as a kind of "opening music" (*xiandao de yinyue*) that "guides the masses to immerse themselves in the diegesis."[14] As a conservatory-trained composer, Liu meant to use a homophonic (*qi chang*) choral piece (sung in Yue opera vocal style) to "objectively depict the mood and atmosphere."[15] His use of preexisting Yue opera "aria types" was extensive but in a way like a classical Hollywood film composer, who would typically write a film score to supplement, resemble, or enhance both the expression of *qing* and the treatment of mise-en-scène, cinematography, and film editing.

A glimpse of the original score (Figure 4.05) suggests that the "opening number" could be Liu's musical arrangement based on the classical form in Western art music. Primarily in G major, the "opening number" begins with a two-bar introduction that brings about an eight-bar antecedent-continuation hybrid theme, whose second appearance involves a melodic embellishment in the antecedent and a modulation from the tonic to the dominant in the continuation. It is in the AA' strophic form wherein all the measures adhere to a quadruple meter and an approximately adagio tempo. It involves an accompanied homophonic chorus that, despite the adoption of Yue opera singing style, deploys functional harmony and counterpoint to "express various moods and emotions [and] enhance the atmosphere and vividness [of the

[14] Ruan Qian (ed.), *Dianying biandao jianlun* (Shenyang: Dongbei shudian, 1949), 103.

[15] Liu Ruzeng, *Dianying yueju Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai qupu*, song-texts by Xu Jin and Sang Hu (Beijing: Yinyue chubanshe, 1956), IV. Liu's intention of setting the song as non-diegetic and choral was acknowledged by some cultural critics. Dong Chuan, for example, states that "by deploying the chorus, [such Yue opera music] could illustrates the mental states of the [depicted] characters in a timely and appropriate manner, so as to strengthen the dramatic effect." For details, see "Cong yueju zai guowai yanchu zhong suo tihui dao de ruogan wenti," *Xiju bao*, vol.11 (1955), 10.

music].”[16] It features Chinese instruments but “in an interchangeable manner” (*xianghu yingyong*) that echoes the basic orchestration principles of Romantic composers such as Hector Berlioz and Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov.[17]

Here arises the question of why, being known for his keen enthusiasm for Chinese opera, Zhou Enlai would ignore the presence of such a heavily Westernized “opening number” and claim the film as classically Chinese.[18] Liu’s five-page introduction to the original score prepares a persuasive answer for that, as it shows how Western classical music features could be “equated” with the Chinese counterpart. The appearance of the epithet “G scale” (G *diao*), for instance, suggests that the “opening number” is in G major, but Liu’s remark on *diaoxing* (modal characters or tonality) shows that “G scale” could be a Chinese musical mode called *che diao*:

> *Che diao* (the sol mode): pitch [set] equivalent to G [major] scale (G *diao*); the [corresponding] *erhu* tuning is sol-re; most extensively used [scale], appropriate for [expressing] usual moods.[19]

The fact that Yue opera practitioners from the 1940s and onward have been proclaiming *che diao* as the genre’s quintessential “aria type” is no less important in the same regard:

> Liu Ruzeng once states: “Nowadays one often hears how ‘a play revives a genre.’ Yet, for Yue opera’s *che diao*, one could rather speak of how a *diao* develops into a genre [...] One should view the birth of *che diao* as a milestone of Yue opera’s musical development.”[20]

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[16] Liu Ruzeng, V.

[17] Ibid.; Kenneth Kreitner, et al, “Instrumentation and Orchestration,” *Grove Music Online*, accessed August 3, 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/20404>.

[18] For information about Zhou’s enthusiasm for Chinese opera, see, for example, Zhou Enlai, “Zhengwuyuan guanyu xiqu gaige gongzuo de zhishi,” *Renmin ribao*, May 7, 1951; *Shanghai wenhua geming wenyua dashiji (1937.7–1949.5)*, eds. Zhongyang Shanghai shiwei dangshi ziliao zhengji wenyuanhui, Zhongyang shanghai shiwei dangshi yanjiushi, and Zhongyang Shanghai shiwei xuanchuanbu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui (Shanghai: Shanghai fanyi chubanshe, 1991), 206; and Sang Hu, “Zhuiyi Zhou Enlai zongli ersanshi,” *Zhou Enlai yu dianying* (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1995), 354.

[19] Liu Ruzeng, II. The specification of the sol-re *erhu* tuning emphasizes the modal character of the “opening number,” since the *erhu* open strings are tuned D and A in common Chinese music practice. For details, see Terence M. Liu, “Erhu,” *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music Volume 7: East Asia: China, Japan, and Korea*, eds. Robert C. Provine, Yosihiko Tokumaru and J. Lawrence Witzleben (New York: Garland Publishing, 2002), 213.

[20] Yuan, *Qiusuo rensheng yishu de zhendi*, 277.

For Liu, *che diao* is both a tonality and a tune model for composing Yue opera vocals. It was first brought into the ears of Yue opera audience during a performance in November 1943:

> I shocked the *erhu* accompanist Zhou Baocai, as he noticed me singing [in a mode] one scale degree higher. Without altering the position of *qianjin* (the restraining loop), he immediately adjusted the *erhu* tuning from la-mi in *shigong diao* ("the la mode") to sol-re, which is equivalent to the tuning of Peking opera's *erhuang* "aria type"… At that moment, Zhou, originally a Peking opera *jinghu* accompanist, made a remedy [for my change of mode] by connecting my vocal lead-in (*qidiao*) with the use of tremolo… *Che diao* was shaped by my improvisational performance and Zhou's accompaniment, as well as the audience's enthusiasm… I sang [some Yue opera excerpts] in *che diao* the next day at the radio station, and it arose empathy from even more audiences. [*Che diao*] was soon absorbed by various Yue opera troupes, *erhu* accompanists and actor-singers. Through collective endeavor, this new "aria type" gradually became richer and more developed; it established itself as the dominant "aria type" in Yue opera… [which] led to further evolvement in Yue opera's metrical structures. [21]

According to Zhou Laida's extensive study of Yue opera musical transcriptions, *che diao* is a set of tunes that follow eighteen or more types of metrical structure (*banshi*).[22] Based on the same skeleton melody but varied in tempo, rhythmic pattern, melodic structure, and phrase-ending pitch (*luo yin*), these tunes are generated through four variation (*bianzou*) strategies common in Chinese traditional music genres, namely melodic decoration (*xuanlü runshi*), structural alteration (*jiegou bianhua*), expansive embellishment (*fangman jiahua*), and pitch replacement (*jie zi*).[23] *Man zhongban* would be the metrical structure that shapes the melodies of the "opening number" if one readily accepts the specification in the original score; it is more likely a mere tempo marker of sixty to eighty beats per minute, as the vocal lines rather follow *shizi diao* ("ten-character tune"), a metrical structure that accommodates the atypical text-setting of ten-character phrase.

[21] Yuan, *Qiusuo rensheng yishu de zhendi*, 275-276.

[22] Zhou Laida, *Zhongguo yueju yinyue yanjiu* (Taipei: Hongye wenhua, 1998), 87-88.

[23] See also Li Minxiong, *Minzu qiyue zhishi guangbo jiangzuo* (Beijing: Renmin yinyue chubanshe, 1987), 60-105.

[FIRST LINE]

MOTHER TUNE
(MODE UNSPECIFIED) 1 2 3 3 | 3 1 2 - |

CHE DIAO
PRIMARY SKELETON (1=G) 1 21 2 3 | 2 1 2 3 2 - |
x x x x x x x

CHE DIAO
SHIZI DIAO SKELETON (1=G) 1.6 12 32 3 | 23 54 32 1 | 2 3 6.1 6.1 | 2.0 0 0 0 |
x x x x x x x x x x

THE SONG (1=G) 1 6 12 3 3230 | 2 3.5 3 3210 | 2 3 6.1 6 1 | 2 - 0 0 |
x x x x x x x x x x

[SECOND LINE]

MOTHER TUNE 2 5 3 2 | 3 2 1 - |

CHE DIAO
PRIMARY SKELETON 2 3 3 1 2 | 2 3 2 1 - |
x x x x x x x

CHE DIAO
SHIZI DIAO SKELETON 23 12 32 3 | 1.2 3 5 232 1 | 6 1 2 3 5 232 | 10 0 0 0 |
x x x x x x x x x x

THE SONG 2 05 2 765 | 1.2 3523 2 2160 | 6 05 3532 1235 | 1 - 0 0 |
x x x x x x x x x x

a. UNDERLINED NOTE: EIGHTH NOTE; DOUBLE-UNDERLINED NOTE; SIXTEENTH NOTE
b. DOT BELOW NOTE: AN OCTAVE LOWER
c. x: POSITIONS OF CHINESE CHARACTERS FROM THE SONG-TEXT

Figure 4.06:
A comparison between Yue opera skeleton melodies and the first and second vocal lines of the “opening number”

Despite their conformity to Western classical melodic phrasing, the first and second vocal lines of the “opening number” are derived from the “mother tune” (*muqu*) in three steps (see Figure 4.06). First, the “mother tune” is set in “the sol mode” before an addition of some notes that, without altering the core melodic and rhythmic structure, results in the *che diao* primary skeleton melody (*yuan ban*). Second, the *che diao* primary skeleton melody is given a more variegated and complex rhythmic structure while its beat pattern changes from one downbeat and one off-beat (*yiban yiyan*, equivalent to duple meter) to one downbeat and three off-beats (*yiban*

sanyan, equivalent to quadruple meter), so that the *che diao shizi diao* skeleton melody would come into being. And finally, with some melodic decorations, the *che diao shizi diao* skeleton melody becomes the first and second vocal lines of the "opening number." This process is typical of tune formation among Chinese opera genres in "tempo-variant form," wherein "a certain tune, through many generations of transmission and recreation, has developed into a family of a limited number of variants."[24] Accustomed to the ears of performers and listeners alike, these variants "share similar tonal and modal features but differ from each other in what is called *ban*, [which] might be equated with tempo […] [but] implies in addition metrical structure and a degree of melismaticness in the text-tune relationship."[25]

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[THIRD LINE]

CHE DIAO
SHIZI DIAO SKELETON   5   232 76    7  | 5.6 72   6.7 653  | 53    5 5.6    72    | 60 0    0   0 |
                           x   x x             x   x     x         x       x x          x

THE SONG              16 12   3.2    3  | 2    3 4  3    3210 | 1212 3 2532 1231 | 23 232 20  0 |
                      x   x    x            x    x    x           x     x  x             x

THE SONG: FIRST LINE  16 12   3    3230 | 2    3.5  3    3210 |  2    3 6.1      61  | 2   -   0   0 |
                      x   x    x            x    x    x              x    x x              x


[FOURTH LINE]

CHE DIAO
SHIZI DIAO SKELETON   223 56 76 7 | 553 5672 65 6 | 2    32 3   53   |   5. 56 7672 767 | 5 0 0 0
                        x  x   x        xx        x           xx      x        x

THE SONG              2    56 7.  0 | 6.5  5     6.  0 | 3.5 35 22 121 | 1 5   6 7       66 | 5 - 0 0
                      x    x  x        x    x     x       x   x  x         x
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Figure 4.07:
A comparison between *che diao shizi diao* skeleton melody and the third and fourth vocal lines of the "opening number"

[24] Bell Yung, *Cantonese Opera: Performance as Creative Process* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 7.

[25] Ibid.

The third vocal line however complicates one's understanding of the "opening number" as a *che diao shizi diao* variant (see Figure 4.07 above). It has an outlook entirely different from the corresponding skeleton melody, and yet it is derived from the first vocal line—through pitch replacement—for a notable change of mood (*ganqing biaoxian*). While one can assume this treatment as how the "opening number" sustains its AA' strophic form, one should not forget that the Yue opera "mother tune" remains the origin of the third vocal line, not to mention that pitch displacement, being a typical variation strategy in Chinese traditional music, is deployed to generate the third vocal line. Similarly, the resemblance between the fourth vocal line and the corresponding *che diao shizi diao* skeleton melody provides an explanation to why the former ends with a (harmonic) modulation from the tonic to the dominant.

Aside from its adherence to "tempo-variant form" and traditional variation strategies, the "opening number" is organized in a way like a conventional Yue opera *liantao* suite of *che diao shizi diao* variants. It begins with a very short instrumental prelude (*yinzi*), which is followed by a basic section (*jiben duanshi*) with two pairs of vocal lines (*duizhang*). Musically, all but the third vocal line are directly derived from the corresponding *che diao shizi diao* skeleton melody, with standard phrase-ending pitches (i.e., 2 the first, 1 the second, and $\underset{\cdot}{5}$ the fourth). The strophe follows a symmetrical text-setting (see Figures 4.06 and 4.07) and all the vocal lines are set to contrasting contents (i.e., depiction of scenery versus description of a person in the first pair; enthusiasm versus disheartenment in the second pair) for dramatic effects; all but the third vocal line are rhymed (i.e., *bian* the first, *quan* the second, and *tian* the fourth) as well.

Overall, the "opening number" borrows musical concepts and techniques from the Western classical form for experimenting the use of homophonic chorus and modern Chinese orchestral sound in Chinese opera, and yet it includes musical features characteristic of Chinese

opera genres in "tempo-variant form."[26] Historically and politically driven, such manifestation of musical creativity sustained the Sinicization of foreign and imported music as a legitimized way to enhance existing Chinese musical traditions. As the PRC chairman Mao Zedong stated in a speech to "music workers" (*yinyue gongzuozhe*) in 1956:

> [Our] music could follow foreign rationales, [and] it could also make use of foreign instruments. Yet, it has to have its national characters (*minzu tese*), with its unique style(s)… National styles (*minzu fengge*) could be mixed with something foreign… [If] we acquire foreign strengths, [then] our own things would show a leap forward. Chinese and foreign [elements] have to be organically integrated; [this is] not a mere adoption of foreign elements… [If] we could digest foreign music, absorbing its strengths, then this would be advantageous to us. Either a mere adoption or an entire rejection of foreign elements is wrong.[27]

Subject to the musical environment and practices which one accustoms to, one could identify the "opening number" as Chinese classical, Western modern, or otherwise; its musical hybridity is indeed a source of questions regarding the (re)presentation of Chineseness.[28] Yue opera vocal style (*changqiang*) could be foreign to Western audience but meaningful to Shanghainese audience. Basic part-writing could be common in arrangements of Western pop and folk songs but new in the music of Chinese opera. The "opening number" demonstrates its potential to affect one's sensory and aesthetic experience through musical features that are attached to either Yue opera or the Western classical form. The dynamic relationship between the strophe's textual content and the moving image's visual content is instructional to the

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[26] For details about modern Chinese orchestral sound, see Frederick Lau, *Music in China: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 27. Here. I refer to Joseph Lam's description as follows: "a sonic texture that can be found in many genres of (modern) Chinese music that is reminiscent of traditional practices but also evocative of Western concert music of eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe." For details, see "Chinese Music and Its Globalized Past and Present," *Macalester International* 21: *The Musical Imagination in the Epoch of Globalization* (St. Paul, MN: Macalester College, 2008), 43-46.

[27] Mao Zedong, "Tong yinyue gongzuozhe de tanhua – August 24, 1956," *Renmin ribao*, September 9, 1979.

[28] Judith Becker, "Exploring the Habitus of Listing: Anthropological Perspectives," *Handbook of Music and Emotion: Theory, Research, Applications*, eds. Patrik N. Juslin and John A. Sloboda (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 149; Joseph Lam, "Music, Sound, and Site: A Case Study from Southern Song China (1127–1275)," *New Perspectives on the Research of Chinese Culture*, eds. Pei-Kai Cheng and Ka Wai Fan (Singapore: Springer, 2013), 104.

differentiation between the filmed stage and the diegesis, as it imposes certain conditions on one's perception of a "film of stage art." But still, the musical content of the "opening number" is significant to one's perception of the moving image and hence one's cinematic experience. For those who have a limited exposure to the musical style or linguistic language of Yue opera, the "opening number" may have "create[d] rhythm, atmosphere, cinematic space, spectatorial distance, and point of view" like a classical Hollywood movie sound track.[29] For the learned audience, the "opening number" could otherwise be an informative representational device, because its strophe complements the filmed action and vice versa, rather than "offset[s] the aesthetic balance between music and narrative cinematic representation" like a distracting film song.[30] Of course, as the film progresses, there is no question that the "opening number" initiates the audience into the story's exposition of archetypal plots, i.e., Zhu Yingtai begging her father for a chance to leave home and pursue study, her serendipitous encounter with Liang Shanbo while on the way to Hangzhou (*Caoqiao jiebai*), and her three-year school companionship with Liang (*Tongchuang sanzai*).

4.3 Turning the Serendipitous into the Tragic: A Display of Virtuosity

As a fulfilment of fraternal promise, Liang visited Zhu several months after Zhu returned home from school, contemplating a marriage proposal to his best friend's younger sister. He could not be more ecstatic when he realized—at the first moment of the reunion—that Zhu was actually the "younger sister" who disguised herself as a schoolboy for three years or more. His

[29] Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), 16.

[30] Ibid., 20.

ecstasy was however ephemeral, as Zhu's maid revealed to him that Zhu was going to marry someone else. The story turns tragic since then.

With regard to the film's plot development, the reunion of Liang and Zhu (*Loutai hui*, see Figure 4.08 below) is key to sustaining the story's dramatic tension. It begins with a dialogue between Liang and Zhu (shots 1 and 2), which sets the tragic tone for the remaining part of the story by revealing the inevitability of Zhu's arranged marriage. It continues with Zhu's reminiscence of her earlier days with Liang, as she alluded to the blood vow made on a bridge countryside and the three-year school companionship (shot 3), before lamenting about the innuendos she made during the eighteen-*li* farewell (*Shiba xiangsong*) (shots 4–6). In response, Liang exclaimed his speechlessness with Zhu's lament (shot 7) and bemoaned his miserable destiny as a lover (shot 8), which prompted an outburst encapsulated in the stretched-out statement "infinite happiness, infinite grief" (shot 10). Feeling utterly helpless, Zhu wished Liang all the best and blamed herself for causing all the misfortunes (shot 11), which brought the reunion to the end.

SHOT	CAMERA MOVEMENT INVOLVED (Y/N)	SINGER(S) IN CAMERA FOCUS	SINGER	“ARIA TYPE”	METRICAL STRUCTURE (*BAN SHI*)	STRING-INSTRUMENT (*SI XIAN*) ACCOMPANIMENT (Y/N)
1 (62.4s)	N	YUAN AND FAN	YUAN	CHE DIAO	SAN BAN	Y
2 (39.3s)	N	FAN	FAN		MAN BAN	N
3 (74.2s)	Y	YUAN AND FAN	YUAN		MAN BAN	N
4 (50.9s)	Y	YUAN AND FAN			TWICE AS FAST	N
5 (3.9s)	N	FAN				N
6 (65.2s)	Y	YUAN AND FAN			TWICE AS FAST (SINCE 2ND LINE) SLOW DOWN (LAST 3 LINES)	NO UNTIL THE LAST 2ND VOCAL LINE
7 (55.3s)	Y	FAN	FAN		MAN BAN	Y
8 (67.4s)	Y	FAN				Y
9 (4.3s)	N	YUAN	(INTERLUDE)	XIANXIA DIAO	KUAI BAN	NA
10 (55.6s)	Y	YUAN AND FAN	FAN		MAN BAN (1ST LINE) / JIE BAN-SAN BAN (2ND LINE)	Y
11 (35.1s)	Y	YUAN AND FAN	YUAN		JIE BAN	Y

Table 4.01: The core suite (*liantao*) in the film’s *Loutai hui* episode, cinematic and musical settings[31]

[31] See also Cinemetrics, “Cinemetrics Database: Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai – Liutai hui (1953, PRC), Directed by Sang Hu, Measured with FACT,” <http://www.cinemetrics.lv/movie.php?movie_ID=20440>.

However effective in terms of storytelling, the aforementioned storylines were not that intriguing among Yue opera actor-singers and audience of the 1950s, who seemed to care more about the musical and melodramatic expressiveness of the performing bodies than what they had known for a long time.[32] The extensive use of *che diao* and *xianxia diao* "aria types" (such as *che diao man ban* and *xianxia diao man ban*) may explain why the film delivers the reunion of Liang and Zhu as an eight-and-a-half-minute core suite (*liantao*) that musicalizes the expression of lyrical, despairing, melancholic, or sentimental contents.[33] Yuan Xuefen and Fan Ruijuan sang for their roles quite a number of highly melismatic passages that were set to the *san ban* (slow tempo, unmetered, "free" rhythm), *man ban* (slow tempo, with a rhythmic pattern equivalent to quadruple meter), and *jie ban* (a *man ban* subtype with a different upbeat position) metrical structures (Figure 4.08, the seventh column). The displacement of both the performing bodies and the camera (involving mostly tracking shots with slow panning, if not static shots) is very limited, while the length of each film shot is notably perceptible (i.e., average shot length: 46.7s, median shot length: 55.3s). The reunion of Liang and Zhu is therefore conveyed in a remarkably slow pace in both musical and cinematic terms, in order to accentuate those subtle hand and facial gestures as well as those signature "aria types" performed by Yuan and Fan (i.e., *che diao* for Yuan and *xianxia diao* for Fan).[34]

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[32] For details, see Ding Zu, "Yingpian *Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai* gei women de qifa," *Xiju bao*, vol.1 (1955), 62; and Sun Jianhua and Li Dade, "Zhiyuanjun tongzhi kan yingpian *Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai*," *Dazhong dianying*, vol.2 (1955), 32. See also chapter 2, pages 26-28, with regard to narratological issues in Chinese traditional storytelling.

[33] Zhou Laida, 110-111, 168, 175-178.

[34] According to Yuan's autobiography, *xianxia diao* first appeared during a Yue opera stage performance of *The Butterfly Lovers* in May 1945, when Fan expressed her frustration with the low pitch range of the traditional *liuzi diao* "aria type" while singing for the scene *Shanbo linzhong* (*Shanbo Approaching his Death*). Similar to the case of *che diao*, erhu accompanist Zhou Baocai played a critical role in the emergence of *xianxia diao*. He collaborated with Fan, integrating melodic fragments from *che diao* and Peking opera's *fan erhuang* "aria type" with the dol-sol erhu tuning, in order to develop a new "aria type" that supersedes *liuzi diao*. *Che diao* and *xianxia diao* share a relationship similar to that between Peking opera's *erhuang* and *fan erhuang* "aria types," in which vocal melodies

The film deploys the reunion of Liang and Zhu as a dramatic means to render *The Butterfly Lovers* more realistic and straightforward as well.[35] Set in imperial China but devoid of specific historical context, *The Butterfly Lovers* is a love story that—as either a critique or an approval—portrays the orthodox Confucian values of women's "three obediences and four virtues" (*sancong side*) within "a cultural realm filled of timely turning points, chances, and prophetic events."[36] The Yue opera film made this story a critique of those values, as it was told from the perspective of Yuan Xuefen, meanwhile a feminist communist cultural cadre who not only personally and professionally resisted "feudal remnants" with remarkable persistence, but also critically and relentlessly reinterpreted this story since her stage debut as a teenage actor-singer.[37] The director Sang Hu also aspired to transform *The Butterfly Lovers* into "an outstanding work of art that firmly combines realism (*xianshi zhuyi*) with romanticism (*langman*

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are derived from the same skeleton melodies but being played in different tunings/scales. For details, see Yuan, *Qiusuo rensheng yishu de zhendi*, 277-278.

[35] For details, see Sang Hu, "Tantan xiqu pian de juben wenti," *Lun xiqu dianying* (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 1958), 42; Jiang Yi, 30; and Yuan, *Qiusuo rensheng yishu de zhendi*, 137.

[36] Geremie Barmé, "Persistence de la tradition au 'royaume des ombres,' Quelques notes visant à contribuer à une approche nouvelle du cinéma chinoise," *Le Cinéma Chinois*, ed. Marie-Claire Quiquemelle (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1985), 123. In the renowned essay *Nü jie* (*Lessons for a Woman*), Ban Zhao (48–116?), a Chinese woman of letters, describes in seven paragraphs how a woman should behave in both the family and the society in order not to disgrace and burden her parents. Among those seven paragraphs, the fourth paragraph on womanly qualifications (*fu xing*) has been directly connected to the discussion on women's four virtues in Confucian social discourse. According to Ban Zhao, "A woman (ought to) have four qualifications: (1) womanly virtue; (2) womanly words; (3) womanly bearing; and (4) womanly work… To guard carefully her chastity; to control circumspectly her behavior; in every motion to exhibit modesty; and to model each act on the best usage, this is womanly virtue. To choose her words with care; to avoid vulgar language; to speak at appropriate times; and not to weary others (with much conversations), may be called the characteristics of womanly words. To wash and scrub filth away; to keep clothes and ornaments fresh and clean; to wash the head and bathe the body regularly, and to keep the person free from disgraceful filth, may be called the characteristics of womanly bearing. With whole-hearted devotion to sew and to weave; to love not gossip and silly laughter; in cleanliness and order (to prepare) the wine and food for serving guests, may be called the characteristics of womanly work. These four qualifications characterize the greatest virtue of a woman. No woman can afford to be without them." For details, see Nancy Lee Swann, *Pan Chao: Foremost Woman Scholar of China – Background, Ancestry, Life, and Writings of the Most Celebrated Chinese Woman of Letters* (New York and London: The Century Co., 1932), 82-99.

[37] For details, see Chiao, 81; and Yuan, *Qiusuo rensheng yishu de zhendi*, 12, 26-29, 137.

zhuyi)" by the means of Yue opera and film.[38] In this regard, Yuan and Sang Hu contributed their expertise to the Yue opera film with four goals in mind, namely the removal of "vulgar," "feudal," "obscene," or "superstitious" content, the restatement of personal values in favor of gender equality and the freedom to love, the reorganization of plots based on the standard(ized) three-act structure, and the rephrasing of selected lines with more "highbrow" vocabularies and less "dialectal" idioms.[39] Synoptic outlines (*lutou*, *mubiao*, or *tigang*) were replaced by a script co-authored by the film director, the film composer, and the actor-singers, while semi-improvisatory vocal lines and dialogues became extinct.

Artistic collectivism was typical of cultural production during the Mao regime, and yet Sang Hu exploited the screenwriting process for fulfilling his own creative ambition.[40] He might have defended himself by claiming screenwriting as "the basis of film production," such that everyone in the film crew "must obey the movie camera" and "get used to what the art of cinema (*dianying yishu*) demands."[41] He probably had studied *Methods of Writing a Shadow Play* (*Yingxi juben zuofa*, hereafter *Methods*) with remarkable effort, since Hou Yao (1903–1942), the author of this influential book on Chinese film theory, was known for his advocacy of "script-centrism" (*juben zhongxin zhuyi*) and his argument over how the quality of screenwriting would determine the artistic value of filmmaking.

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[38] Sang, "Yinmu shang de *Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai*," the first paragraph.

[39] Sang, "Tantan xiqu pian de juben wenti," 47; Sang, "Yinmu shang de *Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai*," the fifth paragraph; Yuan, *Qiusuo rensheng yishu de zhendi*, 7, 26-29, 137.

[40] For details, see Hui, 152.

[41] Fan Ruijuan, "Wo zai sheyingji qianmian," *Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai dianying tekan* (Hong Kong: Southern Film Corporation,1954), the second paragraph; Sang, "Tantan xiqu pian de juben wenti," 35; Yuan, *Qiusuo rensheng yishu de zhendi*, 135.

Consisting of eleven chapters, *Methods* begins with Hou proclaiming how drama represents, critiques, neutralizes, and beautifies human life, and how, by modern and technological means, cinema facilitates a more truthful, economical, ubiquitous, lasting, and educational kind of drama.[42] Hou not only complied with Western aesthetic notions such as the human spirit (*renlei jingshen*) and its purification (*jinghua*) through art, but also affirmed the economic and ideological efficiency of the cinematic apparatus. He stressed on the importance of deploying cinema to investigate various kinds of social crises, conflicts, and obstacles, with "lively imagination," "in-depth observation," and "plenty of sympathy."[43] He also elaborated on how a screenwriter's adoption of three-act structure would render a film narrative more effective.[44] Without overlooking the significance of mise-en-scène, spatial-temporal construct, and spectatorial address, Hou treated cinema as an intermedial art that (re)shapes and delivers dramatic narratives and conflicts.[45]

Sang Hu admitted that he knew and understood very little about Yue opera, but he did not consider that as problematic to the way he condensed a three-hour Yue opera stage performance into a 110-minute film.[46] He asserted that he deleted and amended some preexisting plots "not just for the sake of concision, [but] more importantly to render the main themes and the characters more vivid and prominent."[47] He also said that cinematography and film editing were

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[42] Hou Yao, *Yingxi juben zuofa* (Shanghai: Taidong tushuju, 1925), 1-5.

[43] For details, see ibid., 13-18.

[44] For details, see ibid., 24-39.

[45] For details, see ibid., 43-58. See also Bao, 378.

[46] For details, see Sang, "Yinmu shang de *Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai*," the fifth and sixth paragraphs; and Sang, "Zhuiyi Zhou Enlai zongli ersanshi," 354. See also Fan, the third paragraph; and Yuan, *Qiusuo rensheng yishu de zhendi*, 135-137.

[47] Sang, "Yinmu shang de *Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai*," the fifth paragraph.

useful for "displacing some unavoidable onstage [figurative] movements without affecting the musicality of performance," as he would be allowed to set a faster but steadier dramatic pace with a more "realistic" visualization of the overall content.[48] These self-imposed principles were revealed in his treatment of a prop, namely a fan-shaped jade pendant that he referred to as a love token, for creating a sense of suspension that "accentuated Liang's kind-hearted character [and] bolstered the spirit and atmosphere of a tragedy (*beiju*)."[49] He maintained that Yue opera stage performance used to set up the confrontation between Liang and Zhu by having Liang talking about the love token right after Zhu's maid revealed Zhu's arranged marriage. For this, he however decided to suspend this confrontation by altering this plot, so that after Zhu ended her reminiscence and lament, Liang would "suddenly remember about the love token" and return it to Zhu "in greatest despair right before his departure."[50] This alteration follows the strategy of developing a dramatic climax as stated in *Methods*, through which "the screenwriter has to be most emphatic, leading the audience to emotional extremes," so that "one would internalize the characters' happiness and sadness."[51] For Sang Hu, the love token was no longer a mere proof of engagement that triggered Liang's extreme anger, but a plot device—mentioned in a few of Zhu's vocal lines as part of "flashbacks in contrast" (*duibi chuan'cha*) —that engendered Liang's emotional excess and thus accentuated Liang as a tragic character.[52]

Sang Hu also indicated how he treasured Chinese opera narratives of high literary values and intelligibility, and how he dispensed flowery or vulgar languages so as to serve a nationwide

[48] Ibid.

[49] Sang, "Tantan xiqu pian de juben wenti," 43.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Hou, 52.

[52] Ibid., 55-56; Sang, "Tantan xiqu pian de juben wenti," 43.

audience.[53] Valuing syntactic and semantic clarity over formalistic beauty, he considered some use of rhyme schemes in Chinese operatic verses too inflexible and thus not suitable for filmmaking.[54] He would forgo artistic or performative embellishments that he found too playful or inappropriate for properly portraying a story character.[55]

To be sure, Sang Hu's plot arrangement, use of props, and song-text adjustment were reflective of Hou Yao's influence, although it was his view of *The Butterfly Lovers* that made this influence most obvious:

> Precisely, because of the pure romantic love between Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai, as well as their sacrificial suicides for resisting feudalistic arranged marriage, [*The Butterfly Lovers*] intensely shouts out the hope, grief, and indignation originated from the desire of our country's young men and women for a blissful marriage [with matrimonial autonomy], and thus the people would love this story and use their wisdom and creativity to enrich it.[56]

Consciously or not, Sang Hu followed Hou Yao's preferences for those humanistic and egalitarian contents that resonate with the nation's state of affairs, including "the question of marriage" that concerns the essences of romantic love, "the question of morality" that inquires into the possible ways of breaking outmoded moral principles and shaping the modern ones, "the spirit of sacrifice for truth," "the virtuous romantic love of the two sexes," and "the spirit of perseverance in the face of adversity."[57]

After all, Sang Hu received both criticism and praise for his cinematization of Yue opera and *The Butterfly Lovers*. One of his fellows argued that his overly cinematic mise-en-scène

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[53] Sang, 46.

[54] Ibid., 47.

[55] Ibid., 43-45.

[56] Sang, "Yinmu shang de *Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai*," the first paragraph.

[57] Hou, 15, 18, 21-22.

setting “destructed the unity of [Yue opera’s] performance conventions.”[58] Another commended him for “the conformity to filmmaking principles, taking advantage of the convenience brought by cinema.”[59] Basically, Sang Hu’s overt adherence to *Methods* reflected what Christian Metz would regard as an enchantment of cinema’s capacity: *Method* characterized filmmaking as “the point of departure for specialized practices” and thus provided Sang Hu with autonomy and authority during film production; it made him a “cinematic fetishist” who perceived filmmaking “as a technical performance, as prowess.”[60]

Through rearranging or reinterpreting *The Butterfly Lovers* by the means of Yue opera, screenwriting, and cinematography, talented and empowered artists like Yuan Xuefen and Sang Hu strategically fulfilled their social or artistic ambitions despite the political restraints of the time. Although the PRC state identified filmmaking as part of the cultural ideological state apparatus that accentuated collectivism and nationalization under Chinese socialist transformation (*shehui zhuyi gaizao*), its subversion of individual(istic) ambitions was far from absolute in practice.[61] Sang Hu had shown in his film direction how his articulation of cultural meanings could divert one from perceiving the political or ideological messages designated by the CCP. Such diversion would be even more transparent when one contrasts Yuan Xuefen’s

[58] Wang Yi, “Tan wutai jilu dianying,” *Lun xiqu dianying* (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 1958), 4.

[59] Zhang Junxiang, “Wutai yishu jilupian xiang shenme fangxiang fazhan,” *Lun xiqu dianying* (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 1958), 13-14.

[60] Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1982), 74.

[61] In *Situated Listening: The Sound of Absorption in Classical Cinema*, Giorgio Biancorosso has made a similar remark on the relationship between the film studio as an institution and the film crew members as expressive individual within the context of Hollywood: “Winning the attention of an audience to the film is one thing; drawing it to certain aspects of the finished product is quite another, rather like a prize sanctioning the dominance of whomever controls the work of a Hollywood studio. We can think of a production team as working in harmony toward the completion of the best possible product while simultaneously allowing that actors, directors, writers, cinematographers, and musicians vie for attention to their own craft in one way or another (at times even undercutting the attainment of their shared goal).” (2017: 102)

perennial revision of *The Butterfly Lovers* prior to the film production, with the CCP's appropriation of the film for social and political purposes.

4.4 From Allegorizing Women's Liberation to Hegemonizing Chineseness

In her autobiography *Exploring the Truth of Life and Art* (*Qiusuo rensheng yishu de zhendi*), Yuan Xuefen rued the days she was an exploited Yue opera actor-singer, exclaiming how her early career led her to a decade-long project to transform *The Butterfly Lovers* into a Yue opera on film. She showed not only her sensitivity to illiteracy being a traditional stigma associated with the majority of women and Chinese opera actor-singers, but also her strong belief in the notion of *qingbai* ("pure body and conduct"). She lamented the "socially-backward" performance conventions of traditional opera troupe, before proclaiming that a thorough Yue opera reform was the only way to change the destinies of her own and her colleagues:

> Yue opera must and has the potential to bring a thorough reform into play. [There is] no script, [so we] should choose some meaningful contents for writing a script; [there is] no director, [so we] should have the director [position]; rehearsals should involve choreographers and artistic advisors for handling makeup, costumes design, mise-en-scène setting, and stage lighting; vocal tunes should include the limited preexisting stock tunes such as *siping diao* but requires [further] creation and enrichment; from the modification of backstage environment to [matters concerning] rehearsal and performance, [there] must be a system of regulation (*guifan de zhidu*) that guarantees this thorough reform and [the renewed] artistic creativity. [We] have to let those performers and specialists notice the interrelationship between the rise and decline of Yue opera and the destiny of the individual (*geren mingyun*).[62]

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[62] Yuan, *Qiusuo rensheng yishu de zhendi*, 10. Among the several meanings of *qingbai*, the notion of pristineness in conduct is most extensively elaborated in various kinds of ancient and texts: In the poem *Li sao*, Qu Yuan (~343B.C.–~277B.C.) uses the word *qingbai* and states that "to die for righteousness alone I sought, for this was what the ancient sages taught" (Yang (trans.) 1955: 6); in the sixtieth volume of *Hou Han Shu*, it portrays the personality of Cai Yong's (132–192) father positively as acerbic but with *qingbai* conducts; in the twenty-seventh "outer chapter" (titled *Cijiao*, "Criticizing Arrogance") of *Baopuzi*, Ge Hong (283–343) states that in reality there exist few or no *qingbai* conducts or professions; in the essay of guidance *Xunjian shikang*, Sima Guang (1019–1086) describes his family as originally poor but has inherited the *qingbai* spirit for generations; in the biographical essay *Ye Jia chuan*, Su Shi (1037–1101) regards Tang (618–907) esteemed figure Ye Jia (?–?) as a *qingbai* gentleman who has a spirit of composure like those flowing clouds; in the third chapter of the Ming (1368–1644) classical vernacular novel *Water Margin*, the character Shi Jin exclaims that he is a decent and *qingbai* man who would never be willing to taint the corpses of his parents. For Jin Jiang (2009: 61), *qingbai* could be understood even more specifically "as a moral imperative of female bodily practice," which "was defined from a Confucian discourse on female chastity prevalent during the Ming and Qing dynasties," being "commonly used to describe women of good families, but rarely, if ever, public women who worked as prostitutes or entertainers."

4.4.1 The Metamorphosis in Shanghai

Figure 4.08: Yuan (middle) in *The Miseries of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* (*Liang Zhu aishi*) at Mingxing Theater (*Mingxing da xiyuan*) in Shanghai, 1945

With a hope to ideologically transform those illiterate housewives (*wu wenhua de jiating funü*) into modern women, Yuan embarked on her Yue opera reform in 1942 when she was twenty.[63] She was inspired by modern "spoken dramas" (*huaju*) that evolved from early-twentieth-century didactic "civilized plays," and was determined to replace Yue opera performance conventions with newly established principles of theatrical performance.[64]

[63] Shanghai Library, "Yuan Xuefen zai Dalai juchang chongxin dengtai, yanchu *Gumiao yuanhun*, kaishi yueju gaige," Shanghai Memory, accessed March 19, 2018, <http://memory.library.sh.cn/node/72953>.

[64] For details, see Yuan, *Qiusuo rensheng yishu de zhendi*, 7-12. In the introduction chapter of *Cinema and Urban Culture in Shanghai, 1922–1943*, Yingjin Zhang (1999: 12-13) relates *wenming xi* to traditional teahouse culture and early Chinese cinema as follows: "From the perspective of an institutional history, the origins of the Chinese film industry can be traced back earlier to the 1910s, not just to traditional teahouse culture as described by Zhen Zhang, but also to *wenming xi*, a new type of Chinese spoken drama. According to Zhong Dafeng, an advocate of a distinctively Chinese *yingxi* film tradition, Zheng Zhengqiu displayed in his early works of drama and film a tendency to fashion *yingxi* on the model of *wenming xi*, a genre that had drastically changed from a politically sensitive play in the late Qing period to an ethnical family melodrama in the 1910s. For Zhong, Zheng Zhengqiu's *wenming xi* tradition, especially its renewed attention to the changing urban ethos and popular tastes, was carried on

Accordingly, she learned scriptwriting techniques by herself, collaborated with amateur playwrights, and staged new Yue opera productions with contemporary social themes. And yet, despite having such a progressive mind, she could not ignore the lasting popularity of *The Butterfly Lovers*; she had to compromise on the box-office demand by revising her rendition of *The Butterfly Lovers* (see Figure 4.08 above) within "the enlightenment structure of feeling," wherein the romantic and psychoanalytic definitions of love became the basis of literary and theatrical production.[65]

Yuan's revisionist approach to *The Butterfly Lovers* involved four aspects of concern. First, she found many of Yue opera's preexisting musical-theatrical narratives superstitious, regressive, inferior, and vulgar. Particularly, she despised the inclusion of sexual innuendos in vocal delivery as grotesque and salacious. She wanted only to preserve and magnify what she deemed as the purity of love relationship between the protagonists, because—echoing the notion of *qingbai*—she found their *zhongzhen* (i.e., loyalty and fidelity) most valuable for promoting modern moral and matrimonial values. Second, she aimed to overcome what she claimed as the inadequacy of Yue opera's musical expressiveness. She began her collaboration with Liu Ruzeng, which led to the incorporation of Western tonal harmony and orchestration techniques into Yue opera accompaniment since the late 1940s. Third, she dismissed the use of synoptic outline (for semi-improvisatory vocal and speech delivery) as a theatrical nonsense that deceived the audience. She preferred the use of script over learning by rote, as she treated the script as a means to deliver sophisticated ideas. Fourth, she not only replaced conventionalized Chinese operatic costumes with period costumes that were presumably more historically accurate in

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by subsequent film investors and producers; it was therefore instrumental in forming and shaping the Shanghai film audience and film industry in the 1920s."

[65] Haiyan Lee, 221.

design, but also substituted the long-established role-type system (*hangdang*) with an acting method that focused on internalizing a story character's psychological states.[66]

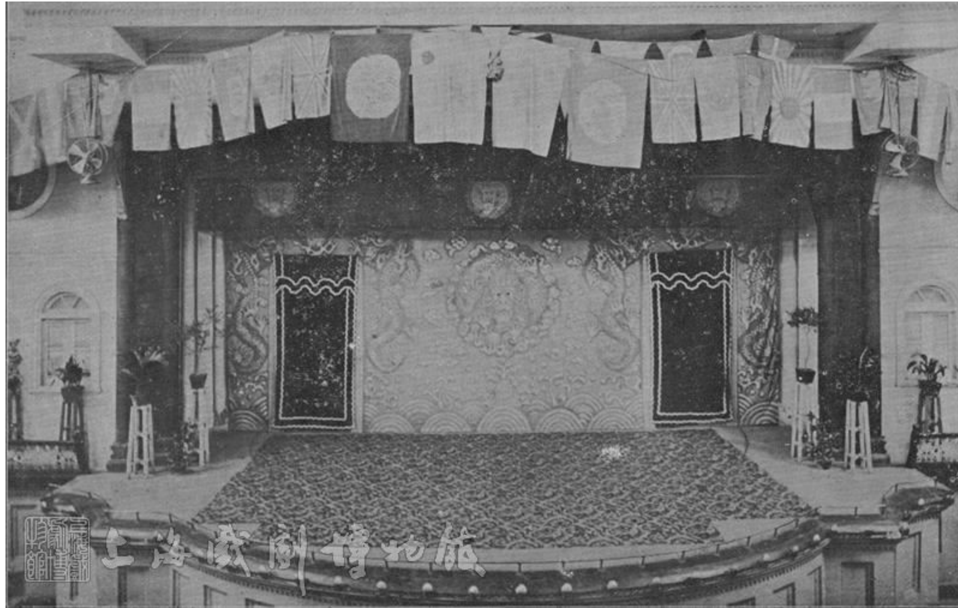

Figure 4.09: The New Stage (*Xin wutai*) in Shanghai, China's first revolving stage with a proscenium arch (*jingkuangshi xuanzhuan wutai*), built in 1908 (Photograph courtesy of Shanghai Theater Museum)

Yuan revered the stage as where the audience should "contribute to the artistic atmosphere [by] being polite and not casually giving applauses."[67] She attempted to transform a performance space of multiple social and artistic functions into "a monument of holy spirits" and "a mirror of the society" that enhanced Yue opera's social and artistic status.[68] Echoing pioneering figures such as the Xia Brothers who built the New Stage (*Xin wutai*, Figure 4.09) for Peking opera performance, Yuan stressed on the difference between social and representational spaces and that between "real" and performed identities. Nevertheless, as an actor-singer who focused on performance, she hardly pondered over the convergence of mechanical, architectural,

[66] Lu Shijun and Gao Yilong (eds.), *Shanghai yueju zhi* (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1997), 297.

[67] Yuan, *Qiusuo rensheng yishu de zhendi*, 42.

[68] Ibid., 9, 42.

and social-discipline technologies that sustained the spatial reconfiguration of Chinese opera performance venue(s) since the late nineteenth century.[69] For the same reason, she appeared to be innocent of the interplay between cinema (involving Chinese as well as Hollywood movies) and theater (including "spoken dramas" as well as folklore dramas):

> Aside from its self-serving attitude, the [field] report [from an American government trade official] does confirm in a rather rudimentary fashion certain affinities between the Hollywood narrative tradition and some prevalent formulaic devices in traditional Chinese popular fiction, for example, the *da tuanyuan* (great reunion) ending and the melodramatic necessity of the "triumph" of right over wrong… The popularity of so-called historical pictures is easily explainable, as it can be related to the Chinese audience's interest in traditional folktales and historical romances… It must also be noted […] that for all the brilliance of their cinematic technique, Chinese films of the 1930s—leftist or not—continued to emphasize the development of plot… the […] elements of folk singing and the like further reinforce the impression that certain scenes are "staged"—hence the foregrounding of acting… [T]he Chinese film does not strictly follow the established conventions of the Hollywood genre film (e.g., the musical, the slapstick comedy, the western, film noir, and so on) but rather uses some of its generic devices for its own purposes... The narrative tempo fluctuates precisely because the Chinese film is made to contain diverse elements from different film and cultural genres.[70]

Surrounded by film adaptation of successful plays, theater adaptation of popular movies, and mixed-media display of "literary-theatrical drama," Yuan was keen to integrate "top-tier" performance elements into Yue opera. She admired not only the choreographed "water-sleeves" and bodily movements (*shenduan*) from the classical *kunqu* opera, but also the "interiorized psychological activities" (*neizai de xinli huodong*) and "performing bodies" (*xingti biaoyan*) of female Hollywood film stars.[71] Yet, practically, her Xuesheng troupe shared the use of props, costumes, and constructed sets with those film studios in Shanghai that specialized in making folklore drama films, not to mention that her Yue opera reform was notably inspired by the urban

[69] For details, see Joshua Goldstein, *Drama Kings: Players and Publics in the Re-creation of Peking Opera, 1870-1937* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 55-117; and Laikwan Pang, *The Distorting Mirror: Visual Modernity in China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 133-163.

[70] Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930–1945* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 97, 106, 108.

[71] Yuan, *Qiusuo rensheng yishu de zhendi*, 13.

modern life portrayed in Hollywood movies.[72] She adapted elements from cultural forms of distinct materialities and conventions, such that she could offer a kind of renewed sensuous pleasure that attracted the lower-class people and women from the domestic sphere, before engaging them in issues about class, gender, and social justice.[73]

Yuan was passionate about "breaking the old and establishing the new" (*pojiu lixin*). She treated patriotic figures such as late Song scholar-bureaucrat Wen Tianxiang (1236–1283) and late Qing feminist-revolutionary Qiu Jin (1875–1907) as her role models, and was adamant that Yue opera and its practitioners should become modern and respectable.[74] Her artistic endeavor, in conjunction with her view on marriage, morality, and patriotism, followed a dialectics that was based on the dichotomies between the civilized and the uncivilized, between the vulgar and the tasteful, and between the "feudalistic" and the progressive.[75] She probably had read and agreed with what Xia Yan (1900–1995) wrote in the preface of his script *Qiu Jin* in 1944:

> When feminism and sexual equality are used by a few as stepping-stones, "the women's movement" is suffocated. But the real women's movement and the real new women have emerged among the people who do not debate terminology such as equality. Here there is no hero, and there are no glorious speeches and theories. They just want and they just do. They treat themselves as human beings… a member of the new China, a human being of indomitable spirit.[76]

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[72] See also Poshek Fu, *Between Shanghai and Hong Kong: The Politics of Chinese Cinemas* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 31, 34.

[73] See also Jin Jiang, 188.

[74] For basic biographical information about Wen Tianxiang and Qiu Jin, see, respectively, Luo Yuming, *A Concise History of Chinese Literature, Volume 1*, trans. Ye Yang (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), 555-558; and Ono Kazuko, *Chinese Women in a Century of Revolution, 1850–1950*, ed. Joshua A. Fogel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 59-65.

[75] For details, see Liu Ming, "Yueju huajuhua! Yuan Xuefen que zuixin yishu, datan shangtai zuoxi xiatai zuoren de zhexue," *Zhoubo*, vol.12 (May 31, 1946), 1; Zhou Nan, "Zhuanfang: Yuan Xuefen xiansheng tan yueju gexin yundong," *Guoji xinwen huabao*, vol.57 (1946), 5; and Yuan, *Qiusuo rensheng yishu de zhendi*, 7-15.

[76] Wang Zheng, "Fashioning Socialist Visual Culture: Xia Yan and the New Culture Heritage," *Finding Women in the State: A Socialist Feminist Revolution in the People's Republic of China, 1949–1964* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2016), 176. For details about Xia Yan's cultural and political significance in Chinese left-wing cinema of the 1930s and the PRC cinema before the Cultural Revolution (in relation to socialist feminism), see Wang Zheng, 170-198.

For Yuan, the opera troupe was once “a miniature of the old society, [wherein actor-singers] lived in the lowest level, [and one could witness] exploitation all over the place.”[77] It was where she suffered from class struggle in the form of sexual and economic exploitation. She was therefore dismissive of Yue opera’s conventional practices; she determined to reform the genre despite being frank about her deficiency in artistic insights and cultural knowledge.[78] With an undifferentiated reverence for “higher” cultural forms such as *kunqu* opera and Hollywood cinema, she committed herself and her Yue opera reform to women’s liberation and some modernization and nation-building agendas. She aimed at enhancing Yue opera without sacrificing its accessibility, albeit with a vulnerability to “all the mistaken identifications and false recognitions which betray the gap between acknowledge and knowledge.”[79]

While Yuan’s social vision and artistic goals were manifested in her Yue opera reform in aesthetic and political terms, one should not dismiss the fact that such vision and goals originated in a survival instinct grounded in cultural consumption, a practice “predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfill a social function of legitimating social difference.”[80] However the dichotomy between the “feudalistic” and the progressive was one of the common threads running through literature, theater, cinema, and other Chinese cultural forms since the beginning of the New Culture Movement in the late 1910s, such commonality did not necessitate the universality of political dedication to culture. Unlike the emergence of modern Chinese literature, “spoken drama,” and left-wing cinema, Yue opera was not something of serious concern among Chinese intellectuals who chiefly redefined and politicized high culture; its reform instead began with

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[77] Yuan, *Qiusuo rensheng yishu de zhendi*, 2.

[78] Ibid., 9.

[79] Bourdieu, 323.

[80] Ibid., 7.

Yuan being a popular actor-singer of rural upbringing and moderate literacy, who actively recruited amateurs or practitioners of marginal status in the field of cultural production:

> They were poor children who had no way to make a living other than to go learn [traditional] theatrical singing (*chang xi*). When they became popular in Shanghai, those adoptive mothers and fathers all pursued them, while those evil forces in the society surrounded them and corrupted them. A few of them soon realize their status as the insulted and exploited, and they pursued progress, approaching those progressive "spoken drama" workers (*jinbu huaju gongzuozhe*) led by the [CCP's] underground forces.[81]

Yearning for opportunities and recognitions in addition to a better living standard, Yuan and her recruits participated either wholeheartedly or opportunistically in canonizing a not-yet-legitimate performing art. They basically "juxtapose[d] 'easy' or 'old fashioned' (i.e., devalued) legitimate products with the most ambitious products of the field of mass production."[82] Zhou Baocai (1912–2002), Zheng Chuanjian (1910–1966), and Liu Ruzeng were among Yuan's earliest recruits who successfully altered their own career path and became among the prominent figures in the history of Yue opera. Evident in many examples including *The Butterfly Lovers* as a Yue opera on film (i.e., *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai*), they contributed their expertise in Peking opera, *kunqu* opera, and Western classical music to the Yue opera reform. Their artistic footprints guaranteed Yue opera a "higher" artistic standard, but they chose to distance themselves from comparison with their past fellows. Zhou Baocai, a *huqin* (Chinese two-string bowed lute) player who was primarily a Peking opera accompanist until the late 1930s, was hired as Yuan's principal accompanist since 1943.[83] He introduced numerous Peking opera instrumental tunes and techniques to Yue opera, and was key to creating the two "aria types" (i.e., *che diao* and *xianxia diao*) that constituted virtually all the vocal tunes in *Liang Shanbo and*

[81] Lu and Gao, 313.

[82] Bourdieu, 326.

[83] Lu and Gao, 363.

Zhu Yingtai.[84] Zheng Chuanjian was a graduate from the distinguished Institute for the Preservation and Transmission of *Kunqu* Opera (*Kunju chuanxisuo*). He started working for Yuan in 1944 as an instructor who specialized in *kunqu* opera's choreographed steps and "water-sleeves."[85] He shared with Yuan the emphasis on character portrayal, and was the first to adapt *kunqu* opera performance techniques for Yue opera's "modern naturalistic expression of love and desire."[86] In 1947, he became the first technical director (*ji dao*) in the history of Chinese opera, and his cross-genre technical adaptation—best exemplified in the opening sequence and final episode of *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai*—set an illustrious example for Chinese opera's later development. Similarly, Liu Ruzeng was acclaimed as the first conservatory-trained composer specializing in the music of Chinese opera. He began his collaboration with Yuan as a theme song (*zhuti qu*) composer for a 1945 Yue opera production, and was known for pioneering the use of thematized interludes and adopting Western symphonic and modern Chinese orchestral sounds for the music of Chinese opera.[87]

Yuan claimed that Yue opera was "restricted by its own melodic diversity" and "not expressive enough [in accompaniment]," and she capitalized on her leadership to warrant Yue opera's appropriation of musical elements from Peking opera, a legitimate Chinese national symbol since the mid Qing dynasty, and Western classical music, an emblem of Chinese musical

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[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid., 338.

[86] Jin Jiang, 92.

[87] Cheng Gongliang, *Qiulaiju yijiu*, ed. Yan Xiaoxing (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2015), 183-185; Lu and Gao, 366. In addition to his musical rearrangement for *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* and his scoring for the 1948 and 1978 Yue opera film versions of *Xianglin the Sister-in-law*, Liu wrote one of the Mandarin *shidaiqu* ("song in vogue") classics *The Bright Moon Sends My Love Across a Thousand Miles* (*Mingyue qianli ji xiangsi*) for Wu Yingyin (1922–2009). He was also one of the major composers who participated in the production of the revolutionary Peking opera *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* (*Zhiqu weihushan*).

modernity since the early twentieth century.[88] She entrusted her music collaborators with full respect and seldom questioned why or how those appropriated musical elements would be compatible and advantageous to Yue opera. She held the same attitude toward the adoption of choreographed steps and "water-sleeves" from *kunqu* opera. Her vocal style was barely influenced by the aesthetics of *kunqu* singing, but she knew well enough about the classical and cultured but esoteric (*qugao hegua*) and waning (*moluo*) status of *kunqu* opera.[89] In general, the use of music and choreography in *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* might have created an impression of resplendence to the audience, and yet such impression might have concealed a cultural aggregation marked by "a choice of sure and certified products."[90]

Yuan's stylistic borrowing from "spoken drama" could also be an artistic and cultural expression of "asceticism, rigor, legalism, the propensity to accumulation in all its forms," something which Bourdieu regards as "the necessity underlying the characteristic dispositions of the petit-bourgeois habits."[91] Praising "spoken drama" in overtly moralistic and nationalistic terms, Yuan viewed Yue opera as the exact counterexample. Accordingly, she transformed "spoken drama" into Yue opera's "correctional" agency in order to connect her artistic and cultural practices to her (reflection of) social and individual self. Her strong belief in the notion of *qingbai*—manifested in her integral onstage (e.g. her performance as Zhu Yingtai in *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai*) and offstage (e.g. her refusal to perform in a *tanghui* "private party" for Madame Chiang Kai-shek) personae—speaks of what Yuan herself considered as "the

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[88] For details about Chinese musical modernity in relation to Western classical music, see, for example, Joys H. Y. Cheung, "Riding the Wind with Mozart's 'Jupiter' Symphony: The Kantian and Daoist Sublimes in Chinese Musical Modernity," *Music and Letters*, vol.96 no.4 (2015), 534-563.

[89] For details, see Yuan, *Qiusuo rensheng yishu de zhendi*, 7.

[90] Bourdieu, 331.

[91] Ibid.

interrelationship between the rise and decline of Yue opera and the destiny of the individual."[92] Her insistence on adapting Lu Xun's novella *Blessing* (*Zhufu*) for Yue opera during the second half of 1946 proved herself to be both "correct" and "corrected" as well, since this stage adaptation was recognized by literary and political luminaries for its "seriousness" to the extent that it later became what Wang Zheng describes as "a rallying point of left-wing artists in Shanghai when they were facing intense persecution from the ruling Nationalist Party."[93] Yuan's noted sensitivity to the public opinions about her social and artistic activities even induced her anxious quest for approbation from the left-wing circle. [94] For this, Bourdieu has provided a plausible explanation:

> The dispositions manifested in the relation to culture, such as the concern for conformity which induces an anxious quest for authorities and models of conduct and leads to a choice of sure and certified products (such as classics and prize winners), […] are the very same ones which are manifested in relation to ethics, with an almost insatiable thirst for rules of conduct which subjects the whole of life to rigorous discipline, or in relation to politics, with the respectful conformism or prudent reformism which are the despair of aesthetic revolutionaries.[95]

The emergence of "modern woman" images and lifestyle across those foreign concessions (*zujie*) in Shanghai seemed to have a significant impact on the Yue opera reform as well.[96] At the minimum, it had a remarkable impact on the social aspiration of Yue opera actor-

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[92] Yuan, *Qiusuo rensheng yishu de zhendi*, 9. See also *Shanghai wenhua geming dashiji*, 239. According to *Shanghai yueju zhi* (1997: 305), Yuan's refusal to perform privately for Madame Chiang was highly publicized: it was on the front-page headline of the Shanghainese newspaper *Lianhe wanbao* on June 8, 1946.

[93] Wang Zheng, 188. For details about Lu Xun, see Leo Ou-fan Lee, "Introduction," *Lu Xun and His Legacy*, ed. Leo Ou-fan Lee (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), ix-xix.

[94] Jin Jiang, 154.

[95] Bourdieu, 331.

[96] In *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930–1945*, Leo Ou-fan Lee describes the semi-colonial Shanghai in relation to concession borders as follows (1999: 5-6): "Politically, for a century (from 1843 to 1943), Shanghai was a treaty port of divided territories. The Chinese sections in the southern part of the city (originally a walled city) and in the far north (Chapei district) were cut off from each other by the foreign concessions—the International Settlement (British and American) and the adjacent French Concession—which did not come to an end until 1943, during the Second World War, when the Allied nations formally ended the concession system by agreement with China. In these extraterritorial zones, Chinese and foreigners lived in mixed

singers and the female audience constituted by factory workers and middle-class housewives as well as businesswomen and university students. Before the Yue opera reform, Yuan's fellows Yao Shuijuan (1923–1968) and Xiao Dangui (1920–1947) had already experimented with a theatrical mise-en-scène that was inspired by Mandarin films and "spoken dramas." Yuan was however more ambitious. She not only treated Mandarin films and "spoken dramas" as important sources of sophisticated stories and advanced acting and scriptwriting skills, but also studied Hollywood films—whose plots, acting styles, and lighting designs, among many elements, were heavily borrowed or adapted by Chinese filmmakers and "spoken drama" playwrights—for more inspiration. She identified Greer Garson's (1904–1996) performance in *Madame Curie* (1943) as a model, and favored the so-called *modeng* ("modern") acting style carried by Greta Garbo (1905–1990), Bette Davis (1908–1989), and Ingrid Bergman (1915–1982) in other Hollywood *wenyi* films.[97] She could have agreed with Josef von Sternberg (1894–1969) that acting "is not the memorizing of lines while wearing a disguise, but the clear reconstruction of thoughts that

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company (*hua yang zachu*) but led essentially separate lives. The two worlds were also bound together by bridges, tram and trolley routes, and other public streets and roads built by the Western powers that extended beyond the concession boundaries. These boundaries were marked by stone tablets, which were hardly noticeable in the labyrinth of streets and buildings that signaled the Western hegemonic presence: bank and office buildings, hotels, churches, clubs, cinemas, coffeehouses, restaurants, deluxe apartments, and a racecourse. They not only served as public markers in a geographical sense, but also were the concrete manifestations of Western material civilization in which was embedded the checkered history of almost a century of Sino-Western contact."

[97] Speaking of the relationship between Shanghai and modernity, Leo Ou-fan Lee mentions the early history of the term *modeng* as follows (1999: 5): "the English word 'modern' (along with the French *moderne*) received its first Chinese transliteration in Shanghai itself: the Chinese word *modeng* in popular parlance has the meaning of 'novel and/or fashionable,' according to the authoritative Chinese dictionary *Cihai*. Thus in the Chinese popular imagination Shanghai and 'modern' are natural equivalent." On a different note, in the book chapter "A Small History of *Wenyi*," Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh illustrates the emergence of the term *wenyi* in film criticism and advertisements during the 1920s and early 1930s, arguing that *wenyi* was "a robust way to classify and describe cultural products and consumption" (2013: 228). Yeh is aware of "the wide horizon of *wenyi* materials and the intertextual nature of *wenyi* studies" (ibid., 236) and she recognizes how *wenyi* "borrow[ed] cultural prestige from the West for use in an Asian colonial context" and became "a distillation of literariness, synonymous with quality, and adaptable to Chinese writing, writers, and film adaptations" (ibid.). For details, see Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, "A Small History of *Wenyi*," *The Oxford Handbook of Chinese Cinemas*, eds. Carlos Rojas and Eileen Chow (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 225-249.

cause the actions and the lines."[98] Her understanding of "performance with true emotions and concrete feelings" (*zhenqing shigan de biaoyan*) could have been grounded in the notion of *photogénie*, which assumes an ineffable, intuitive, and elusive display of "certain plain truth" as essential to artistic expression.[99]

Yuan justified Hollywood cinema's influence on Yue opera as an artistic concern that, once again, surmised the artistic inferiority or shallowness of Yue opera.[100] To quote Bourdieu again, Yuan perceived Hollywood cinema as a means to "den[y] […] lower, coarse, vulgar, venal, servile […] enjoyment, which constitutes the sacred sphere of culture, impl[ying] an affirmation of the superiority of those who can be satisfied with the sublimated, refined, disinterested, gratuitous, distinguished pleasures forever closed to the profane."[101] The film culture in Shanghai during the 1930s and 1940s was once part and parcel of the modern Chinese self. But still, the vision of modernity projected in this culture was to a great extent prescribed by the social, cultural, and artistic hierarchies that were associated with production costs, exhibition practices, advertising strategies, and journalism. Through film criticism, Chinese intellectuals (especially the leftists) translated the foreign and modern appeals of cinema into certain artistic and educational values that contributed to the reflection of social reality. Those movie ratings published in mainstream newspapers and magazines were often dominated by Hollywood blockbusters; they listed Chinese films much less frequently and mostly with low or even no

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[98] Josef von Sternberg, "Acting in Film and Theater," *Theater and Cinema: Contrasts in Media, 1916–1996*, ed. Robert Cardullo (Palo Alto: Academica Press, 2011), 148.

[99] Richard Abel (ed.), *French Film Theory and Criticism: A History/Anthology, 1907–1939; Volume 1: 1907–1929* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 107-116; Ian Aitken, *European Film Theory and Cinema: A Critical Introduction* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001), 82-83.

[100] Yuan, *Qiusuo rensheng yishu de zhendi*, 13-14.

[101] Bourdieu, 7.

scores. Movie theaters were distinguished by locations, ticket prices, screening options, and architectural designs. First-run Hollywood films were screened only in deluxe “movie palaces” of lavish appearance and comfortable seats located in Western concessions, where a moviegoer had to accept a prohibitive ticket price and, as Poshek Fu observes, “a new code of behavior shaped by bourgeois value of self-restraint, orderliness, privacy, and respectability that befitted the urban modernity their sleek surroundings embodied.”[102] Chinese films were instead exhibited in older and less-equipped second-run theaters from the city’s northern part, for “a noisy, rowdy clientele of [those] who […] enjoyed little privacy or orderliness.”[103] Notwithstanding, those burgeoning Chinese pictorials, film journals, and women’s magazines were flooded with news and photos of Hollywood (and later Chinese) female film stars. They symbolized moviegoing as a pilgrimage to a fantasized new, liberal, and fashionable world.

4.4.2 Zhu Yingtai Joining the Party in Beijing

Following the establishment of the PRC and the CCP’s institutionalization of the entire field of cultural production, the cultural legitimacy of Yue opera was, like other Chinese opera genres, subject to neither class distinction nor aesthetic scrutiny but the principles set in Mao Zedong’s Talks at the Yan’an Conference on Literature and Art (*Zai Yan’an wenyi zuotanhui shang de jianghua*).[104] Tian Han (1898–1968), an eminent left-wing dramatist, regarded Chinese opera as “an educational and recreational cultural enterprise that connects hundred thousands of

[102] Fu, 34.

[103] Ibid., 35.

[104] Mao Tse-tung, “Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art,” *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, accessed October 11, 2016, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3_08.htm>.

artists to tens of millions of audience members."[105] Zhou Enlai declared Chinese opera as "an important weapon that educates the people through the spirits of democracy and patriotism."[106]

Yue opera was among the best candidates to actualize and promote new nationwide cultural policies due to its popularity, its "upwardness," its left-leaning content, and most importantly, its incorporation of both ancient Chinese and modern Western elements (*yang wei zhong yong, gu wei jin yong*). The CCP instantly absorbed Yue opera's popularity and political propriety, as it found both Yuan Xuefen and her Yue opera reform valuable to setting a benchmark for the large-scale Chinese Opera Reform (*xiqu gaige*). Yuan became the only female and non-Peking opera actor-singer (among the four Chinese opera actor-singers) being invited to attend the first Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in 1949 (see Figure 4.10 below). The CCP appointed her as the president of the newly nationalized East China Experimental Yue Opera Troupe (ECEYOT) in April 1950, before it sent her to the Second World Peace Council Congress in Warsaw and the Sixth Council of World Federation of Democratic Youth in Vienna in October and November 1950. Yuan then led ECEYOT to stage *The Butterfly Lovers* in Beijing for the 1951 National Day official program, which prompted the Ministry of Culture to request for a rerun in the first National Convention of Chinese Opera Performance (NCCOP) next year, when ECEYOT garnered top prizes in all categories and Yuan received highest honors "for her past struggles against the reactionaries and her contribution to the Yue opera reform."[107]

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[105] Tian Han, "Wei aiguo zhuyi de renmin xinxiqu er fendou," *Renmin ribao*, January 21, 1951.

[106] Zhou, "Zhengwuyuan guanyu xiqu gaige gongzuo de zhishi."

[107] Yuan, *Qiusuo rensheng yishu de zhendi*, 134.

Figure 4.10: Cheng Yanqiu, Yuan Xuefen, Mei Lanfang, and Zhou Xinfang attending the first Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in 1949

Without sacrificing popularity, such "proper treatment of Chinese opera as a national heritage" rendered Yuan and ECEYOT artistically prestigious and politically correct.[108] It led to various claims about *The Butterfly Lovers* becoming a Yue opera film for artistic reform and mass education.[109] Yuan Xuefen, Sang Hu, and film producer Xu Sangchu (1916–2011) nevertheless stated in different contexts that Zhou Enlai and Xia Yan—who was the chief of Shanghai Municipal Cultural Bureau during that time—started a plan on making the film before the first NCCOP commenced.[110] According to Yuan, the East China Ministry of Culture approved her withdrawal from the first NCCOP as an actor-singer, but it insisted on her performance as Zhu Yingtai (with Fan Ruijuan as Liang Shanbo) for the film to be made after

[108] "Zhengque de duidai zuguo de xiqu yichan," *Renmin ribao*, May 7, 1952.

[109] Sun and Li, 32; Jiang Yi, 30; Ding, 62-63.

[110] For details about Xu Sangchu, see Wang Nan and Wen Qing (eds.), "Xu Sangchu: Jiefangchu Shanghai dianyingye de jieguan he gongsi heying," *Koushu Shanghai: dianying wangshi*, vol.1 (Shanghai: Shanghai Education Publishing House, 2008), 38-45.

the Convention.[111] Xu also noted that Zhou advised the nationalizing Shanghai United Film Studio to use its expired color film stock to film the most updated Yue opera rendition of *The Butterfly Lovers*, while Sang Hu attended the first NCCOP because Xia recommended him for directing the film.[112] The goal pursued by Zhou and Xia was unclear, but Madame Zhou seemed to have suggested their political considerations in her letter to Yuan written in April 1950:

> Recently, the Central People's Government has announced the Marriage Law. This is a great means to liberate every man and woman from the feudalistic marriage system. In order to implement this Law thoroughly, [the Government] needs to conduct promotional work for educating the masses, and [we] are working on that. Yet, this is a long-term task [that] requires coordination with various sectors for the best [social] effect. There could be more extensive involvement in that from the field of [traditional and modern] theater, and I think you [and your fellows] must have already noticed and taken action on that.[113]

The Marriage Law was part of the PRC's first legislation on "private matters."[114] It was passed by the second highest Government Administration Council (*Zhengwuyuan*) on March 3, 1950, before the highest Council of the Central People's Government (*Zhongyang renmin zhengfu weiyuanhui*) gave it the final approval on April 13, 1950. It fulfilled virtually all of Yuan's feminist agendas projected in both her Yue opera reform and her renditions of *The Butterfly Lovers*, as it "identified free love, as opposed to traditional arranged marriage, and women's liberation in general[,] as fundamental components of China's socialist culture and the basis for forging a new socialist citizenry."[115] It warranted *The Butterfly Lovers* being an

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[111] Yuan, *Qiusuo rensheng yishu de zhendi*, 133.

[112] Xu Sangchu, "Yiwei dui dianying chuangzuo you guanjianxing yingxiang de ren," *Zhou Enlai yu dianying* (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1995), 163; Sang, "Zhuiyi Zhou Enlai zongli ersanshi," 353; Wang and Wen, 45.

[113] Yuan, *Qiusuo rensheng yishu de zhendi*, 126-127.

[114] Jianfu Chen, *Chinese Law: Context and Transformation* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016), 532. See also Zhou Enlai, "Zhongyang renmin zhengfu zhengwuyuan guanyu guanche hunyinfa de zhishi," *Renmin ribao*, February 1, 1953; and "Zhonghua renmin gongheguo hunyinfa," *Zhongguo renda wang*, accessed September 25, 2016, <http://www.npc.gov.cn/npc/lfzt/rlys/2014-10/24/content_1882723.htm>.

[115] Jin Jiang, 185.

effective means for the masses to understand women's struggle for gender equality. "The pure love relationship between Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai, as well as their suicidal resistance to feudalistic arranged marriage," observed Sang Hu, "intensely shout out the longstanding desperation, grief, and anger of those men and women who strive for blissful marriage in our country, [showing] why they love the story on the one hand and use their wisdoms and creativity to renew this story on the other hand."[116] As such, the Yue opera film version could be important to the 1953 nationwide mass movement to implement the Marriage Law:

> All levels of leading Party and government bureaus should extensively mobilize their members of each's departmental system with close cooperation in order to collaboratively and thoroughly implement the Marriage Law, participating in this large-scale social reform movement. We demand the leading officials and general members of the Party section, the political and military sections, the citizenry section, the workers section, the peasants section, the youth section, the women section, [and] the culture and education sections, to be the models in the execution of the Law, supporting this movement in public opinion and coordinating their actual work with this movement under the unified leadership of the local Party and governmental bureaus.[117]

Mao Zedong definitely recognized the potency of Yue opera and *The Butterfly Lovers* for promoting the Marriage Law, as he had asserted many times that the CCP had to satisfy the cultural needs of the masses despite the scarcity of professional skills and technological resources. Actually, in summer 1950, Mao was accompanied by Zhou Enlai and several other high-ranking PRC officials while attending a performance by the troupe of Dongshan Yue Opera Society in the Hall of Embracing Compassion at Zhongnanhai.[118] Zhou probably had told Mao about Yue opera's popular appeal and political potential in that occasion, and Mao seemed to have learned from the Beijing-based print media about Yue opera's popularity afterward.

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[116] Sang, "Yinmu shang de *Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai*," the first paragraph.

[117] "Dali zhunbei kaizhan Guanche hunyinfa de qunzhong yundong," *Renmin ribao*, February 1, 1953.

[118] Xu Lanjun, "'Aishang' de yiyi: wushi niandai de Liangzhu re ji yueju de liuxing," *Wenxue pinglun*, vol.6 (2010), 55-56; Elena Meyer-Clement, *Party Hegemony and Entrepreneurial Power in China: Institutional Change in the Film and Music Industries* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 49.

In 1952, Shanghai United Film Studio released an "evaluative conclusion report" (*zhengfeng xuexi zongjie baogao*), in which ECEYOP was identified as a target for collaboration in order to attract factory workers and rural populations.[119] Consequently, Yuan Xuefen became the principal actor-singer and chief artistic advisor of *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* (i.e., the Yue opera film version of *The Butterfly Lovers*). She and the film crew spent the first half of 1953 on rehearsals, soundtrack recording, shot division planning, color film experimentation, and set and costume design, but the film took at least six more months to complete.[120] This painstaking effort on making the first color film of New China was marked by technical challenges and resource scarcity, both of which nearly brought the production to a halt.[121] The severe difficulties caused by the Studio's unfamiliarity with both the Sovcolor process and the use of carbon arc lamp, in addition to the frustration with lip-synching and coordination with camera movements among the actor-singers, resulted in an exhaustive number of retakes for most satisfactory visual quality instead of best performance.[122] The morale of the film crew was very low but Chen Yi (1916–2011), the mayor of Shanghai, still chose to admonish them before urging them to perceive those technical challenges as both a test of artistic collectivism and a

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[119] "Shanghai lianhe dianying zhipianchang wenyi zhengfeng xuexi zongjie baogao," *Zhongguo dianying yanjiu ziliao, 1949–1979, vol.1*, ed. Wu Di (Beijing: Culture and Art Publishing House, 2006), 325.

[120] For details, see Yuan Xuefen, "Cong wutai dao yinmu," *Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai dianying tekan* (Hong Kong: Southern Film Corporation, 1954), the fifth paragraph; Sang, "Zhuiyi Zhou Enlai zongli ersanshi," 354; Jiang Yi, 30, and Sun and Li, 32.

[121] Yuan Xuefen, "Cong wutai dao yinmu," the fifth paragraph; Yuan, *Qiusuo rensheng yishu de zhendi*, 135-137.

[122] Jay Leyda, *Dianying: An Account of Films and the Film Audience in China* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press. 1972), 209; Yuan, "Cong wutai dao yinmu," the fourth and fifth paragraphs; Fan, the fifth and sixth paragraphs. Sovcolor is a Soviet version of Agfacolor, the latter of which was first introduced in 1932 as the German counterpart of (the American) Technicolor. For details, see Gert Koshofer, "Die Agfacolor Story. Eine deutsche Geschichte: Technische Pionierleistung für das Kino und Filmmythos," *Weltwunder der Kinematographie. Beiträge zu einer Kulturgeschichte der Filmtechnik*, ed. Joachim Polzer (Berlin: Verlag der DGFK), 29.

proof against Soviet experts' (under)estimation.[123] By creating what Tina Mai Chen would call "a moment of equalization [when] China asserted itself at the center of socialist film exchanges" during the first Five-year Plan (*Diyige wunian jihua*), Chen Yi originated the triumphant undertone of the film's addition of an eye-catching final episode, wherein those choreographed steps and "water-sleeves" originated in *kunqu* opera were captured in some way that, according to film director Zhang Junxiang (1910–1996), "transcended stage configurations and followed cinematic conventions"[124]

4.4.3 The Butterfly Lovers in Disguise in Geneva

The making of *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* had heavily invested in the CCP's propagation of the Marriage Law and exemplification of Chinese Opera Reform. Nevertheless, as Zhou Enlai had anticipated during the post-production process, the film was first screened in Geneva and several film festivals in Europe, before it reached Chinese audiences within and beyond the Mainland:

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[123] Yu Ling, "Yu Hu duonian chuiai xin," *Zhou Enlai yu dianying* (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1995), 68; Ding, 63. See also Tina Mai Chen, "Socialist Geographies, Internationalist Temporalities and Traveling Film Technologies: Sino-Soviet Film Exchange in the 1950s and 1960s," *Futures of Chinese Cinema: Technologies and Temporalities in Chinese Screen Cultures*, eds. Olivia Khoo and Sean Metzger (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 87-88. According to Sang Hu (1995: 354), Xia Yan invited Chen Yi, Zhou Enlai, and Zhou's wife to the film's test screening at Shanghai Film Studio in winter 1953, during which Zhou asked at length about film's condensation of contents from previous stage production(s) and gave concrete advice: "Premier Zhou meditated for a short while, and then asked us in the tone of negotiation whether—for the coherence of film narration—it would be possible to add an episode of Zhu Yingtai expressing her yearning for Liang Shanbo after the episodes *Liutai hui* (*The Reencounter*) and *Shanbo linzhong* (*Shanbo Approaching his Death*), so as to connect the next episode in which Zhu was forced by her father to get on the bridal sedan (*huajiao*) from Ma's family. We found the Premier's suggestion very insightful, and so [we] supplemented the film with the [extra] *Si xiong* (*In Reminiscence of the "Brother"*) episode, adding [only] four short vocal lines that nevertheless invigorated the firm, virtuous, and eternal love relationship between Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai."

[124] Zhang Junxiang, 13-14; Tina Mai Chen, 78. For details about the nationalized filmmaking practice in the PRC throughout the first Five-year plan, see, for example, "China Film Studio Has 5-year Plan: Movie-makers Have Output Target—Aim at Political Moral in Pictures," *The New York Times*, September 30, 1956.

> [After the filming was over,] the Premier [Zhou Enlai] couple insisted on visiting Shanghai Film Studio to attend a test screening and show their support to the crew… After the screening, the Minister appeared very pleased and glad… He then humorously cheered up the crew: "Thanks to your [effort], you all helped me to gain more admiration [from others]. For the first time, I can use the color film of our own [country] for welcoming those diplomats from other countries, [and I can] send [copies of] this film to each of our embassies for promoting our own art. Who said only the United Kingdom and Shakespeare have *Romeo and Juliet*? We have it as well, [and] our *Romeo and Juliet* is *The Butterfly Lovers*. For the first time, I am going to bring this first color film of New China overseas for an upcoming Conference."[125]

The Butterfly Lovers seemed to first become the Chinese counterpart of *Romeo and Juliet* in winter 1953, when Zhou told the film crew his intention to use *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* to promote Chinese art in front of foreign—especially European—diplomats:

> [For the debut screening], [the Premier] advised me to write the following line in those invitation letters: "[I would like to] invite you to watch a color opera film (*caise geju dianying*)—the Chinese *Romeo and Juliet*." [He proposed] to include a three-minute oral lead-in in English right before the screening, [during which] the plots should be introduced in brief, [with] the use of words that provoke poetic feeling and tragic atmosphere, [so as to] guide the audience to [appreciating] the film without further elaborations… We followed what the Premier told us... [We] rented the hotel's grand restaurant, and the two hundred and fifty seats were filled with people ten minutes before the [debut] screening began… [T]he whole venue had been silent [since the film began]. I looked around and [saw everyone] focusing on the film. While the film showed the episodes "Crying with the Grave" (*Ku fen*) and "Metamorphosis to Butterflies" (*Hua die*), I overheard some people crying. After the screening was over, […] the audience remained seated and were still fantasizing; [the restaurant] maintained its silence for around a minute[,] before [there was] a sudden burst of applause. For a long while, those people were not willing to leave, [and they] enthusiastically expressed their opinions [on the film]. Generally speaking, [they think the film was] so beautiful and even more touching than Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.[126]

For Zhou and his fellows, the film was highly successful in Geneva because it brought the PRC notable national recognition:

> Many social elites [in Geneva] praised the beauty of [the film's] colorfulness and music, acclaiming [the film] as an "Eastern-style delicate performance." An American professor [attended one of those screenings] without advance notice, and he asked if he could buy a copy of the film. He said [he] should bring the film to the U.S. and show it to those Hollywood filmmakers who could only make movies that showed [female] thighs.[127]

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[125] Yu Ling, 68-69.

[126] Xiong Xianghui, *Lishi de zhujiao: Huiyi Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai ji si laoshuai* (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 1995), 131-132.

[127] Ibid., 132.

Somewhat ironically, the decision of screening the film in Geneva was due to a suspected allegation of promoting militarism through the documentary film *1952 National Day*:

> The Premier asked, "[Were there] any criticism [on the documentary film]?" [I said] I overheard an American reporter saying [that] the film illustrates China promoting militarism. The Premier replied, "[This] deserves attention even if no others saying so. Let us show those people one more film: *The Miseries of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* (*Liangzhu aishi*, i.e., the pre-release title of the Yue opera film)."[128]

Arguably the best spy in the CCP's history, Xiong Xianghui (1919–2005) made an observation that was sharper than a mere speculation.[129] According to *The New York Times*:

> The Chinese Communist propaganda effort at Geneva entered the movie field tonight. On invitation from the press officer of the Chinese delegation to the Geneva [C]onference, a large international audience witnessed a film showing the 1952 National Day celebrations in Peiping [i.e., Beijing], together with views of Communist construction and productive activities.[130]

Until the PRC resumed "normal diplomatic relations" (*zhengchang waijiao guanxi*) with foreign countries in the early 1970s, Chinese artists from the Mainland could only travel to "neutral countries" such as Switzerland and Sweden, or those countries in the Eastern Bloc, in most part of Southeast Asia, and in some part of Africa and Latin America. These artists had even lower mobility than their Soviet comrades, as they could only perform for the purpose of diplomatic cultural exchange whenever they left their home country. Under the "Bamboo Curtain" and following the Korean War (1950–1953), the PRC created a national image that was somewhat partial and ambiguous to foreigners, whereas the Republic of China (ROC) had been taking its diplomatic advantage to claim national legitimacy through "orthodox" (*zhengtong*) cultural means. The 1954 Geneva Conference was thus more than an opportunity for the PRC to

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[128] Ibid., 130-131.

[129] For details about Xiong's political status, see Xuezhi Guo, *China's Security State: Philosophy, Evolution, and Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 324-325. See also Stacey Bieler, *Patriots or Traitors: A History of American Educated Chinese Students* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 348.

[130] "Chinese Show Film at Geneva," *The New York Times*, May 14, 1954.

demonstrate its influence on international politics, as the PRC also hoped to display its national image to the West with its cultural asset and humanistic facet. *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* suitably served this intention, because it showcased various artistic, dramatic, and technical elements with the use of the most advanced cinematic technology available.

Despite the initial poor reception during a test screening in Geneva, the film created an impression of classical China as soon as Zhou Enlai insisted on packaging it as the Chinese counterpart of *Romeo and Juliet*.[131] Zhou was attentive to most Westerners being unfamiliar with both the plots of *The Butterfly Lovers* and a kind of cinematic musicality and visuality stemmed from Chinese opera, but he was also sensitive to how a Yue opera film that embodied these elements was in many ways comparable to a Western musical, theatrical, or cinematic version of *Romeo and Juliet*. Some musical and dramatic elements in *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* had indeed facilitated Zhou to impose on Westerners a perceptual and conceptual framework that effectively translated the film into a symbol of the PRC national pride. First, although coincidental, the film's elimination of the so-called regressive contents—such as superstitious rituals and reincarnation—made the overall narrative less cultural specific and hence more accessible to Westerners. Second, by emphasizing the struggle of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai over love commitment as a tragedy, the film rendered Liang and Zhu comparable to Romeo and Juliet. Third, the film's renewed vocal setting and instrumental accompaniment offered some melodic expressions and sonic qualities that were not too distant from the music of an European opera film. And finally, the film's lack of English subtitles assisted Zhou to exoticize it as a transcultural audiovisual allusion to *Romeo and Juliet*, such that one could leave the plots aside

[131] For details, see Xiong, 131.

at ease and take pleasure in perceiving the music, the spectacle, and the performing bodies.[132] Zhou veiled the film's political initiatives and connotations by decontextualizing its representational content in a way that receded the political values of Yue opera into the background, such that he could maneuver, appropriate, or even reinvent certain symbolic meanings for performing the Chinese self in front of the Western other.

4.4.4 Emancipating the Butterfly Lovers in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia

Figure 4.11: Cathay Theater in Wan Chai, Hong Kong – the 107th day, 484 consecutive screenings

Following the diplomatic triumph in Europe, *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* was released in Shanghai and other PRC major cities. It was later available to Hong Kong and Southeast

[132] "Gaiety Amid Encircling Gloom: Indian Film a Delightful Surprise at Edinburgh," *The Manchester Guardian*, September 1, 1955.

Asian audiences through Southern Film Corporation, a CCP-affiliated film distributor based in Hong Kong, and became the most-watched Chinese film during the 1950s.[133]

The film's domestic success was predictable in a country where state policies and institutions were integrated into different levels of cultural practice. The film's immense popularity outside the PRC was however associated with external factors beyond the CCP's control, although there involved implementation of an official strategy:

> [T]he overseas united front promotion work (*haiwai zhi tongzhan xuanchuan*) of those "communist bandits" (*gongfei*) could often [be done with] concentration of [man]power as well as cohesive coordination. In case of the Hong Kong release of *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai*, there shows: first, all communist[-affiliated] newspapers' concerted effort on publicizing and promoting the film]; second, the initiation of collective ticket-booking (*jiti dingpiao*) initiated by some people from those left-wing labor unions and pro-communist schools; third, the deliberate setup of "promotion showcase" (*xuanchuan chuchuang*) in pro-communist book stores. Apparently, this film is apolitical, which therefore [creates] the effects of: first, implying the "communist bandits" as yet to entirely overthrow old stuff (*jiu dongxi*); second, most easily arouse the nostalgic sentiments of those Shanghainese [immigrants] through Yue opera; third, proclaiming the CCP's "advance" in cinematic technology and techniques (*dianying jishu*); fourth: paving the way for [the overseas distribution of] other [CCP] political propaganda film.[134]

The populaces in Hong Kong and other Chinese localities outside the PRC were subject to social, political, and economic structures that were different from the PRC counterpart. They did not live with or under the CCP's ideology of mass culture and class struggle, and had a more open access of cultural forms and knowledge. In Hong Kong, Chinese natives (i.e., Hakka, Tanka, Hoklo, and Punti) and migrants (from Guangzhou, Taishan, Chaozhou, Fujian, and Shanghai etc.) were diverse in linguistic backgrounds and differentiable in cultural practice. While all

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[133] For details, see Xu, 33-35, 56-57; Sang, "Tantan xiqu pian de juben wenti," 47.

[134] "Tiemu guancha: gongfei haiwai wenhua tongzhan de yinmou," *Lianhe bao*, December 28, 1956. See also See also Lo Wai-luk, "Dianying faxing zuowei wenhua shijian: shuo Nanfang kenguang tuoying," *Kenguang tuoying: Nanfang yingye banshiji de daolu* (Hong Kong: MCCM Creations, 2005), 200; Christine Loh, *Underground Front: The Chinese Communist Party in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010), 88; Stephen Wing-kai Chiu and Victor Kei-wah Shin, "Liang'an sandi de zhengzhi chayi yu wenhua jingji de ronghe: Yindu zai huayu dianying chanyelian de jiaose," *Xionghuai zuguo: Xianggang "aiguo zuopai" yundong*, eds. Stephen Wing-kai Chiu, Tai-lok Lui, and Sai-shing Yung (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2014), 170; Xu, 52, 60, 83; and Fu, "Cold War Politics and Hong Kong Mandarin Cinema," 119.

these Chinese people followed the lunar calendar and celebrated traditional festivals such as the New Year, the Dragon Boat Festival, and the Mid-autumn Festival, their affinity with customary rituals, cuisines, and entertainment forms varied. One notable example of this would be the ritual opera (*shengong xi*) for "purificatory sacrifice" (*qingjiao*) and the Hungry Ghost Festival (*yulan jie*).[135] During a performance as such, actor-singers and musicians would perform the same stock of folk tales—such as "celebration of longevity" (*heshou*) and "gifting of a son" (*songzi*)—but with different plot emphases, spoken languages, and musical styles. Identity consciousness was intensified within this population not only due to the inclusion of many migrants from different parts of Mainland China; one's frequent exposure to the similar other due to rapid production and circulation of comparable representations was no less significant in this regard. Undoubtedly, these factors made more perceptible what Prasenjit Duara would describe as "a polyphony of voices, contradictory and ambiguous, opposing, affirming, and negotiating their views of the nation."[136]

For the aforementioned Chinese people, the association between *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* and the Marriage Law and the first Five-year Plan was irrelevant to their everyday lives, and yet they could still refer to the film as an agency that served the need for contact with the obfuscated homeland.[137] As a 1954 Hong Kong elite newspaper article had succinctly summarized, film was the most powerful weapon when the "liberal world" and the communist (socialist) counterpart always altered strategies, forms, and methods of ideological

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[135] For more information about *qingjiao*, see Carol Ann Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 115-119; and Stephen Jones, *In Search of the Folk Daoists of North China* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 102-105, 110-113.

[136] Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 10.

[137] See also Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 53-55.

propagation.[138] Such power of cinema made the British colonial government (in Hong Kong and the Malay peninsula) and many Southeast Asian governments very cautious when dealing with film censorship.[139] Consequently, like how Zhou Enlai dealt with a suspected allegation of the PRC's promotion of militarism during the Geneva Conference, the CCP played the "apolitical" and "cultural tradition" cards of Chinese opera film for promoting the PRC as a modern nation-state with impressive cultural wealth.[140] The quote I illustrate at the beginning of this sub-section is thus more than a mere political attack from Taiwan, because there is evidence that some underground CCP members in Hong Kong attempted to mobilize film stars, the cultural elite, and Cantonese opera "divas" for aggrandizing *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai*.[141]

Drawn from a love story that had been circulated in folk culture for centuries, *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* expressively depicted the suffering of a traditionally typified couple (i.e., a poor scholar and a virtuous beauty). It romanticized the couple's endurance before a sentimental chorus concluded the story with the couple's romantic fulfillment and moral triumph. It also projected a glamorous vision of Chinese modernity through defining Chinese opera film as a film style characterized by traditional contents in addition to technical, technological, and representational innovations. It successfully transcended those regional boundaries that were affixed to linguistic preference and musical inheritance; it allured not only the elite but also many semi-literates and illiterates who used to enjoy folklore drama films with

[138] Xu, 44.

[139] One example of such cautious practices would be the case of the Thai government dealing with the commercial distribution of *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai*. According to a brief report from the Pan-Asia News Agency published in April 28, 1956, the Thai Prime Minster Plaek Phibunsongkhram (1897–1964) announced the ban on the public screening of *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai*, even though the film was passed by the Thai censors beforehand. For details, see "Taiguo jinying feixuan yingpian," *Lianhe bao*, April 29, 1956.

[140] Lo, 200.

[141] For details, see Xu, 35-36.

a conservative taste. It coordinated with the CCP's united front strategies (*tongyi zhanxian gongzuo*) in the most economical manner, engrossing nearly a million (or more) Chinese overseas viewers originated in Shanghai, Zhejiang, Guangdong, Fujian, and other regions along the southern coast of Mainland China.[142] It was in such a high demand that it was even screened in those movie theaters that mostly scheduled Hollywood blockbusters and mainstream Japanese movies (see Figure 4.11 in page 119, for example); it attracted the two Chinese "liberal" film distribution and exhibition powerhouses (i.e., Cathay Organization and Shaw Organization) to purchase its distribution rights in Southeast Asia. It firmly established the benchmark for the transregional distribution of Chinese films during the mid twentieth century, which empowered the CCP to seize soft power against KMT beyond territory borders by showing how, in contrast to the previous regime, the "motherland" (*zuguo*) was developing with "new citizens, new affairs, and new trends" (*xin renshi*, *xin zuofeng*).

4.5 Concluding Remarks

Yue opera first emerged in Shanghai during the 1930s as an urbanizing regional opera that combined Jiangnan folk and traditional music, narratives, and performing bodies with Western dramaturgy, Romantic aesthetics, and liberal values. It was then institutionalized by the CCP for various purposes at local (within Shanghai), regional (within Jiangnan area), national (within the Mainland), transregional (among Chinese communities beyond the Mainland except Taiwan), and international levels. These urbanization and institutionalization processes involved numerous kinds of participants who engaged in staging, reforming, filming, and promoting Yue opera by particular means, for particular degrees of commitment, and with particular agendas in

[142] Xu, 37.

mind. Yue opera also absorbed Chinese audiences from localities of distinct social structures and cultural practices. All these particularities and differences—as I have elucidated in this chapter through analyzing the roles of influential individuals and inquiring into the cultural politics of specific periods and environments—were nevertheless overcome with an equivocal desire for a Chinese modernity characterized by national(istic) sentiment or ambitions. This phenomenon reveals how, with regard to the construction and maintenance of Chineseness, the openness and indeterminacy of the deterritorialized Chinese communities during the mid twentieth century assured the existence of various articulations of the Chinese self, wherein an ultimate fixity of meanings was impossible despite the necessity of partial fixations for cultural communication.

The Butterfly Lovers played an outstanding role in Yue opera's social and artistic development not only because it exemplified the social and artistic aspirations of both the Yue opera reform led by Yuan Xuefen and the Chinese Opera Reform masterminded by the CCP, but also due to its malleability to satisfy populist demands for political appropriation. The transformation of *The Butterfly Lovers* into *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* is thus reflective of a history of cultural production that, to quote Arjun Appadurai, ties Yue opera "with images, ideas, and opportunities that come from elsewhere, often moved around by the vehicles of mass media."[143] The film maintained the appearance of the stage version as a fantasy or an imagination, but was no longer a composite of "residual practices, confined to special persons or domains [and] restricted to special moments or places."[144] Arguably, by the means of specialization, professionalization, and artistic appropriation, the film's actualization of "conscious design and political will" was more important than its offering of "antidotes to the

[143] Appadurai, 54.

[144] Ibid., 53.

finitude of social experience" for establishing itself as the Chinese opera film par excellence during the 1950s.[145] When Zhou Enlai brought the film to Geneva along with *maotai* liquor and a handful of rare antiques from the Palace Museum in Beijing, the film was instantly canonized and historicized despite Yue opera's relatively brief history.[146] Yet, it was Zhou's strategy of presenting *The Butterfly Lovers* as the Chinese counterpart of *Romeo and Juliet* that conjured up the film's discursive richness in exchange for the PRC's cultural hegemony against the Republic of China. Purposely or not, Zhou established the film as a hegemonic articulation of Chineseness, but at the same time exposed the ambiguous lacuna between the strained Chinese reality and the idealistic Chinese imaginary to Chinese and non-Chinese people, within and beyond the Mainland.

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[145] Ibid., 53-54.

[146] Wo Xiao, "Shaoxing diduban de jiaotao," *Shaoxing shangbao liangzhounian jinian tekan* (October 1935); "BTV dangan: Zhou Enlai yu Rineiwa fengyun (xia) 3/3," YouTube video, posted by "Chinese Documentary Channel HD, accessed October 20, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eq6fbEWXzBo>.

Chapter 5

Deconstructing Chineseness and Chinese Operatic "Yellow Plum" in and through *The Love Eterne*

5.1 Prologue

Around a month after *The Love Eterne* (1963) premiered in Taipei, Hsu Fu-kuan (1904–1982) wrote about the film for a local newspaper.[1] One could not help but wonder why this renowned New Confucianism philosopher was interested a film that was despised by Bo Yang (1920–2008)—arguably the most outspoken Chinese social critic of the time—as "palely self-pitiful, anemically idealistic, cheaply pessimistic, and nihilistically moralistic."[2] On top of that, as the film triumphed over its competitors in Golden Horse Awards and Asia Pacific Film Festival, one might be intrigued by how Run Run Shaw (1907–2014), the owner of Shaw Brothers Studio, appropriated the rhetoric of the New Culture Movement, proclaiming that "[f]ilmmaking ha[s] to 'modernize' itself in order to meet the 'changing entertainment needs of the tens of millions of audiences from different Asian nations'."[3]

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[1] Hsu Fu-kuan, "Kan *Liangzhu* zhihou," *Zhengxin xinwen bao*, May 28, 1963. For details about New Confucianism, see John Makeham, "The Retrospective Creation of New Confucianism," *New Confucianism: A Critical Examination*, ed. John Makeham (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 25-54.

[2] Bo Yang, "Banpiao wenti zhi yi," *Bo Yang quanji: Sanwen juan zawen lei*, ed. Lee Jui-teng (Taipei: Yuanliou, 2000), 274.

[3] Poshek Fu, "Introduction: The Shaw Brothers Diasporic Cinema," *China Forever: The Shaw Brothers and Diasporic Cinema*, ed. Poshek Fu (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 5.

With regard to these stimulating thoughts, I will investigate *The Love Eterne* as an assemblage of Chinese traditional culture characterized by a multivocal cinematic retelling of *The Butterfly Lovers*, a transregional division of labor in film production and distribution, and certain intersections of ethnoscapes, mediascapes, and ideoscapes.[4] Unlike the Yue opera film predecessor that—as illustrated in the previous chapter—followed the conventions of Chinese opera film, *The Love Eterne* was in part a showcase of Li Han-hsiang's (1926–1996) film auteurism "with song and dance [adapted from Chinese opera genres], completed with period costumes and literary-artistic styles."[5] Moreover, the making of *The Love Eterne* was driven by commercial opportunism instead of ideological and political substantiation.[6] Although Run Run Shaw produced the film with an apparently nationalistic ambition, he did not come up with the idea of making it until his commercial rival Loke Wan Tho (1915–1964) publicized the intention to make a film adaption of *The Butterfly Lovers* featuring star actresses You Min (1936–1996) and Li Li-hua (1924–2017).[7] Without a shooting script and without any advance notice, Shaw preposterously asked Li Han-hsiang to complete *The Love Eterne* before MPGI's release, and allowed him to hire Ling Po (1939–)—who was at the time labeled as a "second-rate" Amoy

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[4] See also Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 27-47.

[5] Edwin W. Chen, "Musical China, Classical Impressions: A Preliminary Study of Shaws' *Huangmei diao* Film," *The Shaw Screen: A Preliminary Study* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2003), 51.

[6] For details, see "Guopian zai mei dashou huanying," *Southern Screen*, vol.82 (December 1964), 2; King Hu, *A Touch of King Hu*, eds. Köichi Yamada and Udagawa Köyö, trans. Li He and Ma Songzhi (Hong Kong: Rightman Publishing, 1997), 52, 55-56, 58; Peggy Chiao Hsiung-ping, "The Female Consciousness, the World of Signification and Safe Extramarital Affairs: A 40th Year Tribute to *The Love Eterne*," *The Shaw Screen: A Preliminary Study*, ed. Wong Ain-ling (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2003), 77. See also Poshek Fu, "Cold War Politics and Hong Kong Mandarin Cinema," *The Oxford Handbook of Chinese Cinemas*, eds. Carlos Rojas and Eileen Cheng-yin Chow (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 122.

[7] Hu, 58.

Hokkien film (*Xiayu pian*) actress—to personate Liang Shanbo.[8] *The Love Eterne* was also remarkable because of the choice of Mandarin for dialogue delivery and the replacement of "dialectal" Chinese operatic singing style with pop singing style; these preferences meant not only to displace local or regional musical-linguistic characters that appeared to have hindered the accessibility of Chinese opera film, but also to improve the efficiency of filmmaking in general and accommodate cinematography and film editing in particular.[9]

This chapter will commence with a critical response to why and how, despite the "endless repetition of the [musical] theme," Hsu Fu-kuan, Bo Yang, and Run Run Shaw all agreed that the use of *Huangmei diao* (as music) was effective in *The Love Eterne*.[10] I will first introduce the musical history of *Huangmei diao*, and then examine the (de)construction of Chinese history and identities in *The Love Eterne* in relation to the issue of pastiche. I will explicate how, while delivering an ancient Chinese love story "in a style of narration that roughly approximates the slow and formal conventions of the Chinese theater[,]" *The Love Eterne* "takes liberty with [the conventions and the lore of the Chinese theater] in the way such things are done in Hollywood," embodying a nostalgia for the ancestral land (*zuji*) and a belief in rejuvenating Chinese culture.[11]

Competing against Hollywood historical epics in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia, *The Love Eterne* deployed "surge and splendor" to establish Run Run Shaw as the foremost

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[8] For details, see ibid., 52-55; and Li Han-hsiang, "Xiao Juan gai yiming Ling Bo jingguo," *Sanshi nian xishuo congtou*, vol.2 (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books, 1984), 221-222.

[9] Li Han-hsiang, *Sanshi niantou shuo congtou* (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books, 1983), 269; Hu, 52-57. See also Jiang Yi, "Caise yingpian *Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai* shi zenyang paishe de?," *Dazhong dianying*, vol. 70 (January 1954), 30; Yuan Xuefen, *Qiusuo rensheng yishu de zhendi: Yue Xuefen zishu* (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2002), 135-137. For details about how the use of regional musical-linguistic language could hinder a film's accessibility among Chinese audiences, see, for example, Wei Guangrong, "Difang xi zenyang gao 'yuyan guifanhua'?," *Xiju bao*, vol.2 (1956), 45; Tao Junqi, "Ji xiqu yu hanyu guifanhua weiti zuotanhui," *Xiju bao*, vol.5 (1956), 19-20; and Yi Bing, "Yetan xiqu yu hanyu guifanhua de wenti," *Xiju bao*, vol.6 (1956), 25.

[10] John L. Wasserman, "*Love Eterne*: An Exquisite Chinese Film," *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 12, 1963.

[11] Bosley Crowther, "Screen: Run Run Shaw's No.2 Here," *New York Times*, January 16, 1965.

figure of Chinese cinema.[12] It broke all box-office records of the time by offering a series of grandiose audiovisual spectacles that, asserted Wilt Idema, "can only be compared to that of *Gone with the Wind* and *The Sound of Music* fused into one."[13] As I will discuss through an analysis informed by Vivian Sobchack's phenomenology of film experience, *The Love Eterne* evoked a sense of historical Chineseness that transcended technical accuracy and specificity; its use of Eastmancolor and Shawscope revealed an excessive parade and accumulation of details and events originated in traditional choreography and modern cinematography as well as Chinese operatic tunes and Westernized musical sounds. Ling Po's multiple public personae—on Amoy Hokkien and Mandarin screens, on concert stages in Taiwan and Southeast Asia, and on vinyl records and radio channels—also contributed to a kind of "cinematic onomatopoeia" that brought about an expansive and multileveled temporality for effectuating *The Love Eterne* as a believable Chinese simulacrum.[14]

5.2 Shi Bailin and his Musical Renewal of *Huangmei Diao* in Mid-1950s Shanghai

What is *Huangmei diao* in *The Love Eterne*? Is it a Chinese opera regional genre or a particular kind of folk tunes? Is *The Love Eterne* a Chinese opera film or a musical film? How

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[12] "Liang Zhu jiehua, yingtan qiji," *Southern Screen*, vol.65 (July 1963), 50-51; Vivian Sobchack, "'Surge and Splendor': A Phenomenology of the Hollywood Historical Epic," *Representation*, vol.29 (winter 1990), 28.

[13] Wilt L. Idema (ed. and trans.), *The Butterfly Lovers: The Legend of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai – Four Versions, with Related Texts* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2010), xi. According to Wong Ain-ling and Kwok Ching-ling (2005: xvi), *Ben-Hur* (1959), *Spartacus* (1960), *Cleopatra* (1963) were box office winners of the early 1960s, obtaining higher revenues than any Mandarin or Cantonese films.

[14] According to Sobchack (1990: 36), "[T]he representation or imitation of a general idea rather than a specific person, event, or thing [...] often takes the most *literal* and *material* form of imitation, creating at the formal level of representation what I choose to call cinematic *onomatopoeia*. Thus, temporal *magnitude* is constituted not only by the 'big' presence of stars but also by literal *quantity*: an extravagance and accumulation of detail, horses, moccasins, battles, jewels, and Christians. Similarly, the *existential weight* of historical 'being-in-time' that is culturally sedimented as the thought that History is made literal and material through *scale*: in the concretely 'big' presence of monumental sets and landscapes. [emphasis in original]"

does *Huangmei diao* make *The Love Eterne* popular? These questions arise from how, for decades, Chinese people have been referring *Huangmei diao* to some representational and performance practices that originated in a liminal and intermediary space between stage and cinema during the 1950s and 1960s.[15]

Originally known as "tea-picking ditties" (*caicha diao*) in Huangmei, Hubei, *Huangmei diao* reached Anqing, Anhui and other neighboring regions during the eighteenth century.[16] Since then and until the late nineteenth century, it was developed into a "minor opera" (*xiao xi*) genre that combined the modally-gendered "flower-drum" (*huagu*) with a few other folk singing styles.[17] It differed from most Chinese opera regional genres whose musical and theatrical elements were grounded in the Four Major Vocal Styles (*si da shengqiang*).[18] It did not adopt

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[15] See also Tan See-kam, "Huangmei Opera Films, Shaw Brothers and Ling Bo—Chaste Love Stories, Genderless Cross-dressers and Sexless Gender-plays?," *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, no.49 (spring 2007), <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc49.2007/TanSee-Kam>; Emilie Yueh-Yu Yeh, "China," *The International Film Musical*, eds. Corey K. Creekmur and Linda Y. Mokdad (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 180; and Chen, 52-53.

[16] For details, see Lu Hongfei, *Huangmeixi yuanliu* (Hefei: Anhui renmin chubanshe, 1985, 1-11; and Shi Bailin, *Huangmeixi yinyue gailun* (Beijing: Renmin yinyue chubanshe, 1989), 3-5. See also Wang Zhaotian, "Qiantan Qingyang qiang dui Huangmei xi ji qi qinyuan juzhong de yingxiang," *Huangmeixi yishu*, vol.2 (1982), 40-62.

[17] See also Lu, 11-26; and Shi, *Huangmeixi yinyue gailun*, 4-19. Similar to the "flower-drum" singing in other neighboring areas, *Huangmei diao* has been, conventionally speaking, deploying specific musical modes for male and female singing in which, within the same major pentatonic scale, if the dominant note of female voice is in scale degree 1, then that of male voice would be in scale degree 3, or if the dominant note of male is in scale degree 1, then that of female voice would be in scale degree 5. Even when *Huangmei diao* has become a "grand opera" genre and extensively feature tune types such as "plain verse" and "fire attack," the vocal voices remain modally gendered. For details, see Yu Yun (ed.), *Zhongguo xiqu zhi: Anhui juan* (Beijing: China ISBN Center, 1993), 99-101. For illustration, see, for example, Shi, *Huangmeixi yinyue gailun*, 196-197, 226-232, 252-257, 266-272.

[18] Bell Yung, *Cantonese Opera: Performance as Creative Process* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 4-5. According to Yung (1989: 7), "[a]ll Chinese operas organize their tunes according to a combination of the medley form or the tempo-variant form," although "[m]ost operas […] utilize one organization more than the other." Yung also mentions (ibid., 8) that "[t]he operas are, of course, musically quite different if they belong to different *qiang*; the differences include scale, tonal mode, ornamentation, the repertory of tunes, accompanying instruments, and the manner of accompaniment." And, as he elaborates (ibid.), "[i]n cases where the operas belong to the same *qiang*, they share the same repertory of tunes and other musical matters to a large extent; but regional aesthetic preferences inevitably result in different treatments of the same tune by the singers," which suggest "on a more detailed level, the music of regional operas belonging to the same *qiang* differ from one another." The *qiang* that Yung discusses about are basically the Four Major Vocal Styles, which include Kunshan style (*Kunshan qiang*), Yiyang style (*Yiyang qiang*, also known as "high" style, *gao qiang*), Qin style (*Qin qiang*, also known as "clapper" style, *bangzi qiang*), and pihuang style (*pihuang qiang*). Also, following Yang Yinliu's categorization (1977: 984) of Chinese opera genres, *Huangmei diao*

any metrical structures from Chinese operatic "tempo-variant form" until the mid twentieth century, when it became a "grand opera" genre (*da xi*) that treated Peking opera and a few other regional operas as models.[19]

Huangmei diao used to entertain the audience with raw, sexualized, and "feudalistic" contents as well as explicit, nonsensical, and exaggerated expressions. As such, it was considered too lowly for and by the urban audience. Nevertheless, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) recognized the advantages of adapting this genre for delivering ideological messages to peasants and other proletariats (*wuchan jieji*), and was eager to implement a substantial and multidimensional reform accordingly. Shi Bailin (1927–), an influential reformer of *Huangmei diao*, once stated that Huangmei opera—a new major regional opera genre that came into view in the 1950s—was affected by a new context of musical creativity that involved the insertion of "revolutionary" contents, the adherence to sinicized socialist realism principles, the establishment of state-owned professional troupes, and the restructuring of cultural and artistic hierarchy among practitioners.[20] He also claimed that the absence of preexisting "labeled tunes" (*qupai*) and other traditional tunes rendered Huangmei opera a flexible genre, one that could use instrumental music to serve the expressive needs of specific troupes, plays, or actor-singers.

Graduated from Shanghai Conservatory of Music in 1953 as a composition major, Shi began his lifelong engagement in *Huangmei diao* with *Heavenly Match*, a popular "grand opera"

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would be one of the few minor "ditty operas" (*xiaodiao xi*) whose musical elements do not show any particular connections to the Four Major Vocal Styles, at least during the Qing dynasty (1644–1911).

[19] For details, see Ding Shiping, "Huangmeixi de yougong zhi chen: Ding Laoliu," *Huangmeixi yishu*, vol.1 (1982), 31-32; Lu, 26-88; and Shi, *Huangmeixi yinyue gailun*, 185-303. For an illustration of tempo-variant form, see, for example, chapter 4, pages 81-84.

[20] Shi, *Huangmeixi yinyue gailun*, 321. See also Zheng Lisong, "Yi Huangmeixi shouci dengshang shanghai wutai," *Huangmeixi yishu*, vol.1 (1980), 96; Geng Tian, "Hu Yuting jianjie," *Huangmeixi yishu*, vol.1 (1980), 102-105; and Lu, 1-4, 285-299.

that became a Huangmei opera on film (1955) after receiving critical acclaim during the East China Convention of Chinese Opera Performance in 1954. He was assigned to rearrange music for the film, and he thoroughly studied the musical-theatrical conventions of *Huangmei diao* by seeking practical advice from Yan Fengying (1930–1968), Wang Shaofang (1920–1986), and other actor-singers in Anhui Province Huangmei Opera Troupe, in addition to analyzing whatever transcriptions available, so as to figure out a suitable way to complete his assignment.

The "fire attack" (*huo gong*) tune type:
the female four-line-and-seven-character archetype

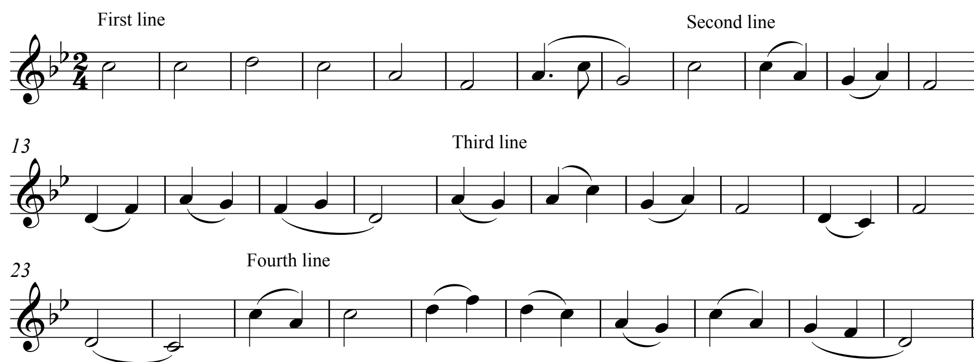

Figure 5.01: The "fire attack" tune type: the female four-line-and-seven-character archetype

Excerpt from *Four Appraisals at the Magpie Bridge*
(*Queqiao sizan*): the vocal melody

Arranged by Shi Bailin
Sung by Wang Shaomei, Pan Jingli, and Pan Xiayun etc.

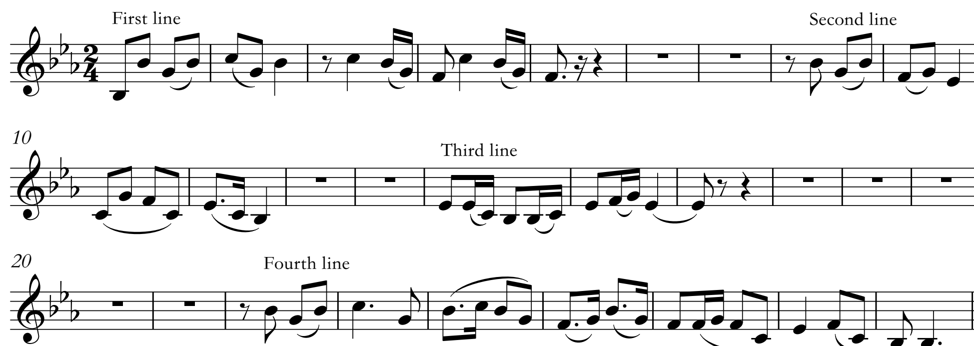

Figure 5.02: *Heavenly Match*, the set piece *Four Appraisals at the Magpie Bridge*, 0:06:13–0:07:05

Excerpt from *The Birds on the Tree Becoming a Pair* (*Shushang de niaoer cheng xiangdui*): the vocal melody

Arranged by Shi Bailin and Wang Wenzhi
Sung by Yan Fengying and Wang Shaofang

Figure 5.03: *Heavenly Match*, the set piece *The Birds on the Tree Becoming a Pair*, 1:04:12–1:05:20
[AB “dialogic metrical pattern” (*duiban*): A – measures 1-4 (also the female *maiqiang* “aria type”); B – measures 5-8]

However Shi retained many *Huangmei diao* conventional musical-theatrical features (such as the gendered character of most, if not all, tune types) in the film version of *Heavenly Match*, he has been mostly known for transforming some medley-like vocal excerpts (*changduan*) into self-contained set pieces of less local or regional flavor.[21] *Four Appraisals at the Magpie Bridge* (*Queqiao sizan*), for instance, is for most part (i.e., except the third line) a melodic expansion of one of the female “fire attack” (*huo gong*) archetypes (Figure 5.01), but Shi disguised the excerpt illustrated in Figure 5.02 as a self-contained set piece that accommodated the film’s clear-cut insertion of dialogue. Similarly, *The Birds on the Tree Becoming a Pair* (*Shushang de niaoer cheng xiangdui*) is a “plain verse” (*ping ci*) set in the gendered AB “dialogic metrical pattern” (*duiban*), but Shi rendered the excerpt illustrated in Figure 5.03 into another self-contained set piece by repeating it several times for one of the scenes.[22] The partial use of Mandarin in these set pieces meant to eliminate linguistic regionality

[21] Sang Hu, “Tantan xiqu pian de juben wenti,” *Lun xiqu dianying*, eds. Zhang Junxiang and Sang Hu (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 1958), 41-42, 45. For Shi’s arrangement, see, for example, Shi, *Huangmeixi yinyue gailun*, 194-197, 241-243, 245-246. 286-287, 426-432.

[22] For details about this musical excerpt, see Shi, *Huangmeixi yinyue gailun*, 220-223.

for the nationwide audience within Mainland China, while the eclectic use of modern Chinese orchestral sound "enriched" these set pieces "for better musical effect on screen" by offering a musical texture that was more comparable to some folk-sounding pop songs such as *Song of Four Seasons* (*Siji ge*) and *The Wandering Songstress* (*Tianya genü*) of the 1930s, than to most Chinese opera regional genres of the time.[23]

Notably mediated by the so-called film language, the aforementioned set pieces brought some significant changes in the musical creativity and consumption of Chinese opera during the mid twentieth century. Their compactness, repeatability, sing-along quality, and modernized musical texture enabled the audience to appreciate them at ease.[24] Their linguistic accessibility, in conjunction with their wide circulation by the means of cinema, radio, vinyl records, and sheet music, also gave rise to new ways of creating, adapting, performing, and perceiving the music of Chinese opera. These trendsetting characters of *Huangmei diao* were soon exploited by Run Run Shaw, as he learned about the popularity of *Heavenly March* in Singapore in 1956, before he suggested Li Han-hsiang to direct *Diau Charn* (1958), the first-ever Mandarin "yellow plum" musical film, for Shaw Brothers Studio two years later.[25]

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[23] Xu Suling, "Shitan xiqu yishupian de yixie wenti," *Lun xiqu dianying*, eds. Zhang Junxiang and Sang Hu (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 1958), 33; Chen, 52. First sung by Zhou Xuan (1918–1957), one of the most iconic singers in the history of Chinese popular music, *Song of Four Seasons* is a pop adaptation of a Suzhou folk song, whereas *Wandering Songstress* is an original composition. They are the two famous theme songs featured in the Chinese left-wing cinema classic *Street Angel* (1937), in which Zhou performed as a teahouse songstress. For details, see Jean Ma, *Sounding the Modern Woman: The Songstress in Chinese Cinema* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015), 54-70. See also Lu, 301-304, for various quotes regarding the film's public reaction in relation to its language accessibility. Language standardization (*yuyan guifanhua*) was one of the most controversial issues under debate during the Chinese Opera Reform.

[24] See Lu, 301-304, for various quotes regarding the film's public reaction in relation to musical consumption.

[25] Li Han-hsiang, "Huangmeixi jutuan zai gang yanchu," *Sanshi nian xishuo congtou*, vol.4 (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books, 1984), 174-175; Li Han-hsiang, "Bujian yuedui de men hulu," *Sanshi nian xishuo congtou*, vol.4 (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books, 1984), 178-180; Li Han-hsiang, "Quantuan gong wushijiu ren," *Sanshi nian xishuo congtou*, vol.4 (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books, 1984), 180-183; Li Han-hsiang, "Yinyue fangmian de gaige," *Sanshi nian xishuo congtou*, vol.4 (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books, 1984), 183-185.

5.3 Li Han-Hsiang, Wang Chun, and the Emergence of Mandarin "Yellow Plum" Musical Film

Diau Charn is remarkable not only for establishing a new Chinese film genre, but also for launching the transformation of *Huangmei diao* into "the signature musical texture of Shaw Brothers Studio that is no less distinctive than Cantonese operatic singing."[26] Li and musician-composer Wang Chun (1920–2001) were keen to incorporate pop singing style and four-part chorus into *Huangmei diao* in order to "emphasize a certain charm, style, and classical impression, rather than the sense of a certain time or region."[27] They believed that the "old-fashioned" Chinese operatic singing style (*tu changfa*) should be abandoned due to its incompatibility with the concurrent musical trends in Hong Kong, and they sought to establish Tsin Ting's (1934–) "gentle and effeminate" contralto natural voice as a standard.[28]

Although Wang was prolific in composing vocal set pieces for Teochew opera films (*Chaoju pian*) as well as those Amoy Hokkien films that heavily appropriated *nanguan* ("Southern pipes," a Southern Min narrative-singing genre) and *gezaixi* (also known as Taiwanese opera) vocal tunes, he was more widely known for his pioneering scoring for Mandarin "yellow plum" musical films.[29] The practical experience he gained from Teochew

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[26] *Koushu lishi fangwen: Ling Bo, 2011/04/14*, VHS (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2011).

[27] Chen, 63.

[28] See also Li Han-hsiang, "You Min nianxing shiyi yan guzhuangxi," *Sanshi nian xishuo congtou*, vol.2 (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books, 1984), 210; Li Han-hsiang, "Mati xiu yuanjiao 'wahang'," *Sanshi nian xishuo congtou*, vol.2 (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books, 1984), 269; and Yu Siu Wah, "Cong sige gangchan *Liang Zhu* banben kan dalu wenhua zai Xianggang de bentuhua," *Zhongguo yinyue yanjiu zai xinshiji de dingwei guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* (vol.2), eds. Tsao Pen-yeh, Qiao Jianzhong, and Yuan Jingfang (Beijing: Renmin yinyue chubanshe, 2001), 1047-1048.

[29] Wang Ying-fen, "Xiayu guzhuangpian de yinyue yunyong: yi nanguan wei zhaodian," *Xianggang Xiayu dianying fangzong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2012), 96-109; Po Fung, "Dui Chaoyu pian de yixie guancha he renshi," *Xianggang Chaoyu dianying xunji* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2013), 34-47. For Wang's partial filmography as a composer, see the records from Hong Kong Film Archive's Collection Items Online Catalog, i.e., <http://ipac.hkfa.lcsd.gov.hk/ipac/cclib/ipac.jsp?cs=iso-8859-1>.

opera films and Amoy Hokkien films, in addition to his technical knowledge about Chinese operatic modal characters (*diaomen*), made him competent to deal with Mandarin "yellow plum" musical films. Notwithstanding, he still sought advice from Lin Shengyi (1914–1991), a composer-pedagogue who introduced him Western classical music composition techniques such as part-writing, functional harmony, and orchestration.[30]

Compositionally speaking, Wang was—in comparison with Chou Lan-ping (1925–1971) and particularly the case of *The Love Eterne*—conservative in his selection of melodic materials but flexible in his adaptation of preexisting conventions that connect music to dramatic actions. He introduced a significant number of musical elements to *Huangmei diao*, and yet most of them were only for renewal of musical texture. For the classic set pieces *Disguising as the Emperor* (*Ban huangdi*) and *Flirting with Li Feng the Phoenix* (*Xi feng*) featured in *The Kingdom and the Beauty* (1959), Wang seemed to have combined vocal melodies from *Four Appraisals at the Magpie Bridge* and *The Birds on the Tree Becoming a Pair* with either fragments of *Huangmei diao* "aria types" or imitative instrumental interludes.[31] He retained the appearance of conventional Chinese operatic *liantao* suite and preserved the gendered AB "dialogic metrical pattern" in these "yellow plum ditties," but no longer treated the dramaturgical, instructional (to formulaic and figurative bodily movements), or functional (in relation to musical form) attributes of these features as essential to the musical rendering of *Huangmei diao*. He might have therefore deconstructed and deterritorialized *Huangmei diao* as a Chinese opera regional genre,

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[30] Wang Chun, "Erhu yanzouzhe: Wang Chun," *eBaoMonthly*, accessed November 30, 2016, <http://ebaomonthly.com/window/music/chinese/hang_1.htm>; Li Han-hsiang, "Mati xiu yuanjiao 'wahang'," 268.

[31] For the published transcriptions of *Disguising as the Emperor* and *Flirting with Li Feng the Phoenix*, see *Jiangshan meiren dianying shaoshuo* (Hong Kong: Nanguo dianying huabaoshe, 1959), 32-34, and *Jiangshan meiren gequ tekan* (Hong Kong: Daya yinshuashuo, 1959), 2-5, 10.

as some of its melodic materials became "autonomous from the dramatic action, impulses, and situations, and independent of characters and landscapes."[32]

5.4 Kick-start *The Love Eterne* with Chou Lan-Ping's Musical Footprints

Figure 5.04: Chou Lan-ping (standing) and some professional instrumentalists in Movietown's recording studio (Photograph courtesy of Lui Pui-yuen and Yu Siu Wah)

Completed in spring 1963, *The Love Eterne* is the first Mandarin "yellow plum" musical film that features a film score by Chou Lan-ping (Figure 5.04) who, rather than being a folk musician at first, began his musical journey by joining Kuomintang's Central Training Regiment (*Zhongyang xunlian tuan*) and enrolling in the third class of Music Cadre Training Program

[32] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 319.

(*Yinyue ganbu xunlian ban*) as a tenor who minored in composition.[33] He completed his formal music education at the National Opera School (*Guoli geju xuexiao*) before the War ended, and toured with the Drama Section in the Ministry of National Defense (*Guofangbu yanjudui*) before moving to Taipei in 1949 as a KMT soldier.[34] He was hired by Wanxiang Film Company to compose music for Mandarin film *Wind and Cloud Over Alishan* (*Alishan fengyun*, 1950), and became the Appointed Vocal Instructor and Appointed Composition Specialist in the Music Department of Broadcasting Corporation of China in 1952.[35] With notable works such as Mandarin pop songs *The Verdurous High Mountain* (*Gaoshan qing*) and *Green Island Serenade*, Chinese orchestral piece *Sceneries of the Mountainous Region* (*Shandi fengguang*), and oratorio *Koxinga Cantata*, he established himself as the most prolific and versatile composer in Taiwan during the 1950s.

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[33] Shen Tung, "Zhou Lanping yu *Lüdao xiaoyequ* chaunqi," *NTU Studies in Taiwan Literature*, vol.12 (August 2012), 84; Shen Tung, "Ai Taiwan, weiwei lihai zhongjian: Zhou Lanping yinyue zuopin zhong de Taiwan xiangxiang," *Lin Wenyue xiansheng xueshu chengjiu yu xinchuan guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* (Taipei: NTU Department of Chinese Literature, 2014), 551.

[34] For details, see Shen, "Zhou Lanping yu *Lüdao xiaoyequ* chaunqi," 84; Shen, "Ai Taiwan," 551.

[35] For details, see Shen, "Ai Taiwan," 552.

The Love Eterne:
Opening-and-closing set piece, the (mixed) chorus

Arranged/composed by Chou Lan-ping
Lyrics by Li Junqing

SOPRANO
啊
(closing)
啊
(opening and closing)

ALTO
啊
啊

TENOR
啊
啊

BASS
啊
啊

9 (first line) (second line)

彩 虹 萬 里 百 花 開 蝴 蝶 雙 雙 對 對 來

彩 虹 萬 里 百 花 開 蝴 蝶 雙 雙 對 對 來

啊 啊

啊 啊

2

13 (third line) (fourth line)

地 老 天 荒 心 不 變 梁 山 伯 與 祝 英 台

地 老 天 荒 心 不 變 梁 山 伯 與 祝 英 台

地 老 天 荒 心 不 變 梁 山 伯 與 祝 英 台

地 老 天 荒 心 不 變 梁 山 伯 與 祝 英 台

Figure 5.05: *The Love Eterne*, the opening-and-closing set piece, the chorus (see also Section B in Figure 5.06)

Figure 5.06: *The Love Eterne*, the closing set piece [titled *Metamorphosis into Butterflies* (*Hua die*)], excerpt [vocal score published by Tower Records (*Dianta changpian*) in Taipei in 1963]

化 蝶

G调 $\frac{2}{4}$ 中中板

（鋼片琴）

（齐唱）彩虹万里

鮮花開，花間

蝴蝶成双对，

（笛）

（中奏，舞蹈）

（弦樂）

千年

万代不分開，梁山

（弦樂）

伯与祝英台。

Figure 5.07: Yue opera film version of *The Butterfly Lovers* (1953), the closing set piece
[titled *Metamorphosis into Butterflies* (*Hua die*)], excerpts [vocal score published by Yinyue chubanshein Beijing in 1956]

The Love Eterne:
Opening-and-closing set piece, the instrumental interlude

Arranged by Chou Lan-ping
[Composed by Chen Gang and He Zhanhao]

Figure 5.08:
The Love Eterne, the opening-and-closing set piece, the instrumental interlude (see also Section C in Figure 5.06)

The Female Prince Consort (*Nü fuma*):
Opening-and-closing set piece, the (female) chorus

Composed by Shi Bailin
Song-text by Wang Zhaotian (original) and Lu Hongfei (arr.)

Figure 5.09: *The Female Prince Consort*, the opening-and-closing set piece, the chorus

Figures 5.10a (above) and b (below): *Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto*, violin solo excerpts

Chou demonstrated in *The Love Eterne* how, rather than imitating his predecessors including Shi Bailin and Wang Chun, he retained his own composition style despite his unfamiliarity with Mandarin "yellow plum" musical films. The film's opening credits, for instance, begin with a four-part chorus (Figure. 5.05) that is lyrical but compact, polyphonic but pentatonic, tactfully rhymed but plainly syllabic. The succeeding interlude (Figure 5.08) is in the mode of sol (*zhi diao*) but obtains a strophic-form outlook with two hybrid themes, featuring not only *dizi* (transverse bamboo flute) and *guban* ("drum and clappers") but also cello and Western brass instruments.

Apparently showing no trace of *Huangmei diao*, this beginning chorus may nevertheless sound similar to that in PRC Huangmei opera film *The Female Prince Consort* (*Nü fuma*, 1959).[36] Both choruses consist of two pairs of seven-character phrases, and one could notice a melodic resemblance between the first and fourth phrases of the older version (Figure 5.09, measures 5-6 and 11) and all but the fourth phrase of the newer version (Figure 5.05, measures 9-14). On top of that, the reappearance of the opening set piece as the closing set piece is applicable to both *The Love Eterne* and *The Female Prince Consort*.[37] But then, the older version is set in a monophonic texture and has a musical length double of the newer version, whereas the new version deploys part-writing and harmonization to feature mixed voices, which obscures the gendered modal character of *Huangmei diao*.[38] More ironically, the melodies of the newer version were first written by Shi Bailin in an attempt to use non-diegetic music as film music.[39] The symmetrical musical opening and closing of *The Female Prince Consort* is indeed a particularity (not observable from other PRC Huangmei opera films), although Chou apparently presumed that as conventional of *Huangmei diao*.[40] Likewise, the lyrics of the newer version

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[36] According to Chou's recount, Li asked him to score two scenes of *The Love Eterne* during the "music test" before making the "risky decision" of commissioning him to score for the whole film. For details, see Yao Feng-pan, "Zhou Lanping fan Tai tan Huangmeidiao," *Lianhe bao*, September 21, 1963.

[37] The chorus of the opening-and-closing set piece in *The Female Prince Consort* was also rearranged by Chou in its entirety for the musical setting of a song-text composed by Li Chun-ching, which appears at the end of the episode "eighteen-*li* farewell." For the vocal score of this rearrangement, see *Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai: dianying zhutiqu* (Taipei: Tower Records, 1963), 30.

[38] Shi, *Huangmeixi yinyue gailun*, 185-186.

[39] See also Ruan Qian (ed.), *Dianying biandao jianlun* (Shenyang: Dongbei shudian, 1949), 103; and Liu Ruzeng, *Dianying yueju Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai qupu*, song-texts by Xu Jin and Sang Hu (Beijing: Yinyue chubanshe, 1956), IV.

[40] See also Yao, "Zhou Lanping fan Tai tan Huangmeidiao." In fact, both *The Love Eterne* and the Yue opera film version of *The Butterfly Lovers* borrow the idea of *kai luo* ("to commence with the gong sound") and deploy the gong sound for beginning the film. One may suspect this commonality as analogous to the symmetrical use of music at the very beginning and very end of both *The Love Eterne* and *The Female Prince Consort*. For more information, see chapter 4, page 76.

originated in the closing chorus of the Yue opera film version of *The Butterfly Lovers* (see Figures 5.05 and 5.07), which were handwritten on the last page of the pre-shooting script of *The Love Eterne*.[41] The interlude that succeeds the melodies of the newer version is rather a re-orchestrated combination of two melodies from different parts of *Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto* (see Figure 5.05, section C, Figure 5.10a, measures 3-10, and Figure 5.10b, measures 7-11), which shows at most a tenuous melodic relation to the Yue opera film.

The above example is evidence of appropriation from various musical sources for creating a seamless and cohesive musical assemblage, but the music's remote connection to the film's dramatic actions renders itself insufficient for substantiating the assertion that Chou's film score was a musical fabrication of *Huangmei diao*. In this regard, one may want to look into the purposefully publicized classroom scene (see Figure 5.11 below) that sets in motion the film's early episode about the three-year companionship between the protagonists Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai. There, without specific instructions from either Li Han-hsiang or the pre-shooting film script, Chou collaborated with assistant director King Hu (1932–1997) on creating a set of musicalized dialogues titled *The Great Way of Learning* (*Daxue zhi dao*, see Figures 5.12 and 5.13 below), for several sophisticated reasons.[42]

[41] *The Love Eterne*, film script, 1962, Shaw Brothers Studio, Hong Kong Film Archive.

[42] "Shaoshi qunxing kechuan yan xuesheng," *Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai dianying xiaoshuo* (Hong Kong: Southern Screen Pictorial, 1963), 9-12; Hu, 54-55; *The Love Eterne*, film script, 1962.

5.5 Silencing *Third Sister Liu* through *The Way of Great Learning*

Figure 5.11: *The Love Eterne*, the classroom scene
featuring star actors Kwan Shan (1933–2012), Chiao Chuang (1934–2008), Li Hsiang-chun (?–), Koo Mei (1929–),
Shih Yen (1938–), Ting Ning (1939–), and Chiang Hung (?–)

D調 2/4 3/4 **大學之道**

金銓 詞
周藍萍 曲

（"梁山伯與祝英台"插曲）

（男女声合唱與英台、山伯、老師、肥仔獨唱）

MODERATO

ALLEGRETTO

MODERATO

（續"大學之道"）

Figure 5.12: *The Love Eterne*, the set piece *The Great Way of Learning*, excerpt [vocal score published by Tower Records (*Dianta changpian*) in Taipei in 1963]

The Way of Great Learning (*Da xue zhi dao*): the vocal dialogues

Music (rearranged) by Chou Lan-ping
Song-text (edited) by King Hu

MODERATO

(interlude) (mixed chorus sung like recitation)
大學之道 在明明德 在親民 在 止於至善

7
知止而後 有定 定而後能靜 靜而後能安 安而後能慮 慮而後能

13 (interlude) (teacher solo)
得 古之欲 明明德 於天下者

19 (chorus) (teacher solo) (chorus) (teacher solo) (chorus)
先治其國 欲治其國者 先齊其家 欲齊其家者 先修其身

26 (teacher solo, free tempo) (student solo)
子曰學而 時習之 不亦 說 乎 有朋自遠 方 來

32 (teacher sings) (interlude) (Yingtai sings)
不亦 樂 乎 關關雎鳩 在河之洲 窈窕淑女

38 (interlude) (teacher sings) (interlude)
君子好逑 唯女子與小人 為 難 養也

43 (Shanbo sings)
近之則不遜 遠之則怨

51 (teacher sings) (fat dude sings)
子曰飽食 終 日 飽食 終 日 飽食 終 日

2

59
飽食 終 日 下一句

69
糞土之墻 不可圬也

Quotations from *Great Learning* (*Da xue*), one of the *Four Books* (*Si shu*), translation by A. Charles Muller (2013)

大學之道（The way of great learning; measure 3），在明明德（consists in manifesting one's bright virtue; measure 4），
在親民（consists in loving the people; measure 5），在止於至善（consists in stopping in perfect goodness; measure 6）。

知止而後而定（When you know where to stop, you have stability; measures 7-8）；
定而後能靜（When you have stability, you can be tranquil; measure 9）；
靜而後能安（When you are tranquil, you can be at ease; measure 10）；
安而後能慮（When you are at ease, you can deliberate; measure 11）；
慮而後能得（When you can deliberate, you can attain your aims; measures 12-13）。

古之欲明明德於天下者（The ancients who wanted to manifest their bright virtue to all in the world; measures 16-18），
先治其國（first governed well their own states; measure 19）；
欲治其國者（Wanting to govern well their states; measure 20），
先齊其家（they first harmonized their own clans; measure 21）；
欲齊其家者（Wanting to harmonize their own clan; measure 22），
先修其身（they first cultivate themselves; measures 23-24）。

Quotation from *Analects* (*Lun yu*), another one of the *Four Books*, translation by D. C. Lau (1979)

子曰：「學而時習之（measures 26-27），不亦說乎（measures 28-29）？
有朋自遠方來（measures 30-31），不亦樂乎（measures 32-33）？」
(The Master said, "Is it not a pleasure, having learned something, to try it out at due intervals?
Is it not a joy to have friends come from afar?)

唯女子與小人為難養也（measures 40-41），近之則不遜（measure 43），遠之則怨（measure 44）。
(It is the women and the small men that are difficult to deal with. If you let them get too close,
they become insolent. If you keep them at a distance, they complain.)

子曰：「飽食終日（measures 51-63），（無所用心，難矣哉！）」
(The Master said, "It is not easy matter for a man who always has a full stomach to put his mind to some use.")

Quotation from *Book of Odes* (*Shi jing*), translation by Arthur Waley (1937)

關關雎鳩（"Fair, fair," cry the ospreys; measure 34），在河之洲（on the island in the river; measure 35）。
窈窕淑女（Lovely is this noble lady; measure 37），君子好逑（fit bride for our lord; measure 38）。

Figure 5.13: *The Love Eterne*, the set piece *The Great Way of Learning*, the vocal dialogues

SHOT	SHOT TYPE	MAIN SUBJECT(S)	MEASURES	SHOT LENGTH
1	LONG	TEACHER	1-2	5.4s
2	TRACKING	ALL STUDENTS	3-6	12.1s
3	TWO SHOT	2 STUDENTS (KWAN SHAN AND CHIAO CHUANG)	7-8	3.8s
4	TWO SHOT	2 STUDENTS (WONG MAN AND MO CHOU)	9	2.6s
5	TWO SHOT	2 STUDENTS (LI HSIANG-CHUN AND KOO MEI)	10	3s
6	TWO SHOT	2 STUDENTS (SHIH YEN)	11	2.8s
7	TWO SHOT	2 STUDENTS (TING NING AND CHIANG HUNG)	12-13	2.8s
8	MEDIUM CLOSE-UP	TEACHER	14	3.4s
9	LONG	ALL STUDENTS	15	2.7s
10	LONG (SHOT)	TEACHER AND STUDENTS	16-18	7.8s
11	LONG (COUNTERSHOT)	TEACHER AND STUDENTS	19	3.1s
12	MEDIUM CLOSE-UP	TEACHER	20	3.1s
13	MEDIUM	STUDENTS	21	2.6s
14	TRACKING	TEACHER	22-29	17.8s
15	CLOSE-UP	1 STUDENT (KWAN SHAN)	30-33	10.9s
16	TRACKING	TEACHER	34-36	5.2s
17	CLOSE-UP (SHOT)	1 STUDENT (YINGTAI)	36-38	6.5s
18	MEDIUM CLOSE-UP THEN TRACKING (COUNTERSHOT)	TEACHER	39-41	7.6s
19	CLOSE-UP (SHOT)	1 STUDENT (SHANBO)	42-44	6.9s
20	CLOSE-UP (COUNTERSHOT)	TEACHER	45-46	2.5s
21	MEDIUM-LONG	STUDENTS	46-47	2s
22	TRACKING	TEACHER	48	1.6s
23	DOLLY ZOOM	1 STUDENT (FAT DUDE)	49-50	3.9s
24	MEDIUM CLOSE-UP (SHOT)	TEACHER	51-52	4.7s
25	TWO SHOT THEN CLOSE-UP (COUNTERSHOT)	2 STUDENTS, THEN 1 (FAT DUDE)	53-56	10.9s
26	CLOSE-UP (SHOT)	TEACHER	57-58	1.8s
27	CLOSE-UP (COUNTERSHOT)	1 STUDENT (FAT DUDE)		1.5s
28	TWO SHOT (COUNTERSHOT)	2 STUDENTS (SHIH YEN)		1.4s
29	CLOSE-UP (COUNTERSHOT)	1 STUDENT (CHIAO CHUANG)		0.9s
30	CLOSE-UP (COUNTERSHOT)	TEACHER		0.8s
31	TWO SHOT (COUNTERSHOT)	2 STUDENTS (SHIH YEN)		0.6s
32	CLOSE-UP (SHOT)	1 STUDENT (FAT DUDE)	59-60	2.9s
33	CLOSE-UP (COUNTERSHOT)	TEACHER	61-62	3s
34	CLOSE-UP (COUNTERSHOT)	1 STUDENT (FAT DUDE)	63	1.5s
35	TWO SHOT (SHOT)	TEACHER AND 1 STUDENT (FAT DUDE)	64-67	3.5s
36	TWO SHOT (COUNTERSHOT)	TEACHER AND 1 STUDENT (FAT DUDE)	67-70	6.4s
37	TWO SHOT	TEACHER AND STUDENTS	71-72	3.8s
38	CLOSE-UP (SHOT)	1 STUDENT (FAT DUDE)	73-74	4.4s
39	MEDIUM CLOSE-UP (COUNTERSHOT)	TEACHER	75	1s
				169.2s

Table 5.01: *The Love Eterne*, the classroom scene, a shot analysis of *The Way of Great Learning*[43]

[43] See also Cinemetrics, "Cinemetrics Database: The Way of Great Learning – The Love Eterne (1963, Hong Kong), Directed by Li Han-hsiang, Measured with FACT," <http://www.cinemetrics.lv/movie.php?movie_ID=21039>.

In order to evoke a historical impression in *The Love Eterne*, King Hu adapted several renowned passages from Confucian classics *Great Learning* (*Da xue*), *Analects* (*Lun yu*), and *Book of Odes* (*Shi jing*) (Figure 5.13)—all of which already existed and studied by schoolboys during the Eastern Jin dynasty (317–420) when the original story was first known—for plot development in the classroom scene.[44] Taking the quotes from *Analects* as examples, the one that expresses the joy of learning and meeting new friends from afar (measures 26-33) summaries the blissful feelings of the female protagonist Zhu Yingtai at the moment, whereas the one that criticizes women as difficult to deal with (measures 40-44) prepares the succeeding set piece *Enlightened* (*Maosai dunkai*) for a heated vocal dialogue between Zhu and the male protagonist Liang Shanbo on women's social and historical statuses.[45] Through Chou's antiphonal musical setting (measures 16-63), these quotations are effectively transformed into recitation materials for a sizeable class, not to mention that the content of *Book of Odes* (measures 34-38) has meant to be sung since its emergence more than two thousand years ago.

Apparently sensible, this treatment of the classroom scene is musically confusing. Chou did not follow the musical-theatrical conventions that prescribe antiphony in the style of *Huangmei diao*; the music instead demonstrated some rhythmic patterns characteristic of *caidiao* ("colorful tunes"), a regional opera from Guangxi.[46] For this, one may want to compare the

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[44] As Hu himself confesses (1998: 54), it is virtually impossible to imagine how a school looked like during the Eastern Jin dynasty; one may even wonder if school (and hence schoolboys) existed during that time. This matter brings into the issue of historicity, which will be further discussed later in this and next sections regarding the "surge and splendor" of *The Love Eterne*. With regard to the question of when *The Butterfly Lovers* first existed, see, for example, Qian Nanyang, *Mingjia tan Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai* (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 2006), 29, 136-138.

[45] For the vocal score of *Enlightened*, see *Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai: dianying zhutiqu* (Taipei: Tower Records, 1963), 10-12.

[46] Shen Guifang, *Caidiao yinyue* (Nanning: Guangxi renmin chubanshe, 1982), 16.

classroom scene with the *Singing Battle* scene (*Dui ge*) of *Third Sister Liu* (*Liu sanjie*, 1960), the first landscape-musical film (*fengguang yinyue gushi pian*) produced in the PRC.[47]

Version 2 in the *Singing Battle* scene:
from *Sing in the Mountain and the Mountain Echoes*
(*Geshan duige shan daying*)

Sixty beats per minute

(Mr. Li)

赤膊雞仔 你 莫 惡， 你 歌 哪 有 我 歌 多！

Version 3 in the *Singing Battle* scene:
from *I Have More Songs Than You Do* (*Nige nayou woge duo*)

Sixty beats per minute

(Mr. Li)

小小 黃雀 才 出 窩， 諒你山歌 有 幾 多。

Version 5 in the *Singing Battle* scene:
from *They Become the Landlord's Running Dogs*
(*Caizhu qinglai dang nucai*)

Sixty beats per minute

(Mr. Luo)

一個 油筒 斤 十 七 連油 帶 筒 二 斤 一

Figure 5.14: *Third Sister Liu*, the *Singing Battle* scene,
selected (three out of eleven) versions of opening melodic phrases sung by the three educated misters (*xiucai*)

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[47] Depending on the context, the word *dui ge* could be translated as "singing battle" or "antiphonal singing": the former signifies the dramatic and ideological aspects of the scene, while the latter speaks of the musical counterpart. Although *Five Golden Flowers* (1959) is stylistically very similar to *Third Sister Liu* in both cinematic and musical terms (note: the film composer Lei Zhenbang (1916–1997) wrote and (re)arranged all the music for both films), it was the latter that has been proclaimed as the first PRC color landscape-musical film. The reason behind this remains unknown; *Five Golden Flowers* has been a bit less mentioned in both popular and scholarly discourses than *Third Sister Liu*, but the former has been known for its commitment to Zhou Enlai's dedicated advice, its propose of celebrating the tenth anniversary of the PRC, its status as "a good example of the ethnic minorities genre" (Zhang and Xiao 2002: 168), and its reception marked by its wide overseas distribution.

Go Not to the Sages, This is My Advice (*Quan ni mojin shengren men*)

Composed by Lei Zhenbang
Song-text by Qiao Yu

Forty-eight beats per minute

(Mr. Li)

見你 打魚 受 奔 波 ， 常 年 四季 打 赤 腳
It's real hard work to catch fish. You go barefoot in all seasons.

9

不如 嫁 到 莫 家 去 ， 穿金藏 銀 住 樓 閣 。
Better for you to marry into the Mo family. You'll wear gold and silver and live in luxury.

Eighty-four beats per minute

15 (Third Sister Liu)

你愛 莫家 錢才 多那個， 穿金藏 銀 住 樓 閣， 何不 勸你 親妹 子，
You envy the Mo's because they're rich. They wear gold and silver and live in luxury. Why not advice your sister

21

嫁 到 莫 家 作 小 婆？
to marry Lord Mo and be one of his concubines?

Sixty beats per minute

24 (Mr. Tao)

你 發 狂， 開口敢 罵 讀書 郎，
You've gone out of your mind. How dare you insult a learned scholar?

29

惹得 聖人 生 了 氣， 從此天 下 無 文 章 。
Should the sages take offence, no good writings henceforth there would be.

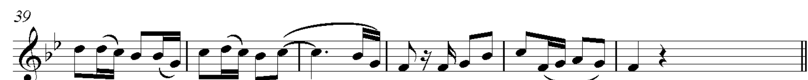
Seventy-two beats per minute

33 (Third Sister Liu)

笑 死人 咧， 勸 你 莫 進 聖 人 門
How very ridiculous! Go not to the sages; this is my advice.

2

39



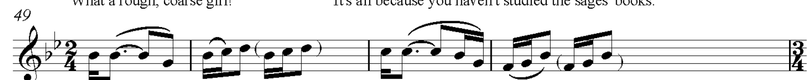
若還 碰見 孔夫 子啦， 留 神板子 打手 心 。
If you do and you meet Confucius, he'll beat your palm to punish you his poor student

Sixty beats per minute

45 (Mr. Li)

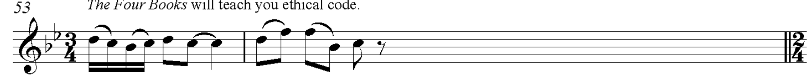
真 粗 魯， 皆因不 讀 聖 賢 書，
What a rough, coarse girl! It's all because you haven't studied the sages' books.

49



不讀 四 書 不知 禮 ，
The Four Books will teach you ethical code.

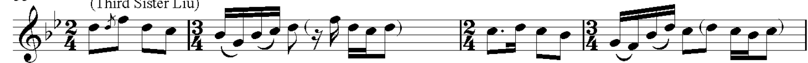
53



勸 你 先學 人 之 初 。
And I advice you to start with the *Three Character Classic*.

Seventy-two beats per minute

55 (Third Sister Liu)



莫 要再提 聖 賢 書 ， 怕 你越讀 越 糊 塗，
Don't you mention the sages' books again. The more books you read, the more stupid you'll become.

59

五谷 雜 糧 都 不 種， 餓 死你這 人 之 初
If we do not grow rice or other crops, you with your *Three Character Classic* will be starved to death.

Sixty beats per minute

64 (Mr. Tao)

你 莫 罵 ， 你 是 朽 木 不 可 雕，
Don't be so fierce, lass. Nothing can be carved out of you decayed wood.

68

常言 萬 般 皆下 品， 自古 唯 有 讀 書 高 。
You must have heard the truth, learning is the noblest of all human pursuits.

Figure 5.15: *Third Sister Liu*, the *Singing Battle* scene, the set piece *Go Not to the Sages, This is My Advice*

Figure 5.16: *The Love Eterne* (left) and *Third Sister Liu* (right):
Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai, Third Sister Liu, the student crowd, and the peasant crowd

SHOT	SHOT TYPE(S)	MAIN SUBJECT(S)	MEASURES	SHOT LENGTH
1	MEDIUM – MEDIUM CLOSE-UP	MR. LI	1-11	30.9s
2	MEDIUM CLOSE-UP – MEDIUM – CLOSE-UP	(SISTER ZHOU) AND THIRD SISTER LIU	12-23	27.5s
3	MEDIUM CLOSE-UP – CLOSE-UP	(MR. LI) AND MR. TAO	23-32	26.5s
4	MEDIUM	THIRD SISTER LIU (AND THE CROWD)	32-44	23.8s
5	MEDIUM CLOSE-UP	MR. LI	45-54	23.6s
6	MEDIUM-LONG – MEDIUM	THIRD SISTER LIU (AND THE CROWD)	55-63	18.4s
7	CLOSE-UP	MR. TAO	64-72	23.2s
				173.9s

Table 5.02: *Third Sister Liu*, the *Singing Battle* scene, a shot analysis of *Go Not to the Sages, This is My Advice*[48]

Through setting those passages from Confucian classics to those melodic phrases from the *Singing Battle* scene of *Third Sister Liu*, Chou not only incorporated *caidiao* musical elements into the music of *The Love Eterne*, but also parodied the original lyrics by the means of musical montage. He selected, edited, and pierced together the opening melodic phrases sung by the three educated misters (*xiucai*) (Figure 5.14)—but nothing from Third Sister Liu—to form *The Way of Great Learning* (Figure 5.13). He restructured the original call-and-response form in a way that evidently set the new lyrics against *Go Not to the Sages, This is My Advice* (Figure 5.15) from *Third Sister Liu*. The excerpt sung by Mr. Li in the middle of *Go Not to the Sages* (measures 45-53) seemed to have provided Chou an idea for allegorizing his musical setting of those *Four Books* quotes (see Figure 5.13, measures 16-29) as an answer to Third Sister Liu on whether or not to "go to the sages" or "mention the sages' books again" (see Figure 5.15, measures 35-38 and 55-56). Similarly, by setting the incomplete line "Confucius said a man who always has a full stomach…" in a fragmented melodic phrase that originally characterizes the three educated misters (see Figure 5.13, measures 51-76, Figure 5.15, measures 1-8, and Figure

[48] See also Cinemetrics, "Cinemetrics Database: Go Not to the Sages, This is My Advice – Third Sister Liu (1960, PRC), Directed by Su Li, Measured with FACT," < http://www.cinemetrics.lv/movie.php?movie_ID=21042>.

5.16), Chou possibly appropriated *Analects* in order to make fun of Third Sister Liu's statement regarding the relative importance of food for stomach versus food for thought (Figure 5.15, measures 59-63). One may also find those *Great Learning* lines that emphasize the significance of achieving inner stability and tranquility (Figure 5.13, measures 7-13) echoing the vocalized disparagement on Third Sister Liu as "a rough, coarse girl" who have "gone out of [her] mind" (Figure 5.15, measures 24 and 45). After all, *Go Not to the Sages* celebrates agrarian labor and disapproves Confucianist indulgence as feudal, unproductive and hypocritical, whereas *The Way of Great Learning* silences (evasively or not) Third Sister Liu and restates the importance of studying Confucian classics and maintaining Confucian morals:

> Chou Lan-ping smartly deployed some of those mountain songs from *Third Sister Liu*. For example, [there is] a tune featured in the classroom scene [of *The Love Eterne*] when the educated mister is leading [a group of] students to recite from books; it is exactly the tune [featured in the *Singing Battle* scene] of *Third Sister Liu* while those rancorous educated misters bring a full boat of books to compete singing [with Third Sister Liu]. This shows Chou's cleverness.[49]

Entrusted by Li Han-hsiang with the task of filming the classroom scene, King Hu supposed to have imagined before or during his own storyboarding how *The Way of Great Learning* would sound like while preparing the song-text for Chou Lan-ping's musical setting.[50] Hu probably had visualized his sense of tempo and rhythm through camera movement, action

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[49] Li Han-hsiang, "Zhou Lanping buxiayu Beiduofen," *Sanshi nian xishuo congtou*, vol.3 (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books, 1984), 197. According to various historical sources, the political dimension of *Third Sister Liu* regarding the antagonism between the working class (*laodong jieji*) and the "bourgeois" intellectuals was reflective of the concurrent social and ideological practices. In the autobiography of renowned *qin* player Cheng Gongliang (1940–), there is a six-page recollection of how such antagonism affected the general curriculum of Shanghai Conservatory of Music through the implementation of a policy titled "The Necessity of Incorporating Education with Productive Labor" (*Jiaoyu yao yu shengchan laodong xiang jiehe*) during the Anti-Rightist Movement and Great Leap Forward in 1958 and 1959. In Cheng's own words, this policy implementation "was manifested in visits and expeditions to as well as performances and [voluntary] physical labor for troops, factories, and the countryside, [prompting those conservatory students] to create [new works], perform [for different audiences], and learn about various folk cultures (*caifeng*) while contributing physical labor" (2015: 129-130). It "[treated] physical labor as merely a method, [as] actually intended for achieving the goals of thought reform (*sixiang gaizao*) […] under the premise of 'education necessarily serving the politics of proletariats' (*jiaoyu yao wei wuchan jieji zhengzhi fuwu*)" (ibid., 132). For details, see Cheng Gongliang, *Qiulaiju yijiu*, ed. Yan Xiaoxing (Beijing: Zhongjua shuju, 2015), 129-134.

[50] Hu, 56.

choreography, and set design, before he realized that the music of *Huangmei diao* was “too long and too slow” for his filming purpose.[51] He created a footage with five times more shots but five seconds shorter than the *Go Not to the Sages* counterpart (see Tables 5.01 and 5.02), before he reassigned “a much faster tempo” to the music.[52]

Figure 5.17:
The Love Eterne (left) and *Third Sister Liu* (right), a comparison of shots (above) and costume designs (below)

On a different note, at least two visual aspects of the classroom scene suggest that Hu—a filmmaker who was keen to project political allegories through historical plots—created an adverse response to the *Singing Battle* scene.[53] First, Hu instructed the set designer to decorate

[51] Ibid., 57.

[52] Ibid.

[53] In his analysis of Hu’s classic *A Touch of Zen* (1971), Stephen Teo posits that “all the plots of Hu’s series of *wuxia* films […] are fictional treatments proceeding from real characters and historical incidents, which underlie the basis of the political allegory” (2007: 63). Although *A Touch of Zen* is a film adaptation based on the twenty-fifth chapter *Female Knight Errant* (*Xia nü*) in the second volume of Pu Songling’s (1640–1715) *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* (*Liaozhai zhiyi*), Teo asserts that the film “relies on a classical textual source on which Hu could

all the wooden screens with craved Chinese characters, as he wanted to capture such artistic attribute in a "frozen" static symmetrically-framed establishing shot (Figure 5.17, upper left) that precedes the commencement of *The Way of Great Learning*. Coincidentally or not, in the *Singing Battle* scene, the vocal dialogue between Third Sister Liu and the three educated misters is yet to formally begin until a static symmetrically-framed shot depicts the landlord (Figure 5.17, upper right)—whose costume design (including hair color and beard style) resembles that of the teacher in the classroom scene—gives Third Sister Liu the final warning of self-humiliation. Second, Hu asked the Studio to provide him as many actors and actresses as possible for shooting the classroom scene.[54] He evidently took full advantage of the human and technological resources available in Movietown, such that he could shoot a crowd scene—with his virtuosic screenwriting, storyboarding, and film direction—that was no less spectacular than the *Singing Battle* scene.[55] There was definitely no chance (in either practical or political terms) for Hu to follow the story setting of *The Butterfly Lovers* and shoot the classroom scene in the "heaven-like" Hangzhou (*tian shang tiantang*, *di xia Su Hang*), where the scenic beauty would be on a par with the filming location of the *Singing Battle* scene (i.e., the "second-to-none" Yangshuo, *Guilin shanshui jia tianxia*).[56] Hu therefore decided to compensate for such shortcoming by combining Movietown's set-design specialty with a lively shot/reverse shot sequence (see Tables

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superimpose his own allegory of modern Chinese politics: the Cold War between the CCP and the GMD" (ibid.). In this sense, it is conceivable that Hu filmed the classroom scene of *The Love Eterne* with a similar intention.

[54] Hu, 54.

[55] See also Poshek Fu, "Going Global: A Cultural History of the Shaw Brothers Studio, 1960–1970," *Border Crossings in Hong Kong Cinema,* ed. Law Kar (Hong Kong: Hong Kong International Film Festival, 2000), 50; Sek Kei, "Shaw Movie Town's 'China Dream' and 'Hong Kong Sentiments'," *The Shaw Screen: A Preliminary Study*, ed. Wong Ain-ling (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2003), 37.

[56] See also Xu, 72. In "*Two Stars on the Silver Screen*: The Metafilm as Chinese Modern," Kristine Harris (2012: 203) mentions that "the picturesque landscape of the Jiangnan region" was chiefly why "Shanghai filmmakers [of the 1930s] famously enjoyed outings to scenic Hangzhou and the West Lake for location shoots."

5.01 and 5.02), featuring traditional landscape painting and tailor-made uniform but more remarkably the cameo appearance of star actors and actresses (see Figures 5.11 and 5.16).[57] He gave the audience the first taste of all these features in a two-shot sequence, in which the student crowd reads aloud a line from *Great Learning* in synchronized motion under the teacher's instruction (Figure 5.17, upper left). This display of obedience to authority contrasts how Third Sister Liu (Figure 5.16, upper right) projects the voice of the oppressed against the three educated misters recruited by landlord (Figure 5.17, upper right).[58] Hu then used a close-up to illustrate the "cultured" Kwan Shan (1933–2012) answering the teacher's question, before he captured the "perky" Shih Yen (1938–) in a couple of two-shots.[59]

Through this analysis, one would notice how, in musical, visual, and ideological terms, the classroom scene in *The Love Eterne* could reveal a contestation of Chinese cultural politics by being a parody of the *Singing Battle* scene in *Third Sister Liu*. In fact, *The Way of Great Learning* is the only set piece in *The Love Eterne* that does not evince any trait of *Huangmei diao*. It instead displays an ahistorical and decontextualized idealization of China that, with an antipathy to Chinese communist ideological values, embeds Confucian platitudes on chastity, loyalty, purity, and integrity in a variety of textual, musical, and visual references.[60]

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[57] Hu, 54.

[58] Xu Dunle, "Kenguang tuoying wushiqiu," *Kenguang tuoying: Nanfang yingye banshiji de daolu* (Hong Kong: MCCM Creations, 2005), 72.

[59] According to Yu Mo-wan (2001: 154-155), Kwan Shan once studied at Northeastern University (*Dongbei daxue*) in Shenyang before moving to Hong Kong in 1950, and was the first Hong Kong film actor being recognized within international film festival circuit: Kwan was awarded the Leopard for Best Actor in the eleventh Locarno International Festival for his performance in *The True Story of Ah Q* (1958), a film adaptation of Lu Xun's (1881–1936) renowned novel of the same title produced by Great Wall Film Company.

[60] Fu, "Going Global," 47.

5.6 *The Love Eterne* as a Chinese Simulacrum

Noted for its visual and musical extravagance, *The Love Eterne* was nevertheless a domestic box-office failure in Hong Kong. Its huge commercial success came instead from Taiwan and Southeast Asia. Particularly, it turned Taipei—the capital of Republic of China (ROC, i.e., Taiwan)—into "the city of fanatics" (*kuangren cheng*), where many "resettled" Mainlanders (*waisheng ren*) and "native" Hakka and Hokkien people (*bendi ren*) watched it dozens of times and knew both its plots and music by heart.[61]

The Way of Great Learning was repeatedly sung—in part or as a whole—in places where *The Love Eterne* was popular, but what made this set piece exceptional was something beyond the allure of its visuals and music. In Taiwan, the audience most likely perceived *The Way of Great Learning* as a *Huangmei diao* rendering of the archetypal plots about Zhu Yingtai's three-year school companionship with Liang Shanbo.[62] They probably could not recognize the musical difference between *The Way of Great Learning* and other set pieces of *The Love Eterne*. Their deaf to the intertextual relationship between *The Way of Great Learning* and the *Singing Battle* scene of *Third Sister Liu* was more a fact than a speculation, because all PRC films were banned in Taiwan until 1988, and *Huangmei diao* was barely known in Taiwan until Li Han-hsiang introduced it to Taiwanese audience through *Diau Charn* and *The Kingdom and the Beauty*.[63] In

[61] See also Ramona Curry, "Bridging the Pacific with *Love Eterne*," *China Forever: The Shaw Brothers and Diasporic Cinema*, ed. Poshek Fu (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 190; Fu, "Introduction: The Shaw Brothers Diasporic Cinema," 14; and Chiao, 76. Ling Po also mentioned in a 2000 interview conducted by the Hong Kong Film Archive that "[within] the whole Taipei, [one could hear] those songs of *The Love Eterne* everywhere, [as] everyone was singing them while talking about Ling Po." For details, see *Koushu lishi fangwen: Ling Bo, 2000/01/19*, VHS, (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2000).

[62] *Koushu lishi fangwen: Ling Bo, 2011/04/14*.

[63] Although Chan Siu-hung Natalia states in her recent book chapter on Ling Po and *The Love Eterne* (2016: 88-89) that "after the change of political sovereignty in 1949, *Huangmei diao* followed Kuomintang and reached Taiwan, even merging with Taiwanese *gezaixi*," existing Chinese and Anglophone scholarship on Chinese opera does not show any traits of *Huangmei diao* being presented as a regional opera in Taiwan throughout the twentieth century.

Southeast Asia, a Chinese moviegoer could instead experience the charm of (the reformed) Huangmei opera brought by *Heavenly Match* and *The Female Prince Consort* as well as the scenic beauty and musical drama of *Third Sister Liu*, both of which came before *The Love Eterne*.[64] In Singapore, one might even notice that *The Way of Great Learning* appropriated some musical excerpts that previously inspired the People's Action Party to carry out a successful political campaign for the 1963 Legislative Assembly General Election.[65]

If the past prevalence of such politicized cultural knowledge would not essentially necessitate a critical attitude toward *The Love Eterne*, then why and in what sense should one bother with the extent to which *The Way of Great Learning* is *Huangmei diao*? For a Chinese moviegoer who had left the Mainland for specific reasons and time span, this question plausibly pushed his or her Chinese self to react positively or negatively to how, in or through *The Way of Great Learning*, Chinese "key symbols" such as Confucius, *The Four Books*, and *Huangmei diao* were expressed or represented as conforming to, in conflict with, or nuancing his or her own social, cultural, or political values. This reaction is concerned with the substances of these "key symbols" and how they are contextualized and conveyed in a specific form of representation; it is about whether *The Way of Great Learning* demonstrates "the quintessence of Chinese culture"

Interestingly somehow, Lin Ku-fang mentioned in her monograph on Taiwanese musical traditions (2000: 158) that "during the early [sic] 1960s when *Huangmei diao* [as a popular music genre] was popular, [those] newly arranged *gezaixi* 'arias' (*changqiang*) also incorporated [some] *Huangmei diao* musical elements." Liu Siu-theng also argues in the biography of *gezaixi* film composer Tseng Chung-ying (1922–) (2002: 78) that "*gezaixi* was popular during the time while *Huangmei diao* movies were trendy… *gezaixi* was a very new thing, and it would borrow some new music; [some musical elements of] *Huangmei diao* were absorbed [by *gezaixi*] because of that."

[64] For details, see Xu, 72-74.

[65] For details, see Xu, 73.

as Wilt Idema posits, or "an appropriation of historical material and cultural meanings for commercial ends" as Lily Kong argues, or otherwise.[66]

Although Run Run Shaw had a self-proclaimed sense of national mission sustained by the twin themes of cherished cultural tradition and authentic "Oriental flavor," his profit-driven business practices rendered the stylistic maneuvers in *The Love Eterne* susceptible to commercial exploitation.[67] It would therefore be credulous to accept literally Shaw's desire for using *The Love Eterne* "to satisfy the hopes and desires of my audience [who] miss the homeland they have left behind and the cultural tradition they still cherish."[68] At least, as Lily Kong points out:

> All the classic characteristics of the Fordist regime of accumulation were evident in the Shaw enterprise: the moving assembly line; the "mass workers" in large factories; economies of scale reaped through large-scale mass production; a hierarchical bureaucratic form of work organization, characterized by a centralized management; vertical integration, driven by a desire to achieve cost efficiency in production for the system to regenerate itself.[69]

What if one borrows Frederic Jameson's notion of "nostalgia film" in order to understand this aspect of *The Love Eterne* ? For Jameson, "nostalgia film" either projects a reinvented past in its lived totality, or creates an impression of classic or historic objects in order to reawaken a sense of the past.[70] It addresses to a specific practice of pastiche—a neutral practice of imitating other styles and particularly their mannerisms—that represents not the historical past but the

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[66] Idema, vii; Lily Kong, "Shaw Cinema Enterprise and Understanding Cultural Industries," *China Forever: The Shaw Brothers and Diasporic Cinema*, ed. Poshek Fu (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 30.

[67] For details, see Fu, "Going Global," 47; and Fu, "Introduction," 9-10. See also Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 14, 29.

[68] Fu, "Cold War Politics and Hong Kong Mandarin Cinema," 122.

[69] Kong, 33.

[70] Frederic Jameson, "Postmoderism and Consumer Society," *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983–1998* (London and New York: Verso, 1998), 8.

ideas or cultural stereotypes about that past.[71] As such, it compensates, substitutes, or displaces representations that have direct and historicized connections to the past, thereby generating a consumable simulacrum of the past that, in Jameson's words, intensifies "an addiction to the photographic image" and displays "a tangible symptom of an omnipresent, omnivorous, and well-nigh libidinal historicism."[72] This phenomenon is exemplified in many moments of *The Love Eterne*. In *The Way of Great Learning*, a hybrid and modern musical setting is provided for some quotes from Confucian classics on the one hand, and the glossy qualities of photographic image (i.e., Eastmancolor, Shawscope, Japanese cinematographic expertise, etc.) complement some "fabricated replicas" of Chinese classical artworks on the other hand.[73] It projects a past that signifies the longstanding cultural hegemony of Confucianism, albeit in an anachronistic manner which Jameson criticizes as "a terrible indictment of consumer capitalism itself—or, at the very least, an alarming and pathological symptom of a society that has become incapable of dealing with time and history."[74]

The notion of "nostalgia film" facilitates an overview of *The Love Eterne* that accounts for late-capitalist economic, technological, and ideological factors. It provides an explanation to how *The Love Eterne* transformed a vast amount of money and

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[71] Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 21.

[72] Ibid., 18. See also Frederic Jameson, "On Magic Realism in Film," *Critical Inquiry*, vol.12 no.2 (Winter 1986), 310.

[73] Labeling himself as a film director who developed an "archeological obsession" (*kaogu pi*) in the midst of his filmmaking career, Li Han-hsiang recollects his work experience with Shaw Brothers Film Studio's set and costume designers—particularly Lu Shihou (?–?) and Chan Ki-yui (1920–)—in his autobiography, stating that many replicas of Chinese classical artworks featured in those Mandarin costume drama films of the 1950s and 1960s were mostly copycat fabrications. For details, see Li Han-hsiang, "Pai *Dian Chan* zengjia yusuan," *Sanshi nian xishuo congtou*, vol.2 (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books, 1984), 260-262; Li Han-hsiang, "Fuzhuang shiji zhuadao guo jiushi cai," *Sanshi nian xishuo congtou*, vol.2 (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books, 1984), 262-264; and Li Han-hsiang, "Song gei 'a yi' xijiang yue," *Sanshi nian xishuo congtou*, vol.2 (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books, 1984), 264-267.

[74] Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," 9-10.

technology into a display of financial power in addition to visual and sonic extravagance.[75] Notwithstanding, it dismisses the fact that *The Love Eterne* emerged from a particular mode of temporal consciousness:

> [I]t was not only the films' spoken and sung language that [American reviewers] found incomprehensible, but also their use of genre conventions, their national/cultural signification, and even their inscription of gender… First, beyond admiring the film's beguiling use of texture and color and camera (thereby largely addressing its formal visual construction), critics on both U.S. coasts situated *Love Eterne* largely in relation to traditional Chinese opera, however little they themselves knew of those traditions. In arguing that the film's purported genre conventions—such as extended, apparently repetitive musical sequences and stylized body movements—threw up a barrier to Western audiences, the reviewers lost in their translation for readers the film's combinations of styles and conventions—the modernizing of the traditional—that some U.S. audiences might have (as now) discerned and enjoyed, even without having linguistic access to *Love Eterne*'s realization of poetic language in dialogue and song that so enthralled audiences in Taiwan and elsewhere. Nor could they themselves grasp the subtle signification of the actors' gestures or details in the mise en scène that so had gratified audiences educated in classical Chinese culture. The U.S. critics also had no knowledge of the genealogy or cultural significance of "The Butterfly Lovers" tale and so could not position the film as an adaptation nor otherwise enrich their readers' contexts for approaching its narrative or characters.[76]

As Ramona Curry has encapsulated above, the reception contrast between Chinese and American audiences bespeaks the effectiveness of *The Love Eterne* to confront Chinese audience with "the actual outlook of the aged motherland's landscape."[77] It echoes Hsu Fu-kwan's argument that the film's "essential mission" was to represent within the Confucian structure of feeling "the profound sentiments of pure love."[78] Hsu viewed the major plots of *The Butterfly Lovers* (namely the fraternity of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai as students, Zhu's concealed

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[75] See also Sobchack, 25

[76] Curry, 190-191.

[77] Hsu, "Kan *Liangzhu* zhihou."

[78] Ibid. According to Haiyan Lee (2007: 36), "the Confucian structure of feeling encompasses the meanings and values pertaining to the individual's location in the cosmic/social order and as espoused by the key members of the cult of *qing* movement and recuperated by a group of late Qing and early Republican writers." It "encompass[es] discourses of *qing* from the fifteenth to early twentieth century," which "have challenged the traditional foundations of meaning through a counter discourse that valorizes the personal and the subjective" but "does not effect an epistemic break with Neo-Confucian orthodoxy." She posits that "for all its effort to legitimize the affective and the individual, it is still committed to patrilineal continuity, ritual propriety, and the social order" (ibid., 38). For details, see *Revolution of the Heart: A Genealogy of Love in China, 1900–1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 25-92.

romantic fondness for Liang, and the successive suicides of Liang and Zhu because of their devotion to each other) and the musicality of *Huangmei diao* (characterized by plain, folksy, and naturalistic vocal expressions) as indispensable to the film's expressiveness.[79] He also spoke positively about how the film engendered evocation (*yiwei*) through its mise en scène. He contended that the film's exemplification of pure love distinguished itself from the "the abnormal psychology of fin de siècle," wherein sensuous love signified a commonplace human desire for an instant sensorial satisfaction that could not withstand "conscientious introspection [and] passage from occurrence to reminiscence."[80]

In general, Hsu stated how *The Love Eterne* deployed specific and observable connectors to the past as the communicative means to portray Chinese traditional society for Chinese people of the mid twentieth century. Details such as the costume design based on Han Chinese traditional clothing (*hanfu*), the Confucian gender binary confronted by virtually all the characters throughout the film, and the musicalized and historicized Chinese operatic performing body that prescribed the perception of time, became agencies of "historical re-figuration" that facilitated negotiation, maintenance, or renewal of Chinese identities.[81] Since basic education was yet to supersede Chinese opera as the most accessible means for Chinese people to learn about Chinese history, one could imagine how, for perceiving *The Love Eterne* as historical, those agencies were more impactful than issues such as anachronism. Those agencies assumed

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[79] Ibid. This elaboration on the film's borrowing from *Huangmei diao*, in addition to Hsu's statement on the film's overall cultural significance, were exclusively cited in an article published in *Southern Screen* three months later. For details, see "*Liangzhu* jiujing haozai nali?," *Southern Screen*, vol. 66, 52-54.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 72. In the advertisement published in *Central Daily News* on May 4, 1963, the publicist analogizes (if hyperbolically) how the May Fourth Movement in 1919 led to a groundbreaking development in the field of Chinese literature, to how *The Love Eterne* demonstrates an eminent achievement in Chinese national cinema (*woguo yingtan*).

the authenticity of bodily, musical, and linguistic expressions, and were thus potent to suspend or overcome one's disbelief in the film's visual and musical renewal of *Huangmei diao* as an intrusion of tradition. Otherwise, not only would it be odd to witness an exceptionally large and orderly class using writing paper as a study tool during the Eastern Jin dynasty, the four-part mixed-voice choral writing featured in both the beginning and the end of the film would also be nothing but an obvious mismatch with the musical texture of traditional Chinese opera.[82]

This explanation substantiates why *the display of* musicalized and historicized performing body was one of Li Han-hsiang's foremost concerns when directing *The Love Eterne* and other Mandarin "yellow plum" musical films. Li mentioned many times in his autobiography about why and how a shallow and awkward imitation of stylized gestures or choreographed steps would lead to an embarrassment.[83] He even justified his aesthetic judgment with Chinese opera playwright-theorist Qi Rushan's (1875–1962) aesthetic dictum "no sound that is not music, no movement that is not dance" (*wu sheng bu ge, wu dong bu wu*), although he tolerated the displacement of preexisting musical conventions with popular music elements in his cinematic renderings of *Huangmei diao*.[84] In short, Li's film auteurism contributed to a "period discourse"

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[82] *Chaoyang Gully* (*Chaoyang kou*), a popular Henan opera "contemporary play" (*xiandai xi*) premiered in 1958, is one of the very few early examples that illustrate the use of four-part mixed-voice choral writing in Chinese opera. "Contemporary plays" were considered experimental and did not enter into Chinese mainstream culture until the late 1950s, whereas four-part mixed-voice choral writing mostly appeared in either Chinese hymns rearranged by Western missionaries during the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, or Chinese art songs (*yishu gequ*) and mass songs (*qunzhong gequ*) composed in Western idioms in the 1920s and onward. For details, see He Wei, *Xiqu yinyue yanjiu* (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1985), 65-69; and Kuo-huang Han, "The Importation of Western Music to China at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," *Essays in Honor of John F. Ohl: A Compendium of American Musicology*, ed. Enrique Alberto Arias (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 231.

[83] Li Han-hsiang, "Xiao Juan gai yiming Ling Bo jingguo," *Sanshi nian xishuo congtou*, vol.2 (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books, 1984), 221; Li Han-hsiang, "Yuan Meiyun fuze wushu zhidao," *Sanshi nian xishuo congtou*, vol.2 (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books, 1984), 273; Li Han-hsiang, "Sha xiaozi shui liangkeng," *Sanshi nian xishuo congtou*, vol.3 (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books, 1984), 201; Li Han-hsiang, "Liangzhi wucai binfen xiao fenghuang," 271. See also Chiao, 78.

[84] For details, see Li Han-hsiang, "Li Lihua changde doushi liuxing qu," *Sanshi nian xishuo congtou*, vol.2 (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books, 1984), 111-112; Li Han-hsiang, "Yao Min tiba le henduo gexing," 113-114; Li Han-hsiang, "Mati xiu yuanjiao 'wahang'," 269; Li Han-hsiang, "Liangzhi wucai binfen xiao fenghuang," 271; Li Han-hsiang, "Yuan Meiyun fuze wushu zhidao," 273; Li Han-hsiang, "Zhou Lanping buxiayu Beiduofen," 196.

only if it was ascribed to a collective consciousness evoked by those Chinese "key symbols" that circulated among Chinese people.[85] An experience of history that transcends historical accuracy or specificity would never come to fruition without a suspension of disbelief, and *The Love Eterne* could not be a Chinese simulacrum without a shared understanding of cultural knowledge or experience between the creators and the viewers. With joys and constraints prescribed by an overdetermined vision of Confucianism, Chinese audience were irresistibly attracted to the film's miniaturized pleasure of "real" China, wherein music and the moving image "became an avenue for outpouring the cultural imaginaries."[86]

5.7 *Subtle Smile from the Hill Afar* and the Territorialization of the "Long Stride" Refrain in Taiwan

Nearly two decades after his direction of *The Love Eterne*, Li Han-hsiang summarized the film's reception in two sentences:

> *The Love Eterne* I directed in 1961 [sic] was once much sought after in Taiwan; it was surprising that there were folks watching the film again and again for more than a hundred times. All radio channels were broadcasting *Subtle Smile from the Hill Afar*, while everyone was singing the line *chunshui lübo ying xiaoqiao* ("spring water reflects a bridge") aloud; Taipei was then mocked as the "city of fanatics."[87]

Li was acutely aware of the unusual practice of re-watching *The Love Eterne* many times in a movie theater, the ubiquity of the film's original sound tracks through the radio and the gramophone, and the sing-along quality of "yellow plum ditties." More intriguingly, Li used *Subtle Smile from the Hill Afar* but not any other excerpt to exemplify his observation.

[85] Chen, 59.

[86] Ibid., 53.

[87] Li Han-hsiang, "Hong de shihou buzheng paiming," *Sanshi nian xishuo congtou* (Taipei: Minsheng baoshe, 1981), 278.

Figure 5.18: *The Love Eterne*, the set piece *Subtle Smile from the Hill Afar*, screenshots in sequence (from left to right and from above to below)

D調 2/4

遠山含笑

李雋青詞
周藍萍曲

（"梁山伯與祝英台"插曲）
（山伯、四九對唱）

MODERATO（優美抒情地）

（山伯）遠山含笑　春水綠波映小橋（間奏）行人來往陽關道　酒帘兒高掛紅杏梢（間奏）綠蔭深處聞啼鳥（間奏）柳絮兒不住隨風飄（間奏）（四九唱）觀此處風景甚妙　歇歇腿來伸伸腰。

（4）

Subtle Smile from the Hill Afar (*Yuanshan hanxiao*)

Arranged/composed by Chou Lan-ping
Lyrics by Li Junqing

Moderato (優美抒情地)

(Shanbo) 遠 山 含 笑，春水 綠波 映小 橋。 (interlude)
(Distant hills are pleasant; spring water reflects a bridge.)

9
行人 來往 陽關 道。
(Travelers are walking to and fro.)
酒 帘 兒 高掛
(Winery's sign is hanging on the treetops.)

17
紅 杏 梢， (interlude) 綠蔭 深處 聞啼 鳥。
(Birds sing among the think branches.)

25
(interlude) 柳索兒 不住 隨 風
(Willows dance in the soft breeze.)

33
飄。 (interlude) (Servant Four-nine) 觀此處 風景甚妙 歇歇腿來 伸 伸 腰。
(The scenery is so wonderful here; let's rest and stretch our legs.)

Figure 5.19: *The Love Eterne*, the set piece *Subtle Smile from the Hill Afar*, the original (left) and trans-notated (right) vocal scores

SHOT	SHOT TYPE(S)	SCREENSHOT(S) (IN FIGURE 5.17)	MEASURES	SHOT LENGTH
1	TRACKING – LONG	1	1-2 (PRECEDED WITH AN INTRODUCTION)	21.5s
2	TRACKING – TILT (UP) – MEDIUM LONG	2, 3	3-6	10.6s
3	TRACKING – MEDIUM LONG	4	7-13	12.9s
4	TRACKING – MEDIUM	5, 6	14-33	37.8s
5	TRACKING – TILT (DOWN) – MEDIUM CLOSE-UP	NA	34-40	13.6s
				96.4s

Table 5.03: *The Love Eterne*, a shot analysis of *Subtle Smile from the Hill Afar*[88]

Preceding the first encounter between Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai at Caoqiao (i.e., *Caoqiao jiebai*), *Subtle Smile for the Hill Afar* is a scene opener (*kaichang*) that introduces Liang and the constructed scenic background of Hangzhou to the audience. It involves a virtuosic visual display that alludes to both Chinese traditional painting and Chinese opera stage performance. The cinematographer Tadashi Nishimoto's (1921–1997) extensive use of tilting and panning could have referred to Liang as the subject of a portraiture in a hanging scroll (*lizhou*), while the art director Chan Ki-yui's (1920–) constructed scenic background could have become the substance of a landscape painting in a handscroll (*changjuan*) (see Figure 5.18 and Table 5.03). The whole sequence of "punctuated" tracking shots rather depict Liang (and the movie camera) moving clockwise and steadily like a Chinese operatic *xiaosheng* (young male role type) character who emerges from the stage entrance (*shangchang men*), performing "circumferential stride" (*zou yuanchang*) with "itinerant steps" (*tangbu*) interspersed with

[88] See also Cinemetrics, "Cinemetrics Database: Subtle Smile from the Hill Afar – The Love Eterne (1963, Hong Kong), Directed by Li Han-hsiang, Measured with FACT," <http://www.cinemetrics.lv/movie.php?movie_ID=21102>.

occasional "standing posture" (*zhanxiang*).[89] The transition of film shots is in synchrony with that of musical phrases (see Figure 5.19 and Table 5.03), while the movie camera's change of focal length puts Liang "closer" to the audience, as if Liang is at the central front of the stage (see Figures 5.18 and 5.19).

The male "cadential claps" (*qieban*):
an example from *Heavenly Match*
scale unspecified, free tempo (*sanban*)

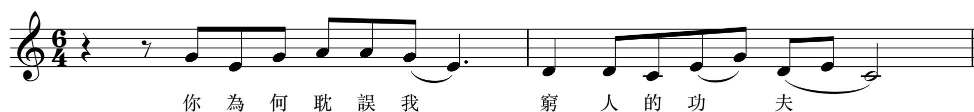

Figure 5.20: The male "cadential claps": an example from *Heavenly Match*

The male ten-character "initiatory claps" (*qiban shiziju*):
an example from *Heavenly Match*
scale unspecified, the modal final (*diaoshi zhuyin*) in scale degree 1

Figure 5.21: The male ten-character "initiatory claps": an example from *Heavenly Match*

[89] Yu Handong (ed.), *Zhongguo xiqu biaoyan yishu cidian* (Taipei: Guojia chubanshe, 2001), 114-115. For the traditional (non-proscenium and rectangular-shaped) Chinese opera stage (*xitai*), there are stage entrance (*shangchang men*) and exit (*xiachang men*) at the rear left and right from the frontal view.

The male "'long stride' aria type" (*maiqiang*):
an example from *Rendezvous at the Blue Bridge* (*Lanqiao hui*)
scale unspecified, ending note (*zhongjie yin*) in scale degree 3

Figure 5.22: The male "'long stride' aria type": an example from *Rendezvous at the Blue Bridge*

Excluding the introductory vocal line and those instrumental interludes, *Subtle Smile for the Hill Afar* is, melodically speaking, a combination of the male "cadential claps" (*qieban*, Figure 5.20), the male ten-character "initiatory claps" (*qiban shiziju*, Figure 5.21), and the male "'long stride' aria type'" (*maiqiang*, Figure 5.22), all of which are the formulaic components of the "plain verse" tune type typically featured in *Huangmei diao* "grand operas."[90] It closely follows the preexisting text-setting principle as well as the musical conventions dedicated to male roles for dramatic action and vocal closing. Such choice and use of musical materials contribute an authentic impression of *Huangmei diao* to the film, which convince not only Chinese opera enthusiasts but also some ethnomusicologists and film scholars.[91]

This analysis of *Subtle Smile for the Hill Afar* seems to have justified Edwin W. Chen's observation that "*The Love Eterne* is much more cinematic [than the Yue opera film version of *The Butterfly Lovers*] as a creative endeavor [that] represent[s] the triumphant aesthetic integration of music, choreographed movements, and storytelling."[92] Nevertheless, the set piece

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[90] For comparison, see Figure 5.19 (measures 14-18) with Figure 5.21; Figure 5.19 (measures 29-40) with Figure 5.20; and Figure 5.19 (measures 9-13 and 20-24) with Figure 5.22.

[91] Nancy Guy, *Peking Opera and Politics in Taiwan* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 28-29; Tan, "Huangmei Opera Films, Shaw Brothers and Ling Bo."

[92] Chen, 66.

Women Could Not Leave The Boudoir (*Nüer buxu chu guifang*) from the film's classroom scene provides a counterexample of how Chou ignored both the gendered modal and melodic characters of the "'long stride' aria type" and the sectional order and text-setting rules of "plain verse."[93] He paraphrased the male version of both the "aria type" and the ten-character "initiatory claps" for a musical phrase sung by (the female protagonist) Zhu Yingtai, and assigned the male version of the "aria type" (instead of the "cadential claps") to Liang Shanbo right afterward for ending the set piece. Likewise, the gendered melodic contrast of the "aria type" is effaced in the set piece that ends the film's "eighteen-*li* farewell" episode, wherein the vocal dialogue starts with Zhu singing the male (instead of female) version of the "aria type" and Liang the female (instead of male) version, before the female version is transformed into a theme that adheres to a larger aaba-form.[94]

"'Long stride' aria type" was initially one of the five *Huangmei diao* supplementary "aria types" (*fujia qiang* or *buchong yueju*) that constituted the dramatic, instructional (to formulaic and figurative bodily movements), functional (in relation to the musical form), and gendered content of a "plain verse." It was put into more extensive and exclusive use after Yan Fengying and Wang Shaofang started creating more melodic variations on it during the late 1940s and early 1950s, with an aim to enhance the musical expressiveness of *Huangmei diao*.[95] The famous

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[93] For the vocal score, see *Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai: dianying zhutiqu*, 5.

[94] For the vocal score, see *Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai: dianying zhutiqu*, 28-29.

[95] For details, see Shanghai yishu yanjiusuo and Zhongguo xijujia xiehui Shanghai fenhui (eds.), *Zhongguo xiqu quyi cidian* (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 1981), 379; Ni Bin (ed.), *Anqing Huiju Huangmeixi shiliao zhuanji*, vol.2 (Anqing: Zhengxie Anqing shiwei wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui Anqing wenshi ziliao bianjibu, 1991), 134; Wang Naizhuang and Wang Shuqing (eds.), *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo renwu cidian* (Beijing: Zhongguo jingji chubanshe, 1989), 24; Anhui sheng difangzhi bianzuan weiyuanhui (ed.), *Anhui sheng zhi: renwu zhi* (Beijing: Fangzhi chubanshe, 1999), 815; Jiang Qing, Guan Jianhua, and Qian Rong (eds.), *Zhongguo yinyue wenhua daguan* (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2001), 710; and Shi Bailin, "Yan Fengying yu Huangmeixi," *Zhonghua yishu luncong*, vol.6 (Shanghai: Tongji daxue chubanshe, 2006), 175.

excerpts *The Birds on the Tree Becoming a Pair* (see Figure 5.03 in page 133) and *Dong Yong Sells His Body* (*Maishen zangfu*) in *Heavenly Match* were among the exemplars of such an enhancement, and they indeed inspired Wang Chun's classic (re)arrangement of *Disguising as the Emperor* and *The Birds on the Tree Becoming a Pair* for *The Kingdom and the Beauty*. *The Love Eterne* also featured melodic variations on the "'long stride' aria type" in some set pieces, but Chou Lan-ping was different from Yan, Wang Shaofang, and Wang Chun in the sense that he deviated himself from the modal and formal conventions of *Huangmei diao*:

> Li Han-hsiang not only gathered many *Huangmei diao* reference books and research materials for Chou Lan-ping's perusal, but also commissioned Chou to write a film score for *The Love Eterne*. Chou then worked unceasingly without taking a breather, voraciously absorbing various Chinese folk singing styles as his means to enhance *Huangmei diao*… According to Chou, those "communist bandits" are now promoting folk singing, but [their development of] *Huangmei diao* has already lagged behind […], especially after Tsin Ting's unique *Huangmei diao* singing style has established the foundation for the success of [Mandarin] "yellow plum" musical films... Chou composed [for] *The Love Eterne* according to the melodic variations of *Huangmei diao* core tunes (*zhudiao*), because *Huangmei diao* comprises the most limpid melodic gestures (*zui minglang de xuanlü biaoqing*) for articulating *qing* (emotions, feelings, or sentiments) such as joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness. Notwithstanding, unlike those obstinate *Huangmei diao* composers of the past, he strove for creative freedom (*ziyou fazhan*). He said that *The Love Eterne* includes musical elements from *Huangmei diao* as well as Peking opera, *kunqu* opera, Yue opera, and art song...[96]

Politicized or not, Chou's musical understanding of *Huangmei diao* showed his conformity to modernist thinking and his disapproval of CCP cultural production. He viewed those conventionalized elements of Chinese opera as restrictive and outdated, and was driven to liberate *Huangmei diao* from Chinese operatic conventions in order to individuate the articulation of *qing* (emotions, feelings, or sentiments) through music. As a "freedom filmmaker" (*ziyou yingren*) who was once a KMT soldier in Mainland China, he defied what the CCP established in the Chinese Opera Reform. He treated the appeal of Tsin Ting's pop-style vocal rendering as a legit indicator of *Huangmei diao* enhancement, while absorbing elements from a wide range of musical styles into his film score.

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[96] Yao, "Zhou Lanping fan Tai tan Huangmeidiao." For details about the notion of *qing*, see chapter 2, pages 21-23.

By transforming "'long stride' aria type" into a refrain whose sonic effect is devoid of functionality, subject to free appropriation (i.e., adaptable to whatever musical phrasings and text-settings), and no longer triggers any action within a directional, periodic, and regulated time-space, Chou exemplified in *The Love Eterne* (and his scores for other Mandarin "yellow plum" musical films) what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari conceptualize as territorialization.[97] Conventionally, the disposition of a codified (*chengshi hua*) preexisting tune would constitute "a block of space-time" that symbolizes *Huangmei diao* as a milieu (i.e., Huangmei in Southeast Hubei and the neighboring Anqing in Southwest Anhui).[98] On top of that, the incorporation of musical elements from different genres (i.e., "flower-drum" singing, regional folk singing, and Peking opera) into *Huangmei diao* illustrates the moments when one type of code absorbs fragments of another type instead of derivatives of the same type, such that transcoding takes place "in which one milieu serves as the basis for another, or […] is constituted in it."[99] Chou instead rendered those conventionalized or conventionalizing musical elements autonomous, since he treated them as "melodic landscapes and rhythmic characters" that continually enrich their internal relations by remaining relatively constant or otherwise (i.e., growing or diminishing, expanding or contracting, fast or slow).[100] For Deleuze and Guattari, such melodic landscapes and rhythmic characters are, respectively, the territorial counterpoints and motifs that

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[97] Deleuze and Guattari, 315-317. In *A Thousand Plateaus* (2005: 323, 348), Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari define refrain as follows: "In a general sense, *we call a refrain any aggregate of matters of expression that draws a territory and develops into territorial motifs and landscapes* (there are optical, gestural, motor, etc., refrains). In the narrow sense, we speak of a refrain when an assemblage is sonorous or 'dominated' by sound… The refrain is sonorous par excellence, but it can easily develop its force into a sickly sweet ditty as into the purest motif, or Vinteuil's little phrase. And sometimes the two combine: Beethoven used as a 'signature tune.' The potential fascism of music."

[98] Ibid., 313.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Ibid., 319.

"*enter shifting relations with one another that 'express' the relation of the territory they draw to the interior milieu of impulses and exterior milieu of circumstances.*[emphasis in original]"[101]

Through musical decoding, Chou exploited the sonorous qualities of "'long stride' aria type," such that the "aria type" became a refrain interiorized in many self-contained set pieces of *The Love Eterne*.[102] But then, as this refrain recurred through various human (i.e., the voices of the original singers, of other professional singers, and most powerfully, of those devoted audience members) and non-human agencies (i.e., film screening, radio broadcast, and LP record playing), it territorialized Taiwan and other Chinese communities outside Mainland China:

> [T]his national style of singing (*minzu shi de gequ*) is still more bucolic than some kinds of [pop] singing. And, in this province's (i.e., Taiwan) communities, almost everyone owns a radio and a record player; [it is] essential to often supply a large quantity of audio recordings. Such supply not only helps promoting those films, but also fills up the vacuum of folk entertainment.[103]

This refrain would cause those people to perceive *Huangmei diao* as Chinese music "only because [it is] *territorialized*, not the other way around. [emphasis in original]"[104] Nothing other than the refrain itself could territorialize those milieus.

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[101] Ibid., 317.

[102] See also ibid., 551-552, in which Deleuze and Guattari refer to French musicologist Gisèle Brelet (1915–1973) with regard to his favorable comment on how Béla Bartók compositionally transformed melodies in themes. According to Brelet, there is an antimony between melody and theme. He claims that "[p]opular music is melody, in its fullest sense, melody persuading us that it is self-sufficient and is in fact synonymous with music itself," which "could never constitute a true theme," as it would "refuse to bend to the learned development of a musical work pursuing its own ends." For Brelet, "Bartók solves this problem, which was thought insoluble."

[103] Yü Hsin-shan, "Huangmeidiao shan'ge gechang dianying," *Lianhe bao*, March 5, 1964.

[104] Deleuze and Guattari, 316.

5.8 Ling Po and the Consummation of Mimetic Chineseness in *The Love Eterne*

Despite the tunefulness which Chou masterfully exploited, the "'long stride' aria type" would not fully utilize its sonorous quality in *The Love Eterne* without Ling Po, an actress first known as Xiao Juan during the 1950s and the early 1960s:

> [While] I worked for Grandview as a movie set designer […], I often saw the eleven-or-twelve-year-old Xiao Juan. During that time, she mostly performed the *mui tsai* ("little sister," a juvenile female servant) role for Amoy Hokkien films. She looked sweet, always smiling while being polite and respectful to people. She could also sing *Huangmei diao*, with a mellow, warm, and delicate voice, but I really did not know that [until she was a playback singer for *Dream of the Red Chamber* (1962)]… This might be why I insisted on Xiao Juan personating Liang Shanbo [for *The Love Eterne*]… Xiao Juan's acting must be good because her playback singing was highly emotive, playful while [eliciting] joy [but] somber while in desolation. Actor selection [should] only depend on whether (s)he is suitable for and capable of [the respective role]… This was how Xiao Juan changed her stage name to Ling Po and made her first [sic] Mandarin "yellow plum" musical film *The Love Eterne* with the co-leading actress Loh Ti… When the film was shown in Taipei, there was an old lady who watched it a hundred and forty-four times… When she [later] saw Ling Po in person, she held Ling Po's hands for long, gazing at her and exclaimed… I thought the old lady might have gone crazy after listening too much of *Huangmei diao*, but then I overheard and learned that she spoke Hokkien, exclaiming how beautiful Ling Po was.[105]

Li Han-hsiang's recollection of his early encounters with Xiao Juan speaks of how, before becoming a sonorous refrain that was disseminated through various human and non-human agencies, the "'long stride' aria type" was embodied in Ling Po's performing body.[106] That is to say, the identity shift from Xiao Juan (as an Amoy Hokkien film actress who occasionally performed *Huangmei diao* playback singing) to Ling Po (as a reincarnated Liang Shanbo) was decisive to how *The Love Eterne* accomplished the transformation of the "'long stride' aria

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[105] For details, see Li Han-hsiang, "Xiao Juan gai yiming Ling Bo jingguo," 221-222; and Li Han-hsiang, "Yao Min tiba le henduo gexing," 113. Before Li discussed about Xiao Juan/Ling Po at length as shown in the quote, he favorably compared her with Jen Chieh (?–), who impersonated servant Silvery-heart (*Yinxin*) in *The Love Eterne* (1984a: 221): "The actress who impersonated Jia Baoyu [*en travesti*] [in *Dream of the Red Chamber* (1962)] was Jen Chieh, who allegedly performed Yue opera in the Mainland beforehand. Yet, […] even if she did, she would only perform ordinary roles; [she] did not look like a well-trained and popular actor-singer (*xunlian yousu de ming jiaoer*). Her impersonation looked too impoverished (*hansuan xiang*) [and] did not display the elegance and grandiosity of an aristocrat (*shijia zidi*), [although] Xiao Juan's playback singing enhanced that. Therefore, I think, for my fellow Yuan Qiufeng's (1924–?) *Dream of the Red Chamber*, the most successful part is from Xiao Juan's playback singing."

[106] See also "Duocai duiyi de Ling Bo," *Southern Screen*, vol.67 (September 1963), 8.

type." This postulation brings this chapter's discussion of *The Love Eterne* to the final phase, in which I will probe into Ling Po's "past life" and suggest how, using the Movietown's wealth of human and technological resources, Li Han-hsiang capitalized on her mimetic talent as well as her photogenic and phonogenic charisma, thereby establishing an outstanding example of "cinematic onomatopoeia" in the history of Chinese cinema.[107]

Born in Shantou in 1939 as Huang Yu-chun, Ling Po was sold to the Yan family in Xiamen as a young child renamed Chün Hai-tang.[108] She showed a keen enthusiasm about *yangge* ("rice sprout song") and "flower-drum" performances as an elementary school student, before her adoptive mother brought her to Hong Kong following the arrival of the People's Liberation Army in Xiamen in October 1949.[109] Life was hard in Hong Kong and the refuge-seeking pair could only afford a cheap shared room in Sheung Wan, where Ling Po learned a bit of classical *nanguan* narrative singing from Hokkien amateur players Chen Jinmu (?–?) and Chen Dingchen (?–?). This musical encounter led to their collaboration in *Xiaofeng* (1957), an Amoy Hokkien film adaptation of *Fifteen Strings of Cash* (*Shiwu guan*).[110] Chen Jinmu even

[107] See footnote 14 for details about "cinematic onomatopoeia."

[108] For details, see Bo Jiang, *Shaoshi juxing: ling juli jiechu* (Hong Kong: Sing Tao Books, 2005), 37-42.

[109] *Koushu lishi fangwen: Ling Bo, 2000/01/19*. Ling Po's adoptive mother was a concubine and was therefore under the threat of being sued by the principal wife as soon as the CCP implemented the Marriage Law.

[110] *Koushu lishi fangwen: Ling Bo, 2011/04/14*; "Xiaofeng," *Xianggang yingpian Daquan: disi juan (1953–1959)* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2003), 330. According to "Words from the Director" printed in the promotion pamphlet of *The Romance of Lychee and Mirror* (*Li jing yuan*, 1954), Chen Jinmu and Chen Dingchen were famous members of Xiamen-based *nanguan* performance group *Ji'an tang*. For details, see Wang Ying-fen, 98-99. While Ling Po claimed to have no memory of *Ji'an tang* and its connection to Amoy Hokkien film production, she indicated (2011) that "I do not remember those film titles, but I know I once performed *Fifteen Strings of Cash*." This statement suggests the status of *Fifteen Strings of Cash* as a Chinese opera traditional play (originated from Ming playwright Feng Menglong's (1574–1645) *Stories to Awaken the World* (*Xingshi hengyan*)) that once contributed to Chinese people's common knowledge.

composed several vocal excepts for Ling Po's early performance as Zhu Yingtai's servant in an Amoy Hokkien film adaptation of *The Butterfly Lovers* (1955).[111]

Prior to her appearance in *The Love Eterne*, Ling Po (as Xiao Juan) was a popular Amoy Hokkien film actress whose singing was considered crucial to a satisfactory box-office performance. Although she did not perform "yellow plum ditties" until the early 1960s, she was familiar with the eclectic musical style developed by Wang Chun, who arranged film scores for Mandarin "yellow plum" musical films *Diau Charn* and *The Kingdom and the Beauty* while writing set pieces for Amoy Hokkien contemporary drama films such as *Shrews from Afar* (*Fanpo nong*, 1958), *Jade from a Destitute Household* (*Fengmen biyu*, 1958), *Miss Cuicui* (*Cuicui guniang*, 1959), and *Phony Phoenix* (*Jiafeng xuhuang*, 1959).[112] Her performance in *Queen of Folk Songs* (*Shan'ge huanghou*, 1959)—a remake of Mandarin film *Bean-curd Queen* (*Doufu xishi*, 1959)—was no less notable, as she probably had reinterpreted those Mandarin pop-style film songs originally sung by Tsin Ting, for Hokkien (and possibly Teochew) audiences in Taiwan, Malaya, Singapore, the Philippines, and a few other Southeast Asian countries.[113]

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[111] "Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai," *Xianggang yingpian Daquan: disi juan (1953–1959)* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2003), 322.

[112] "Cuicui guniang," *Xianggang yingpian Daquan: disi juan (1953–1959)* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2003), 339; "Jiafeng xuhuang," *Xianggang yingpian Daquan: disi juan (1953–1959)* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2003), 346; "Shrews from Afar," Hong Kong Film Archive Collection Items Online Catalogue, accessed February 14, 2017, <http://ipac.hkfa.lcsd.gov.hk/ipac/cclib/search/showBib.jsp?f=e&id=65537319385605>; "Fengmen biyu," Hong Kong Film Archive Collection Items Online Catalogue, accessed February 14, 2017, <http://ipac.hkfa.lcsd.gov.hk/ipac/cclib/search/showBib.jsp?f=e&id=65537317337605>. For details about Wang Chun's musical eclecticism demonstrated in Amoy Hokkien films, see Yu Siu Wah, "Wushi niandai xiayu pian: cong qi yinyue kan Xianggang wenhua hudong," *Xianggang Xiayu dianying fangzong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2012), 116-118.

[113] "Doufu xishi," *Xianggang yingpian Daquan: disi juan (1953–1959)* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2003), 276-277; "Shan'ge huanghou," *Xianggang yingpian Daquan: disi juan (1953–1959)* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2003), 343. According to Ling Po (2011), many set pieces in Amoy Hokkien films were modified versions of those from Mandarin films. See also Yu, "Wushi niandai xiayu pian," 117-118.

Ling Po (as Xiao Juan) was a versatile actress. She participated in more than fifty Amoy Hokkien films, carrying big and small roles in film adaptions of not only folk stories and classic vernacular novels, but also contemporary drama films and martial arts-magic spirit films (*wuxia shen'guai pian*).[114] She knew that singing was mostly reserved for leading roles, and the abundance of contemporary drama films in her early filmography explains why, driven by the industrial demand, her dire need to make a living, and her love for music, she tried very hard to imitate the mainstream pop singing style through listening to the original soundtracks of some Mandarin box-office hits.[115] Songs were indispensable to Chinese films of whatever spoken language until no earlier than the late 1960s, but playback singers and vocal instructors were unaffordable luxuries for low-budget Amoy Hokkien films.[116] Ling Po barely received a formal musical training, as she only managed to take a couple of private lessons with Leung Lok-yam (1910–1989), a composer known for his Mandarin and Cantonese film songs written between the 1940s and 1960s. She never studied stylized gestures or choreographed steps with any Chinese opera actor-singers, but had to follow whatever firsthand instruction given by an Amoy Hokkien film director.[117] She thought she could be a Mandarin film actress sooner if her adoptive mother

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[114] "Dianying renwu suoyin," *Xianggang yingpian Daquan: disi juan (1953–1959)* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2003), 445; *Koushu lishi fangwen: Ling Bo, 2011/04/14*.

[115] Based on records from Hong Kong Film Archive, Xiao Juan was the leading actress in thirty-eight Amoy Hokkien films, among which twenty-five of them are contemporary drama films, whereas the majority of the remaining thirteen include the four-volume remake of Mandarin martial arts-magic spirit film serial *The Burning of the Red Lotus Temple* (1928–1931), a costume drama film about Southern Song folk hero Ji Gong, and those featuring young and ebullient mythical figures, such as Nezha from *Investiture of the Gods* (*Fengshen yanyi*) in *Nazha Perturbing the East Sea* (*Nazha da'nao Donghai*, 1956), Hong Hai'er from *Journey to the West* in *The Battle Between the Red Child and the Monkey King* (*Hong Hai'er dazhan Sun Wukong*, 1957), Maudgalyayana from *Mulian Rescues his Mother* (*Mulian jiu mu*) in *Mulian Saves his Mother* (1957), whose portrayals conventionally emphasize less on singing and more on acting or visual effects (including acrobatics).

[116] *Koushu lishi fangwen: Ling Bo, 2011/04/14*.

[117] Ibid.

did not hesitate to pay Hong Wei (1918–2011), a Manchurian veteran actress experienced in Mandarin voice acting, for rectifying her accented Mandarin diction.[118]

Figure 5.23: Ling Po (a.k.a. Xiao Juan) in Thailand for a film promotion concert tour in the late 1950s (Photography courtesy of Ling Po Fans Club)

In Ling Po's own words, "there was no time or money for systematic learning, and you had to sing well even if you could not."[119] She was well aware of the precarious power relation between a film director and a film actress.[120] She also understood the importance of developing a virtual but intimate bond with the film audience, and was told that a convincing personation of a character would overcome deficiencies in other aspects of performance such as dialogue and gestural expressions.[121] She attributed her success as

[118] Ibid.

[119] Ibid.

[120] Ibid.

[121] Ibid.

a film actress to her lively, simple, honest, and obedient personality traits, and regarded her personation of Liang Shanbo as somewhat self-reflexive.[122] She had a sizeable and growing fan base since she first joined those film promotion concert tours (*suipian dengtai*) as Xiao Juan (see Figure 5.23 above) in the late 1950s, but claimed that she had no concept of stardom until later in her career:

> I did not know whether I was popular or not; I just did what my mum requested… Concert tours must have brought [me] some money, but I never saw any [because] my mum would keep all of it. During that period, [it was] common to organize film promotion concert tours. I remember my first time singing on stage [as such] was in Singapore, because there were all Hokkien people speaking Hokkien. I did not know what I should sing, but I knew I must go: [such tour] was very helpful to a film's promotion and box office performance. I then followed [the tour] and visited North Borneo (today's Sabah in Malaysia), Singapore, and the Malay Peninsula.[123]

Although Shaw Brothers Studio did not sign Ling Po as a contract actress until 1962, it previously hired her on a project basis. Not only was she the leading actress of *Brother Wang and Brother Liu* (*Wang ge Liu ge*, 1959), which was the Studio's first of the only three Amoy Hokkien films, she was also the *Huangmei diao* playback singer who recorded for *Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Honglou meng*, 1962) and *The Adulteress* (*Yang Naiwu yu Xiao baicai*, 1963).[124] She struggled with a lack of job opportunities following the demise of Amoy Hokkien films, and was trying to "move from one realm to another" within Hong Kong film industry of the time.[125]

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[122] *Koushu lishi fangwen: Ling Bo, 2000/01/19*.

[123] Ibid. See also May Ng (ed.), "*Koushu lishi: Ling Bo (er fang)*," *Xianggang Xiayu dianying fangzong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2012), 169; Chen Kuei-fang, "'Liang xiongge' tan Liang Shanbo," *Taiwan Panorama*, April 1988, accessed February 11, 2017, <https://www.taiwan-panorama.com/Articles/Details?Guid=3972dac1-22df-46e8-a3e0-70f5c02855dd&CatId=1>; "Ling Bo chang *Liang Zhu*: qishi sui Liang xiongge zai dengchang, laogong zan 'shishang zuihao'," *Apple Daily Taiwan*, April 10, 2009, accessed February 11, 2017, <http://ent.appledaily.com.tw/section/article/headline/20090410/31535393>; "Wo ai Liang xiongge: Ling Bo de meili," *Taiwan you ying: Taiying xingwenpian zhong de dianying*, accessed February 11, 2017, <http://www.ctfa.org.tw/tai_image/star-b.html>.

[124] Ibid.; *Koushu lishi fangwen: Ling Bo, 2011/04/14*; "Biannian biao," *Xianggang yingpian Daquan: disi juan (1953–1959)* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2003), 370-417.

[125] *Koushu lishi fangwen: Ling Bo, 2011/04/14*.

She could have continued her career by taking part in Taiwanese Hokkien or Cantonese film productions if Yüeh Lin (?–?), a veteran Mandarin film actor, did not invite her to star in *Liu Hai's Encounter with the Fairies* (*Liu Hai yu xian*, 1961, Figure 5.24), a low-budget Mandarin "yellow plum" musical film.[126]

Figure 5.24:
Liu Hai's Encounter with the Fairies (1961), "youthful and gorgeous star Xiao Juan's first Mandarin film" and "the only authentic Mandarin 'yellow plum' musical blockbuster film after *Diau Charn* and *The Kingdom and the Beauty*" (newspaper advertisement on the first day of Taiwan release, *Lianhe bao*, August 31, 1961)

The release of *Liu Hai's Encounter with the Fairies* was quite a surprise to many Chinese filmmakers in Hong Kong and Taiwan, including Li Han-hsiang, who by that time had already directed *Diau Charn* and *The Kingdom and the Beauty*.[127] Why wouldn't Li be curious about anyone other than himself directing a Mandarin "yellow plum" musical film outside Movietown, when hiring a *Huangmei diao* composer, lyricist, or singer from Shaw Brothers Studio was

[126] After the production of Amoy Hokkien film had ceased in Hong Kong film industry, there were four Cantonese contemporary drama films featuring Xiao Juan, three of which were released in February 1962, and the remaining other in April 1963; she was not featured in any Chinese films throughout 1960.

[127] Ibid.

mostly unaffordable and virtually impossible?[128] For Ling Po, what she had to do for the film was however far from special:

> Some of those circumstances were no different from those when I was participating in an Amoy-language film production. [There was] no such money [for music production], no such [expert] as composer; [Yüeh Lin] just bought a LP recording of *Heavenly Match* [original sound tracks] for my perusal. After I had studied the recording, [he] altered the existing strophes [and] added some new ones. That was [how] I could sing *Huangmei diao*; I learned it that way. [*Liu Hai's Encounter with the Fairies*] was the first time I performed for a Mandarin film [and] sang *Huangmei diao*. After that, I believe I was qualified to sing *Huangmei diao*.[129]

Notwithstanding the exploitative nature, she considered this experience a good fortune for her career; she thought it paved her way for joining Shaw Brothers Studio and becoming an established film actress.[130] Her *Huangmei diao* performance for *Liu Hai's Encounter with the Fairies* drew attention from Yuan Qiufeng (1924–?), as it allegedly reminded him of their past collaboration for *The Love of a Pedicab Driver* (*Sanlun chefu zhi lian*, 1959) while he was directing *Dream of the Red Chamber*. This was how she got her next job as a *Huangmei diao* playback singer, which she did so well to prompt Li to persuade Run Run Shaw to hire her as the leading "actor" in *The Love Eterne*.[131]

For both personal and professional reasons, Ling Po felt very glad to have followed the footsteps of those past colleagues who continued their careers in Movietown. She was very satisfied with the improved work conditions since she joined the production of *The Love Eterne*:

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[128] Ibid.

[129] Ibid. See also the selected transcription in Ng, 172.

[130] Ibid. See also "Lin Dai ku'nao, Le Di bapai zuokan Ling Bo xiongyong shi (yi)," *Ming Pao Daily*, February 7, 2015, accessed February 15, 2017, < http://bka.mpweekly.com/interview/集體回憶/林黛哭鬧-樂蒂罷拍坐看凌波洶湧時（一）>.

[131] *Koushu lishi fangwen: Ling Bo, 2011/04/14*.

> Shaw Brothers was a big corporation with a lot of money. There were composers writing for [particular] singers, [while] those Chinese operatic gestures were [taught by] specialists. [For the latter,] [t]here was one called Tang Xueyuan, who was a famous Peking opera actor-singer; he taught us [sic] during rehearsals and filming.[132]

She was also very conscious about how she could benefit from such professionalism:

> I have to once again thank god for gifting me a career [as a film actress]. […] [F]or what a teacher demonstrated, different students would have his or her own perception and understanding; for the same Chinese operatic gesture, maybe I did it in a more verisimilar manner. This is a gift from heaven. [Tang Xueyuan] taught [me] shot by shot. If there was a shot that involved two vocal lines, [then] he would teach [me] the bodily gestures for those two lines [only], and [I] would just follow [his instructions]. If the director said what [I] just followed was good enough, then there would be a formal run. Everything was taught while the teacher was next to you…[133]

She received instructions that were more specific and elaborate than before, but she was still aware of her own mimetic talent. For her *Huangmei diao* rendering in *The Love Eterne*, she once mentioned how, without knowing how to read music notations until a few years later, she learned to sing better by following the firsthand guidance Tsin Ting gave her in the recording studio.[134]

While some film critics and scholars claimed that Ling Po's *en travesti* gender inscription was central to her personation of Liang Shanbo being a lasting cultural phenomenon, there were other factors that contributed to her uniqueness in the same regard.[135] First, Ling Po was virtually the only actress who need not rely on a playback singer for performance in Mandarin "yellow plum" musical films.[136] This attribute made her performance not only more integral than her

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[132] Ibid. See also the selected transcription in Ng, 173.

[133] Ibid. See also the selected transcription in Ng, 173-174.

[134] Ibid.

[135] See also Ng Ho, "Yinyan: Huangmeidiao guzhuang gechang yu minjian chuanqi," *Guzhuang, xiayi, Huangmei diao* (Hong Kong: Celestial Pictures, 2004), 106; Hu Qingxuan, "Fengmi yishi de Huangmei diao," *Guzhuang, xiayi, Huangmei diao* (Hong Kong: Celestial Pictures, 2004), 109; Lok Fung, *Youli sexiang: Xianggang dianying de nü ban nan zhuang* (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 2016), 94-98, 106-107; and Chiao, 76-77. There have been rumors about Loh Ti's displeasure in working with Ling Po after *The Love Eterne*. Yet, Loh Ti penned two articles on her relationship with Ling Po published in Taiwan's *Central Daily News* on July 13-14, 1963, in which she spoke very highly on Ling Po's personality, professionalism, musical talent, and *en travesti* charisma.

[136] The other notable actress of comparable status would be Koo Mei (see Figure 5.11, upper right), who collaborated with Ling Po (i.e., Xiao Juan) in *Dream of the Red Chamber* as another leading playback singer. Being

Movietown peers, but also more comparable to an actor-singer featured in a Chinese opera film. Second, Ling Po was in no sense a newcomer to receiving instructions for imitating Chinese operatic gestures. She was already perceptive to similar instructions during her "past life" as Xiao Juan, before she was taught to perform in *The Love Eterne* some gestures that could be in reminiscence of Xun Huisheng (1900–1968), one of the Four Great *dan* Actors in the history of Peking opera.[137] And finally, Ling Po had a larger fan base than her Movietown peers because—as she believed—her past popularity as Xiao Juan (on film and on stage) motivated Hokkien audiences in Taiwan and Southeast Asia to go watch a film whose spoken language (i.e., Mandarin) was alien to most of them.[138] As she once exclaimed a couple of months after the Taipei premiere of *The Love Eterne*, "I do not have relatives in Taiwan, [but] there must be many Hokkien compatriots I think!"[139] It would be ridiculous if they recognized neither her face nor her voice after she changed her stage name (see Figure 5.25 below). After all, as an Amoy Hokkien film actress during the late 1950s, Ling Po failed to make a stable living but developed a solid foundation and some valuable skills for her later career.

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the leading actress of *Comedy of Mismatches* (1964), Koo was however far less prolific than Ling Po in making Mandarin "yellow plum" musical films.

[137] Lee Chen-hsiang, "Zaijian Zhongguo! Fanggong yishi touben ziyou xueleishi," *Taiwan People News*, February 5, 2017, accessed February 16, 2017, <http://www.peoplenews.tw/news/9e68fd75-6c4e-44be-b028-ccab699a59bb>.

[138] *Koushu lishi fangwen: Ling Bo, 2011/04/14*; Guy, 28-29.

[139] Wang Hui-kung, "Wo huijian le Ling Bo," *Lianhe bao*, June 27, 1963.

Figure 5.25:
Left: Xiao Juan in *Judge Bao's Night Trial of Guo Huai* (1956)
Right: Ling Po (seated) in *The Love Eterne* with Li Han-hsiang (left) and Loh Ti (rear middle)
(Photography courtesy of Ling Po Fans Club)

Following the release of *The Love Eterne*, Shaw Brothers Film Studio produced nineteen more Mandarin "yellow plum" musical films, with twelve of them featuring Ling Po as the leading "actor"/actress. Ling Po performed as the male protagonist *en travesti* in seven of them, and carried the major plots of cross-dressing disguise (*nü ban nan zhuang*) in another three of them.[140] She is historically the most prolific actress for this film genre, and has therefore been synonymous with *Huangmei diao* for decades, being known and remembered for her lyrical mezzo-soprano voice and her delicate cross-dressing performance as a young talented gentleman

[140] This statistical assessment is based on the Shaw filmography collated by Yu Mo-wan, Angel Shing, and Lee Chun-wai. For details, see "The Shaw Filmography," *The Shaw Screen: A Preliminary Study*, ed. Wong Ain-ling (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2003), 346-414.

(*caizi*), an expressive scholar (*xiucai*, *shusheng*), or a handsome upright soldier from the Chinese ancient past.[141] But still, it was her personation of Liang Shanbo that quintessentially redefined *Huangmei diao*. She rendered Liang Shanbo—one of the most popular folkloric figures in imperial and modern China—a locus of multifarious articulations of Chinese identities. On the one hand, her photogenic appearance was complemented by exquisite set and costume design, sophisticated cinematography and film editing, and the technological strength of Eastmancolor and Shawscope. On the other hand, her phonogenic vocalization brought together the Mandarin pop-singing style (re-)standardized by Tsin Ting, the sonorous quality of the "long stride 'aria type'" first exploited by Yan Fengying and Wang Shaofeng, the polished song-texts rewritten in the classical language by King Hu, the "grand" modern Chinese orchestral sound created by professional instrumentalists under Chou Lan-ping's direction, and the audio mixing and high fidelity maneuvered by Movietown sound engineers. All these qualities were substantial to how *The Love Eterne* attracted audiences ranging from intellectuals who were conversant with Confucianism and Romanticism, to rural old people who shared everyday jokes and gossips in Hokkien idioms.

Through deploying the conventions of Mandarin costume drama film, Li Han-hsiang treated *Huangmei diao* and *The Butterfly Lovers* as the historical means to rekindle certain memories, aspirations, or even ideologies for national imaginaries in *The Love Eterne*. He masterminded Ling Po's overdetermined presence in the film, as he established what Sobchack would regard as "a sign of *temporal transcendence* [emphasis in original]" that outlived the end of History as it was written by Liang Shanbo.[142] This sign exceeded the representation of Liang

[141] Lok Fung, 93.

[142] Sobchack, 36.

Shanbo to the extent that it successfully generalized historical specificity for the audience. It signified various exemplary and expressive characteristics of Chinese traditional culture through a performing body that inscribed an experience of a Chinese simulacrum upon the audience, among whom the majority were perceptually mediated by their prior experience of Chinese opera. The longevity of "elder-brother Liang" (*Liang xiongge*)—a nickname given to Ling Po by her fans since *The Love Eterne* achieved a phenomenal box-office success in Taiwan in 1963—is the best proof of how Ling Po ascribed *The Lover Eterne* an immortal status in the history of Chinese cinema. To paraphrase Sobchack again, Ling Po (re)presented "not [a] *real historical* figure but rather the *real significance* of [a] historical figure. [emphasis in original]"[143]

[143] Ibid.

Chapter 6

Sinicizing *Love Me or Leave Me* in a British Colony: American Cabaret, Cantonese Opera, and Cultural Critique

6.1 Cantonese Opera Being the Locus of Film Remake as Cultural Critique

During the mid twentieth century, Chinese cinema upheld a discourse that, as it sustained a hierarchy of domestic and foreign film production and consumption, marginalized film remaking. Grounded in the cultural politics that involved the contest for national legitimacy between Kuomintang (KMT), the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and other influential figures of high social standing since the early 1930s, this discourse had a strong connection to the state policies implemented in Mainland China and Taiwan, where the prospect of film remaking as a means to initiate thoughtful comparison and evaluation of local and foreign meanings was undermined. In Hong Kong, this discourse rather came into effect in less restrictive terms, as one could witness how, under British colonial rule, film remaking still invoked the Chinese populace to engage in cultural critique, an action that referred "not merely to conditions for the validity of knowledge, but to methods of inquiry directed at evaluating cultural and social practices."[1]

[1] George E. Marcus and Michael M. J. Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), xvi. See also Wong Ain-ling, "Foreword," *Hong Kong Filmography Volume IV (1953–1959), Chinese Edition* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2003), xi; and Poshek Fu, *Between Shanghai and Hong Kong: The Politics of Chinese Cinemas* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 58-59.

As George Marcus and Michael Fischer posited within the context of contemporary ethnographic writing, cultural critique "must include an account of the *positioning* of the critic in relation to that which is critiqued, and secondly, the critic must be able to *pose alternatives* to the condition he [sic] is criticizing. [emphasis in original]"[2] Similarly, through value-laden adaptation, appropriation, elimination, or replacement of local and foreign cultural symbols and meanings, film remaking necessitates a distinction between the local self and the foreign other:

> The writers and directors borrowed characters, plots, and scenes from Hollywood cinema for dramatic use, absorbing some of the new elements in Western popular culture as entertaining gadgetry but not identifying them with Western culture and ideals. Very often the films were critical toward the Western values of freedom, individuality, and, in particular, youthful rebellion. Although the films were full of entertainment, they remained dubious of the idea of modernization and materialization, which seemed to result in making the rich richer and the poor poorer. The films stood with the lower class and lower-middle class and were in general culturally conservative, complying with Chinese traditional family values and Chinese morality. However, these films brought a great deal of youthful elements, energy, and fashionable lifestyle into Hong Kong's cinema that reflected the changes in Hong Kong society and the likes and wants of the younger generation in the late 1950s and early 1960s.[3]

By probing into *The Sorrowful Lute* (*Pipa yuan*, 1957) as a remake of *Love Me or Leave Me* (1955), this chapter investigates how Cantonese opera was deployed in film remaking as a means of cultural critique. I will trace how *The Sorrowful Lute* turns a renowned American cabaret singer's biography into a semi-fictional yet historicized tale of a famed Cantonese opera actor-singer. I argue that the film conveys a critical attitude toward both Chinese filmmaking and the Chinese national past and present.[4] I will also explicate the intertextual and intercultural relations within *The Sorrowful Lute*, with a focus on issues including the social stigmatization of female musical labor, the public interest in comparing backstage lives with onstage personae, the historical linkage between Cantonese opera and itinerancy, and the musical and theatrical

[2] Ibid., 115.

[3] Law Kar, "Shaw's Cantonese Productions and Their Interactions with Contemporary Local and Hollywood Cinema," *China Forever: The Shaw Brothers and Diasporic Cinema*, ed. Poshek Fu (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 72.

[4] See also Lucy Mazdon, *Encore Hollywood: Remaking French Cinema* (London: British Film Institute, 2000), 72.

stereotyping of virtuous and patriotic female figures. I will demonstrate how, within a habitus affected but not prescribed by the political ideologies of KMT and CCP, a diasporic sense of the Chinese self would come into being while foreign attributes were sinicized on film.[5]

6.2 Contextualizing Mid-twentieth-century Chinese Film Remake

In 2011, six senior Hong Kong film critics and researchers selected *The Sorrowful Lute* as the only film remake among the "100 Must-see Hong Kong Movies."[6] This exceptional status, on top of the film's invisibility for a long period, somewhat bespeaks film remaking being a subaltern practice in mid-twentieth-century Chinese cinema, wherein national politics prescribed not only preferences for genres, subject matters, and spoken languages, but also construction of the national self in relation to authenticity, cultural prestige, and the judgment of taste.[7]

Chinese filmmakers once took a particular interest in remaking commercially successful Mandarin or Hollywood musical films in Hong Kong for two major reasons. First, the persistence of regional stardom and linguistic barriers was causal to remaking Mandarin films as

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[5] Rey Chow, *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), 24. See also Stephanie Po-yin Chung, "A Southeast Asian Tycoon and His Move Dream: Loke Wan Tho and MI&GI," *The Cathay Story*, ed. Wong Ain-ling (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2002), 30-39.

[6] Leisure and Cultural Services Department and Hong Kong Film Archive, *100 Must-see Hong Kong Movies* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2011), 6-111. According to the press release, "[t]he panelists are renowned writers and researchers Mr. Law Kar and Ms. Wong Ain-ling; the Dean of the School of Film and Television of the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, Mr. Shu Kei; the Artistic Director of the Hong Kong International Film Festival, Mr. Li Cheuk-to; the HKFA's Programmer, Mr. Sam Ho; and the HKFA's Research Officer, Mr. Po Fung."

[7] Yiman Wang has provided theoretical description of the film remake in semi-colonial Shanghai and colonial Hong Kong as a subaltern articulation of Chinese identities. For details, see Yiman Wang, *Remaking Chinese Cinema: Through the Prism of Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Hollywood* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013), 7-13. *The Sorrowful Lute* is among the extremely few Chinese films whose access are limited to research purpose only. Produced by Motion Picture and General Investment Company Limited in 1957, the film's copyright is still owned by Cathay Organization, the corporation that managed the already-disbanded film company between the mid 1950s and the late 1960s. The film is currently available for viewing in Hong Kong Film Archive, but this requires a written submission that specifies the viewer's research purpose to the copyright holder. Neither screen capture nor video clip extraction is allowed for whatever reasons, although the Archive owns a few DVD copies of the film. Furthermore, the film has never been broadcast on any television channels.

"dialect" films for an expanding market.[8] Second, the abundance of songs and spectacles in addition to Western and cosmopolitan novelties rendered Hollywood musical films attractive to being remade.[9] The burgeoning but still meagre literacy rate was insufficient for sustaining the accessibility of either Chinese subtitles or the officially sanctioned national spoken language (i.e., Mandarin).[10] Dubbing was also far from effective to those new and often less-educated moviegoers, whose difficulties in appreciating unmediated Western foreignness often engendered a sense of alienation that overpowered the presumed allure of exoticism.[11]

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[8] The causes of domestic film remakes in various Indian languages (e.g. Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, etc.) are, to a notable extent, comparable to those of remaking Mandarin films into Cantonese or other non-Mandarin Chinese versions. For details, see Nikhila H., "Marking Out the 'South' in/of Hindi Cinema: An Approach via Remakes," *Salaam Bollywood: Representations and Interpretations*, eds, Vikrant Kishore, Amit Sarwal, and Parichay Patra (New York: Routledge, 2016), 219-240.

[9] The Bollywood remaking of Hollywood movies also shares similar practical and economic concerns with the Hong Kong counterpart. For details, see and Lucia Krämer, "Adaptation in Bollywood," *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies*, ed. Thomas Leitch (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 251-266.

[10] According to Paul Clark (1988: 176), "[b]efore 1949, more than three-quarters of the films that filled China's screens were imported, mostly from Hollywood." Andrew F. Jones (2001: 121) also states that "an estimate 80 to 90 percent of all films shown in Shanghai in the 1930s were of foreign origin." In this light, it is important to keep in mind Victor Fan's observation (2015: 158) that between the late 1920s and the end of Second World War, those Kuomintang film censors "had banned all films from being subtitled, [as] a measure originally designed to discourage viewers from watching Hollywood films."

[11] One could trace the history of dubbing foreign films (which should be treated as separated from the history of dubbing Mandarin or Cantonese films into Cantonese, Amoy Hokkien, or Teochew versions) for Chinese audiences by first looking into the American "Earphone" (*Yiyi feng*), a wired broadcast system introduced by Shanghai's Grand Theater (Da guangming) in November 1939 to provide instant (female-voice) Mandarin interpretation of Hollywood movies on pay-as-you-go basis. According to Zhang Wei, virtually all first-class movie theaters in Shanghai adopted this service-technology in 1942, which remained effective until the late 1940s. The first foreign films dubbed in Mandarin were a set of newsreels produced by the United States Department of the State under the supervision of Chinese American Wango Weng (1918–). *Tarzan's New York Adventure* (1942) arrived in Shanghai in October 1946 as the first Hollywood movie dubbed in Mandarin, while *Zoya* (1944), the first Soviet dubbed counterpart, was shown half a year earlier. Yet, for various reasons related to cost-effectiveness, demography, national politics, and modes of cultural consumption, dubbing foreign films (excluding Japanese and Soviet films) was not common in Chinese localities within and beyond Mainland China until the late twentieth century. For details, see Paul Clark, "The Sinification of Cinema: The Foreignness of Film in China," *Cinema and Cultural Identity: Reflections on Films from Japan, India, and China*, ed. Wimal Dissannayake (Lanham and London: University Press of America, 1988), 178; Zhang Wei, "Ershi shiji qianqi Haolaiwu yingpian de hanyi chuanbo," *Journal of Shanghai University (Social Science)*, vol.13 no.5 (September 2006): 41-46; Zhang Wei and Yan Jieqiong, "Mopian shidai de 'peiyin' yu 'peiyue'," *Zhongguo dianying suyuan* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2011), 239-240; Kinnia Yau Shuk-ting, *Gang Ri yingren koushu lishi: hua di wei you* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), 24, 59, 67, 170; Chiang Ching, *Guren gushi* (Taipei: Locus Publishing, 2013), 178; and Wang Zhenggang, "Xin Zhongguo dianying yizhi pian chuchuang shilue," *Tuanjie bao*, February 1, 2016, accessed March 21, 2017, <http://www.tuanjiebao.com/lishi/2016-02/01/content_46862.htm>.

For the Chinese film remake as such, it is common to see local values being inscribed to a foreign original through translational strategies that, being "fundamentally ethnocentric [and] susceptible to scandal," destabilized the authority of dominant cultural values and institutions.[12] Early Cantonese films were for instance based on Cantonese opera stage adaptations of popular musicals, historical dramas, and physical comedies from the Hollywood. Although they sinicized many musical and dramatic elements from the originals, they were accused of provincialism on top of moral, technical, and aesthetic deficiencies under the hegemony of the Shanghai film industry.[13] They led KMT's Central Committee of Propaganda to decree all Chinese sound films to be made in Mandarin in the early 1930s, before the Shanghai film industry exploited the ban on Cantonese films issued by KMT's Central Film Censorship Committee and attempted to annihilate Cantonese film production a few years later.[14]

Notwithstanding this politicized dismissal, early Cantonese films demonstrated how the coexistence and mutual influence of "spoken drama," Chinese opera regional genres, domestic and foreign films, and entertainment forms such as vaudeville and variety show, had a lasting effect on Chinese films in general and the Chinese film remake in particular. This phenomenon was encapsulated in the popularity of amusement halls (*youle chang*) in Chinese urbanities during the first half of the twentieth century, wherein the synthesis of experiences from

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[12] Lawrence Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 68. See also ibid., 77-78.

[13] For details, see Wong Kee-chee, "'A Song in Every Film," *Hong Kong Cinema Survey, 1946–1968* (Hong Kong: The Urban Council, 1979), 26-27; Yingchi Chu, *Hong Kong Cinema: Coloniser, Motherland and Self* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon: 2003), 19; Zhang Zhen, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen: Shanghai Cinema, 1896–1937* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 250-255, 260-261, 283-284; and Kristine Harris, "*Two Stars on the Silver Screen*: The Metafilm as Chinese Modern," *History in Images: Pictures and Public Spaces in Modern China*, eds. Christian Henriot and Wen-hsin Yeh (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, 2012), 206.

[14] Victor Fan, *Cinema Approaching Reality: Locating Chinese Film Theory* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 160. See also "Zhongxuan buzhang Shao Zili tan: yueyu pian jue yu liuyuedi qian jinjue," *Movietone*, vol.6 no.20 (1937): 877; and "Shanghai yingye jutou tan jinshe yueyu pian shishi buzhou," *Movietone*, vol.6 no.26 (1937): 1122.

wandering through a variety of live performances and attractions (including trick films and foreign newsreels) anticipated a hybrid mode of spectatorship.[15] The popularity of particular genres (e.g. musical film, opera film, fantasy film, historical costume drama film, etc.) and subject matters (e.g. songstress (*genü*), opera star (*hongling*), etc.) prompted some Chinese filmmakers to feature musical performance on film through film remaking as well. By the means of "play within a play," those filmmakers took advantage of the advent of film sound, using music "to embellish visual attraction and dramaturgy rather than to conceal the process of narration," such that they could capitalize on the fame of popular singers and Chinese opera actor-singers, as well as on the attractiveness of a wide range of representational and performance elements.[16] Zhang Wei and Jean Ma noted on how, in a "play within a play" scene, a vocal "interlude"—be it a Mandarin pop song, a regional narrative singing excerpt, or an "aria" from a regional opera—would create a shift into different narrative registers and modes of address, prescribing a specific set of representational tropes and formal patterns on the one hand and intervening the diegetic flow with an inscription of the actor as both the performer and the fictional character on the other hand.[17] Victor Fan pointed out how the conventional staging of Cantonese opera episodic act influenced the presence of "play within a play" scene in early Cantonese films; he noticed that the singing of a skillful performer could put the audience "into a

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[15] Zhang Zhen, 64.

[16] Ibid. Using *The Sing-song Girl Red Peony* (*Genü hong mudan*) for exemplification, Zhang Zhen (2005: 307) argues that "[t]he musical numbers were not usually integrated into the narratives but were sung by characters playing characters and dubbed by famous vocalists, hence the term *xi zhong xi*," noting on "the permeability of the theater and film, which became more pronounced with the advent of reproducible sound." Zhang's argument is generally applicable to Chinese films of the 1930s and 1940s, although numerous Cantonese and Mandarin films produced in Hong Kong during the 1950s and 1960s, such as *The Love Eterne* (1963), a Mandarin "yellow plum" musical film discussed in chapter 5, and *The Sorrowful Lute* (*Pipa yuan*, 1957), a Cantonese film remake of *Love Me or Leave Me* (1955) to be discussed in this chapter, demonstrate several kinds of integral relationship between singing (which is not essentially presented in the form of musical number) and plot development.

[17] Zhang Wei, "Zhongguo dianying yinyue yuanliu tanxun," *Tanying xiaoji: Zhongguo xiandai yingtan de chenfeng yiyu* (Taipei: Showwe, 2009), 197-210; Jean Ma, *Sounding the Modern Woman: The Songstress in Chinese Cinema* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015), 6-7.

form of *cing* [i.e., *qing*], which would either recall an affective state analogous to the dramatic situation or prosthetically insert such a state into the spectators' sensoria."[18]

The opening scene of *My Kingdom for a Husband* (*Xuangong yanshi*, 1957, see Figure 6.01 below) illustrates how, through remaking *The Love Parade* (1929), Tso Kei (1916–1996) transformed an exemplar of Hollywood's dreamy "musical extravaganzas" into a Chinese spectacle that entailed the aforementioned matters. It is an exotic cinematic display that features Cheung Ying (1919–1984) as a dandyish nobleman who, fancied by many wealthy and lustful women, performs a cover version of the original's title song *My Love Parade* in a European café setting. This "cover version" preserves the melodies but—with symbolic references originated in classical verses *Summons of the Soul* (*Zhao hun*) and *Boating in White Lotus Pond* (*Bailian chi fanzhou*)—changes the flirtatious dialogue between Maurice Chevalier (1888–1972) and Jeanette MacDonald (1903–1965) into a mildly suggestive monologue that depicts a night stroll in a garden.[19] With the playback singing accompanied in a homophonic texture by an "indigenized" Western violin and a Cantonese "ancient" plucked lute (i.e., *qinqin*), an American musical "show tune" becomes the basis for a modernized Cantonese operatic song. It pays tribute to Sit Kok-sin (Xue Juexian, 1904–1956)—a multi-talent Cantonese opera superstar (*wanneng laoguan*) who adapted *The Love Parade* for the play *An Amorous History of Jade Palace* (*Xuangong yanshi*) in the early 1930s—by highlighting an imitation of his distinctive singing style on film.[20]

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[18] Fan, 172.

[19] Alleged to be a verse by Qu Yuan (340–278 BC), *Summons of the Soul* first appeared in *The Songs of Chu* (*Chu ci*). For its English translation, see Cyril Birch (ed.), *Anthology of Chinese Literature: From Early Times to the Fourteenth Century* (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 73-77. *Boating in White Lotus Pond* is a seven-character *shi* poem by Bai Juyi (772–846). For its English translation, see Xiaoshan Yang, *Metamorphosis of the Private Sphere: Gardens and Objects in Tang-Song Poetry* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center 2003), 84.

[20] For more information about *An Amorous History of Jade Palace*, see Mei Xun, "*Xuangong yanshi* de pingjia," *Xuangong yanshi tekan* (Shanghai: Tianyi yingpian gongsi, 1934), 3-4; and Frances Russell, "Hollywood in China," *Vox Magazine*, October 1, 1935.

別創新風格的「璇宮艷史」，是一部輕鬆俏皮的歌唱大喜劇，全部時裝浪漫派作風演出，爲「電懋」公司本年度鄭重攝製中的又一部粵語鉅獻。

「璇宮艷史」以描寫皇室宮庭生活爲經，穿插着一向被認爲貴族與子民之間不可能論婚的問題爲緯，故事大意是說，一位儀態萬千而富情感的女皇，當她偶然看上了一位青年音樂家之後，便芳心暗許，招爲皇夫，可是這位窮音樂家却過不慣那種宮庭中拘束的生活，因而寧願飄流四方，重渡自由自在的生涯，於是靜悄悄地出走，而這位女皇呢，也覺得愛情比權位更可貴，終於追上了窮音樂家的行程，一對有情人同諧白首！

「璇宮艷史」由左几導演，張瑛飾青年音樂家，羅艷卿飾女皇，以及梁醒波、譚蘭卿、檸檬、吳桐等等聯合主演，由於「璇宮艷史」的格調新穎，氣氛清麗，爲粵語片一向所未有，相信必能一新觀衆耳目。

圖片說明：（1）張瑛飾青年音樂家，怎樣也擺不脫美女的糾纏。（2）梁醒波着迷的神態。（3）應付不了娘子軍的包圍，只有衝出重圍。（4）看了這張精采劇照，不由得你不作會心的微笑。

Figure 6.01: *My Kingdom for a Husband*, an excerpt from a promotion essay published in *International Screen*, vol. 21 (July 1957)

Aside from its engagement in music commodification and cultural translation, the above example alludes to an ongoing contestation about defining Chinese cinema through filmmaking. *My Kingdom for a Husband* was a trend-setting box office success in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia in the late 1950s. It led to a wave of Cantonese opera/musical films imitating Hollywood palace-setting period dramas (*gongwei pian*), although it was perceived as—like other Cantonese films of the time—too low by artistic standards among the Chinese founders and members of the Asia-Pacific Film Festival.[21] This scenario is similar to how the producer and film crew of *An*

[21] See also Yung Sai-shing, "Cong *Xuangong yanshi* dao *Xuangong yanshi*: Helihuo dianying yu wushi niandai yueyu xiqu pian," *Xunmi yueju shengying: Cong hongchuan dao shuiyin deng* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press,

Amorous History of Jade Palace (1934) regarded their endeavor as a triumph of indigenization, whereas those KMT film censors and the Shanghai film industry disparaged the film as a technical failure that morally corrupted Chinese people and populistically undermined the official implementation of Mandarin as the national spoken language.[22] It sounds quite ironic that Mak Siu-ha (d. 1941), the author of *Brief History of Cantonese Opera* (*Guangdong xiju shilue*), regarded *An Amorous History of Jade Palace* as first a Cantonese opera stage production that surpassed *Love Parade* and other Hollywood sound films, and then a film that established Cantonese opera as a marker of Chinese modernity:

> It is amazing that Cantonese opera could tremendously improve within such a short period of time. Although it is generally susceptible to low-class amusement and could not completely withdraw itself from traditional customs, those [recent] excellent plays still offer [the genre] some precious rewards. Apart from those tight-knit plots and those lively and outstanding artists, [I could] instantly speak of several reformative features [of Cantonese opera]: newly rearranged revolutionary historical plays […], adaptations of world classics (such as *La Dame aux camellias*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Romeo and Juliet*), selections from foreign historical dramas (such as *Napoleon*, *Ben-Hur*, *Robin Hood*, and *Richard Cœur de Lion*), adaptations of famous movies (such as *The Love Parade*, *Thief of Bagdad* (1924), *Resurrection* (1927), *The Garden of Allah* (1936), *The Blue Angel*, *Broken Lullaby* (1932), etc.), Western-costume new plays (such as *White Golden Dragon*), […] use of Western instruments for accompaniment (violin, guitar, saxophone, banjo, etc.), […] replacement with three-dimensional setting, borrowing of gestures from cinematic acting, infusion of atmosphere from spoken theater, unification of costumes design according to each play's historical setting, and so on...[23]

For Mak, the reformative features he mentioned would accommodate Cantonese opera to contemporary trends, such that Cantonese opera would become modern and hence surpass those "lawfully and stubbornly conservative" regional operas from the North, including Peking opera.

2012), 94; and Kwai-cheung Lo, "Hong Kong Cinema as Ethnic Borderland," *A Companion to Hong Kong Cinema*, eds. Esther M.K. Cheung, Gina Marchetti, and Esther C.M. Yau (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 76.

[22] For details, see Fei Xu, "Yijiusansi nian Tianyi de tingjin dui," *Xuangong yanshi tekan* (Shanghai: Tianyi yingpian gongsi, 1934), 4-6; Shen Jicheng, "Xue Juexian xiao shi," *Xuangong yanshi tekan* (Shanghai: Tianyi yingpian gongsi, 1934), 6-7; Cheng Yan, "Tang Xueqing xiao shi," *Xuangong yanshi tekan* (Shanghai: Tianyi yingpian gongsi, 1934), 7; Zhi Qing, "Tianyi gongsi de yueyu yousheng pian wenti," *Movietone*, vol.3 no.17 (1934): 332; "*Xuangong yanshi* Guangzhou jin ying," *Movietone*, vol.3 no.44 (1934): 864.

[23] Mak Siu-ha, *Guangdong xiju shilue* (Hong Kong: Zhongguo wenhua xiejinhui, 1940), 2.

However Tso Kei explicitly put the emergence of the Western capitalist culture industry and the vestige of Confucian patriarchy in dialogue, he could not prevent *The Sorrowful Lute* from being dismissed as a mere fulfillment of market demands "at the Southern margins." In this light, this chapter will show how, in *The Sorrowful Lute*, Cantonese opera is a means to depict facets of modernity and express national(ist) sentiment perceivable to those who left their Chinese motherland as sojourners, immigrants, refugees, or émigrés. I will first scrutinize the title sequence's juxtaposition of Edward Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance March No.1 in D* with a reconstructed imagery of Guangzhou's amusement hall attractions, and then examine the succeeding cabaret dance sequence, wherein the female protagonist Tong Siu-ling reluctantly performs Li Jinhui's (1891–1967) (in)famous Mandarin pop song *Peach Blossom River is the Beauty's Nest* (hereafter *Peach Blossom River*).[24] My analysis of these two examples will reveal how, taking the hegemony of Hollywood and Mandarin filmmaking into account, the use of music in *The Sorrowful Lute* is committed to what Emilie Yeh observes as "a move away from simple copying or 'borrowing' from the West toward a discursive practice of sinification."[25] My analysis will also anticipate my proposition that during the 1950s, the Chinese title of *Love Me or Leave Me* (i.e., *Pipa yuan*) carried a moral(istic) undertone that substantiated film remaking in general and *The Sorrowful Lute* (also known as *Pipa yuan*) in particular as cultural critique.

[24] For Li Jinhui's musical biography, see Andrew F. Jones, "The Yellow Music of Li Jinhui," *Yellow Music: Media Culture and Colonial Modernity in the Chinese Jazz Age* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001), 73-104.

[25] Yueh-Yu Yeh, "Historiography and Sinification: Music in Chinese Cinema of the 1930s," *Cinema Journal*, vol.41 no.3 (Spring 2002): 87.

Figures 6.02a and b:
"Singing-stage Rose" (*Getan meigui*) Leung Ying (?–2006) performed at Ko Shing Teahouse in West Pont, Hong Kong, 1958, versus "Doris Day shines as the 'Sweetheart of Song' Ruth Etting in her nuanced and stirring performance of this jazz great in *Love Me or Leave Me*" (courtesy of Warner Bros.)

Through illustrating *pipa* (pear-shaped plucked lute) as an euphemism of songstresses who entertained their clientele in teahouses (*chalou*, see Figure 6.02a above) and winehouses (*jiujia*) in Guangzhou and Hong Kong between the mid nineteenth and mid twentieth centuries, I posit that *Pipa yuan* as a Chinese title was subject to moralization under Confucian orthodoxy.[26] I will demonstrate in this chapter how it alluded to the portrayal of Ruth Etting (personated by Doris Day, see Figure 6.02b above), thereby insinuating a critical attitude toward *Love Me or Leave Me* from an unmistakably Chinese perspective. Actually, before *The Sorrowful Lute* transformed cabaret from a desirable cultural form into something culturally, artistically, and morally inferior to Cantonese opera for an aspiring performer, those Chinese newspaper advertisements of *Love Me or Leave Me* (see Figure 6.04a in page 214) already showed some captions that, in contrast to the English newspaper counterpart (see Figure 6.04b in page 214), characterized Etting as unfaithful to Martin Snyder, the sympathized antagonist.[27]

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[26] For details about *pipa* as a euphemism in Cantonese culture, see Lai Kin, *Xianggang yueju xulun*, ed. Cham Lai Suk-ching (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 2010), 326-327; Du Zhanpeng, "Guangzhou chentang dongti 'yanhua' shihua," *Guangzhou wenshi ziliao cungao xuanbian*, vol.9, accessed April 15, 2017, <http://www.gzzxws.gov.cn/gzws/cg/cgml/cg9/200808/t20080826_3926.htm>. See also Gail Hershatter, *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth-century Shanghai* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 41-45; and Lee Siu-yan, *Yuediao cifeng: Xianggang zhuanqu zhilu* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Chinese Music Archive, 2010), 15-19, 24-25.

[27] Tso Kei's creation of the character Tong Siu-ling in *The Sorrowful Lute* is plausibly inspired by the songstress Tang Xiaochun (or Tong Siu-chun) depicted in Zhang Henshui's (1895–1967) "chaptered" *zhanghui* novel *The House of Qinhuai* (*Qinhuai shijia*). Completed during the late 1930s, *The House of Qinhuai* is, like Zhang's earlier *Two Stars on the Silver Screen* (*Yinhan shuangxing*), a novel about songstresses. It was adapted into film twice, first by Zhang Shichuan in Shanghai in 1940 and later by Tso Kei (as *The Songstresses*) in Hong Kong in 1963. Tso Kei's newer film adaptation, I argue, provides some clues for uncovering some details of *The Sorrowful Lute* which he directed six years before. First, there are some parallels between the relationship of the female protagonist and the antagonist in *The Sorrowful Lute* and that in *The Songstresses*, while the name of the female protagonist in *The Sorrowful Lute* is very similar to that in *The Songstresses* (and therefore, to that in *The House of Qinhuai*). Second, *The Songstresses* replaced the Jiangnan regional elements in *The House of Qinhuai* with the Cantonese equivalent, the most notable of which would be the overt substitution of Suzhou *tanci* narrative singing performed by *xiansheng* sing-song girls with Cantonese operatic songs by "petite *pipas*" (*pipa zai*); this cinematic treatment is comparable to how he supplanted American cabaret from *Love Me or Leave Me* with Cantonese opera in *The Sorrowful Lute*.

6.3 Amusement Hall on the Land of Hope And Glory?: The "Canned Music" With a Political Undertone

Knowing that Cantonese films were infamous for their casual and erratic use of "canned music" (*guantou yinyue*), one might wonder if *The Sorrowful Lute* also appropriated an unknown tape recording of a famous British military march only for some tuneful melodies to be offered in the opening titles. What if this appropriation involved meticulous sound editing, such that it created an "accompanying soundtrack" (*pei yin*) or some "descriptive music" (*miaoxie yinyue*) that reached the standards established by esteemed Chinese composers such as Huang Tzu (1904–1938) and He Lüting (1903–1999)?[28] What if this appropriation came with the imagery of an amusement hall, such that the music could "equally be heard as a vivid illustration of contemporary urban life"?[29] What if the appropriated musical content was known for its direct connection to *Land of Hope and Glory*, a famous song whose earlier version was first intended for commemorating Edward VII's accession and his crowing as Emperor of India?[30]

Snippets of popular Western classical pieces or classical Hollywood movie soundtracks were indeed "misplaced" in many Cantonese films of the 1950s and 1960s.[31] Such technical (mis)treatment, argued Huang Tzu, confirms that "most of those who deal with 'accompanying

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[28] See also Huang Tzu, "Dianying zhong de yinyue," *Diantong*, vol.11 (1935): 9; He Lüting, "*Dushi fengguang* zhong de miaoxie yinyue," *Diantong*, vol.11 (1935): 9; He Lüting, "Zhongguo yinyuejie xianzhuang ji women duiyu yinyue yishu suo yingyou de renshi," *Mingxing*, vol.6 nos.5-6 (1936), six pages. The opening credits of *The Sorrowful Lute* shows that Hong Liu, an unknown composer who, according to the records of Hong Kong Film Archive, wrote a couple of Mandarin popular songs for *Songs in Misty Night* (1956), a Mandarin remake of *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925), was responsible for the film's "accompanying soundtracks."

[29] Daniel M. Grimley, "'The Spirit-Stirring Drum': Elgar and Populism," *Edward Elgar and His World*, ed. Bryon Adams (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), 112.

[30] Nalili Ghuman, "Elgar and the British Raj: Can the Mughals March?," *Edward Elgar and His World*, ed. Bryon Adams (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), 255-256.

[31] Examples of those popular Western classical pieces include Felix Mendelssohn's "Wedding March" in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Richard Wagner's "Bridal Chorus" in *Lohengrin*, Modest Mussorgsky's *Night on Bald Mountain*, Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*, Jules Massenet's "Meditation" from *Thaïs*, Gustav Holst's *The Planets*, Aram Khachaturian's "Sabre Dance" from *Gayane*, etc.

soundtracks' are deficient in musical knowledge and understanding," because "the music's mood and rhythm are very often incompatible with or irrelevant to the moving image."[32] He Lüting even condemned that as—in contrast to other aspects of Chinese filmmaking—"a shame of [not only] Chinese cinema but also the whole cultural history of China."[33] Notwithstanding, the causes and effects of adapting Edward Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance March No.1 in D* for the opening credits of *The Sorrowful Lute* were more nuanced than what Huang and He could have critiqued; the film was marketed to moviegoers in Hong Kong and Malaya, where the march carried localized connotations that were associated with British colonial rule, thereby creating a contrast to the film's patriotism-related Cantonese operatic portrayal of "the Four Great Beauties" (*si da meiren*, which will be discussed in the final section of this chapter).

For some musicologists such as Brian Trowell, *Pomp and Circumstance* marches are "really a kind of recruitment propaganda [if one] put[s] their glittering orchestral equipage and sheer catchiness to one side," whereas others such as Diana McVeagh suggest that those marches "are not unthinking celebrations of military might [but] magnificent display pieces, apt for their time, and still of worth, if they can be listened to without nostalgia or guilt for an imperial past."[34] Trowell's caution is not an overstatement because, remarked Daniel M. Grimley, "for many commentators, such as Michael Kennedy, the [first] march represents the elevation of empire and a particular (for some, problematic) vision of Englishness."[35] But still, McVeagh's viewpoint seems more applicable to the intended audience for *The Sorrowful Lute*, who very

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[32] Huang, 9.

[33] He, "*Dushi fengguang* zhong de miaoxie yinyue," 9.

[34] Brian Trowell, "The Road to Brinkwells: The Late Chamber Music," *Oh, My Horses!": Elgar and the Great War*, ed. Lewis Foreman (Rickmansworth: Elgar Editions, 2001), 351; Diana McVeagh, "Elgar, Sir Edward," *Grove Music Online*, accessed May 5, 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/08709>.

[35] Grimley, 112.

likely had learned about *Pomp and Circumstance March No.1 in D*—through radio broadcast or firsthand witness—as part of a spectacle created by a military/police band during an official celebration of a colonial ceremony (such as the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953).

PART	SECTION	MEASURES	TEMPO	REMARKS
INTRO	intro	1-9	allegro con molto fuoco in mm. 1-7, poco allargando in mm. 8-9	-
A	A: first theme	10-17	a tempo	sentence a
B		18-25	-	sentence a'
C	A: second theme	26-33	animato since m. 27	sentence b
D		34-41	-	sentence b: approximately the same as part C
E		42-47	a tempo	-
F		48	leading to the repeat of sections A to E	-
G	transition	49-59	-	first part of transition: same basic idea as sentence a
H		60-77	poco allargando since m. 72	second part of transition
I	B: trio in G major	78-93	largamente	period c
J		94-117	allargando in mm. 105-107, a tempo since m. 108	period c'
K		118-133	molto maestoso	period c: approximately the same as part I
L		134-157	allargando in mm. 145-147, a tempo since m. 148	period c': approximately the same as part J
M	A: first theme	158-173	a tempo	parts A and B
N	A: second theme	174-181	animato since m. 175	repetition of part C
O		182-195	a tempo since m. 190	repetition of parts D and E
P	transition	196-206	-	repetition of part G
Q		207-218		repetition of part H until tempo changes to poco allargando
R	B': trio in D major	219-238	poco allargando in mm. 219-222, molto maestoso since m. 223	four-bar modulation + part I in D major
S		239-252	allargando since m. 251	part J in D major but different resolution
T	B': coda	263-275	tempo primo in mm. 263-266, più mosso since m. 267	-

Table 6.01: Edward Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance March No.1 in D*, form analysis

SHOT	FULL ORCHESTRAL SCORE MEASURES	VISUAL CONTENT
1 (8.4 s)	parts O and P, mm. 192-197 (G: I - V7) and mm. 200-202 (transposition begins with G major's tonic)	the Sun Company, a view from a moving vehicle (in a medium shot) in Guangzhou's Pearl River in a busy morning
2 (9.6 s)	parts P and Q, mm. 203-212 (transposition con't)	(same as above but in a medium-long shot)
3 (5.8 s)	part Q, mm.213-218 (transposition con't, with notable rhythmic pattern xxx xx)	the Sun Amusement Hall on the uppermost floor of the Sun Company, front-door noticeboard showing (in a close-up) the program of the day: Cantonese Opera Hall –*Mu Guiying* Talents Hall –magic and martial arts Movie Hall –*Charlie Goes Lucky* Peking Opera Hall –*The Trial of Su San* New-style Theater Hall –*Lady Meng Jiang*
4 (13 s)	part R, mm. 219-226 (modulation to D major and then the trio begins in majestic marching tempo, i.e., molto maestoso)	visitors entering into (the Great Hall of) the Sun Amusement Hall (long shot)
5 (2.9 s)	part R, mm. 227-228	some visitors walking upstairs and downstairs, from and to Cantonese Opera Hall (medium shot)
6 (9.6 s)	part R, mm. 229-235	Peking opera performance, with the audience in view (medium-long shot)
7 (5.3 s)	part R, mm. 236-238	visitors having morning dim sum at the Great Hall (medium shot)
8 (6.7 s)	part S, mm. 239-243	visitors walking from and to Movie Hall and Song-and-dance Drama Hall (medium shot)
9 (16.8 s)	part S, mm. 244-254 (tempo being further slowed down since m. 251, i.e., allargando)	magic show (in Talents Hall) on stage (medium shot)
10 (25.9 s)	part S, mm. 255-260 (rit. begins in m. 256)	weightlifter (in Talents Hall) trying to lift the lighter barbell in one power snatch (medium shot)
	part S, mm. 261-262 (IAC begins, D: ii - cadential six-four)	weightlifter throwing the lighter barbell to his assistant who could not hold it
	part T, mm. 261-272 (coda begins)	weightlifter trying to lift the heavier barbell in clean-and-jerk style, during the clean (camera moving toward the weightlifter)
	part T, mm. 273-274 (PAC, the first and second "resolved" tonic chord, the second one with highest pitch in scale degree 3)	weightlifter trying to lift the heavier barbell in clean-and-jerk style, during the jerk (medium close-up)
11 (4.8 s)	part T, mm. 275 (the final tonic chord)	the Song-and-dance Drama Hall sign, the diegesis emerges right after the cadence

Table 6.02: *The Sorrowful Lute*, opening titles with excerpts of *Pomp and Circumstance March No.1 in D*

Now, looking into the two sets of data illustrated in Tables 6.01 and 6.02, one could judge from a representational viewpoint whether music plays a significant role in the opening credits of *The Sorrowful Lute*. Visually, the opening credits first illustrate the Sun Amusement Hall as a historic venue in Guangzhou.[36] The moving image then shows some moments of visitors entering and wandering around the Hall, before it captures a magician followed by a weightlifter leaving the audience in awe in the Hall's Talents Theater. It ends with foregrounding a sign that points to the Hall's Song-and-dance Drama Theater, where the film's first story event takes place. Musically, the opening credits feature an "accompanying soundtrack" that—divided into three parts if one takes its changes in tonality, tempo, or structural character into account—combines excerpts of *Pomp and Circumstance March No.1 in D*.[37] Overall, with a narrowing scope but increasing details, the opening credits introduce the film's story setting chronologically.

Noting the synchronicity and syntagmatic parallelism between music and the moving image, this use of "canned music" in *The Sorrowful Lute* seems to be neither casual nor erratic. Through cutting and recombining musical excerpts from a tape recording, the "accompanying soundtrack" demonstrates not only a clear structural organization but also the arranger's adequate proficiency in Western functional harmony.[38] Its introductory and transitional passages

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[36] Lai, 308. See also Mui Lung, *Ximi qingren Ren Jianhui chuan* (Hong Kong: unknown publisher, 1968), essay no. 29. It is noteworthy that female Cantonese opera actor-singers such as Tam Lan-hing (1906–1981) and Yam Kim-fai (1913–1989) established their career at the Sun Amusement Hall during the 1930s.

[37] The three parts are: the G major introductory and transitional passage in shots 1 to 3; the D major trio played the first time in *molto maestoso* (i.e., very stately and slow, but with a lively expression) in shots 4 to 8; and the same trio section played the second time in *allargando* (i.e., in a manner slower in time and fuller in tone) and prolonged by a coda in shots 9 and 10, which ends with the final tonic chord in shot 11. For *Pomp and Circumstance*, trio refers to "the concept of a contrasting or lightly scored middle section to a scherzo-type movement," which was "still used in symphonic works by Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Bruckner and Mahler" and "persisted well into the twentieth century." For details, see Erich Schwandt, "Trio," *Grove Music Online*, accessed May 5, 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/28376>.

[38] One could refer the clear structural organization of the opening "accompanying soundtrack" to its arrangement of the introductory and transitional passage in dominant key, the periodic theme in home key, the repetition of the

carry the *scherzoso* (i.e., "joke-full" or "playful") character that suitably anticipates the mood and atmosphere of an amusement hall, while its ending passage figuratively "describes" the actions of a weightlifter, utilizing not only the conclusive character of the original coda but also the musical and dramatic tension created by a cadential six-four and an authentic cadence. Such technical sophistication could have astonished Huang Tzu and He Lüting, although they might find the final tonic chord of this "accompanying soundtrack" most powerful for introducing the audience to the diegesis.[39]

My functionalist analysis has possibly explained the suitability of *Pomp and Circumstance March No.1 in D* for the opening credits of *The Sorrowful Lute*. Aside from that, some music scholars have already elaborated on Elgar's notion of music as a form of spectacle and his capability of attracting audiences from a wide range of social classes and backgrounds.[40] These qualities might have contributed to the effectiveness of the "accompanying soundtrack," but the reception history of the march might still retain some significance to perceiving the film.

6.4 Peach Blossom River is not the Beauty's Nest: Cabaret as Yellow Music Against Morality

If "canned music" could not legitimize *The Sorrowful Lute* as a target of criticism, then how about the Mandarin popular song *Peach Blossom River*? Was Huang Tzu's condemnation of *Peach Blossom River*—as a lewd song (*yindang gequ*) composed by an advanced film composer who knew how the masses were starved of music—sufficient for problematizing *The Sorrowful*

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theme in home key, and the coda in home key. The arranger's adequate proficiency in Western functional harmony is most obvious in his recombination of the original march's parts O and P.

[39] Huang, 9; He, "*Dushi fengguang* zhong de miaoxie yinyue," 9.

[40] See, for example, J. A. Fuller Maitland (ed.), *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol.1 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1904), 774; Deborah Heckert, "Working the Crowd: Elgar, Class, and Reformulations of Popular Culture at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," *Edward Elgar and His World*, ed. Bryon Adams (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), 307-308; Diana McVeagh, "Elgar, Sir Edward"; and Grimley, 110-112.

Lute as an unsophisticated Cantonese film?[41] What if those KMT bureaucrats and leftist critics of the 1930s also shared Huang's opinion?[42] How could *Peach Blossom River* be meaningful to a film that presented a cultural history of Cantonese opera through remaking a Hollywood narrative about a renowned cabaret singer?

Intended for arousing the audience's curiosity, *Peach Blossom River* characterizes the first scene of *The Sorrowful Lute* as a spectacle that spotlights Fong Yim-fen (1926–)—a Cantonese opera "diva" who exceled at portraying kindhearted but miserable traditional characters—personating a cabaret singer.[43] One could see Fong appears on stage with a bob, a straw fedora, and a Western umbrella (*yang san*). She sings about the Peach Blossom River in Hunan province as filled with beauties like those four pairs of accompanying dancers who are young, fairylike, barefoot, and wear rah-rah skirts. She strolls around the stage like a stereotypical French lady and uses her natural voice to sing in Mandarin. With the accompaniment of a violin, a saxophone, a cymbal, and a snare drum, the song adopts a homophonic texture, presents a verse written in a modern vernacular language, and features some "jazzy" syncopated pentatonic melodies inspired by George Gershwin and Tin Pan Alley.

All these visual, musical, and performance attributes are highly distinguishable from Fong's typical image during the late 1950s and hence effective in evoking an impression of "the cinema of attractions." Notwithstanding, there are several moments in *The Sorrowful Lute* when the audience is reminded of how American cabaret in general and *Peach Blossom River* in

[41] For details about Huang's condemnation, see Huang, 9.

[42] For details, see Jones, 73-74. See also Nimrod Baranovitch, *China's New Voices: Popular Music, Ethnicity, Gender, and Politics, 1978-1997* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 14.

[43] "Yi bu chao shuizhun de duocai duozi de wenyi gechang pian," *International Screen*, vol.23 (September 1957): 41; Fung Tsz, *Fang Yanfen chuan ji qi xiqu yishu* (Hong Kong: Holdery Publishing, 1998), 40; Ho Wing-sze and Wong Man-yeuk, *Yintan tuyan: Fang Yanfen de dianying* (Hong Kong: Wings Workshop, 2010), 1, 46; Lee Siu-yan, "A Historical and Social Study of Fong Yim-fan's Cantonese Opera," (PhD dissertation, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2011), 45, 49-53, 66-68.

particular are far less morally and artistically desirable than Cantonese opera. These moments not only refer to Chinese cultural politics of the 1930s, but also accentuate the film's satirical intent.

Peach Blossom River is originally a mixed vocal duo that "tells the story of a man who stays true to his love despite temptation."[44] It first appeared as one of Li Jinhui's twenty-five *Family Love Songs* (*Jiating aiqing gequ*) published in Shanghai in 1930. In *The Sorrowful Lute*, the song is rearranged for a single female voice, with half of the lyrics eliminated so as to offer an instrumental interlude for dancing. As a text, this rearrangement transforms an expression of faith in love into a depiction of beautiful scenery and people; as a performance took place in the 1930s, it was conceived as no less vulgar and decadent than the original:

> What did change […] was the context in which these [love] songs were performed… [B]ecause of the commercial availability of sheet music and gramophone records, [Li's music] was increasingly performed in nightclubs, cabarets, and cafés, as well as in the domestic parlors of the urban petit bourgeois. One effect of the music entering wider commercial and social circulation was a proliferation of the meanings that audiences and commentators might attach to Li's texts. Popular musical meaning is contextual; the same text said dramatically different things when performed by a child in a school auditorium or by a young woman to a group of paying customers in a theater.[45]

In *Yellow Music: Media Culture and Colonial Modernity in the Chinese Jazz Age*, Andrew F. Jones discusses at length how a song like *Peach Blossom River* made Li Jinhui "a target for critics of all persuasion unhappy with the ideological tenor of the new media culture."[46] According to Jones, Li intended to "institute a new representational regime predicated on realist aesthetics" like those prominent May Fourth dramatists such as Hong Shen (1894–1955) and Tian Han (1898–1968), but Li's contemporaries found his philosophy of "aesthetic education" (*mei yu*) idiosyncratic, controversial, or even despicable.[47] Li's limited familiarity with Western

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[44] Jones, 93.

[45] Ibid., 94.

[46] Ibid., 113.

[47] Ibid., 88.

functional harmony, his stylistic affinity with Chinese folk music and "low-class" American jazz, and his choice of high-pitched, nasal, and melismatic "little sister" singing voice (*meimei qiang*), perturbed not only music reformers such as Huang Tzu and He Lüting but also his former followers such as Nie Er (1912–1935) and Wang Renmei (1914–1987).[48] Such critical attitude toward music was generally presumed in both the May Fourth discourse on Chinese music reform and the urban culture discourse during the Republican era, as an unquestioned endorsement of a colonial hierarchy that privileged the musical knowledge and practices of the European elite circle. Li's contemporaries also failed to sympathize with Li's rhetoric on adopting Takarazuka aesthetic. Li emphasized that his staging of the idealized modern young female image could emancipate the female body from the shackles of feudal discipline as well as counter the "physical weakness" and "poor hygiene" of Chinese citizens perceived by foreign powers. Yet, his vision as such did not earn him any praise for heralding the advent of modernity and liberty. Very few among those who held a fervent belief in Social Darwinism could appreciate Li's proclaimed eugenic display of female bodies; Li got offended far more frequently because such display was generally despised for introducing a new and exotic form of scopophilia that, as it conveniently reinforced the long sexualized and stigmatized image of female musicians, aggravated public morality.

In fact, being a cabaret singer in 1930s Guangzhou was a stigmatized matter of "throwing the head and showing the face" (*paotou lumian*) equivalent to being a taxi dancer in 1930s Chicago.[49] That means, by reassigning the female protagonist as a cabaret singer rather than a

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[48] For details, see ibid., 79, 103, 126-127. See also Huang, 9; and He, "Zhongguo yinyuejie xianzhuang."

[49] For details about the social status of taxi dancers in 1930s Chicago, see Paul G. Cressey, *The Taxi-dance Hall: A Sociological Study in Commercialized Recreation and City Life* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 31-106. First appeared in Ming vernacular novels *Investiture of the Gods* (*Fengshen yanyi*) and *The Plum in the Golden Vase* (*Jin ping mei*), the proverb *paotou lumian* originally implies the disgracefulness of women's public presence that would ruin the reputation of fathers and husbands in Chinese traditional society. In modern times,

taxi dancer—being known as a "waist seller" (*huo yao*) among various kinds of modernized sex workers in 1930s and 1940s Shanghai and postwar Hong Kong—for the first scene, *The Sorrowful Lute* alters the character setting of *Love Me or Leave Me* for an exchange of cultural currencies that is concerned with moral regulation.[50] According to Gail Hershatter:

> Dancing itself was characterized as an activity that had no evil connotations in the West but that when imported to China gave "those with mad sexual desires and greedy merchants a kind of sex business." [...] They were depicted as humiliated by exposure to sexual harassment from dance-hall patrons […] and constantly at risk of descent into outright prostitution. Like some of the other "modernized" sex workers, they were sometimes portrayed as under the domination of madams or contractors who treated them brutally, so that their situation did not appear to differ greatly from that of women who were unambiguously prostitutes.[51]

After all, the treatment of *Peach Blossom River* in *The Sorrowful Lute* retains a disdainful attitude toward Li Jinhui's music, but it signifies Cantonese opera instead of Western classical music as more respectable and sophisticated. It characterizes "song-and-dance drama" (*gewu ju*) as a frivolous means to sexualize a female body by extracting and reinterpreting some performance elements from two early scenes in *Love Me or Leave Me*—in which Ruth Etting worked in a middle-class restaurant in Chicago as first a dance chorus member and then a halftime stand-up comedienne—for a (shot/reverse shot) sequence that features incongruent body movements and deliberate audiovisual asynchronism. Etting's failure to dance in sync with her fellows was chiefly a matter of technical deficiency and talent misplacement, which caused

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despite the gendered nature being a bit less emphasized than before, this proverb still carries similar negative and (hyper-)sexualized connotations and often applies to degrading female entertainers.

[50] See also chapter six, section three in Li Changli etc. (eds.), *Zhongguo jindai shehui shenghuo shi (1840-1949)* (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2015), 803 pages; Nam-hoi Sap-sam-long, "Pa du hongdeng shang laoda, geshan wushan jiu yinyuan," *The Kung Sheung Evening News*, November 15, 1964; and Nam-hoi Sap-sam-long, "Tianxia chinan duo youhen, youlai yanlü ban wuqing," *The Kung Sheung Evening News*, November 28, 1964. Gail Hershatter (1997: 58) once referred to a modern form of prostitution in Shanghai as follows: "The hierarchy of prostitution required constant updating, particularly in the 1930s and 1940s, to take account of the proliferation of ancillary occupations such as that of tea hostess, taxi dancer, masseuse, female guide, and striptease performer. As paid companions, entertainers, and sex workers, the female practitioners of these new professions presented women in Westernized dress, mimicking a different, newer elite from the one that shaped courtesan practice. Theirs was a 'modern' form of prostitution, with emphasis on functional and efficient delivery of services to members of the commercial and industrial classes."

[51] Hershatter, 59-60.

nothing more than a mild mockery from the piano accompanist. Tong Siu-ling did not turn her body around like other dancers because she was unwilling to do so, which cost her a rebuke from two troublemakers (who later flirted with a couple of streetwalkers) and the troupe supervisor (who spoke like a *laobao* madam working in a low-class brothel).[52]

Unlike Etting who simply wanted a chance to sing, Tong had a more concrete and specific ambition.[53] In the first scene of *The Sorrowful Lute*, Tong expressed her displeasure of performing "song-and-dance drama," before she showed her excitement about the Cantonese Opera Theater lining up a traditional play on legendary heroine Mu Guiying. She was so devoted to Cantonese opera that she rushed for the play right after her own performance was over, and later forgot about her unfinished job duty at the Song-and-dance Drama Theater. This incidence led to her first encounter with the antagonist Chiu Tsat, who "helped" her to get a more preferable job as a subsidiary Cantonese opera actor-singer who carried a minor maidservant (*meixiang*) role. This change in stage life did not satisfy Tong for long, as she soon asked Chiu for better opportunities, which Chiu reacted by parodying Tong's previous performance of *Peach Blossom River*, before he claimed Cantonese opera being a more serious business and promised Tong that he would hire an experienced vocal instructor for her career development.

Following *Pomp and Circumstance March No.1 in D* and *Peach Blossom River*, no music other than Cantonese opera is featured in *The Sorrowful Lute*. This maneuver substantiates

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[52] In one of MPGI's promotion essays, the author labels to those streetwalkers as "wandering orioles" (*liuying*). For details, see "Xiechu ming nüling hengzao pohai de xuelei shi," *International Screen*, vol.21 (July 1957), 46-47. In Republican Shanghai, such streetwalkers were instead labeled as "floating rafts" (*tangpai*). According to Hershatter (1997: 62), "floating rafts" were "among the crowds thronging to the amusement halls, movie theaters, and department stores of the 1930s," who "drifted through these new public spaces without official interference." Lilian Lee (2009), a famous Hong Kong writer known for her novella *Farewell My Concubine* (*Bawang bieji*), also provides very similar explanation of "floating rafts" in a newspaper article. On a different note, based on Hershatter's synthesis of information from some primary source (1997: 46), *laobao* madams were "described unflatteringly as 'warlike brutal old lower-class hags' or 'man-crazy sharp-tongued middle-age women'."

[53] In one of the dialogues between protagonists Ruth Etting and Johnny Alderman in *Love Me or Leave Me*, Etting says, "If somebody gives me a chance to sing, I will sing. That's all."

Cantonese opera being the film's core subject. The film's treatment of Elgar's British military march and Li Jinhui's Mandarin pop song is—as I have demonstrated above—technically sophisticated and discursively significant. There shows not only a recontextualization of music through film and sound editing but also a moralization of music by the means of screenwriting, film acting, and cinematic mise en scène, both of which are so remarkable that they challenge the general assumptions of music misuse in Chinese commercial films, illuminating the problematics of Chinese film music as more about context and practices than text and materials.

6.5 Translating an American Cabaret Singer into a Cantonese "Petite *Pipa*": The Emergence of a Critical Intent

Without essentially engaging in the hegemonic construction of the Chinese self, *The Sorrowful Lute* deploys *Peach Blossom River* to critique American cabaret as a manifestation of the Western capitalist culture industry. In this section, I will illustrate how the different meanings connoted in *Pipa yuan*, the Chinese title shared by *Love Me or Leave Me* and *The Sorrowful Lute*, further insinuate a moralized comparison between American cabaret and Cantonese opera.

Figure 6.03: *The Sorrowful Lute*, newspaper advertisement, *Wah Kiu Yat Po*, Oct. 16, 1957

As an elaborating Chinese key symbol, *pipa* conjures up a historical image of female music-making, in which the player tends to be either a concubine or a courtesan, known for her physical beauty and erotic sensibility as well as her lament and sorrow.[54] Therefore, for a Chinese moviegoer of the 1950s, a mere glance at *Pipa yuan* as a film title would probably prompt him or her to recall certain common knowledge about folklore and expect the film being a story about a Chinese woman—most likely a concubine like Wang Zhaojun (52 B.C.–21 B.C.), who had been mythologized as one of "the Four Great Beauties" in countless stage, musical, literary, and calligraphic portrayals for more than a thousand years, or a courtesan like Li Xiangjun (1624–1653), who was dramatized in *The Peach Blossom Fan*, a classic *chuanqi* "marvel tale" penned by Kong Shangren (1648–1718)—who expresses bitter sentiments through singing and *pipa*-playing. This speculation would make much sense if one refers to those newspaper advertisements and promotion essays that publicized Fong Yim-fen as a Cantonese opera "diva" who personated "the Four Great Beauties" in *The Sorrowful Lute* (see Figure 6.03 above). But for those who were familiar with Hollywood movies, the same title might remind them of *Love Me or Leave Me*—a mainstream Oscar winner (see Figure 6.04a below)—and leave them the general impression of *The Sorrowful Lute* as a film remake.[55]

[54] For details about key symbol and particularly elaborating symbol, see chapter 2, footnote 37 and pages 21-22. For details about the social, cultural, and historical significance of *pipa* in relation to female music-making, see Joseph Lam, "The Presence and Absence of Female Musicians and Music in China," *Women and Confucian Cultures in Premodern China, Korea, and Japan*, eds. Dorothy Ko, JaHyun Kim Haboush, and Joan R. Piggott (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 97-120; and Joseph Lam, "Pipa as a Window on Chinese Music," *China Mirror*, accessed May 18, 2017, <http://chinamirror.net/?page_id=757>.

[55] For various reasons, it was more common for a Cantonese film remake to create a new title than to adopt the original's translated title, as shown in the cases of *An American in Paris* (1951, *Huadu yanwu* versus *En'en ai'ai*), *Lili* (1953, *Gufeng qiyuan* versus *Churu qingchang*), and *Interrupted Melody* (1955, *Xixiang qingduan* versus *Luanshi hongling*), etc.

Figures 6.04a and b:
Love Me or Leave Me, newspaper advertisements, *Wah Kiu Yat Po* and *South China Morning Post*, Dec. 31, 1955

These two ways of perceiving *Pipa yuan* as a film title could affect how *The Sorrowful Lute* was understood as a film that, while negotiating the Chinese self, accounted for both cultural familiarity and difference. Although the way *Love Me or Leave Me* contributed to *The Sorrowful Lute* might be a matter of limited concern in reception, the former undeniably provided the latter a concrete creative basis. *The Sorrowful Lute* could alter or neglect some elements of *Love Me or Leave Me*, but the former would remain a remake of the latter.

Re-translated as "the sorrowful lute" for the remake's overseas distribution, *Pipa yuan* literally means "the *pipa*'s lament," which apparently has nothing to do with the original *Love Me or Leave Me* but "somewhat elicits the gist of ancient poetry" like those Chinese titles of classical Hollywood movies discussed by Leo Ou-fan Lee.[56] One may notice the similarity between *Pipa yuan* and those titles of boudoir poems (*guiyuan shi*) such as *Zhaojun yuan* (*Zhaojun's Lament*) and *Changmen yuan* (*Lament from Changmen Palace*), but one may ask how a translation as such would be meaningful to a film about the survival of an aspiring American cabaret singer of the 1920s and 1930s.[57] What qualities from *Love Me or Leave Me* is translated into its Chinese title? *Love Me or Leave Me* could have adopted a Chinese title such as *Genü yuan*, which directly refers the film to a biography of a songstress (i.e., *genü*, who could be a cabaret singer, a *xiansheng* sing-song girl, a Chinese opera actor-singer, or a busker), or *Shengsheng yuan*, which pays tribute to Li Qingzhao (1084–1151) and her renowned poetic

[56] Leo Ou-fan Lee, "Di'er jiang, xulun er: Cong lao dianying de yiming xuexi guwen," *Zhongguo wenhua chuantong de liuge mianxiang* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2016), 96.

[57] Ibid., 99. According to Xiaorong Li (2012: 10), "[B]oudoir poetry had assumed the longest-lived and most important place in Chinese literary history, with the earliest examples dating to the Han period. Most commonly, male literati used the image to exercise their imaginations about female sexuality and emotion… Moral instructions for women as well as other discourses centered on the *gui* provide clues for constructing female subjects in both social formation and discourse. They generated conceptualized gendered positions into which women could be interpolated. In other words, the *gui* was molded into a symbol of women's sexual status and gender position and became a recognizable signifier in late imperial Chinese social and cultural practices. Women inevitably brought these meanings into their poetry even as their strategic uses of these meanings differed."

lament *Shengsheng man* (*A Weary Song to a Slow Sad Tune*).[58] What does *pipa*, unmistakably a (sinicized) Chinese traditional instrument, signify in relation to Ruth Etting's personal and professional struggle with Martin Snyder as depicted in *Love Me or Leave Me*?

Following Gail Hershatter's remark on Cantonese people who "had their own intricate terminology for sexually active women, virgins, and banquets," one may reconsider *pipa* as a Chinese key symbol carrying regional-specific meanings.[59] According to local historian Lai Kin:

> In Hong Kong during earlier times, [one could find] singing stages in established teahouses and winehouses as well as up-and-coming amusement halls… Singing stages in Hong Kong [island] and Kowloon [peninsula] flourished before the [Second Sino-Japanese] War. New singers [of Cantonese operatic songs]—due to the emergence of "broadcasting ladies" and other amateur singers—had been taking the place [of their predecessors]. Hong Kong had a relatively open society, [and thus] female apprentice singers (*xi qu zhe*) were increasingly visible [in public]. As time went by, those who were more mature and skillful frequently appeared in radio programs and participated in broadcast singing (*bo chang*), and there came the name "broadcasting ladies." And later, some "broadcasting ladies" [decided] not to avoid "throwing the head and showing the face" and [chose to] perform on singing stages, and so they were the newcomers among singing-stage female singers (*getan nüling*). Following the change of society, there were less and less singing-stage singers who were once prostitutes or "petite *pipa*" (*pipa zai*), […] although there remained some "petite *pipa*" who later became famous for singing [on singing stage], such as Siu Ming-sing's (1912–1942) disciple-proper Chan Kam-hung (1920–)… She was a "petite *pipa*" from Macau, and she had been singing until [sometime between] the 1980s and 1990s.[60]

Recounting about those singing stages (*getan*) in 1920s and 1930s Hong Kong, the quote above shows how *pipa* could be more relevant to *Love Me or Leave Me* if one compares an American cabaret singer with a Cantonese "petite *pipa*" (see Figure 6.05 below), both of whom would entertain the (predominantly male) clientele by performing ballads that incorporate erotic

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[58] Examples of a cabaret singer include *Three Stars and the Moon* (*Sanxing ban yue*, 1937) and *Mambo Girl* (*Manbo nülang*, 1957) etc.; examples of a *xiansheng* sing-song girl include *Rouge* (*Yanzhi kou*, 1988) and *Flowers of Shanghai* (*Haishang hua*, 1998) etc.; examples of a Chinese opera actor-singer include *The Singing Girl Red Peony* (*Genü hong mudan*, 1931) and *Southern Sisters* (*Nanguo zimei hua*, 1940) etc.; examples of a busker include *Song of the Fisherman* (*Yuguang qu*, 1934), *Street Angel* (*Malu tianshi*, 1937), and *Eternity* (*Wanshi liufang*, 1943) etc.]

[59] Hershatter, 54.

[60] Lai, 326-327. For more information about Chan Kam-hung, see Chan Sau Yan, *Wang Yuesheng tuchuan: Wang shi xiangpian huiji* (Hong Kong: Xianggang zhongwen daxue yueju yanjiu jihua, 1995), 61.

or sentimental themes into hybrid musical forms or styles.[61] It suggests *pipa* being a signifier of "singing beauty" (*geji*), whose identity as a "petite *pipa*" was distinguishable from a female blind singer (*gumu shiniang*) or a "broadcasting lady" (*boyin xiaojie*).[62] In the encyclopedic *Digest of Qing Anecdotes* (*Qing bai lei chao*), Xu Ke (1869–1928) defined "petite *pipa*" as a Cantonese slang for "a prostitute who was yet to attend the rite of passage [and lose her virginity]."[63] Several decades later, Poon Yin-tak (1893–1956) and Du Zhanpeng (?–?)—respectively a connoisseur of Cantonese operatic singing and a past owner of "blossoming banquet winehouse" (*huayan jiujia*) in Republican Guangzhou—stated that "petite *pipa*" was a teenage prostitute who had yet to sleep with any clients but worked as a wine-drinking companion and a performer of "river tunes" (*he diao*), a vocal genre that influenced the Eight Great Verses of Lingnan (*Lingnan badaqu*) favored by well-educated Cantonese opera amateur "players" (*wanjia*).[64]

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[61] Ibid., 278-292; Maria Jaschok and Suzanne Miers, "Women in the Chinese Patriarchal System: Submission, Servitude, Escape, and Collusion," *Women and Chinese Patriarchy: Submission, Servitude, and Escape*, eds. Maria Jaschok and Suzanne Miers (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1994), 12; Tim Ashley, "Cabaret," *The Oxford Companion to Music*, ed. Alison Latham, accessed May 19, 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e1066>.

[62] See also Lee Siu-yan, *Yuediao cifeng*, 17.

[63] Xu Ke, *Qing bai lei chao*, *fangyan lei*.

[64] Du, <http://www.gzzxws.gov.cn/gzws/cg/cgml/cg9/200808/t20080826_3926.htm>; Yung Sai-shing, "Cong yueyue shi kan 'badaqu': jidian chubu guancha," *A Preliminary Survey of the Cantonese Eight Song Cycles in South China: History and Sources*, eds. Tong Soon Lee, Man Shan Cheung, and Ai Mei Luo (Hong Kong: The Center for Chinese Music Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2015), 22-27. First published in 1983, the essay "Yanhua xuelei hua Chentang" (1997:404-414) distinguishes six "blossoming banquet winehouses" from all other winehouses in Guangzhou, noting the frequent visits of prostitutes as the former's defining character.

Figure 6.05:
A "petite *pipa*" in late-nineteenth-century Singapore (photo courtesy of National Museum of Singapore)

In 1983, the official anthology *Guangdong Historical Materials* (*Guangdong wenshi ziliao*) included an essay on prostitution in Republican Guangzhou, in which the author discussed about "petite *pipa*" with even more details. He first stressed that "petite *pipa*" was a well-trained teenage singer and *pipa* player owned and to be sold by a *laobao* madam.[65] He then indicated that a *laobao* madam would ask a "female minion" (*liaokou sao*) to arrange an appointment with a "blossoming banquet winehouse" owner, so that a "petite *pipa*" could perform a suggestive

[65] Cun Shi, "Yanhua xuelei hua Chentang," *Jindai zhongguo changji shiliao*, vol.2 (Shijiazhuang: Hebei renmin chubanshe, 1997), 415. See also footnote 52.

song—such as Lady Du Qiu's (d. 830s-840s?) *Robe Embroidered in Gold* (*Jinlü yi*)—in order to tempt a wealthy man into undertaking formalities for acquiring her virginity or ownership.[66]

Due to social changes, "petite *pipa*" had been rapidly disappearing since the 1940s. Those anecdotes about "petite *pipa*" were however circulated in Cantonese communities until decades later, otherwise Tso Kei would not have chosen to portray the social life of "petite *pipa*" in *The Songstresses* (*Qinhuai shijia*, 1963)—a mainstream Cantonese film—six years after remaking *Love Me or Leave Me* for the first time.[67] The choice of *Pipa yuan* as the Chinese title of *Love Me or Leave Me* might thus allude the film's portrayal of Ruth Etting to the image of a "petite pipa." Accordingly, Martin Snyder's status as Etting's abusive manager would be comparable to a *laobao* madam's treatment of a "petite *pipa*," while the lyrics of the film's many musical numbers—such as Etting's signature tune *Ten Cents a Dance*, which narrates the life of a jaded taxi dancer—would be no less suggestive than a "river tune." *Pipa yuan* as a translated film title could therefore invite one to watch the film based on the Confucian orthodox notion that female music-making was, to quote Joseph Lam, "particularly corruptive because it seduces [the listener] not only with sound but also [with] the physical presence of female performers."[68]

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[66] Ibid., 416. See also Yung Sai-shing, "Fulu: Wan Qing Xianggang jiyuan yu Guangdong quyi," *Xunmi yueju shengying: Cong hongchuan dao shuiyin deng* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2012), 281-284; and *Report of the Commissioner appointed by his Excellency John Pope Hennessy to enquire into the working of "The Contagious Diseases Ordinance, 1876"* (Hong Kong: Government Printers, 1879).

[67] For details about *The House of Qinhuai* and *The Songstresses*, see footnote 27. Tso Kei remade *Love Me or Leave Me* twice, the first time as *The Sorrowful Lute* in 1957 and the second time as *Tears of Pearl* (*Zhenzhu lei*) in 1965. *The Sorrowful Lute* and *Tears of Pearl* are very similar except the former's more outstanding showcase of Cantonese opera through the theme song and the two "play within a play" scenes with Fong Yim-fen and Wong Chin-sui; the character setting of the two films are basically the same, although the names of those characters as well as the content and extensiveness of their "play within a play" scenes differ (e.g. Tong Siu-ling in *The Sorrowful Lute* becomes Pearl Fong in *Tears of Pearl*, rendering the film title of the later more descriptive to the narrative).

[68] Lam, "The Presence and Absence of Female Musicians and Music in China," 97.

Figure 6.06: *Love Me or Leave Me*, Ruth Etting (right, personated by Doris Day) as a taxi dancer

For a society in which taxi dancers (see Figure 6.06 above) and cabaret singers were stigmatized as manifestations of decadence and indecency, one can imagine how the audience would conceive of Ruth Etting's career moves as equivalent to an (in)famous Chinese prostitute offering herself in exchange for fame.[69] This proposition provides a pointer for understanding how, as a cinematic amalgam of cabaret, Hollywood, and American urbanism, *Love Me or Leave*

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[69] In an essay published in *The Kung Sheung Evening News* in December 25, 1964, esteemed Cantonese opera playwright Nam-hoi Sap-sam-long wrote about Chinese people's presumption about prostitutes and film actresses as follow: "In the past, there was an (in)famous prostitute who entered into the film industry and served [one of the] director[s] in person. That director already had a wife, [and therefore] he only treated the prostitute as a mistress, although he committed himself to promoting her film career. The prostitute had the director's professional guardianship, [and she] surprisingly became the most popular film star of the time. But then, as she had reached prominence, [she] often threatened the director… Facing such problem, the director [found her] difficult to deal with, and [he] eventually ended his relationship with her… Later, I directed several films and got know to a spoken theater actress. This actress was quite talented in acting, but her facial appearance was not photogenic, and thus I assigned her a supporting role and sought [another] for the major role. She however misunderstood [my intention] and once asked whether an actress should have a relationship with the director so as to obtain the major role and become a star. [She said] if there existed such a rule, then she would not mind sacrificing her sex appeal. I immediately defended [myself], saying that either an actor or an actress should be judged by artistry, [and] there should never be a female film star who merely relies on a special relationship; more seriously, a director should never use [the assignment of] major role [as a means] to seduce beauties. Unfortunately, ordinary people [used to] believe in such misconception. Until now, in the film industry, [there have been] quite some actresses who were dance girls or lowlier. They still assume that sex appeal could tempt someone into offering a major role, although [they] would mostly [experience] rises and falls [as a result]."

Me was situated in a mode of spectatorship that remained highly moralized by Confucian orthodoxy. It explains why, by adapting the plots (*qingjie*) and dramatic qualities (*xiju xing*) of *Love Me or Leave Me* on the one hand, and by adding new content such as the two “play within a play” scenes featuring “the Four Great Beauties” on the other hand, *The Sorrowful Lute* was publicized as a sheer refinement (*quwu cunjing*) that suited Chinese people better.[70] One could even regard the theme song (*zhuti qu*, see Figure 6.07 below) of *The Sorrowful Lute* as a cultural translation of *Ten Cents a Dance* that, in and through a more literary and classical song form, equated a “petite pipa” with a taxi dancer.

6.6 *Pipa yuan*: From a Film Title to a Theme Song

L_1	朝朝抱弄琵琶，	Caressing her *pipa* every morning,
L_2	如玉韻聲聲優美。	every tone is emotively clear and beautiful.
L_3	此身縱使抱絕技，	Carrying unique techniques with her body,
L_4	望休要驕滿自詡。	hopefully she would not be too proud.
L_5	誰是個知音客，	Whoever the music connoisseur would be,
L_6	難覓到風雅士 。	it is difficult to find a cultivated gentleman.
L_7	一朝倘遇輕佻子，	One day she may instead encounter a frivolous one
L_8	情狂抱著摧花意 。	who would ruin her when getting crazy.
L_9	玉顏老去，	As her face gets old,
L_{10}	不堪痛心失意 。	she couldn't withstand her painful heart and miseries.
L_{11}	深深抱恨，	With deep regret
L_{12}	暗暗傷悲；	while hiding her sorrow,
L_{13}	身似落花心似水 。	her body follows those falling flowers and her mind is calm as still water.
L_{14}	嘆後果確堪憐，	Exclaiming the consequence is quite pitiful,
L_{15}	徒後悔自慚不智 。	but only could she sigh over her own fault.

Figure 6.07: *The Sorrowful Lute*, the theme song, the first strophe

[70] “Xiechu ming nüling zao pohai de xueleishi: *Pipa yuan* de houtai fengguang,” *International Screen*, vol.21 (July 1957): 46.

Could "a frivolous one" (from L_7) be one of those "pansies and rough guys, tough guys who tear my gown"?[71] Is it "difficult to find a cultivated gentleman" (from L_6) because "sometimes I think I have found my hero, but it is a queer romance"?[72] What literary and classical qualities does the theme song of *The Sorrowful Lute* demonstrate? Why does that matter? In the previous section, I have illustrated the connotations of *Pipa yuan* as a Chinese film title. In this section, I will scrutinize *Pipa yuan* as a theme song of *The Sorrowful Lute*, in an attempt to show that generic norms and their cross-cultural transposition were more than a matter of representational concern in mid-twentieth-century Chinese cinema.[73] I will approach the song first as a diegetic manifestation of the Cantonese operatic *duqu* process and next as a subtitled combination of a flashback montage sequence and a musical(ized) monologue.[74] I will show how the song's cautionary message is connected with the film's various historicized moments of backstage and offstage lives, such that the film could put the musical asset and cultural history of Cantonese opera on display while absorbing the main plots and cinematic techniques featured in *Love Me or Leave Me*. The song could—as Mak Siu-ha would have argued in *Brief History of Cantonese Opera*—exemplify a critical learning of the Hollywood that associates Cantonese opera with the modernizing world without losing touch with Chinese traditional culture.[75] The song could also suggest *The Sorrowful Lute* being no less embodied, meaningful, and

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[71] Lorenz Hart, "Ten Cents a Dance," *Lyrics by Lorenz Hart*, accessed July 31, 2017, <http://www.lorenzhart.org/tensng.htm >.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Jean Ma, *Sounding the Modern Woman: The Songstress in Chinese Cinema* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015), 8.

[74] Following Bell Yung's description (1989: 43-44), Cantonese operatic *duqu* is a process in which a singer would meet with the leading erhu/gaohu player in private to try out various ways of vocalizing the singing passages from a script or a verse manuscript.

[75] Mak Siu-ha, *Guangdong xiju shilue* (Hong Kong: Zhongguo wenhua xiejinhui, 1940), 2.

sophisticated than those "progressive" Mandarin films that prided themselves on promoting patriotism and social realism (*shehui xianshi zhuyi*).[76]

Appeared twice in *The Sorrowful Lute*, the theme song written by Lee Yuen-man (1912–?) and Lo Kar-chi (1916–1996) contributed to different narrative functions in each appearance. In the first appearance, the theme song was initially an aggregation of moral advise musicalized by the male protagonist Hon Kong-to, who railed against the female protagonist Tong Siu-ling approaching the antagonist Chiu Tsat with an opportunistic mind. But then, after Tong expressed her appreciation of the song as nothing other than music, she sang it with Hon's *yehu* (two-string bowed lute with a coconut soundboard) accompaniment as a learner, transforming it into a means to display a lesson of Cantonese operatic singing. In the second appearance, the theme song became something Tong—by then a Cantonese opera "diva" active in Malaya—rediscovered while studying a Cantonese opera manuscript. She was alone, and the song triggered her memories with a hindsight about her music lesson with Hon and what had happened to her beforehand and afterward; the song became a mnemonic device in addition to a once-neglected cautionary message. In general, the theme song facilitated a concrete and realistic imagination of a Cantonese opera actor-singer's backstage life. Complemented by the cinematic presence of Fong Yim-fen (as Tong Siu-ling) and Wong Chin-sui (as Hon Kong-to) who often performed together as Cantonese opera actor-singers in Hong Kong in the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s, the theme song fascinated those who were familiar with and impassioned about rumors and anecdotes about the world of entertainment in both the past and the present.

The Sorrowful Lute is comparable to many mid-twentieth-century Chinese sound films with regard to its treatment of the theme song. It promotes and reproduces commercial(ized) musical forms with a vision of Chinese modernity, demonstrating various aspects of Chinese

[76] See also "*Pipa yuan* nannü zhujiao Chufan Fanjie you da shengzhang," *Wah Kiu Yat Po*, October 18, 1957.

urban life while reflecting a particular ideology of Chinese filmmaking through the showcase of musical activities.[77] What distinguishes *The Sorrowful Lute* from the others is how several cinematic devices or techniques mediate its theme song for the purpose of storytelling. Like the film's treatment of *Pomp and Circumstance March No.1 in D* and *Peach Blossom River* which I have discussed earlier, such mediation engages the film in exploring alternative approaches to indigenizing or nationalizing film music by technical in addition to material means.

6.6.1 A Cantonese Operatic *Siukuk* Prior to Cinematization

The Sorrowful Lute

The theme song of *The Sorrowful Lute*

Music by Lo Kar-chi
Song-text by Lee Yuen-man
Sung by Fong Yim-fen

approx. 35 beats per minute

朝朝抱弄琵琶，如玉韻聲聲優美。此身縱使抱絕技，望休要驕滿自
應當注重前途，名利更不必經意。青春最堪重視，務須要珍愛自

8

詡。誰是個知音客，難覓到風雅士；一朝倘遇輕佻子，
己。毋為那花蜂侵擾，徒自惹傷心事；朝朝帶恨泣芳菲，

15

情狂抱着摧花意。玉顏老去，不堪痛心失意；深深抱恨，暗暗
琵琶震動芳心碎。撥弦細唱，一曲悄將心事寄；歌聲偏帶恨，抱怨祇

22

傷悲；身似落花心似水。嘆後果確
天知；感慨萬千心已死。似落花似

26

堪憐，徒後悔自慚不智。
飄萍，憔悴自憐悲不已。

Figure 6.08: *The Sorrowful Lute*, the theme song, transcription

[77] Sue M. C. Tuohy, "Reflexive Cinema: Reflecting on and Representing the Worlds of Chinese Film and Music," *Global Soundtracks: Worlds of Film Music*, ed. Mark Slobin (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), 185.

A_1a

L_1
X 、 、
L L O O L L
朝朝抱弄琵琶，
X 、 、
L O O L L L O
如玉韻聲聲優(美) 。

A_2a

L_1
X 、 、
L L O O L L
應當注重前途，
X 、 、
L O O L L L O
名利更不必經*意* 。

B_1a

L_5
X 、 、
O L O O
玉顏老[去]，
X 、 、
L L O L L O
不堪痛心失 *意* 。

B_2a

L_5
X 、 、
O L O O
撥 弦細唱，
X 、 、
L L O L L O O
一曲悄 將心事(寄) 。

A_1a

L_2
X 、 、
O L O O O O O
此身縱使抱絕(技)，
X 、 、
O L O L O O O
望休要驕滿自[詡] 。

A_2a

L_2
X 、 、
L L O L O O
青春最堪重*視*，
X 、 、
O L O L O O O
務須要珍愛自(己) 。

B_1a

L_6
X X
L L O O O O L L
深深抱恨，暗暗傷(悲)；
X 、 、
L O O L L O O
身似落花心似[水] 。

B_2a

L_6
X X
L L L O O O O O L L
歌聲偏帶恨，抱怨祇天*知*；
X 、 、
L O O L L O O
感概萬千心已(死) 。

A_1b

L_3
X 、 、 、
L O O L L O
誰是個知音客，
X 、 、
L O O L O O
難覓到風雅*士* 。

L_4
X 、 、 、
L L O O L L O
一朝 倘 遇輕佻 *子*，
、 、
L L O O L L O
情狂 抱著 摧 花 *意* 。

A_2b

L_3
X 、 、 、
L O O L L L O
毋為那花蜂侵擾，
X 、 、
L O O L L O
徒自惹傷心*事* 。

L_4
X 、 、 、
L L O O L L L
朝朝 帶 恨 泣 芳(菲)，
、 、
L L O O L L O
琵琶 震 動 芳心[碎] 。

B_1b

L_7
X 、 、 、
O O O O L L
嘆後果確堪 憐，
X 、 、
L O O O L L O
徒後悔自慚不*智* 。

B_2b

L_7
X 、 、 、
O O L O L L
似落花似飄 萍，
X 、 、
L O O L L L O
憔悴自憐悲不*已* 。

[note 1: X: strong-beat *baan*; dotted (above character) or underlined (below punctuation): weak-beat *ding*]
[note 2: L: level tone; O: oblique tone; underlined (below L or O sign): decorative character *chenzi* involved]
[note 3: italicized: first rhyme; bracketed: second rhyme; square-bracketed: third rhyme]

Figure 6.09: *The Sorrowful Lute*, the theme song, illustration of verse structure

The extent to which *The Sorrowful Lute* uses the music of Cantonese opera for cinematic storytelling would be clearer after a music analysis of its theme song. In this regard, one must first try to listen to the theme song as a mere *siukuk*, whose two rhymed strophes (A_1B_1 and A_2B_2, Figure 6.09) could be entirely new or based on a verse prototype "variation" (i.e., *cipai biange* or *qupai biange*). In the former case, the strophes would be "composed for preexistent tunes with little alteration to their melodic characteristics."[78] In the latter case, the strophes would adopt certain prescribed mood(s), tone pattern(s), rhyming scheme(s), and metrical structure(s). The credits shown in the theme song's published score however suggest that both the strophes and the tune are entirely original, leading one to consider how the strophes are composed (*zhuanqu*) before being set to a tune (*daqu*) that takes the duration, inflection, and pitch level of linguistic tones into account.[79] As a showcase of stylistic diversification, the theme song blends Western classical music elements such as melodic imitation, rhythmic symmetry, and call-and-response phrasing (see Figure 6.08 above), with the Cantonese regional flavor sustained in the *jingsin* scale/key/mode, the *maanban* metrical structure/tempo, and the poetics elicited from a stylized use of figurative language and rhyming techniques.[80] Free from formal, textual, and intertextual

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[78] Bell Yung, *Cantonese Opera: Performance as Creative Process* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 128.

[79] See *Pipa yuan tekan* (Hong Kong: International Screen Pictorials, 1957), 32 pages. See also Bell Yung, 82.

[80] Literally meaning "proper/regular/normal strings," *jingsin* (also known as *hochesin*) indicates the two strings of the leading bowed lute gaohu being tuned in sol (G) and re (D) for playing the sol-la-ti-do-re-mi-fa heptatonic scale, with sol, la, do, re, and mi most frequently featured (as predominant notes or cadential notes). Here, one should note that the equivalence of sol and G (or re and D) arises from transcriptional/notational convenience instead of the use of pitch pipe or tuning fork; the actual pitch and the notated pitch are generally within the difference of one whole step. This explains why theme song of *The Sorrowful Lute* is composed in *jingsin* but notated in D scale instead of C scale. For details, see Bell Yung, 14-18, 106-127. As a tempo marker, *maanban* refers to "slow tempo"; as a marker of metrical structure, it signifies the presence of "one strong beat (*ban*), three weak beat (*ding*)" pattern in "aria types" (*qiang*) among tempo-variant form Chinese opera genres such as Cantonese opera and Peking opera. This concept of beat-counting (*dingban*) is also applicable to Cantonese operatic *siukuk* (which is a kind of "fixed tunes," according to Bell Yung), although with more flexibility. "One strong beat, one weak beat" pattern is forbidden in *maanban* "aria types" such as *bongji maanban*, but not in a *maanban siukuk* like the theme song of *The Sorrowful Lute* (see B_1a and B_2a in the illustration above). Literary allusion is a prominent example of figurative language in the theme song of *The Sorrowful Lute*. Here include those words that function as such: 玉韻 in L_1 of A_1a, 知音 and

restraints, it is comparable to a new tune exclusively composed for a new Cantonese opera production of the early and mid twentieth century.[81]

6.6.2 The Phophetic Music Lesson Given by a Cantonese *wanjia*

The music analysis above provides some important information about the relationship between the theme song and the film plots. It illustrates the song's stylistic characters as originated in the *zhuanqu* and *daqu* processes, which authenticate the song as reflective of the personal and artistic relationships between the two protagonists in the film's music lesson scene. It also reveals the song's void of formal or structural restraints, which eventually facilitates the song's two strophes (A_1B_1 and A_2B_2, Figure 6.09) becoming a prophecy, a conversation topic, an element in action, a mnemonic device, and a cautionary message at the film's different moments.

If the theme song had effectively contributed to a kind of cinematic realism as a result, then the audience of the time should be able to perceive that. Actually, before the theme song—as a *siukuk* composed by Hon Kong-to and dedicated to Tong Siu-ling—first appeared in the music lesson scene, the audience should have already learned from the earlier backstage scene that Hon was an amateur *wanjia* who composed and accompanied Cantonese operatic songs. After the costumed Cantonese opera principal *dan* actor-singer Madame Hing told the stage advisor Uncle Chou that she would not sing until Hon arrived, the audience would likely expect Madame Hing to return to the stage later as a songstress instead of an actor-singer. Their witness to Hon's arrival as an accompanist in Western formal attire who carried a violin case (see Figure 6.10a below for a typical image of an accompanist as such), on top of the fact that a performance

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風雅 in L_2 of A_1b, 落花 in L_6 of B_1a and L_7 of B_2b, 芳菲 in L_4 of A_2b, and 飄萍 in L_7 of B_2b. For details, see Elma Moy (née Szeto Wai-ying), "Guoyue, yueju nali qu: yu guoyuejia Lu Jiachi yixi tan," *Sing Tao Evening News*, December 11, 1967.

[81] Bell Yung, 129; Lee, *Yuediao cifeng*, 42-43.

of ballroom-style Cantonese operatic singing would commonly succeed a staged Cantonese in those amusement halls in 1930s and 1940s Guangzhou, would sufficiently justify this expectation.[82] Moreover, at the near end of the backstage stage, Hon was shown to have absorbed in thinking about Uncle Chou's disagreement with offering a vocal excerpt to someone who appeared to be technically "naïve" (*yanggu*), before he defended Tong's candidness in front of Uncle Chou at the near end of the backstage scene. Hon's reactions reflected himself being a *wanjia* who "tended on the whole to regard [his] activity self-consciously as 'fine art'," such that the audience would consider him as musically competent and knowledgeable.[83]

Figures 6.10a and b: Wong Yue-sang playing violin as an accompanist; Fong Yim-fen and Wong

The backstage scene is meaningful for understanding the theme song in relation to the music lesson scene, because it helps the audience to make a better sense of how, with a strophe written in a relatively refined literary style, the theme song characterizes Hon as a classy master

[82] Lai, 288.

[83] Bell Yung, 39.

(*shifu*) and gentleman (*xiansheng*) who treated Tong with pride and poise. The way Hon was portrayed in the backstage scene also hints at the theme song's hybrid and modern musical style. The audience might liken Hon to Wong Yue-sang (1919–1989, Figure 6.10b), one of Fong Yim-fen's frequent collaborators who was first a *wanjia* and later a modish composer-accompanist who taught both amateur and professional singers.[84]

Hon's status as a *wanjia* was indeed significant to what happened before and during the music lesson scene when the theme song's discursive and symbolic meanings came into play. Although Hon promised to teach Tong during their first ever encounter in the backstage scene, he expressed his approachability politely and with humility (*junzi youli*) without being specific. Hon and Tong barely knew each other until Chiu Tsat decided to hire Hon as Tong's teacher. Chiu viewed Tong as his love interest and hoped to hire Hon to please her. For this reason, Chiu exploited his social understanding of *wanjia*. He depreciated against Hon by first proclaiming Hon as inferior to a "veteran master," and then transforming Hon's promise into a money-based commitment that sought guarantee of Tong's professional eligibility and set aside Hon's generosity and personal indulgence (*renqing*).[85]

By disclosing the disparity between music's cultural and economic values for men of different social standings and education levels, the aforementioned details prescribed the rivalry

[84] According to the timeline compiled by Chan Sau-yan (1995: ix), Wong Yue-sang often visited Cantonese singing clubs (*quyi she*) and music societies (*yinyue she*) when he was sixteen, and he joined renowned Cantonese musician Leung Yi-chung (1905–1974) and others to hire blind songstresses (*guji*) for learning to play various interludes (*guomen*) when he was eighteen. These musical experiences are, according to scholars such as Bell Yung (1989: 39), Lai Kin (2010: 276), and Lee Siu-yan (2010: 18-19), characteristic of *wanjia*.

[85] Famous Cantonese opera *dan* actor-singer Pak Suet-sin (1928–) illustrates in her autobiography a typical case of apprenticeship to a *wanjia*. She recounts her private music study with Sin Kon-chi (1911–1970), an esteemed *wanjia* who accepted her as his only student chiefly because of his reverence for and close friendship with her father. Sin was known for his musicianship as well as his kindness, seriousness and strictness. According to Pak, Sin was knowledgeable about drama in addition to music, and he was concerned with national affairs. Moreover, Sin paid a lot of attention to Pak's development as a singer, an actress, and a young adult; he not only was meticulous about Pak's learning, but also gave her plenty of professional and personal advice. All these details show how generosity and personal indulgence characterize the status of *wanjia* in early-and-mid-twentieth-century Cantonese culture. For details about Pak's case, see Pak Suet-sin, *Bai Xuexian zizhuan* (Hong Kong: Jiwen chubanshe, 1957), 58-59, 63-64.

between Chiu and Hon. Chiu's intervention also led to Tong's appreciation of the theme song—as a *siukuk* filled with Hon's musical talent, literary brilliance, and moral commitment—with ambivalence. After Tong enthusiastically read the song title (i.e., *Pipa yuan*) aloud and tried to figure out the composed tune through her voice, she asked Hon what the song was about in all innocence. She got frustrated as soon as Hon told her with insistence that the song allegorized the relationship between her and Chiu. Hon's succeeding lecture on her compromise between Chiu's material support and vulgarities therefore led to nothing but her reluctance to confront with her personal vulnerabilities. She could have withdrawn from the music lesson if Hon continued his lecture. Here once again highlighted the self-proclaimed nobility (*zi ming qinggao*) of a *wanjia* through a display of Hon's didactic mannerism (which is well embodied in Wong Chin-sui's preceptive character in everyday life) and literary sophistication (which is implied in Tong's inability to grasp the song's use of figurative language).[86]

In contrast, Chiu Tsat was portrayed in the same scene as "a frivolous one who would ruin her when getting crazy" (A_1b L_4, Figure 6.09). Through parallel editing and accompanied by a melodic theme from Pytor Ilyich Tchaikovsky's Symphony no.6, this portrayal contextualizes the theme song as not only a means for Tong and Hon to achieve intimacy, but also an excuse for a surreptitious affair which Chiu suspected and determined to interrupt.[87] Chiu's suspicion is understandable if one pays attention to the apparently insignificant conversation between Tong and Hon's mother that begins the music lesson scene. Why would Hon's mother—a traditional

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[86] See also *Ta Kung Pao*, March 18 and September 5, 1960.

[87] The mentioned melodic theme originates in the *allegro vivo* section from the first movement of the symphony. It appears in *The Sorrowful Lute* thrice (note: the other two appearances are both from Tong's confrontation with Chiu, the first of which is found right after Chiu quarrels with a stage advisor during one of Tong's rehearsals in the Sun Amusement Hall, which lasts until after Chiu has raped Tong in her bedroom, while the second of which is found right after Chiu rejects Tong's request for returning to Guangzhou, which continues until after Chiu fists into and curses his personal assistant for an unintended belittlement), all of which characterize Chiu Tsat as ruthless and insane.

funü (woman) who complied with the Three Obediences and Four Virtues—allow Tong to enter into Hon's bedroom?[88] What if she told Tong that "I would not be bothered even if you wake him up"? These two questions become trivial when one finds Hon teasing Tong in his bedroom.

The implied mutual affection between Hon and Tong resolved the tension arose from Hon's insinuation regarding Tong's opportunism, but then it substantiated Chiu's assumption that Tong and Hon "clearly carry on a surreptitious affair" (*fenming xidu yiqi*).[89] By the time the theme song appeared in the music lesson scene, Tong and Hon were so lighthearted that they intuitively filled their eye contact with tenderness (*meilai yanqu*). Either of them could imagine such a pleasant moment of music-making would end abruptly with Chiu's intrusion, which was keenly felt by the protagonists but also the audience, among whom one might have already immersed in the musical flow, humming while waving the right hand and counting strong and weak beats (*dingbaan*, see Figure 6.09 in page 225) like Tong. The absence of subtitles prompted the audience to pay less attention to the strophe, so that they would perceive the theme song as more a diegetic event than a self-contained work of art. The sonic presence of *yueqin*, *gaohu* (high-pitch bowed lute), and *xiao* (vertical bamboo flute) seemed negligible to perceiving the music's diegetic quality, since it contributed to a timbral blend typical of Cantonese operatic singing and thus effective for concealing the visual absence of respective instruments and players from the audience.[90] Likewise, Hon's surrender to Tong's adamancy seemed adequate to compensate for the uncanniness arose from the coexistence between the sorrowful expression of the theme song (see Figure 6.07 in page 221) and the cheerful mood of the protagonists.

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[88] For details about the Three Obediences and Four Virtues, see chapter 4, footnote 36.

[89] The word *yiqi* is only comprehensible in Cantonese. It is a very common referent of an act or a relationship that is intimate, ambiguous, and surreptitious. For more information, see, for example, Lilian Lee, "Yiqi," *Apple Daily*, April 27, 2008, accessed July 22, 2017, <http://hk.apple.nextmedia.com/supplement/columnist/art/20080427/11037615 >.

[90] See also Bell Yung, 23-31.

Apart from the cumulating prophetic potency of Tong's "predestined" (*mingzhao*) and "redemptive" (*yin'gong*) struggle with Chiu, the interruption of musical flow is key to this dramatic disturbance.[91] While Tong asked Hon whether she sang (the first strophe of) the theme song correctly, Hon was about to finish his instrumental playing and reply Tong with compliment. This is the moment when one notices a swift shift on Hon's face from smiling to agitated to courteous, as Hon saw Chiu furiously standing right behind Tong. With a feel of suddenness augmented by a brief timpani roll that followed an instant of suspenseful silence and preceded a short but loud theater organ note, a twosome music lesson was twisted into a triangular confrontation. Melodramatic enough, Chiu first interrogated Hon about a breach of promise to teach only at Tong's place, but eventually pledged himself to arrange a stage debut for Tong (as a principal *dan* actor-singer).

The music lesson scene in *The Sorrowful Lute* is analogous to the moment when *Love Me or Leave Me* features the song *It All Depends on You*, wherein the triangular relationship between the two protagonists and the antagonist is set up for the rest of the film. This plot adaptation shows the remake's faithfulness to the original, but its incorporation of elements of Cantonese opera's cultural history into the renewed plots is far from negligible. One may wonder if the remake is—to paraphrase Walter Benjamin—intimately connected to the original without being important to it, like a manifestation of life in relation to the phenomenon of life.[92] In *The Sorrowful Lute*, the relationship between Hon Kong-to and Tong Siu-ling began with Hon being

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[91] The word *mingzhao* appears when Tong's cousin exclaims after Chiu's departure from her place. It is rarely used in today's everyday conversation, although it appears as the title and keyword of a recent essay written by a Chinese astrologist. For details, see Ziwei Yang, "Mingzhao?" *Apple Daily*, May 28, 2007, accessed July 22, 2017, <http://hk.apple.nextmedia.com/supplement/columnist/art/20070528/7145719>. The word *yin'gong* appears when a female landlord exclaims after Chiu's departure from the place of Tong's cousin. It carries double (and opposite) meanings in Cantonese. For details, see Yang Ruowei and Zhang Bennan, "Cong 'yingong' yici tandao 'meiwu tongci'," *Yuwen jianshe tongxun*, vol.89 (May 2008), <http://www.huayuqiao.org/DOC8900/8921.htm>.

[92] Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens*," *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 71.

a cultured, courteous, and dignified *wanjia*, whose affection for Tong did not grow deeper until Chiu Tsat hired him to provide Tong three months of intensive teaching. This is in contrast to what one could grasp from the conversation between Johnny Alderman (personated by Cameron Mitchell) and Ruth Etting (personated by Doris Day) during the music lesson scene in *Love Me or Leave Me*, wherein Johnny told Ruthie that "I am getting paid by the hour" in order to soothe her worry about being late, before he thanked her—who "got the idea from you" and "thought it was better if you get paid"—for "cutting me in" even if "I would have done it for nothing." Hon looked supercilious and rejected Chiu's monetary offer before Tong urged him to accept Chiu's double-pay on her behalf, whereas Johnny told Martin Snyder (personated by James Cagney) about the hourly rate he used to charge for a music lesson, before Marty offered him double of what he proffered. Furthermore, Hon asked Tong for her name and whether she "has the heart to learn something" only after he had listened to Uncle Chou's complaint about Tong, whereas Johnny was keen to offer Ruthie a free music lesson, which led the restaurant owner to warn him to "kindly use your head" against "that one belongs to the gimp bought and paid for." Hon composed a *siukuk* for Tong with a clear intention in mind, as he hoped to evoke Tong's greater sense of danger toward Chiu and bring her musical gift to light, whereas Johnny used the enamored chorus of *It All Depends on You* to first test Ruthie's vocal proficiency and finally relayed a double entendre.[93] Hon made his moral commitment explicit before Tong sang the theme song with his accompaniment, whereas Johnny did not reveal his moral opinion on Marty until he reacted against Ruthie's idea about needing Marty as "sort of a manager." All these subtle differences in character settings demonstrate how, as a film remake, *The Sorrowful Lute*

[93] I describe the chorus of *It All Depends on You* as enamored due to the content of the song's verse section, whose lyrics convey that "lovers depend on moonlight for a love affair; babies depend on mothers for their tender care; flowers depend on sunshine and the morning dew; each thing depends on something, and I depend on you." *It All Depends on You* was a very popular song first written for the musical *Big Boy* in 1925 and then covered by many famous singers, including Ruth Etting as well as Al Jolson, Frank Sinatra, and Nat King Cole etc.

engaged in cultural critique through sinicization. It retold *Love Me or Leave Me* through an active and comparative engagement in Cantonese opera "as an object, a site, and a process," whose particular "sonic, non-sonic, and mixed meanings" were perceivable among Cantonese audiences in Hong Kong and Chinese overseas in the late 1950.[94]

6.6.3 Reaching the Karmic Ending of Bhavacakra Through Repetition of Music and the Moving Image

Unlike *Love Me or Leave Me* whose narrative is linear and involves no recurrence of musical numbers, *The Sorrowful Lute* features its theme song twice, with the second appearance in a flashback montage sequence and a musical(ized) monologue in combination. In the following analysis, I will explicate how, by transforming a prophecy into a confession, the film affirms its theme song's cautionary message. With an intriguing use of subtitles and film editing skills, the theme song takes advantage of an affective display of Fong Yim-fen's performing body; it utilizes a photographic and phonographic repetition to guide the audience to expect a reunion of the two protagonists.[95] It also exemplifies Rey Chow's statement on how, within the context of Chinese cinema, flashbacks "allow for a specific kind of cognitive and epistemic shift, whereby the world becomes comprehensible not so much through direct sensory-motor movements as through temporally mediated events such as memories, retellings, and juxtapositions of disparate images."[96]

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[94] Joseph Lam, "Music and Male Bonding in Ming China," *Male Friendship in Ming China*, ed. Martin Huang (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 79, 81.

[95] Giorgio Biancorosso argues in *Situated Listening: The Sound of Absorption in Classical Cinema* that recognition "cues us to search for meaning," and thus "to recall a motif is not merely to recognize specific features of the music as being the same or a variant thereof; it is also to grasp the *sense* of a recurrence by detecting a pattern and reckoning the presence of a communicative intention [emphasis in original]" (2017: 161).

[96] Rey Chow, *Sentimental Fabulations: Contemporary Chinese Films* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 91.

SHOT	LENGTH (second)	FLASHBACK/ DIEGESIS	SCENE	ENDS WITH DISSOLVE (Y/N)	VOCAL LINE	DIEGETIC/ NON-DIEGETIC MUSIC
1	20.5	diegesis	[medium shot, zooming toward Tong's face when the music begins]	Y	[mm. 25-29 as the instrumental intro.]	non-diegetic
2	13	flashback	M_{3a} – music lesson (singing)	Y	A_1a L_1	(meta)diegetic (voice in sync)
3	9		B – backstage (Hon witnessing the stage director being dismissive about Tong's performance capability, before Hon asks Tong for her name)	N	A_1a L_1 (last 2 char.) – L_2	non-diegetic (voice out of sync)
4	10			Y		
5	11.5		M_{3b} – music lesson (singing)	Y	A_1b L_3	
6	7.5		M_1 – music lesson (Tong "sneaking in" Hon's bedroom for the new handwritten song manuscript and then trying to figure out the composed tune from the notation, before Hon surprises Tong with his own voice)	N	A_1b L_3 (last 3 char.) – L_4	
7	12			N		
8				Y		
9	17		SD_1 – Tong asking Hon for comment after her stage debut	Y	B_1a L_5 – L_6 (first half)	
10	10		SD_2 – Chiu's confrontation with Hon (after Tong's stage debut) at Tong's new house	N	B_1a L_6 (second half)	
11				Y		
12	14.5		M_2 – music lesson (Hon appeasing Tong after her refusal to take his advice)	Y	B_1b L_7	
13	103	diegesis	[medium close-up, zooming toward Tong's face during L_2 and the first half of L_3, tracking Tong's movement during L_5 – L_7]	NA	A_2B_2 L_1 – L_7	diegetic

Table 6.03: *The Sorrowful Lute*, the theme song, an analysis of its second appearance (see also Figures 6.07 and 6.09)

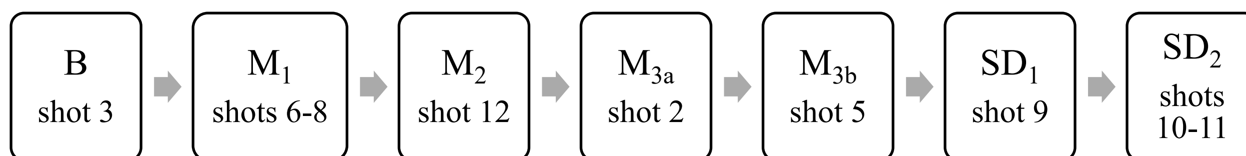

Figure 6.11:
The Sorrowful Lute, the chronological order of the events recaptured in the theme song's second appearance (see also Table 6.03)

Presumably, the flashback montage sequence in *The Sorrowful Lute* is inseparable from Tong Siu-ling's rediscovery of a handwritten *siukuk* manuscript. As a mnemonic device, this manuscript chiefly functioned as Tong's personal study tool, and yet it not only helped her to recall what she had previously learned from and practiced with Hon Kong-to, but also evoked her memories about him (see Table 6.03 above):

> Although in repertory and style of singing the performances [among *wanjia*, or amateur singers] were similar to those of teahouse singers, most of the songs were specially written by amateur or professional scriptwriters on the basis of the established repertory. The text was neatly written out or mimeographed, and while the name of the singer for whom the song was written was often prominently inscribed on the pages, the scriptwriter's name might not appear at all. The singers guarded these texts with pride and secretiveness. When I asked one singer to let me make a photocopy of one of his songs, he agreed to it only with great reluctance.[97]

From its dedicated musical and textual content to its calligraphic inscription and handicraft materiality, this manuscript is full of Hon's artistic footprints. It is distinguishable from the commodified transcription—wherein the same content is printed in standardized font and cipher notation—published in the film's promotion pamphlet. It facilitated Tong to "catch sight of the remains and therefore think back to the bygone" (*duwu siren*), introspectively and musically.

[97] Bell Yung, 39.

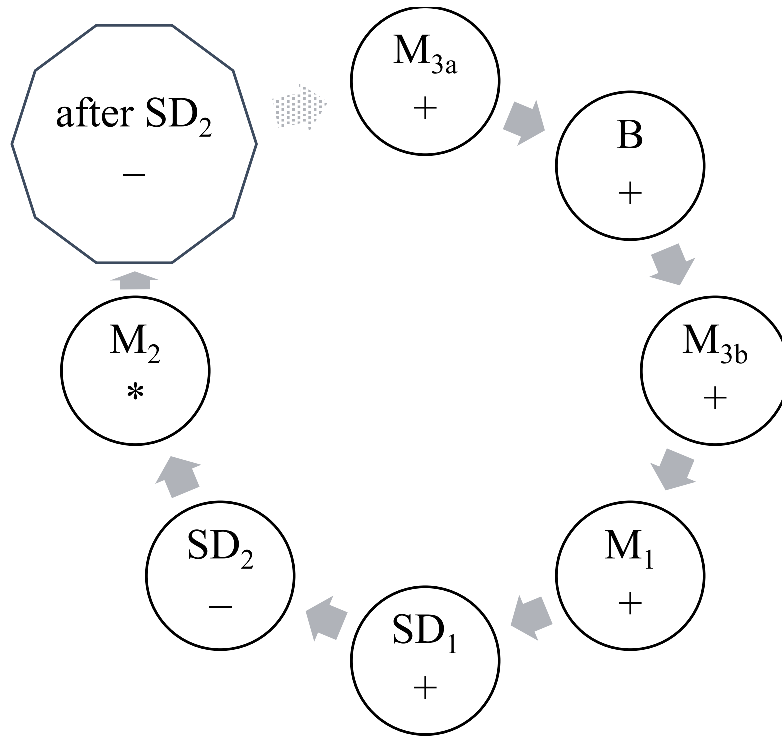

Figure 6.12:
The Sorrowful Lute, the rearrangement of the events recaptured in the theme song's second appearance in the form of a karmic "wheel of life" (see also Table 6.03 and Figure 6.11)

Tong's recollection began with the theme song's (meta)diegetic presence, which centers around the music lesson scene (M) but includes snapshots of the backstage scene (B) beforehand and the stage debut scene (SD) afterward. It recapitulates why and how Hon would get know to Tong before he became close to and later estranged from her. By the means of zoom-in and dissolve, the resurfaced moving image sets a first-person perspective on Tong's recollection and recontextualizes the theme song's first strophe as a cautionary message. The way those past events were arranged is neither chronological (Figure 6.11) nor random, but conceivably an abstraction of the karmic "wheel of life" (*bhavacakra*) (Figure 6.12).[98] This arrangement

[98] According to Robert E. Buswell Jr. and Donald S. Lopez Jr., "[T]he *bhavacakra* is a seminal example of Buddhist didactic art. [It] is comprised of a series of concentric circles, each containing pictorial representations of some of the major features of Buddhist cosmology and didactics." For details see "Bhavacakra," *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 111-112.

corresponds to how the theme song's first strophe (A_1B_1) goes from a delightful (+) beginning (shot 2 and L_1 in A_1a) to an unsettled end (shot 12 and L_7 in B_1b), which encapsulates a rupture (–, shots 10-11 and A_1b L_4) that Tong could but chose not to stay away from (*, shot 12); it anticipates Tong's distressful diegetic rendering of the second strophe (shot 13 and A_2B_2).[99]

Such photographic and phonographic repetition within *The Sorrowful Lute* creates a particular experience of time that is shaped not only by the thematic and stylistic traits of *siukuk*, but also by a kind of care that concerns both the fate of the female protagonist and the evolvement of the triangular relationship between the two protagonists and the antagonist.[100] When the flashback montage sequence is shown to be followed by Tong Siu-ling "returning" from her recollection and singing the second strophe, one would realize that the second strophe is the remains of the theme song that was beyond Tong's reach during the music lesson scene due to Chiu Tsat's intrusion. This awareness generates a feeling that Tong missed something that could have changed her fate. She could have "cherished herself" with "the utmost value of her youth" (A_2a L_2) after Hon Kong-to cautioned her not to "bother with [the lure of] fame" (A_2a L_1) and "be disturbed by that bee" (A_2b L_3), but things went otherwise by the time she rediscovered the handwritten *siukuk* manuscript, since she already "carried regrets and cried about floral fragrance every morning, with the heart broken while those *pipa* strings vibrate" (A_2b L_4). She became so sad that "her heart has died after having deep feelings about big changes of the outside world" (B_2a L_6), and she could not stop "pitying herself with exhaustion and endless sorrow" (B_2b L_7). As captured in a long take that portrays Tong in medium close-ups stemming from static and tracking shots, the whole second strophe constitutes Tong's embodiment of what Hon "has meant to tell her at heart through the song" (B_2a L_5) through her "rather sorrowful voice" and in "a grievance that is known

[99] For the original and translated first strophe, see Figure 6.07.

[100] See also Paul Ricœur, "Narrative Time," *Critical Inquiry*, vol.7 no.1 (Autumn 1980), 180-181.

by the heaven only" (B_2a L_6). She was all by herself in a spacious apartment while singing the theme song again as an itinerant Cantonese opera "diva" who reluctantly left Guangzhou for a performance tour around Malaya. She was no longer the aspiring actor-singer who deliberately disregarded the moral implication of the first strophe during the music lesson scene. She sang the second strophe this time as a veteran with a much-improved literacy; she was able to understand the song well enough for embodying it not only with her memories as illustrated in the form of flashback montage, but also with her despair manifested in her lyrical voice (*shuqing de changfa*) and her facial expression captured in close (cinematographic and gramophonic) proximity and without interruption (see the last row in Table 6.03).[101] The addition of subtitles to the theme song's second appearance also accentuates the importance of perceiving the song as a metanarrative about Tong herself and the film itself at that particular moment.

6.7 Epilogue: Enunciating Patriotism at the Southern Margins through "the Four Great Beauties" and Chinese Operatic "Play Within A Play"

To Tong's surprise, briefly after she sang the theme song again with sorrow and regret, the Sun Company from Guangzhou sent a negotiator to her place and invited her to collaborate with Hon—now known as a Cantonese opera *sheng* actor-singer called Luk Kong-po—on stage back home. This incidence establishes the theme song as a marker of separation and reunion between Tong and Hon that, warranted by what happened to both Tong and Hong between and after its two appearances, affirms the Karmic "wheel of life" that punished and rewarded Tong's moral beings throughout the film.

[101] Regarding Fong's lyrical singing style, Fong herself once stated that it involves two major elements, i.e., the mellow quality that comforts the audience's ears and the emotive power that keeps her out of singing sharp pitches. As shown in Figure 6.08, the theme song features a number of legatos and has a pitch range (i.e., E_4 to $F\#_5$) that is relative low for a *dan* actor-singer. Furthermore, Fong's voice has been considered among Cantonese opera enthusiasts as remarkably different from some renowned *dan* actor-singers such as Hung Sin-nui (1924–2013) and Pak Suet-sin (1928–), both of whom have a higher vocal range and more penetrative voice.

As one could notice from the flashback montage sequence (when the theme song appears the second time), Tong had a successful stage debut as a principal *dan* actor-singer after the music lesson scene (when the theme song appears the first time) took place and before Hon confronted with Chiu Tsat. These events once again follow the original plots in *Love Me or Leave Me* with regard to how the personal and professional relationships between Ruthie, Johnny, and Marty evolved (see Table 6.04 below): Hon/Johnny told Chiu/Marty about the decision to discontinue his professional partnership with Tong/Ruthie; he despised Chiu/Marty for being morally corrupted and manipulative to Tong/Ruthie, before Chiu/Marty reacted against his aspersion by accusing him of failingly holding a love interest in Tong/Ruthie. In fact, before the reunion of Tong/Ruthie and Hon/Johnny, Chiu/Marty raped Tong/Ruthie and forced Tong/Ruthie to leave a very popular opera troupe/revue company in Guangzhou/New York, for taking up a westbound-and-southbound performance tour.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Love Me or Leave Me</td><td colspan="2">The Sorrowful Lute</td></tr>
<tr><td>Music</td><td>Place(s)</td><td>Music</td><td>Place(s)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Theme song:
The Sorrowful Lute</td><td>Guangzhou: Hon’s house
(music lesson)</td><td>It All Depends On You</td><td>Chicago: restaurant owned by Mr. Frobisher, rehearsal space
(music lesson)</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="5">Cantonese opera:
on legendary female warrior
Fan Lihua saving her husband
Xue Dingshan (and eventually
defeating the Western Liang army)</td><td rowspan="5">Guangzhou:
The Sun Company,
Cantonese Opera Hall
managed by Hui Caan
(Tong’s debut as
a leading dan actress)</td><td>You Made Me Love You</td><td rowspan="2">Chicago: restaurant owned by Mr. Frobisher
(Ruthie’s debut as a cabaret singer)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Stay On the Right Side, Sister</td></tr>
<tr><td>Everybody Loves My Baby</td><td rowspan="2">Chicago: restaurant owned by Mr. Frobisher
(Ruthie as a cabaret singer)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Mean to Me</td></tr>
<tr><td>Sam, The Old Accordion Man</td><td>Chicago: unknown radio station
(for The Ruth Etting Show broadcast)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">THE CONFRONTATION (HON/JOHNNY AND CHIU/MARTY)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Cantonese opera:
Mulan Joining the Army</td><td>Guangzhou:
Flowery and Lurid Shadows
Opera Troupe (rehearsal)</td><td>Shaking the Blues Away</td><td>New York: Ziegfeld Follies at Broadway</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">THE RAPE SCENE (TONG/RUTHIE AND CHIU/MARTY)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Cantonese opera medley:
siukuk based on tune archetypes
Silk-washing Stream,
Zhaojun’s Lament,
Autumn Moon Over Han Palace,
and Consort Yang Intoxicated</td><td>Nanyang (i.e., Malaya):
Penang and Singapore
(stage performance excerpts
plus snapshots of
itinerant performance)</td><td rowspan="2">Medley:
What Can I Say After
I Say I’m Sorry,
I Cried For You,
My Blue Heaven,
and Ten Cents a Dance</td><td rowspan="2">Detroit, Buffalo, Las Vegas (Silver Slipper), and Miami
(stage performance excerpts plus
snapshots of itinerant performance)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Theme song:
The Sorrowful Lute</td><td>Nanyang: Tong’s apartment</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">THE REUNION (TONG/RUTHIE AND HON/JOHNNY)</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Cantonese opera:
The Phoenix Pavilion</td><td rowspan="4">Guangzhou:
The Sun Company,
Cantonese Opera Hall
managed by Mr. Shiu</td><td>I’ll Never Stop Loving You</td><td>Hollywood: Paul Hunter Productions Studio, recording studio
(between Ruthie and Johnny)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Never Look Back</td><td>Hollywood: Paul Hunter Productions Studio, recording studio
(during soundtrack recording with a full orchestra)</td></tr>
<tr><td>At Sundown</td><td>Hollywood: Paul Hunter Productions Studio (during filming)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Love Me or Leave Me</td><td>Hollywood: Marty’s restaurant</td></tr>
</table>

Table 6.04: Songs in *Love Me or Leave Me* and Cantonese opera excerpts in *The Sorrowful Lute*, first comparison

What differs *The Sorrowful Lute* from *Love Me or Leave Me* in this case however consolidates the former as a film remake that commits itself to cultural critique. In *The Sorrowful Lute*, it is Hon actively seeking to collaborate with Tong again, as he traveled to Penang in order to persuade Tong to return to Guangzhou. This move motivated Tong to initiate a legal separation from Chiu, as she was determined to get rid of Chiu's control in order to decide her own fate. In *Love Me or Leave Me*, the reunion between Ruthie and Johnny is rather a result of Marty's arrangement for Ruthie's Hollywood debut. Marty did not know about Johnny's involvement until after Marty arrived at the film studio, and Ruthie later ended her relationship with Marty due to his unreasonable demand for excluding either her or Johnny from a film that was already in production. Although both Tong and Ruthie viewed love relationship as secondary to career development until they gained their fame and had more power to make personal and professional decisions, only Tong elicited a strong sense of homesickness during her time as an itinerant performer. Furthermore, both Tong and Ruthie displayed their indifference to the enthusiasm shared by Chiu and Marty, but Tong was particularly regretful about her separation from Hon, as she explicitly confessed her moral ignorance—not only to her cousin right before leaving for Nanyang (i.e., Malaya), but also to herself through the theme song's second appearance—before she met with Hon again, whereas Ruthie merely insinuated her contrition through the (extra)diegetic presence of a few lines from *What Can I Say After I Say I'm Sorry* and *I Cry For You*.[102]

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[102] The relevant dialogue between Tong and her cousin: (Cousin) "You have made the mistake [to comply with Chiu] already anyway; you can't make a return [to Hong] even if you keep crying right now." (Tong) "I truly regret that I did not listen to Brother To (i.e. Hon) [while he was warning me]; what is the significance of having a successful career if [I am] manipulated by someone for the whole life?!" (Cousin) "This is all determined by fate; your current situation may be better if Mr. Hon has not left you." (Tong) "Everything is my fault. He warned me [against Chiu's mischievousness] many times, but I never listened to him. Therefore, when I went to his house last night, he did not come out to see me." The lines which involve Ruthie's insinuation: "What can I say, dear, after I say I'm sorry? What can I do to prove it to you (I'm sorry)?" from *What Can I Say After I Say I'm Sorry* and "I cried for you, now it's your (turn to cry over me)" from *I Cry For You*.

Aside from how *The Sorrowful Lute* moralized *Love Me or Leave Me* through addition and reinterpretation of plots, the homesickness that uniquely characterized Tong's time in Nanyang deserves some discussion. Grounded in the choice of music in the film's first Chinese operatic "play within a play" scene and the musicalized metanarrative in the film's second Chinese operatic "play within a play" scene, I argue that such homesickness arises from personal concerns that are palpably mediated by wartime patriotism, a politicized matter that is present in the film's every singing moment except the theme song.

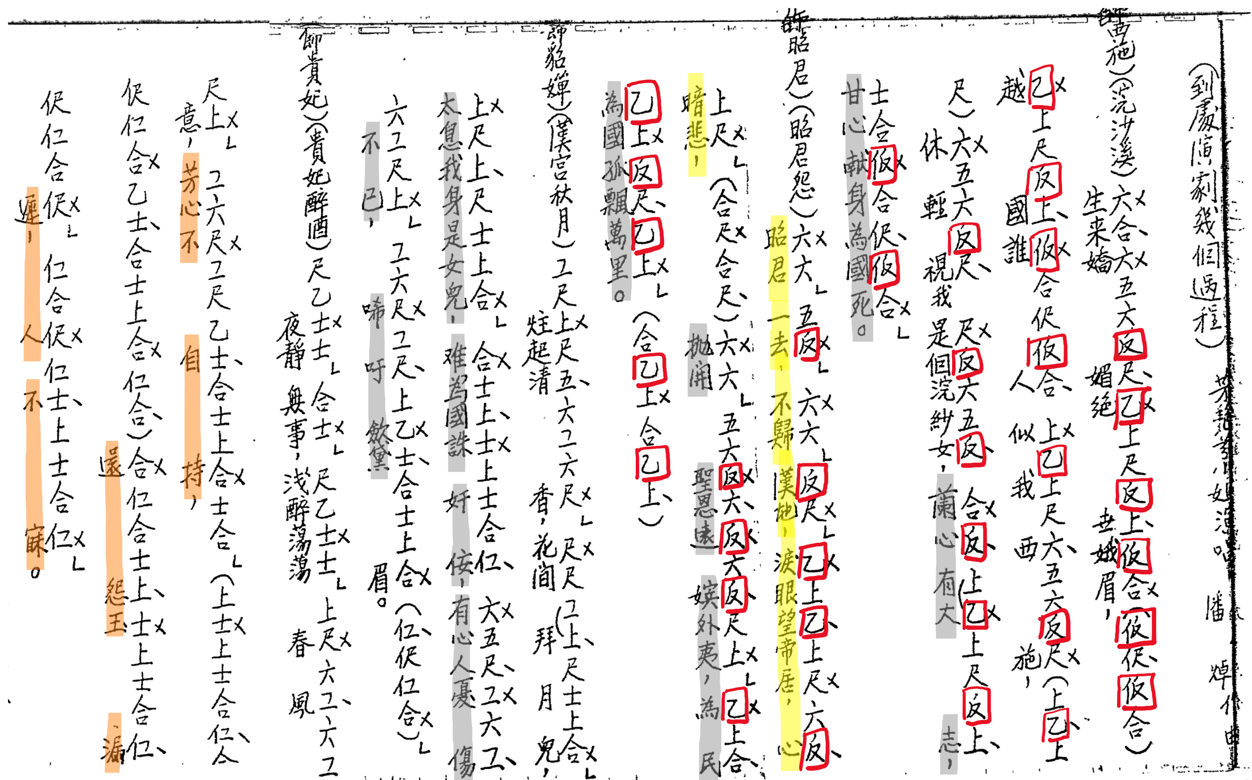

Figure 6.13:
Cantonese opera medley in the first "play within a play" scene of *The Sorrowful Lute*, facsimile of the song manuscript (photocopy courtesy of Chinese Opera Information Centre, Chinese University of Hong Kong)

Allegories of personal relationships	Lighthearted musical spectacles
Music lesson (with Johnny)	
*It All Depends On You	
Ruthie’s debut as a cabaret singer (with Johnny)	
^You Made Me Love You	_#Stay On the Right Side, Sister_
Ruthie as a cabaret singer (with Johnny)	
*Mean to Me	_^Everybody Loves My Baby_
Ruthie in radio station (with Johnny)	
	*Sam, The Old Accordion Man
Ruthie in Ziegfeld Follies (without Johnny)	
	*Shaking the Blues Away
Ruthie as itinerant performer (without Johnny)	
*What Can I Say After I Say I’m Sorry	_^My Blue Heaven_
*I Cried For You	
*Ten Cents a Dance	
Ruthie in Hollywood, rehearsal at recording studio (with Johnny)	
I’ll Never Stop Loving You	
Ruthie in Hollywood, during soundtrack recording at recording studio (with Johnny)	
#Never Look Back	
Ruthie in Hollywood, during filming (without Johnny)	
	*At Sundown
Ruthie in Hollywood, at Marty’s restaurant (with Marty)	
*Love Me or Leave Me	

Allegories of personal relationships	Musical spectacles about patriotic acts
Music lesson (with Hon)	
The Sorrowful Lute (theme song, Tong as herself)	
Tong’s debut as a principal _dan_ actor-singer (with Hon as an advisor)	
	Tong as Fan Lihua saving her husband (and eventually defeating Western Liang army)
Tong in Flowery and Lurid Shadows Opera Troupe (without Hon)	
	Mulan Joining the Army (Tong as Mulan)
Tong as itinerant performer (without Hon), the first Chinese operatic “play within a play” scene	
	Silk-washing Stream (Tong as Xi Shi)
Zhaojun’s Lament (Tong as Wang Zhaojun)	
Consort Yang Intoxicated (Tong as Consort Yang)	_Autumn Moon Over Han Palace_ (Tong as Diao Chan)
The Sorrowful Lute (theme song, Tong as herself)	
Tong returned to Guangzhou (with Hon as a _sheng_ actor), the second Chinese operatic “play within a play scene”	
The Phoenix Pavilion (Tong as Diao Chan, Hon as Lü Bu)	

Table 6.05: Songs in _Love Me or Leave Me_ and Cantonese opera excerpts in _The Sorrowful Lute_, second comparison
[*: Ruth Etting’s hit songs, ^: Tin Pan Alley popular songs, #: new songs written for the film]

Without taking the wartime history of Cantonese opera into account, one may be tempted to consider Tong Siu-ling's personation of "the Four Great Beauties" in the first Chinese operatic "play within a play" scene as a pragmatic replacement of Ruth Etting's hit songs (Table 6.05).[103] There are several factors that support this view. First, *Silk-washing Stream* (*Huansha xi*), *Zhaojun's Lament*, *Autumn Moon Over Han Palace* (*Han'gong qiuyue*), and *Consort Yang Intoxicated* (*Guifei zuijiu*) were among the most frequently used tune archetypes in mid-twentieth-century Cantonese opera, while *Zhaojun's Lament* and *Autumn Moon Over Han Palace* had been performed as Cantonese instrumental music standards for more than a century. That means one could easily recognize various forms or interpretations of these tune archetypes—through radio, movies, stage performances, etc.—within a mid-twentieth-century Cantonese musikscape. Second, these tune archetypes are thematically or programmatically related to the historical/folkloric narrative of "the Four Great Beauties."[104] *Zhaojun's Lament* offers a discursive means for *The Sorrowful Lute* to treat Wang Zhaojun's affair with Emperor Yuan of Han as an allegory of the relationship between Tong Siu-ling and Hon Kong-to.[105] *Consort Yang Intoxicated* is a historical/historicized source adaptable for signifying Tong's

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[103] For details, see "Yi bu chao shuizhun de duocai duozi de wenyi gechang pian," 41; and *Pipa yuan tekan* (Hong Kong: International Screen Pictorials, 1957), 32 pages. The newspaper advertisement illustrated in Figure 6.03 also explicitly promotes Fong's personation of "the Four Great Beauties" in the film's two Chinese operatic "play within a play" scenes as "groundbreaking" and "a payoff of the ticket price."

[104] In *The Sorrowful Lute*, *Autumn Moon Over Han Palace* characterizes Diao Chan, one of "the Four Great Beauties," as a concubine from the Eastern Han palace; this musical arrangement is not essential, although it appropriately situates Diao Chan in the context of the historical novel *Romance of the Three Kingdom*. *Zhaojun's Lament* and *Consort Yang Intoxicated* rather indicate through their titles how their musical contents are related to two of "the Four Great Beauties," namely Wang Zhaojun and Yang Guifei. *Silk-washing Stream* is related to Xi Shi, the remaining one of "the Four Great Beauties," in a similar manner, since the young Xi Shi is very often referred to as a silk-washing maid in folkloric accounts.

[105] Here refers to the following composed line from *Zhaojun's Lament*: "[After] Zhaojun was gone, [she] never returned to the land of Han; [her] weeping eyes contemplated the emperor's mansion [from afar], [with] a heart [of] concealed despair." For the original Chinese song-texts, see the words highlighted in yellow color in Figure 6.13. See also footnote 102 with regard to Hon's refusal to see Tong while she went to his house the night before she left for Nanyang.

loneliness and depression as well as anticipating the moment—comparable to the one that follows the end of *Ten Cents a Dance* in *Love Me or Leave Me*—when Tong indulged in drinking before she irritated Chiu to throw the liquor bottle on the floor with anger.[106] Third, as shown in the facsimile of the song manuscript, *Silk-washing Stream* and *Zhaojun's Lament* are both modally "bitter" (see those red-squared *yi* [乙] and *fan* [反] pitches in Figure 6.13). It is probable that songwriters/arrangers Lee Yuen-man and Poon Cheuk (1921–2002) featured them in the first half of the medley so as to highlight the "bitter sentiment" characteristic of Fong Yim-fen's style of acting and singing (*yanchang*).[107] And finally, prior to *The Sorrowful Lute*, Fong already won much acclaim for her stage portrayal of tragic figures such as Zhu Yingtai in *The History of Regrets Between Leung Shan-pak and Chuk Ying-toi* (*Liang Zhu henshi*), Dou E in *Snow in June* (*Liuyue xue*), and Li Xiangjun in *Li Xiangjun*, and she actually personated Xi Shi—one of "the Four Great Beauties"—several times while she was an apprentice studying at the National Sound Cantonese Opera Academy between 1937 and 1938. Knowing that "the Four Great Beauties" all died tragically, Fong automatically became one of the best candidates for personating those characters.[108]

Pragmatism certainly played a role in creating the first Chinese operatic "play within a play" scene in *The Sorrowful Lute*. A general comparison between the songs in *Love Me or Leave Me* and the Cantonese opera excerpts in *The Sorrowful Lute* (see Figure 6.13 above) however suggests the latter's engagement with Chinese cultural politics. If one looks beyond the allegorization of personal relationships being a prominent narrative function shared by the

[106] Here refers to the following composed line from *Consort Yang Intoxicated*: "[My] fragrant heart is out of my control, [and I] also lament over the slowness of the jade water clock; I cannot sleep." For the original Chinese song-texts, see the words highlighted in orange color in Figure 6.17.

[107] See also Lee Siu-yan, "A Historical and Social Study of Fong Yim-fan's Cantonese Opera," 66, 68.

[108] See also ibid., 53; Ho and Wong, 1, 46; and Fung, 22-23, 41.

singing voices of the two films (see Table 6.05 above), one would probably be intrigued by the displacement of some lighthearted reflections from Tin Pan Alley by a number of patriotic messages that pay tribute not only to the Confucian tradition of female self-sacrifice, but also to what Wing Chung Ng perceives as "Cantonese opera's involvement in various effort to aid China's defense against Japanese aggression."[109] According to Ng:

> Other than financial support, the opera community did what it did best to heighten public spirit by performing plays with strong patriotic content. Examples from the late 1930s are numerous, but among the best known are a series of plays dubbed "The Four Great Beauties," mounted by Xue Juexian. Drawing on the stories of four legendary women in Chinese dynastic history, the series emphasized the imminent crisis of national extinction and put forth a relentless call for selfless sacrifice and devotion through the examples of these iconic female figures. The timely content and the masterly performance of Xue in his key role as female impersonator in all four plays helped make sure they were big hits.[110]

Lee Yuen-man and Poon Cheuk might have used this musical displacement to suggest a direct connection between *The Sorrowful Lute* and the wartime stage production of "the Four Great Beauties" led by Sit Kok-sin.[111] Likewise, Tso Kei might have realized Charles Vidor's historicized treatment of *Shaking the Blues Away* in *Love Me or Leave Me* while directing the corresponding scene in *The Sorrowful Lute*, wherein Cantonese opera troupe Flowery and Lurid Shadows (*Hua yanying*) was rehearsing *Mulan Joining the Army* as a "synoptic play"

[109] Examples of lighthearted reflections from Tin Pan Alley include the following line from *My Blue Heaven*: "When whippoorwills call and evening is nigh, I hurry to my Blue Heaven." Examples of patriotic messages as described above include the composed lines "[my] orchid heart holds a lofty aspiration [and I am] willing to sacrifice [myself] for my country" by Xi Shi, "[I] shrug off the emperor's affection [so as to] marry a distant foreign [tribe leader] for [the good of] the country and the people, leaving myself alone [somewhere] thousands of miles [away]" by Wang Zhaojun, and "What a shame that I am female [and thus] incapable of killing those evils and frauds for the country; [I] have such a heart and cannot stop [myself] being sad for that" by Diao Chan. For the original Chinese song-texts, see the words highlighted in grey color in Figure 6.17.

[110] Wing Chung Ng, *The Rise of Cantonese Opera* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2015), 104.

[111] According to esteemed Cantonese opera playwright Nam-hoi Sap-sam-long (1910–1984), "*Xi Shi*, *Wang Zhaojun*, and *Diao Chan* were all staged by Juexiansheng [Opera Troupe] already; only the staging of *Yang Guifei* remained a problem... For 'the Four Great Beauties,' only three of them were rendered into stage productions, and yet the ongoing publicization had come into effect; even if the Troupe decided not to stage *Yang Guifei*, it still needed to stage another play about an ancient beauty. Eventually the Troupe manager accepted [the playwright] Fung Chi-fen's advice on abandoning *Yang Guifei* and preparing *Wu Zetian*." For details, see "Bai Yutang zaipai Chen Feinong chenggong," *The Kung Sheung Evening News*, August 14, 1964.

(*tigang xi*).[112] Tso might have heard of those anecdotes about Fong Yim-fen's performance as Hua Mulan—a filial and patriotic female warrior—in Jiangmen during the Second Sino-Japanese War, and he seemed to know that Cantonese opera troupes such as Lurid Shadows of Famous Blossom (*Minghua yanying*) were popular in 1920s and 1930s Guangzhou.[113]

In addition, until her retirement two years after the premiere of *The Sorrowful Lute*, Fong had been eager to portray virtuous and patriotic figures on film and on stage. Her personation of Dong Xiaowan (1624–1651) and Li Xiangjun received much acclaim in this regard, but it was her involvement in *Emperor Wu of Han Meeting Lady Wei in Dream* (*Han Wudi menghui Wei furen*) and *The Everlasting and Most Respectable Zhang Yuqiao* (*Wanshi liufang Zhang Yuqiao*) that set her apart from her peers (such as Yu Lai-chun, whose performances as legendary patriotic female warriors including Fan Lihua, Liu Jinding, and Mu Guiying etc. were acclaimed to no lesser extent).[114] For *Emperor Wu of Han Meeting Lady Wei in Dream*, the performance by

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[112] See also "Ziegfeld Follies of 1927," *Playbill*, October 17, 1927, 33. In *The Sorrowful Lute*, Tso Kei accentuates Chiu Tsat's callous manner by highlighting Chiu's ignorance of both the storylines of *Mulan Joining the Army* and the code of conduct attached to Cantonese opera rehearsal. Chiu is angered by the stage advisor's conventional treatment of the character Hua Mulan, because the stage advisor and his coworkers know clearly that it is essential to provide the audience some background information about Mulan (such as the longstanding fact that Mulan decides to fulfill her filial obligation through cross-dressing herself as a young man such that she could take over her old father's duty as a soldier) before introducing her on stage, whereas Chiu insists nonsensically on Tong Siu-ling (who personates Mulan in this scene) acting and singing on stage since the very beginning of the performance. The stage advisor's reluctance to compromise with Chiu eventually leads to Chiu disrupting the rehearsal and inflicting severe injury on the troupe manager, causing Chiu to force Tong to leave the Troupe and become an itinerant performer in Nanyang/Malaya.

[113] Jiangmen is a prefecture-level city in the west of the Pearl River Delta. For anecdotes about Fong's performance as Hua Mulan, see, for example, Cai Yue, "Huadan wang: Fang Yanfen," *Dallas Chinese News – DCOS Column*, July 18, 2014, accessed December 11, 2017, <http://dallaschinesenews.com/detail.php?id=3469>. For details about Hua Mulan, see Shiamin Kwa and Wilt L. Idema (eds. and trans.), *Mulan: Five Versions of a Classic Chinese Legend with Related Texts* (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2010), xi-xii. For details about popular Cantonese opera troupes in 1920s and 1930s Shanghai, see Yip Sai-hung, "Xiqu shichuang: san da quannüban (shang)," *Wen Wei Po*, June 11, 2013; Yip Sai-hung, "Xiqu shichuang: san da quannüban (xia)," *Wen Wei Po*, June 18, 2013.

[114] For Dong Xiaowan's brief biography, see Chen Shengxi, "Dong Xiaowan," *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Women: The Qing Period, 1644-1911*, eds. Lily Xiao Hong Lee, Clara Lau, and A. D. Stefanowska (New York: Routledge, 2015), 30-33. For Li Xiangjun's brief biography, see Lin Yanqing, Lily Xiao Hong Lee, and Sue Wiles, "Li Xiang," *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Women: Tang Trhough Ming, 618-1644*, eds. Lily Xiao Hong Lee and Sue Wiles (New York: Routledge, 2015), 228-230.

Fong as Wei Zifu (153–91BC) and Sit Kok-sin as Emperor Wu of Han (156–87BC) has been reputed to be artistically and historically significant to Cantonese opera.[115] For *The Everlasting and Most Respectable Zhang Yuqiao*, Fong's performance as Zhang Yuqiao (1625–1648) is notable for her awareness of three elements, namely the overtly political scriptwriting by historian Jian Youwen (1896–1978), the story's historical reference to Chinese opera's reactionary anti-Manchu status in Guangdong during the mid seventeenth century, and the story's proclaimed aim "to improve Cantonese opera, to commend Cantonese art and literature (*wenyi*), and to promote national spirit (*minzu jingshen*)."[116]

The second Chinese operatic "play within a play" scene in *The Sorrowful Lute* is similar to the first one for its strategies of comparative moralization. In *Love Me or Leave Me*, Marty shot at Johnny due to his jealousy about Johnny's reunion with Ruthie in Hollywood; in *The Sorrowful Lute*, Chiu Tsat committed the same act for the same reason against the reestablished partnership between Hon Kong-to and Tong Siu-ling in Guangzhou. In this case, however Ruthie expressed her gratitude to Marty by arranging his release on bail and performing the title song

[115] Fung, 286; Sit Kok-sin and Fong Yim-fen, vocalists, *Han Wudi chuhui Wei furen, Han Wudi menghui Wei furen*, Crown Records CCCD-1004, 2010, compact disc. For Wei Zifu's brief biography, see "Wei Zifu, Empress of Emperor Wu," *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Women: Antiquity Through Sui. 1600 B.C.E.-618 C.E.*, eds. Lily Xiao Hong Lee and A. D. Stefanowska (New York: Routledge, 2015), 218-220.

[116] Yung Sai-shing, "Yueju shuxie yu minzu zhuyi: Fang qiang yueju *Wanshi liufang Zhang Yuqiao* de zai quanshi," *Wanshi liufang Zhang Yuqiao yuan juben ji daodu*, ed. Li Siu-leung (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 2011), 118-120, 126, 128-137, 144-145; and Lee Siu-yan, "Yinyue, zhengzhi yu shenghuo: cong Fang ju *Wanshi liufang Zhang Yuqiao* dao yijiuwuling niandai Xianggang shehui," *Wanshi liufang Zhang Yuqiao yuan juben ji daodu*, ed. Li Siu-leung (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 2011), 186-189, 194-202, 205, 207-208. For Zhang Yuqiao's brief biography, see He Lingxiu, "Zhang Yuqiao," *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Women: The Qing Period, 1644-1911*, eds. Lily Xiao Hong Lee, Clara Lau, and A. D. Stefanowska (New York: Routledge, 2015), 307-309. For Jian Youwen's brief biography and his contribution to *Everlasting Zhang Yuqiao, the Most Respectable Courtesan*, see Yung Sai-shing, "Yueju shuxie yu minzu zhuyi," 122, 124-125, and Lee, 190-192. In *Brief History of Cantonese Opera* (1940: 9), Mak Siu-ha refers to an entry written by Chen Zisheng (1614–1692)—the younger brother of Zhang Yuqiao's first husband Chen Zizhuang (1596–1647)—found in an unidentified collection that assembles old records of loyalists (*yimin*), stating how Cantonese opera played a critical role in Zhang's death remonstration with her second husband Li Chengdong (died 1649), a general under the wing of rebel leader Li Zicheng (1606–1645) who surrendered himself first to the Ming court and then to the Qing court before initiating a coup d'état in Guangzhou in 1648. The same incidence is also recounted in the preface of *Song of Lady Zhao* (*Zhao furen ge*) published in the first volume of Kuang Lu's (1604–1650) verse collection *The Elegance of Steep Mountain from the Hall of Oceanic Snow* (*Haixuetang qiaoyaji*).

for the inauguration of his nightclub restaurant, Tong conveyed her hatred of Chiu by staging the love triangle depicted in *The Phoenix Pavilion* (*Fengyi ting*)—a famous episode from the historical novel *Romance of the Three Kingdom*—against Chiu's will at the Sun Amusement Hall. Unlike Marty who was ultimately rewarded some sympathy and appreciation, Chiu died in the end as a villain who had no choice but to jump off from a building during a police chase.

愁寄侯門	Sadly lingering in the nobleman's mansion
倍添心中恨和*怨*；	would only double the hatred and sorrow in my heart.
國家危亡，	The country is in danger and falling into ruin
董卓巨奸持國弄*權*，	while Dong Zhuo this giant evil is managing it and manipulating his power
妄作胡為，	recklessly and outrageously,
倚靠奉先威脅群賢。	relying on Lü Bu so that he could threaten those wise mandarins.
堪悲漢天子，	So miserable is the current Son of Heaven of the Han dynasty,
與公卿敢怒不敢言。	who shares his anger with his officers but dares not to voice it.
司徒心內思*算*，	Wang Yun the Minister over the Masses has pondered over such adversities
用連環妙計誅董卓，	and decided to deploy a chain of clever maneuvers to put Dong Zhuo to death.
假意將我來奉獻，	He pretends to send me to Dong as a gift,
當中設計施手*段*，	such that he could avail himself of my attributes
使呂布倒顛，	to overturn Lü Bu's loyalty to Dong,
不保董卓再弄*權*。	defying Dong to manipulate his power again.

Figure 6.14: *The Phoenix Pavilion* in *The Sorrowful Lute*, the opening song-text
[italicized character: first rhyme; underlined character: second rhyme]

With a metanarrative that stretches across the original plots of both *Love Me and Leave Me* and *Romance of the Three Kingdom*, the second Chinese operatic "play within a play" scene in *The Sorrowful Lute* means to amuse the audience while providing a reminder of the chaotic sociopolitical conditions during both the late Eastern Han dynasty and the late 1930s.[117] As exemplified in the vocal monologue (Figure 6.14) that begins *The Phoenix Pavilion*, it uses lines such as "the country [being] in danger and falling into ruin" and "defying Dong [Zhuo] to

[117] The following lines sung by Hon is comparable to part of the title song's lyrics in *Love Me or Leave Me*: "Pity me that this sky of feelings and sentiments (唉我恨情天) does not entitle us as a couple (不使我倆成眷屬) but instead torments us with eternal regrets (竟弄至抱恨綿綿)." For the *Love Me or Leave Me* counterpart, Ruth Etting sings: "You won't believe me that I love you only; I'd rather be lonely than happy with somebody else… but night time is my time for just reminiscing, regretting instead of forgetting with somebody else."

manipulate his power again," to illustrate how a "synoptic play" could provide some room for allegorizing preexisting plots with personal and political issues, thereby effectuating a tactful allusion (*tanyan weizhong*) and an expressive embellishment (*jieti fahui*) that would be—contended Mak Siu-ha—efficacious for Chinese opera's dissemination of patriotic messages.[118]

Tong Siu-ling's return to Guangzhou was a personal and professional decision driven by amorous yearning and moral obligation. That said, the Karmic "wheel of life" prescribed Tong's (mis)fortune as conductive to her homesickness to the extent that it exemplified Gungwu Wang's concept of sojourning. According to Wang, Chinese people since the Song dynasty had been well aware that they were not supposed to leave China permanently when they went overseas in the ports across the South China Sea, and they would always plan for a return if they were filial and loved their homes.[119] Such a longstanding awareness had been effective despite the massive changes of social and political conditions since the late nineteenth century, and it became a matter of patriotism and political loyalty at the height of Chinese nationalism during the First and Second Sino-Japanese Wars.[120] After all, *The Sorrowful Lute* rendered *Love Me or Leave Me* into a compelling and accessible means to inquire into issues of Chinese modernity during the mid twentieth century. It involved representational decisions and strategies that contradicted orthodox assumptions about the poor standards of Cantonese films upheld by Mandarin filmmakers. It not only confronted the Chinese self with the Western other by making the past and the foreign served the present, but also provincialized the perception of Chinese identities through music and the moving image.

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[118] Mak, 12-13.

[119] Gungwu Wang, *The Chinese Overseas: From Earthbound China to the Quest for Autonomy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 44.

[120] Ibid., 69-77.

Chapter 7
Conclusion

7.1 Chinese Opera on Film: A Recapitulation

Following the arrival of film sound, musical films were commonplace in world cinemas throughout the mid twentieth century. In Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and other Sinophone communities, Chinese opera films were however more ubiquitous than Chinese musical films, and yet the former were virtually extinct when the latter started to decline in popularity in the early 1970s. On top of that, Mandarin "yellow plum" musical films and Chinese operatic "play within a play" scenes were once unique to Chinese musical films, but then the former disappeared along with Chinese opera films when the latter could only be found in a handful of international film festival hits such as *Peking Opera Blues* (*Daomadan*, 1986) and *Farewell My Concubine* (*Bawang bie ji*, 1993). The vanishing of Chinese opera—as a site, an object, and a process—in Chinese cinema of the late twentieth century and onward is intriguing. Changes of taste and cultural consumption habits seem insufficient for explaining that, because the cinematization of Chinese opera was inseparable from issues of literacy, migration, technologism, and most significantly, modernity and nationalism, all of which affected the maintenance and renewal of Chinese cinemascapes and musikscapes.

Traditionally, Chinese opera is a representational means to stage a preexisting narrative in a selected regional musical-linguistic language with stock characters and archetypal role types.

Despite its remarkable musical expressiveness, Chinese opera is more than a mere music genre complemented by acting, dance, and storytelling; it is comprised of bodily acts and textual contents that are subject to regionalized idioms, pronunciations, tone patterns, rhyming schemes, stock tunes, and instrumental timbres. The cinematization of Chinese opera is therefore more than a facet of commodification, because the regionality of Chinese opera inevitably generates creative and ideological tension between promoting and abandoning cultural and artistic conventions in and through Chinese cinema.

While Chinese opera embodies visual and discursive elements that overtly signify Chineseness in national terms, its musical and linguistic attributes are conductive to illustrating a regional variety that did not fit well with Chinese state politics of the early and mid twentieth century. In Republican China, only a handful of Chinese opera films—with most of them being Peking opera films—were made in the two decades following the beginning of the sound era. Cantonese opera on film was, politically and commercially speaking, marginalized by both Kuomintang and Mandarin filmmakers as provincialist despite its popularity and cosmopolitan sensibility. From *Two Stars on the Silver Screen* and *An Amorous History of Jade Palace*, one could take a glimpse of how Cantonese filmmakers such as Sit Kok-sin and Mak Siu-ha offered visions of modernity and nationhood that were alternative to, incompatible with, or even in conflict with the sanctioned counterpart.

Yue opera films—including the controversial *Xianglin the Sister-in-law*—rather emerged after the Second Sino-Japanese War as a byproduct of stage productions promoted by prominent members of the Chinese Communist Party such as Tian Han and Zhou Enlai. This political appropriation of cultural artifacts anticipated the pragmatic approach to literature and art in Communist China. Chinese opera films proliferated as a consequence of the CCP's nationwide

Chinese Opera Reform as well as an economical solution of mass entertainment for hundreds of millions of commoners, and yet the state retained the prestige of the national Peking opera over other Chinese opera regional genres, although the traditionality of Chinese opera stage performance gradually became a “feudal” vestige to be abandoned in a centralized mode of collective filmmaking until after the Cultural Revolution.

KMT continued to perceive Peking opera films and Mandarin films as superior to other kinds of Chinese films (including Taiwanese opera films and Amoy Hokkien films) after its resettlement and imposition of martial law in Taiwan since 1949. It once produced a Peking opera film version of *Lady Zhen* (*Luo shen*, 1956) in order to directly compete against the CCP for national legitimacy. It also took advantage of the import of *The Love Eterne* and other Mandarin “yellow plum” musical films from Hong Kong, treating those imports as a modern means to showcase a euphonious and picturesque Chinese simulacrum consisting of key symbols that were, with the CCP’s dislike, associated with Confucianism and certain aspects of Chinese traditional culture. The British colonial government in Hong Kong instead allowed Chinese films of whatever spoken language to be made and circulated in a free market, although politically-sensitive contents were mostly (if not entirely) censored. It did not want to create any impression that would suggest an advocacy for either KMT or the CCP, and Hong Kong turned into a city where Chinese regional-language cinema and various forms of Chinese opera on film flourished. *The Sorrowful Lute* for instance reflected what a cultural environment as such was allowed for, as it articulated Chinese identities through deploying Cantonese opera as a means of cultural critique (against the Western other but also the Chinese hegemony) rather than a national emblem, evoking a sense of Chineseness that, instead of being an imposition or an essentialization, was open to question or even challenge.

This clash of cultural identification was indeed intensified by Chinese filmmakers when Chinese opera—as both a performing art and a cultural form—was on the one hand deployed to nationalize Chinese cinema, and on the other hand despised for its populist potential to provincialize Chinese cinema. On the "positive" side, pioneers such as Fei Mu were eager to explore how Chinese opera—and Peking opera in particular—could contribute to a national film style. Fei's artistic and nationalistic intentions to make *Murder in an Oratory* (*Zhan jingtang*, 1937) and *Eternal Regret* were indeed far-reaching enough to render the cinematization of Chinese opera an issue of establishing an indigenous mode of filmmaking in Mainland China during the 1950s, although many Chinese filmmakers in Hong Kong and Taiwan chose to deal with that as a matter of business (e.g. Li Han-hsiang transformed *Huangmei diao* into Mandarin "yellow plum" musical films that were meant to be Chinese blockbusters in Taiwan and Southeast Asia) or stylization (e.g. King Hu deconstructed Peking opera in a number of Mandarin *wuxia* swordplay martial arts films that made him an auteur celebrated by Euro-American critics). On the "negative" side, early Chinese opera films such as *An Amorous History of Jade Palace* and *Xianglin the Sister-in-law* were criticized for their musical and linguistic regionality despite their progressive agendas. Cantonese and Taiwanese opera films were representative of mainstream cinema in Hong Kong and Taiwan between the mid 1950s and the mid 1960s and yet, without any justification, they were despised for being the most unrefined kind of "dialectal" productions, not to mention that Mandarin films were essentialized as technically and artistically superior to all kinds of "dialect" films by most Chinese politicians, intellectuals, and elite artists. The official promotion of Mandarin as the national spoken language in Mainland China and Taiwan, in addition to the proximity of Mandarin to modern vernacular written Chinese (*xiandai baihua wen*), politicized all other Chinese regional

languages as inferior to Mandarin due to their heterogeneity and their exclusive orality. Education reformers, conservatory founders, and Western-trained composers and musicologists also converted Chinese musical regionality from a folk and traditional marker into an obstacle to modernization, as they chose to advocate a Europeanized national music style. As a result, with the exception of Peking opera being the national opera endorsed by both KMT and the CCP, Chinese opera and its cinematization were conceived as populistic for the most part.

Notwithstanding the elitist skepticism toward its incompatibility with projecting a unified national image, Chinese opera remained one of the most established and accessible agencies of cultural communication for Chinese people during the mid twentieth century. Neither KMT, the CCP, nor the British colonial government developed any systematic measures to address the issue of basic literacy until the mid 1950s, and Mandarin did not gain sufficient currency to sustain its status as the lingua franca among Chinese people until or after the 1960s. These two social factors rendered the ubiquity of Chinese opera on film a matter of practicality when the majority of moviegoers had limited grasp of subtitles and relied heavily on a particular regional language for social interactions, because Chinese opera on film was the principal and tenable way—especially in Mainland China—for a Chinese regional language to reach the audience through the silver screen. Moreover, the affective and discursive contents of Chinese opera were longstanding and relevant enough to evoke a strong sense of cultural intimacy to the audience of the time. As such, Chinese opera's potency in interrogating the Chinese self about the construction, maintenance, or renewal of identities was formidable when one was in a dark room perceiving its cinematic representation—as amplified music and magnified moving image—attentively and introspectively as an anonymous individual.

The sizeable number of professionals (i.e., actor-singers, playwrights, instrumentalists, *xiyuan* "playhouse" managers, etc.) who frequently switched between the fields of Chinese opera stage performance and Chinese filmmaking attested to the pragmatic aspect of Chinese opera on film as well. Chinese opera provided valuable human resources for Chinese filmmaking when imported theatrical genres were still too intellectual or experimental for the mainstream audience. It also transferred established norms and substances such as stardom and spectatorial assumptions and preferences from the stage to the silver screen. The general view of cinema as a modern technological medium for delivering "literary-theatrical drama" persisted within the Chinese context until "new wave" filmmakers—most notably Chen Kaige (1952–), Edward Yang (1947–2007), and Patrick Tam (1948–)—brought to light the ontology of the photographic image famously discussed by André Bazin (1918–1958). Furthermore, in Chinese cinema, historical subject matters were more common than the contemporary counterpart until baby boomers began to take a prominent role in Chinese popular culture in the mid 1960s. Knowing that "literary-theatrical drama" was very much about why and how history mattered to Chinese people in moral, cultural, and political terms, the suitability of Chinese opera—whose repertoire originated chiefly in "literary-theatrical drama"—for representation in mid-twentieth-century Chinese cinema became conspicuous. In the same regard, the operation of *xiyuan* "playhouse" during the same period exemplified a spatial cohabitation of Chinese opera and cinema that, key to a mutual transformation of representational practices and viewing conventions, revealingly affected Chinese cinemascapes and musikscapes of the time.

7.2 In Search of the Chinese Self at the Time of Deterritorialization

The mid twentieth century was when the demographic patterns of Chinese localities changed rapidly, dynamically, and on a large scale. In addition to the Second Sino-Japanese War and the Chinese Civil War between KMT and the CCP, the subsequent transformation of social and economic structures in Mainland China and Taiwan were causal to a huge wave of migration that altered many nexus of cultural meanings previously sustained by region-bound Chinese populace. The mid twentieth century was also when media technologies began to have a significant effect on rural Chinese population. Cinema, the gramophone, and radio broadcast were commodified to the extent that they were not cosmopolitan novelties anymore. Physical distance became less an obstacle that restricted the production, consumption, and circulation of both tangible and intangible cultural artifacts, whereas the homeland became less a place of residence and more a place to be remembered or imagined during this period of social instability. Under these circumstances, Chinese opera on film manifested how, within and beyond geographical boundaries, the persistence of particular visual, musical, linguistic, and dramatic foci of attention was dialogic to official nationalism and foreign interventions with regard to the negotiation of Chinese identities. Testifying the final decades when Chinese opera still permeated Chinese social lives, Chinese opera on film was likewise a display of cultural meanings being preserved, adapted, evaluated, renewed, recreated, or abandoned by Chinese people from different localities through various ways of participation; it triggered a search for the Chinese self in a manner that underlined identity politics as part of Chinese people's everyday life at the time of deterritorialization.

Appendix

Attended Public and Private Screenings of Chinese Opera on Film

Table 1: Public screenings

No.	Date	Title	Genre	Program	Venue
1	2014-09-05	*Madam White Snake* (*Baishe chuan*, 1962)	YP	The Writer/Director in Focus II: Griffin Yue Feng	HKFA
2	2014-09-06	*Lady General Hua Mulan* (*Hua Mulan*, 1964)	YP	The Writer/Director in Focus II: Griffin Yue Feng	HKFA
3	2014-09-06	*The West Chamber* (*Xixiang ji*, 1965)	YP	The Writer/Director in Focus II: Griffin Yue Feng	HKFA
4	2014-09-06	*The Three Smiles* (*San xiao*, 1969)	YP	The Writer/Director in Focus II: Griffin Yue Feng	HKFA
5	2014-09-13	*The Lotus Lamp* (*Baolian deng*, 1965)	YP	The Writer/Director in Focus II: Griffin Yue Feng	HKFA
6	2014-10-10	*The Burning of Chained Barge* (*Huoshao lianhuan chuan*, 1951)	HD (Mandarin)	Morning Matinee: Four Clown Masters of Cantonese Opera	HKFA
7	2014-10-10	*The Story of Tung Siu-yuen* (*Dong Xiaowan*, 1950)	HD (Cantonese)	Morning Matinee: Four Clown Masters of Cantonese Opera	HKFA
8	2014-10-24	*Mo Chung Fights the Tiger* (*Wu Song da hu*,1959)	CO	Morning Matinee: Four Clown Masters of Cantonese Opera	HKFA
9	2014-10-31	*The Lotus's Story* (*Furong chuan*, 1959)	CO	Morning Matinee: Four Clown Masters of Cantonese Opera	HKFA
10	2014-11-28	*The Sword* (*Yi ba cunzhong jian*, 1958)	CO	Morning Matinee: Four Clown Masters of Cantonese Opera	HKFA
11	2014-11-30	*The Lost Kite* (*Sou shuyuan*, 1957)	CO	From Real to Abstract: Cine Attempts on Stage Operas	HKFA
12	2014-11-30	*Patriotic Heroine* (*Longhu guan qian lienü hun*, 1960)	CO	From Real to Abstract: Cine Attempts on Stage Operas	HKFA

13	2014-11-30	*The Red Robe* (*Da hongpao*, 1965)	CO	From Real to Abstract: Cine Attempts on Stage Operas	HKFA
14	2014-12-05	*Poetic Genius* (*Di ba caizi huajian ji*, 1960)	CO	Morning Matinee: Four Clown Masters of Cantonese Opera	HKFA
15	2014-12-12	*Blood-stained Hand* (*Xuezhang shagu an*, 1961)	CO	Morning Matinee: Four Clown Masters of Cantonese Opera	HKFA
16	2014-12-13	*The Kingdom and the Beauty* (*Jiangshan meiren*, 1959)	YP	Run Run Shaw's Factory of Dreams	HKFA
17	2014-12-13	*The Magnificent Concubine* (*Yang Guifei*, 1962)	HD (Mandarin)	Run Run Shaw's Factory of Dreams	HKFA
18	2014-12-26	*Presents for Engaged Couple* (*Feitian baojian dou shendeng*, 1962)	CO	Morning Matinee: Four Clown Masters of Cantonese Opera	HKFA
19	2015-03-07	*The White Snake* (*Baishe chuan*, 2007)	PO	"Silver Sea, Opera Garden" (*Yinhai xiyuan*)	CFA
20	2015-03-24	*Wild Boar Forest* (*Yezhu lin*, 1962)	PO	"Silver Sea, Opera Garden" (*Yinhai xiyuan*)	CFA
21	2015-05-29	*The Revenge Battle* (*Wuqing baojiao youqing tian*, 1964)	CO	Chinese Opera Festival 2015	HKSM
22	2015-06-05	*Murder in the Oratory* (*Zhan jing tang*, 1937)	PO	Chinese Opera Festival 2015	HKSM
23	2015-07-10	*Three Battles to Secure Peace for Nation* (*Sanzhan ding jiangshan*, 1961)	CO	Chinese Opera Festival 2015	HKSM
24	2015-07-11	*Holy Snake and Flying Tiger* (*Shenshe feihu jiu zhenggong*, 1961)	CO	Chinese Opera Festival 2015	HKSM
25	2015-11-27	*The Bound-feet Mu Guiying from Shandong* (*Shandong zajiao Mu Guiying*, 1959)	CO	Iconic Heroines in Cantonese Opera Films	HKFA
26	2015-11-28	*The Invincible Generals of the Yang Family* (*Wudi Yangjia jiang*, 1961)	CO	Iconic Heroines in Cantonese Opera Films	HKFA
27	2015-11-28	*Women Generals Issuing an Indictment to the Emperor* (*Yangmei nüjiang gao yuzhuang*, 1961)	CO	Iconic Heroines in Cantonese Opera Films	HKFA
28	2015-11-29	*Lady General Fa Muk-lan* (*Hua Mulan*, 1961)	CO	Iconic Heroines in Cantonese Opera Films	HKFA
29	2015-11-29	*A Maid Commander-in-chief and a Rash General* (*Diaoman yuanshuai mang jiangjun*, 1962)	CO	Iconic Heroines in Cantonese Opera Films	HKFA

30	2015-11-29	*The Capture of the Evil Demons* (*Dazhan sizhoucheng*, 1962)	CO	Iconic Heroines in Cantonese Opera Films	HKFA
31	2016-06-29	*The Legend of Purple Hairpin* (*Zichai ji*, 1959)	CO	Chinese Opera Festival 2016	HKSM
32	2016-07-01	*Ten Years Dream* (*Shinian yijiao Yangzhou meng*, 1961)	CO	Chinese Opera Festival 2016	HKSM
33	2016-07-02	*Watch Tower* (*Wang'er lou*, 1962)	CO	Chinese Opera Festival 2016	HKSM
34	2017-06-03	*The Naughty Couple* (*Qijiao lang gengjiao*, 1960)	CO	Chinese Opera Festival 2017: A Tribute to Tong Tik-sang on his 100th Birthday Anniversary	HKFA
35	2017-06-03	*Fairy in Drawing* (*Huali tianxian*, 1957)	CO	Chinese Opera Festival 2017: A Tribute to Tong Tik-sang on his 100th Birthday Anniversary	HKFA
36	2017-06-11	*Triennial Mourning on the Bridge* (*Sannian yiku erliang qiao*, 1959)	CO	Chinese Opera Festival 2017: A Tribute to Tong Tik-sang on his 100th Birthday Anniversary	HKFA

YP – Mandarin "yellow plum" musical film; CO – Cantonese opera film; PO – Peking opera film; HD – Historical costume drama film

HKFA – Hong Kong Film Archive; HKSM – Hong Kong Space Museum; CFA – China Film Archive

Table 2: Private Screenings in Film Archives (for Research Purpose)

No.	Date	Title	Genre	Archive
1	2015-03-09	*Murder in the Oratory* (*Zhan jing tang*, 1937)	PO	CFA
2	2015-05-12	*Lady General Liang Hongyu* (*Liang Hongyu*, 1963)	PO	CTFA
3	2015-05-12	*Sanbo and Yingtai* (*Sanbo yingtai*, 1963)	TO	CTFA
4	2015-05-13	*Xue Gang Tamering with the Lantern* (*Xue Gang danao huadeng*, 1962)	TO	CTFA
5	2015-05-14	*The Beggar and the Precious Daughter* (*Qishi yu qianjing*, 1961)	TO	CTFA
6	2015-05-14	*A Nominated Scholar* (*Jinbang timing*, 1967)	TO	CTFA
7	2015-05-15	*The Fertility Goddess* (*Zhusheng niangniang*, 1962)	TO	CTFA
8	2015-05-16	*A Ten-thousand-mile Journey in Search of the Mother* (*Wanli xunmu*, 1963)	TO	CTFA
9	2015-05-16	*Luo Tong Sweeping the North* (*Luo Tong sao bei*, 1963)	TO	CTFA
10	2015-06-04	*Southeast the Peacock Flies* (*Kongque dongnan fei*, 1955)	HD (Amoy)	HKFA
11	2015-06-04	*The Sorrowful Lute* (*Pipa yuan*, 1957)	CD (Cantonese)	HKFA

PO – Peking opera film; TO – Taiwanese opera film; HD – Historical costume drama film; CD – Contemporary drama film

CFA – China Film Archive; CTFA – Chinese Taipei Film Archive; HKFA – Hong Kong Film Archive

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