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Advantageously Adverse: Chinese Cinemas in Transition, 1945-1951

A Dissertation Presented

by

Lunpeng Ma

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Abstract of the Dissertation

Advantageously Adverse: Chinese Cinemas in Transition, 1945-1951

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Gone with the Wind (1939), a Hollywood prestige picture, was translated into Chinese as *A Beauty at a Turbulent Time* in 1946 and became a box-office hit at Shanghai. Its startling success, however, was soon overwhelmed in every aspect by a domestic film, *The Spring River Flows East*. This second blockbuster indicates the revitalization of Chinese cinemas in terms of aesthetics, genre, and industry in the aftermath of the Japanese occupation. Nevertheless, the translated title *A Beauty at a Turbulent Time* subliminally manifested the worries and dreams of China in a chaotic period. In this dissertation I examine postwar Chinese films, and situate them within the larger socio-political context of the civil war and Communist takeover, the runaway inflation, and the cultural disintegration.

Current scholarship divides Chinese cinemas into mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. I argue this taxonomy formalizes in the transitional late 1940s when Shanghai, Hong Kong, Manchuria and Taiwan cinema paradoxically enjoyed industrial consolidation and aesthetic sophistication against all odds. Departing from the seminal works on Chinese cinemas in the 1930s and wartime, this project is the first scholarly endeavor on "the postwar golden age" on

which no English monograph exists. It takes a locale-specific and regionally-connected approach to map out the individual cinema of Greater China on its own merit and their interconnectedness. I also address its “transnational encounter” with Japanese remnants, Hollywood stardom, and Soviet’s formula films.

Examining the intersecting discourses of modernity, nationality and industry in four chapters on Shanghai, Hong Kong, Manchuria and Taiwan cinema respectively, this project evokes an archeological and archival approach to cinematic artifacts rather than simply reading movies politically or generically. It expands upon the scholarly attention from the silent era through the 1930s to this unexplored transitional era. Meanwhile, my work shifts academic interest from “Chinese-language cinemas” to locale-specific yet globally-connected traditions. Finally, the project addresses Cold War politics manifested in Chinese cinemas.

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List of Abbreviations

AEFS, Agricultural Education Film Studio 农业教育电影制片厂

CCMMPA, Complete Chinese Modern Movie Periodicals' Abstracts 中国现代电影期刊全目书志

CCP, Chinese Communist Party 中国共产党

CCS, Changchun Studio 长春制片厂

CFS, Central Film Studio 中央电影企业股份有限公司

CFSD, Central Film Service Department 中央电影服务处

CMP, China Motion Pictures Studio 中国电影制片厂

ECF, Encyclopedia of Chinese Films 中国影片大典

Grandview, Grandview Film Company Limited 大观声片有限公司

KMT, Kuomintang, Chinese Nationalist Party 中国国民党

NFC, Northeast Film Corporation 东北电影公司

NFS, Northeast Film Studio 东北电影制片厂

HKF, *Hong Kong Filmography*

HKFA, Hong Kong Film Archive

HKIFF, Hong Kong International Film Festival

HKUC, Hong Kong Urban Council

Man'ei, Manshu Eiga Kyokai, or Manchukuo Film Association Ltd.

PLA, The People's Liberation Army 人民解放军

PRC, the People's Republic of China 中华人民共和国

SFHM, Shanghai Film Historical Materials 上海电影史料

Acknowledgements

Writing the acknowledgement must be a bizarre moment: one feels overjoyed to see a gigantic project completed, exhausted to move on, obligated to express gratitude, and a bit curious about its' "afterlife." In addition to these complex feelings, I do have my low back pain to remind me of the physical impact the dissertation has effected to me. Both emotional and bodily experiences indicate that this is a *personal* statement dedicated to those who have assisted and supported me to make this project possible.

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Introduction

Addressing Chinese Cinemas: A Critical History

This dissertation reads Chinese films from 1945 to 1951 within a large socio-cultural-political context. I examine the tension of Chinese cinemas as manifested in modernity discourse, national ideology and industry practices, and I trace the trajectory of that tension in different regions and its interaction with the global cinema. This era, which comprises the civil war period (1946-49) (the war between the China Community Party (CCP) and the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) from 1947-49) and the early years (1949-51) of regime division into the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (with Hong Kong remaining a British colony), has been described by film scholars as the second "golden age" of Chinese film history.[1]

This crucial period involves a social turmoil and a drastic historical transformation. Paradoxically, despite the seemingly far-reaching changes, Chinese cinemas not only overcome ideological antagonism and national disintegration by retaining the aesthetic complexity and industrial conventions, but also integrate diverse influences from the United States, the Soviet Union, and Japan. By weaving a tripartite perspective (the modern, the national and the industry)

[1] The first "golden age" of Chinese films usually refers to the 1930s left-wing film movement (1931-37) that exhibits humanistic attentiveness, aesthetic profoundness and strong ideological messages. Afterwards the cinescape in wartime (1937-1945) was rather multi-polarized: Shanghai's "escapist," commercial movies and Manchukuo's educational and entertaining films, and Chongqing's resistant works. For discussions on the first "golden age," see Laikwan Pang, *Building a New China in Cinema: The Left-wing Cinema Movement 1932-1937*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002, and Vivian Shen's *The Origins of Left-wing Cinema in China, 1932-37.* New York: Routledge, 2005. For discussions on wartime cinema, see Poshek Fu's *Between Shanghai and Hong Kong: The Politics of Chinese Cinemas. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003*; and Weihong Bao's *Baptism* by *Fire*: *Spectatorship and Aesthetic Affect in Chinese Cinema from Shanghai to Chongqing*. Ph.D. dissertation, Chicago University, 2006.

and focusing on four areas---Shanghai, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Manchuria (each displaying a distinct cinematic culture), this project addresses postwar Chinese cinemas in their juncture and liminality (a concept I articulate in the second part of the introduction). I argue that during the course of this geopolitical division and cultural interaction, the typological pattern of "three cinemas of China" (mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan) arose and engendered an interconnected, dynamic network between them.[2] In order to better contextualize and conceptualize the unique postwar cinematic landscape, I begin with the question why I chose this seemingly troublesome project before I take a historicized turn in approaching this critical period and the scholarship on it.

Phenomenally, Chinese cinema, as much as China *per se*, has won worldwide attention since the 1980s. Anglo-American scholarship examines Chinese cinemas from multiple perspectives: Kung fu heat, the works of the "fifth generation," underground documentaries, art-house films of Taiwan, "mainstream melody" from mainland China, and "Chinese language" cinema.[3] Amidst these informative, exciting topics emerge, I observe, two related trends: a liking of "contemporaneity," and a lack of focus on historical and holistic inquiries on the one hand and the rhetoric of "allegory" on the other. For the first trend, it is absolutely tenable to focus on the "newer and more sophisticated" contemporary Chinese cinemas due to their engagement with mainland China's opening up and transformation from the 1980s onwards, the generic maturity and commercial success of Hong Kong films, and Taiwanese auteurs'

[2] For a comprehensive portrayal of "three cinemas of China," see Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema*. London: Routledge, 2004, esp. Chapter 4, 5 and 6 on Taiwan, Hong Kong and PRC cinema respectively.
[3] For the definition and application of "Chinese language" cinema, see Sheldon H. Lu and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh eds. *Chinese-Language Film: Historiography, Poetics, Politics*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004, 10-15.

contemplation of postmodern conditions and the identity issues. Yet no matter what the Chinese reality is, how well Hong Kong movies sell in the world, and who the impressive directors are, the films evolve from a particular history. In the early 1930s when Chinese sovereignty and wellbeing was in crisis, leftwing intellectuals such as Hong Shen and Xia Yan (洪深，夏衍) wielded the century-long tradition of "art for the sake of nation and Dao (morality)" as a cinematic weapon for mass mobilization. Not coincidently, on the eve of World War Two, Jewish cultural critics including Walter Benjamin and Siegfried Kracauer, pondered the menace of cultural fascism and sought cinematic modernity as an alternative.[4] "The angel of history," for both groups, was engendered by the direct experience of great upheavals, and hence could offer reference and answer for mankind.[5] In a similar vein but from the obverse direction, the prosperity and omnipresence of contemporary Chinese cinemas also necessitates a historical and systemic encounter with "old prints, names, and stories."

The imperative of retrospection and reflection not only alerts us, as critical scholars, to the pitfall or precariousness of "contemporaneity," but also disenchants the rhetoric of "allegory" by which, in terms of the study of Chinese cinemas, a certain object (film, director, genre, star, spectator, etc.) is "grafted" with a privileged, usually western, interpretation that frames and filters the content to fit. To my mind, the kind of (mis)reading which attempts to correlate a film

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[4] See Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen eds. *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Reading*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 7th edition, 2009, 665-685; Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.

[5] For the idea of "the angel of history," see Walter Benjamin "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*: *Essays and Reflections*. New York: Schocken, 1969, 259. for an interpretation, see Stephane Moses, *The Angel of History: Rosenzweig, Benjamin, Scholem*. Trans. Barbara Harshav. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009.

text or auteur with predetermined allegorical content seems perfectly arbitrary. "Allegory" means "reading otherwise" and once one prefers certain discourse s/he can simply make it a valid, authoritative reading for a selected text.[6] Even if the excessive close-reading of a film and mechanic appropriation has turned into "a history" per se, it is easy to manipulate a conceived context since the context and the text dutifully reflect each other and endlessly confirm a preconceived hypothesis. One of the key measures to avoid the allegorical (con)textualization is the "documentation" that commands the researchers' mastery of film oeuvre, using as many primary resources as possible, which entails the process of classifying and annotating those materials to restore the historical context.

By cautioning against the above two tendencies, I am not suggesting a wholesale riddance of contemporary cinema or any theoretical reading. On the contrary, in the course of articulating postwar Chinese cinemas, I have cross-referenced with current film culture (e.g. the connection between martial arts movies in the late 1940s and King Hu and Ang Lee's new adaptations) and also integrated the discourses of modernity, nationalism, traumatic representation, para-cinema, montage theory, star construction, and above all liminality within different chapters. The crux lies in the fact that these conversations and conceptualizations are secondary. They, at best, parallel my narration and analysis of the innate traits of the period under

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[6] An oft-cited statement on reading third-world films and literature as allegory is from Fredric Jameson who asserts "all third-world texts are necessarily…allegorical. Third-world texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic- necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society." See it in "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," *Social Text*, no. 15 (1986): 69. For a response to his essentialist claim, see Shuqin Cui, *Women Through the Lens: Gender and Nation in a Century of Chinese Cinema*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003, 116. For the example of an "allegorical reading" of Hou Hsiao-Hsien and Taiwan New Cinema, see Darrell William Davis and Ru-shou Robert Chen eds., *Cinema Taiwan: Politics, Popularity and State of the Arts*, London: Routledge, 2007. 85-86.

investigation (the turmoil of the Chinese civil war and Cold War in Asia), of the distinct and yet interdependent cinematic aesthetics, and of the film industry's disintegration and revival, all facets of a heterogeneous history. In other words, I have made tremendous efforts to balance and negotiate between China, cinema and the compound designator "Chinese cinemas."

Under the circumstance of the world's upwelling curiosity about a wide variety of Asian movies, scholars have made similar observations and confirmed that "the relationship among (Asian) cinema, nationhood, and history is as complex as it is fascinating," and also that "national Asian cinematic forms are approached…as specific negotiations between local/national/regional traditions and 'Western' film conventions and aesthetics."[7] When it comes to the discussion of Chinese cinemas, film critics have already delineated and explicated the big picture of China, Asia, and the world in the film history of the 20th and 21st century.[8] I would like to emphasize, however, that amidst "the fad of prefix" in academia, namely, "re-X," "post-X," "trans-X," "inter-X," "cross-X" and so forth, I simply attempt to *address postwar Chinese cinemas*. The practice of addressing, as my introduction subheading reads, highlights the understudied, undefined nature of films in the late 1940s and early 50s, and positions the subject--Chinese cinemas--in the juncture of geopolitics, culture, history, and industrial development. Although it becomes almost counterintuitive not to approach "the (cinematic) combination constituted by the People's Republic, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the Chinese

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[7] Wimal Dissanayake ed., *Colonialism and Nationalism in Asian Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994, x; Dimitris Eleftheriotis and Gary. Needham, *Asian Cinemas: A Reader & Guide*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006, 1.

[8] For instances, see Sheldon H. Lu ed., *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997; Philippa Gates and Lisa Funnell eds., *Transnational Asian Identities in Pan-Pacific Cinemas: The Reel Asian Exchange*. London: Routledge, 2012.

diaspora,"[9] never have Chinese cinemas, in a plural modality yet as a coherent constellation, been so closely interconnected, inevitably competitive, and individually thriving as in the postwar era in the locales of Shanghai, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Manchuria. For example, even nowadays there is a strict quota on imported films between China and Taiwan; the CEPA (Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement) of Hong Kong and the Mainland ironically encourages Hong Kongese to make more "local" genres (e.g. horror and gangster) to eschew the censorship in China. By contrast, few man-made or official barriers existed between Shanghai, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Southeast Asia, Soviet Union, and Hollywood during the period 1945 to late 1949 (although Manchuria was relatively constrained). Hence, the great flow of film copies, manpower, capital, technology, ideas, and studio expertise took place on multiple levels and from diverse directions from 1945 to early 1949, and to a lesser degree up to 1951, an intense and crucial period to which I am turning.

Studying the postwar years necessitates a foray into the "complicated, obscure and yet compelling" later Republican era and the early years of the PRC.[10] The recent scholarly reappraisal of this era helps efface political taboos ingrained in both the CCP and KMT "official histories" and revises the previously nation-centered approach.[11] In a broader sense, Republican

[9] Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar, *China on Screen*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006, 14; similar judgments are from Will Higbee and Song Hwee Lim, "Concepts of Transnational Cinema: Towards a Critical Transnationalism in Film Studies," *Transnational Cinemas* 1, no.1 (2010): 7-21; Yingjin Zhang, *Cinema, Space, and Polylocality in a Globalizing China*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010.

[10] The Republican period on mainland China ended in 1949, replaced by the PRC's communist reign, while Taiwan maintained the Republican title (ROC) since 1949. For a comprehensive overview, see John K. Fairbank and Albert Feuerwerker eds. *The Cambridge History of China, Republic China 1912-1949*. Vol 12, 13. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986; and for the challenge of the periodization and continuation of historical process, see, for example, Paul Cohen's "Reflections on a Watershed Date: the 1949 Divide in Chinese History" in Jeffrey Wasserstrom ed., *Twentieth-Century China*: *New Approaches*. London: Routledge, 2003, 27-36.

[11] The revisionist approaches are nuanced studies of the civil society, the ordinary people of the lower class, local

China of 1911 to 1949 can be singled out as a “transitional time” or “disquieting variation” between two centralized, unified regimes (Qing Empire and PRC). Analogous to earlier politically turbulent, artistically creative, and culturally diverse eras, China of the first half of the twentieth century embraced unique features too. In politics, it pursued a Republican polity against the monarchy, thereby deepening the national discourse starting from the later Qing dynasty. It witnessed the full-scale economic transformation to an industrialized and transnational entity mainly in urban areas, thereby entailing a process of modernization. Finally, in culture, it created the most heterogeneous and contested cultural trends, manifested in a co-existent yet dialogic modernism, neo-classicism, and populist propagandist art (the May Fourth Movement being exemplary).

My project concentrates specifically on the cinema in the postwar phase, while linking to the 1930’s left-wing films, wartime split film enterprises (at Shanghai, Manchuria and Chongqing), and also geopolitically divergent movies in the 1950s. The period starts in 1945 when Japan surrendered and a civil war loomed, and it ends not in 1949, the “official” marker of a new era, but in 1951 when the ongoing Korean War (and the Cold War) decisively shaped the post-colonial world and the cinematic paths in and out of China. Due to China’s increasing military aid to Korea and the escalating hostility between the U.S. and China, Hollywood movies were completely erased from China in 1951 and superseded by the Soviet’s Communist model, while “free Taiwan” attracted direct investments and technical support from America since it was

history, urban complexity, and gender dynamics. See Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom and Richard Louis Edmonds eds. *Reappraising Republican China.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. Wasserstrom ed. *Twentieth-Century China,* and Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.

a paradise of film exhibition in Asia.[12] Moreover, this intensified international air pushed both the CCP and Hong Kong colonial government to close the door on each other in 1950 and 1951 so much so that the filmmakers who migrated from the North to Hong Kong turned into a generation of "exiles," and many local genres and stars had to align themselves as either "leftwing" or "pro-Taiwan."[13] In short, this periodization challenges politically drawn boundaries, brings into consideration a trans-regional and international framework, and pays equal attention to both cinematic continuity and disruption of a China in great transition.

To ensure a historical, critical engagement with postwar Chinese cinemas and also anticipate my own delineation and conceptualization of it in the second part, a literature review is in order. To begin with, it is indispensable to situate Chinese cinemas in the broader socio-cultural Republican history. China was in a state of war during the first half of the 20th century, replete with warlord battles, unifying campaigns, anti-bandit operations, Sino-Japanese war (1937-45), the civil war, and the Cold War.[14] From Suzanne Pepper's pioneering book to recent monographs, a number of historical studies have presented a dialectical picture of the civil war and its after effects on China proper as well as in the borderlands (e.g. Hong Kong, Manchuria and Taiwan).[15] Yet these studies are all preoccupied with one "rationale," attempting to account

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[12] For how the Cold War psyche changed Hong Kong and Taiwan cinema, see, for example, Tina Mai Chen's "International Film Circuits and Global Imaginaries in the People's Republic of China, 1949-57," *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 3, no. 2 (2009): 149-61.

[13] Ng Ho, "Exile, a Story of Love and Hate," in Hong Kong Urban Council ed., *The China Factor in Hong Kong Cinema*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Urban Council, 1990.

[14] I derive this judgment from a variety of historical monographs on this period. See, for instances, Edward L. Dreyer, *China at War, 1901-1949.* New York: Longman Group Limited, 1995, and James C. Hsiung and Steven I. Levine eds. *China's Bitter Victory: The War With Japan, 1937-1945*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992.

[15] See Suzanne Pepper's *Civil War in China: The Political Struggle, 1945-1949.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980; Lloyd E Eastman's S*eeds of Destruction: Nationalist China in War and Revolution, 1937-1949*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984; Steven Levine's *Anvil of Victory: The Communist Revolution in*

for the struggle between the CCP and KMT and their gains and losses. In the process they more or less sacrifice the dynamics of socio-cultural interactions and the documentation of the life experience of the Chinese. Another area that falls by the wayside is the cultural (literary, cinematic and folk) landscape.[16]

In terms of film studies, Ding Yaping's *Imaging China, Chinese Film Art: 1945-1949*, published in Chinese, is the only book roughly on this period.[17] Despite its valuable socio-political analysis and aesthetic approach, it is hampered by its partisan perspective (endorsing the CCP's cinema) and does little to engage with modern discourse and the film industry. While few scholars have done inclusive work to reveal the compelling interactions between the chief film bases of China, several thought-provoking articles in English have come out recently that deal with individual subjects. Film historian Paul Pickowicz is one of the leading scholars who persistently reminds us that the significance of the second "golden age" was once eclipsed by leftist classics in the 1930s; he has published a series of essays on postwar cinematic themes and film stars. Stephen Teo, Poshek Fu, and Shu Kei, among others, aptly dismiss the conventional wisdom in disparaging early Hong Kong productions as "Cantonese remnants" and steadily call upon the autonomy of the local cinema and its cultural nurturance to

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Manchuria, 1945-1948. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987; Odd Arne Westad's *Decisive Encounters: The Chinese Civil War, 1946-1950*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.

[16] The literary analysis in *Unwelcome Muse* is an exception and inspires my own study of the postwar period. See Edward M. Gunn's *Unwelcome Muse: Chinese Literature in Shanghai and Peking 1937-1945*. New York: Columbia University. Press, 1980. Another related study is Hung Chang-tai's *War and Popular Culture: Resistance in Modern China, 1937-1945*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.

[17] Ding Yaping 丁亚平, *Imaging China, Chinese Film Art: 1945-1949* 影像中国，中国电影艺术. Beijing: Culture and Arts Press 北京：文化艺术出版社, 1998.

Hong Kong residents and Chinese diasporas in Southeast Asia.[18] Unfortunately, academia has hitherto harvested almost nothing on postwar Manchurian or Taiwanese films, let alone their dialogues with both Shanghai and Hong Kong. In a nutshell, the current scholarship falls short of critically addressing and appreciating one of the climaxes in the history of Chinese film.

Advantageously Adverse: Chinese Cinemas in Liminality (1945-1951)

A critical inquiry of Chinese cinemas entails a process of historization and documentation by which one has to amass adequate primary materials and secondary literature before theorizing and summarizing. When this process is applied to postwar Chinese filmmaking in distinct locales, it becomes exceedingly difficult to encapsulate the characteristics of and conversations between Shanghai, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Manchuria cinema into one overarching, all-encompassing discourse, as the cinema of each place boasts unique cultural and film conventions that lay the foundation of contemporary typology. That being the case, nonetheless I argue that they, as an integral, albeit sometimes contested, part of Chinese cinemas, all manifest a similar narrative of revival against all odds and enjoy liminality--or, the status and nature of being in-between and on the threshold--that defies any rigid categorization or imposed conformity and allows each place to stay fluid, multivalent, and malleable by drawing upon heterogeneous resources.

By "advantageously adverse," I mean that Chinese cinemas endured the ordeal of the civil war, the runaway economy and the disintegration of the film industry and yet still contributed time-honored movies, genres, filmmakers, stars, studios and magazines, and charted

[18] See, for example, Poshek Fu's "Japanese Occupation, Shanghai Exiles, and Postwar Hong Kong Cinema," *The China Quarterly* 194, (June 2008): 380-394.

recognizable paths in different places. In terms of adversities, for example, when the whole nation was in ecstasy after V-J day, the KMT's prolonged takeover of the Japanese film properties at Shanghai drained the energy of every party before the first feature film came out in late 1946, one entire year after the victory. Shortly after a stable period (1946-1947), rampant inflation (as a result of the government's misconduct, incompetence, corruption, and military expenditure) made the cost of filmmaking at Shanghai rise to an incredible level. The investment for one movie in 1947 was ten thousand times more than in 1939 in the prewar era, and the cost of film celluloid in 1948, mostly imported from abroad, was twenty times higher than in 1947.[19] This inflationary surge ravaged a great number of cities in mainland China as well as Taiwan where the price of movie ticket rocketed from 20 yuan in early 1946, to 50 yuan in March 1947, to 400 yuan in October 1948, to 3000 yuan by the end of 1948, and to 40,000 yuan in May 1949.[20] Politically, the antipathy between the CCP and KMT and the escalating civil war forced many studios and their managers in both Shanghai and Hong Kong to side with either party, which demarcated partisan film camps. The founding of a "Red China" ultimately effected an exodus of filmmakers and industry elites who mostly migrated to Hong Kong and (some) to Taiwan, resulting in an anticipated disintegration. On the international level, the drastic change of world structure and the iron curtain of the Cold War made Manchuria a strategic place and yet a fierce battlefield; it was unable to mass-produce quality feature films until late 1949 when the

[19] Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema*. 45; "The Cost for Making a Movie" 摄制一部影片的成本, *Picture News* 电影杂志, no.25 (1948):7; "Film Production Association Requests Equipments Import be Allowed" 电影制片业公会要求准许输入器材, *Film And Radio* 电影与播音, vol. 7, no.5 (1948):24.

[20] Huang Jianye 黄建业 et al., *The Chronicle of Taiwan Cinema, 1898-2000* 跨世纪台湾电影实录. Vol.1, Taipei: Chinese Taipei Film Archive 台北: 国家电影资料馆, 2005, 46-48; Zhou Nan 周南, "The Overview of Taiwan Movie Theaters" 台湾电影院概况, *Qingqing Film* 青青电影, no. 34 (1948):9.

CCP gained a firm foothold.

Against such a turbulent, precarious situation, however, the cinema in those key locales rose from the ashes of the Anti-Japanese War and unique film cultures began to emerge. Shanghai, as the towering film center in every aspect since the 1900s, returned to normality in 1947 and produced classical films such as *The Spring River Flows East*, a commercial miracle (staying in theaters for three months and attracting more than 10% percent of city dwellers) in the Republic of China. Its competitive edge stemmed from a large talent pool (from all over China), sound film infrastructure (theaters and technical firms), ancillary cultural industries (opera, broadcasting, publishing, dance, and literature), cosmopolitanism, and the largest group of middlebrow consumers in China. Shanghai's vitality and vibrancy, however, was quickly undermined by the runaway economy and the threat of Communism such that the film hub moved to Hong Kong, a safer and more resourceful enclave located in South China.

The resurgence of the film industry in Hong Kong primarily manifested in its production numbers: 90 films in 1947, 143 in 1948, 179 in 1949, 191 in 1950, and 171 in 1951, far exceeding its prewar apex, 125 movies in 1939 (with only one exception).[21] Its prosperity originated from its colonial standing (making it relatively immune to the domestic politico-economic chaos) as well as a distinct Cantonese culture, the geographic proximity to Southeast Asia (the most concentrated area of Chinese diasporas), and the massive refugees. At the same time Taiwan cinema upgraded itself from being a simply Japanese colonial exhibition

[21] Winnie Fu ed. *Hong Kong Filmography*. Vol. 2 (1942-1949), vol. 3 (1950-1952). Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 1998, 2000.

rendezvous point to a robust film base as the Nationalists, who retreated from the mainland China, forcefully strengthened the state-owned studios by constantly making entertaining and edifying works for Taiwanese aborigines, new immigrants, and overseas Chinese. Film studios in Manchuria, controlled respectively by the KMT and CCP, also stepped out of the shadow of the Japanese colonization, exerted the power of technocracy (inherited from Manchukuo Film Association Ltd.), contributed magnum opera of unique Northern flavors, and boasted a special form of internationalism.

Although each cinema unfolded diverse stories of recovery, their revival as a collective was deeply rooted in the broader postwar socio-cultural-political context, and all, to some degree, enjoyed the advantages of "liminality." Liminality (from Latin *limen* for "threshold"), a major anthropological term that indicates the quality of ambiguity or disorientation in the course of ritual transition, also signifies liminal periods in political, cultural and psychological changes for "in-between situations and conditions that are characterized by the dislocation of established structures, the reversal of hierarchies, and uncertainty regarding the continuity of tradition and future outcomes."[22] My engagement with this concept vis–à–vis postwar Chinese cinemas revolves around three layers: the theoretical, the historical/geographical, and the specific.

Anthropologist Victor Turner's application of Arnold van Gennep's use of *limen* offers a revision of the "ritual process," divided into three distinct and sequential phases: "separation,"

[22] Agnes Horvath, Bjørn Thomassen, and Harald Wydra, "Introduction: Liminality and Cultures of Change," *International Political Anthropology*, IPA journal 3 (2009) http://www.politicalanthropology.org/the-journal-current-a-past-issues/57-ipa-journal-3/171-ipa3-introduction-liminality-and-cultures-of-change (Accessed June. 21, 2013).

"liminality," and "reaggregation."[23] For Turner, in the liminal stage ritual subjects "pass through a period and area of ambiguity, a sort of social limbo which has few (though sometimes these are most crucial) of the attributes of either the preceding or subsequent profane social statuses or cultural states."[24] Hence liminality is allied with the transition within a life cycle and, by extension, signifies boundaries, borders, and limits--physical, figurative and conceptual. Cinema as a modern medium exemplifies and embodies many boundaries as well as resistance to these boundaries. In the late 19th century, film as a technology, art form, social phenomenon, and lucrative business already marked its malleability in transgressing existent social norms, as well as having a pseudo-dream ritual function that presents frequently enigmatic, sometimes enchanting, audiovisual stimuli. Therefore, since its advent, film form has incessantly flirted with what lies beyond its porous borders traversing boundaries between, for instance, formalism and fantasy, actuality and fictional narrative, art and science, and cultural convention and experimentation.[25]

So far liminality sounds like a universal term; however, its association with cinema is illuminating. To apply this concept as the underpinning discourse of postwar Chinese cinemas, a specifically historic and geographic analysis is necessary. In extending liminality from rituals to large-scale societal changes and appropriating Karl Jaspers' idea of the "axial age" (an in-between period between two structured world-views and between two rounds of empire

[23] Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960; Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. New Brunswick: Aldine Transaction, 2008, 94-96.
[24] Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play.* New York: PAJ Publications, 1982, 24.
[25] For applications of liminality in film studies, see, for instances, Terrie Waddell, *Wild/lives: Trickster, Place and Liminality on Screen*. London: Routledge, 2009; Joseph G. Kickasola, *The Films of Krzysztof Kieslowski: The Liminal Image*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2004; Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001, esp. 77-80, 237-241.

building), Arpad Szakolczai defines the years after World War Two and before Communist takeover in some regions as a liminal period, with the conditions of "disorganization, depravity, and suffering" that allowed the communists "to unfold a characteristic self-sustaining mechanism."[26] Chinese cinemas, as much as China itself, were deeply involved in this liminal stage when the industry suffered inflation, embargo, political coercion, and market segmentation and disintegration. Yet this liminality of postwar China presents a liberation from rigid codes of mundane life and regime regulation precisely because of a highly de-centered society, the political uncertainty, the unusual cultural encounter (of South and North, of inland and coastal, of domestic and international), and speculative economics. The cinema of every key locale, unlike that in the preceding Japanese-occupied era or in subsequent authoritarian states, freely interacted and competed with each other, drew upon resources by every possible means, and eventually charted a distinct cinematic path before conforming to overwhelming social norms again in the early 1950s. Geographically, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Manchuria, among other places, constitute as "the margins" as opposed to "China proper" (or Inner China, the core regions of China). Hong Kong, a remote port city adjacent to Canton Province in the south, had long been ceded to Britain as a colonial entrepôt since the late 19th century; as an isolated island a hundred of miles away from mainland, Taiwan used to be a "a ball of mud" beyond the pale of (Chinese) civilization; and Manchuria referred to a large frontier region--sandwiched between Russia and Korea--in northeast Asia. In the late 1940s and early 50s, they were all places of transformational between-ness: neither being fully postcolonial nor national, and being neither

[26] Arpad Szakolczai, *Reflexive Historical Sociology*. London: Routledge, 2003, 214-215.

Chinese nor foreign.

Thus postwar cinema in each key place manifested specific "liminal features" as well as other unique traits. For instance, Manchurian films since 1945, akin to Manchuria's own ambiguous standing, stood at the threshold of being neither purely Han nor Manchu (the last rulers of imperial China and an ethnic minority), and unrestrainedly made use of Japanese technocrats, the Soviet Union's formula of "peasant, worker, soldier," Korean exhibition markets, and local Manchurian talent. The "in betweenness" of Taiwanese cinema appeared in the fluid identity of some films (being both Shanghainese and Taiwanese), in the oscillation between (post)colonialism and nationalism, and in the simultaneous showcasing of modern and indigenous culture. Hong Kong cinema's liminality rested in its mediation between and also integration of North and South culture, both Cantonese and Mandarin dialects, leftwing and rightist ideologies, and diasporic filmmaking and local lowbrow appeal. The famous Huang Feihong film series best exemplified this---its negotiation between martial arts with opera, northern opera routine with southern school martial combat routines, and local legend with traditional Confucian code. Shanghai cinema, due to its enduring central position, was not as liminal as the other three cinemas, which partially explains its gradual degeneration from 1949. Within a short-lived threshold period (1946-48), it nevertheless benefited from the healthy competition of state-owned and private studios, the influx of film personnel from Chongqing (the wartime capital), and a cosmopolitan atmosphere. These transitional and contingent advantages were impossible during both Japanese occupation (before 1945) and the Communist reign (after 1949).

These various liminalities contributed to the revival of the film industry of China; yet each cinema narrated a unique story of restoration that largely set the current typology and bequeathed invaluable film assets for decades to come. Chapter One uses the film *The Spring River Flows East* as an entry point to address Shanghai cinema first at the cinematic level--a Chongqing style in the local filmmaking as a result of "the tale of two cities," a demarcated yet energetic studio system, and postwar melodramas addressing war trauma and gender representation. Hollywood pinups and domestic cover girls in popular Shanghai film periodicals, the trans-media cinescape and "film as social events," and a case study of Guotai Studio are discussed at the extra-cinematic level. Similarly, the Hong Kong chapter also provides a comprehensive study of its aesthetics, industry practices, and eminent paragons. The first section discusses the delicate aesthetics of a picture-perfect Hong Kong cinema from the vantage points of genre, auteur, language, and local flavors. The second part explores the sophisticated yet partisan studio system in Hong Kong and its trans-media connection with broadcast, or "radio play." The "evergreen tree" of the silver screen Li Lihua (李丽华), whose career lasted over four decades, straddling both left and right campaigns and spanning Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Hollywood, is contextualized in the last section from the perspectives of history, geopolitics, and performance.

Chapter Three discusses Manchurian cinema primarily and centers on the discourse of "northern film" to clarify the lasting mystery around this extremely understudied subject. This focus not only discloses Manchurian cinema's unique geopolitics, history, modernity, cultural identity, and industry practice, but also articulates its mediation with meta-narratives such as

Japanese colonization, and the civil war. The chapter focuses on three studios: Northeast Film Corporation whose institutionalization, internationalism and technocracy differentiated itself from other cinemas; Changchun Studio and its masterpiece *Along the Sungari River*, which displayed a distinct northern flavor and a riveting application of montage; and the CCP's Northeast Film Studio, renowned for its diverse film forms, unusual international personnel, and sound distribution and exhibition channels. The last chapter examines the process of the resurgence of Taiwanese cinema. I first discuss the condition of "film industry without film" by mapping Taiwan as a screening locale for colonial Japanese government and then as a postwar shooting location for Shanghainese who had been separated from this "treasure island" for years. Three movies made in three consecutive years (1948-50) that I analyze in three individual parts upgraded the island from a simple exhibition rendezvous. They also legitimized, I argue, a Taiwan-centered cinema that displayed its ethnography, modern appeal, and "free ideology."

Throughout all these four chapters, I have adopted a tripartite analytic focus: the modern, the national and the industry. The dominant methodology for studying Chinese cinemas is the use of national discourse that was shared by both Chinese and English-speaking academia. Because national humiliation and salvation loom so large in Chinese history, Chinese film theorists and entrepreneurs alike claim "independence and uniqueness."[27] Thus, scholars take pains, for instance, to illustrate succeeding generations of filmmakers that could be explained by time-honored lineage inheritance. They account for an ubiquitous unfolding scene as a result of

[27] Besides Shen, Pang and Zhang's books mentioned previously, see also Hu Jubin's *Projecting a Nation: Chinese Cinema Before 1949*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University, 2003.

the unrolling of Chinese landscape paintings. Needless to say many merely focus on the "politically correct" films made by the left-wing and CCP. To problematize this default discourse, critics such as Zhen Zhang and Weihong Bao, strongly influenced by the Chicago school of film studies, advocate their methodology of "vernacular modernism."[28] Their interest lies more in urban, cosmopolitan ambiance, female spectatorship, stardom and fandom, acoustic performance, film magazines, theaters and advertisements, and the travel and translation of modernity.[29] While these two approaches remain important for my project, I would like to incorporate a third perspective, namely industry practices, to supplement and contest the prior two. To create the industry prism is to underscore the commercial and technological aspects as much as to articulate the distinct "studio faces" and the generic preferences of both Shanghai and Hong Kong. Employing the industrial view also lends itself to, for example, the dialogic competition between business and ideology in both Communist-controlled Manchurian cinema and Nationalist-reigned Taiwanese cinema. Methodologically, this approach directs our attention away from various extra-cinematic practices (for instance, the invocation of the national cinema only to deconstruct it) to cinematic "essences" such as genre study, film auteurs, and studio style. In other words, the industry perspective allows us to refashion various key templates ranging

[28] "Vernacular modernism," as Miriam Hansen claims, refers to the concept expressing human sensorium, "bodily genres" and urban experience elicited by cinematic modernity in Hollywood; it was then translated and reconfigured in local receptions such as China. See her "The Mass production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism." in Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams eds. *Reinventing Film Studies.* London: Bloomsbury, 2000, 59-77; and "Falling Women, Rising Stars, New Horizons: Shanghai Silent Film as Vernacular Modernism," *Film Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (2000): 1-22. For its application and contestation in China, see Zhen Zhang, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

[29] In addition to Chicago school's publications, see also Zhang Yingjin ed. *Cinema and Urban Culture in Shanghai, 1922-1943*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999; Andrew Jones's *Yellow Music: Media Culture and Colonial Modernity in the Chinese Jazz Age.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2001; and Yomi Braester's *Witness Against History: Literature, Film, and Public Discourse in Twentieth-Century China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 2003.

from aesthetic representations, generic articulations, auteur theory, and stylistic features to formalistic evolution that potentially transcends the external ups-and-downs. As a result the tripartite design creates an intricate yet multilayered blueprint for this distinct period.

Having made an argument for a second “golden age” historically and critically above, I would argue that this project bears multiple significances. It evokes an archeological and archival approach to cinematic artifacts rather than simply reading movies politically or generically. The project expands upon the scholarly attention from the silent era through the 1930s and wartime to an unexplored postwar transitional era. Meanwhile, it is the first work that engages with Chinese cinemas in every key locale (Shanghai, Hong Kong, Manchuria and Taiwan) that decisively shapes the contemporary film typology. Finally, I also present the crucial influence of international film and Cold War politics on Chinese cinemas.

Chapter One: The Spring River Flows East: Shanghai Cinema Reawakens

Introduction:

On October 10th 1947 the movie *The Spring River Flows East* (一江春水向东流, 1947) made its debut in Shanghai.[1] Years have elapsed, yet the film vividly inhabits the memories of elderly Shanghainese as well as viewers of today. It was a smash hit all over China and grew into a social event parallel to *Gone with the Wind* from Hollywood in 1939.[2] The story is set in Shanghai where Sufen (素芬), a female textile worker, falls in love with and marries Zhang Zhongliang (张忠良), a patriotic schoolteacher. The Anti-Japanese war interrupts their short-lived honeymoon and Zhongliang evacuates to Chongqing (重庆, war-time capital of China) amidst dangers and desolation, leaving behind his family back in Japanese-ravaged Shanghai. In the course of the prolonged resistance war, Zhongliang slowly indulges in the decadent life and unabashedly becomes the lover of a high-rank hostess. In Shanghai Sufen barely ekes out a living with her son and mother-in-law as a maid in a wealthy, pro-Japanese family. The climax comes at the time of the nation's victory in 1945 when Chongqing personnel, including Zhongliang himself, are sent back to take over Shanghai. The dramatic moment is the scene when Sufen meets him, now a dandy-like politician, in a welcome soiree at her workplace and discovers in shock that he has become the husband of her hostess's sister-in-law from

[1] All the English translations of film titles, if not indicated, are from *Encyclopedia of Chinese Films* (abbreviated as *ECF*) 中国影片大典 to make a coherent referencing style. See China Film Archive and China Film Art Research Center 中国电影资料馆,中国电影艺术研究中心 ed. *ECF*. Vol. 1 (1905-1930), vol. 2 (1931-1949.9) and vol. 3 (1949.10-1976). Beijing: China Film Press 北京: 中国电影出版社, 1995, 1996, 2001.

[2] Paul Clark also briefly touches on this comparison in his discussion of pre-1949 Chinese cinema in *Chinese Cinema: Culture and Politics since 1949*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988, 16. Tino Balio talks about *Gone with the Wind* debut show and its social impact in his *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise 1930-1939*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005, 1-3.

Chongqing. Sufen drowns herself in the Huangpu River (黄浦江) after Zhongliang refuses to rejoin his old, poor family.

Bret Sutcliffe positions *The Spring*'s progressive ideology within the postwar film industry for its realistic quality that differed from ruling party KMT's movies and Hollywood's exotic spectacle works. He also interprets its gender politics in mediating the class struggle and gender stereotypes in traditional Chinese culture.[3] Besides its "seriousness," *The Spring* also appealed to popular taste. It lasted in theaters for three months and approximately fifteen percent of the Shanghai population went to see it, setting unbreakable records in Republican China.[4] Akin to a Hollywood prestige picture at the same time, the film premiered in the first-run theaters Grand (大光明) and Majestic (美琪), encouraging house managers to substitute a domestic film for planned Hollywood showings.[5]

Regardless of *The Spring*'s diegetic complexity and its sensation, this classic has not received deserved academic attention, nor has this period of Shanghai cinema, barring a few publications on postwar classics, superstars and eminent filmmakers.[6] Film historian Paul

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[3] See Brett Sutcliffe, "*A Spring River Flows East*: Progressive Ideology and Gender Representation," *Screening the Past* no. 5 (Dec. 1998) http://www.latrobe.edu.au/screeningthepast/firstrelease/fir1298/bsfr5c.html (Accessed Nov. 21, 2011)

[4] See "Preliminary Statistics: Shanghai Audiences for *The Spring River Flows East*" 初步统计:一江春水向东流上海观众纪录, *Kunlun Film News* 昆仑影讯, no.8 (1947): 3; Cheng Jihua 程季华 stated that from October 1947 to January 1948 there were 712,874 viewers for it. Cheng, et al. eds. *The History of the Development of Chinese Cinema* 中国电影发展史. Vol. 2. Beijing: China Film Press 北京: 中国电影出版社, 1998, 222. Wang Chaoguang 汪朝光 wrote that *The Spring* had attracted more than 460,000 audiences in only three theaters, exceeding its Hollywood counterparts. Wang, "The Illumination of Shanghai Domestic Movies in the Post-war Era" 战后上海国产电影的启示 in *Film Art* 电影艺术, no.5 (2000): 31.

[5] For its premiere information and discussion, see *Kunlun Film News* 昆仑影讯, no.6 (1947): 1-20. For the discussion of American "prestige pictures," see Thomas Schatz, *Boom and Bust: The American Cinema in the 1940s*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1997, 41, 67.

[6] See for instances Carolyn FitzGerald, "*Spring in a Small Town*: Gazing at the Ruins," in Chris Berry ed. *Chinese Films in Focus II*. London: BFI, 2008, 205-211; Paul Pickowicz, "Acting Like Revolutionaries: Shi Hui, the Wenhua Studio, and Private-Sector Filmmaking, 1949-1952," in Jeremy Brown and Paul Pickowicz, eds. *Dilemmas of*

Pickowicz is one of the pathfinders who have published a series of articles on postwar Shanghai cinema's historical significance and social engagement. He aptly applied the phrase "Victory as Defeat" to highlight the thematic and ideological disillusionment and "explicitly political, implicitly political, and utopian collective" patterns in the postwar cinema.[7] In this chapter I go one step further to map out a cinematic constellation that interconnects the movie text, film industry, film culture, and broader socio-historical background.

As Paul Clark contends the achievement of *the Spring* "arose out of the war experience and its aftermath," it reifies a number of characteristics of postwar Shanghai cinema both cinematically and extra-cinematically.[8] Using this film as an entry way and applying the tripartite methodology, namely the modern, the national and the industry, I delineate in this chapter the multivalent, polysemic, heterogeneous, and rather intertwined cinescape of Shanghai. Thematically, the film addresses "a tale of two cities," namely the confrontation between Chongqing and Shanghai, the process of which articulates the geopolitics of the resistance and occupied zones, signals the dilemma of the takeover event, and establishes a "Chongqing style" in the filmmaking at Shanghai. In the first section I elaborate on the geopolitical dimension of Shanghai cinema. Then I shift to the studio system for an in-depth, comparative exploration of

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Victory: The Early Years of the People's Republic of China. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008, 426-429; Weihong Bao, "Diary of a Homecoming: (Dis-)Inhabiting the Theatrical in Postwar Shanghai Cinema," in Yingjin Zhang ed. *A Companion to Chinese Cinema*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2012, 377-399; Paola Iovene, "Phony Phoenixes: Comedy, Protest, and Marginality in Postwar Shanghai," in Sherman Cochran and Paul Pickowicz eds. *China on the Margins*. Ithaca: Cornell University, 2010, 267-287.

[7] Paul Pickowicz, "Victory as Defeat: Postwar Visualizations of China's War of Resistance," in Wen-hsin Yeh, ed. *Becoming Chinese: Passages to Modernity and Beyond*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000, 365-398; another paper is his "Chinese Filmmaking on the Eve of the Communist Revolution," in Song Hwee Lim and Julian Ward, eds. *The Chinese Cinema Book*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, 76-84.

[8] Clark, *Chinese Cinema: Culture and Politics since 1949*, 17.

the film aesthetics, organization and discourse. Drawing upon Thomas Schatz's work on Hollywood of the 1940s, my second part canvasses the distinct studios with recognizable style, generic specification, star vehicle, and organizational strategy. While high-profile, progressive studios like Wenhua (文华) and Kunlun (昆仑), which produced *The Spring*, stay in focus in the chapter, I pay equal attention to the unnoticed yet no lesser meaningful lowbrow, for instances, the Guotai (国泰) and Datong (大同) studios for their alleged "pink movies," espionage genre, rapid-fire editing, and bodily sensations.[9] I compare in the third part the postwar melodramas made by state-owned studios with those by Kunlun Studio, including *The Spring*, for their sentimental yet reflexive renditions of war trauma and gender dynamics.

On the extra-cinematic level, *The Spring* also represents the overall trend of Shanghai cinema. Since it outperformed Hollywood movies in both box office records and exhibition, producers found it lucrative to invest in domestic movies, and urbanites displayed emotional attachment and enthusiasm when watching them, thereby ushering in a production of national cinema. In response to Paul Pickowicz's concern about "too much on films, not enough on film culture" in Chinese film study, my fourth section contextualizes one facet of the postwar consumerism of Shanghai: the popular film periodicals.[10] By fleshing out the process of how domestic female stars gradually replaced Hollywood cover girls, I examine how the star vehicle is visualized and sexualized in print (in both serious magazines and tabloids). The sensational

[9] Since the CCP, after 1949, only acknowledged the contribution of progressive studios at the expense of other non-political or pro-KMT ones, the films by Guotai and Datong were labeled as "vulgar," "pink," and ideologically backward. See Cheng, *The History of the Development of Chinese Cinema*. Vol. 2. 278-282.

[10] Paul Pickowicz, "From Yao Wenyuan to Cui Zi'en: Film, History, Memory," *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 1, no. 1, (2007): 41-53.

success of *The Spring* even altered Shanghai exhibition patterns in that theater owners were willing to make more room for films and reduced the showings of traditional opera plays, a fact that revealed the industry interplay. A trans-media discourse comprises my fifth part. It highlights the cross-fertilization of cinema and other entertainments such as theater, singing/dancing and broadcast. Exactly because of its energetic and unruly nature, postwar Shanghai cinema ran like "the spring water," spilling over into other geopolitically significant locales such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the Northeast. The last section focuses on Guotai as a case study for its distinct studio style and also as a representative of the interconnectedness of Shanghai cinema in regard to the outflow of Guotai's personnel, capital, and facilities to Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Shanghai cinema was advantageously pushed and pulled by disparate, interrelated forces. Never (before and after) has Shanghai cinema been in such a hectic mood, which I name "the Reawakening of Shanghai Cinema."[11] With the hustle and bustle, the cinema fed ordinary Shanghainese, filling vacuity left by rampant inflation and dismal civil war. The daily show of movies zoomed in as the dream, hope, nostalgia, and stimulation. This period is similar to the "boom and bust" decade of Hollywood in the 1940s, and was analogous to Thomas Schatz's notion of an industry "at war," although the Chinese counterpart maneuvered through various interventions.[12]

The Takeover Event: A West/East Encounter

On February 1 1947, about half a year before the release of *The Spring*, the movie *Eight*

[11] See also Zhang's *Chinese National Cinema*. 96-97.
[12] Thomas Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, 1.

Thousand Li of Cloud and Moon premiered in Huguang Theater (沪光大戏院) to a small group of journalists.[13] Both movies share a common depiction and criticism of the "takeover" (接收) phenomenon. The takeover referred to the postwar event when the KMT officials came back from Chongqing with the central government's decrees to take over Japanese/puppet territories, confiscate their properties, and purge so-called *Hanjian* (汉奸).[14] Shanghai became, undoubtedly, their first and foremost target. The takeover was so intense and prolonged that it reshaped Shanghai cinema: Japanese vestiges were swept away,[15] the Chongqing clique gained the upper hand in competition with the Shanghai clique who stayed behind in occupied Shanghai,[16] and state-owned studios led the film industry.[17] The takeover loomed so large within the film world that it grew into a syndrome, which I associate with geopolitical preoccupation, psychological trauma, and bodily affliction. In what follows I clarify the phenomenon, contextualize its cinematic representations, and finally pin down a "Chongqing style" in the filmmaking at Shanghai.

[13] See "*8,000 Li of Cloud and Moon* Entertains the Press First at Huguang" 八千里路云和月 2 月 1 日在沪光先招待新闻界, in *Southeast Wind* 东南风, no.41 (1947): 8.

[14] *Hanjian* (汉奸), literally means a traitor who is a Han Chinese and betrays Han (people), a neologism invented in the Qing Dynasty when China was ruled by Manchurians. In the modern context, the usage of *Hanjian* extends to any type of traitor regardless of his ethnic, political, geographical background. For the detailed discussions of *Hanjian*, see Margherita Zanasi's "Collaborationist Nationalism in Occupied wartime China," in Timothy Brook and Andre Schmid, eds. *Nation Work: Asian Elites and National Identities*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000, 159-190; and Zanasi's "Globalizing Hanjian: The Suzhou Trials and the Post-World War II Discourse on Collaboration," *The American Historical Review* 113, no.3 (June 2008): 731-751.

[15] Films made in the Japanese governed period were completely frozen for further investigation, while Anti-Japanese movies produced by KMT state-owned studios against severe circumstance received more resources to circulate and be shown in various venues.

[16] See "The Big Changes in Movie City and The Intrigues Among Stars" 影城大变：明星斗法. It reports the Chongqing and Shanghai cliques had daggers drawn, and Chongqing people's dominance. See it in *Shanghai Tan* 上海滩 no. 23 (1946): 21.

[17] For instance, the Japanese well-facility studios were carved up by two state-run studios and actually controlled by KMT's Propaganda Department and Defense Department. See Cheng, *The History of the Development of Chinese Cinema*. Vol. 2. 147.

In brief, the takeover is a spin-off of the protracted Anti-Japanese War and an aftershock of the hard-won victory. With the all-out war first flaming in northeast China (Japan's sphere of influence) and then spreading to the eastern part, millions of people fled their hometowns to west China where lofty mountains, desolate deserts, and impetuous rivers checked the invasion of Japanese armies, putting both sides in a stalemate. It was one of the most miserable migrations in the twentieth century and the divided national territory caused tremendous problems afterwards. Italy and Germany were in a similar situation after WWII.[18] For the film makers who populated Shanghai on the eve of Japanese invasion in 1937, to stay or to evacuate became not so much a question of life as a moral choice.[19] Impassioned or reluctant, most outstanding film figures decided to begin a patriotic odyssey, while others, for multiple reasons, stayed behind.

In his memoir the director Zhang Che (张彻) told an inside story of postwar Shanghai cinematic territory. There were basically three recognizable groups. The first was from Chongqing and returned to take over as patriots. The second consisted of filmmakers such as Fei Mu (费穆) who switched into theater to make historic allegories in occupied Shanghai. The third who continued to make commercial, apolitical films.[20] It was those eminent stars and directors

[18] For the details, see Fairbank and Albert Feuerwerker eds. *Cambridge History of China*. Vol. 12.

[19] This situation could also be compared to French intellectuals' choices when facing the invasion of Germany. Poshek Fu singled out three models, namely, passivity, resistance and collaboration for literati left behind in Shanghai, while people who, choosing to migrate to the inland, were generally considered as patriots, or at least non-collaborators. See Fu's *Passivity, Resistance, and Collaboration: Intellectual Choices in Occupied Shanghai*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993. Throughout Chinese history, there are countless heroes with dignified heads or traitors with bending knees, the modern essayist Zhou Zuoren 周作人 being scolded as the most infamous traitor with bending knees.

[20] For the first group it included progressive figures such as Cai Chusheng, Shi Dongshan, Bai Yang and Qin Yi (蔡楚生，史东山，白杨，秦怡), as well as KMT-leaning ones like Yuan Congmei (袁丛美); for the third group, Zhang Shankun, Tu Guangqi, Li Lihua and Zhou Xuan (张善琨，屠光启，李丽华，周璇) were among the most well-known ones. See Zhang, *A Memoir of Hong Kong Cinema in Last Three Decades* 回顾香港电影三十年. Hong Kong: Sanlian Press 香港：三联出版社, 1989. 214. Poshek Fu takes issue with the conventional wisdom that

of the third group who became a scapegoat for the public as well as for certain arrogant returning filmmakers.

The takeover event of Shanghai cinema, executed by the handpicked figures from the first group, took place in two spheres, with the state-owned studios' confiscation of Japanese properties, and with the Shanghai Film and Drama Association's (上海电影戏剧协会) investigation of *Funi film people* (附逆影人) often abbreviated as *funi* (literally, film people adherent to the treachery). Since Shanghai, akin to Manchuria and unlike Taiwan or Korea, stood out as the major film production base for the Japanese empire to sugarcoat its ideology and entertain the colonized, the film infrastructure remained almost intact. Therefore, when the KMT takeover commissioners landed at Shanghai, they grabbed all remaining Japanese film studios and "converted" them into state-owned properties (see Table 1-1).

Table 1-1[21]

Japanese Studio Name	Taken by	Address
Studio 1/Wenhua 文华厂	Central Film Studio 中电 CFS	Zhabei District 闸北
Studio 2	Central Film Studio	Fulv Li Rd. 福履理路
Yi Hua Studio 艺华厂	China Motion Pictures Studio 中制 CMPS	Jin Situ Temple 金司徒庙

The takeover went far beyond the material level to involve individual film participant and group. Far from an easy task as dealing with indifferent machinery, every pressure group or

Shanghai film culture under Japanese reign went utterly sterile and treasonable. Instead, he spoke volumes for "the strategic maneuver and commercial semi-dependence" of Chinese film studios, mainly mediated by Zhang Shankun and Kawakita Nagamasa 川喜多长政. See Fu's, *Between Shanghai and Hong Kong: The Politics of Chinese Cinemas*. 131.

[21] See Cheng, *The History of the Development of Chinese Cinema*. Vol. 2. 148.

individual had his own agenda and the process of "labeling" *Funi film people* was notoriously prolonged and complex. The final *funi* list was the result of incredible compromises between the returning filmmakers from Chongqing, the "collaborative" ones at Shanghai, the court, the KMT officials, print media, and the public.[22] Conventional wisdom proposes a nationalist explanation to engage with the underlying mechanism accounting for this takeover turmoil: the antagonism between China and Japan.[23] What this simplistic view neglects are the appeal of different interest groups involved in it and non-political factors that complicated the picture. Hence, I bring forward a geopolitical discourse to articulate the takeover syndrome by which it manifested the perennial cultural disparagement and conflict of interest among competing locales. Historically, Chongqing is an insular, inland city where film infrastructures were scarce and weak, which, among other things, forced prior film crews to do theater rather than cinema.[24] Thus, going (back) to Shanghai to punish the collaborating filmmakers, seize their job positions and, above all, resume the filmmaking had become real and desirable for them. Out of this practical consideration, people from Chongqing formed certain stable circles, championed as the Chongqing clique, and forcefully elbowed out Shanghai fellows, known as the Shanghai clique.

[22] In "To Accuse the Film and Drama Figures" 检举电影戏剧界人物, the reporter complained about the various standards to label *funi* film people. See it in *Merry Voice* 快活林, no.19 (1946): 12. "Reporters Are Greatly Disappointed to See the Accusation of Film People" 看检举影人，记者们大失所望 bemoaned that the accusation movement was not initiated by the court but more determined by film associations. See it in *Merry Voice* 快活林, no.37 (1946): 14. "The Secret History of *Funi* Film Star Bai Guang" 附逆影星白光秘史 uncovered Bai's flirtation and seduction with taking-over deputies to be exempted from prosecution, *Movie Times* 时代电影, no.16 (1946): 17. "How Taking-over Commissioners Get Rich" 接收大员如何发财 disclosed the KMT officials took bribes. See it in *Movie News*, 精华/中外影讯, no.14 (1946): 8.

[23] See, for example, Cheng, *The History of the Development of Chinese Cinema*. Vol. 2. 145-159.

[24] In "Shanghai Culture in Mist" 迷雾中的上海文化 the author Lu Mang (鲁莽) discussed the cultural parameters of both Chongqing and Shanghai, especially the conversion of Shanghai film people to theater at Chongqing due to various constrains. See it in *Jingwei* 经纬, no. 2 (1946): 8-10.

The Chongqing clique discredited Shanghai film (style) as decadent and detrimental.

Lan Ma (蓝马), a household actor in Chongqing, returned to Shanghai in 1946 and received immediate welcome and job offers in both theater and cinema. Certain Shen, a seasoned lighting technician from Chongqing, was hired and cheered as an industry hero in Shanghai. Both examples revealed the tension between Chongqing and local people.[25] Since Chongqing folks had more experience and accomplishments in theater than in cinema during wartime, they first took over the drama front in Shanghai and gradually permeated into the cinema, resulting in a "Chongqing style" being formed and circulated. "The spring river from the west" unstoppably flowed into Shanghai, a phenomenon occurred in almost every national and private studio.[26] After several *funi* were made to flee to Hong Kong and without a life-and-death threat, both cliques gradually acquiesced to the existence of the other, albeit with an invisible line between them that distinguished their filmic language and future fate.

The takeover syndrome also resonated in several movies, having grown into the most poignant postwar cinematic trope. Besides the aforementioned *Eight Thousand Li of Cloud and Moon* and *The Spring River Flows East*, movies like *Diary of the Homecoming* (还乡日记 1947), *People without Names* (无名氏 1947), *Welcome Home* (衣锦荣归 1947), *Lucky Son-in-law* (乘龙快婿 1948), and *Crows and Sparrows* (乌鸦与麻雀 1949)[27] all foregrounded this subject matter in a similar manner. There are plotlines on the takeover of the Chongqing

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[25] "Interviewing Shanghai Actors Returning from Chongqing: Kang Jian and Lan Ma" 访重庆归来的上海艺人: 康健与蓝马, in *Merry Voice* 快活林, no.3 (1946): 1; "The Lighting Technician Shen ? from Chongqing" 由重庆来的灯光家沈?, in *Film and Drama Weekly* 影剧周刊, no.3 (1946): 9.

[26] See "Foul Atmosphere in Film Circle: Open Strife and Veiled Struggle Between Differing Cliques" 电影圈乌烟瘴气: 各派系明争暗斗, in *Southeast Wind* 东南风, no.39 (1947): 5.

[27] Productions made in Hong Kong on the same theme will be discussed in Chapter Two.

people and the reverence and envy of Shanghai folks towards these returning men, stereotypes of presumptuous, corrupt commissioners from Chongqing, and the sympathy to local underdogs suffering both Japanese mutilation and compatriots' mischief.

In *Lucky Son-in-law*, a family melodrama, film star Jin Yan (金焰) plays a righteous reporter returning from Chongqing, who has been mistakenly imagined by his fiancée and mother-in-law at Shanghai as an influential takeover official who could possess a big mansion, fancy car and gold bullion. In postwar America the fact that the return of male soldiers replaced the wartime working women triggered a reinforcing representation of the femme fatales on screen.[28] Similar gender dynamics dominated postwar Chinese cinema, albeit with a local flavor. Domestic works aspired to portray the caricatured, avaricious male takeover official coupled with his wartime wife (抗战夫人) from Chongqing and their confrontation with the official's first wife at Shanghai. *The Spring River Flows East* boldly took issue with this polygamy, and *Diary of the Homecoming*, a screwball comedy with a critical message, went even further to provide a more comic, deformed narrative in which a takeover deputy audaciously took over not only an alleged collaborator's house, but his wife, which fueled a carnivalesque duel. In diegesis and practice, the homecoming of filmmakers from Chongqing was, by no means, a sweet journey, because they needed to handle gender relations and, meanwhile, establish themselves in Shanghai. Since both cliques prioritized the "eating, drinking and housing" concern rather than national and ideological issues against the chaotic takeover backdrop, a number of geopolitical

[28] See Mary Ann Doane, *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis.* New York: Routledge, 1991; and Mike Chopra-Gant, *Hollywood Genres and Post-war America: Masculinity, Family and Nation in Popular Movies and Film Noir*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2006.

confrontations remained on a self-contained level, similar to the self-censoring system in Hollywood.[29] The reporter's eventual marriage to his fiancée's younger sister in *Lucky* was indicative of the bond between Shanghai and Chongqing.

The impact of the takeover syndrome went beyond the representation to the actual filmmaking, too. The returning of Chongqing filmmakers painted a unique flavor onto Shanghai cinema, which I name as the "Chongqing style" that was embodied in acting, theme, and style. For acting, on-screen dialogue became more punctuated and powerful, characters' gestures and motion more exaggerated and deformed, and more attention and efforts were placed on the stage effects or mise-en-scene such as lights, cosmetics, and outfits. For example, both *The Spring* and *Eight Thousand Li*, directed and acted by returning filmmakers, featured various scenes of enunciated talks with expressive hand gestures and facial expressions that felt like a public speech or spoken drama (see fig. 1). That might explain why *Spring in a Small Town* (小城之春 1948), made by Fei Mu, was hailed as a poetic, non-dramatic work that went against the grain. Thematically, filmmakers from Chongqing, due to their enormous hardship and misery in the course of evacuation and migration, aspired to create more realistic, tragic stories to portray the lower class or refugee en route, to emphasize the national catastrophe, and to scold the rotten, sinful life and the decadent dancing/singing world in Shanghai. This leads to the production of stylistic, self-reflexive movies that highlighted the lives of those evacuating people and their artistic pursuit and national salvation. Moreover, the anti-Japanese drama and chorus troupes

[29] See Lea Jacobs, *The Wages of Sin: Censorship and the Fallen Woman Film, 1928-1942*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991.

organized by evacuating filmmakers from Shanghai were highly acclaimed in many postwar films, including *Eight Thousand Li, Diary* and *Spring Couldn't be Locked* (关不住的春光 1948). In short, the Chongqing style had transplanted into Shanghai cinema the dramatized language, political message, and aesthetic self-reflexivity, all of which spoke volume of the fact that the domestic geopolitical encounter might not be as chaotic as the takeover and that the trans-regional interaction was beneficial.

Postwar Studios and Aesthetics

The takeover movement lasted a year and exhausted everyone's energy. It was not until the middle of 1946 that Shanghai cinema recharged to shoot new movies. Surprisingly, once Shanghai cinema embarked on the journey of reviving, it swiftly attuned to the new environment and contributed artistically profound yet stylistically disparate works made by a wide range of distinct studios. In this section I investigate the multifaceted postwar studios on their own merits so as to offset the political demarcation of studios since the early 1930s. After presenting the historical background, I dissect the studio system through its institutional operation, major/minor studio configuration, star system, and production trend, and also position it as a counterpart to Hollywood, which Chinese studios always emulated and with which they competed.

Serious scholarship did not place enough focus on the postwar industry practices and structures, and arguments on modern Chinese film industry are often overwhelmed by an ideological line.[30] With an attempt to rectify this entrenched imbalance, I trace this flawed

[30] Cheng's *The History of the Development of Chinese Cinema* is the canonical one that deals with "political correctness." Books in English, due to the archival limitation and existing framework, have not contributed a

taxonomy back to the early 1930s and approach the postwar studio system more from an aesthetical and commercial angle. Scholars concurred that the "September 18th Incident" in 1931 punctuated Chinese film history and accordingly spurred a leftist, national turn, The CCP responded to this crisis-cum-opportunity (verbatim 危机 in Chinese) so efficiently that it dispatched renowned literati figures, mostly as screenwriters, to infiltrate film studios. and it seized the newspaper supplements in order to endorse the resistant films and chastise the KMT.[31] As a result, commercial studios disintegrated into a revolutionary camp and its anti-camp.[32]

This "politicalization of aesthetics" in grouping diverse studios came in tandem with the "aestheticization of politics" in the making of left-wing, resistant movies,[33] and this remained true for postwar cinema. Film scholars, however, have to bear alternative approaches and make efforts to allow studios to "speak for themselves," not as a mere mouthpiece for politics. From a discursive perspective, the studio system formalized during the 1930s against a national exigency, and it underwent political intervention, and a subsequent nationalization, at Shanghai, Manchukuo, and Chongqing when the cinematic apparatus became involved in the total war. It nevertheless gradually regained vitality after 1945, first in Shanghai as several private studios received special permission from the KMT to reestablish their filming studios that had been

systemic overview of the postwar studio system.

[31] For a detailed discussion, see Pang's, *Building a New China in Cinema*; Hu's *Projecting a Nation*; and Vivian Shen's *The Origins of Leftwing Cinema in China, 1932-3*.

[32] Under such condition, active studios such as Diantong (电通), Lianhua and Mingxing (联华, 明星) were often contrasted with the politically-free studios such as Tianyi and Xinhua (天一, 新华).

[33] The aestheticization of politics appeared first in Walter Benjamin's warning of a Fascist aesthetics in Nazi Germany. See his "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen eds. *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Reading*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 6th edition. 811.

ruined or confiscated by the Japanese during the war.[34]

The maturity of the post-war studio first manifested in a profoundly integrated system. Seen from this vantage point, Guotai stood out as the most commercially ambitious and successful conglomerate in terms of its secured capital, independent shooting studios, reliable distribution channel and three affiliated theaters.[35] Akin to post-war Hollywood majors that "were making a great deal more in gross revenue and profits than the other companies,"[36] Chinese counterparts, such as Guotai, Wenhua, and Kunlun also reaped huge benefits, which explained why these syndicates outlived other relatively small and ad hoc studios. Apart from the inter-studio vertical integration, lateral expansion, and cooperation was also active among different studios. China Film United Company (中国电影联影厂), for example, functioned as a cross-studio allied organization that contrived to unite the distributing channels of CFS, Kunlun, and Wenhua so as to take over more market share and forestall the war-inflicted inflation for a win-win result.[37] A similar move, albeit in a reverse way, appeared at Guotai in January 1948 when Liu Zhonghao and Liu Zhongliang (柳中浩，柳中亮), two motion picture mogul brothers since the 1920s, disassembled the highly concentrated Guotai empire into Zhonghao's Guotai and Zhongliang's Datong company. This unusual disintegration actually mitigated investing risks, optimized

[34] Guotai, Lianhua/Kunlun and Shanghai Experimental Film Studio were among the first studios given permission to reestablish their studios devastated in the Anti-Japanese War.

[35] See one of the comprehensive reports on Guotai entitled "Guotai in the Past Few Years" 几年来的"国泰" in *Film And Drama Magazine* 影剧杂志, no. 4 (1949): 9.

[36] Thomas Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, 331.

[37] One ad of China Film United Company introduced its structure and goal, see *Western Movie Pictorial* , no.1 (1948): 13. Another example of lateral cooperation was the case of Lianhua Film Art Society and Kunlun, the bond of which consolidated the distribution of individual productions. See Xia Yunhu's "Kunlun's Xia Yunhu Explicates to the Reporters the Ownership," 昆仑夏云瑚向记者阐明产权问题, in *Kunlun Film News* 昆仑影讯, no.2 (1947): 1.

resources, and reinforced horizontal collaboration. Integration or not, film studios at Shanghai took every means to strategize their positions and maximize the profits.

Within such an efficient organizational system, almost every eminent film company bore its brand in its individual structure, demonstrated in the dynamic relation between the boss, manager, producer, screenwriter and director, whose interaction inexorably determined the taste and tone of studio movies. Behind Kunlun, for example, aggregated a loose group of the most maverick left-wing and communist filmmakers. Guotai and Datong, on the other hand, oscillated between the left and right and wielded a tactic for speculation at a turbulent time, thereby turning out many "vulgar" or lowbrow movies, a practice followed by other smaller studios. Yet if choosing one of the most cohesive, cost-effective companies, Wenhua would be second to none. Wenhua's sole boss Wu Xingcai (吴性裁), also an established entrepreneur in textiles, transferred almost all the routine management and decision-making to his entrusted manager, studio head, and general accountant as well as first-class production units led by idiosyncratic screenwriters and directors.[38] It entailed a streamlined structure resembling Warner Brothers.[39] Due to this flexible, mutually reliable, and professional setup, Wenhua enjoyed stable management, curbed escalating production costs, and maintained a steady flow of personnel and capital, thus strengthening itself as a sustainable model among private studios before 1949.

Institutionally, the configuration of major studios versus major-minors of Hollywood would

[38] The general manager is Wu Bangfan 吴邦藩, studio head Lv Jie 陆洁, and general accountant Wu Bingyao 吴炳耀. See Ma Jingyuan 马景源, "The Evolvement of Wenhua Film Studio" 文华影片公司沿革 in *Shanghai Film Historical Materials* (abbreviated as *SFHM)* 上海电影史料. Vol. 1. Shanghai: Shanghai Film Bureau 上海: 上海市电影局史志办公室, 1992, 54-66.
[39] See Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, 337-8.

also be applied in Shanghai, although the criteria and situation differed. Guotai, Wenhua, and Kunlun belonged to the first echelon, having produced twenty-nine, ten and seven films respectively in postwar Shanghai.[40] Despite a lack of a reliable industry statistics, sporadic box office number and consistent movie news indicated that almost all the commercially and critically hailed movies were from these three major studios, such as Guotai's *A Tragic Marriage*, Wenhua's *Phony Phoenix* and Kunlun's *The Spring River Flows East*. Major-minor studios included Datong, Shanghai Experimental Film Studio 上海实验电影工场, and Dahua 大华, with a total output ranging from four to ten films and also discernible genre cycles and fairly stable working units. Besides major studios and major-minors, there were about twenty-six minor film companies that only produced one to three movies, most of which followed suit of already successful models made by major studios or lifted stories from Hollywood. *Agent No.5* (第五号情报员, 1948) by Dahua was a heavy-handed imitator of CFS's *Spy No. one* (天字第一号, 1946). And Qunxing studio's 群星 *A Diamond Ring* (珠光宝气, 1948) directly drew from Hollywood's *Tales of Manhattan* (1942) by altering the central trope from the high-middle class emblem of the black formal tailcoat in *Tales* to a more conspicuous commodity, diamonds, within Chinese context.[41]

Unlike postwar Hollywood, the Shanghai studio system and the star system had been dissonant, although the film industry remained as star-driven as ever. In other words, stars at

[40] All the listed movies here did not include those started before 1949 but finished and released into market after May 1949 when Shanghai was seized by the CCP. It is worthy to mention *ECF* 中国影片大典 erroneously attributes Wenhua's *A Good Couple* (1948) to a non-existent Shanghai Wenhua Company (文化), a homophone yet with a different character. See *ECF*. Vol. 2, 417; and *SFHM* 上海电影史料. Vol. 1, 65.

[41] See "*A Diamond Ring* Somewhat Resembles *Tales of Manhattan*" 珠光宝气有些像纽约奇谭, in *Movie Weekly* 电影周报, no.9 (1948): 11.

Shanghai traveled relatively freely between state and private studios, left and right camps, major and minor companies, and even Shanghai and Hong Kong, to their best advantages. In Hollywood, "the top stars declined to risk the financial hazards of freelance status or independence after 1947, returning instead to the security of a studio contract," whereas in Shanghai, established stars, amid a similar tight economic restraint and political unrest, preferred to work with studios on an ad hoc basis, reflecting a collective anxiety about prospects and betraying a philosophy of pragmatism and non-commitment.[42] The studios also favored this provisional partnership rather than an exclusive contract since it prevented an outflow of large cash and left them leverage. Against this atmosphere, Shi Hui (石挥), the most talented and versatile male star in Chinese film history, was indeed an exceptional case because in order to secure his stay at Wenhua, Wu Xingcai renewed an exclusive contract with him in 1948, agreeing that Shi could direct his own films at Wenhua and distribute his invested movie *She Married Three Times* (人尽可夫, 1948), in addition to a considerable salary increase.[43]

The most visible production trend in postwar Shanghai cinescape was the war films. The overwhelming eight-year Anti-Japanese War afflicted both ordinary folk and filmmakers, thus it was not surprising to see five out of six movies made in late 1946 centered on the subject of patriots-versus-traitors in the resistant China. While the war genre "was on hiatus from 1946 to 1949" in Hollywood,[44] Chinese producers and directors did not imitate the Hollywood model to

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[42] See Schatz, *Boom and Bust*. 354. And in "Zhang Fa Shouted for an Unlucky Year" 张伐大呼流年不利, the male star Zhang Fa complained about the Wenhua's arrearages and urged a picture-by-picture payment instead of a contracted deal. See it in *Spring Sea* 春海, no.16 (1947): 5.

[43] See Ye Ming 叶明, "The Recollection of Wenhua (1947-1951)" 文华影片公司的回忆, in *SFHM.* Vol. 1, 37-38.

[44] See Thomas Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, 369.

turn to entertaining musicals but continued to shoot "the heroic, the insulted, and the numbed" (people) of the War. The war films nonetheless appeared not so much in the form of large-scale combat dramas (thanks to an underfunded and ill-equipped film industry), but rather centered on the infliction of war on family life and romantic relations influenced by the fallout from the war. Another outstanding stable genre was realist films about the bleak, disillusioned postwar world. Parallel to Hollywood's social problem picture, these realist films played out the "victory as defeat" theme, with such recurring tropes as the chaotic takeover, rampant inflation/unemployment, deteriorating living conditions, and sinned metropolitan.[45] Notwithstanding the harassment by government censorship, the genre ingeniously created an ending with a brighter future or hope, free to different interpretations--either resulting from the KMT's reform or the CCP's revolution. Meanwhile, the espionage/detective movies also took up a significant position, especially in 1948-49 when the civil war spurred more sensational works. Facing the landing of Communism in 1949, both state-owned and private studios, to eschew new investment and possible loss, produced the potpourri films by extracting and reassembling prior movie scenes for the eager cinephiles. *Dreams of the Movie Fans* (银海幻梦, 1949) and *The Strange Story of the Film Studio* (影城奇谭, 1949) were two examples.

As the result of an efficient studio system, distinct studio styles, active star engagement, and genre sophistication, the industry's professionalization speeded up, demonstrated first in the reinforcement of industrial infrastructures, second in the maturity of many film professions, and finally in the development of ancillary enterprises. Even though the film industry suffered from

[45] See Paul Pickowicz's "Victory as Defeat."

foreign exchange restraint, technology embargos, and waves of financial storms, it overcame these adversities impressively. For instance, it (re)fashioned up-to-date film studios with sophisticated equipment and technologies (e.g. promoting 16 mm cameras and film) mainly imported from Hollywood via Hong Kong.[46] It also renovated movie theaters into modern resorts and spectacular locales. At the same time professional crews such as art designers, costumers, cinematographers, and sound recorders played a vital role in creating stylized, unique works. Many of them shunned the old, prevalent apprenticeship and opened eyes to and tried their hands at the formal training from both America and Europe.[47] The phenomenal institutionalization also fueled the advancement of many ancillary industries that, in return, streamlined and strengthened the film industry. Qinghua 清华, a minor studio that moved from Peking to Shanghai in 1948, formed its own orchestra and choir to play movie theme songs and celebrate film events on a regular basis. In addition, Qinghua's efforts to enhance the living conditions of its employees, through renting out apartment complexes and even hiring chefs, had fostered an organization with high cohesion and also guaranteed quality of films, most being melodramas.

Melodrama vis-à-vis the War Trauma

Postwar studio vitality and sophistication resided not only in private companies, but in state-owned studios, the contribution of which was often undermined by the "political

[46] See, for example, "The Competition of 16mm Film Camera among American Companies" 美国各大公司的16mm 竞争 in *Movie Times* 时代电影, no. 15 (1946): 4.

[47] A fine example is the KMT official-cum-producer Zheng Yongzhi 郑用之 led a team of film technicians, including the famous cinematographer Wang Shizhen 王士珍, to visit and study from the American film industry. See "Zheng Yongzhi Visits the U.S. on July 3" 郑用之 7 月 3 日赴美考察, in *Information* 见闻, no. 2 (1946): 7.

correctness." In this section, I shift the focal point from the commercial to the ideological, demonstrated in the two bifurcated camps: the KMT's state-owned oligopolistic studios versus the CCP-controlled private studios. Yet it is no coincidence that both groups applied the same genre of melodrama and war trauma to appeal to the spectator on the one hand, and to promote the nationalism on the other.

As stated before, the KMT's foray into the cinematic apparatus in the 1930s was a reaction to the left-wing literati who, spurred by the national exigency, spearheaded the filmmaking with a style of exposure and critique. Although the KMT thus had to tighten the grip of censorship and meanwhile ghostwrite pro-governmental movies,[48] it was not until the Anti-Japanese war in 1937 that the KMT seized a rare opportunity to restructure the entire movie industry, a large portion of which, however, was left behind in Shanghai under Japanese reign.[49] During wartime, the KMT, in the name of a United Front, monopolized the limited film enterprises in hand and produced a total of eighteen feature films over eight years with the besiegement and undersupply of raw materials.

"KMT cinema" is a loosely designated term. It has to be unpacked as China Motion Pictures Studio (CMP) and Central Film Studio (CFS), the former led by the military, and the latter by the

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[48] The KMT not only dispatched its blue-shirt, undercover agents to assault progressive studios (e.g. Yihua 艺华), but subsidized major studios to make pro-government works. The movies included *The Iron-bird* (铁鸟, 1934) and *National Customs* (国风, 1935) that extolled the social harmony and national self-strength, a goal in accord with Chiang Kai-shek's New Life Movement. See Cheng, *The History of the Development of Chinese Cinema*. Vol. 1. 291-99; Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema*, 62-63; and Pang, *Building a New China in Cinema*, 53. For a discussion of this Movement and movies made within this milieu, see Kristine Harris's "*The Goddess*: Fallen Woman of Shanghai," in Chris Berry ed. *Chinese Films in Focus II*, London: BFI, 2008, 128-136.

[49] See Fu's *Between Shanghai and Hong Kong* for Shanghai cinema in occupation.

Propaganda Committee.[50] In wartime, CMP was more militant and productive (fifteen films totally), while CFS stood in a marginalized position (three movies).[51] This disproportion overturned after V-J Day. For the Propaganda Committee and its subordinate CFS played a vital role in the takeover, resulting from the "party over army" principle.[52] Table 1-2 illustrates the detailed information of CMP and CFS (divided into four studios) in postwar era.

Table 1-2[53]

Studio Name	Location	Productions	Specialization
CFS One	Shanghai	7	Newsreel, Documentary, feature film
CFS Two	Shanghai	18	Feature film
CFS Three	Peking	16	Feature film
CFS Four	Changchun	3	Feature film, documentary
CMP	Nanjing	2	Military movie and feature film

Note: Production only betrays the amount of feature films.

Through the relentless takeover of Japanese film properties, the state-owned enterprises infiltrated and held sway over Shanghai cinema. The institutional monopoly strengthened the cultural discourse of the KMT, but impeded the resurgence of private studios because the

[50] Other minor studios included China Education Film Studio (中教), China Agricultural Education Film Studio (农教) that were under protection and control of big, wealthy families. These companies, however, were largely transferred to Taiwan and merged with the local film companies, which is discussed in the Taiwan chapter.

[51] See Zhang's *Chinese National Cinema*, 92-94.

[52] See the decree "Interim Measures for Administrating Newspapers, Communications, Magazines, Cinema, and Broadcast of Restored Areas" 管理收复区报纸通讯杂志电影广播事业暂行办法, quoted from Cheng, *The History of the Development of Chinese Cinema*. Vol. 2. 146.

[53] The production number comes from *ECF*, although numbers from CFS 2 and 3 differed from Chen's statistic since the book did not count in *The Dawning* 鸡鸣早看天 (CFS 2), *He Looks Like a Shadow* 神出鬼没 (CFS 3) and *Sinister House No.13* 十三号凶宅 (CFS 3) which are jointed produced by CFS and private studios. See Cheng, *The History of the Development of Chinese Cinema*. Vol. 2. 462-65.

high-rank officials from Chongqing were suspicious of Shanghai capital and did not spare sufficient inspection of those private assets that were forced to be merged into the Japanese corporations during the war. Hence the first movie made by a private studio did not come out until December 1946.[54] Moreover, the KMT contrived vertical integration by setting up the "Central Film Service Department" (CFSD 中央电影服务处) to monopolize the circulation and exhibition of all domestic and foreign movies and to regulate the investment and foreign exchange.[55]

The attempt to monopolize and manipulate Shanghai cinema hardly ran smoothly, however. Noncooperation and protest arose from influential merchants, most of whom were inextricably tied up with the KMT officials and had seen cinema as a commercial speculation. Other dissenters such as major Hollywood studios (as well as British Eagle-Lion Film) and the KMT's opposing cliques were also dissatisfied with the monolithic system and ineptitude. The combined effort led to a commercialization of CFS in April 1947 and thus the degeneration of CFSD.[56] Film tycoons thus created ingenious means to establish their own integrated film companies, which competed with the state-owned cinema.

Actually "the spring time" for private studios came between 1947and 1949. The ratio of private versus state-owned production within these three years was 23:15, 52:22 and 29:5.

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[54] The first movie made by private company is Guotai's *Sparks of the Nation* (民族的火花, 1946).
[55] "Film Production Association Requests Equipments Import be Allowed" emphasizes how the foreign exchange restriction and embargo of raw materials imposed by the government had crippled private studios and suggested a lift to the export quota to make money by exporting films to Southeast Asia. See it in *Film And Radio* 电影与播音, vol. 7, no.5 (1948): 24.
[56] As a result of this, CFSD became a smaller company that only distributed movies made by CFS. See Cheng, *The History of the Development of Chinese Cinema*. Vol. 2. 151.

Regardless of their aesthetic proclivity and commercial nature, Shanghai private film companies could be roughly categorized as left-leaning and independent. The most progressive studio was Kunlun, the organization and operation of which was directed by underground communists.[57] The relatively independent sector comprised entertainment-oriented studio such as Guotai and Datong and socially critical such as Wenhua. However, as the KMT lost the battlefield and failed to gain public support in late 1948, almost all studios took a progressive turn, featuring the trope of mass movement and desire for a bright future.

Yet the political demarcation could not do justice to the postwar complicated studio configuration and genre sophistication. So in what follows, I compare the postwar melodramas made by CFS with those by Kunlun to illustrate the visual, thematic and stylistic differences of their individual approaches to war trauma and gender dynamics.[58]

As discussed in the previous section, the war film was the most salient production trend for postwar cinema. The war lasted eight years and loomed so large that it grew into what I call "a burdened heritage." The term is an oxymoron that discloses the catastrophe the war inflicted upon the Chinese, and the unbending spirit and righteous martyrdom. Both have been continuously represented and re-appropriated in later cultural products. Hence various film studios made melodramatic stories to contend with this trauma, albeit with different patterns and effects.

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[57] For detailed organization and operation, see ibid, 206-210; Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema*, 100-101; and Clark, *Chinese Cinema,* 47.

[58] Despite the heterogeneity of four studios in terms of geography, specialization, and political inclination, CFS, as a whole, helped construct the KMT's ideology. Yet Studio 4 in Changchun is a special case since it was headed by CCP underground members, which I discuss in the Manchuria chapter. Another reason to take CFS's melodramas as a collective is practical: a majority of CFS's war trauma movies is destroyed, so it is imperative to inspect the extant ones as a collective to discover the similarities and differences.

E. Ann Kaplan and Ban Wang, in their introduction to *Trauma and Cinema*, take issue with the notion of inaccessibility of trauma, especially "the fixation on trauma as the ultimate limit of representation," echoed in Theodor Adorno's "no poetry after Auschwitz."[59] It might be true that trauma causes the jolt, paralysis of the subject, and disorder of the memory, but they argue for an intervening scheme to re-insert history in order to approach both individual psychic suffering (e.g. the train accident) and historical shocks (e.g. the war wound) and deem trauma as an historical and cultural phenomenon. [60] From an international perspective, for instance, Europe, Asia and the U.S. have made, and are still making, retrospective war movies, albeit with variations, as the most traumatic event in human history.[61] China is not the exception.

The War of Resistance was a vehicle exploited for the release of national disaster and personal trauma, represented in films made by Central Film Studio, Kunlun, and other studios alike. Yet state-owned studios and private ones applied different ways to engage with the trope of trauma. In *Trauma and Cinema*, Kaplan and Wang sorted out four cinematic strategies for trauma films: mainstream melodramatic (through themes and techniques, ending with a comforting "cure"); vicariously traumatized (via a negative, shocking effect causing a vicarious trauma); voyeuristic (using newsreel or documentary to feed the victim); and a witness position (through empathic identification without vicarious traumatization, by a non-narrative narration and

[59] E Ann Kaplan and Wang Ban, eds. *Trauma and Cinema: Cross-cultural Explorations*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004. 4.
[60] Ibid. 5
[61] One of the compelling books that deals with this postwar retrospection of war trauma is Kyoko Hirano's *Mr. Smith Goes to Tokyo: The Japanese Cinema under the American Occupation, 1945-1952*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992.

self-reflection).[62] CFS works could be placed in the melodramatic mode with a clear ideological message. In contrast, the movies by Kunlun conveyed a more critical and self-reflexive tone to grapple with the war trauma.

CFS's productions on the war trauma, overall, directly undertook the war trope with a melodramatic plot and political persuasion, and designed a happy ending with a family reunion and/or national victory.[63] CFS produced more than a dozen films on the War of Resistance, approximately one third of its oeuvre.[64] Most of them, unfortunately, disappeared forever. Yet from the synopsis and a couple of extant copies, we can detect the way in which war trauma was appropriated and exploited. *Spy No. One*, a super-popular film directed by Tu Guangqi 屠光启, featured Qin as a KMT underground top spy in Peking who dexterously stole the "Cryptic Telegraph Code" from her husband Liu, the city puppet commander serving the Japanese army. Qin handed it over to her previous lover, Ying, the nephew of the commander and also another underground agent for the same mission. The story started with a flashback (Ying's recollection on a murky night of himself being chased by Japanese soldiers), a rhyming structure in between, and ended with Ying's celebration of victory against Qin's tomb for her heroic death. Thematically and structurally, it resembles the postwar Hollywood crime genre, influenced by the killings and machinations in *Murder My Sweet* (1945) and *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1946).[65] Moreover, Qin was a femme fatale-like figure, often in a curvaceous cheongsam and

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[62] Kaplan and Wang eds., *Trauma and Cinema*, 9-10.

[63] Movies such as *The Family with Chivalry* (忠义之家, 1946), *A Lad and Two Girls* (粉墨筝琶, 1948), *He Looks like a Shadow, Coming Generations* (子孙万代, 1948), and *The Holy City* (圣城记, 1946) all fell into this category.

[64] Some movies were made by studio 3 in Peking, but taken as a whole, CFS works illustrated the way in which state-owned studio engaged with the war trauma. See my previous note for details.

[65] "Hollywood Advocates Murder, too" 好莱坞也在提倡暗杀 stated the influence of *Postman Always Rings Twice*

with a soliciting manner, who circulated between Liu and Ying, and did not expose her identity as the Spy Number One until the very end.[66] Dramatic plot, intertwined family relations, and moral distinction aside, *Spy* delivered anything but an opaque political message. It delineated the sacrificing spirit of the KMT spies from Chongqing as well as having a heavy-handed celebrattory denouement with a march that featured the iconographic firecrackers and lion dancing accompanied by impassioned military band music.

Ben Singer, in discussing American melodrama in the 1910s and 20s, proposed five constitutive factors of melodrama: pathos, overwrought emotion, moral polarization, non-classical narrative and sensationalism.[67] Almost all the elements, except the non-classical narrative, are apparent in *Spy*. It is laced with a noir-like style, nationalistic message, and sensational effect. *Spy* also demonstrates with relish a modernist style in the diegesis: a sophisticated eavesdropping scheme, crucial telegraph codes, an art deco dancing hall, and a movie-going hobby. *Spy* debuted in Queen Theater around Christmas time of 1946 and achieved a sellout, encouraging more mainstream melodramatic works.[68] Not only did it benchmark and galvanize a number of (female) espionage films,[69] it was also the trendsetter for making women's movies in the sense of centering on glittering female stars as well as catering to female

on domestic productions. See it in *Southeast Wind* 东南风, no.15 (1946): 1.

[66] In fact, movie *Spy* was adapted from drama *Wild Rose* 野玫瑰 in which wild rose, representing Qin's wildness and sexuality, was juxtaposed with tender rose, designating Liu Xiaoyan, the daughter of Liu and stepdaughter of Qin, who fatefully fell in love with her cousin Ying and fled with him with the "Cryptic Telegraph Code."

[67] Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.

[68] Even contemporary popular journalism traced *Spy* as the forerunner of contemporary espionage blockbusters and interviewed Bai Xianyong 白先勇, a renowned author who once lived at Shanghai, who described *Spy* as "so packed" 爆棚 when he watched it in 1946. See Yang Biao 杨彪 "*Spy No. One*: Espionage Blockbuster of Old Shanghai" 天字第一号:老上海的谍战大片, in *Shanghai Times* 申江服务导报, 02 Mar. 2011.

[69] Other CFS (female) espionage films are *The Family with Chivalry*, *A Lad and Two Girls*, and *He Looks like a Shadow* (1948), along with several privately-made titles.

spectators.[70] Likewise, *Bloody Escape* (白山黑水血溅红, 1947), another film by CFS on the Anti-Japanese War, recaptured female sacrificing archetypes, the inexorable assassination scenes, and the pathetic heroism of an occupied Harbin as well as the modernist flavor of a cabaret feast.

If CFS applied a melodramatic political mode in dealing with war trauma and seldom touched upon the realistic aftershocks in the wake of V-J Day, Kunlun's productions, regardless of their depictions of the war hardship and suffering of body and soul, were geared towards an "epic style" and a witness position for reflexivity, open structure, and hope theme rather than being arrantly melodramatic. Styled as epics, *8,000 Li*, *The Spring River Flows East*, and *Spring Couldn't be Locked* all spanned over pre- and post-war periods, panned across occupied and rear regions (Chongqing and Shanghai), and more importantly, highlighted the epochal tragedy against the backdrop of the hard-won victory. The "epic" did not merely remain in the diegesis, namely historic scope and narrative breadth and depth, but on an extra-diegetic level. When encountering with war trauma, Kunlun movies featured an all-star ensemble cast, large investment, prolonged production periods, serious filmmakers, and also box-office records that solicited waves of heated discussions. In addition to the epic style, Kunlun, as the vanguard of the progressive movement, opted for the reflexivity pattern and thematically challenged the illusionary victory, which impaired the KMT's legitimacy by using an open structure and ending.

Kunlun movies bequeathed the "traumatic and realistic strain," and were self-consciously vigilant and critical of the menace of overblown melodramas, which set them apart from the

[70] A series of debates revolved around the women problems and female stars in *Spy*, penned mostly by women audiences. See "The Female Star in *Spy* Ouyang Shafei is a Rib-shaped Figure" 天字第一号中女星欧阳莎菲是个排骨 in *Shanghai Tan* 上海滩, no.3 (1947): 8; and "The Female Star Ouyang Shafei in *Spy*" 天字第一号女主角欧阳莎菲 in *Chinese Star* 中国明星, no. 1 (1948): 7.

pattern of CFS.[71] Visually, Kunlun inserted war newsreel and documentary footage to create the effect of verisimilitude. Even if there existed melodramatic tropes in plot coincidence, family tragedy or moral contrast, Kunlun filmmakers applied the reflexivity that portrayed their own resistance in the war rather than fabricating heroic espionage stories. In so doing, they engendered an "empathetic identification without vicarious traumatization" among viewers, operating as the "witness position."[72] One of the most impressive and sophisticated reflexive scenes disclosing the war trauma came from the performance of *Lay Down Your Whip* (放下你的鞭子) in the movie *8,000 Li*. Tao Jin (陶金) and Bai Yang (白杨), who themselves performed Resistance drama during their migration from Shanghai to Chongqing, played the leading roles of Gao and Jiang, who threw off their family shackles and joined the third team of the Shanghai Salvation Drama Troupe to sow the patriotic seeds. En route at Suzhou, they enacted a short, but by no means meek, street performance of *Lay Down* in which Gao and Jiang played father and daughter exiled from their hometown in Manchuria, so devastated by the Japanese that they had to flee and eke out a living as low-class street entertainers.[73] Being a sentimental show with the daughter tearily singing of the Japanese brutality, the father's reluctant whipping of his hungry daughter for her poor acting, and the spectators' sympathy towards them and indignation against the Japanese, the reenactment of *Lay Down*, until the end, demystified the melodramatic mode (see fig. 2). Gao yielded the fact "we are just acting" to the crowds who overreacted, and thus

[71] Ban Wang, "Trauma, Visuality, and History in Chinese Literature and Film," in E Ann Kaplan and Wang Ban eds., *Trauma and Cinema*, 217.
[72] Ibid. 10.
[73] Pickowicz provides a discussion on the origin and function of the powerful *Lay Down Your Whip.* See his "Victory as Defeat," 369. 377.

cooled down the uncurbed emotion of both players and audiences so as to channel it to rationality and reflection. This outdoor skit in the film *8,000 Li* uncannily arouses three levels of reflexivity, namely the dramatic, the cinematic, and the autobiographic. The dramatic signified the on-the-spot performance by the father and daughter to confront the trauma and elicit sentiment, as if unfolded in a Stanislavski system (action merging the emotion; actor merging the character). The cinematic incorporated the dramaturgy for the purpose of reenacting, demystifying, and contemplating, and lessened the catharsis and identification by inserting a Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt* (defamiliarization or estrangement effect) in the revealing scene. The autobiographic went over to the actual occurrences of migrating film stars, Tao and Bai included, whose re-performances in postwar cinema not only self-reflected their own traumatic experiences, but allowed the spectator the privilege of articulating the war drama from an individually reflexive, collectively conscious vantage point. These three levels of significance were constantly visible and traceable in Kunlun works, most actors and directors of which shared the same stories as Tao and Bai and integrated various reflexive techniques to register the Anti-Japanese War. In *Spring Couldn't be Locked*, a group of scenarists, directors and actors projected their patriotic passion onto a diegetic Resistance Choir that spread national solidarity and meanwhile reminded viewers of the performativity through the cinematic and autobiographical angle. Similar tropes were also found in the women's self-teaching class in *Three Girls* (丽人行, 1949), a film on the fates of three women (a proletariat revolutionary, a factory worker, and a bourgeois housewife) in occupied Shanghai, and the drama performance of *Brightness* in *Hope in the Human World* (希望在人间, 1949).

Aside from reflexivity, for Kaplan and Wang the open structure or non-narrative narration is another method to position viewers in a witnessing point to handle the trauma representations. This feature also dominates postwar movies. Since private studios like Kunlun had been subjected to tough censorship, the open structure functioned to undo the overdramatic closure and reinforce the connection of wartime trauma and disillusioned victory. In the very end of *8,000 Li*, Gao and Jiang, having endured the ordeal of the War as well as the adverse postwar living conditions of Shanghai, could not afford to raise of their inopportune infant, which symbolized the future. At this maudlin moment, an oversized question mark punctuated the narrative and abruptly ended the movie, leaving much space for viewers to release the overwrought emotion and ponder an alternative path in a corrupt society, perhaps the hope from the CCP (see fig. 3). Similarly, the ending of *Three Girls* did not dwell on the drama of two women's suicides, but instead inserted the female revolutionary's agitating remark, appearing onscreen in big letters "national female warriors; modern new women." This interruption broke the logic of melodrama and envisaged a theme of hope to overcome the traumatic present/past.[74]

The aforementioned different representational modes of melodrama and trauma of CFS and Kunlun studios were actually more nuanced and case-specific than sheerly oppositional or conflicting. CFS's later works did contain reflexive scenes, especially those directed by progressive filmmakers, to reveal the hallucination, displacement, and post-impact of the war trauma (e.g. *Catching the Dream*, 寻梦记, 1949), whereas Kunlun productions were sometimes

[74] Hope is an allegory and Wang Ban demands that it is imperative to "distinguish ideological hopes in the narrative and the facile realization of the hopes in a closure." See his "Trauma, Visuality, and History in Chinese Literature and Film," 233.

credited for their tear-jerking effect as well as tragic stories. However diverse they were, the ensemble works of post-war cinema carved out a distinct path of melodrama with Chinese characteristics that delivered an explicit political message, featured the family entanglement, and grappled with the war trauma simultaneously sentimentally and self-reflexively.

The Fragmentations of Consumerism: the Pin-ups and Popular Periodicals

No matter what time period, there are entertaining and commercial movies that shun meta-subjects or overly serious tropes such as the war of resistance. Eileen Chang (张爱玲) was perhaps the most creative, worldly female writer whose wartime novels and postwar screenplays displayed an apolitical, petty-bourgeois flair. Using her film as a prelude, I shift the focus to the extra-cinematic from this section on. As an attempt to engage with the heterogeneous postwar film culture, this part presents one fascinating facet of the consumerism of Shanghai: popular film periodicals. I examine it through three rubrics, namely the conceptualization of postwar film periodicals, the three main publishing stages (especially the trend from putting up Hollywood pin-ups to spotlighting domestic cover girls), and reassessment of tabloids/mosquito newspapers.

The opening of *Endless Love* (不了情, 1947), written by Eileen Chang and directed by Sang Hu (桑弧), charted a romantic encounter set in Guotai (国泰) movie theater. The first ten-second scene applied an establishing shot to layout Guotai, which was centered in the screen with its modern architectural style, giant movie ads, and the busy traffic by the gate. The next shot was a pan from the Hollywood poster (*Shine on Harvest Moon*, 1944) to the female protagonist Yu lingering in front of a bilingual notice 不日献映/*Coming Soon* of another Hollywood film on

billboards (*Rhapsody in Blue*, 1945) (see fig. 4). Yu then met with Xia, a married businessman, around the booth where Yu sold an extra ticket, via the cashier, to Xia under a rule shown on a bilingual notice 注意：一概不得院内转卖/*Notice: Tickets Handing Prohibited in the Theater*.

The portrayal illustrates the colorful, multi-faceted film culture as well as the reflexivity of a film on movie-going. Cinema has become the indispensible entertainment of Shanghai, especially for the urbanites, and also the best dating venue. The narrative reflects the movie-watching custom, e.g. the scalping around the theater, the bilingual notice, and gendered audiences. It also betrays the charm of Hollywood embedded in a 1947 domestic movie, with two Hollywood posters: one highlighting female stars, the other a musical. Taken as a whole, it is indeed a vivid miniature of postwar Shanghai film culture.

After four years of "sealed life" and not being able to watch any Anglo-American movies, Shanghai audiences swamped any theater showing old, new, or undated Hollywood films, only to relish the long-awaited flavor of romance and spectacle.[75] Hence, when the domestic film enterprises were dwelling on the takeover syndrome, Hollywood movies, together with a handful of British and Soviet films, re-landed with a vengeance in China and agitated a carnival air in Shanghai.[76] The hyper consumerism, once hindered by the Japanese coercion act, ran on like a wild horse. It manifested not only in movie-going, but also in department store shopping,

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[75] Many newspapers and magazines reported such a craze. For instance, in the "Foreword" 前言 of *United Movie News* 联合影讯 the editor stated the dread reality of the Pacific War that canceled out Shanghai audiences' chance to watch Hollywood movies; another article focused on the price hike of Hollywood movie-tickets in September and October, no matter whether old or newly released ones. It cited Tay Garnett's *Back to Bataan* (1943) as a "new picture" versus those old ones, in the 1930s. See it in *United Movie News*, no.1, (1945).

[76] In "Call for Help from Hollywood Distributors: The Severe Starvation of Chinese 'Brain Food'" 谨向好莱坞电影发行商呼救: 中国"精神食粮"荒严重, the author revealed Hollywood swept the local market and audiences' incredible consuming desire for it. See it in the photocopy *Shenbao* 申报, 389-16/1.

ballroom patronizing, nightclub visiting, and radio listening. Given that the first new domestic film did not come out until August 1946, the one-year "vacuum" (1945-46) was the "Best Year of Hollywood" in Shanghai, although the daunting civil war became tenser and the price index went up constantly. Against the inflationary economy and looming war menace, most Shanghai urbanites chose to indulge in the comfort of looseness and dissipation. Cinema (in its broader cultural sense) and film periodicals grew into one of their dependencies, escapes, and even addictions.

After combing through hundreds of palpable magazines, tabloids, newspapers, and press kits, I suggest that Shanghainese craze for movies went beyond immediate movie-watching to off-screen or extra-cinematic consumption such as subscribing/reading film magazines, dating in theaters, visiting studios, appropriating film dialogues, and imitating stars' costumes in daily life.[77] Their habitual and psychological obsession with movies was a nationwide phenomenon, also shared by other city dwellers.[78]

Contextualizing and conceptualizing movie magazines articulates the dynamics of stardom/fandom in film studies. It also shifts the paradigm of production-center to reception end, a process that problematizes the understanding of *national* cinema and in the meanwhile invokes

[77] Reports such as "Special Subscribing Advertisement" 订阅广告, "Dahua Theater Has Become the Supply Station of Streetwalkers" 大华大戏院城了盐水妹的供应总站, "Going into the 'Staff Only' Studio " 走入摄影场"谢绝参观"之门, and "The Bare-breasted Clothes of Hollywood Stars" 好莱坞影星的裸胸服装 revealed this. See them respectively in *Film and Spoken Drama* 电影话剧, no.1 (1948): 1, *Merry Voice* 快活林, no.32 (1946): 6, *Film* 电影, no.8 (1947): 5, and *Movie News* 精华/中外影讯, new no.2 (1946): 3.

[78] Urbanites in Chengdu, Guangzhou, Peking, Hong Kong (成都，广州，北平，香港), and in lower Yangtze Region such as Nanjing, Suzhou and Hangzhou (南京，苏州，杭州) also committed enormous interest and considerate money to films. Various articles reported this phenomenon.

an "imagined community."[79] However, provided that the available movie copies of that era are greatly outnumbered by the lost and sealed ones, reading and therefore analyzing film publications entails an ontological, rather than hermeneutic, significance in Chinese film studies. Therefore postwar film periodicals are windows through which cinema can be *read* in an interdisciplinary, trans-media way.

There were approximately eighty film magazines published in postwar Shanghai, not including the special promotional magazines (特刊).[80] Drawing on Rick Altman's discussion on categorization in general and film genre in particular, I acknowledge the elusiveness of the umbrella term "film magazine" and slippery nature of taxonomy.[81] Yet for a manageable analysis I specify two staple genres: serious film magazines and tabloids/mosquito newspapers (小报 in Chinese). They both reported on film stars, movie synopses/reviews, local audiences' reactions, and filmmaking and exhibition. Each category had its own mission and catered to readers with a range of prices. Both genres were considerably free-standing, independent, and institutionally flexible, but not without discrepancies. Most magazines aimed for critical essays, serious reviews, and sociopolitical engagement, while tabloids were replete with eye-catching

[79] Andrew Higson, in his re-grounding of national cinema, wrote that "the parameters of national cinema should be drawn at the site of consumption as much as the site of production of films." See his "The Concept of National Cinema," *Screen* 30, no.4 (Autumn 1989): 36; Benedict Anderson conceptualized a capitalistic community where the printing culture bound together otherwise scattered people in an imagined way. See *The Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 2006; and Higson, in the year 2000, revisited the idea of national cinema by uncovering how government applies national cinema to publicize the cultural logic beneath. See his "Limiting Imagination of National Cinema," in Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie eds. *Cinema and Nation*. London: Routledge, 2000. 64.

[80] Shanghai Municipal Library 上海图书馆. *Complete Chinese Modern Movie Periodicals' Abstracts* (abbreviated as *CCMMPA*) 中国现代电影期刊全目书志 has listed 91 periodicals with about 50 accessable today. Yet this is based upon the holdings of Shanghai Municipal Library, while it is possible that other city library has other extant film periodicals. *CCMMPA*, Shanghai: Science and Technology Literature Publisher 上海: 上海科学技术文献出版社, 2009.

[81] Rick Altman, *Film/Genre*, London: BFI, 1999. 1-29.

captions, star gossip or scandal, and erotic/exotic stories. To every genre there were exceptions, but put together, these publications commented on and contested each other, reflected the blistering film milieu of Shanghai against the social unrest, and furnished later film scholars and fans alike with a colorful prism through which we are able to probe the whole spectrum of film culture, something we cannot achieve by only watching film prints.

Before I go into the development and stages of film periodicals, an overview of their publishing style and features is in order. Two phases could be singled out: in the year 1946 (22 total periodicals) and 1948 (25) there was a great upsurge of new publications, but for the years 1945 (7), 1947 (12), 1949 (11), the publishing industry underwent a readjustment, resulting in a smaller amount of publications. The primary reason, I propose, for this uneven wave is that the timing of initiating and ceasing a publication roughly overlaps with the overall filmic milieu as well as with the broader socio-economic-political background. In 1946, 4/5 of the publications (17 out of 22) came out in the first half of the year, because they had significantly filled the void left by domestic output.[82] Similarly, in expecting a monetary reform in Shanghai in 1948, a majority of new magazines started between August and November (11 out of 25) when both the filmmaking and movie-going benefited from a short-lived yet preciously stable period.[83] The reasons for relatively fewer publications in 1945, 1947, and 1949, however, were varied and more complex. First the existing film presses with fair reputations preempted the entry of

[82] For example, the opening remark of *The Metro News* 米高梅影讯 "Let's Get Together" 发刊词 introduced the goal of this periodical as being to energize the blank, dreary atmosphere of Chinese cinema since no new domestic production had come out yet. See it in no.1 (1947): 3, 30.

[83] An observer in "Movie Theaters Revived within Price Fixing after August 19" 在"限价声中"(8 月 19 日之后)电影院重见热闹 depicted the restoration of energy in both film exhibition and magazine re-issues after the KMT exerted a new monetary system nationwide. See it in *World Cinema's Supplement* 世界电影副刊, no.1 (1948): 10.

newcomers.[84] Moreover, the postwar disorder in 1945, an all-out civil war in 1947, and the impact of the regime change in early 1949 respectively impeded publishers' investments and enthusiasm. As for the content and style, it can be divided into three stages, with 1945-46 mostly focused on Hollywood news, the second stage between 1947 to 1948 committed more to national cinema, and early 1949 going to two extreme ends, to which I now turn.

Let us start with Hollywood pin-ups. Hollywood news and movies flooded into Shanghai immediately after Japan surrendered. Titles such as *Blue Angel* (1930, dubbed in English) and *The Sweetheart of Sigma Chi* (1933) were promptly advertised by first-run theaters in August and September in *Shenbao* (申报) a renowned newspaper in Shanghai with the longest publishing history (1872-1949). By December, film ads were predominantly for Hollywood pictures, highlighting either Technicolor, war-scenes, or stars.[85] The paucity of fine domestic movies accounted for the turn to foreign products, but more arguably, the craze for Hollywood, regardless of its stunning combat sequences, star vehicles, or melodious songs, betrayed the Chinese people's desire for free choice long oppressed by the Japanese ban on Anglo-American culture and the consumption of foreign cultural products. Not only Hollywood, but British, Soviet, French, Cuban, Indian, Spanish, Swiss, and even newly surrendered Japanese cinema were introduced to Shanghainese, and the list could go on and on as the screening and reading atmosphere became more secured.[86]

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[84] According to the *CCMMPA*, in 1946 and 1948, there were at least 12 and 15 new magazines, while in 1945, 1947, and 1949 there were only 3, 5, and 8 new publications. All numbers excluded the press kits.

[85] See the film ads in *Shenbao* on August 17th, 23rd, and in November and December.

[86] See reports "Ten Stars from China, America, Britain and Soviet" 中美英苏十大明星, in *World Movie Forum* 世界影坛, no. 1 (1945): 7, "The New Pictures of the Soviet Union: Full of Dynamics" 战时苏联新片:充满活力, in ibid 10, "Tokyo will Put on Hollywood Movies" 东京将映好莱坞影片 in ibid, no.2 (1945): 14, "On French

Shanghai regained its reputation as the world's most vibrant metropolis, it was replete with cosmopolitan spirit. Among the hilarious, hectic film culture stood out a plethora of Hollywood coverage. The opening essay in *World Movie Forum* (世界影坛) clearly underlined the importance to study from Hollywood "to achieve higher artistic criterion, an experience learned from 30 years of Chinese film history."[87] Hollywood pin-ups--healthy ladies, hyper-sexy girls, and even child stars--dominated the magazine covers. The re-inaugurating issue of *Movie News* (中外影讯/精华) in September 1945, for example, was a special volume dedicated to Hollywood marriage and divorce, including many controversial figures.[88] A Grown-up Shirley Temple with permanent waves, grinned innocently with her pet dog on the inaugurating cover of *Film* (电影). Deanna Durbin was showcased as Miss Charming, nestled up with her lover in *Hers to Hold* (1943) and wished a Happy New Year to Chinese audiences in the first issue of *Film News* (影讯). The cover image of the tabloid *Stars* (星光) introduced the "topless style" of Hollywood, illustrated with a blonde naked to the waist (see fig. 5).[89] The display of domesticity, romance, and amorousness and the eliciting affect fed the curiosity of Chinese readers.

Special columns such as "Hollywood Pin-ups" and "Different Views on Cover Girls" described, displayed, and disclosed the glamour of Hollywood stars.[90] Besides stars, film

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Cinema" 关于法国电影, in *Movie Weekly* 电影周报, no.3 (1946): 8, "A Challenge to Hollywood Cinema: British Cinema" 向好莱坞挑战(英国电影), in ibid no.6 (1946): 7, "The Election of Famous Hollywood Films in Cuba" 古巴的好莱坞名片选举, in ibid no.14 (1946): 3, "Introducing a Swiss Movie, *Last Chance*" 介绍一部瑞士影片最后的机会, in ibid no.16 (1946): 3, and "Spanish Film Award"西班牙的电影奖金, in ibid no.17 (1946): 5.

[87] "Learn Higher Artistic Standard" 学取更高度的艺术水准, in *World Movie Forum* 世界影坛, no.1 (1945): 1.

[88] See vol. 6, no. 5 (1945).

[89] See the cover of no. 1 (1946) of *Film* 电影, no. 1 (1946) of *Film News* 影讯, and no.1 (1945) of *Screen Weekly* 电影周报 respectively.

[90] See no. 7 (1946) of *New Hollywood* (新)好莱坞 and no. 23 (1946) of *Movie News* 精华/中外影讯.

magazines also furnished Shanghai urbanites with the latest news replete with Art Deco graphic designs and illustrations, the bilingual reportage (English/Chinese), and a modernist taste that introduced the U.S. film industry as a modern war machine, as portrayed in *Endless Love*.[91] Local readers, however, were not passive consumers digesting everything offered without comprehension. Rather, they participated actively in discussion on "what could be learned from Hollywood movies," showed critical visions of star personas like Charlie Chaplin, and even imagined creating a Hollywood all-star cast for re-enacting Chinese novelist Ba Jin's masterpiece *Family* 家.[92] Most of them still wished to see the fact that Chinese cinema could catch up with, if not compete against, world-leading Hollywood.

Hollywood pin-ups became paired with no less charming domestic cover girls for most film magazines as the filming environment in Shanghai grew stable and a great many new domestic movies occupied the screens. Actually it was a push-and-pull process that the high visibility of Chinese cover girls and wide circulation of domestic movies mutually solidified each other to boost individual market share.

Unlike the year 1945 and 1946 when a majority of magazines and tabloids gave first priority to Hollywood, later publications balanced the reports from home and abroad and were very

[91] Titles such as "The Contributions of Hollywood to WW II" 好莱坞对二战之贡献 and "Star's Decommission" 影星复员 illustrated the relation between war and Hollywood. In addition to exposure of star images that displayed a modernist style in their attire, makeup, and accessory, illustrations of American movie palace, drive-in house, new 16mm cameras, and advancement in color movies all showcased the lure of modern. See the first in *Movie Weekly* 电影周报, no.7 (1946):5, and second in *West Point* 西点, vol.1, no.5 (1945): 7.

[92] In a series of lottery-attached forums "What We could Learn from Hollywood," 我们从好莱坞影片中能获得什么 readers enthusiastically partook of discussions that feature, for instance, "The Problems of Chaplin's New Movies" 卓别林新片的问题, see it in *World Movie Forum* 世界影坛, no.1-2 (1945): 15. Also see readers' responses to "The Ideal Cast for *Family*" 理想中家的阵容, in *Movie Weekly* 电影周报, no.8 (1946): 15.

attentive to the topic of veterans and rising starlets of China.[93] Take *Movie* (电影), a serious film magazine spanning 1946 to 1949, for example. In the first half of 1946 not only did Hollywood pin-ups dominate the front pages, but the reports and discussions of Hollywood's war-time ad-hockery, application of new technologies, and model studio Warner Brothers overwhelmed domestic news. Yet, since the editorial note "Augmenting the Domestic Reportage to 50%" (加大对国产,一半一半) in December 1946, gradually local news on the most bankable female stars, Miss Shanghai's joining filmmaking and controversial *Funi* actresses took up more room.[94] Roughly starting from the middle of 1947, all cover girls were Chinese with only one exception, Susan Hayward.[95] A similar trend could be discerned in *Merry Voice* (快活林, Feb. 1946 to Aug.1948), *Shanghai Recreation* (上海游艺 Aug. 1946 to Dec. 1947) and other presses, too. Even *The Metro News* (米高梅影讯 Aug. 1946 to Aug. 1947), one of the few periodicals solely dedicated to Hollywood (and to MGM), had to change its style and language from reports in English to Chinese to accommodate the demands of local readership and "ordinary fans," and to promote its liaison with Dahua Theater (大华大戏院) and its sophisticated earphone/headphone system (see fig. 6).[96] The number of female domestic stars, compared with Hollywood counterparts, was much more than that of male stars, and many magazines did use gendered

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[93] Those stars returning from Chongqing elicited more attentions among local readers, "four famous actresses" (四大名旦 Qin Yi, Bai Yang, Shu Xiuwen, Zhang Ruifang 秦怡，白杨，舒绣文，张瑞芳) being the most enchanting ones. See "Who are Four Famous Actresses of Chongqing" 谁是重庆四大名旦, *Da Guanyuan* 大观园, no.23 (1946): 7.

[94] See it on no. 7 (1946): 2.

[95] Ouyang Shafei 欧阳莎菲, Ouyang Feiying 欧阳飞莺, Huang Zongying 黄宗英, Chen Juanjuan 陈娟娟, Wang Danfeng 王丹凤, Bai Guang 白光, Baiyang, Du Lizhu 杜骊珠, Gong Qiuxia 龚秋霞, Jiao Hongying 焦鸿英 are featured.

[96] Other periodicals exclusively on Hollywood were *New Hollywood* (1946), *Western Movie Pictorial* 西影 (1948), and *Western Movie Stories* 西影小说 (1949). For the reason and detailed discussion of the change of *The Metro News* 米高梅影讯, see "Foreword" 卷首语, vol. 2, no. 2 (1947).

tactics to appeal to certain reading groups.[97]

In 1949, before the PLA "liberated" Shanghai in May, both filmmaking and publishing declined. The socio-political chaos might explain the short lived and intermittent release of the magazines, but the running away of a sizeable number of businessmen as well as the migration of a number of film professionals, mostly to Hong Kong and to a lesser degree to Taiwan, impaired both publishing quality and quantity.[98] Amidst the chaotic and uncertain air film periodicals were polarized: some made a "progressive" turn, becoming more grass-rooted, nation-conscious, left-leaning, and Russian-informed.[99] The rest, however, were tempted to publish sensational features on sentimental serial stories, stimulating action movies, and femme fatales, analogous to Ben Singer's definition of melodrama.[100] An example of this is "Daughter of the Landlord in Liberated Area" in which a pathetic, mistreated lass from a wealthy family faced sexual abuse and physical torture from the CCP cadres, a scene and trope that might be

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[97] In "Such an Article that Goes so far as to Praise Kunlun's *Maiden's New Grievance*" 竟然有称赞昆仑新闺怨的文章, the author mentioned the movie reflected women's plight nowadays and its appeal to the female worker-cum-mother in Shanghai. See it in *The Press Kits for Guotai's New Pictures* 国泰新片特刊, no.18 (1948): 3. Female periodicals such as *Women* 女人 and *Females* 妇女 stated many how-tos clearly for women in terms of film, which provided hints for this issue. For instances, "Bai Yang's Husband is Working" 白杨的丈夫是工作 in *Women* 女人 uncovered Bai's dilemma between family and career. See it in no.2 (1948): 6. "The Tips for Seeing a Movie" 看电影的技巧 in *Females* 妇女 suggested to female audiences the yardsticks for selecting both an entertaining and enlightening film, one of which was to see not only the director or star involved, but positive film reviews. See it in no.5 (1947): 18-19, no.6 (1947): 24-25.

[98] The businessmen included Zhang Shankun, Li Zuyong 李祖永, Luo Xueqian 罗学谦, all helping shape the outlook of Hong Kong and Taiwan film industry. "The Press Feels Bittersweet Today," 出版界今天悲喜交加 mourned the bleak reality of sharp decrease of sales due to the loss of personals and capitals but meanwhile foresaw a brighter future after the civil war stopped, see *West Point* 西点, vol.2, no.34 (1949): 16.

[99] Besides the progressive journal *Film and Drama Series* continued its criticism on Hollywood and hail for Soviet's model, *Western Movie Pictorial* and *Mercury Lights* 水银灯, both once praised Hollywood for its lavishing style, debased Hollywood's decadence so as to eulogize films from the Soviet.

[100] The tabloid *Tai Mountain* 泰山, published from March 1946 to March 1949, was a representative one, while *Shanghai Tan* 上海滩 and a serious film magazine *Picture News* 电影杂志 also demonstrated such propensity. Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity*.

reminiscent of the notorious *The Birth of a Nation*.[101] This was mostly apparent in film tabloids and pictorials, the goal and style of which determined its apolitical, profit-driven characteristics.

As Rey Chow contends, in a different context, "the coexistence of an unprecedented realism and a novel melodramatization means that, from the very earliest moments, the modes of identity construction offered by film were modes of relativity and relations rather than essences and fixities."[102] The twin film publications (the realistic, serious film magazines and melodramatic, hyperbolic tabloids) in postwar Shanghai constitute a dynamic and irreducible episode in Chinese film history. Putting the two genres side by side, we can argue that one shoulders responsibility, and the other hawks entertainment. Tabloids, or *mosquito newspapers* in a more derogatory sense, had an established history and played an indispensable role in "Shanghai modern."[103] Recent scholarship, with the turn to cultural studies and popular media, has produced thought-provoking research. In his seminal book, Perry Link maps out the ecology of popular fiction in the 1910s and 1920s (especially the Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies genre) as a bifurcated branch of May Fourth canonical works.[104] In addition to Link's efforts, other projects also provide insights on the theory and history of tabloids which argue for a systematic

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[101] "Daughter of the Landlord in the Liberated Area" 地主女儿在解放区, *Tai Mountain* 泰山, March 25, (1949): 1.

[102] Rey Chow, "Film and Cultural Identity," in John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson eds. *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. 168.

[103] See Leo Ou-fan Lee's explication of how modernity and modernism organically developed in a treaty port, Shanghai in its 1930s and 1940s, although he ended his delineation in 1945. See his *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999. Parallel themes can be found in Lydia Liu*, Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity-China, 1900-1937*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995; Andrew Jones, *Yellow Music: Media Culture and Colonial Modernity in the Chinese Jazz Age*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2001; and Shumei Shih's *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China, 1917-1937*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

[104] See his *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies: Popular Fiction in Early Twentieth Century Chinese Cities*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981.

study of this understudied subject.[105]

As yet no serious publication has dealt with the film tabloids in the postwar period. Since tabloids were specially designed for urbanites, salary men, and readers with time and leisure, their sizeable copies, up-to-date content, and fervent pursuit of inside scoops assured representation of a collective mentality, be it distortion or immediate reflection. Most tabloids were issued on a weekly basis so that they could offer the latest film news, something monthly magazines failed to handle. They also enjoyed broader circulation, highlighted allegedly exclusive, exploding "inside scoops" (内幕), and were more graphic.[106] The table of contents for the No. 15 issue of *Southeast Wind* (东南风), an exemplary tabloid in Shanghai, suffices to illustrate the point with lurid headlines such as "Hollywood advocates murder, too" (*The Postman Always Rings Twice*), "Hu Ping has chosen to be a Buddhist nun," "Zhao Dan is going to marry," "Hu Feng goes to Southeast Asia alone," and "Mao Zedong struggles with his marriage to Lan Ping (stage name of Jiang Qing)."[107] The selection of one particular issue from a typical tabloid might be considered arbitrary, nevertheless it reflected the extent and interest of both publishers and readers. The names mentioned above were film stars or celebrities and the reportage hilarious and eye-popping. This kind of reportage did offer useful and even reliable

[105] See Bonnie S. McDougall et al eds. *Popular Chinese Literature and Performing Arts: In the People's Republic of China 1949-1979*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984; Perry Link, et al eds. *Unofficial China: Popular Culture and Thought in the People's Republic*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1989; Edward M. Gunn's *Unwelcome Muse: Chinese Literature in Shanghai and Peking 1937-1945*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980; and Chang-tai Hung's *War and Popular Culture: Resistance in Modern China, 1937-1945*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.

[106] See titles in *Merry Voice* 快活林, a typical tabloid, "The Insider Story of Feng Zi's Leaving For Hong Kong" 凤子去港内幕, no.15 (1946), "The Inside Story of Huaguang Film Company" 华光影业公司内幕, no.35 (1946), and "The Inside Story of Nanking Theater's Bankruptcy" 南京大戏院破产内幕, no.36 (1946).

[107] See it in *Southeast Wind* 东南风, no.15 (1946).

information because the articles, taken as a whole, delivered how stars, in Christine Gledhill words, "sell meanings and affects."[108] They also disclosed the hidden secrets readers hoped to dig up (murder, career path, marriage, and hobby) from stars' *off-screen* lives, and a multi-dimensional picture of Shanghai's cultural circle, something a serious journalist might feel too kitsch or vulgar to pen. Most of the exaggerated articles, however, deviated from facts since they proved to be fabricated news or factoids, clarified by later issues and other presses. It really depends on how we, as critical readers, approach, interpret and contextualize them.

The overall style of tabloids was diverse, gossipy, trivial yet informative, and above all sexy. One key characteristic of this genre is "只关风月，不论政治," literally, *exclusively on "wind and moon," no discussion on politics*. *"Wind and moon"* in a Chinese literary context denotes not so much a natural phenomenon as romantic, amorous affection, and even licentiousness.[109] In an ever-changing, insecure Shanghai, tabloids abounded to anchor the beating hearts with rosy dreams and fairy tales coupled with disastrous misfortunes of stars and the exaggerated bewilderment of celebrities. When reading through various tabloids, locals, by compensation and displacement, psychologically and physically vented their anxiety at a turbulent time. The names of tabloids were specially oriented towards this function to soothe and to provide enjoyment: *Southeast Wind*, *Pictorials of Artistic Sea*, *Spring Sea*, *Tea Talk: Charming*, *Grand View Garden*, *The Spring and Autumn of Home and Abroad*, and *Fragrant Snowy Sea* (东南风，艺海画报，春海，茶话：美丽，中外春秋，香雪海). In terms of content, for example, even the report of the

[108] Christine Gledhill, "Signs of Melodrama," in Christine Gledhill ed. *Stardom: Industry of Desire*. London: Routledge, 1991. 215.

[109] In classical works like *A Dream of Red Mansions* 红楼梦 and *The Harem of Hsi Men* (or Jin Ping Mei 金瓶梅) there permeated the phrase of *fengyue*.

CCP, unlike the propaganda imposed by the KMT, was laced with "sharing wives," "comfort women soldiers," and the "awful enlistment movement."[110]

Another meaningful contribution was the tabloids' diversion from film-text centered discourse to one focused on personnel and studio. Fewer movies/plots were mentioned in tabloids, but reportage of stars, directors, investors, new technology and film studios, mostly with vivid photographs cartoons, and doggerel, permeated pages, were fleshed out an otherwise one-dimensional screen world. Looking away from flat screens, this "deep focus," enabled by both serious magazines and kitsch tabloids, substantially enriches our understanding of postwar Chinese film culture, and hence facilitates a trans-media, cross-fertilized vision of the hyper consumerism of the time, fragmented though it may be.

Trans-media Landscape: Film Industry, Theater, and Film as the Social Event

Having read through numerous film periodicals, I became aware of the revival of postwar Shanghai cinema and discovered a compelling phenomenon; cinema topped the local entertainment, which was indeed a synergic ecology. This section begins with a paradox by canvassing how and why cinema surpassed theater as the first choice for the public even as the institutional boom and aesthetic sophistication of cinema, I argue, were intimately interrelated with and propelled by the ancillary entertainments such as drama, music, radio and singing/dancing. In explicating this industry synergy, I go on to unpack the trans-media nature of Shanghai cinema in the late 1940s, which has hitherto received insufficient scholarly attention.

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[110] See, for example, "Sharing Wives-ism in Liberated Area" 共妻主义在"解放区," in *Shanghai Tan* 上海滩, the March special issue, (1949): 5.

The last part articulates how Shanghai cinema, as the most conspicuous recreation industry, grew into a series of social events in which various contesting socio-political forces registered their claims and values.

To weave a trans-media (or "crossmediality" as Zhang Yingjin calls it) landscape is to exercise a comparative, interdisciplinary approach to Chinese film studies.[111] The postwar era documented the revival of Shanghai cinema, stimulated by music and printing industries and facilitated by mechanical reproduction and mass distribution. Hence, I investigate the interplay of cinema, drama, music, broadcast, and above all singing/dancing in the late 1940s to map out the synergistic ecology.[112] It was phenomenal for the literati that cinema outmatched theater as the most conspicuous means to enjoy life and propagandize ideas, provided that theater, in Shanghai, Chongqing, and other cities alike, was the most popular form in the wartime period.[113] There were numerous titles in postwar magazines lamenting the deterioration and incompetence of drama, superseded by omnipresent cinema: Lu Chong's "The Disaster of Drama Movement" (陆翀, 剧运厄运), Kong Lingjing's "The Crisis of Drama Movement Has Almost Gone" (孔另境, 剧运的危机快过了), Cheng Zhi's "How to Save Drama Movement" (程之, 挽救剧运之

[111] Zhang Yingjin's "Comparative Film Studies, Transnational Film Studies: Interdisciplinarity, Crossmediality, and Transcultural Visuality in Chinese Cinema," *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 1, no. 1 (2007): 27–40; in the inaugurating issue of *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, the first academic publication dedicated to Chinese film studies in English, scholars such as Paul Pickowicz, Laikwan Pang, and Jeroen Kloet also voiced for a comparative, interdisciplinary, cross-boundary methodology to Chinese film studies.

[112] Zhang Yingjin aptly traces the genealogy of studies on Chinese film history first from the perspective of politics, then art and finally culture, the last approach being inspired by the cultural history and Foucauldian archaeology of knowledge. See his "Introduction," in Zhang ed. *Cinema and Urban Culture in Shanghai, 1922-1943*. 3-4.

[113] The reasons why theater topped cinema in the War differed in unoccupied and occupied regions: in Chongqing filmmakers were forced to theater because of the limited supply of filming resources; while Shanghai cinema, although it enjoyed an anomalous boom from 1937-1941, was harassed by the Japanese, resulting in an outflow of film crews to join the drama front, a less-controlled, more flexible field.

道), and Hang Zhou's "What Had Drama Actors Done" (杭舟，剧人们做了些什么).[114]

In order to clarify the seemingly sum-zero relation of drama and film, it is imperative to position their entanglement within Chinese film history and its unique cultural tradition. Historically, the earliest Chinese films were adaptations from traditional Chinese opera: *Conquering Jun Mountain* (定军山, 1905 in Beijing) from Peking opera, and *Zhuang Zi Tests His Wife* (庄子试妻, 1914 in Hong Kong) from Cantonese opera. The genealogy suggests that every time cinema, as a new media, broke new ground, it would return to the theatric medium for inspiration. When the talkie became a novelty, the first Chinese Vitaphone film *Songstress Red Peony* (歌女红牡丹, 1930) featured four Peking opera numbers dubbed by renowned star Hu Die (胡蝶) rather than daily conversations, just like Hollywood musicals used song in place of dialogue.[115] *White Gold Dragon* (白金龙, 1933) was the first talkie in Cantonese, with the plot and mise-en-scène copied from the eponymous Cantonese opera. The first color movie made in Shanghai *Regrets of Life and Death* (生死恨, 1948) was the film version of a famous Peking opera scenario of the same title. Both opera and film starred Mei Lanfang (梅兰芳), too.[116] Hence, the simplified, naive association of cinema and theater, as the Chinese term *Yingxi* 影戏 or *Yingju* 影剧 indicates, could not provide the nuances and specific answers to rather

[114] Lu's in *New Film And Drama* 新影剧, no. 1 (1947): 17, Kong's in *Film And Drama Magazine* 影剧杂志, no. 2 (1949): 5, Cheng's in *Film And Drama Magazine* 影剧杂志, no. 2 (1949): 14, Hang's in *Film And Drama Weekly* 影剧周刊, no. 3 (1946): 15.

[115] Vitaphone and Movietone are two early ways of adding sound. Vitaphone records the sound on a separate disk, and entails simpler technology, but it could be mismatched with the movie screening. Movietone applies a sound-on-film technology, and requires a more sophisticated technology to secure the synchronization of sound and image. See Cheng, *History of the Development of Chinese Cinema*, 161-168.

[116] It seems an axiom in Chinese film history that *Regrets of Life and Death* is the first color movie. Yet several Hong Kong color movies, albeit made in the U.S. during WW II, are more eligible to be the first "Chinese" color movies. I discuss this in my Chapter on Hong Kong Cinema.

complicated situations.[117]

It is extraordinary that cinema came hand in hand with long-cherished opera when the innovative concoction eased the technological risk, secured investment, and reached a wider spectatorship. Precisely because drama was the linchpin upon which each cinematic breakthrough depended, film scholars traced an "operatic mode" in Chinese cinema.[118] To Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar, this operatic mode counteracts the mimetic or realistic assumption, entails an alternative means of Tom Gunning's "cinema of attraction," and above all is "the living core of a distinctive Chinese cinema."[119] It provides a provocative way to revisit Chinese film history and aesthetic. Yet I would argue that there are comparative, generic, generational, and economic factors inherent in this issue. As for the comparative factor, other nations also appropriated national cultural traditions to integrate the imported cinema, Japanese *haiku* and Italian opera being two examples. Thus, the operatic mode for Chinese cinema might not be naturally nationalist. Second, the evolution of the genre of melodrama or the melodramatic mode, along with the operatic mode, also brought in musical and operatic expressions to offer attractions to interrupt "continuity style" and realism. Third, in the Chinese context, the formation of this operatic mode involved the contribution of the first generation of Chinese

[117] Suffice it to say that many a film magazine and essay simply applied them to refer film and/or drama. To name but a few examples after 1945: *Film and Drama Weekly* 影剧周刊, *New Film and Drama* 新影剧, 影剧, *Film and Drama Series* 影剧丛刊, *Film And Drama Magazine* 影剧杂志.

[118] Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar, *China on Screen*. 47. For other valuable pieces in English, see David Bordwell, "Transcultural Spaces: Toward a Poetics of Chinese Film," in *Post Script* 20, no. 2 (2001): 9–25; Sek Kei, "Thoughts on Chinese Opera and the Cantonese Opera Film," in Hong Kong Urban Council ed. *Cantonese Opera Film Retrospective*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Urban Council, 1987, 14-17; and *Opera Quarterly* compiled a series of articles on Chinese opera films, especially those made in the 1950s and 60s in mainland China, see its vol. 26 Issue 2/3, (Spring/Summer 2010).

[119] Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar, *China on Screen*, 47-8.

filmmakers (such as Zheng Zhengqiu, Zhang Shichuan, and Shao Zuiweng 郑正秋，张石川,邵醉翁) who established their careers in traditional opera. For domestic investors and producers the mixture of cinema and drama was also a result of economic consideration and commercial strategy. In short, film and drama unfolded in both a competitive and collaborative way, and their interplay manifests the malleability and metamorphosis of both media. Therefore scholars should be aware of not only the aesthetic dimension, but industry strategy, technological consideration, and socio-political factors that have been shaping their interrelation.

Both film and drama in postwar Shanghai, either as a business or an art form, did draw on the strength of each other and were actually interdependent. Many an actor, especially those back from Chongqing who had more theater experiences, could straddle both stage and screen without any difficulty. A number of theaters were designed or renovated for trans-media performances, such as Huanghou Theater (皇后戏院).[120] Shanghai audiences aspired to see stars well-versed in more than one profession, much like contemporary cinephiles crave for versatile stars. Yet the degeneration of drama movement[121] and its being overwhelmed by cinema begged a series of investigations, from the angles of price, personnel, tax, and spectatorship.

In terms of ticket price, the high cost of personnel and interior decoration of dramatic performance lent it no competitive edge compared to the mechanically reproduced, massively distributed, and lightly transported cinema. One film ticket was 10-20% cheaper than a theater

[120] See the report "Huanghou Theater Switched into Movie House" 皇后大戏院改为电影院, in *Merry Voice* 快活林, no. 37 (1946): 2.

[121] See, for instance, "Theaters of Spoken Drama All Enacted Plays Made in Chongqing" 话剧院均演"重庆戏," in *Da Guanyuan* 大观园, no. 5 (1946): 4.

ticket.[122] Since making money was easier in cinema than in theater, many “drama people,” be they in Peking opera or other local operas, moved to more bankable filmmaking, thereby causing a considerable shortage of personnel in theater.[123] Institutionally, the Shanghai municipal government and its Social Bureau (社会局), out of the anxiety about a politically progressive drama movement and the recognition of a commercialized, profitable cinema, forced the confiscated theaters to convert into movie houses and imposed a 30% entertainment tax on film and 40% on drama.[124] The fourth factor that contributed to cinema’s predominance came from the local audiences, who displayed more enthusiasm towards color movies, Hollywood blockbusters, and Chongqing stars, all of which were inaccessible to them under the Japanese occupation. Even though cinema outshone drama in post-war Shanghai, there was still a spacious passage for two-way traffic and the revival of Shanghai cinema was inseparable from the influx of theater. Despite the fact that the overall postwar cinescape betrayed a realist aesthetic with lifelike characters, movies like *A Showy Life* (浮生六记, 1947), *A Bitter Life of an Actress* (甦凤记, 1947), *An Actress in Tianqiao* (天桥, 1947), *Regrets of Life and Death*, *New Year Sacrifice* (祥林嫂, 1948), *Anecdotes of an Actor* (二百五小传, 1949) and *Quintessence of Shaoxing Opera* (越剧精华, 1949) highlighted idiosyncratically expressive musical numbers, drawn from diverse traditional dramas, let along some other movies that were directly adapted from

[122] See “The City Council Readjusts the Ticket Price of Cinema and Drama” 影剧票价市政府重调, an article published in Chengdu; but it revealed the price comparison of Shanghai, *Movie Times* 时代电影, no. 11 (1946): 7.
[123] 言慧珠, who won the “Peking Opera Queen” of 1946, turned to filmmaking later for a more promising career. See “Yan Huizhu Is Not a Film Talent” 言慧珠并非电影人才 in *Shanghai Tan* 上海滩, new no. 9 (1947): 7.
[124] See an article that compares the tax rate in Shanghai and Chengdu: “The City Council Decrees: Increase the Tax on Movie Theaters” 市政府下令: 增加影院捐税, in *Movie Times* 时代电影, no. 18 (1946): 1.

well-established plays performed during WW II.[125]

Similarly, music, broadcast and singing/dancing all advanced the ascendancy of cinema and brought in the tie-in allure for film. The popularity of cinema, in return, increased the sale of gramophonic records, opened up a visual venue for radio stars, and showcased fashionable singing and dancing. One exemplary case was the craze for Hollywood songs, in movies, in printing, and on radios.[126] No wonder the Hollywood musical genre and its startling, flamboyant style were the most intoxicating subjects among postwar Shanghai urbanites. It received indigenous adaptations by Chinese filmmakers, and manifested live in local dancing halls and night clubs.[127] The domestic film/singing star Zhou Xuan (周璇) is a telling example of transmediality. During wartime Shanghai Zhou was often compared with Japanese film and singing star Li Xianglan (李香兰 Yamaguchi) and her participation in a series of *funi* movies stirred up both scolding and empathy in the years that followed. However, profiteering bosses and producers had little interest in clarifying her reluctant collaboration with the Japanese. They

[125] Guotai's popular espionage-cum-melodrama movie *Spy No. One*, for example, was adapted from wartime drama *Wild Rose* (野玫瑰).

[126] Between 1945 to 1946 when domestic movie productions were still in preparation, a large ratio of imported Hollywood movies was the showy, easy-to-follow musicals and a great number of film reports were dedicated to Hollywood songs, singers, and the musicals. This trend continued after 1946. For instance, "Dangerous Musicals" 歌舞片的危险性 translated the director Norman McLeod's discussion of the tough work involved in producing musicals, drawn from his experiences with *The Kid from Brooklyn* (1946), see it in *West Point* 西点, vol. 1, no. 12 (1946): 10. In *Film*, a film magazine that lasted from 1946 to 1949, almost every issue would feature Hollywood singers, musicals and ads for the most recent song lyrics, Bing Crosby (1st issue), airlifted pop song lyrics (2nd issue), how-toes of musicals (3rd issue), and etc. In *Weekly Movie News* 星期影讯 (1946), introduction of Hollywood songs constituted indeed an independent section.

[127] One of the earliest postwar domestic movies, *Flying Orioles* (莺飞人间, 1946), especially emulated Hollywood musical style and the director Fang Peilin 方沛) deliberately vented his ambition to beat Hollywood. See "Fang Peilin Was Disaffected by American Movies" 方沛霖不服美国片, in *Merry Voice* 快活林, no. 36 (1946): 5. According to many tabloids, film stars and filmmakers loved to frequent dancing halls and night clubs and exercised the latest singing/dancing pieces often seen/heard in Hollywood movies. See "Ying Yunwei Crazily Danced at Paramount" 应云卫狂舞百乐门, in *Starlight* 星光, new no. 16. (1946): 11; "Carnival Overnight: Reports From Christmas Dancing Event of Film Crew" 狂欢通宵，影人圣诞舞会记盛, in *Film Weekly* 每周电影, no. 1 (1949): 24.

simply wanted to "package" Zhou to wholesale songs in order to boost tickets and promote movies. In order to exploit Zhou's controversial fame, film moguls in both Hong Kong and Shanghai seized every chance to expose her to headlines. They hired five composers to exclusively write songs for Zhou, made musicals to showcase her stardom, broadcast every singing piece, published lyrics and musical scores for her songs, and they tacitly approved of the tabloid rumors about Zhou's secret lovers.[128] Even though she was elected as "the artistic queen" in 1946 and her versatility enhanced the box office takings, her fate was stained by the so-called collaboration, which eventually led to her mental breakdown in the early 1950s.[129]

It was not unusual to hear a number of female stars demonstrate their vocal skill, and exclusively designed "singing movies" bequeathed many popular film theme songs, some of which are still heard today.[130] In addition to Zhou Xuan, Bai Hong, Bai Guang, Yao Li, Ouyang Feiying, Sha Li and Gong Qiuxia (白虹，白光，姚莉，欧阳飞莺，沙莉，龚秋霞) were the most glittery female stars who sang in cinema, on radio and in bars. Singers with a "camera face" also "jumped onto screen."[131] Besides beautiful singing girls, radio stars also received ample chances to join in filmmaking. The comedy actor Han Langen (韩兰根), who once collaborated with the

[128] Movies starring Zhou Xuan all obtained impressive theme songs, ranging from modern songs, folk pieces to operatic music. See reports, for instances, "Zhou Xuan Was So Popular in *Nanyang*" 周璇红遍南洋 in *Film* 电影, no.15 (1948): 11, "Zhou Xuan in Distress and Hesitation" 苦闷,彷徨中的周璇, in ibid, no.18 (1948): 10, and "Five Composers Exclusively Write Songs for Zhou Xuan" 五位作曲家专为周璇写歌, in *Qingqing Film* 青青电影, no. 4 (1948): 5.

[129] "The Competition of Shanghai Artistic Queen of 1946: Zhou Xuan as the Film Queen" 1946 年上海艺术皇后竞选:电影为周璇, in *Shanghai Tan* 上海滩, no. 4 (1946): 1.

[130] Very few men were packaged to sing on screen, a phenomenon to be explained by further studies. I use the term "singing movies" (e.g. *Two Musical Girls* 柳浪闻莺, *Story of a Street-singing-girl* 十步芳草 and *Spring Couldn't be Locked*) to differentiate from Hollywood musicals that featured singing and dancing. The dancing part, which required more techniques and investments, was rarer in Chinese film.

[131] See, for example, "Singing Stars Jumping onto Screen" 跃上银幕的歌星们, in *Movie Fan Magazine* 影迷俱乐部, no. 2 (1948): 3.

Japanese, started his career first in broadcast as a detour before re-launching his acting and producing life.[132] The film *Sorrows of a Bride* (新闺怨, 1948), in order to authentically portray Shanghai sing-song girls who often imitated the cinematic style and desired a celebrity career, hired up to thirty dancing girls, blurring the boundary between singing and filming, fandom and stardom, virtuality and reality, and onscreen and offscreen.[133] Cinema had such a transmedia enchantment that the Shanghai municipal government had to censor certain "improper" movie songs, and that the Yonghua Film Corporation of Hong Kong placed an advertisement in reputable film magazines offering a reward of one billion *fabi* (the official KMT currency) for any charming musical score.[134]

That cinema rose to become the prime entertainment of Shanghai accordingly gathered more than sufficient public attention. As an extension of the transmedia discussion, I approach the popularity and controversial impact of cinema from the perspective of social event. In her *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film*, Miriam Hansen theorizes "public life," rather than public sphere, to situate the spectator more as a social audience inflected with gender and class.[135] Drawing upon public life while shifting the focus from spectatorship to film consumers and practitioners, I borrow the concept of the social event to understand how postwar cinematic incidents punctuated otherwise continuous film history and destabilized otherwise

[132] "Han Langen's Farewell To Silver Screen" 韩兰根告别银幕, in *Da Guanyuan* 大观园, no. 23 (1946): 3; "Han Langen's Comic Broadcasting Program" 韩兰根滑稽播音, in *Merry Voice* 快活林, no. 4 (1946): 8.

[133] "Thirty Dancing Girls Participated the Filmmaking of *Sorrows of a Bride*" 舞女 30 人拍新闺怨, in *Kunlun Film News* 昆仑影讯, no. 13 (1948): 12.

[134] "Banned Popular Songs" 被禁的流行歌曲, in *Merry Voice* 快活林, no. 53 (1947): 3; "Yong Hua Bid One Billion *Fabi* for Musical Score" 永华 1 亿元求歌谱, in *Qingqing Film* 青青电影, no. 6 (1948): 8.

[135] Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991. 11-13.

balanced relations between the fictitious and the real to be in conversation with the broader socio-political backdrop. In the Chinese context, happenings that were deemed as events could be translated figuratively as *fengbo* (风波 waves of wind) and the following four film events (*fengbo*) showed how "the norm of cinema" was ruffled and how various contesting socio-political forces registered their claims and values. These events were the following: the first Shanghai beauty pageant (上海小姐选美 October 1946), "the *Phony Phoenixes* incident" (假凤虚凰事件 July 1947), the "Jindu Theater bloody incident" (金都戏院血案 July 1947) and the film crew strike (电影职工罢工事件 November 1948).[136] These film related events all exerted enormous social impact, a fact that proved the extreme popularity of cinema and also its vulnerability to a destabilizing environment.

The beauty pageant, with an alleged aim to collect money from patrons for the refugees migrating from *Subei* (苏北),[137] was not, strictly speaking, a "film" incident. Yet film stars' initial enthusiasm and then collective withdrawal manifested not so much the vanishing aura of cinema as a reverse fact: cinema, for many filmmakers, was an art detached from such vulgar and hypocritical activity.[138] Interestingly enough, the "afterlives" of champions of "Miss Shanghai" were virtually involved in cinema, either out of voluntary desire or solicited by

[136] What constituted a film event really depends on the author's approaches. The movement to prosecute *funi* film people was surely a heated postwar affaire. Events like this are either covered elsewhere in this chapter or necessitate more archival materials to discuss.

[137] *Subei* designates the northern part (or the region north of Yangzi River) of Jiangsu province, adjacent to Shanghai, where there was constant passage connecting the Metropolis Shanghai in terms of manpower, capital, resource, and cultural forms. Yet exactly because a majority of *Subei* people started their career in rather "dirty, tough, tiresome" fields like rickshaw, prostitution, barber, cook, Shanghai locals tended to look down upon them and used *Subei* often in a deriding, satirical way. See Emily Honig, *Creating Chinese Ethnicity: Subei People in Shanghai, 1850-1980*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992; Meng Yue, *Shanghai and The Edges of Empires*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006.

[138] See, for example, "Zheng Junli Will not Elect Bai Yang as Miss Shanghai" 郑君里不选白杨做上海小姐 in *Southeast Wind* 东南风, no. 8 (1946): 7.

directors.[139] Xie Jiahua (谢家骅), the second "Miss Shanghai" of the debutante group, was persuaded into cinema, in which her sociable proclivity and outgoing personality found comfort. Her debut in *Rumours in the Air* (满城风雨, 1947, Hong Kong) was paired with the 1946 "Miss Hong Kong" Li Lan (李兰).[140] Film stars' worry about the "overexposure" to the public and their aspiration of a pure, unpolluted film world proved true in Xie's ensuing years, yet in a pathetic way. Locked at home away from any social life by her wealthy husband, Xie committed suicide with an overdose of sleeping pills, in much the same way as the famous star Ruan Lingyu (阮玲玉) did in 1935. In the 1920s and 30s, film stars often participated in the beauty contest to gain more public attention, whereas in the postwar era they refrained from being "contaminated" by such an overly commercial form. Yet the charming screen world was indeed such a magnet for those outsiders that they had to exchange their lives for exposure.

It seemed futile to imagine and run a pure, self-sustained cinema in postwar Shanghai. One year later, when Wenhua released *Phony Phoenixes*, it incurred waves of protest, blockage, and riot nationwide because of the "derogatory" portrayals of barbers and "caricatures" of *Subei* people, according to the Barbers' Association, Barbers' Union, and the Yangzhou (a city of *Subei*) Local-place Association (理发公会，理发工会，扬州同乡会).[141] On July 11, 1947, the preview day, armies of barbers enclosed the Grand Theater to protest the insult, an event that soon

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[139] The Peking opera queen Yan Huizhu 言慧珠, dancing queen Guan Minli 管敏莉, and sing-song queen Han Jingqing 韩菁清 were, in varying degrees, all involved into cinema in the later years.

[140] "The Inside Story on Xie Jiahua's Performance in Filmmaking" 谢家骅拍电影内幕, in *Film* 电影, no. 13 (1947): 14; and "The Second 'Miss Shanghai' Xie Jiahua's Silver Screen Life Was Over" 上海二小姐谢家骅上银幕告吹, in *Qingqing Film* 青青电影, no. 8 (1947): 5.

[141] A lot of *Subei* people, due to their similar dialects and geographical proximity, would have a master-apprentice relation and the barber vocation was actually peopled with *Subei* fellows.

escalated into a riot inviting the intervention of the police. Although later on Wenhua, mediated by the Shanghai Social Bureau, compromised by deleting three "humiliating scenes," the film historian Zhiwei Xiao reminds us this incident illustrates the power of the protest culture.[142] In addition, I propose three more interpretations regarding the prosperity of postwar Shanghai cinema. The grand protest turned out to be a blessing in disguise for Wenhua: *Phony* received a great amount of media coverage in and out of Shanghai, became a household name, and enjoyed sellouts.[143] Hence it consolidated the dominant position of cinema among local people and helped turn cinema into the most topical event. Secondly, the director Huang Zuolin (黄佐临), having realized its popularity, dubbed the movie in English and sold copies to the U.S. and Britain, thereby adding translation and transnational facets to this film event.[144] The third observation concerns unnoticed elements that contributed to this distinct film event. Its leading star Li Lihua's previous collaboration with the Japanese allowed the newspapers another topic to protest.[145] The local-place force also manifested the lobby power of social groups and civil society in later Republic China, and the movie's different fates in other cities (banned, cut, or kept intact) suggested a localized policy in film circulation as well as regional autonomy against a central system.[146] In short, the protest against *Phony Phoenixes* ironically made it an instant hit

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[142] Xiao Zhiwei, "Social Activism during the Republican Period: Two Case Studies of Popular Protests against the Movies," in *Twentieth Century China* 25, no. 2 (2000): 55.

[143] For example, the established *Qingqing Film* 青青电影 published a special kit exclusively dedicated to this movie to cater to the readers' interest. See *Phony Phoenixes* special issue 假凤虚凰特辑, (July 25, 1948).

[144] It was the earliest dubbed movie by Chinese people into a foreign language, so to speak. See "*Phony Phoenixes* Goes to Overseas" 假凤虚凰出洋, in *Qingqing Film* 青青电影, no. 1 (1948): 12; and "An Oversea Chinese at New York Reviews *Phony Phoenixes*" 一个纽约华侨评价假凤虚凰, in ibid, no. 37 (1948): 7.

[145] "How Does Li Lihua Became Popular" 李丽华是怎么成名的 revealed her collaborating life, which unexpectedly spurred the sell of *Phony Phoenixes*. See *Chinese Star* 中国明星, no. 1 (1948): 12.

[146] As for *Phony Phoenixes*' different fates in exhibition, see "*Phony Phoenixes* in Northern China" 假凤虚凰在北

in many regions and its controversy made people thirsty to see how "bad" it was.

Not every public event was distanced from the politics and ended in negotiation. The "Jindu incident," happened on July 28 and caused nine death and nineteen injuries. Although it was a conflict between Shanghai Municipal police and military police over the control of film theaters, this bloodshed, nevertheless, indicated the popularity of cinema. Jindu Theater, along with Jincheng and Culture Auditorium (金城，文化会堂), was associated with the Guotai film conglomerate and hence always premiered Guotai movies.[147] On 7/28 Guotai's big-budgeted movie *A Tragic Marriage* (龙凤花烛) continued its show here, with long lines waiting for tickets. After seeing this amidst humid and scorching weather, Liu, the officer from the Work Bureau (工务局) walked into the theater with his friends and asked the ticket inspector Zhang for an excess ticket. Zhang's adamant refusal fueled a quarrel and invited an unexpected amount of onlookers. This caused a massive traffic jam that resulted in the interventions first from policemen and then from gendarmes. Had *A Tragic Marriage* not received such a fervent reception and the waiting people accumulated excessively, the crowd would not have blocked the traffic. Had cinema not been growing into the most conspicuous and profitable business coveted by various forceful interest groups, the police would not have stepped in to "protect" the theater and quash the problem. Perhaps even the boss of Guotai and the director of *A Tragic Marriage* could not foresee that the popularity of a movie could have such a life-and-death outcome.

方, in *Qingqing Film* 青青电影, no. 8 (1947): 11, "*Phony Phoenixes* at Guangzhou" 假凤虚凰在广州, in ibid, no. 4 (1948): 16, and "*Phony Phoenixes* at Fuzhou" 假凤虚凰在福州, in ibid, no. 12 (1948): 15.

[147] "'Greater China' Switches to a Middle Ground in Distributing New Movies" 大中华发行新片改走中间路线 discusses three theater lines in screening domestic movies, Jindu, Jincheng and Culture Auditorium being one of them. See it in *Pictorial of Artistic Sea* 艺海画报, new no. 10 (1948): 6.

Even within film circles, the popularity of movies caused uneven distribution of money and power. While theaters reaped the most profits by showing both national and foreign movies, the production studios, due to their larger investment, clumsy size, and overstaffed system had problems adjusting to inflation and maintaining strong cash-flows. Yet film crews in production lines could not afford to strike or protest compared with exhibitors, who could locate alternatives (Hollywood or British movies) if domestic studios ceased filmmaking.[148] Therefore whenever ticket prices could not match the skyrocketing inflation in Shanghai, the employees of theaters, organized by Unions, went on strike. On July 1 1946, there was already a "voluntary closure" among theaters to request an increase of the ticket price and autonomy to set the price, although the latter part was turned down by the Social Bureau for the reason that "movies, as the most popular and accessible entertainment, were necessities of local residences. The price should be decided by the government."[149] On November 18 1948, a citywide strike of film crew (over 1000 participants), led by theater workers and mechanics from unions, called for a concomitant increase with the inflation hike, a stormy event that lasted three days and forced the Social Bureau to cede. Akin to the cause of the "Jindu incident," this strike was not so much a political uprising as a socio-economic movement resulting from the entrenched contradicting interests between government and commercial groups. The Social Bureau took pains to curb the price increase so as to create a "harmonious" atmosphere, while film crew gave more priority to their

[148] "The Increasing Price Affects Producers" 物价涨影响制片商, in *Qingqing Film* 青青电影, no. 36 (1948): 2.

[149] See "Shanghai Ticket Price Increased Again; Theaters Closed to Request for Recreation Tax Relief" 上海票价又涨,停业请求减免娱乐税, in *Movie Times* 时代电影, no. 16 (1946): 11; and "The Special Issue for Theaters Automatic Close for Tax Relief on July 1st" 7 月 1 日各个戏院自动停业请免专辑, in ibid, no. 17 (1946): 9.

own income than social stability. The event proved to be a sum-zero action, with worker leaders imprisoned, 52 theaters closed for three days and the Shanghai Financial Bureau's loss of much tax.[150] This event, as a pinnacle of the "protest culture" in Shanghai, revealed cinema's potential impact on entertainment, edification and propaganda for various parties. These four film related events taken together demonstrated the power of the postwar movie industry to shape and intervene in the "public life" of Shanghai.

Shanghai Connections: Guotai as an Example

Although Guotai's employees also partook of a series of protests, Guotai remained institutionally stable and continued to enforce its "non-intervention" policy. Since Guotai gained its reputation as the most representative and remarkable film company in postwar Shanghai, my last part of the Shanghai chapter investigates its short splendor as a fine example of previously discussed discourses. I also chart out its interconnectedness with Hong Kong and Taiwan that defined postwar Chinese cinescape and meanwhile helped establish distinct cinematic paths.

As one of the most productive, strategically flexible studios, Guotai survived the takeover chaos and was the earliest private studio to restart production in late 1946. However, it received an orthodox verdict in Chinese scholarship as a "two sided" studio-- being backward, reactionary (because of its compliance with the KMT's bureaucratic capitalism), but sometimes progressive (owing to intermittent serious movies made by leftwing filmmakers).[151] Labeled as such, most

[150] See "The Inside Story of Movie Houses' Close: A Three-day Strike out of Labor Relation" 电影院停映内幕: 一共 3 天,劳资爆发, in *World Film Supplements* 世界电影副刊, no. 4 (1946): 11; and "The Close of Movie Houses Caused Losses From Every Party" 电影院停业,各方损失大, in *Yihai Pictorial* 艺海画报, new no. 9 (1948): 14.
[151] Cheng, *The Development History of Chinese Cinema*, vol. 2. 278.

Guotai movies were simply thrown into the trash can without a chance to explore its industry practices and experience. As stated in the studio section, its heads, the Liu brothers (the legendary film family of China), founded the Guotai movie empire in the 1920s, straddled both production and exhibition ends, and were deft at networking with the high officialdom during both Japanese and KMT's times. Institutionally, Guotai assumed a classic Paramount-like top-down management, with all decisions emanating from the Liu brothers, who implemented "business first, ideology aside" philosophy and mediated between disparate parties.[152] When the Shaw brothers (邵氏) were immersed in the war debris and sought a proper investing place, the Liu brothers firmly rooted in Shanghai, spearheaded the industry by obtaining a chain of theaters, and expanded the distribution to China's inland, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Southeast Asia.

The two-sided studio label first resulted from the commercial and pro-KMT works made by two rightwing producer-cum-directors Xu Xinfu and Zhou Boxun (徐欣夫, 周伯勋) who maintained a close relation with the government and also oversaw all the production units. The Liu brothers also supervised many of their own productions, guiding them to highlight entertainment at the expense of a poignant ideological penchant. Whenever sensing a political relaxation, they, however, allowed leftwing filmmakers to point fingers at the social corruption, gender inequality, and government incompetence. *Frailty, Thy Name is Woman* (弱者，你的名字是女人, 1948) best exemplified this.[153]

[152] Liu brothers not only maintained a close personal relation with the KMT's cultural official like Pan Gongzhan 潘公展 and Zhang Daofan 张道藩, but befriended leftwing ideologists such as Tain Han, 田汉 Yu Ling 于伶 and Hong Shen 洪深. For the discussion on Paramount, see Thomas Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, 353-54.

[153] Its screenwriter is Ouyang Yuqian 欧阳予倩 and one of its directors Hong Shen, both having been progressive veterans who openly criticized the KMT.

Guotai's controversial boom lay in its star vehicles and genre peculiarity. In order for a sensational advertising effect, Guotai did not hesitate to solicit the so-called infamous *funi* stars like Zhou Xuan and Wang Danfeng (王丹凤) to join the company. The Liu brothers went even further to embrace them into Liu's family either as the fostered daughter (Zhou) or daughter-in-law (Wang) and to create shining roles for them. Apart from this kinship strategy, Guotai also effectively forged a starlet team and spared no expense to publicize them through its own journal called *Guotai New Movie Special Kit* (国泰新片特刊).[154] As for genres, Guotai's top brand was the "pink movie," stemming from its box-office hit *The Pink Bomber* (粉红色的炸弹, 1948). Pink movies, contrary to serious films, conveyed to audiences a soft-porn-like style, with erotic scenes and sensational plots, all displayed via revealing female stars. Pink movies perfectly catered to Shanghai urbanites as well as Southeast Asia diasporas in a turbulent time. Hence Guotai encouraged sensational, suggestive directors such as Tu Guangqi, Yang Xiaozhong 杨小仲 and Xu Xinfu to crank out "pink bombs" for the market, some profitable, some not. Under the hallmark of pink movies, Guotai developed the espionage genre, period drama, and family melodrama to fit its entertaining agenda. The diversity and maturity of genres fed the anxiety-ridden people in postwar Shanghai and allowed Guotai the ability to make series of movies at a lower cost.

Guotai, even as the most maneuvered, resourceful and networked studio, could not hide from its destiny when the political climate was on the threshold of a drastic change in late 1948,

[154] Female starlets like Wu Jinghong, Shu Yi, Cang Yinqiu (吴惊鸿，束夷，仓隐秋) and male stars like Feng Zhe, Yan Hua (冯喆，严化) were promoted.

after the CCP won major battles. The Liu brothers, after enduring the left movement in the 1930s and Japanese invasion in the 1940s, conceived of "a middle ground" by not inflaming any party. A consequence of their "non-intervention" principle unexpectedly led to the divided typology of Chinese cinema. Pressured by the takeover by the CCP, Guotai let go its contracted filmmakers who fled to Hong Kong, thus leaving left glittery names such as Zhou Xuan, Tu Guangqi and Yan Hua full space to bring the "pink" tradition and entertainment spirit into Hong Kong cinema.[155] More importantly, the Liu brothers, due to their close relation with Chiang Kai-shek's powerful son Chiang Ching-kuo who ruled Shanghai in late 1948, dispatched a location team in late 1948 to Taiwan, the KMT's shelter, where a new motion picture base was founded in the 1950s.[156] This team shot *The Legend of Ali Mountain* (1949), which turned out to be the first Taiwanese film under the KMT reign. The significance of filming *Turmoil* at Taiwan cannot be overstated. Not only did it thematically focus on the confrontation of Han people and Taiwanese aborigines and feature the folk song *High Mountain,* labeled as the "postcard" of Taiwan, it also bequeathed a complete film unit to Taiwan as well as Guotai's producing methods and organizing structure.[157]

Nevertheless, the main part of Guotai remained in Shanghai as the Liu families felt hesitant to run away from this cosmopolitan-cum-localized city where four generations had prospered. Liu Zhonghao had doubts about the nature and practice of the CCP, but he bore the imaginary to

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[155] See the report "Guotai in the Past Few Years," in *Film And Drama Magazine* 影剧杂志, no. 4, (1949): 9.

[156] See "Guotai Rents Studio at Taiwan to Shoot Movies" 国泰在台湾租棚拍片, in *Film Weekly* 每周电影, no. 5 (1949): 9; "Film Companies Moved to Taiwan" 影片公司搬台湾, in ibid, no.4 (1949): 7.

[157] These figures include director Zhang Che 张彻 who mastered at martial arts film in the 1960s and 70s, stars Wu Jinghong, Li Ying 李影, Lan Tianhong 蓝天虹, and other supporting technicians.

do business in an authoritarian, revolutionary regime. His hope ran afoul of the CCP's huge construction of a state-owned and red cinema which emulated the CCP's cinematic experiment in Manchuria during the civil war.[158] As a result, Guotai's first-rate studio was absorbed into a nationalized, monolithic studio system, its star system transformed into a revolutionary star program without any emphasis on personal aura, and its genre production shifted into the worker-soldier-peasant formula.

Guotai, therefore, functioned as an exemplary case for the studio interplay between Shanghai, Hong Kong, Manchuria, and Taiwan, each having carved out its own cinematic path in the late 1940s that crystallized the taxonomy of Chinese cinema.

[158] Even if Guotai produced politically correct movies, it still was targeted as an unqualified private studio. See "Guotai Has Changed Production Way" 国泰改变制片方针, in *Qingqing Film* 青青电影, no. 22 (1949): 3.

Chapter Two: The Fiery Phoenix: A Picture-perfect Hong Kong Cinema

Introduction:

Postwar Hong Kong cinema revived against all odds and its resurgence has parallels to that of Shanghai cinema. Both cinemas have similar recovery stories: Hong Kong and Shanghai resumed film-making in late 1946 in the aftermath of Japanese occupation. The film industry in each place competed fiercely with Hollywood and gradually fostered a localized market. Both locales were deeply involved in postwar political turmoil, but maneuvered to establish a solid industry base, develop various genres, and showcase enchanting stars. There was also active reciprocal business interaction between Hong Kong and Shanghai cinema during the period 1945-1951. Yet Hong Kong, a British entrepôt far to the south of metropolitan Shanghai and more adjacent to both the Canton province and Southeast Asia, had cultivated a distinct colonial history, Cantonese dialect, and a Southern Culture that all vividly demonstrated their vigor in the local cinescape. In this chapter I explore the postwar Hong Kong cinema on its own merits and without losing sight of its contribution to networking with other key locales such as Shanghai, Hollywood, Canton, Southeast Asia, and Taiwan.

The thematical framework and conceptual paradigms of film aesthetics, industry practices, and theorization of modernity remain the same in this chapter as in the others for the sake of coherence and consistency. My emphasis, however, is more on textual analysis and paracinematic discourse, which have not been thoroughly studied by film scholars, owing in the first place to the inaccessibility of film materials and second to a critical prejudice, both of which

are addressed here. Paracinematic taste or "trash aesthetics," according to Jeffrey Sconce, "involves a reading strategy that renders the bad into the sublime, the deviant into the defamiliarized and in so doing, calls attention to the aesthetic aberrance and stylistic variety evident but routinely dismissed."[1] Even though paracinema usually describes "debased" genres or avant-garde cinema,[2] I apply this concept to postwar popular Hong Kong movies, whose aesthetic complexity, generic diversity, technological novelty and cultural uniqueness have long been dismissed as third-rate (compared to coeval Shanghai classics), if not discarded as complete trash. A fine example of this is the martial arts film, a popular, lowbrow genre largely excluded from postwar Shanghai for its "sheer meagerness and anachronism." Yet it splendidly entered into Hong Kong by retaining its entertainment value and merged with local culture. Hence, when audiences nowadays are thrilled by Jet Li's Huang Feihong (黄飞鸿 Wong Fei-hung, a Cantonese boxer whose exploits are set in late Qing/Early Republican China) movies, few realize that this martial arts series, with over 100 iterations so far, started as early as 1949 and received not laudations, but criticism and rancor.[3]

Somewhat like Taiwanese cinema, whose century-old complex history has often been reduced overwhelmingly to certain auteur and art-house works, the films of Hong Kong gain international recognition only after the 1970s thanks to the "kung fu heat." The earlier local movies, mostly dubbed in Cantonese, churned out by small studios, and financed with minimal

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[1] Jeffrey Sconce, "'Trashing' the Academy: Taste, Excess, and an Emerging Politics of Cinematic Style," *Screen* 36, no. 4, (1995): 388.

[2] Joan Hawkins, *Cutting Edge: Art-Horror and the Horrific Avant-Garde*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

[3] Hereafter I include the Cantonese spelling for acknowledged names in the parenthesis. For the latest discussion of Huang, see Po Fung and Lau Yam eds., *Mastering Virtue: The Cinematic Legend of a Martial Artist*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2012.

funds, were deemed by contemporary audiences as tasteless pastimes at best and not worth studying or preservation. This prejudice obtains currency in both spectatorship and scholarship nowadays. In light of this, it is imperative to treat "lowbrow, decadent and coarse" Hong Kong films made in the postwar years seriously. It was an era when the local cinema blossomed.

David Bordwell's *Planet Hong Kong* introduces Hong Kong's major filmmakers and their styles to western readers, enabling them to enjoy a globally popular film industry. Yet he candidly states in the preface: "perhaps out of stubborn naïveté, I thought that I had something original to say."[4] His subtle regret for the book's historical insufficiency is offset in Stephen Teo's *Hong Kong Cinema*, a well-researched book with profound background information and insightful templates (e.g. Father/Son relations).[5] The earliest monograph on Hong Kong cinema *Window on Hong Kong*, published in 1977, had already done some justice with a balanced analysis of film industry and aesthetics.[6] After these seminal works, many other books on Hong Kong cinema from differing perspectives appeared: genre (action, kung fu), auteur (Wong Kar-wai, Ann Hui), movement (new wave, post-1997), and its border-crossing.[7] *The Cinema of Hong Kong: History, Arts, Identity* merits a mention in that it endeavors to historicize the industrial myths by seeking answers back to the bygone era.[8]

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[4] David Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.

[5] Stephen Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimensions*. London: British Film Institute, 1997.

[6] Ian C. Jarvie, *Window on Hong Kong: A Sociological Study of the Hong Kong Film Industry and Its Audience*. Hong Kong: Centre of Asian Studies, 1977.

[7] Instances are David West's *Chasing Dragons: An Introduction to the Martial Arts Film.* New York: I. B. Tauris, 2006; Pak Tong Cheuk's *Hong Kong New Wave Cinema (1978-2000).* Bristol: Intellect Books, 2008; Wimal Dissanayake's *Wong Kar-wai's Ashes of Time*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003; and Law Kar and Frank Bren's *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-Cultural View*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2004.

[8] Poshek Fu and David Desser eds. *The Cinema of Hong Kong: History, Arts, Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,, 2000.

The contributions mentioned notwithstanding, these books evaded the postwar era, a period remaining rough-and-tumble and even backward in the eyes of most researchers. In the meanwhile, the Hong Kong International Film Festival and Hong Kong Film Archive (abbr. as HKIFF and HKFA hereafter) have published retrospective issues on a variety of topics that provide the most comprehensive account so far.[9] Drawing upon previous books and these special issues, and over 110 rare film prints from this period, I approach the Hong Kong cinescape in this chapter through three intertwined themes: aesthetics (genre and auteur), industry (studio and trans-mediality), and stardom (specifically the stardom of Li Lihua).[10]

In what follows, I examine a typical film that illustrates how these discourses engage and negotiate with postwar Hong Kong cinema. *The Fiery Phoenix* (火凤凰, 1951)[11] represents an ego-centric, art-for-the-sake-of-art painter, Zhu Keqi who first separates from his decadent, feudal family and then abandons his Western purist dream for a progressive, altruist cause. He pursues his neighbor Mei Liyi, who also escapes from a suffocating family to commit herself to educating the masses. When they get married, Liyi's mentor, Mr. Chen, wishes for them to become phoenixes, reborn from the ashes and "serving the people." Their marriage turns out to

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[9] Titles related to postwar period include: *Cantonese Cinema Retrospective (1950-1959)*, 1978, *Hong Kong Cinema Survey (1946-1968)*, 1979, *A Study of the Hong Kong Swordplay Film (1945-1980)*, 1981, *A Comparative Study of Post-War Mandarin and Cantonese Cinema*, 1983, *The Traditions of Hong Kong Comedy*, 1985, *Cantonese Melodrama (1950-1969)*, 1986, *Cantonese Opera Film Retrospective*, 1987, *Changes in Hong Kong Society Through Cinema*, 1988, *The China Factor in Hong Kong Cinema*, 1990, *Overseas Chinese Figures in Cinema*, 1992, *Mandarin Films and Popular Songs: 40s-60s*, 1993, *Cinema of Two Cities: Hong Kong-Shanghai*, 1994, *Early Images of Hong Kong & China*, 1995, *Fifty Years of Electric Shadows*, 1997, *Border Crossings in Hong Kong Cinema*, 2000. These books are all edited and published by Hong Kong: Hong Kong Urban Council (abbr. as HKUC)

[10] Hong Kong had made approximately 800 movies from 1946 to 1951, most of which were lost over time. HKFA can only provide about 100 titles for viewing due to various reasons while the other extant 40 copies are preserved at local TV stations or by individuals. Hence by no means is my watching list complete.

[11] All English translations of film titles of Hong Kong, if not indicated, are from *Hong Kong Filmography* (abbreviated as *HKF*) for coherence. See Winnie Fu ed. *HKF*, vol. 2 (1942-1949) and vol. 3 (1950-1952).

be a mistake, ruined not only by gender inequality but by the spouses' increasingly divergent interests. Keqi's male chauvinism and artistic obsession cause his exhibition to be a fiasco and finally leave Liyi no choice but to leave home and devote herself to laborers' children. In despair, Keqi is persuaded to design for *The Voice of Freedom*, a local kitsch tabloid. Once again, his aspiration is shattered by brash commercialism and only at that moment does he recall the urge from Liyi to wholeheartedly join the masses. Much inspired, Keqi spares food for beggars when roaming the street and begins to appreciate the work of a cobbler living downstairs whose shoe-mending noise used to annoy him. He eventually walks to Liyi's classroom and feels invigorated by the poor kids' lively sketches drawn directly from their experience rather than from dogma. The film ends with the reunification of the couple and Keqi's self-remolding via labor. Four years after the Shanghai classic *The Spring River Flows East*, *Fiery Phoenix* also delivered a progressive social message from the angle of family vicissitudes. Both films symbolically bespeak of the resurgence of postwar Shanghai and Hong Kong cinema, reborn from the ashes of warfare.

The Fiery Phoenix inherits the tradition of family melodrama from Shanghai. Hence the chapter's first section will discuss the delicate aesthetics of a picture-perfect Hong Kong cinema from the vantage points of genre, auteur, language, and local flavors. In the diegesis, the film strives to contrast socially responsible art with other kitsch forms. Moreover, its production studio was 50th Year Motion Picture (五十年代影业), a transitional yet influential film cooperative (合作社) dedicated to serious filmmaking and it anticipated major left-wing studios in Hong Kong: The Great Wall, Phoenix, and Xinlian (长凤新).This will lead to my discussion

of the film industry in the second part in terms of its sophisticated yet partisan studio system and its trans-media connection with broadcast, or "radio plays." What fascinates audiences most is the film's star-studded cast,[12] especially the star Li Lihua (李丽华), credited as the "evergreen tree" of the silver screen, whose film career lasted over four decades, straddling both left and right campaigns and spanning Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Hollywood. I will contextualize the myths around Li in Part Three by probing into how she ingeniously eschews the stigma of "collaborator," conjures up a cross-regional star image, and in so doing enacts an amazingly wide range of roles for local and transnational spectators.

A Picture-perfect Cinema

After 1945 Hong Kong was not handed over to the Republic of China, the victorious nation, but to Great Britain due to the international trade-off. The British colonial government, once having shamefully surrendered Hong Kong to Japan, returned with prudence, trying best to maintain the status quo. Under such a relatively relaxed circumstance arose the sprawling film production/exhibition in Cantonese, an endemic localized recreation that would have probably faced elimination in a united, ultra-national China.[13] As a matter of fact, before Hong Kong cinema received its international reputation in the 1970s and 80s for its "kung fu heat" and "new-wave" movement, local films were usually disparaged as "Cantonese Remnants" (粤语残

[12] When *The Phoenix* was premiered at Shanghai, it received highlighted coverage and film aficionados loved Li even if the film was set as an example of "petty bourgeois taste." See *Qingqing Film* 青青电影, no. 17 (1951): 3, 15-20.

[13] In the 1930s when the KMT enjoyed its golden decade, the central government already exerted systemic control over the Cantonese cinema, but its decree to terminate local cinema met extreme resistance from Hong Kong and ended up in vain due to the more pressing war. See Xiao Zhiwei's "Constructing a New National Culture: Film Censorship and the Issues of Cantonese Dialect, Superstition, and Sex in the Nanjing Decade," in Zhang's *Cinema and Urban Culture in Shanghai, 1922-1943*, 183-199.

片).[14] The term, so to speak, had multiple meanings: temporally it discredited old films, not differentiating those with merits or historically significant ones. It also marked the line between Cantonese and Mandarin productions, thereby discriminating against the former as low budget, coarsely cast inferior art with a casual attitude. This derogatory phrase exposed a hierarchy in reception: Cantonese films existed as a residual in the market, far below the deluxe Hollywood and Mandarin films. However, the postwar Hong Kong film industry, as diverse and dynamic in that time as any, produced both Mandarin classics and ample Cantonese masterpieces for various social strata. In this light, I balance the examination of both Mandarin and Cantonese productions and unpack local film aesthetics from genre, auteur, and language.

Similar to the prosperity in postwar Shanghai, Hong Kong cinema resurrected swiftly from the devastation of the war (see Table 2-1 for the number of feature films made in both Shanghai and Hong Kong).

Table 2-1[15]

	Year 1947	Year 1948	Year 1949	Year 1950	Year 1951
Shanghai	38 films	74	34	46	30
Hong Kong	90 films	143	179	191	171

Due to this remarkable rate from a tiny island, many Shanghai commentators jealously

[14] This term is generally accepted even among HongKongers. For example, *A Century of Light and Shadow* (百年光影), an official documentary on Hong Kong cinema, has a subsection called "All Cantonese Films Are Bad?" (粤语片皆残) to dispel the cliché. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-YzPU1qgmxg&feature=relmfu (Accessed Jul. 05, 2012).

[15] See Yu Muyun's introduction in *HKF*, vol. 2 (1942-1949) and vol. 3 (1950-1952).

designated Hong Kong cinema as "potboiler" or "a cinema in a dead end."[16] This condescending attitude of Chinese towards Hong Kong cinema derived partially from the advanced technology and state-subsidy that had spoiled the Chinese film industry. It also revealed mainlanders' "central plains syndrome," their elitism, and their Sino-centric mentality, especially to peripherals such as Hong Kong, Taiwan and Southeast Asia.[17] That the Shanghainese resided in the metropolis and enjoyed the latest Hollywood pictures ironically bred a sense of insularism and indiscriminate superiority. Yet history has proved that Shanghai cinema was too late in 1949 to discover that some genres were re-fashioned in Hong Kong with local variations. Large amounts of capital were resituated in Hong Kong, and certain auteurs fled to this more resourceful, safer locale.

The martial arts genre was one of the staples in Hong Kong that Shanghai failed to mass-produce. Since the Chinese central government was critically weakened in the war and entrenched in the postwar takeover, Hong Kong found leeway to make entertaining, lowbrow films that seemed anachronistic in Shanghai.[18] Therefore the martial arts genre, mistakenly associated with a backward culture, began to take root and mutate in Hong Kong. Basically two subgenres, namely swordplay and ghost-spirit films (刀剑,神怪片), dominated the screen.[19] Among them stood out one sub-genre, female knight-errant films that actively negotiated with

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[16] "How Cantonese Cinema Committed Suicide" 粤语片怎样自杀, *Film* 电影 (published in Guangzhou), no. 10 (1948): 1; "Cantonese Cinema in Dead End" 粤语片末路, *Qingqing Film* 青青电影, no. 12 (1947): 3.

[17] Fu, *Between Shanghai and Hong Kong*, 87.

[18] The first wave of Hong Kong to crank out the martial arts and folklore films was in the 1930s, which ended in a premature decline first because of the purification initiative from the Chinese authority and later owing to the War.

[19] The fist-to-fist kung fu pictures emerged much later for a more realistic demand and fast-paced social rhythm. Yu Muyun, "A Preliminary Study of Cantonese Martial Art Cinema," in HKUC ed., *A Study of the Hong Kong Swordplay Film (1945-1980)*. Hong Kong: HKUC, 1981, 87-106.

gender dynamics, national sentiment, *Wen-Wu* 文武 dichotomy, and visuality-aurality.

The earliest postwar martial-arts directors were almost all Northerners (北方人), not Hong Kong natives.[20] Like their more eminent protégés such as Zhang Che and Hu Jinquan (Chang Cheh 张彻, King Hu 胡金铨), these film-makers from the north migrated to this safer yet alien land to avoid turbulence and continue working. Ren Pengnian (任彭年), an established director honored as one of the first generation filmmakers, fled Shanghai in 1937 and contributed to Hong Kong cinema not only his talent and diligence but his lifelong partner-cum-wife, the star Wu Lizhu (邬丽珠). This couple cooperated and pioneered in postwar Hong Kong swordplay films. Among them, *The Lady Escort, Part Two* (女镖师续集, 1947) was their first postwar endeavor, formulated from their prewar hit *The Lady Escort*. It anticipated their enduringly beloved subject: the female knight-errant (女侠). *Lady Robin Hood* (女罗宾汉 1947) is their only extant film of this sub-genre that exemplified Hong Kong swordplay films.[21]

Lady Robin Hood, as the name suggests, centers on a Robin-Hood hero, albeit set in ancient China and impersonated by a female, who robs corrupt offices to relieve the poor and helps her father Luo, the banished loyal minister, forestall another minister Situ's plan for usurping the throne. As one of the first Chinese female martial arts stars, Wu played Lady Robin Hood in her forties, performing archery, swordplay, and several stunts of jumping and chasing. Trained in

[20] Northerner is fairly a loose term for those who live in and come from any place that is to the north of Hong Kong. Except for people from Canton, which is adjacent and considered as the hometown to Hong Kong, those from Shanghai, Beijing, and other cities alike are all called Northerners.

[21] Their female-errant films included *The Heroine* (女勇士 1948) *The Big Fight Between Hero Copper Hammer and Madam Nine Flowers* (铜锤侠大战九花娘 1948), *The Mysterious Heroine* (神秘女侠 1949) and *The Lady Escort and the Knight with the Whip (*女镖师三戏神鞭侠 1949).

Jingwu Sports and Wushu Association (精武体育会) at Shanghai in the 1920s,[22] all her performances, thanks to Ren's dexterity, mark a more realistic visual impact and entail a rapid-fire narrative.[23] This film's style set the trend for a local martial arts genre in that it differed from the traditional theatrical display of martial arts (e.g. Cantonese opera) and later informed more localized Huang Feihong films. The most intriguing fact about this film is its double disguise. First all Chinese actors play Westerners amidst a graphic Western mise-en-scène (e.g. Gothic castles and Victorian costumes) that nevertheless implies a "mandate of heaven" in the plot. Second, Wu disguises herself as Robin Hood, wearing two moustaches and turbans that made her resemble Douglas Fairbanks in *The Thief of Bagdad* (1924). The disguise and ambivalence validated the couple's experience and skill in incorporating diverse foreign and domestic elements into their pictures. At a figurative level, it also reflected the vacillating emotion of those northerners who had to sojourn and work in an alienated Hong Kong. Their collage of south and north, national and international, imagined and reality sold extremely well in Southeast Asia where Chinese overseas shared similar feelings of displacement and split belonging.[24]

A few of Ren and Wu's works, such as *Bloodshed in a Besieged Citadel* (血染孤城 1948, and Wu also played the male hero in it), did confront the Sino-Japanese war, but the majority were adapted from Chinese folklore and opera set-pieces, featuring the courage and skillfulness

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[22] Shen Ji 沈寂, *Shanghai Film* 上海电影, Shanghai: Wenhui Press 上海：文汇出版社, 2010.

[23] For the genealogy of the female knight-errant genre, see Bao Weihong, "From Pearl White to White Rose Woo*: Tracing the Vernacular Body of Nüxia in Chinese Silent Cinema* 1927-193" in *Camera Obscura* 20, no. 3 (2005): 193-231.

[24] "Ren Pengnian Shot *Northeast Hero* to Cater to Southeast Asia" 任彭年拍关东大侠迎合南洋口味, *Qingqing Film* 青青电影, no.25 (1948):2.

of a female knight-errant. Since the swordplay genre attracted northern talents and gained more popularity in Hong Kong, it underwent a process of blending and renovation. The most notable feature is the nationalism and patriotism conveyed via fighting, as both *Lady Robin Hood* and *Bloodshed* exemplify it.[25] From an aesthetic perspective, the swordplay films also invited martial arts masters from both northern and southern schools who displayed their individual fighting styles, with the northern school displaying more *Wushu* routines and traditional opera techniques, and with the southern pursuing more realistic combat effects. A related characteristic rested in the thematic confluence of *Wen* (literacy, seen in folklore, Peking or Cantonese Opera performances, and literary adaptations) with the tradition of *Wu* (martial arts).

The Kung Fu Couple (宏碧缘 1949), directed by a veteran Wang Yuanlong (王元龙) from Shanghai,[26] presents this *Wen-Wu* dialectic. Its story was drawn from an eponymous Peking opera. It also enacted the spirit of *Xia* (侠 knight-errant), who uses *Wu* for the righteous course regardless of personal interest.[27] The excitement of this film resided as much in the execution of *Xia* in punishing the villain and pursuing the romance, as in the innovation of the audio-visual display of martial arts. Its plot revolved around the heroine Bilian and the hero Hongxun (碧莲 宏勋), who become involved in a case of bullying. *The Couple* features Yu Suqiu (于素秋)

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[25] This bond was first consolidated in Hong Kong in the late 1930s when the national crisis against Japan was so severe, and it was carried forward more boldly by those Northerners who filmed "National Resistance Films" 国防电影.

[26] Another director is Chen Huanwen 陈焕文, who had been active in film industry for more than 100 films. Unfortunately, his career was unknown to us owing to very scant extant materials.

[27] To fully discuss the definition, development and its representation of *Xia* in cinema is beyond the scope of my project. However the best series covering its history, literary interconnection, and cinematic adaptation in Hong Kong is *A Study of the Hong Kong Swordplay Film (1945-1980)*. For other general books, see Jia Leilei 贾磊磊, *A History of Wuxia Cinema* 武侠电影史. Beijing: Culture and Arts Press, 文化艺术出版社, 2005; Chen Mo 陈墨, *The History of Chinese Wuxia Cinema* 中国武侠电影史. Beijing: China Film Press 北京：中国电影出版社, 2005.

playing Bilian, who masterfully balances the virility of a female knight-errant with elegance, another form of double disguise in martial arts films. This was Yu's local debut after years of practice of Peking Opera with her father Yu Zhanyuan (于占元).[28] In the film, there are two showcases of Yu's northern school style, one gracefully applying rhythmic music to stimulate and yet bond the narrative, and the other suggesting *Wu* overwhelming *Wen*. The first scene, set in an outdoor field and designed to display the street-play of martial arts barnstormers (see fig. 7), features continuous, synchronous background drumbeating that intensifies the tempo and interlocks otherwise discrete showcase performances, the effect of which is re-appropriated in King Hu's *A Touch of Zen* and even in Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*.[29] The second scene alternates the camera between Bilian's graceful swordplay and Hongxun's male gaze from behind, thereby altering the traditional gender dynamics when a scholar (才子) recites poetry to a passive beauty (佳人). It also charts the importance and ascendency of *Wu*, contrasted with *Wen*, often impersonated by effeminate scholars in postwar Hong Kong.

The director of *Couple,* Wang Yuanlong, not only choreographed Yu's stunning sequences, but displayed delicate acting in *The Revenge of the Great Swordsman* (大侠复仇记 1949) and *Fury in Their Hearts* (王氏四侠 1950), both based upon eponymous swordplay movies from Shanghai. These films, made by Northerners, also provided venues for local actors. For example, *The Kung Fu Couple* created a spot for Tang Xingtu (Tong Sing To 唐醒图), the first female

[28] Yu Zhanyuan moved to Hong Kong in 1948 to establish his Yuan Class (元家班) where Jackie Chan, Sammo Hung, and Woo-ping Yuen began their career.

[29] The consistent diegetic sound glued together the martial arts showcase otherwise disrupted by three perspectives in the diegesis, namely, the observation of Hongxun, the gaze of the bully, and the onlookers. For a discussion of the function of the drumbeating in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, see Christina Klein, "*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*: A Diasporic Reading," in *Cinema Journal* 43, no. 4 (2004): 18-42.

producer-cum-scenarist of Hong Kong who eked out a living after 1945. It also featured Sima Yin (司马音), Miss Hong Kong in 1948, as a coquette flirting onscreen with dimples, in a sharp contrast with Bilian's "moral superiority."[30] Yet it was not until the inception of the Huang Feihong series made in Cantonese in 1949, mostly directed by Hu Peng (Wu Pang 胡鹏) and starring Guan Dexing (Kwan Tak-hing 关德兴), that the martial arts genre grew more localized, lowbrow and hybrid. The book *Mastering Virtue* has already mapped out the history and art of this series.[31] What I focus on here is the liminality in the four earliest Huang Feihong films.[32] The liminality mediated martial arts with opera, northern opera routine with southern school comba, local legend with Confucian code, and visual impact with the playfulness of mechanized setting (机关布景).

The sensation of filming Huang Feihong with local touches took Hong Kong by storm. Between 1949 and 1951 five Huang films (four available now) made it onto the silver screen. The series differs substantially from the works made by Northerners discussed above as the local flavor is the remarkable trait. The plot and archetype of Huang aside, all four movies embedded Cantonese opera in an otherwise "pure" martial arts genre. In *Wong Fei-hung's Part One: Whip that Smacks the Candle* (黄飞鸿传上鞭风灭烛, 1949), Hu Peng was concerned about the marginalization of Cantonese cinema by big-budgeted Mandarin pictures,[33] and endeavored to spotlight Canton/Hong Kong (粤港) culture by deploying a five-minute sequence of the local

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[30] For SiMa Yin's film career, see Yu Muyun, *Miss Hong Kong and Hong Kong Cinema 1946-1988*, 香港小姐与香港电影, 1946-1988. Hong Kong: Sanlian Press 香港: 三联书店, 1989.

[31] Pu Feng and Liu You eds, *Mastering Virtue: The Cinematic Legend of a Martial Artist*.

[32] For the discussion of this concept, see my introduction.

[33] Zhong Baoxian 钟宝贤, *One Hundred-Year of Hong Kong Cinema* 香港百年光影. Beijing: Peking University Press 北京: 北京大学出版社, 2007, 124.

"Dragon Boat Song" (龙舟曲), which punctuated the narration yet preserved the aura of this low-class entertainment (see fig. 8). The later English inter-title read "the director inserted this Dragon Boat Song performance to add to the realism of this film in depicting episodes from everyday life, and as a means of recording the traditional southern lifestyle."[34] Similarly, both parts 3 and 4, *The Battle by Lau Fa Bridge* and *The Death of Leung Foon* (血战流花桥 梁宽归天, 1950), featured memorable Cantonese songs, a practice that became a model in the 1950s and 60s.

Not only was the native performance highlighted, but the southern school of martial arts prevailed as well. *Whip* planned a scenario where Master Huang inculcates the new disciples to the purpose, genealogy, and style of his school before he asks one senior, played by a real kung fu boxer, to teach *Tiexian* (铁线拳), a typical southern fist technique. Actually the Huang series hired martial arts consultants from both North and South to first adapt the opera performance into film and also to design more realistic combat.[35] The foregrounding of the Huang Feihong legend, Cantonese opera, and southern combat style all contributed to the local flair.

The localization, however, did not obscure the representation of universal Confucian morals. The inculcation scene in which Huang edifies, "from now on you must respect your teacher, emphasize principles, every moment remember your purpose…main purpose, for the country; minor purpose, at least keep public peace," is indeed a ritual that fleshes out *Ren* (仁 an

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[34] See the film online https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YWqAMMpseFM, starting from 1: 02:43 (Accessed June 25, 2013)

[35] In these early Huang Feihong films, Hu Peng hired both martial arts masters from the South such as Liang Yongheng (梁永亨 a disciple of Huang himself) and experienced consultants from the North such as Yuan Xiaotian (袁小田) for the best choreography.

obligation of altruism and humaneness) in serving the country, *Yi* (义 the upholding of righteousness) for principles, and *Li* (礼 norms and propriety) in maintaining the teacher-student relation of Confucianism. This motif recurred in later pictures, showing that a majority of postwar Hong Kong filmmakers were still immersed in traditional Chinese ritual and doctrine.

That Huang films featured delicate visual displays guided by Confucian codes did not distract audiences from enjoying the mechanized setting, often at a villain's home: a convention in the martial arts genre back that goes back to prewar Shanghai.[36] In *Whip,* when Master Huang goes to a rascal Hong's home to settle a dispute, Hong switches open a secret compartment in the basement, filled with snakes and torture instruments, to entrap Huang's disciple. Through the disciple's confinement, *Whip* showcases the agility of gravity-defying rope-swinging and acrobatic performances. This not only added an adventurous playfulness to the combat, but anticipated the "martial arts plus mechanized setting" mode for later local swordplay films.

I have already elaborated how female knight-errant films negotiated with gender, nationalism, *Wen-Wu* 文武 tradition, and visuality-aurality for one thing, and the liminality in the famous Huang Feihong series for another, both of which exhibited the enduring tropes of the martial arts genre and also displayed a touch of Hong Kong peculiarity. Undoubtedly martial arts films invited several established directors into the production.[37] The application of auteur theory, first introduced by Andrew Sarris, in China must be cautious and contextualized since Chinese filmmakers were more prone to external forces such as politics, and some filmmakers might not

[36] See Bao, "From Pearl White to White Rose Woo," 216.
[37] In 1949, the martial arts genre took up ten percent of the overall production. It raised to over twenty percent in 1950, and remained over fifteen percent in 1951. See Yu "A Preliminary Study of Cantonese Martial Art Cinema," 88.

take their career as seriously as their French and American counterparts. Yet it is not anachronistic or improper to draw upon key elements of auteur theory to engage with postwar Hong Kong cinema, for in general the auteur movement took place in the late 1940s when critics and directors, long involved in the studio system, aspired for change after a disastrous war. Filmmakers in Hong Kong, in particular, enjoyed a rather stable period to orchestrate their productions. Among them, Yang Gongliang and Zhu Ji (杨工良，珠玑 Chu Ki), one of Mandarin origin and the other Cantonese, demonstrated remarkable style, versatility, and adaptive capacity, which secured their reputation in the 50s and 60s. Both, unfortunately, remain little known to readers and scholars alike. An engagement with both directors will enrich our understanding of local auteurs and meanwhile offer two alterations to revise conventional auteurship: the template of overlooked names and the template of "embryo auteur."

The analysis of postwar Hong Kong directors elucidates two problems: one is practical as the majority of their works were lost and even written materials are too scant to supplement; the other is theoretical, namely, the pitfall of uncritically appropriating auteur theory.[38] To avoid such flaws, while I approach local auteurs vis-à-vis their technical, thematic, and philosophical signatures, I also position them with their contemporaries to articulate their idiosyncrasies. Both Yang and Zhu's work have received little attention, or even disdain, because they were first degraded into a "commercial category" that implied little artistry. They were also overshadowed by more prestigious names such as Zhu Shilin (朱石麟).[39] In postwar Hong Kong, Zhu Shilin

[38] See Stephen Teo's "The Father-son Cycle: a Critique of Thematic Continuity in Cantonese Cinema" in HKUC ed., *Cantonese Melodrama (1950-1969)*. Hong Kong: HKUC, 1986, 44.
[39] Zhu (1899-1967), who stood out as the most studied auteur in modern Chinese film history, has been a film

conveyed "a style of outcry" to condemn the evil nature of mankind, the gullible judicature, the degeneration of the society, and above all, the suffering of Chinese women.[40] The director Bu Wancang (卜万苍), as the Chinese Cecil B. Demille, displayed his life-long penchant for period movies; Fang Peilin was infatuated with Hollywood-like musicals before his death in an airplane crash; Yue Feng (岳枫) devoted himself to fallen women films. Their Cantonese coevals such as Wu Hui, Mo Kangshi, Tang Disheng, Zhou Shilu, Qin Jian, Li Chenfeng, Li Tie, Liu Fang, and Lu Dun (Ng Wui, Mok Hong-si, Tong Tik-sang, Chow Sze-luk, Chin Chien, Lee Sun-fung, Lee Tit, Lau Fong, Lo Dun 吴回 莫康时 唐涤生 周诗禄 秦剑 李晨风 李铁 刘芳 卢敦) also continued and developed their film careers.

Within this comparative paradigm, Yang Gongliang was indeed a "minor" figure. His undue marginality relates to the first alteration I propose to auteur theory: the pattern of overlooked names. It relates to the contestation of factuality and reconstruction, or a yawning gulf between "then and now." In other words, tension exists between the indelible marks certain directors leave, which are demonstrated in their remarkable output, genre, style, social impact, and influence of their works during their own times, and the obliteration of them later on due to political, aesthetical, and personal reasons. Paul Robeson and his activist films is the western example of this pattern, and Yang and his light comedies is Robeson's counterpart in China.

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veteran since the 1920s. He was shocked to death by the stormy, schemed accusation of his *Sorrows of Forbidden City* (清宫秘史 1948), which fueled the Cultural Revolution. His laureateship resulted from his uninterrupted film career in prewar, occupied Shanghai and postwar Hong Kong and also from his obligation as "a literary director," the refined treatment to "the old and new," and his unique film language. See for instances Wong Ain-ling ed. *Zhu Shilin: A Filmmaker of His Times*. Hong Kong: HKFA, 2008; Zhu Feng and Zhu Yan 朱枫, 朱岩, *Zhu Shulin and Cinema* 朱石麟与电影. Hong Kong: Tiandi Press 香港: 天地图书, 1999.

[40] For instances, in *Yonder My Love* (秋水伊人 1947) Zhu, as the screenwriter, denounced the deceivable law system and in his *Third Generation* (第三代 1948) he furthered the question of the justice; in the historic allegory *Sorrows of Forbidden City* he was concerned with the helpless against all odds.

Born, educated, and film-apprenticed in Shanghai, Yang, with a savvy and devoted personality, was invited in 1936 by Zhu Qingxian (竺清贤), the founder and sound engineer of Nanyue Film Co. (南粤), to Hong Kong where he quickly mastered almost every step in filmmaking and contributed to various genres until 1965.[41] More information is needed to re-appraise this underrated figure as the great majority of his movies were lost. Yet thirty films made by Yang from 1946 to 51 (only seven available), compared with Zhu Shilin's output of eight, Ren Pengnian's eleven, and Hu Peng's twenty-one, prove him to have been a productive director. The massive number had a double-edged effect because "serious critics" simply neglected them. However, it was through these persistent productions that Yang sharpened his skills and became an auteur. His signature was that he straddled both Mandarin and Cantonese filmmaking, excelled in lighthearted comedy, and advocated a philosophy of social mediation 调和; three features that set him apart from his peers.

His most notable trait was his flexibility and creativity in making both Cantonese and Mandarin films. As inferred above, the postwar Hong Kong cinescape was clearly demarcated by language and native place, and therefore each campaign secured its own studio, cast, and director. To shuttle through these two rather self-contained coteries required Yang to grasp individual generic codes, unique plotlines, and camera language as well as consumer taste. For example, Cantonese audiences liked folklore and opera-adapted stories, while viewers for Mandarin films favored a more sophisticated or westernized plot. Twenty-five Cantonese and five Mandarin films comprised Yang's oeuvre at this time, an achievement owing to his diverse background and

[41] See a mini-bio of him in *The Traditions of Hong Kong Comedy*, HKUC, 1985, 152.

trans-cultural experience.

Watching his seven extant movies (three Cantonese, four Mandarin) one cannot miss his talent in deploying stardom, narrative, opera tradition, and various gags to optimize the effect of the film. His three Cantonese films all featured top-rated opera stars (referred to *lingxing* 伶星), household folktales with familiar narrative structure, and witty dialogues in dialect, all of which amused local lowbrow fellows. In this regard, *The Spoiled Princess* (刁蛮宫主 1948) not only tapped Hongxian Nv's (Hung Sin-nui 红线女) persona as a whimsical girl and paired her, often in an opera-singing context, to counter Ma Shiceng (Ma Si-tsang 马师曾), both being super *lingxing*. Yang also ingeniously interlaced modern traces by casting Ma as a psychologist Ph.D. who counteracted, with his terminology, Hongxian's self-indulgence, the most enjoyable leitmotif of the film. In the opening repartee (set in an arranged date), Hongxian taunts Ma "are you a 'fresh turnip peel?' (新鲜萝卜皮 a Cantonese slang meaning 'who the hell you are')," and the next moment Ma slaps her maid in response, albeit in a playful way (see fig. 9). Throughout the whole film the coupling of fresh badinage and teasing delivers a local flavor. Similarly, Yang's Mandarin works also feature popular northern stars in lighthearted, witty romances.

This leads to the second achievement of Yang Gongliang: his dexterity in making comedy. When other directors dwelt on Cantonese opera films (e.g. Tang Disheng) or "bitter drama" 苦情戏 (e.g. Li Tie), Yang chose to commit to comedy, especially in the immediate postwar era (1946-49). One of his stylistic traits, as discussed before, rested on his integration of fresh, animated slang and idioms, often rendered in rapid-fire, jocular dialogues. Yang's another proclivity was to incorporate Western comic elements such as screwball genre and slapstick

action so as to consciously, sometimes heavy-handedly, alter Chinese cultural tradition. In his Cantonese film *New White Golden Dragon* (新白金龙 1948), Yang had two leading *lingxing* to showcase their solo voices in a serene garden, symbolic of a romantic trope in Chinese classics. He embellished the scene, however, by dressing them in Western evening gowns, placing a mask on the gentleman's face and a fancy purse in the lady's hand (see fig. 10). With vigorous body language, it conveyed nothing but frisky modern romance. If Yang's Cantonese films applied ready-to-see comic elements such as a psychologist's jargon and a masquerade party, his Mandarin pictures favored westernized gags. *Harmony Reigns* (龙凤呈祥 1948) starts with a son's flying back to see his dying father, a mining tycoon. Upon his return, two clown-like musicians, with suit and tie, welcome him. Yang aggrandized the antic effect by adding the non-diegetic piano sound to dovetail with their actions of standing-up and sitting-down. Later the filial, mild-mannered son, beleaguered by his father's last wish to see his fiancée, solicits a brisk, free-spirited hotel girl to pretend so. This awkward scheme shapes their quarrelsome yet funny encounters, replete with screwball banter and pranks, reminiscent of Howard Hawks's *Bringing Up Baby*. The similar plot and taste was also embodied in Yang's *Peach Blossoms still Titter in the Spring Breeze* (桃花依旧笑春风 1947) where a newly wedded couple, often set in a western-style apartment, bickered over trivial matters and teased about each other's mischief.

Yang Gongliang's opera, comedy, horror, and later martial arts films validated him as a diverse, prolific, and stylish director. Seen as a collection, they aimed not so much to confront the dismal reality or inveigh postwar governments' maladies as to project the social problems onto screen and then solve them in a happy ending. In *New White Golden Dragon* and *The Judge*

Goes to Pieces (审死官 1948), for instance, both adapted from traditional Cantonese opera, Yang entrusted the judicial and police system to right the wrong. Although he went even further in his Mandarin films to highlight the gap between the rich and the poor, the rejoicing resolution, in the form of narrative closure, mitigated the critical tone and offered psychological comfort. *Harmony Reigns* had passing scenarios to contrast the son's wealth and the girl's countryside background, yet their marriage bridged the gap. *The Razor's Edge* (千钧一发 1949), his only extant horror film, exposed men's indulgence in women and wine as well as the intrigue for inheritance within a wealthy family. The realization of the intrigue as a nightmare actually toned down the critique and alluded to cinema's dream effect in mediating life. Yang's criticism in *The Corn is Ripe for Plucking* (女大当嫁 1948) might be the most revealing. It opened with a dozen piled newspapers to report bankruptcy and market speculations. It unfolded this social reality by filming how the underdogs, like the comic artist, free-lancer, and dulcimer player, had to coop themselves up in a shanty. It was, however, a well-meaning caricature, or at best self-mockery. Using the social problem and personal hardship as the backdrop and effective gags for this romantic comedy, Yang eventually let the underprivileged and the privileged dine together and arranged a sweet, albeit abrupt, marriage.

Yang Gongliang's productivity and auteur signature proved that his works were much underestimated. Compared with Yang, who had seven movies for re-evaluation, Zhu Ji was not that lucky because we can only see four titles out of almost forty films he had (co-)directed from 1946-51. Due to this frustrating constraint, I propose another alteration of auteur theory: the concept of the "embryonic auteur" that could be applied to almost all the Cantonese directors at

this time.[42] This group, Zhu included, forayed into burgeoning Hong Kong cinema in the late 1930s, and resumed polishing their individual style after the war, which paved the solid way for their illustrious accomplishments in decades to come. The postwar era was the incubation stage for them, instrumental for their systematic experiments in genre, technique, adaptation, worldview, and marketing. Exactly because they were rising directors, or embryo auteurs, who strived for market recognition, their works manifested astonishing diversity, high productivity, ambivalent attitudes, and varied quality, which incurred both attention and doubt from their Shanghai peers.[43] Yet within these decisive years they advanced their skill and established the names. Another reason to address them as "embryo auteurs" relates to their rapid growth as well as sense of insecurity. Zhu Ji, so as to survive in a fierce market, made on average 7.6 films per year, which spanned comedy, melodrama, martial arts, and opera. Most of them were unadvisedly downgraded as "debased" films and were lost over the years. The fact, however, is that it was Zhu, among other Cantonese directors, who ushered in a golden age of local cinema in the 1950s and 60s that has been forever cherished in memories of millions of people.

Situating Zhu in the postwar period and with other embryo directors, this section focuses on two features, namely, his "sense of the times" (时代感) and ingenuity in filming indoors, one from the thematic perspective and the other from the stylistic.[44] Conventional wisdom dismissed

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[42] The prenatal development has three main stages: the germinal, embryonic, and fetal stage. In the embryonic stage, the embryo (the mass of cells) grows into a distinct human being with key systems or organs such as the central nervous system and cardiovascular system. Therefore I use this crucial stage as a parallel for postwar Cantonese filmmakers.

[43] For the most comprehensive, unbiased contemporary overview of Hong Kong cinema in the immediate postwar era, see *Chinese Cinema* (published in Hong Kong), no.1-3, 1946.

[44] Confined by the limited resources and meanwhile his extreme productivity in the 1950s and 60s, these two observations are by no means complete and are subject to be complemented. For example, the gender dynamics (his penchant for depicting the humiliated stepmother, the disgraced widow, and the sexually frustrated opera girl) and

him as a "wonton noodle director" (云吞面导演 indiscreet directors who had the camera rolling while they were out eating a wonton noodle) and accused him of making "cheesy, excessive" works.[45] Having seen all his available films, along with synopses of lost movies, I urge a revision of Zhu. His robust "sense of the times" impressed me. Akin to Yang Gongliang, Wu Hui, Li Chenfeng and others, Zhu started his career as an apprentice (he joined Hong Kong Tianyi 天一港厂, the precursor of Shaw Brothers) at thirteen, rotated and self-taught in many departments to make ends meet, and had to join in a traveling troupe in Canton during the war.[46] Having undergone vicissitudes and weathered numerous hardships, Zhu bore the signs of social responsibility and natural compassion for the downtrodden before he partook in Union Film 中联 in 1953, a leftist organization for socially conscious Cantonese filmmaking. He did make amorous films and cheap series, especially in the late 50s to 60s.[47] When he committed himself to the social causes, however, his sensibility and faculty was second to none.

In *You Are a Nice Lady, but Why…* (卿本佳人 1947), Zhu, as the co-director, claimed "in my choice of scripts, I abandoned the idea of picking a subject of the decadent 'Mandarin Butterfly school.' Borrowing Hong Kong society as our background, we therefore put forward 'evil characters of all kind.'"[48] Designed as a satirical farce, this film exposed the trick and fate

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his capability in directing complicated plots and convoluted relationships await more research.

[45] Shu Kei 舒琪, "How Much We know of Zhu Ji" 珠玑知多少, an article published on Cantonese Cinema Study Association website, http://www.ccsahk.com/?p=844 (Accessed Sep. 23, 2012).

[46] "Close-up Chu Ki: Another Union Director" 中联导演群像之四: 珠玑 has a mini-profile of him. See it in *The Union Pictorial* 中联画报, no.10 (1956):15.

[47] The most infamous ones are "the headless queen" 无头东宫 series. Yet even this genre had its deep-rooted cultural significances. See Liu Damu, "Observations on 'the Headless Queen' Series," in *Cantonese Opera Film Retrospective*, Hong Kong: HKUC, 1987, 32-34.

[48] "Words from Filmmakers" 编导的话, *Huaqiao Evening News* 华侨晚报, 19 Nov. 1947.

of swindlers and thieves in a vibrant Hong Kong and was highly lauded in local newspapers.[49] In addition to the trenchant depiction of this mysterious group, Zhu also gracefully inserted an episode on the beauty contest that sympathized with the vain, over-fashioned women, a conscientious response to the Hong Kong Beauty Pageant in 1946 and 1947. His "sense of the times" also derived from the head-on portrayal of the war and its traumatic aftereffect, often in a subtle way. The postwar Hong Kong cinema was often categorized as vulgar and cardboard if put side by side with serious Shanghai films. Some of Zhu's works actually resembled Shanghai classics in that they applied the social problem genre to denounce the war. Both *A Devoted Soul* and *Who Will Sympathize with Stepmother* (孽海痴魂 1949, 谁怜后母心 1951) used the Anti-Japanese War as a key narrative that precipitated the woman/family's fate, the theme of which echoed as an autobiography of Cantonese directors, including Zhu himself.

Zhu Ji knew where the trend was and churned out films to feed the market; but never did he hesitate to foreground the correct social message when possible. Like other experienced Cantonese directors, he had to work within constraints, such as limited resources, lowbrow viewers, and livelihood pressure, all paradoxically having fostered his honorable name.[50] His onscreen style sufficed it. Due to the small budgets and demand from the exhibition chain, Zhu, similar to his Cantonese peers, had to finish a film in a week or so, the practice of which incurred the criticism of this "seven-day job" 七日鲜. It was no wonder his films were shot virtually indoors with minimal setting changes. However as his sister, Zhu Rihong (朱日红), a famous

[49] "A Film About Swindlers" 描写老千的影片, Ibid, 15 Nov. 1947.
[50] Shu, "How Much We know of Zhu Ji."

assistant director who also made 800 films, recalled, Zhu was "fast and precise" in that he shot over 140 takes in a day with no mismatches, jump cuts, or disorder. To achieve that, he actually finished the script well ahead of time.[51] In this regard, Zhu excelled in configuring the indoor space with delicate camera language and in arranging character movement.[52] *You Are a Nice Lady* has a scene in a restaurant where two swindlers, their target (a wealthy businessman Xie), and their hook (Ling), sit at three different tables. Perhaps because of a confined interior space, no establishing shot introduces these three tables in one take. Instead, Zhu introduces Ling's walking into the room from the right, passing Xie's table, and sitting in the middle. In the next scene Zhu cuts to Ling's two partners sitting at another table and looking off-screen to the right, which makes the spectator imagine that these three tables are horizontally arranged. By panning the camera left and right and changing the point of view, the scene not only makes full use of this small space, but creates an air of peeking, stalking, and scheming. A similar maneuver was applied in *A Devoted Soul*. Rather than employ the shot/reverse shot technique that demanded more film for a seamless interaction, Zhu frequently framed the conversations in one single take. This was a cost-effective yet hazardous method. Zhu knew better than anyone that too many stationary long takes would bore the audience, so he relied on the stars' exquisite acting for the natural flow of the dialogue and emotion. In *No Sign of the Swallow's Return* (春残燕未归 1951) Zhu designs a compelling after-the-fire scene in which the blind father, the desperate daughter-in-law with her infant in her arms, and his daughter who ran away from the school,

[51] Ibid.
[52] Shu Kei's another article, "The Lady in Black" 往事知多少, also mentioned this style, see http://www.ccsahk.com/?p=671#more-671 (Accessed Sep. 23, 2012).

converse with each other with touching expressions. The fixation of the camera did not reduce the tension, but allowed a democratic space for each character to act in. Zhu well informed his actors how to position and perform so much so that he was particularly adept in filming the ensemble image. With a similar style, Zhu's *Who Will Sympathize with Stepmother* features a family scene in the beginning where the stepmother consoles the father's fury at his prodigal eldest son, the eldest daughter-in-law back-talks to him, and the younger son and wife embarrassingly feel out of place, all vividly captured by one frontal take. Undoubtedly Zhu Ji's distinction and Yang Gongliang's achievement owed much to a benign, thriving local film industry to which I am turning now.

A Partisan yet Robust Local Film Industry

The limited scope of my chapter and the inaccessibility of all rare film copies and pictorials make it harder to cover equally engaging inquiries such as musical films in Mandarin, the social problem pictures in Cantonese that anticipated later left-wing works, and stylish filmmakers like the martial arts director Yuan Xiaotian 袁小田, composer Chen Gexin 陈歌辛, and so forth.[53] Yet a picture perfect postwar Hong Kong cinema already exhibits its vitality in genre, auteur, language and local flavor; it also validates a robust, growing film industry. To revisit the martial arts genre and to rediscover certain auteurs in their critical juncture naturally leads me to overhaul postwar Hong Kong cinema, an industry in its renaissance.

As stated above, the boundary between Cantonese and Mandarin cinema was anything but

[53] This gap has been gradually supplied by certain scholars and organizations. For instance, the Cantonese Cinema Study Association has organized a celebration and discussion of the renowned set director Chen Qirui 陈其锐. See http://www.lcsd.gov.hk/ce/CulturalService/filmprog/chinese/2012fs/2012fs_index.html (Accessed Sep. 23, 2012).

ambiguous. On the one hand, The Great China and Yonghua (大中华 永华), the two biggest Mandarin film companies, stood at the forefront because their resourceful managers solicited Shanghai stars and technicians to fly over to make movies in Hong Kong, a place that enjoyed looser regulation, more monetary stability, and market liberty.[54] Cantonese cinema, by contrast, only thrived on a discrete basis, relying on a one-company-and-one-movie model (一片公司模式). That is, a director first invited popular Cantonese *lingxing* or stars for an eye-popping subject; he secured one-third to half of the investment from the distributor who pre-sold the project to Southeast Asia; he made a film at a rented studio in a more than marvelous speed, often in seven to fourteen days, due to the pressure from the distribution and exhibition ends; and lastly he sold it first to the invested distributor and to a local Cantonese theater line eager for any film with stars. Desperate for quick money, this model cashed in the whole supply chain of cinema and thus was boycotted by Mandarin cinema both in Shanghai and Hong Kong. It resulted in an academic prejudice, too. Yet seen in hindsight, this seemingly exploitative system experimented on a disparate path of Chinese cinema: a commercial-first and trans-regional cinema. This spirit and practice was inherited and developed by Shaw Brothers, MP&CI, and Guangyi in the 1950s and 60s, by Golden Harvest in the 70s and 80s, by the Milky Way in the 90s, and still recognizable in post-1997 years when Hong Kong was handed back to China.

In this boisterous industry stood out Grandview Film Company Limited and its U.S. Branch (abbr. as Grandview 大观 hereafter), which had been dedicated to balancing commercial profit

[54] Almost every superstar of Shanghai and Peking received warm invitation to join or temporarily film for The Great China and Yonghua. Yonghua, in its hey day, could even afford a star's one-take appearance in its magnificent film and for an all-star cast. See "A Letter from Han Langen from Hong Kong" 韩兰根香港来信 in *Qingqing Film* 青青电影, no.19 (1947): 9.

with quality works within a cross-oceanic environment. Its studio manager Liu Fang (刘芳), also a prestigious filmmaker, detailed its glorious history and cross-Pacific organization in "Fifteen Years of Grandview" in 1947:

> It was on a night in 1931 that Grandview rolled its *camera* (originally in English). This memorable take was accomplished by the sponsorship of numerous Chinese Americans and the enormous efforts and investment of Joseph Sunn Jue (赵树燊). Its studio was in San Francisco, becoming the first and sole film bastion in the U.S…After the "9·18" incident, Grandview moved the studio to Hong Kong to resist Japanese enemy. It collaborated with Lianhua's (联华) Hong Kong branch…and established a serious Cantonese cinema. In 1934 it purchased facilities from the U.S…and in 1937 set up a studio in Diamond Hill for 720,000 sq. ft. Jue flew over to the States again in 1939, made *Light of Overseas Chinese* (华侨之光) and built Grandview Theater in San Francisco as the bridgehead of Chinese cinema in America.
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> From 1932-41, it had reaped over 100 films, cooperated with eminent directors (including the first female director Wu Jinxia 吴锦霞), and created countless stars. In accord with the mobilizing atmosphere in mainland, Grandview actively contributed more anti-Japanese films…When Hong Kong was occupied in 1941, all the buried equipments and film copies under the Diamond Hill studio were burned by the Japanese, causing a loss of 150,000 HK dollars.
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> While Jue was distressed, he also felt more obligated to set up Grandview U.S. Branch. He bought property, emulated Hollywood system, trained actors, and harvested 21 b/w movies. He spared no cost to order the newest color machines to make "natural 7-color" (天然七彩) films, thereby embarking on the color movie stage for Chinese cinema. *White powder and Neon Lights* (金粉霓裳) is imported to Hong Kong followed by others…[55]

From an industrial perspective, this statement has already chalked up the threefold achievement of Grandview: trans-regionality, representativeness, and commitment. First and foremost, as Jue stated in an interview in 1947, he made great efforts to sustain Grandview and positioned it as a Greater China cinema, connecting the U.S., Hong Kong, Canton, Shanghai and Southeast Asia within a nexus and taking advantage of each place.[56] As the only company that

[55] Liu Fang 刘芳, "Fifteen Years of Grandview" 大观十五年, *Zhongnan Film* 中南电影, (published in Malaya) no.2 (1947): 3.

[56] Wood Woy, "Light! Camera! Take!" *East Wind*, 20 Dec. 1947, [56] Liu Fang 刘芳, "Fifteen Years of Grandview" 大观十五年, *Zhongnan Film* 中南电影, (published in Malaya) no.2 (1947): 3.

survived the war, its trump card was the cross-oceanic adaptation and flexibility. Born in Canton and migrating to California at five, Jue was so captivated by Hollywood that his own filmmaking dream came true in 1932 when he started Grandview in collaboration with Moon Kwan (关文清), a veteran Chinese ex-pat in Hollywood and cultural advisor to D. W. Griffith's *Broken Blossoms*, who came to the U.S., also in 1932, to promote an Anti-Japanese documentary by the Lianhua studio of Shanghai. Grandview, from its inception, realized its opportunity in making Cantonese films, tapped the resources from more established studios at Shanghai, and absorbed experience from Hollywood. Moreover, its works were marketed not only to Hong Kong and Canton, but to the Cantonese diaspora in Southeast Asia. Liu Fang's introductory article was actually published in a Malaya film magazine. Such a detailed and fair essay about a Hong Kong/Hollywood studio would hardly be seen in a Shanghai publication.

The second contribution of Grandview is its "sample role," or representativeness. Having spanned three decades (1930s to 50s) and consistently made over 100 films with a transnational intent, it provides scholars with the most compelling and abundant materials and modes to approach Chinese cinema. In terms of its organization, it started as a family business and relied on kinship relation, akin to the Liu family in Shanghai (discussed in Chapter One) and the Shaw brothers in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia.[57] In the course of expansion, Grandview, like most Shanghai studios had done, emulated Hollywood's integrated system, possessing both the production unit and exhibition venues. Its ruined studio in Hong Kong resumed quickly in 1946

[56] Wood Woy, "Light! Camera! Take!" *East Wind*, 20 Dec. 1947.

[57] In terms of the native-place and clanship, Jue and Kwan belonged to the Longgang 龙岗 clan in Canton; and for family business, Jue worked as the general manager and his wife Li'er as the star, his relatives Chiu Shu-tai as the studio manager, Shu-ken as producer-cum-director, Shu-fong and Shu-pui as the actor.

and grew as one of the key local filming bases that produced movies for Grandview and other companies. Its U.S. branch continued to shoot movies until 1948 and was later transformed into a color processing plant.[58] Grandview Theater, located in the Chinatown of San Francisco, showcased Cantonese films as a linguistic, cultural bond for the Chinese diaspora. It lasted until the 1970s, bequeathing another treasure for our studies.[59]

As a specimen of modern Chinese cinema, Grandview's commitment and contribution to the national film industry as well as to the trans-regional interaction was outstanding. Its Cantonese movies, almost all profitable, had fed and amused several generations at home and abroad who spoke this lingua franca and obtained emotional attachment from the viewing.[60] Moreover, as Liu recalled in that article, Grandview had been such a company with national passion and social responsibility since the 1930s.[61] Its postwar works reoriented more towards realism and social problem pictures that, for instances, confronted the suppressed life of silkworm peasants of Canton in *Laughter and Tears* (几家欢笑几家愁 1950) and endorsed the progressive message "unity is strength" 团结就是力量 in *Three Kingdoms* (火烧连环船 1951). These attempts were inspired by canonic leftwing films such as *Spring Silkworms* (春蚕 1933), made in

[58] For example, Grandview's *A Baby for Everybody* (连生贵子 1949) was sent back to its U.S. branch for color post-processing, See the promotional magazine for this film, 1949.
[59] See James Wong, "Fade in, Fade out: Yesteryears of Chinese Cinemas in San Francisco," in *Newsletter*, Hong Kong: HKFA, no. 42 (2007): 9-11.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Grandview's Hong Kong studio produced a series of Anti-Japanese films in the late 1930s with unmistakable local flavor. These patriotic films sold well in Canton, Hong Kong and Southeast Asia. For example Jue himself made *Close Combat* 肉搏 and invited Shanghai director Tang Xiaodan 汤晓丹 and local director Moon Kwan to make more than a dozen ardent films such as *Little Canton* 小广东 and *R*oar of the People 民族的吼声. See Tang Xiaodan 汤晓丹, *Sidelights along the Road: the Recollections of Tang Xiaodan* 路边拾零: 汤晓丹回忆录, Shanxi: Shangxi Education Press 山西教育出版社, 1993, 38-40.

Shanghai as well as the Cantonese Film Clean-up Movement in 1949.[62] Grandview's commitment also resided in its unremitting pursuit of technological innovation. Jue and Kwan's first project in the U.S., *Romance of the Songsters* (歌侣情潮 1933), used updated sound technology in recording and it turned out to be one of the earliest Cantonese talkies. When Grandview had to retreat to America, Jue, once again, boldly experimented in shooting color film and Kodachrome with assistance from Hollywood. Perhaps having realized the loss of exhibition venues in China and Southeast Asia, Jue opted for 16mm (rather than 35mm) color technique out of a cost-efficient consideration. As I have discussed in the Shanghai chapter, Grandview's wartime color productions, albeit in 16mm, challenged the fact that "the first" Chinese color film, *Regrets of Life and Death*, was made in Shanghai in 1948.[63] When Jue's color movies made inroads to postwar Hong Kong, he had to import 16mm projectors, for Hong Kong seldom used 16mm films for commercial exhibitions. Yet Grandview's extra effort paid off.[64] All color movies immediately made a sensation. Liu's ending remark that "despite the high cost of color films, Grandview would pursue the artistic perfectness at any price" attested to Jue's lofty aspiration.[65] Actually Jue was always a tide-rider, leading Grandview to produce the first widescreen film and stereo sound film in the mid-1950s in Hong Kong. Besides its technological innovation, it was also dedicated to training and cultivating a great number of talented

[62] A progressive movement that will be discussed below.
[63] "The first" assertion was even untenable, provided that the master copy of *Regrets* was sent to America for color processing See "*Regrets of Life and Death* Shipped from the U.S" 生死恨由美运到, *Qingqing Film* 青青电影, no.4 (1949): 8. The Actress Weiwei 韦伟 also revealed that the finished master copy was sent to Hong Kong first, and she brought it back to Shanghai to avoid the custom tax. See Wong Ain-ling 黄爱玲 ed. *An Age of Idealism: Great Wall & Feng Huang Days* 理想年代: 长城, 凤凰的日子. Hong Kong: HKFA, 2001, 71.
[64] See the report in *Huaqiao Evening News* 华侨晚报 on December 1, 1946; quoted in Yu Muyun's *History of Hong Kong Film* 香港电影史话. Vol. 3, Hong Kong: Ci Wenhuatang 香港: 次文话堂, 81-82.
[65] Liu "Fifteen Years of Grandview," 3.

professionals who enlivened the local industry. Jiang Weiguang and Huang Hesheng (蒋伟光 黄鹤声), having enhanced their acting and directing skills at Grandview's U.S. branch, grew as the backbone of Cantonese cinema. Zhou Kunling (周坤玲), an overseas Chinese/Cantonese diva, was discovered and packaged by Jue and starred in almost 200 films until the late 50s, many of which partnered her with Jue's wife Li'er 丽儿, "queen of color film" 七彩皇后. In order to foster more qualified actors, Jue even founded the Grandview Actor Training Study Society (大观演员训练班影艺研究社) and published a journal *Film Study* 电影学习, as a platform to exchange ideas. Its members appreciated the self-study atmosphere in the Society, shared study notes, and avowed self-respect, and a serious filmmaking attitude.[66] In a nutshell, Grandview's contributions and commitment was second to none.

From the business perspective, the success of Grandview's works was predestined. Han Yanli has already revealed how its identity issue was played out and appealed to overseas Chinese in American society.[67] Anticipating a transnational audience with varied tastes, these films were a medley of diverse attractions, too. Take Grandview's U.S. productions for example. When watching these films, Chinese Americans felt affectionate towards the self-reflexive living scenes in laundry shops and restaurants (*A Strong Wind Banishes the Swallow* 狂风逐燕飞), the family struggles and reunions (*Show off Your Beauty* 争妍斗丽), and the depictions of the mutual assistance of clanship (*The Way to Brightness* 光明之路). With an eye on Hong Kong and the

[66] See, for instances, Dayuan 大元's "Our Criticism" 我们的批判 and Liu Dieyun 刘叠云 "Study and Practice" 学习与力行, in *Film Study* 电影学习, no.1 (1947): 3, 6.

[67] Han Yanli 韩燕丽, "A Preliminary Study of Grandview Film Productions in the US" 从华侨到美籍华人:大观公司在美制片情况初探, in *Newsletter*, Hong Kong: HKFA, no. 50 (2009): 11-15.

Southeast Asian market, Jue designed exotic sequences with American landmarks (the Golden Gate Bridge in *Eternal Love* 海角情鸳; San Francisco Zoo and beach in *White Powder and Neon Lights*).[68] Catering to the lowbrow taste of the petit bourgeois, Grandview mastered the love triangle, romantic farce, and happy ending. When asked by an American journalist about what was featured in an ongoing film, Jue said: "the usual triangle romance: two boys love one girl."[69] In the postwar period, Grandview strategically bombarded Hong Kong and the Southeast Asian market with its color films underscoring overseas-Chinese everyday life and Cantonese folk culture. In addition, Jue endeavored to enhance the company image and recognition by self-reflexively advertising its Grandview Theater in its own films (e.g. *White Powder*) and embedding the news of Grandview in the front-page of local newspapers in its movies, too (e.g. *Black Market Couple* 黑市夫妻).

Unfortunately, Grandview met difficulties in the mid-1950s when Shaw Brothers and MP & GI held sway in Hong Kong due to their wider distribution channels and more vertically integrated system. Jue had to bid farewell to his beloved filmmaking and return to the U.S. While it played a crucial role in the restoration of postwar Hong Kong cinema, its cross-oceanic operation and relatively neutral positioning were at odds with a linguistically and politically demarcated film industry. The postwar Hong Kong cinescape was, by and large, partisan. Both Cantonese and Mandarin camps perceived the other as eccentric and irrelevant. When a cohort of

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[68] A review of *White powder and Neon Lights* read "in it there are westerners and Chinese, classical and modern, dancing and opera, and also the panorama of San Francisco. People who had not visited San Francisco could broaden their vision;" see it in *Jianguo Daily*, 21 July 1947.

[69] Hazel Bruce, "San Francisco's Film Colony Produces a Bedroom Comedy," in *San Francisco Chronicle,* 28 May 1944.

leftwing filmmakers and critics flocked to Hong Kong, they implanted their ideology and partisan doctrine in the local industry. They bashed "the cheesy, gross" Cantonese films by seizing the columns in major newspapers such as the "Stage and Screen Biweekly" 影剧双周刊 in *Huashang* 华商报, *Wenhui* 文汇报 and *L'Impartial* 大公报. For example, Chen Canyun 陈残云 opened fire on Grandview's *Two Women after a Man* (双凤求凰): "a film that idolizes America. It is impossible to find a film (of Grandview) that expresses how overseas Chinese are oppressed by the capitalism in America."[70] These over-demanding remarks did motivate many a filmmaker to re-envision his/her career, but they practically exacerbated the division between camps and exaggerated the rift between politics and business.

The partisan cinema and this air of implacable mutual distrust had reached its apex with the third "Cantonese Film Clean-up Movement" in 1949 (the previous two occurred prior to the war). It was initiated by Cai Chusheng 蔡楚生, a renowned leftwing director and the first national director to win an international film award at Moscow in 1934. Cai, of Cantonese origin, wrote "About Cantonese Cinema" in *L'Impartial* in January 1949 to censure the disorder and "seven-day job."[71] Spurred by this article, the core members of Cantonese cinema launched a movement of self-reflection and reevaluation, and in April 164 film workers signed a manifesto in *L'Impartial,* "promising to unite together, take responsibility, and uphold the social expectation; stopping producing films that are contrary to the interest of nation-state and are

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[70] Chen Canyun et al, "The Toxicnity of Salvish Ideology and Feudal Consciousness" 洋奴思想与封建意识的毒瘤, in *Huaqiao Evening News* 华侨晚报, 20 Mar. 1949.
[71] Cai Chusheng, "About Cantonese Cinema" 关于粤语电影, *L'Impartial* 大公报, 18 Jan. 1949.

harmful to society."[72] Both Chinese and English scholarship has confirmed the Movement's "political correctness"--"focusing on the educational value and artistic worthiness."[73] Yet a contextualization of this movement reveals that it was concerned more with industry development than ideology, and more with factional and provincial interest than universalism.

The movement had never been an exclusively pure ideological undertaking in the first place. As a matter of fact, Cai drove home two key issues in his essay: "we first have to be clear that *selling* (movies) is innocent, and only with a ribald, barefaced method is the selling guilty…second, film entrepreneurs must be aware that when we admit film is *commodity*, this does not mean film is a 'pure commodity'"[74] (italics mine). He called for a dynamic, wholesome Cantonese film industry that would eliminate corrupt syndicates, having controlled both distribution and exhibition channels and would operate in accordance with economic law. Often interpreted as leftwing orthodoxy, the article's significance in reinforcing a robust local industry for the masses was underrated. It was his "About Cantonese Cinema" that propelled previously disunited Cantonese filmmakers to realize the strength of an organization and to rely on each other's capability when making a film. Later they founded South China Film Industry Workers Union 华南电影工作者联合会 with the mission "to facilitate companions' communication, promote film art, and improve companions' well-being."[75] Such a soul-stirring companion

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[72] "Launching 'Clean-up Movement,'" 发起清洁运动, *L'Impartial* 大公报, 8 April 1949.
[73] Yingchi Chu, *Hong Kong Cinema: Coloniser, Motherland and Self*. London: Routledge Curson, 2003, 13; Zhao Weifang 赵卫防, *Hong Kong Film History* 香港电影史, Beijing: China Broadcast and Television Press 北京：中国广播电视出版社, 2007, 86-87.
[74] Cai, "About Cantonese Cinema."
[75] See "The Unprecedented Solidarity in South China Cinema" 华南电影界空前大团结, in *Lingxing Daily* 伶星日报, 10 July 1949; for the development of this still-existent association, see Shi Yangping 施扬平 ed., *Forever Beauty: Sixty Anniversary of South China Film Industry Workers Union 1949-2009*, 永远的美丽：华南电影工作者

organization debuted its *Kaleidoscope* (人海万花筒 1950), a mélange Who's Who Cantonese film featuring 116 actors and ten short stories made by ten directors in six studios. Its aim was not for profit, but for raising money for the Welfare Fund of the Union. This set up a salutary model in Hong Kong cinema that encouraged mutual-aid among filmmakers and highlighted an all-star collaboration onscreen. In retrospect, there was a leap afterwards from the individual-based cinema to a collective, collaborative one.

The collectiveness and solidarity were not without selection, however. Unlike the previous two clean-up movements, which were triggered by an exigent national crisis and a vying Shanghai cinema, the third movement started from within, initiated by filmmakers and focused on opera stars. Cai's article was but a catalyst. The haughtiness of *lingxing* and their tardiness yet privilege in the studio affronted film actors. *Lingxing*, as the highest profile opera stars, were the money-makers for producers since they only need to record *lingxing*'s performances and sell them to Hong Kongese who could not afford the higher price in theater. Lu Deng, an established filmmaker, uncovered an inside scenario: "*Lingxing*'s films are really lucrative. Xin Mashiceng (Sun Ma Si-tsang 新马师曾 a famous *lingxing*) starred a film with Wu Chufan (Ng Cho-fan 吴楚帆). You know Xin, for a shooting schedule at 10 am, he shows up as late as 10 pm. Upon arrival he urges to be shot first, which indeed upsets Wu who has been kept waiting. How could Wu, credited as the 'Movie King,' take this?"[76] Wu then vented his humiliation to a group of actors, so a movement was launched to win back the dignity of filmmakers. Despite Lu's claim

联合会六十周年纪念, Hong Kong: South China Film Industry Workers Union 华南电影工作者联合会, 2009.
[76] Guo Jingning 郭静宁 ed., *Hong Kong Here I Come* 南来香港. Hong Kong: HKFA, 2000, 130.

that it was an inadvertent event, it disclosed the ingrained disharmony between opera *lingxing* and film actors. Film critics later voiced their support in newspapers and the clear-up movement gained full momentum. However, in a market economy, to pledge was one thing, and to reproduce was another. Luckily, as Lu recalled, a British distributor, who understood Cantonese and had business in Southeast Asia, supported Wu and Zhang Ying (Cheung Ying 张瑛 another male film star) by raising the price of a pre-sold movie 片花 by 20-30%.[77] Therefore, this movement resulted largely from the rivalry of two influential factions in gaining their due interest.

The end of the April Manifesto read "wish glory will be with Cantonese cinema, wish dishonor will never be with Cantonese cinema." It unequivocally claimed the local identity and subtly stated another cause of this movement: as a forceful response to the "central plains syndrome" of "superior" Mandarin cinema.[78] The drastic change in 1949 escalated the confrontation. When the CCP swept its way into the mainland, the exodus of refugees, including filmmakers, landed in Hong Kong. They disliked the awkward, unintelligible Cantonese films, as previously suggested in Chen Canyun's vitriol of Grandview. In early 1949 the KMT provincial government in Canton banned "vulgar" Cantonese films (e.g. ghost and swordplay genre).[79] The CCP's "liberation" of Canton turned out to be another nightmare for Hong Kong cinema because a red China did not tolerate a large import of Cantonese kitsch films. All these factors spurred Cai's appeal for a progressive cinema and a robust industry, and they also led to the clean-up

[77] Ibid.
[78] "Launching 'Clean-up Movement.'"
[79] "How Cantonese Cinema Committed Suicide."

movement. Sitting at the lower stratum exploited by capitalists and dismissed as maladroit laborers, Cantonese film workers naturally leaned towards a "worker-peasant-soldier" party, and yet vied with quality Mandarin films for the market.

Therefore, the Cantonese Film Clean-up Movement was imbricated in politics, art, language, market and even clique contestation that denied any simple analysis. The significance of this movement embodies as much in "cleaning up" the instability, speculation, exploitation, and disorderly competition as in jolting Cantonese filmmakers into realizing the power of solidarity and cohesion, all contributing to a robust and lucrative local industry. Similarly, the invention and development of the companion model within Mandarin cinema also stimulated and invigorated the Hong Kong film industry. The postwar Mandarin industry was once concentrated in Great China, the biggest studio, contributing seventeen films from 1946 to 1949. When it met internal problems like mismanagement and overstaffing, Yonghua studio emerged meteorically owing to its extraordinary investment, ambitious plan, and all-star cast. Both studios gained a foothold in Hong Kong, albeit with much reliance on the mainland market, the mode of which set the tone for other Mandarin studios but met stagnancy, if not deadlock, after 1949 when China's door was basically locked up by the Communists.

The Grand Film Co. (大光明影业公司), a much smaller Mandarin studio based in Hong Kong, differed from Great China and Yonghua in its complicity and integration of both Shanghai and local flavor. Often categorized as a leftwing studio, Grand was founded in 1948 by Gu Yelu 顾也鲁, Gao Zhanfei 高占非, Gu Eryi 顾而已 and others.[80] Gu (referring Gu Yelu hereafter)

[80] Cheng, et al. eds., *The History of the Development of Chinese Cinema*. Vol. 2. 203.

claimed its political nature in his memoir: “When shooting *The Soul of China* (Yonghua’s film), Gu Eryi chatted with Gao saying both wanted to start a company to establish a progressive film studio since Hong Kong was beyond the KMT’s control. I immediately agreed and could give up the lucrative job in Yonghua.”[81] The original goal was defined as to “shoot progressive films and resist the KMT.” Although this might be one of the reasons, I would argue that Grand, far from an ideological bastion, was a companion studio struggling for its optimal interest and taking advantage of local circumstances.

Qingqing Film, the most reliable film weekly at Shanghai, tracked the formation of Grand. On May 23 1948, “Gao Zhanfei and Gu Eryi Have Left Yonghua?” enticed readers with the story. Yonghua offered a high salary for attracting stars. But both actors, as well as Gu and Xu Li 徐立, discovered the income disparity between theirs’ and the first-class’s was as large as 1:10. They wanted to resign. Yonghua roped them in by agreeing to raise their wages.[82] The next issue of *Qingqing* published “Gao Zhanfei and others founded Grand.” It described that these stars left Yonghua and allied to organize Grand. Screen veterans notwithstanding, they were circumspect in test-shooting one movie first, and they rented the Great China’s studio for 28,000 HK dollar out of a 100,000 budget.[83] The two reports, with detailed numbers, names, and plans, delineated the economic reason in launching this alleged “leftwing” company, a fact also verified by other

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[81] Gu Yelu, *The Filmmaking in Shanghai: the Autobiography of Gu Yelu* 上海滩从影记: 顾也鲁自传, Beijing: Hanyu Dictionary Press 北京: 汉语大辞典出版社, 2002, 97.
[82] “Gao Zhanfei and Gu Eryi Have Left Yonghua?” 高占非 顾而已等脱离永华? *Qingqing Film* 青青电影, no. 13 (1948): 9.
[83] “Gao Zhanfei and Others Founded Grand” 高占非等创立大光明, *Qingqing Film*, no. 14 (1948): 4.

news.[84] Back in wartime Shanghai, Gu, Xu and Gao, among others, established a fraternity of eleven actors that united for the mutual benefit in the Japanese-controlled studio.[85] They were suspected as "collaborators" after 1945, which impaired their careers in Shanghai.[86] Hence their self-organization in Hong Kong concerned more about their personal, family interest, rather than a political venture.[87] Each staff member at Grand took on a different role according to each one's talent in a way that everyone exerted his specialty (Gu as the General Affair Manager, Gao as director, Gu Eryi in charge of the studio).The contribution of Grand rested much in its camaraderie, the idea and practice of which inspired the form of the film cooperative in 1950.

Seeking investment expediently and working on the basis of mutual trust, Grand went on to experiment with companion pattern by taking advantage of both local and Shanghai resources, even though its first trial, released during a war-ridden time, did not succeed. Gu Yelu, Gao Zhanfei, and Gu Eryi, among others, as seasoned actors, cleverly put a sugarcoat on their realistic pictures to appeal to as broad an audiences as possible. They altered the subject of their second film *Floating Family* (水上人家 1949) to the fishermen's conflict with a ship-owner, with which most Hong Kongers, having lived on this island for years, would easily identify. They did 2/3 of the shooting at Chang Zhou 长洲, an island to the south of Hong Kong and famous for its fishing business. That they could not afford the expensive studio filming this time

[84] For an example, see "Gu Yelu Self-Funds the Filmmaking "顾也鲁自费拍片 in *Pictorial of Artistic Sea* 艺海画报, new no.1 (1948): 9.
[85] Gu, *The Filmmaking in Shanghai: the Autobiography of Gu Yelu*, 62. See also Gu Yelu, "Film Acting on the Screen" 银幕上演人, in *The Press Kits for Guotai's New Pictures* 国泰新片特刊, no.4 (1947): 3; and "The Story of Gao Zhanfei's Collaboration"高占非附逆经过, in *Movie News* 精华/中外影讯, no.25 (1946): 1.
[86] Ibid, 73.
[87] "Why Gu Yelu Came Back" 顾也鲁怎么会回来的, *Picture News* 电影杂志, no.25 (1948): 10.

actually enabled them to make full use of on-location shooting, a situation similar to Italian neo-realism.[88] Because Grand could not "book local theaters" for its first film, Gu and his friends packaged *Floating* with a distinctive Hong Kong flavor and even dubbed it in Cantonese for a local release, a rare marketing initiative for Mandarin studios.[89] To achieve an effect of verisimilitude, Grand bought over 6,000 pounds of fresh fish for the setting of the fish market. In the last scene when the fishermen declared victory over the bloodsucking owner and sailed out to Tianmen Bay to start a new life, local viewers could not miss the beautiful sea scenery and Hong Kong's cityscape behind it.

Audiences from the mainland would also love this story since *Floating Family* reiterated the realistic portrayal of fishermen's miserable life from *Song of the Fishman* (渔光曲 1934), a leftwing masterpiece that kept its box-office record for almost a decade. *Floating*'s subplot of a benign fisherman's daughter who was forced into prostitution resembled another artful Shanghai film, *The Boatman's Daughter* (船家女 1935). The sweet memories of these two Shanghai movies brought an intertexual knowledge and affection for viewers seeing *Floating Family*. Moreover, the filmmaking set many an indoor episode at a smoky yet hilarious inn where fishermen, prostitutes, peddlers, and ballad-mongers convened and idled life, a special homage to the same distinct setting and trope in *Night Inn* 夜店, a sensational film made in 1947 in Shanghai. The nostalgia of the classics in the 1930s and refashioning of the postwar work made *Floating Family* a favorable choice for mainlanders.

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[88] Gu, *The Filmmaking in Shanghai: the Autobiography of Gu Yelu*, 109.

[89] Cao Maotang and Wu Lun 曹懋唐 伍伦, *The Old Days of the Shanghai Film World* 上海影坛话旧. Shanghai: Shanghai Wenyi Press 上海: 上海文艺出版社, 1987, 26. The version of *Floating* I saw in HKFA is dubbed in Cantonese.

It is a pity *Floating* is the only extant movie of Grand, otherwise a systematic review of its blending of the local flavor with "Shanghai characteristics" would be more compelling. Yet from an industry perspective, Grand not only led the genre trend to depict the dispossessed life of fishermen (e.g. *A Fisherman's Honor* 海誓 1949, *Fishermen's Song of the South Sea* 南海渔歌 1950), but nurtured the companion mode that negotiated between peers' specialties, business pressure, and ideological imperative. The form of companion studio or "brotherhood unit" 兄弟班 went popular: Ouyang Yuqian organized a similar mandarin company Nanqun 南群; in the Cantonese circle Tang Disheng started Zesheng 泽生, and Zhou shilu launched Wanfang 万方.[90] Among them 50th Year Motion Picture, founded in 1950, was a transitional yet pioneering studio that advanced the companion model to film cooperative.

50th Year was self-organized by a dozen of filmmakers originally working at Yonghua. As soon as the CCP drove the KMT out of China in 1949 and accordingly tightened the control of film production and exhibition, Yonghua's politically suspicious films, with mediated social messages (e.g. *Sorrows of Forbidden City* and *The Sins of Our Fathers* 大凉山恩仇记), irritated the Communists and were banned in Guangzhou and Shanghai.[91] Since its chief investor Li Zuyong 李祖永 associated himself more with the Taiwan regime, it restrained the workers' activism ignited by the revolution, and he even intervened the script writing. His conflict with staff, most invited from Shanghai with the promise of competitive pay, exploded.[92] Having not

[90] For the discussions of each studio, see Yu *History of Hong Kong Film*, vol. 2 and 3; and "Tang Disheng and Zesheng Studio" 唐涤生与泽生影业, http://epaper.xplus.com/papers/zhtqb/20080304/n119.shtml (Accessed September 15, 2012).
[91] "Guangzhou Started to Ban Films" 广州开始禁映, *Qingqing Film* 青青电影, no.5 (1950):3.
[92] Zhu Anping 朱安平 "The Return Journey of Those Who Long For China" 心向神州回归路, *Masses Cinema*

received their full salary for months, a group of "big names," so accustomed to high living standards, went on strike and opened up their own workshop to secure their lives.[93] The new group included film stars Li Lihua, Liu Qiong 刘琼, Han Fei 韩非, Shu Shi 舒适, director Cheng Bugao 程步高, and Wang Weiyi, among others.

Realizing the financial quandary of Yonghua, branded as the "first-rate" film studio in postwar Asia, these filmmakers proactively clung together. The issue of life pressures and security overwhelmed them. This was not to deny, however, that almost all the *50thers* aspired to and envisaged Communist China.[94] Since the companion model had become attractive through sidestepping direct exploitation, these *50thers* naturally adopted it. Yet two crucial factors distinguished it from Grand's companion mode and anticipated the way in which Hong Kong leftwing studios would organize and operate in the decades to come. The first was its radical politicalization. The second major difference lay in the cooperative form--jointly owned, distributed labor, and outside investment excluded.[95] Hence 50th Year proceeded more as a film coterie.

50th Year was named as such to celebrate China's liberation in the 1950s.[96] This is the validation of the CCP's "United Front" work 统战工作 in Hong Kong, since "the liberation of big cities made film workers read and study…Led by underground communists Sima Wensen 司马文森 and Hong Qiu 洪遒, (we) read *On New Democracy* 新民主主义论…and organized

大众电影, no.2 (2012): 41.

[93] See Lu Yuanliang 陆元亮's account in Huang ed. *An Age of Idealism: Great Wall & Feng Huang Days*, 37-38.

[94] Liu Qiong 刘琼, *The Vicissitudes of My Filmmaking* 影自浮沉, Shanghai: Xuelin Press, 上海：学林出版社, 2002, 21-22.

[95] See Huang ed. *An Age of Idealism: Great Wall & Feng Huang Days*, VII.

[96] Ibid.

Hong Kong Filmmakers Study Group 香港电影工作者学会."[97] Each member of 50th Year joined one of the six sub-groups.[98] With patriotism and revolutionary spirit as the core, its principle was collectivism and equalitarianism, consistent with the ideals of a communist society. Taking the form of a cooperative, 50th Year's capital derived from members' labor, skill, and their corresponding contributions. One member, Feng Ling 冯琳, reminisced "without a boss, 50th Year did not have money. We got workpoint 工分 and no pay at first. After the sale of movies we divide the money."[99] Star Liu Qiong painted a more substantial picture: "all the staff only received necessary subsidy during the movie making. We only retrieved half of the pay, and used the rest as the share capital. The final pay was determined via a democratic appraisal 民主评议."[100] Another practical reason for these filmmakers to work collectively was to level down the internal income gap since prestigious stars like Liu and Li Lihua could join any studio with ease even if Yonghua failed to hire them. Shu Shi commented, "the Study Group was segmented into two groups, one well-fed and one hungry. How to deal with it? So we started 50th Year."[101]

Although it only operated for two years before 50th Year's radical members were repatriated to China, the cooperative provided talent for the three major leftwing studios, The Great Wall, Phoenix, and Xinlian in the 1950s; it also bequeathed the invaluable experience of organizing a film cooperative. For example, in order to make *The Fiery Phoenix* touching and critical, its scriptwriter, director and actors discussed the scenario earnestly and each shared his or her

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[97] Gu, *The Filmmaking in Shanghai: the Autobiography of Gu Yelu*, 104.
[98] See Hu Xiaofeng 胡小峰's account in Huang ed. *An Age of Idealism: Great Wall & Feng Huang Days*, 149.
[99] Feng Ling 冯玲 "Interview on Feng Ling" 冯玲访谈录, *Cotemporary Cinema* 当代电影, no.9 (2012):92.
[100] Liu Qiong, *The Vicissitudes of My Filmmaking*, 22.
[101] See Shu Shi's account in Huang ed. *An Age of Idealism: Great Wall & Feng Huang Days*, 40.

opinions.[102] This fine tradition was kept so intact in Phoenix that its organizer Zhu Shili urged its members to convene and discuss for each script.[103] 50th Year's operating rule--self-organization and regulation, labor as capital, and bonus system--was well carried forward.

A 50th Year member, Hu Xiaofeng (胡小峰), recalls that "We were a brotherhood unit and tried everything. Everyone was single 王老五 without property. (We) came here to eke out a living, so it did not matter life was hard. 50th Year was not productive, since we had no capital. Most equipments were borrowed from elsewhere and used economically."[104] This remark laced a humanistic relish to 50th Year, yet despite the fact that 50th Year achieved the goal to be rid of direct exploitation and to enhance the companions' cohesion, not all of its members were deprived bachelors/bachelorettes or could tolerate years of a bitter yet idealistic life. For instance, in 1952 Li Lihua disavowed the Left and embarked on her superstar journey onwards.

Before an exploration of Li's voyage to stardom across many regions and discourses, I will devote some space here to discussing industrial cross-fertilization, which manifested as the attraction of local cinema to drawing upon diverse media and also signified the distinction of postwar Hong Kong cinema that bewitched a whole generation. Unlike Shanghai cinema that incorporated theater and singing/dancing, a unique phenomenon of postwar Cantonese filmmaking was the adaptation of "radio stories."[105] These "radio stories," broadcast in Guangzhou, became such a sensation that Hong Kongers, bored with the official radio, would not

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[102] See Sima Xiaoshen 司马小莘, "My Father and Film Enterprise of New China" 父亲和新中国的电影事业, http://simawensen.i.sohu.com/blog/view/171901815.htm (Accessed September 15, 2012).

[103] Zhu Feng and Zhu Yan, *Zhu Shulin and Cinema*, 56.

[104] Huang ed. *An Age of Idealism: Great Wall & Feng Huang Days*, 149.

[105] In Republican Shanghai, broadcasting was overseen by the municipal government, and eighteen private and one state-owned radio stations aired comprehensive programs, music time and newspaper excerpts being the most popular. Seldom could a radio play win citywide attention.

miss one sentence on their way home because the show was heard in every household.[106] This sparked the interest of cinematic adaptation in Hong Kong after 1949 when key storytellers Li Wo (Li Ngaw 李我) and his disciple Jiang Sheng (Chiang Sing 蒋声) moved in from Guangzhou. There have been studies about the history of radio-turned cinema.[107] Much has been written on *why* the radio stories grew popular and thus were adapted: foregrounding female bitterness and struggle, highlighting the contemporary setting (especially the war), and offering acute social observation.[108] Yet readers are still confused about *how* exactly two different media correlated and intermingled. Hence I focus instead on the actualization of an oral form in cinema, and examine how Cantonese cinema made full use of this modality.

Preoccupied with a super-prevalent form, the film adaptation retained the key element from the radio stories, that is, the storytelling. For example, the opening of *Eight Immortals in the World of Men* (人海八大仙 1951), based on Jiang's radio show, started with a deep, magnetic male voice, introducing "this is a southern city. It has beautiful scenery, majestic architecture, and prosperous downtown. In this place, many people live a luxury life. However it is only one facet of the city-life. Numerous men sweat and shed blood…To survive, they have to struggle for a living. Well, let me show you something. Come here." At this point the non-diegetic voice ceased and the camera panned to a flea market where "the immortals" vended quack medicine, fruit, fortunetelling, and flowers. There were two sets of montages superimposed over the vocal

[106] Ho Ng, "Radio Plays and the Cantonese Cinema," in Hong Kong Urban Council ed., *Cantonese Melodrama (1950-1969)*, Hong Kong: HKUC, 1986, 59.
[107] See ibid; Ho Ng, "A Case Study of Li Wo," in Hong Kong Urban Council ed., *Cantonese Melodrama (1950-1969)*, Hong Kong: HKUC, 1986, 65-66; Fu Huiyi and Lin Huixian 傅慧仪, 林慧贤, "Airwave Novels and the Movie World" 天空小说与电影世界, *Newsletter* , Hong Kong: HKFA, no.8 (1999): 1-4.
[108] See, for example, Wu, "A Case Study of Li Wo,65.

introduction, one comprising modernity (the downtown views of double-deck trolleys, department stores, and the racecourse), the other showing the reality of the ghetto. Yet it was the voiceover, not the visual message, that led the rhythm and unfolded the narrative. It functioned as though the audience was *listening* to a radio program while *imagining* certain pictures to match. This form was extremely popular in the 1950s.[109] *Debt of Love* (恩重情深, 1951), albeit an original work, applied a similar deep male voice to introduce a sin city with neon lights and crime. In both films, the familiarity of the storytelling would immediately stroke viewers' heartstrings. Between 1950 and 1955, the heyday of "radio-film," Li and Jiang, among other famous radio storytellers, even exposed themselves on the big silver screen to narrate, comment, and appear in cameos.[110]

At times the storyteller/narrator would initiate the story, punctuate the narrative with remarks, and wrap up with a moral lesson for audiences. In *A Devoted Soul*, one of the earliest films adapted from a radio story, the director Zhu Ji ingeniously integrated the storytelling into the plot in an enjoyable, natural way. A well-known songstress's suicide triggers public curiosity and two journalists *interview* her uncle who *retells* her miserable life from the beginning wherein the narrative switches to the point of view of the songstress. Throughout the film, the interview scenario--storytelling model--punctuated the plot flow at every structural turning point, allowing such emotional and narrative compensation for audiences that they might not notice the uncle, the liaison for the storyteller, had the final *say*. Only at the end of it did we see and *hear* a

[109] A large portion of this type of film was lost or destroyed. Out of over 30 movies, there are only less than 10 movies extant.

[110] *Sad Song of an Orphan Girl* 孤凤啼痕 1950, for example, opened with Jiang Sheng who introduced this film, which was adapted from his own radio story.

gentleman, totally detached from the film, earnestly exhort "dear everyone, her dismal life begs our sympathy. But the suicide is futile… We have to face the reality and fight for the rights…Dear everybody, after watching this story, you need to alert yourselves and warn others: never ever commit suicide" (see fig. 11).

Hence the form of storytelling, either in its original form or embedded in the plot, dominated radio-story cinema. The emphasis of the ritual and performance of orality offered more emotional and ethical attachment for a lowbrow audience who preferred this easy-to-follow, morally distinctive, and enjoyable form. That is why the ending of *A Devoted Soul* had an amiable storyteller addressing his audiences. In a similar vein, both the old servant in *Devil's Family* (魔鬼家庭 1950) who *introduces* a family's misfortune in the prelude and the maid in *Who Will Sympathize with Stepmother* who, as a witness, *tells* the truth in the end, resemble the role of a storyteller narrating his or her own tale. Yet the orality did not always come in a staid way. Deng Jichen (邓寄尘), known as the "King of Radio Broadcasting," and adept at imitating a wide range of sound and cross-dressing, created a jocular touch for radio-originated films. The middle-aged Deng not only cross-dressed as an aunty in flamboyant cheongsam in *Daddy and Sonny* (两仔爷 1951), but mimicked a female voice to fool the diegetic characters and entertain audiences. It manifested a traditional Chinese raconteur's ability in maneuvering sound and animating a story. Another aural joyfulness originated from the background music although it might sound too subtle to listeners now. Li Wo once commented, "in Fall 1949, I was invited by Rediffusion Broadcast 丽的 to Hong Kong to tell stories on radio using the popular music 'Sail on to Success' as my opening tune…Several audiences said 'Why not turn 'Sail on to Success'

into a radio play?' So in Spring 1951 I started this story."[111] 'Sail on to Success' 一帆风顺 was then turned into an eponymous film. Actually this piece of upbeat, lighthearted music had already been repeatedly played in *Morning Sun* (朝阳 1950) as a transitional melody to set off the male protagonist's home-coming journey and in *The Chilly Peach Field* (冷桃源 1951) as the opening music. Viewers welcomed this trans-media practice and intertextual playfulness through which they registered both a cognitive and affective recognition.

It is worth noting that this smooth yet by no means simplified cross-fertilization underscored the vocal, usually being an indispensable, albeit unnoticeable part of films, including silent movies. If situating the storytelling within a historical and comparative framework, we can pin it down to its predecessor in the silent age when the Japanese and Taiwanese *benshi* (narrator) or, on an occasional basis, the Chinese "image interpreter" 解画员 explained the foreign plot and directed viewers' attention.[112] A customary connection with narrators for silent films notwithstanding, the Hong Kong case, almost four decades apart, begged a more specific and discursive inquiry. It is true that the storytelling, and by extension the radio music, in Cantonese films was derivative, but it had never been a residual form nor supplementary nor marginal. Both storytelling and music, unlike the live narration in silent films, invoked the existing affection and knowledge from audiences. The vocal performance in various Cantonese movies would imaginably reset one into the everyday habit of *listening* while facilitating his anticipation of

[111] The special kit of *Sail on to Success*.

[112] Ch'iu Kuei-fen. "The Question of Translation in Taiwanese Colonial Cinematic Space," in *The Journal of Asian Studies* 70, 1 (2011): 77-97; Zhang Wei and Yan Jieqiong 张伟, 严洁琼, "The Dubbing and Music in Silent Age" 默片时代的配音与配乐, in Wong Ain-ling 黄爱玲 ed. *Chinese Cinema: Tracing the Origins* 中国电影溯源, Hong Kong: HKFA, 2011, 236-249.

viewing. Audiences wondered *how* the storytelling was visualized and narrated without a live narrator. In addition to the affective and epistemological disparity, the proliferation of the commercial radio stations at Hong Kong and the migration of several key storytellers from Canton ensured the popularity of the "radio story" form. In brief, while the narrating of a silent motion picture entailed a cross-cultural translation and improvisation, the widespread storytelling form in postwar Hong Kong films was a unique, innovative localized signpost that would not have been popular without a timely intersection of technology, ideology, talent, and above all a booming film industry.

Beyond Left and Right: Li Lihua Contextualized in History, Geopolitics, and Performance

"Li Li Hua is a Chinese movie star who is dressed, made up and coiffured with as much care and attention as any Hollywood star ever receives." *Life*, October 27 1947.[113]

In the previous section I approached postwar Hong Kong cinema through Grandview Studio, partisan practice, and transmediality; all bespoke the vitality and distinction of a local film industry. For a full-fledged film industry, though, stars are always key players, yet Chinese stardom had frequently been subject to politics. On July 1st 1950 *Qingqing Film* published a letter by Li Lihua titled "I Aspire to be a Film Worker of People" 我要做人民电影工作者.[114] In it Li whole-heartedly lauded the new China and expressed her eagerness to return to a socialist Shanghai where she had initially gained her overnight fame starring in the film *Three Charming*

[113] "Chinese Movie," *Life*, 27 Oct. 1947: 75.
[114] Li Lihua, "I Aspire to be a Film Worker of People" 我要做人民电影工作者, *Qingqing Film* 青青电影, no.14 (1950):14.

Smiles 三笑 in 1940 at the age of sixteen. But two years later Li, still in capitalist Hong Kong, turned her back on the left and embraced the "free world" so unfalteringly that she, as the deputy chief of the Second Troop Relief Team of Hong Kong and Kowloon Union of Free Workers in the Film Industry, flew over to Taiwan in 1954. Li identified Taiwan as her homeland, pledged loyalty to "free China" and assailed the Communists for their inhumanity.[115]

Commenting on this stark 180 degree change, Paul Fonoroff wrote, "Li was on the verge of returning to the newly established People's Republic when, at the last moment, she decided to remain in Hong Kong. In light of what happened to many of her colleagues during the ensuing political movements, her decision proved a wise one."[116] It was this "last-minute rescue" that triggered my curiosity about Li's splendid yet mysterious stardom. However, as the research went on, I discovered that the ideological contestation was but one facet of her stardom's construction, or "star as a construct" in Gledhill's phrase.[117] Her star career hinged intimately on her wartime collaboration with the Japanese, critically developed after she relocated from postwar Shanghai to Hong Kong, and finally blossomed with her versatility in undertaking various roles. Therefore in this section I articulate Li Lihua's star persona in three intersecting aspects, namely, history, geopolitics and performance, all of which represented the trajectory of postwar Chinese film stars in general and also bespoke Li's unparalleled career.

Western discourses on film stars, represented by the works of Richard Dyer and Christine

[115] Wong Ain-ling and Lee Pui-tak 黄爱玲, 李培德 eds., *The Cold War and Hong Kong Cinema* 冷战与香港电影, Hong Kong: HKFA, 2009, 84; For video on the trip to Taiwan, see the documentary in http://www.ctfa.org.tw/tai_image/international-HK.html (Accessed on September 14, 2012).
[116] See it from http://lilihua.net/Reellives.htm (Accessed on September 14, 2012).
[117] Christine Gledhill, "Signs of Melodrama" in Christine Gledhill ed. *Stardom: Industry of Desire*, London: Routledge, 1991, 214.

Gledhill, among others, accentuate the star as a key player in consumerism, highlighting star production from the economic perspective, star reception via social significance and subject formation, and the symbolic meaning of the star image in its ambiguity and polysemy.[118] Dyer's four components of stardom (industry, critic, star themselves, and audience), Gledhill's three parameters of a star construct (real, reel, and star persona) and Nayar's conceived bond between star and celebrity provide paradigmatic reference for star studies. However, addressing the special conditions of Chinese stardom in the Republican period demands specific discourses.[119] One major discursive difference, according to Sabrina Yu, lies in the "vulnerability of Chinese stars" as opposed to the star power of the Euro-American model.[120] She delineates both the cultural mindset in dismissing stars (star as *Xizi*, a derogatory term for actors and stars as moral victim, always exposed for the public's scrutiny) and the political modeling of stars (stars as film workers in the Communist regime, and stars as political subordinates). In addition, the study of modern Chinese stardom, I would suggest, faces a practical task of locating and discerning primary resources, while American film scholars can refer to reliable (auto)biographies, star's oeuvre, serial publications, personal correspondence, industry records, and so forth.

Taking into consideration these discursive and pragmatic issues as well as Li Lihua's extremely long and diverse film career, I do not intend to offer a definitive narrative that covers her whole acting period. Instead, integrating theory with archive, I argue that Li, not unlike other

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[118] Dyer, *Stars*; and Gledhill ed., *Stardom: Industry of Desire*.
[119] See Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies*: *Film Stars and Society*, London: Routledge, 2004, 3-4; Richard Dyer *Stars*. London: BFI, 1979; Christine Gledhill's "Signs of Melodrama," 214; and Pramond Nayar, *Seeing Stars, Spectacle, Society and Celebrity Culture*, New York: SAGE Publications, 2009.
[120] Sabrina Yu, "Vulnerable Chinese Stars: From *Xizi* to Film Worker," in Yingjin Zhang ed. *A Companion to Chinese Cinema.* London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012, 218.

stars, suffered from the imposition of moral and political judgments after 1945; but being involved with these controversies actually contributed to her exceptional fame since Li could gracefully tap adversities and meanwhile perfect her acting with a great variety of roles. In both tumultuous Shanghai and Hong Kong, she adhered to her religious, professional, and family principles. The vulnerability discourse, paradoxically, served as a foil for Li's tough-minded personality and gender autonomy against a transitional time that eventually gave birth to a superstar across China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Southeast Asia for decades to come.

As Sabrina Yu stated, historically, "Chinese stars were born into misfortune," and "moral suspicion and concomitant moral surveillance have haunted Chinese stars since the birth of Chinese cinema and are manifested in difference forms at different historical moments and social contexts."[121] In the Shanghai chapter, I already suggested that the postwar ethical charge, albeit skewed by ultra-nationalism and livelihood pressure, accused stars as "collaborators" who were left behind in occupied Shanghai. Li Lihua was one of them. Her meteoric rise was much indebted to an occupied, talent-depleted Shanghai where the outflow of first-rate stars to inland China left vacancies for local newcomers like her.[122] Born to a *Xizi* parent, Li, from her childhood, acquainted herself with performance and knew well that being an actress in a modernized-cum-conservative China meant both opportunity and risk. Years later, Li's biographer Yu interviewed her lifelong rival Bai Guang (白光), who commented, "I differ from Li. I started my acting career as a female student, while Li is just from an acting (family)." One

[121] Ibid, 224, 227;
[122] Qingxin 清心, *The Biography of Film Queen Li Lihua* 影后李丽华传.Taizhong: Huazhong Shuju 台中: 华中书局, 1956, 9.

year later, Yu told this to Li, who, in her seventies living in Singapore, swiftly jumped over a trench and responded, “I did this (jumping) thanks to my decades of training in opera. Can Bai do that?”[123] This anecdote revealed the tension between super stars and the hierarchy in class and gender (female student vs. actress). It also vindicated Li’s pride in her formal training in Peking Opera that equipped her with the singing skill, acting style, and above all a classical aura others could seldom possess.[124] The Sino-Japanese War discontinued her opera-studies in Peking before she went back by sea to Shanghai. Then she was coincidently invited to a dinner during 1940 in which Yan Chuntang (严春堂 the investor of Yihua 艺华 studio) scouted Li’s beauty and elegance. Solicited by Yan and approved by her mother, Li joined Yihua with a monthly wage of 300 *fabi* and ascended quickly as one of the glittery stars of Shanghai.[125] The American news magazine *Time* described such a star-scouting: “when he (Yan) first signed the slinky, unknown actress Li Lihua, he told his friends simply: ‘I am setting out a beautiful tree that money drops from.’”[126] One Chinese publication invented the sobriquet “lightening star” for her.[127] At the outset of her life, as she admitted later, Li was apolitical, indifferent to the May Fourth Movement, and disengaged from any progressive arts like spoken drama. Her lack of formal education (she had only a junior high degree), traditional acting background and strict family rules prevented her from embarking on an anti-Japanese journey to the inland. Thus, Li

[123] Yu Yanyin 余业荧, *A Playful Recount of Li Lihua* 戏说李丽华. Taipei: Quanniandai 台北: 全年代出版社, 1996, 50.
[124] In the earliest monograph on Li Lihua, *The Biography of Film Queen Li Lihua* writes that “through five-year training in opera, Li learned singing, make-up, martial arts, as well as Chinese fiddle and lute.” See it on page 6.
[125] Huo Niao 火鸟, “How Li Lihua Mounted on Screen” 李丽华登银幕的经过, *China Film Pictorial* 中国电影画报, no. 11 (1941): 7.
[126] “Little Meow,” *Time*, 3 Nov. 1947.
[127] Ming 鸣, “Star’s House” 明星的家, *Masses Film News* 大众影讯, vol.1, no.46 (1941): 5.

Lihua continued to act under the Japanese reign. This led to Li's career prosperity. At the United China Motion Picture Company 华影, she starred in the sensational drama *Begonia* (秋海棠 1943), a rarely-seen yet majestic musical *Blazing Colors* (万紫千红, 1943), and above all the "traitorous" Sino-Japanese romance *Remorse in Shanghai* (春江遗恨 1944). These were the series of hit movies that promoted her to a superstar but also became a bane to her afterwards.[128]

That Li Lihua climbed to being a superstar and maintained a close relation with United China's Japanese manager Kawakita Nagamasa sowed seeds of jealousy, scorn, and animosity. Immediately after the war, Li, among other United China's actresses, incurred waves of accusation. A postwar article read "Li Lihua sold her soul. She parroted Japanese language in *Remorse in Shanghai* and denounced Anglo-American nations. Now she brazenly goes around to befriend westerners."[129] Titles like "*Funi* Female Star Li Lihua Suffers," "Li Lihua Dodges in Hangzhou," and "No Problem with Li Lihua?" halted and sullied her acting career.[130] Belittled as a "stray dog" (丧家犬), Li hastily agreed to the proposal from a long-time wooer Zhang Xupu 张绪谱, a *xiaokai* (Shanghainese slang for a fop from a wealthy family) of Shandong origin, and they spent their honeymoon in Qingdao 青岛.[131] Li's effort to swim away from the moral and national whirlpool proved partially rewarding since her name was crossed off from the traitor list

[128] From 1943 onwards, Shanghai press demonstrated more interest in Li and there arose various interviews. See, for instances, "Miss Li Lihua Talked over her Screen Career" 李丽华小姐漫谈银幕生涯, *Chinese Film Forum* 中国影坛, no.1 (1943): 9; "My Film-Acting" 我的从影, *Shanghai Weekly* 大上海周刊, no. 1 (1943): 12.

[129] "Female Stars Who Felt Unbearable to Recall" 不堪回首的女明星, *China Film Forum* 中国影坛, no.1 (1946): 1.

[130] "*Funi* Female Star Li Lihua Suffers" 附逆女星李丽华饱尝巨灵掌, *Da Guanyuan* 大观园, no. 20 (1946): 1; "Li Lihua Dodges in Hangzhou" 李丽华到杭州避风头, *Starlight* 星光, no. 19 (1946): 3; and "No Problem with Li Lihua?" 李丽华没问题? *Chinese Film* 中国电影, no.2 (1946): 15.

[131] "Collaborated Stars as Stray Dog" 伪明星都似丧家犬, *Shanghai Tan* 上海滩, no. 13 (1946): 9; for her family life, see "A Happy Family of Li Lihua" 李丽华的美满家庭, *Qingqing Film, History on Stars* 青青电影明星小史, no.1 (1948): 7.

compiled by the self-censoring special committee of the Shanghai Film and Drama Association. Li resumed filmmaking in 1947, yet her stains remained indelible. Her first postwar film *Phony Phoenixes* stirred nationwide protests, part of which involved Li's "shameful history," as I have illustrated in the Shanghai chapter. As a result, this controversial yet artful film and the (in)famous reputation of Li received coverage in the American popular magazines *Life* and *Time*. Her star persona prevailed over the story itself, its director, as well as her remarkable partner Shi Hui.

The Chinese press and public were not as amicable as the American media. Her performance in three consecutive Shanghai films did not wash away the historical disgrace and in late 1947 Li was even summoned to the court with another wartime star Chen Yanyan 陈燕燕, along with thirty other suspect actors. She testified that her joining United China was "against her wish" such that she still felt regretful of starring in *Remorse in Shanghai*. The condemnation, she revealed, made her so restless that she wanted to quit acting.[132] Li's "shameful history" constituted one of the main reasons for her to leave the vengeful, factional Shanghai for a more relaxing Hong Kong in 1948, a wise decision that assured the birth of a trans-regional star. When she flew to Hong Kong, she wrote to *Qingqing Film* that "I hated the Shanghai film world so much; (because) they coerced me due to my 'traitor history.'"[133] Li also told her biographer Yu from Taiwan that "there were over 300 Japanese as extra in *Blazing Colors* to support me as the sole protagonist. Did I dishonor the nation? Even though I was in the occupied area, I did make

[132] Paul Pickwioz 毕克伟, "Never-ending Controversies: The Case of *Remorse in Shanghai* and Occupation Era Chinese Filmmaking" 春江遗恨的是是非非, *Literature and Art Research* 文艺研究, no. 1 (2007): 110.
[133] "Li Lihua Hated so much about Shanghai Cinema" 李丽华恨透上海电影界, *Qingqing Film* 青青电影, no.31 (1948): 16.

achievements. Those (filmmakers) from Chongqing, so what? They elbowed out me; they had to self-criticize what they had done."[134] Actually, as Li stated elsewhere, Yonghua studio's high salary and Hong Kong's cheaper and more stable living conditions were also temptations to go south, but it was her ignominious past that determined her exodus.[135]

Li Lihua's success, controversy, and resurgence resulted from the distinct geopolitics of 1940s China. Both her parents migrated from the war-torn north to semi-colonial Shanghai to seek jobs in Peking opera, and as a result they met, married, and had children. Li, born in such a cosmopolitan environment, went to Peking for opera training that equipped her with a beautiful mandarin accent, mellifluous voice, and a typical classical aura. Her homecoming, once again, kept abreast of times since Shanghai, in isolation, needed new faces like her to enchant folks against a national demoralization. Her name reached every corner of Japanese occupied areas in China, and even traveled to Japan and Southeast Asia. This salient display, however, disturbed Li and almost destroyed her career after 1945. Li so aspired to re-establish her name in Shanghai that she strictly canvassed every possible screenplay for proper roles and even challenged herself by playing a compassionate journalist in *Bright Day* (艳阳天 1948), which differed totally from her spoiled wartime image. It was her deft performance and shining stardom that attracted the American press to laud her. Yet even international fame could not efface her "shameful history." Swamped with love-hate emotion for Shanghai, Li looked forward to resuming acting in Hong Kong. Her decision to move her entire family to Hong Kong was indeed a strategy that saved her

[134] Yu, *A Playful Recount of Li Lihua*, 133.
[135] "Li Lihua's Family Return to Hong Kong" 李丽华全家返港, *Qingqing Film* 青青电影, no.18 (1948): 1.

beloved ones from political turmoil in the transitional time. Hong Kong grew as Li Lihua's second hometown in which she mediated between left and right studios, consolidated her status, and reached out to Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam.[136] Li even received an invitation from Cecil B. DeMille to come to Hollywood, where she starred in *China Doll* (1958), and afterwards was pursued by Yul Brynner. Seen in retrospect, her transregional trajectory was enabled by two intertwined processes, namely, modernization and the decade long Anti-Japanese War. Yet what set her apart from her coeval stars who were also involved in the same socio-political milieu was Li's autonomy in both family life and career path, the latter of which largely depended on her versatile acting.

A discussion of stardom is far from thorough if it omits the personal, affective issue of acting. Screen acting, as Alan Lovell and Peter Krämer argue, has been overshadowed first by the focus on auteur and mise-en-scène and then by semiotic/psychoanalytic meta-theory. A related blind spot assumes that "stars can't act" and "integrates the star into the film's ideological meanings" at the expense of star performance.[137] Leo Lee discovers a similar defect in Chinese film studies in which the critical literature dismisses "acting as 'irrelevant' to the films' formal qualities."[138] This void has been somewhat filled by *Chinese Film Stars*; it is nonetheless an inclusive work that covers stars within one-century of film history.[139] Cross-referencing the literature above, I delineate Li Lihua's postwar self-contrivance in breaking the typecasting during her early stage,

[136] Qingxin, *The Biography of Film Queen Li Lihua,* 35-40.
[137] Alan Lovell and Peter Krämer eds., *Screen Acting*, London, Routledge, 1999, 2, 4.
[138] Leo Lee "The Urban Milieu of Shanghai Cinema, 1930-40: Some Explorations of Film Audience, Film Culture, and Narrative Conventions" in Zhang ed. *Cinema and Urban Culture in Shanghai, 1922-1943*, 90.
[139] Farquhar and Yingjin Zhang eds. *Chinese Film Stars*. London: Routledge, 2010.

and therefore contend that her enactment of a variety of roles not only spanned the political, moral, and regional gap, but diverged from the dominant *bense* (本色 naturalist) acting of Chinese female stars.

Inspired by Richard Schechner, I apply "performance" as an underlying concept that emphasizes the "practices, events, behaviors …(or) the question of 'liveness'" that evokes emotions and circumstances, while using the term acting more as a diegetic "action" that originated mostly from star's skill, spontaneity, and persona.[140] Since Chinese cinema under Japanese occupation remains a taboo in mainland China, Li Lihua's early performance (1940-1944), totaling 28 films, remains opaque.[141] Contemporary publications, however, do provide an appraisal of her performance. "On Li Lihua," an article published in Dec. 1944, summarized her *acting style* as well as the socio-cultural circumstance and audience expectation, which addressed the issue of *performance*. It is worth citing in length:

> The success of one's career depends first on her own characteristic (特质) established first by reality and second on the execution of this characteristics under favorable conditions… The success of Li Lihua is not accidental, so what are her characteristic, and more importantly, under which objective conditions could she exert them?
>
> Everyone knows what Li captivates the public is her "beauty" (美). Yet other female stars also possess attractions, hence why a majority of people prefer Li's "beauty?" Two reasons: first, Li holds her unique "beauty;" second, the aesthetics of ordinary people accords with her "beauty"…
>
> Let us take a look at her family, education and daily life. Li was born in a *lingren* (伶人 actor) family of Peking. The girl of Peking, practically the daughter of a *lingren* family, usually loves jewelry, with lively *action*, sweet talk, lovely smile, and is good at being *coy and coquettish* (撒娇作态). Li excels in the distinct skill of coquettishness where her "enchantment" lies…
>
> Her face, eyes, body, action and voice represent the beauty of a Peking girl, especially

[140] Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, Oxford: Taylor & Francis, 2004, 2.

[141] Several Japanese books, mostly (auto)biographies, started to discuss this area back to the 1980s followed by a handful of Chinese and Hong Kong works recounting it from film history and oral interviews, respectively.

> the beauty of an actress, and even of a *prostitute*. Her inner and exterior characteristics construct this *type* (型) of women, of whom Li is the best. She reflects their strength, but the strength is indeed the shortcoming, that is, although she displayed "beauty" in her exaggeration, coquettishness and affectation, it nonetheless lapses into tawdry *performance*.[142]

Written in four parts, this informative essay fleshed out Li Lihua's *lingren* descent and her mannerisms. It also accounted for the family and geo-cultural conditions that nourished her style. It concluded that "confined by her 'type,' she could only play sing-song girl, prostitute, or gaudy urban girl… These three kinds of women are loved by petit bourgeoisie, so she grows as an onscreen 'mass lover' (大众情人)." Most of her wartime roles, including the lavish waitress in *Blazing Colors*, seemed to attest to this statement. Historically, however, the author's criticism of Li's "inability to play intellectual females or progressive, enthusiastic, and great female" was untenable and anachronistic. For one thing, all (female) stars under Japanese regime faced very limited role choices within preset genres (e.g. costume and family melodrama). For another, Li did show more acting potential than others towards the end of the war in that she played an independent, self-reliant maid in *Autumn* (秋 1942), a rare positive image, and also took the challenging dual role in *Begonia*, both as an enthusiastic student and as an elegant lover.[143] Even in *Remorse in Shanghai*, a lifetime thorn in her side, it was her reserved attitude and girly shyness, not coquettishness, in her first encounter with the Japanese samurai that mitigated the explicit propaganda message.

Li Lihua's postwar career, as discussed before, was bestrewn with public accusation and pressure from returning Chongqing actresses. Therefore, she once again had little room to

[142] "On Li Lihua" 李丽华论, *Shanghai Cinema* 上海影坛, vol.2, no.2, (1944): 8. Italics are mine.
[143] "Miss Li Lihua Talked over her Screen Career," 9.

negotiate her roles. In *Phony Phoenixes* She played a vain widow who advertised for a husband and pretended to be an heiress, which seemed to reinforce her stereotype. On her first date with the barber (played by Shi Hui), who also pretended to be a rich manager, Li, wearing permanent waves and skintight cheongsam, conveyed an urban woman's sophistication and coquettishness through a series of facile actions: lighting a cigarette, gripping a diamond ring, and bidding farewell with a handkerchief. Although Li's acting was hackneyed, I argue it was nonetheless repeated in a satirical and ironic way. To everyone's surprise, in her next film *Bright Day*, the only film work directed by the best dramatist, Cao Yu (曹禺), Li Lihua played a determined, good-Samaritan journalist. One contemporary report read "Li totally abandoned her amorous manner in *Phony Phoenixes* and successfully created a progressive image."[144] Cao was enamored by Li's beauty, especially her eyes, but he delivered it in a moderate, self-effacing way. Paired again with Shi Hui, who mastered the role of a conscientious lawyer, Li played his niece who, much influenced by her uncle, was actually "an intellectual female, progressive, enthusiastic, and great," the opposite characteristics of Li's star persona. Dressed in plain gown, no hairdo, and hugging the orphan next door, Li's opening image impressed us as a "neighbor girl." She always spoke fast, acted forcefully, and expressed earnestness and enthusiasm, detaching her from previous erotic, delicate characters. The ending of *Bright Day* featured Li and Shi, after a life-and-death struggle with bullying traitors, walking to bail out another oppressed family. Baked in the sunshine, Li strode vigorously, threw away her crutch and walked to a brighter future (see fig. 12). This depiction was symbolic for this film (titled *Bright Day*), for the

[144] "Li Lihua Plays a Progressive Woman" 李丽华饰演前进女子, *Qingqing Film* 青青电影, no.13 (1948): 7.

"utopian collective" pattern of postwar cinema, and also for Li Lihua's future career.[145]

With a remarkable achievement in Shanghai, Li had gained more opportunities in Hong Kong from 1948 onwards. "On Li Lihua" was erroneous to typecast Li, but it did a reveal certain idea of her: "as a daughter of *lingren*, restricted by their economic condition and ideology, (Li) lives a life between concubine and proper woman… She does not look like wealthy lady, nor female student, nor taxi dancer, nor prostitute, but partially resembles each of them."[146] This in-betweenness and hybridity proved an asset for Li Lihua in Hong Kong where she featured in radically different roles. In *The Lady Thief* (红粉盗 1948) she played a dashing female knight; and in *Three Females* (三女性 1947) she was the unyielding feministic worker. She also impersonalized the Chinese "Boule de Suif" in *Flora* (花姑娘 1951), and was a decadent mistress in *Awful Truth* (说谎世界 1950). Most postwar film magazines registered as sexist by exclusively highlighting actors' versatile acting such as "multi-faced man Yuan Muzhi 袁牧之" and "all-round Zhao Dan 赵丹" at the expense of discerning actresses' talents. Yet Li's diverse and mature performances in Hong Kong far surpassed many male stars. A couple of female stars like Bai Yang, Shu Xiuwen and Shangguan Yunzhu also exhibited their refined acting skill, but they stayed mostly in Shanghai. Of other major actresses who migrated to Hong Kong, Zhou Xuan stuck to her feeble, melancholy persona, while Gong Qiuxia perpetuated the image of virtuous mother, Chen Juanjuan (陈娟娟) continued her Shanghai casting as an innocent girl, and Bai Guang was cast as an audacious, seductive vamp on and off-screen. Among them stood out

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[145] This "utopian collective" pattern was the feature of Shanghai cinema on the eve of Communist revolution. See Paul Pickwioz, "Chinese Filmmaking on the Eve of Communist Revolution," in Song Hwee Lim and Julian Ward eds., *The Chinese Cinema Book*, London: BFI, 2011, 81.

[146] "On Li Lihua," 8.

Li's considerable virtuosity in taking on diverse roles, which helped her ascend to her career pinnacle in Hong Kong.

Her steady improvement in performance owed much to the political-cultural milieus of Hong Kong, her professional consciousness, and her self-discipline in her private life. The fact that Li was hired by state-of-the-art Yonghua, then partook in a leftist film cooperative, and finally embraced Taiwanese cinema created her diverse experience in contrast to her wartime era. Li debuted in Yonghua's *Our husband* (春雷 1949) as a typical "virtuous wife and devoted mother" 贤妻良母 in opposition to the role of a social butterfly called Shen. Yonghua attempted to capitalize on Li's new image as a mother in real life, so as to break from her previous typecasting. Li effectively met the challenge. She appeared demurely and behaved composedly against her husband's love affair with the butterfly. The climaxing denouement was reminiscent of the ending of *Stella Dallas* when Stella, during a raining dusk, watched her daughter's wedding from the street before she slipped away. Facing the future of her son, too, Li, however, exerted more authority by refusing to return him to his biological mother Shen and lectured about what responsibility was for parents. Shot in close-up and well-lit, Li stood like a statue of the Madonna and held the son tenderly. Moved by her motherly affection, Shen left in a big heavy rain. This was the most memorable moment of *Our Husband*.

In Yonghua Li naturally clung to Shanghai filmmakers, most of whom, much motivated by the Communist victory, sympathized with the CCP.[147] Amidst such a progressive environment, Li joined 50th Year as a "new women" on and off screen. In *The Fiery Phoenix*, as discussed in

[147] Liu Qiong, *The Vicissitudes of My Filmmaking,* 22.

the introduction, Li shook off her capitalistic husband and proudly joined the mass as a plebian teacher. Her sweet, heartfelt grin impressed everyone. Her next film *Wintry Journey* (冬去春来 1950) went even further in that she took on the role of a peasant's daughter and transplanted rice seedlings on the farmland at the beginning. A tracking shot delineated her deftness: bowing for seeds, pulling weeds, and wiping sweat. Throughout the film, she managed the expressive yet subtle moments, for example, sobbing into the hem of her patched clothes when she and her father felt angry at landlord Yan's oppression but dared not speak it. Meanwhile she would also brandish a dagger in despair at Yan after she saw her father beaten to death by him. Her lifelike performance of a peasant's reserved emotion and fierce eruption had illumiated the whole film. This image and trope was no less revealing than *The White-haired Girl* (白毛女 1950), a communist canonical film. No wonder *Qingqing Film* used a captivating title "Li Lihua Grinds Away to be a Peasant's Daughter".[148] Two of her later films, *The Victim* (血海仇 1951) and *Should They Marry* (误佳期 1951), also depicted Li as a peasant daughter-turned streetwalker fooled by a fop and as a poor yet resolute, optimistic textile factory girl.

Such a splendid transformation might be a byproduct of a changing China, but Li Lihua made extreme effort to realize it before any political tide engulfed her. In order to play such a wide range of roles, she set up a high preview standard of every script handed over to her. She recounted more than once in different biographies that from *Phony Phoenixes* onwards, she studied the screenplay closely and simulated the role at home many times before filming.[149] As a

[148] "Li Lihua Grinds Away to be a Peasant's Daughter" 李丽华努力学习成为农家女, *Qingqing Film* 青青电影, no.6 (1950): 9.
[149] Li Lihua 李丽华, *Li Lihua's Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* 李丽华的昨日今日明日. Taipei: Huabao Press

matter of fact, she went down to the Hong Kong countryside to learn the manner and craft of the peasant's daughter in *Wintry Journey*. She exerted the same professionalism at the studio. The director Li Hanxiang (李翰祥) highly praised her punctual arrival for each film. She responded that she observed six principles: 1. don't leave the studio; 2. don't leave when filming; 3. help other actors; 4. help staff; 5. mind one's own business; 6. no gossiping.[150] Unlike some overbearing stars who made every excuse to be late and had a couple of assistants in the studio, Li was well-known for her self-study of scripts and doing needlecraft at the studio when she was free.[151] This low-key attitude and devoted spirit not only ensured her perfect persona onscreen, but reflected her life philosophy. On December 31, 1951, *Life* staged an essay, "Film Queens in Asia," in which Li was crowned as such and the caption read, "I rejected Red overtures, declaring, 'I'm a Catholic. Communism is no good for the soul.'" (see fig. 13).[152] Born into a Catholic family as her parents had converted after they received tremendous assistance from a missionary, Li exercised extreme self-discipline in her everyday life, keeping regular hours, doing housework, never squandering money, and so forth. She had few romantic rumors circulating about her, and the press always cited her as a family model.[153] Recognizing her limited education, she seized any chance to train herself in every aspect while in Hong Kong: she hired a tutor to teach her English, and that eventually paved her way in Hollywood. She also earnestly learned some Russian as well as French from priests. Li so loved cosmetics and fashion

台北: 华报社, 1964, 97.

[150] Li Lihua, *Li Lihua's Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, 210-211.

[151] "Interview: Li Lihua Who Has Changed Style" 访:改变了作风的李丽华, *The Pictorial of Film and Drama* 影剧画报, no.1 (1948):7.

[152] "Film Queens in Asia," *Life*, 31 Dec. 1951: 51.

[153] "A Happy Family of Li Lihua," 7.

that she even designed a special long gown, which became a fad in the 50s, for her role Fengxian in *General Chai and Lady Balsam* (小凤仙 1953).

Film scholars have argued that *bense* acting (literally, true character), or naturalist style, is prevalent in Chinese cinema over several generations since "although second- and third-generation movie stars were lauded because they possessed all of the requisite professional and artistic skills for making movies, the 'true character' standard of acting dominated screenwriting and casting practices during the 1930s."[154] Movie actresses were expected to *play*/*be* themselves to integrate their off-screen star personas with diegetic images. Star Li Lili (黎莉莉), for instance, represented a lively *jianmei* (healthily beautiful) role both in cinema and reality, while Ruan Lingyu's marriage scandal contaminated her purity in film.[155] In the 1940s a majority of female stars, except Li Xianglan (李香兰) whose ambiguous national identity paradoxically facilitated her diverse roles, still faced obstacles to shed the acting stereotype.[156] In this light, Li Lihua's transcendence of her previous typecasting as "sing-song girl, prostitute, or gaudy urban girl" and creation of an amazingly wide range of roles allowed her to navigate her through political turbulence. Her career path was unique; yet her postwar transformation was inseparable from the historical circumstances and geopolitical dynamics. Above all, it was Hong

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[154] Michael Chang, "Movie Actresses and Public Discourse in Shanghai, 1920s-1930s," in Zhang ed. *Cinema and Urban Culture in Shanghai,* 132.

[155] Sean Macdonald, "Li Lili: Acting the Lively, *Jianmei* Type," in Mary Farquhar and Yingjin Zhang eds. *Chinese Film Stars*, 56.

[156] Li Xianglan, or Yoshiko Ōtaka in Japanese, Shirley Yamaguchi in English, was a Manchuria-born Japanese whose language fluency in both Mandarin and Japanese and cross-cultural awareness let her disguise herself as an authentic Chinese star "successfully" assimilating to the Japanese dream. For details, see Shelley Stephenson, "Her Traces Are Found Everywhere: Shanghai, Li Xianglan, and the 'Greater East Asia Film Sphere,' in Yinjing Zhang, ed., *Cinema and Urban Culture in Shanghai*, *1922-1943*. 222-247; Wang Yiman, "Between the national and the transnational: Li Xianglan/Yamaguchi Yoshiko and pan-Asianism," *IIAS Newsletter*, no. 38 (2005): 7.

Kong's stable environment, commercial spirit, and inclusive culture that endowed a Shanghai star with multiple faces.

Chapter Three: The Northern Film: Demystifying Manchuria Cinema

Introduction:

In this section I articulate a neglected yet sensitive episode in the history of Chinese film, that is, postwar Manchurian cinema. Comparing to conspicuous Shanghai, Hong Kong and even Taiwan cinema, the films made in Manchuria remain mysterious for scholars, let alone the industry, politics, and aesthetics underlying these films. Manchuria (满洲) itself stands on the threshold---neither purely Han nor Manchu in ethnicity, neither Chinese nor Japanese in polity, and simultaneously infrastructurally modern but habitually traditional. In light of this, I begin with a very brief delineation of the history, geography, and socio-politics of Manchuria in the first half of the twentieth century. Manchuria historically occupies a large region---sandwiched between Russia and Korea---in northeast Asia. It is the home of the Manchu, after whom Manchuria is named. Being a homeland for several nomadic tribes, including Manchu that reigned China from 1644-1911, Manchuria's fate in the Republican era was phenomenal and dramatic. It was first under the control of Russia (pre-1905), Japan (1905-32), and then ruled by a puppet government, *Manchukuo* (满洲国, 1932-1945), run by the deposed Qing Manchu emperor Puyi (溥仪), who was appointed by the Japanese. The term *Manchuria* might be a misnomer for many a Chinese patriot. It betrays the humiliation of China. Since WW II, Chinese people, up until now, prefer to designate Manchuria as *Northeast China* (东北), a more de-colonized and nationalized name. Yet I continue to use the term Manchuria for the postwar

period mainly for both geo-historical and practical ends.[1] On the one hand, as Prasenjit Duara argued in his *Sovereignty and Authenticity*, Manchuria has always been "a contested borderland" since the mid-nineteenth century and its identity and sovereignty frequently ambiguous and fluid.[2] Therefore "Northeast China" cannot do full justice to Manchuria's distinct history, ethnicity, and geography. Nor can it convey its strategic position that both connects the Soviet Union, Korea, and Japan and indicate the confrontation between the CCP and KMT during the civil war. To use Manchuria, on the other hand, also speaks easily to western readership and brings into view a more contested and formidable picture (e.g. "the Manchuria Candidate").[3]

The cinema in Manchuria was even more murky and complex for audiences home and abroad. As mentioned above, Manchurian cinema has remained *minor, marginal, and mysterious*. It is minor because of the scholarly asymmetry or hierarchy in approaching modern Chinese cinema: Shanghai stood in the upper echelon of the research agenda, overshadowing both Hong Kong and Taiwan cinema, while Manchuria cinema stayed eclipsed or even alienated. The marginality of Manchuria cinema derives precisely from its liminality in geopolitics, culture, history and economics. The nagging logic of being "neither-nor" while "both-and" bewilders most film critics who take pains to define its nature. The third reason for insufficient examination comes from the inaccessibility of film prints, archival documents, and contemporary reviews, many of which have been either destroyed or buried deep in storehouses. Having realized the

[1] Mark C Elliott, "The Limits of Tartary: Manchuria in Imperial and National Geographies," *Journal of Asian Studies* 59, no. 3 (2000): 603-46.

[2] Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003, 41-42.

[3] *The Manchurian Candidate*, a political thriller novel having been adapted twice by Hollywood, came out after the Korean War when hundreds of thousands American GIs fought with "diabolic" Communist soldiers in Manchuria. Hence Manchuria symbolizes a remote yet menacing and traumatic "Red Area" in American psyche.

challenge in studying Manchuria cinema, I strive for demystifying postwar Manchuria cinema, as the chapter title suggests, to first evaluate it as an integral part of Chinese cinema that paradoxically presented an unequivocal local taste, especially seen in the works of Changchun Studio between 1947 to1948. The attempt of demystification also unfolds on a political level, that is, to deconstruct the revolutionist dogmatism exercised by most Chinese authors in their analysis of Manchurian cinema. Exalted as the "the cradle of 'New China's' cinema," the Northeast Film Studio (东北电影制片厂, 1946-54, NFS hereafter), established by the Communist Party in Manchuria during the civil war period, would spearhead an "ultra-politically-correct" film culture in China for decades to come.[4] The "worker, peasant, soldier" orthodoxy replaces Shanghai's petty bourgeois entertainment and draws a parallel to the cinema of Soviet Union. A monopoly of revolution, however, prevents us from capturing a more comprehensive and accurate image of Manchurian cinema. Instead, I use the concept of "northern film" to engage with Manchurian cinema. In order to better contextualize and elaborate my argument, a discussion of current scholarship of Manchuria and its cinema is in order.

Since "Manchuria has played a central role in the history and politics of East Asia in the twentieth century" and "has been home to Chinese, Korean, and Japanese" (as well as Russians) due to its geopolitical nature, it enjoys a more *strategic position* in Chinese history than "Shanghai splendor" has implied (e.g. modernity and cultural diversity).[5] In such works as *Seeds*

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[4] Hu Chang 胡旭, *The Cradle of New China's Cinema* 新中国电影的摇篮. Changchun: Jilin Literature and History Press 长春: 吉林文史出版社, 1986.

[5] See Hyun Ok Park, *Two Dreams in One Bed*: *Empire, Social Life, and the Origins of the North Korean Revolution in Manchuria*. Durham: Duke University, 2005. xi; for this notion of "Shanghai splendor," see Wen-hsin Yeh, *Shanghai Splendor: Economic Sentiments and the Making of Modern China, 1843-1949*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.

of Destruction, Decisive Encounters, and *Anvil of Victory*, scholars all assert that the civil war between the CCP and KMT inManchuria sets the decisive path for China.[6] Other books, for instances, *Japan's Total Empire* and *Memory Maps* shift the focal point to the Japanese industrial, cultural and agricultural experiment in Manchuria and advance the discussion of modernity and colonial state.[7] Recent scholarship, while acknowledging Manchuria's crucial standing in both Japanese wartime empire and postwar Chinese revolution, presents two obvious turns: one is to take into consideration complex paradigms of colonialism/sovereignty, and local/trans-regional and state-nation/internationalism in approaching a strategic Manchuria in history.[8] The other trend gives more heed to the socio-cultural dimension and condition of Manchuria, with which previous studies seldom engage, that reveals the quotidian life (often in an "erotic, grotesque, nonsensical" way) in one of the most heterogeneous and turbulent regions in Asia.[9] Alcohol, opium, prostitution, and avant-garde propaganda received due investigation in various books.[10]

Therefore, alongside this academic shift, a study of Manchuria cinema, including Manshu

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[6] Lloyd E Eastman, *Seeds of Destruction: Nationalist China in War and Revolution, 1937-1949.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984. Steven I. Levine, *Anvil of Victory: The Communist Revolution in Manchuria, 1945-1948*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987; and Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters: The Chinese Civil War, 1946-1950*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.

[7] Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998; Mariko Tamanoi, *Memory Maps: The State and Manchuria in Postwar Japan.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009.

[8] In addition to Duara's and Park's books, for other similar titles, see Shin'ichi Yamamuro's, *Manchuria under Japanese Domination*, trans. Joshua A. Fogel, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006; Blaine Chiasson's *Administering the Colonizer: Manchuria's Russians under Chinese Rule, 1918-29*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010; and Mariko Tamanoi ed., *Crossed Histories: Manchuria in the Age of Empire*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005.

[9] Miriam Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense*: *The Mass Culture of Japanese Modern Times*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.

[10] See Norman Smith, *Intoxicating Manchuria: Alcohol, Opium, and Culture in China's Northeast*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2012; Annika Culver, *Glorify the Empire: Japanese Avant-Garde Propaganda in Manchukuo.*Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2013; and John Jennings, *The Opium Empire: Japanese Imperialism and Drug Trafficking in Asia, 1895-1945*, London: Praeger, 1997.

Eiga Kyokai, or Manchukuo Film Association Ltd. (满洲映画协会, 1937-1945; Man'ei 满映 hereafter) and its postwar metamorphosis, merits a full discussion today. Michael Baskett's monograph *Attractive Empire: Transnational Film Culture in Imperial Japan* not only addresses previous scholarly turns when Baskett claims it is "the first comprehensive study of imperial Japanese film culture in Asia from its unapologetically colonial roots in Taiwan and Korea, to its more subtly masked semicolonial markets in Manchuria and Shanghai, and to the occupied territories of Southeast Asia."[11] It also investigates how Man'ei, sponsored by the Japanese Kwantung Army and Manchukuo government, grew into the most modern film industry in Asia to disseminate its ideology and also do cultural experiments.[12] E Mei's thesis "Commerce and Culture: The Manchukuo Film Industry" provides more industry details about this ideological state apparatus.[13] Taking another direction, Chinese scholarship aims to burnish the "national elements" in Man'ei by denouncing its colonial history and meanwhile introducing "politically correct" genres and stars.[14] Film critics from Japan, too, revealed another side of the coin mostly based on their memoirs.[15] It is dismaying that no serious book in English has yet narrated the

[11] Michael Baskett, *Attractive Empire: Transnational Film Culture in Imperial Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2008, 3.
[12] Ibid, 29.
[13] E Mei, "Commerce and Culture: The Manchukuo Film Industry," M.A. Thesis, National University of Singapore, 2009.
[14] Hu Chang and Gu Quan 胡昶 古泉, *Man'ei, Multiple Perspectives* 满映:国策电影面面观. Beijing: Zhonghua Press 北京:中华书局, 1990; Furuichi Masako, 古市雅子 *The Study of Man'ei Films* "满映"电影研究. Beijing: Jiuzhou Press, 北京: 九州出版社, 2010; and Wang Yanhua 王艳华 has published a series articles on this topic in Chinese and Japanese languages, including her book *Man'ei and the Study of Films under Japanese Colonization in Occupied Northeast* 满映与东北沦陷时期的日本殖民化电影研究. Changchun: Jilin University Press 长春: 吉林大学出版社, 2010.
[15] Yamota Iunhiko 四方田犬彦, *Ri Koron and East Asia* 李香蘭と東アジア. Tokyo: Tokyo University Press 東京: 東京大學出版會, 2001; Tsuboi Hitoshi 坪井與, "The Recollection of Manshu Eiga Kyokai" 満洲映画協会の回想, *Research on Film History* 映畫史研究. no. 19 (1984): 23-54; Sato Tadao 佐藤忠男, "Manshu Eiga Kyokai" 満洲映画協会, in Imamura Shōhei 今村昌平 ed., *Japanese Cinema in the Wartime* 戦争と日本映畫. Tokyo:

"afterlife" of Man'ei. Only Patricia Wilson's article "The Founding of the Northeast Film Studio, 1946-1949" discloses its history by piecing together various recollections.[16] Yet the significance in (re)visiting postwar Manchurian cinema cannot be overstated: although the attractiveness of the Japanese film empire, as Baskett maintains, somehow failed to convince colonized subjects during wartime, it bequeathed an enormous industry legacy from which a prosperous Manchurian cinema arose.

In order to situate postwar Manchuria cinema in a comparative and multivalent framework and to investigate its films on their own merits, I propose the discourse of "northern film" to articulate its complexity and clarify the mystery. It remains obfuscated, for example, how Manchurian cinema differed from the filmmaking in Shanghai in terms of style, tone, cinematography, and technique as well as organization, operation and ideological effect. Also obscure was the process by which both CCP and KMT, in succession, confiscated and appropriated Japanese infrastructure for its own sake. Not coincidently, their respective state-owned studios produced the most localized, riveting films that featured household stars, familiar dialect, international staff, distinct settings and of course ideological messages. Therefore the concept of "northern film" not only discloses Manchurian cinema's unique geopolitics, history, modernity, cultural identity, and industry practice, but articulates local

Iwanami Press 東京: 岩波書店, 1986; Yamoguchi Takeshi 山口猛, *Manshu Eiga Kyokai in Sorrow* 哀愁の満州映画. Tokyo: Santen Press 東京: 三天書房, 2000; Fumiko Kishi 岸富美子, *The Film Life: Man'ei, Northeast Film Studio and Japanese Film* はばたく映画人生: 満映・東影・日本映画, Tokyo: Serabi Press 東京: せらび書房, 2010.

[16] See Patricia Wilson, "The Founding of the Northeast Film Studio, 1946-1949" in George Semsel ed., *Chinese Film: The State of the Art in the People's Republic*. London: Praeger, 1987, 15-34.

cinema's mediation with and negotiation between these meta-narratives.[17] Mapping out this northern film also responds to recent scholarship on Manchuria's cultural condition, thereby destabilizing the monolithic revolutionist interpretation of Manchurian cinema. The nature of being "northern," unpacked either as local, international or revolutionist, underlies and upholds the cinema in Manchuria.

To approach this northern film, I divide this chapter into two parts. Part One unravels the history of the Northeast Film Corporation (东北电影公司, NFC hereafter) established between October 1945 to May 1946. I argue that it was a self-organized, collectively-owned company whose institutionalization, internationalism and technocracy distinguished itself from other Chinese cinemas in this period, a legacy carried forward in Communist studios. In May 1946, after the CCP transformed NFC to its own northern base, the KMT set up a short-lived yet vital studio on site: Changchun Studio (长春制片厂, CCS hereafter). Part One continues with CCS, a state-owned enterprise that managed to produce three feature films from 1947-48 while menaced by war and under resource-limited circumstances before it merged with Central Film Studio 3 (中电三厂) in Peking.[18] Although only *Along the Sungari River* (松花江上 1947) is available now, it manifested a distinct northern flavor in its dialect, mise-en-scène, stardom, music and lifestyle. This northern display, as well as its explicit adoption of the Soviet Union's montage, distanced itself from either Shanghai or Hong Kong cinema at this time. Similar to my analysis of NFC and CCS, Part Two is devoted to the CCP's Northeast Film Studio, located in a remote

[17] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.
[18] "Changchun (Studio) Took Refuge at Peking" 长春避难去北京, *Film* 电影, vol.2, no.3 (1948): 5.

northerner enclave. I delineate its unusual internationalism in a postcolonial environment, the diversity of film forms with notable characteristics, and a well-established distribution and exhibition channel as well as an inclusive cultural enterprise within which cinema, along with other art forms, served politics. My discussion of postwar Manchurian cinema is far from complete or exclusive. There are other scholarly inquiries to be explored. For instance, in terms of primary resources, several key movies are still missing or locked away, while a large number of local film periodicals end up scattered around and demand compiling. Institutionally speaking, how similar were Changchun Studio's works and those made by Central Film Studio 3 in terms of style, theme, and trope, since both were located in the North? From an industry approach, how was Manchurian cinema received by locals, and what was inland audiences' feedback on northern movies? To make it more complicated from a trans-national and trans-media angle, does Hollywood play an equal role in the North in luring city dwellers (who used to be more enthralled by traditional operas) into movie-houses? Such questions command more research and would definitely advance current understanding of Manchurian cinema; and an investigation of "northern film" in the next two parts sheds some light for further study.

"Along the Sungari River:" From Man'ei to Northeast Film Corporation and to Changchun Studio

The contestation and even combat between the KMT and CCP in seizing Man'ei between late 1945 to 1946 were intense and critical for both sides. Behind the façade of the cultural battle was a larger scale of antagonism between these two political rivals. Since Manchuria

geographically serves as a passageway to inland China, Russia, Korean and Japan, and it also boasts abundant resources (e.g. coal, mineral, soil, and barley) and sound infrastructure due to Japanese investment, both Communists and Nationalists had coveted this treasure-rich land for quite some time.[19] As soon as the Soviet Union declared war with Japan in August 1945, the KMT immediately requested the U.S. to help airlift its troops to Manchuria, whereas the CCP ordered its guerillas from various places to march forward by foot to take it over.[20] Within this tug of war, Changchun (previously *Hsinking* 新京, literally "new capital" of Manchukuo), known as "the railway city" and modern center in Manchuria, turned into their main battleground.[21]

Among the well-planned cityscape and awesome Japanese colonial high-rises in Changchun, there stood a large complex comprising a three-story office building with wings, designed by the Japanese architect Rin Masutani, who modeled it on the world-renowned German Universum Film AG (UFA). This was the Manchukuo Film Association. This huge project lasted more than two years (Aug. 1937 to Nov. 1939) and it took up 160,000 sq. m., with six state-of-the-art studios (each 600 sq. m.), four advanced recording studios, and other ancillary buildings. Its scale and facility was second to none in East Asia, surpassing studios in both Shanghai and

[19] For instance, as earl as 1933, the CCP issued a letter to underscore the strategic significance of Manchuria, then colonized by Japan, in the Chinese revolution and communication with the model, the Soviet Union. See "Letter from the Party Center to Party Organizations at all Levels and all Party Members in Manchuria. On the Situation of Manchuria and Our Party's Task," in Tony Saich and Benjamin Yang eds., *The Rise to Power of the Chinese Communist Party: Documents and Analysis*. New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1996, 687-692.
[20] See more information, see Suzanne Pepper's *Civil War in China: The Political Struggle, 1945-1949*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980, 25-28; and Michael Lynch, *Chinese Civil War 1945-49*, Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2010, 35-41.
[21] David Buck, "Railway City and National Capital: Two Faces of the Modern in Changchun," in Joseph Esherick ed., *Remaking the Chinese city: modernity and national identity, 1900-1950*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002, 65-89.

Tokyo. Although almost all managers and technicians were Japanese stalwarts, under the leadership of Masahiko Amakasu (甘粕正彦), an open-minded, albeit radical and loyal militarist who started his post after 1940,[22] Man'ei hired Manchukuo citizens, Taiwanese immigrants, and Korean refugees, as well as many Chinese to work for the studio.[23] From 1938 to 45, it released approximately 108 feature films (geki eiga 娯民映画) as well as nearly 200 documentary, educational films (Kyōiku eiga 啓民映画), and over 300 newsreels (kiroku eiga 時事映画).[24] It came as little surprise that when the shadow of defeat loomed large in Changchun, the KMT, CCP and even the Soviet Union troops vied for this resourceful film base.

With the suicide of Amakasu in August 1945, Man'ei was dissolved and, as Sato Tadao recalled, an air of displacement and distrust among different nationals, cliques, and backgrounds permeated.[25] The Studio was taken by the Soviet's Red Army that controlled other key organizations in Changchun. No clear evidence showed the Soviet Union ransacked the studio, unlike what it did to other factories. This might have resulted from a well-prepared, carefully-arranged plan to self-protect the company. When most Japanese staff were discharged from their posts, it was those progressive Chinese workers and a handful of leftwing Japanese, trusted and buttressed by the majority, who stood up to organize, encourage, and subsidize ordinary workers and their family members. Chinese scholars tend to attribute this to the efforts

[22] Hitoshi, "The Recollection of Manshu Eiga Kyokai," 34.

[23] According to her study, up until November 1944, Man'ei had enlisted a total of 1858 staffs consisting of 1076 Japanese, 711 Chinese, 52 Korean, and 19 Taiwanese. See it in Wang, *Man'ei and the Study of Films under Japanese Colonization in Occupied Northeast*. 36.

[24] Hu Chang and Gu Quan, *Man'ei, Multiple Perspectives*, 43-55; A similar account of the output appeared in a memoir of a Chinese veteran of Man'ei, See Su Yun and Hu Xu 苏云 胡昶 eds., *Remembering Dongying* 忆东影. Changchun: Jilin Literature and History Press 长春: 吉林文史出版社, 1986, 60.

[25] Sato Tadao 佐藤忠男, *Cinema in Gunfire* キネマと炮聲. Tokyo: Iwanami Press 東京: 岩波書店, 2004, 230-31.

of the CCP's underground agents. Yet it seems more convincing that the workers' anxiety about the future and confusion about the mercurial situation, perhaps mixed with simple patriotism, expediently glued together a wide variety of crew, who were diverse in demography and very loose in organization.[26]

On site arose the Northeast Film Corporation, a self-organized, collectively-owned company that ran from October 1st 1945 to late May 1946. The nature of NFC would be measured from its environment, organization, goal, and operation. First, it is a provisional firm out of an extremely volatile situation. Immediately after V-J day, a majority of Man'ei's workers "realized the dismissal wage from Masahiko Amakasu was far from sustaining basic life before they left Man'ei to either go back to their hometown or start small business."[27] The influx of the armies of the Soviet Union, Communists and Nationalists, together with deprived conditions, made it almost impossible for remaining workers to shoot any films. In short, the political, economic, military, and institutional mess demanded a protective unit, however loose and hybrid it was. Second, in terms of organization, NFC originated from two voluntary professional teams formed to maintain order: the Technician Team and the Artist Team. Since NFC shrank from over 1800 people to about 400-500, the remaining crew consisted of almost all technical and performing old hands who had to financially rely on NFC. Although the self-governing phase was much complicated by the participation of diverse groups, the contestation between the CCP and KMT,

[26] This is not to deny the tremendous work of underground CCP members in organizing and educating Man'ei crews. Yet as various recollections revealed, "honestly, a great majority of youth of Manchuria, who had lived a colonized life under Japanese tight reign, were politically ignorant," and "only cared about how to eke out a living." The CCP adroitly capitalized on their hatred towards the Japanese as well as the desire for a stable income. See Su Yun and Hu Xu, *Remembering Dongying*. 29, 14.

[27] Ibid, 28-29.

and inner skepticism, it served as the only time when Manchurian cinema gained an autonomy free from any state or ideological coercion.

Therefore, a paradox surfaced: within an enormously destabilized ambience, Manchurian cinema enjoyed a short-lived yet precious period of self-organization. Its main goal, accordingly, was geared more towards employment and, to a lesser degree, development. The ultimate reason for several progressive workers, numerous indifferent centrists, and Japanese crew to cling together was economic interest and security a factory like NFC could possibly offer. NFC in turn paid its employees monthly allowances by distributing wartime Shanghai films they had in stock that once failed to pass censorship, by reenacting well-known spoken dramas, and most importantly, by translating movies from the Soviet's the Far East Film Exporting Company into Chinese, Japanese and Korean for profit.[28] This leads to the fourth feature of NFC: the "half-hearted internationalism." The operation of NFC was the epitome of a smaller "United Nations" where the people of Manchukuo, Japan, China, Mongolia, Russia, and Korea mingled and worked together. Their relation, however, was far from genuine or enthusiastic, nor based on cooperation in the long run. The ad hoc, fragile bond between different national and ethnic groups hinged on their individual interests, perhaps at the cost of others. For instance, some Soviet officers offered protection of NFC so as to "borrow" cameras in return, while most Japanese crew stayed at NFC only for a chance to be repatriated to Japan;, and there was deep-seated mistrust between Manchurian workers and party cadres from Yan'an.

Although the inner friction and volatile circumstance inhibited feature films from being

[28] Su Yun and Hu Xu, *Remembering Dongying*. 34-35.

produced at Northeast Film Corporation, its contribution was hard to overstate. It succeeded in establishing and subsequently managing a corporation. Hundreds of former Man'ei core crew, who would have been either unemployed or scattered homelessly, converged and cohered at NFC. The state-of-art machinery and ancillary facilities, which would have been simply sold as scrap metal or looted by the Soviets, remained intact, and the film workers grew into the backbone of the Communists' cultural enterprises and the Nationalists' Changchun Studio.

Another key feature of NFC that differed from the experience of any other film bases (e.g. Shanghai, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and even Hollywood) and therefore should be chalked up in the history of Chinese film was its technocracy. Unlike the glittery stars and eminent directors from Shanghai, or influential tycoons in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia, what dominated and ran the film industry in Manchuria were technocrats. This resulted largely from the mechanization of Japanese Man'ei, and became more pronounced and decisive in the postwar socio-political reality. Both Michael Baskett and Furuichi Masako, in their studies of Man'ei, suggest that the paradoxical linchpin around which Man'ei organized itself resided in the ideology of being modern to disseminate Japanese Pan-Asia Prosperity and Ethnical Harmony.[29] In order to achieve this almost "mission impossible," Man'ei secured investment from the Manchukuo government, recruited veteran filmmakers ad hoc from Japan (e.g. Japanese leftwing director Tomu Uchida), and capitalized on the ambiguous stardom of Li Xianglan.[30] Yet they all served and were succumbed to an overarching ideological machine within which the skillful technicians,

[29] Baskett, *Attractive Empire*. 29; Masako, *The Study of Man'ei Films*. 127-128.
[30] See note 155 of my Shanghai Chapter for a discussion of Li.

including cinematographers, editors, art designers, sound engineers/mixers, processing directors, and so forth, maintained and facilitated everything. Directors could be laid off or even repatriated and Li Xianglan could travel to Malaya to shoot a film, but the technocrats were the indispensable asset of Man'ei and exerted an almighty power. In addition, this idea of technocracy magnified itself in Man'ei's Training Schools (养成所) since in it the linguistic and cultural hierarchy made it clear that only the most talented, diligent, and language-savvy Chinese trainees could have the chance to learn profoundly technology based skills such as cinematography and be promoted to directorship after years of practice. Those who did not have such ambition or lacked skills went to acting or supporting sectors. The influence of the technocracy system was clearly vindicated in the postwar Technician Team that proposed and formed Northeast Film Corporation, since its knowledge and skill was the gem ackonwledged by both regular workers at NFC and political parties. In addition, most Japanese who remained working were also capable technicians, a fact ironically indicating the role of technocracy and shortage of Chinese technicians. The number of Japanese crew, falling from over 1000 to around 100, as well as Chinese ones, from over 700 to 300 or so, made the demand for deft hands more pressing than ever. That explained the omnipresence of a few Chinese technicians, for instance, Wang Qimin 王启民 (the sole stand-alone Chinese cinematographer), Zhang Xinshi 张辛实 (the screenwriter), Ma Shouqing 马守清 (the photographer), Lu Guangquan 卢广铨 (the projectionist), in NFC's operation. The technocracy continued to exert influence in the Communist's Northeast Film Studio in three aspects. First, it was the large group of skillful, dedicated technicians that made possible six different film forms, a diversity that well surpassed

Shanghai and Hong Kong cinema. Second, the technocracy signaled a certain meritocracy, but it was definitely reconciled and contested with the Party's ideology. Last but not the least, the technocracy was transnational in essence, exactly like the nature of Manchurian cinema, since it stemmed from Japanese modernist, propaganda experiments, engaged with internationalism during the civil war, and received rectification from the Soviet Union after 1949.

One of the biggest challenges, along with the shortage of funds and raw materials, was the severe coldness that prevented any prolonged filmmaking from being conducted, as the Northeast Film Corporation began operation after October. The frigid weather in Manchuria froze everything, including cameras. Yet NFC did complete a couple of short documentaries celebrating V-J Day, welcoming the Soviet's Red Army, and reporting the memorial of Lu Xun.[31] These shorts previously would have been filmed mostly by the Japanese, but now Chinese technicians, albeit a little inexperienced, held sway over the entire operation, from directing and cinematography to editing.

In short, Northeast Film Corporation offered financial support for a great amount of professionals, and these technicians, among others, in turn maintained the daily operation of NFC by tapping limited available resources. NFC had been controled by pro-Communists de facto, and it did not cease functioning until May 1946 when the Nationalist Army approached Changchun's gate. Realizing the standing of NFC, the CCP launched its ambitious transfer. The facts and numbers sufficed its scale, efficiency, and impact for both the CCP and KMT: on May 13th, the CCP motivated the whole studio to join in a massive moving-out; in two to three days,

[31] Su Yun and Hu Xu, *Remembering Dongying*. 90.

it commandeered more than twenty trucks to transport the equipment to the train station. Numerous equipment and personnel were carried out by three trains, each comprising thirty or so carts; 35mm and 16mm cameras, recording, developing, editing, and projecting machines, carbon-arc lamps, chemical reagents, costumes, cosmetics, over million meters of reels of film, hundreds of film copies, and even stationery were transferred; a group of over 400 people, comprising more than 100 Chinese staff, 100 or so Japanese and Korean technicians, and their families evacuated with the train.[32] Thus, very few had been left for the incoming KMT officers. As their head, Jin Shan 金山, lamented: it was "practically a huge empty factory."[33]

Ironically, Jin's distressed remark turned out to be lip service. He was actually an underground communist member who was entrusted by Zhou Enlai (周恩来), the general chief of the CCP responsible for intelligence work, to "take over" Man'ei to the advantage of the Communists.[34] The large scale hasty relocation campaign led by the Communists did leave gaps. For instance, a lightweight EYEMO camera was hidden by a pro-KMT technician who turned it in to Jin; another camera being mended in Peking was also shipped back; a large group of actors, including several stars, were left behind by the CCP and had to re-affiliate themselves with the new studio for employment.[35] Disguised as an influential Nationalist commissioner with close tie at the high levels, Jin assembled available resources and talents and started from scratch to re-build a studio, this time named Changchun Studio (CCS).

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[32] Ibid, 23-24, 37-39, 63-64, 77-78.

[33] Xu Guorong and Zuo Lai 许国荣, 左莱, *Biography of Jin Shan* 金山传. Beijing: China Drama Press 北京:中国戏剧出版社, 1989, 223.

[34] Ibid, 203-211.

[35] The CCP put enormous emphasis to move out both Chinese and Japanese technicians first at the expense of the fate of actors, a fact implying that the priority was given to technocrats.

In a word, Jin Shan's attitude was negativism: neither to outright fawn over the KMT nor to explicitly laud the Communists. Sitting on the fence and split by dual identities, Jin turned his eyes upon *historical* production, with little contemporary allusion and criticism. Hence emerged the film *Along the Sungari River* (1947). It focused on the Japanese atrocity in Northeast China and Manchurians' insurrection; it inflamed a nationalist compassion rather than ideological agitation, and its diegetic local landscape and customs struck a deep chord in viewers' hearts. *Sungari River*, together with two other films made by CCS (*A Night in Harbin* 哈尔滨之夜, 1948; *The White Dragon* 小白龙 1948), strictly set the plot during the wartime, sidelining any obvious postwar depiction. This smart choice achieved the minimal goal of Zhou Enlai: not to make any anti-Communist work; it also channeled the public's sentiment and reflection towards national trauma, not directing it to any domestic dogfight between the CCP and KMT.

What made *Along the Sungari River* extremely sensational and resonant nationwide, however, lied in its *northern wind, earth, people, and emotion* 北国风土人情, i.e., northern conditions and customs, or northern ethos.[36] In other words, *Sungari River* accomplished a two-fold goal at the reception level: first it appealed to local audiences who aspired to see a long-awaited national film condemning the Japanese assault and sympathizing with Manchurians; Spectators outside of Manchuria also keenly anticipated a genuine movie from the North replete with Manchurian motifs. Its plot assured this double significance. In a small village by the Sungari River, Niu'er (played by Zhang Ruifang 张瑞芳), her grandpa (played by Pu Ke 浦克),

[36] Ding Zhi 丁芝, "One of the Four Famous Actresses at Chongqing: Zhang Ruifang", 重庆四大名旦之一: 张瑞芳, in *Film And Drama Magazine* 影剧杂志, no.1 (1949): 17.

and her parents were living a happy life. Their home was a regular stop for carters. The arrival of a cohort of carts enlivened the entire house, creating a jolly air. Among the carters was Niu'er's cousin (played by Wang Renlu 王人路), also her sweetheart. However, all sweetness and tranquility was shattered by the invasion of the brutal Japanese in 1931. They bayoneted Niu'er's father to death, drowned her mother, and coveted to rape her before her cousin (now her husband) rescued her. Later the grandpa was also shot by a unit of Japanese soldiers, and it drove the couple out of their hometown. Niu'er's husband found a job in a Japanese-run mine, but the miserable working conditions and the bullying Japanese supervisor turned him, and other Chinese laborers, into no less than a slave. The sheer task of increasing coal production at any cost to fuel the war cost many lives and eventually caused an underground flood. The remaining miners and their families, including Niu'er and her husband, gathered to plead with the supervisor for more relief funds. He replied by hitting and punching Niu'er's husband, which sparked a graphic rebellion. This scene, I will argue in detail later on might be the most hot-blooded, soul-stirring, and kinetic moment in the history of Chinese film, comparable to Sergei Eisenstein's "Odessa Steps." However, Niu'er and her husband were saved by the Anti-Japanese Volunteer Army. They joined the army in the end. The *northern wind, earth, people, and emotion* in *Sungari River* effected the studio's realization through an anti-Japanese narrative.

Ironically, Man'ei, the predecessor of Changchun Studio, took the initiative to jump through hoops to promote the northern ethos. On the textual level, many of its films featured such typically local scenes as ice-skating (e.g. in *Winter Jasmine* 迎春花 1942, see fig. 14), the urban

development of Xinjing, i.e. Changchun (e.g. in *All Are Delighted* 皆大欢喜 1942), and Peking-opera scenarios (e.g. in *Tuberose* 晚香玉 1944).[37] Man'ei also established film joint ventures with local puppet governments (e.g. Peking and Shanghai) that secured its distribution/exhibition channels. Its persistent localized tactic and industrial annexation, however, were much undermined by its own well-schemed colonial mission: to use cultural enterprises to consecrate its "Kingly Way" (Ōdō, 王道). This internal incompatibility, being modern, experimental, and local but simultaneously being also extremely propagandist and Japanese, betrayed a fascist aesthetic and preordained its undesirability amongst colonized subjects.[38]

In any case, what Man'ei failed to promote had been achieved by Changchun Studio's productions, especially *Sungari River*. In sharp contrast to the indifference to Man'ei, Shanghai audiences embraced *Sungari River* with a staggering eagerness. They even described the year 1947 as "a year with three rivers" (referring to the hit films *The Spring River Flows East*, *Along the Sungari River* and *Memories of the South* (*of the Yangtze River*) 忆江南).[39] Almost every viewer nationwide anticipated a "different" *Sungari River* from a conventional drama. The drastic change was its *northern wind, earth, people, and emotion*. A newspaper in Peking asserted that the vast Northeast Plain and the roaring Sungari River immediately embraced

[37] Xinjing 新京, literally "new capital," was the colonial name of Changchun and the capital of Manchukuo. The great majority of Man'ei's films were either destroyed in the war or clandestinely locked up by official organizations, and very few have survived. Among them are these three ones that, as a collection, offer a glimpse of the image of Man'ei cinema. The translations are all mine.

[38] A worthwhile project is needed to illustrate how exactly films made by Man'ei were received in Manchuria and, if any, in other occupied regions such as Shanghai. Film publications based in wartime Shanghai, such as *New Film Forum* (1942-43) and *Movie Weekly* (1942-43) at least demonstrated that Man'ei and its copious productions did not yield much coverage at Shanghai. The only exception was the reportage on Li Xianglan, an ambiguous yet enticing Manchuria/Japanese star whose image travelled from Manchuria to China, Taiwan, Japan, and to all Japanese occupied areas. See note 155 of my Shanghai Chapter.

[39] Zhang Ruifang and Jin Yifeng 张瑞芳, 金以枫, *Affective Years: the Memoir of Zhang Ruifang* 岁月有情: 张瑞芳回忆录. Beijing: Party Literature Publishing House 北京: 中央文献出版社, 2005, 23, 96.

audiences, making them feel as if they were living in this beautiful Manchuria.[40] Throughout the film the touch of Manchuria was chiefly embodied in mise-en-scène, stardom, and music.

The sound of gong and rhythmic trumpet kicks off the film. A ray of morning sunshine pierces the clouds to beam on tranquil waters that reflect the early light. This first scene of *Sungari River* imparts the beauty of nature in Manchuria. A bird-eye shot presents a large river, with much ice afloat. With the music turning to a more upbeat, lilting tune, an extreme long shot captures a cohort of carts running on the bank of the Sungari River: horses carry wagons loaded with sacks of grains through a village; their clop and bells echo in the air. A tracking shot follows two wagoners (one being Niu'er's cousin) in cotton-padded overcoats and terai hats, briskly waving their horsewhips. After a brief scene showing native folk going to the market, the camera zooms in on a small inn, the regular stop for the carts. It pans left and right to unfold the typical courtyard of a Manchurian farming family: stringed corn hung under the eaves, piles of woods stacked together, pigs and chickens foraging around, and a quern and other farm implements sit in the corner. When the non-diegetic music ceases, the camera centers on the protagonist Niu'er, in a sleeveless fur coat, crooning the theme song and stirring the food for her beloved cat. The New-Year pictures on the wall, bedding on top of the wooden chest, an old fashioned square table, the boiled kettle on a coal stove, and the spinning wheel all vividly delineate the interiority of a northern house. The next scene is the most "Manchurian:" Niu'er's family are sitting cross-legged around the *kang* (the brick bed warmed by a fire underneath; a household necessity in Northern China), chitchatting while eating dinner; and the father asks the grandpa for another

[40] *Xinmin Newspaper* 新民报, quoted from *Along the Sungari River Special Kit* 松花江上电影特刊. 1947, 10.

cup of wine (drinking is believed to help resist cold in Manchuria, see fig. 15).[41] In short, this over six-minute long opening sequence situated audiences in the lifelike environment of Manchuria, full of authentic attire, dialects, objects, customs, and hobbies. It was no wonder that *Film And Drama Magazine*, based in Shanghai, reported that "*the northern wind, earth, people, and emotion* alone is an eye-opener for southerners, let alone the narrative. It is even alright to watch it for the landscape or as a newsreel."[42]

If the opening sequence exhibited an expressive mise-en-scène, the next ten minute narrative created a hilarious, contented atmosphere, "making the industrious Manchurian people heartfelt by audiences."[43] On hearing the caravan is approaching, the family gets prepared. Her father ropes in flocks of hens and pigs; two shop-boys carry out mangers; Niu'er's mother warms up the *kang* for travelers with straws and cut wood; the grandpa, with a long-stemmed Chinese pipe, oversees everything. At the gateway of the village, the coachmen's whistles and yee-haws accompany kids' jabber, ducks' quacks, and the non-diegetic cheerful music. Upon arrival they tell the grandpa that it is another bumper crop year. Numerous bags of grains on the carts suffice for the harvest. The cousin gives Niu'er a roll of chintz and her mother fine threads as gifts. Niu'er's family accommodates the wagoners before they sleep on the *kang*. The next morning cocks' crows awake them; Niu'er, among others, sees them off against the thick mist.

Within this sequence, the director Jin Shan employed a series of tonal montages to convey an intense emotion to audiences and to evoke psychological resonance. When the caravan comes

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[41] Smith, *Intoxicating Manchuria*. 1-7.
[42] Ding, "One of the Four Famous Actresses at Chongqing: Zhang Ruifang," 17.
[43] *Shenyang Central Daily News*, 沈阳中央日报, quoted from *Along the Sungari River Special Kit*. 1947, 10.

from afar, Jin, in the next scene, arranges a crowd of kids running from the same direction. What is more, he adds in another montage of a throng of quacking ducks wobbling towards the inn, too. The creatures, movement, sound, and above all atmosphere all contributed to the hilarious, jocular tone of the piece. As Eisenstein explicates in his *Film Form*: "in tonal montage, movement is perceived in a wider sense. The concept of movement embraces *all affects* of the montage piece. Here montage is based on the characteristic *emotional sound* of the piece—of its dominant" (italic in the original).[44] He then cites the "fog sequence" in *Potemkin* as an example in which the chief indicator of assembly of the pieces was according to their basic elements: light vibrations (e.g. gloomy dock vs. ships in daylight), graphic changes (erected chimney and angled masts), and a "shrill sound." These elements, for Eisenstein, are "elements of a tonal order; these are movements that move according to tonal rather than to spatial-rhythmic characteristics."[45] This example signals a consonance in combining different elements in change. Surprisingly, in *Along the Sungari River* there is also a similar "mist sequence" when coachmen set off at dawn. Amidst thick mist, a bird-eye shot captures several horses resting in the court, while the cocks crow twice. The next scene shifts to the well-lit room where the coachmen begin to get up. With the upbeat music playing in the background, audiences see the coachmen mount on horses, hear them chitchat with the family, and also experience this merry moment. The last scene, which lasts as long as 35 seconds, has Niu'er standing in the mist, watching the caravan travel along the bank of the Sungari River until it diminishes to a small dot in the distance.

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[44] Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form*: *Essays in Film Theory*. Tran. by Jay Leyda, New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1949, 75.
[45] Ibid, 76.

By incorporating diverse elements in this montage sequence, Jin Shan created for audiences a tone of joyfulness, romance, harvest, and harmony. No wonder one commentator excitedly said, "I especially like the 'atmosphere' 气氛 of this film, and this is the most successful part by the director."[46] Undoubtedly, the tone, or atmosphere, relied much on the delicate and lively mise-en-scène, which restored an authentic Manchuria long desired by the Chinese public. In addition to the diegetic portrait of this distinctive soil, stars also interlaced the film with a tint of northern flavor. The most glittering star in *Sungari River* was Zhang Ruifang, who plays Niu'er. Born in a northern province (Hebei 河北) and educated at the Peking National Art College, Zhang had a natural bent for the arts, especially performance.[47] She was a poster child of northern girls: tall, bright, and sanguine, with big eyes and bushy eyebrows. Being raised in Peking not only furnished her with a mellifluous Mandarin accent, which charted a smooth path for her later career in theater and cinema, but nourished her unique northern characters: folksy (朴素) as a girl next door, foursquare (直爽) as a female student, and virtuous (高洁) as a caring mother.[48] The Japanese invasion of Manchuria and North China forced her to plunge into the national torrent to play in progressive spoken dramas. Zhang further fostered her acting skills at Chongqing, the wartime cultural center of China, by taking on a wide range of iconoclastic roles both on stage and screen.[49] Arranged by Zhou Enlai, Zhang, then being an underground Communist, joined her husband Jin Shan at Changchun Studio in October 1946. *Along the*

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[46] *Peking Chronicle*, 北平纪事报, quoted from *Along the Sungari River Special Kit*, 1947, p 10.

[47] Zhang Ruifang and Jin Yifeng, *Affective Years*. 23.

[48] Wang Rong 王戎, "Zhang Ruifang, from the Sangria River" 从松花江上来的张瑞芳, *Chinese Star* 中国明星, no.1 (1948): 14.

[49] Zhang was thus elevated as one of "four famous actresses" at Chongqing. See "Who are Four Famous Actresses of Chongqing," 7.

Sungari River gave her a great chance to merge her northern characters and trappings with the protagonist Niu'er, who transformed from a doting, sensible teenager to a tough-minded yet devoted wife, and finally to a staunch volunteer warrior, all having occurred on this hot-blooded Manchuria soil.

Being a northerner (北方人) did provide Zhang a natural leverage that other stars hardly possessed, but "do as the northerners do" was not easy for her in any event, as she had been away from her hometown, occupied by the Japanese, for quite a long time. Upon her arrival, she was so infatuated by the "vast land, bold nature, and Changbai Mountain and Amur River (白山黑水)" that she, among others, went down to different places for interviews.[50] She was the one who wrote the synopsis, drew design sketches, and designated Niu'er's postures, putting down almost everything in shooting scripts well ahead of time. In order to produce a heartfelt, sincere work, the film crew (the director, art designer, cinematographer, and Zhang) rode the primitive vehicle *Pali* (similar to sled) to remote areas to select proper on-location sights and to experience life (体验生活). They visited native locals, recorded their interior furnishings and outdoor tools, and figured out everyday life details. Zhang recalls that she caught the ideal image of Niu'er within a bride at one folk's home, who, with a small silver ring around her wrist and a painted nankeen skirt knotted about the waist, was cross-legged, spinning cotton on the *kang*. On seeing her, Zhang immediately conjured up Niu'er in her mind: cute, pure, taciturn, and yet clever, and always being the reliable right hand at home.[51] This moment shaped Zhang's first appearance in

[50] Zhang Ruifang and Jin Yifeng, *Affective Years*. 195.
[51] Ibid.

the movie when Niu'er is humming a song while deftly cutting food and using chopsticks to gather it into the bowl, a sequence showing her vigor, cuteness, and capability. It also directly led up to an identical scene in the middle of *Sungari River*: Niu'er, now a new bride, is reeling a wooden wheel with her right hand and while hand-spinning threads with her left hand (see fig. 16). Sitting at a stool, with burning kettle and wet clothes hung in the background, she wears a painted nankeen apron and long earrings. Similar vivid sequences with lifelike touches pervad the movie. *Sin Wan Pao* (aka *The News*, 新闻报) in Shanghai highly praised that "in the beginning, several movements and dialogues of Zhang Ruifang already draw the outline of a honest, upright, folksy and tender girl."[52]

In the same report it also stated "the acting style (of *Sungari River*) is plain and touching, which increases the quality…Wang Renlu (playing Niu'er's cousin/husband) also enacts a youth in contradiction and struggle, very natural and real."[53] Actually, all the actors in *Sungari River*, except for Zhang, were Man'ei's actors who had been working and living in Manchuria for years. This local star appeal distinguished the film from Shanghai dramas. As one of the Shanghai film magazines claimed, actors (in *Sungari River*) "do not have the mannerism or make-believe that Shanghai stars have. They exude the natural northern flavor."[54] Another pictorial in Shanghai interviewed Zhang Ruifang who outspokenly remarked "I am so moved by a naturally colorful Manchuria, like a green garden. The colorful Shanghai, in my eyes, is gloomy. Similarly, the youthful actors, once cruelly suppressed by the Japanese, bring in individual life experience and

[52] *Sin Wan Pao*, quoted from *Along the Sungari River Special Kit*, 1947, p 10.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ding, "One of the Four Famous Actresses at Chongqing: Zhang Ruifang," 17.

demonstrate their brightness, frankness and earnestness (in *Sungari River*)."[55] In contrast to Shanghai stars' parvenu lifestyle, actors from Manchuria were artless, candid, and fervent. Not only did they integrate the naturalist performance in the film, they actively partook in the discussion of the screenplay, design of the lifelike mise-en-scène, and creation of the simon-pure dialogues, something that they could never achieve in Man'ei where they basically acted like puppets directed by Japanese filmmakers. In the film the male protagonist, for example, had to harness the cart, crack the horsewhip, and then jump over the running cart. Pu Ke (playing the grandpa) recommended Wang Renlu for this role, for Wang, albeit not a renowned name, was a Northern native with skills and was full of potential. This wise decision secured positive reviews afterwards, as *Sin Wan Pao*'s report proved. The minor roles were equally genuine and ardent. For instance, there is a scene when five coal miners are invited to Niu'er's house to the drinking after their toil. With headlamps, towels around the necks, and bottles in hand, they burst into the home without any pleasantries, and sit casually on the *kang*. When *wotous* (steamed millet bun) are served, they grab them before pouring wine into their bowls. He Ruyu (贺汝瑜), a lifelong minor actor with a strong personal style, plays one of the miners. He smirks and teases Zhang, who had previously said "my husband has a strong body, so he worked six additional nights this month." He Ruyu responds "a strong body your husband has, so you are very happy." A roar of laughter among the miners reveals it as lighthearted sexual innuendo. Their forthright amusement and coarse yet unaffected manner, as well as Zhang's shyness and Wang Renlu's warmhearted spirit, were the epitome of ordinary Manchurians. Spectators could not miss the local custom

[55] Wang Rong, "Zhang Ruifang, from the Sangria River," 15.

portrayed here, nor should they misread the "soft-porn" joke, two enjoyments they could only gain from this typical Manchurian film. *Yi Shi Daily* (益世报) in Tianjin intoned that "every miner has strived to move the audiences, making them feel that the extras (龙套) play the same important role as the stars."[56]

The audiences, when enjoying the mise-en-scène and actors' enactment, could actually hear the unusual music (theme song and background music) that might only be available in CCS's works. Numerous articles had been conscious of the *northern wind, earth, people, and emotion* in *Sungari River* (although their definitions were often vague and unclear), but seldom did they notice the spell of *Beauties of Four Seasons* (四季美人), the theme song sung by Zhang that enchanted many generations with an unmistakable northern flavor. According to Pu Ke's memoire, *Beauties* was adopted from *The Hilarious Night* (闹五更), a popular folk song in Northeast China. As a newcomer, Zhang did not recognize it at first. He Ruyu crooned and taught it; it instantly won everyone's heart.[57] *Beauties of Four Seasons* lasts more than three minutes, divided into four parallel parts, each starting with a season. In the first place it is a Chinese ballad solo. *Beauties* employed the traditional pentatonic scale (deviant from the Western heptatonic scale) that sounded cadenced and rhythmic. Since there were no ordinary semitones of 4 (fa) and 7 (si) in it, the repeated use of the rest five notes lent the song more resonance and emotion.[58] Unlike most of the Shanghai film theme songs that were deeply

[56] *Yi Shi Daily*, quoted from *Along the Sungari River Special Kit*, 1947, p 10.
[57] Lyric-rewriting was a collective effort; and the composer slightly adjusted the tune to make it softer, more melodious, and sentimental. Xiao Zhao 肖兆, "Recalling the High-spirited Years in the Initial Stage" 深情忆当年创业见精神, *Film Review* 电影评介, no. 2 (1986): 34.
[58] The discussion of the distinction and value of both pentatonic and heptatonic scales is another academic topic. Yet in general, the pentatonic scale, with a long history in Asian, especially in China, sacrifices sophistication and

shaped by Hollywood musicals and Jazz music, *Beauties* did not have a refrain, but was rendered in four separate yet end-to-end sections that corresponded with the rotation of the four seasons. What is more, each part/season narrated a sympathetic story of a well-known beauty in folklore: Lady Meng Jiang, Xi Shi, Lin Daiyu, and Wang Zhaojun. Using the Chinese literary form of *Bi* and *Xing* (比兴 two main rhetorical devices that formed an analogical, echoing pattern based on the ambiguity), the lyrics craftily paired the natural phenomenon with cultural identification and bridged poetic language and oral expression. The *Erhu* (二胡, a two-stringed bowed musical instrument, aka Chinese violin) accompaniment made the song more "Chinese" and the tone more gentle and lingering. Its pentatonic scale, structure, musical form, rhetoric, musical instruments, and even the title resembled another household movie song, *Song of Four Seasons* (四季歌), sung by Zhou Xuan in the film *Street Angel* (马路天使 1937). One decade apart, two songs together represented the peak of folksong in Chinese cinema.

An indisputable ballade notwithstanding, *Song of Four Seasons*, not unlike the leftist *Street Angel* per se, contains "extra-diegetic intrusions and explicit social references," providing "a larger system of intelligibility that gives the text its allegorical structure" within a "popular discourse."[59] The lyrics portrayed a northern girl fleeing her hometown to Shanghai, owing to the (anti-Japanese) war, and it foregrounded "the green curtain of tall sorghums" (轻纱起高粱), the Great Wall and Lady Meng Jiang, all associated with the Northern flavor. *Beauties of Four Seasons* applied similar cultural allusions, too. What turned *Beauties* more "northern" rested in

complexity for the effect of resonance and cadence.

[59] Ma Ning, "The Textual and Critical Difference of Being Radical: Reconstructing Chinese Leftist Films of the 1930s," *Wide Angle* 11, 2 (1989): 23.

its visuals. First, the image of Niu'er wearing typical local clothes, then the image of those six lifelike miners sitting around the *kang*, and of a rustic yet neat home unequivocally bespoke of a Northeast style. During the third part of the song, the camera shifted to a long establishing shot (almost 1 minute) to introduce the family dependents' housing: rows of tall chimneys, brick walls and wooden fences, stimulating posters and cartoons, and Japanese propaganda, all carrying a distinctive Manchurian tint. This seamless linkage of the interior space and exterior environment indicated the pronounced Northern conditions and customs.

The promotion brochure also revealed another unusual acoustic feature of *Sungari River*, that is, it had its own symphony orchestra that produced all the background music throughout the film.[60] Organized by the renowned composer Sheng Jialun (盛家伦) whose representative film project was the classic horror film *Song at Midnight* (夜半歌声, 1937), the orchestra consisted of over thirty members, most coming from the old royal band working for the Manchukuo emperor Pu Yi. This strong team (six first-violins, six second-violins, two violas, three cellos, two double basses, two French horns, one flute, one euphonium, one harp, one bassoon, one trumpet, two drums, and one piano) was the selling point of the film since this was the only film orchestra in China, the fact of which embarrassed Shanghai cinema and was on a par with leading foreign film studios. The existence of the Changchun Studio symphony might not necessarily result in a northern style of music, but its history and some of its works (e.g. *Song of Four Seasons*) contributed another layer of northern taste to audiences.

In addition to the three main aspects--mise-en-scène, stardom, and music--to feature the

[60] *Along the Sungari River Special Kit*. 1947, 8-9.

northern wind, earth, people, and emotion, the northeast dialect (perhaps even the Japanese dialogues), landscape, and the title per se all vividly betrayed the enchantment of Manchurian cinema.[61] On top of this unique northern style, there emerged a homage to and bold appropriation of Soviet montage theory. My prior analysis already stressed how the director Jin Shan in the opening sequences applied a series of tonal montages to elicit a touch of abundance, joyfulness, and contentment. By sharp contrast, when the Japanese cavalry breached this blissful life, Jin Shan used metric montage (in a breakneck way) to show the dashing horses rampaging through local crowds, followed by three consecutive sharp yet forceful close-ups of Niu'er's father (as a victim), Niu'er's screaming face, and a neighbor's exclamation. It was shocking to compare this rapid metric montage with the previous lyrical, tonal montage. Later, in the middle of *Along the Sungari River* after Niu'er's grandpa was shot by the Japanese soldiers, Niu'er, her cousin and the grandpa stumbled to a dilapidated temple where the grandpa panted out his last words. Jin, once again, employed a group of dim close shots, formed by three successive images of different Chinese Gods, to express his emotion and attitude. The first close shot, with a God sitting in dusty cobwebs, might indicate a degenerated Manchuria, while the second shot had a God chained at his wrists and with clenched fists, which imparted a state of enslavement and suppression (of Manchurian people). The third image and the most poignant one framed a gloomy elderly God who held a spike in a firm clasp. Using a tilt shot, it had full dynamics (see fig. 17). This group of montages as well as the motif, angle of the shot and accompanying music

[61] According to the biography of Jin Shan, he, Zhang and Sheng Jialun, among others, had a heated discussion about the name of the first film of Chuangchun Studio; thus, *Along the Sungari River*, *Under the Changbai Mountain*, and *The Last Emperor* were deliberately created out to underscore the northern appeal. See Xu Guorong and Zuo Lai, *Biography of Jin Shan*. 238-39.

might be inspired by the famous intellectual montage of "God" in *October* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1928) in which the concept of "God" is connected to class structure and the close-ups of various Gods carry overtones of political authority and divinity. Rendered in a concise yet straight way, Chinese Gods were analogous to Manchurian people in *Sungari River*, and the oppression and bondage of Gods symbolized colonized life in Manchuria.

The conjecture that Jin Shan's directing style was much influenced by Soviet films and techniques was not without evidence. His stage name, Jin Shan, literally "golden mountain," was adopted by himself to honor the Soviet film *Golden Mountains* (Sergei Yutkevich, 1931). A social activist and underground Communist living in a culturally hybrid Shanghai, Jin in the 1930s had played roles in Leo Tolstoy's *The Power of Darkness*, Nikolai Gogol's *The Government Inspector* and *Dead Souls*, and systematically learned the Stanislavski system.[62] He also frequented movie theaters (including Shanghai Theater, aka Isis Theater, 上海大戏院) to see and learn from Soviet movies.[63] The novel montage practice (aka "Soviet Union Shot") and the revolutionary spirit, along with the heightened leftist movements that embraced him, had left an enduring impact on his later productions, best exemplified in *Sungari River*.

The denouement of the film manifested Jin's mastery of montage and representation of class/national struggle, and thus it bequeathed us a superior, albeit much understudied, episode in modern Chinese cinema. In the diegesis, numerous coal miners and their families, in the

[62] Xu Guorong and Zuo Lai, *Biography of Jin Shan*. 40-43.
[63] Ibid. For the discussion of the process of introduction and dissemination of Soviet Union films in Shanghai since June 1932, see Cheng et al. *The History of the Development of Chinese Cinema.* Vol 1. 193-195; for a detailed delineation of Soviet films at Shanghai Theater, see Zhang Wei 张伟, *Notes of Discussing Films* 谈影小集. Taipei: Showwe 台北: 秀威咨询, 2005, 185-86.

aftermath of the mine flood with a death toll of 61, mobbed the Japanese management office for due relief funds. Jin had hired and trained hundreds extras from a suburb village to enact this grand scene, the verisimilitude of which, one comment suggested, well surpassed any crowd scene in Hollywood.[64] A wide angle shot showed multiple layers: in the foreground, the ragged crowd flocking to the square in front of the administration guarded by Japanese soldiers, and in the background there was a lookout post on the roof and a chimney sending up smoke. Then the Japanese officer admonished the Manchurian laborers to be content with their extremely low pay and to "have the spirit of Japanese Bushido." During the ferocious officer's talk, Jin shifted between his long, stern face and dozens of local fellows standing still, firmly yet emotionlessly, to create a strained air. Three haggard aunts begged him as *laoye* (lord 老爷) for more funds and mercy. He replied with the curse *baka* (foolish, in Japanese) and fiercely snarled at them. At this right moment, the director focused back on the crowd with a long shot that showed the massive local Manchurians: miserable miners with headlamps or helmets, helpless wives, or elderly grannies with toddler in arms. Then the non-diegetic rousing symphony music commenced. In the next scene reappeared three aunts, who now were so enraged that they stared at the officer with clenched fists and chests heaving. Then Niu'er and her husband slowly elbowed their way through the crowd, followed by a cut to Japanese soldiers aiming their rifles at innocents. So far, the director's arrangement of complex composition, dynamics, intense atmosphere, and confrontation all remind us of the beginning of the pivotal Odessa Steps scene in *Battleship Potemkin* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925). As Eisenstein revealed in his own article, he deliberately

[64] *Along the Sungari River Special Kit*. 1947, 7.

engineered almost every shot.[65] His counterpart in China, Jin Shan applied similar techniques, injected more personal emotions, and achieved a no less compelling segment.

One of the most soul-stirring moments in Chinese film history occurred afterwards. The savage officer smarmily shook hands with Niu'er's husband, who was reasoning with him for due compensation, but the officer grabbed the husband's right hand and executed an arm throw. The good-intention of the Manchurians turned into their nightmare. At this right moment Jin Shan adopted a low angle shot through the Japanese officer's straddled legs to face the inflamed husband lying on the ground (see fig. 18). This image and the power dynamics resembled a scene in the leftwing masterpiece *Goddess* (神女, 1934) where Ruan Lingyu's mother character was harassed and cornered by a gambling thug in a disorienting shot framed by his legs. Yet unlike the stunned goddess who "shrinks to a diminutive powerlessness,"[66] Niu'er's husband looked up at the officer, gnashing his teeth in rage. The officer, once again, bawled to the innocents with "*Baka*!" The shot zoomed in, with the sound of bugles, to the husband, right in between the officer's legs. Eventually, the pent-up furor burst. The husband bounded to his feet and pulled down the demon, who disappeared under the fists of the local folks.

The director had already done enough for this revolt, and now it was the time for a five-minute montage par excellence, comparable to the Odessa Steps. The Tsar's soldiers in their white tunics opened fire on unarmed citizens in *Potemkin*; here the Japanese guards in their cotton uniforms fired volleys into the crowd. The linear movement of Tsarist troops dismounting

[65] Sergei Eisenstein, "'Eh!' On the Purity of Film Language," in Richard Taylor ed., *S.M. Eisenstein: Selected Works*. London: British Film Institute, 1988, vol. 1, 285–95.
[66] Harris, "*The Goddess*: Fallen Woman of Shanghai," 132.

the steps in a rhythmic, machine-like fashion was contrasted with the chaotic, elementary movement of the civilians who bounced down like cherry stones;[67] in *Sungari River*, a Japanese reinforcing unit also marched towards the victims in a straight line, while panicked Manchurians fled in all directions. Eisenstein highlighted an older woman wearing pince-nez (later pieced by a bullet), a kid who was shot down and trampled over time, and a baby in a carriage that rolled down out of control. Jin, much inspired, used three consecutive montages during the Japanese massacre to inflame the audiences: a mother holding a crying baby, helples with the crowd dashing past her; a man lying on the ground trodden on by several feet; and a woman stuck at the administration gate, clutching the edge of a wall amidst a deluge of people. In terms of differences, if the Odessa Steps, rendered in an optical illusion as perspective, unfolded its great length, then the square in *Sungari River*, covered by snow, offered a vast place for the bloodbath captured by various angles and shots. In this sense, the massacre scene was more reminiscent of the slaughter moment of workers (and a bull) in *Strike* (Eisenstein, 1925). Another major disparity was while Eisenstein firmly believed montage should proceed from rhythm, or the dialectics of the shot, not story,[68] Jin favored embedding montage organically in the narrative and not impairing the flow of the plot. Thus the montage sequences in *Sungari River* were moderate yet forceful. Jin also departed from his Soviet masters in imbuing a passionate humanism by featuring the beloved Niu'er's couple having saved each other twice with courage. Through two vivid three-dimensional individuals, Jin set himself apart from the overwhelming

[67] Richard Taylor supplies readers a thorough analysis of the scene; see it in his *The Battleship Potemkin: The Film Companion*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2000, 35-53. For Eisenstein's own memoire, see *Beyond the Stars: The Memoirs of Sergei Eisenstein*. Ed. Richard Taylor, trans. William Powell, London: Seagull Books, 1995, 173.
[68] Eisenstein, *Film Form*: *Essays in Film Theory*. 45-46.

dour class struggle theme in *Potemkin*, and from the revolutionary propaganda in the Maoist era. Moreover, the excited drumbeating and piano music, the wails of innocents and shouts from the Japanese made the sequence more seditious. In short, the intense scuffle--rendered in impressive montages, scenes of hundreds of dead bodies lying in the square, and hot-blooded music--all validated the competence of Jin in handling this most kinetic moment in the history of Chinese film. Certain critic said "if it (*Potemkin*) had been shown in China at the time of Tiananmen Square, I imagine it would have been inflammatory."[69] I would suggest that Jin's *Along the Sungari River* is equally rabble-rousing and speaks more to the local and national audiences.

Rocking the Cradle, Demystifying the Northeast Film Studio

In *Sungari River*, not a single character had a name, but instead was addressed by vernacular designations (e.g. Niu'er, aunty, cousin, Old Wang). Jin manipulated this since he strived to make a "local and national" film, rather than cardboard agitprop. His comrades settled down in a remote northern town, however, launched a cinema explicitly for Party propaganda. This was the cinema of Northeast Film Studio (NFS), often credited as the "cradle of New China."[70] Until quite recently, most Chinese scholars' approach to NFS has fallen into a political pitfall: either overly underlining its "correctness" or claiming the socialist regime as the mainspring of NFS's progress.[71] Hardly could an article methodologically or thematically break the bonds of

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[69] Roger Ebert, "The Battleship Potemkin," in Jayge Carr ed. *The A List: The National Society of Film Critics' One Hundred Essential Films*. Cambridge : Da Capo Press, 2002, 30.

[70] Hu, *The Cradle of New China's Cinema*. 1.

[71] See, for instances, Li Daoxin 李道新, "Northeast Film Studio as the Burgeon of a National Cinema" "东影"之初: 国家电影的萌芽, *Arts Criticism* 艺术评论, no.10 (2009): 37-47; Xiao Yinxian 肖尹宪, "Changchun Film Studio within a Hundred Years of Chinese Films: Shifting the Centre from 'Workers, Peasants and Soldiers' to 'Mass Culture'" 长影厂与中国电影百年论工农兵电影流派和大众电影美学, *Film Art* 电影艺术, no. 6 (2005):

convention to address such inquiries as how the Japanese technicians joined in the production and left their traces in otherwise intact revolutionary films, why NFS contributed as many as six diverse film forms (cartoon, documentary, puppetoon, educational film, dubbed film, and short) within three years before their first feature film in 1949, and how a chiefly ideological cinema managed to reach and shape widespread audiences. It is certain that the exploration of these questions could not proceed without acknowledging and even relying on the political milieu of NFS, Manchuria, China, and the world. Yet the questions proposed above open up new grounds for discussion that dissipate the haze shrouding the glory of the Northeast Film Studio and articulate the operation, management and principle of a Communist state-owned studio whose model had been consecrated and thus promoted nationwide.

When the CCP decamped to the even more northern, barren part of Manchuria in May 1946, they had no confidence in coming back to Changchun at all. Likewise, the sternest problem for the film emigrants of NFS, including Chinese, Japanese, and Korean workers, was to cooperate and survive in the CCP's underdeveloped base. Partly due to a poorly sustained industry and partly for the purpose of politics, NFS had to adopt a strategy of genre diversity at the expense of feature films. With limited resources yet many newcomers, NFS nevertheless merged cinema, theater, music ensemble, and art troupe into a larger cultural enterprise and expanded its distribution and exhibition channels. As the CCP had harvested multiple victories in Manchuria and the rest of China, NFS grew as the proxy of Chinese cinema, gradually marginalizing Shanghai cinema, which had been a towering film center in every aspect since the 1900s.

100-109.

In late 1945, the CCP decided to dispatch the Yan'an Film Troupe to take over Man'ei and make full use of its facilities and professionals.[72] The Party set up two prerequisites for the remaining Japanese crews: 1. Be technically qualified; 2. Be non-imperialist.[73] When the CCP had to hastily withdraw from Changchun, its intense mobilization gave priority to transporting Japanese and Korean employees and valuable equipments for the simple fact that without those foreign old hands, the film machines were only junk.[74]

The massive retreating team, comprised of approximately 100 Japanese and Korean technicians as well as their families, arrived first at Harbin, where a small fraction of them chose to stay and not move further. When they reached Xingshan (兴山), a desolate border town, some returned to Japan as refugees. What the CCP could not let go were those 84 core members with various skills, a majority of whom worked as technicians or instructors afterwards.[75] On October 1 1946 when the Northeast Film Studio was officially founded, the major difference it had from its predecessor Northeast Film Corporation was the political leadership. Five CCP members from Yan'an presided over the studio.[76] While they paid utmost attention to the "political correctness"

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[72] See *Selected Documents of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee* 中共中央文件选集. Vol. 15, Beijing: CPC Central Party School Press 北京：中共中央党校出版社, 1989, 296-300. For the details of the takeover proposal of the Film Troupe, see Wu Zhuqing and Zhang Dai 吴筑清，张岱, *The Monument of Chinese Cinema* 中国电影的丰碑. Beijing: China Renming University Press 北京：中国人民大学出版社, 2008, 275-280.

[73] Hu Chang 胡昶, *The Japanese in Northeast Film Corporation* 东影的日本人. Changchun: Cultural and Historical Materials Committee of Changchun CPPCC 长春：长春市政协文史资料委员会, 2005, 14.

[74] Hu, *The Cradle of New China's Cinema*, 28. Even many renowned actors were left behind in this retreat. See Li Ying 李映, "The Experience after Man'ei's Dissolution" 满映解体后的经历, *Cultural and Historical Materials of Changchun* 长春市文史资料, no. 1 (1992): 100.

[75] Hu, *The Japanese in Northeast Film Corporation*. 25-26.

[76] The CCP member 袁牧之 Yuan Muzhi was the studio director; member Wu Yinxian 吴印咸 the associate director, member Tian Fang 田方 the secretary general, and member Chen Bo'er 陈波儿 the chief art supervisor. See "Northeast Film Studio at Hegang" 东北电影制片厂在鹤岗, *Selected Revolutionist Cultural and Historical Materials of Northeast* 东北革命文化史料选编, no. 1 (1990): 192.

of this diverse organization in an extremely volatile, impoverished environment, they had to convince the international staff to participate in the filmmaking within parameters of survival and ideology. These professionals, mostly Japanese, were an invaluable asset to the film industry and to the Party's mission. Tadahito Mochinaga (持永只仁), a pioneer Japanese stop-motion animator, recalled that "the CCP did not have the plan to move out the Animation Platform 动画摄影台, since no one knew how to do it. I said I would. I had such an experience in Japan in taking it apart…How important was this machine? It was a must for animation synthesis, production and subtitles. The first cartoon of the new China was credited to it."[77]

Other Japanese technicians, akin to Mochinaga, played an instrumental role at NFS, too. Minno Yoshitarō (民野吉太郎), the chief film editor who aided the packing of editing machines at Changchun, was the head of the Editing Sector at NFS until 1953 when he, among most of his peers, voyaged back to Japan. Oda Kenzaburou (织田谦三郎) first joined NFC voluntarily to protect the property from being robbed, worked as maintenance personnel to fix machines, and later instructed Chinese staff on special effects after 1949. Morikawa Kazuo, Akiyama Kiyoshi, and Adachi Isamu (森川和雄，秋山喜世志，安达勇) were the chief caption director, regenerative celluloid developer, and cine-film processing and printing director, respectively, just to name a few.[78] Among them, Fumiko Kishi was special since she stood out as one of the few Japanese female technicians who, as the editor, worked on ten films, including both documentaries and key feature films such as *The White-Haired Girl*. In her memoir, she keenly

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[77] Hu, *The Japanese in Northeast Film Corporation*, 119-120.
[78] Su Yun and Hu Xu, *Remembering Dongying*. 95-103.

acknowledged the friendship between the Chinese and Japanese, but also inferred that the reason for her being entrusted by the CCP was that she was a young mother of two children and had her husband and brother also working in the studio (thus, there was no threat or sabotage whatsoever).[79] Regardless of their specialty, post, gender, and political agenda, what these Japanese personnel had in common was, first, that each had indispensable technical skills that satisfied the Communists. Their recollections suggested that they were desperate for jobs, housing, and education that the CCP managed to supply, and in a similar fashion the Party also needed them for their expertise. Both groups mutually fed each other.[80] The second feature they shared was their national identity, although for most of the time it had been deemphasized or disguised. The studio treated them fairly, but the high-level officials never allowed their "presence" in the films they participated. In all the opening credits of those movies, their names were changed into make-believe Chinese ones. Mochinaga was turned into Fang Ming (方明), Yoshitarō to Ming Wei (明伟), Kenzaburou to Tian Qian (田谦), and Kishi to An Fumei (安芙梅). The list goes on and on. Other ancillary personnel such as the film processing director were simply erased from the screen. They became the heroes behind the scene. Third, they were also subject to the political turmoil under the CCP reign at Xingshan. The incident when 43 of them were ordered by the senior Party officials from the province to be sent down to toil in a shabby coal mine in February 1947 revealed the fragile, contingent "collaborative relation."[81] The dire

[79] Kishi, *The Film Life*. 49-54.
[80] Hu, *The Japanese in Northeast Film Corporation*. 89-136. Other Japanese staffs such as ōtsuka Yūakira (大冢有章), a senior Communist exiled from Japan who once worked at Man'ei as the publicist in chief, did not join NFS on the grounds that he lacked a unique technical edge. See Su Yun and Hu Xu, *Remembering Dongying*. 82.
[81] Hu, *The Japanese in Northeast Film Corporation*. 31-32, 143-146.

reality ironically imitated an identical plot in *Along the Sungari River*. Yet this time the protagonists were downtrodden Japanese, no longer Manchurians.

The tight bond between the Chinese and Japanese vindicated the extent and scope of the international collaboration. Yet the internationalism was not without principle and preference. It was conditional, contained, and connected to geopolitics. Some adroit Japanese technicians of Man'ei were not recruited by NFS thanks to their political oscillation. In addition to dealing with the Japanese, the Northeast Film Studio kept constant contact with the Soviet Union, Korea, and Mongolia, as well as the ethnic minorities associated with these nations. Compared to those predominant Japanese nationals, fewer Koreans and Taiwanese working at Man'ei made contributions.[82] One member from Yan'an Film Troupe wrote in his diary: "on September 1st 1946, the company held a celebration party and dinner to welcome us…We toasted to each other, including many Japanese and Korean."[83] Even the security of NFS were of Korean ethnicities. In July 1947, NFS warmly accommodated a film delegation from Korea. Not only did it perform ethnic music for entertainment, it also produced a mega documentary for Korea, titled *Democratic Korea*.[84] Because of this reciprocal relationship, northern Korea had become the transit port for cultural workers from Yan'an when other routes to northern Manchuria were blocked by the KMT army. Another partner country for NFS was the Soviet Union. During 1946-1949 when the Chinese domestic situation still bewildered Russian commanders, Stalin

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[82] See Su Yun and Hu Xu, *Remembering Dongying*. 72; Kim Yŏ-sil 김려실, *Man'ei and Korean Cinema* 만주 영화 협회 와 조선 영화. 서울: 한국 영상 자료원 Seoul: Korean Film Archive, 2011; and the documentary *Taiwanese in Manchukuo* 台湾人在满洲国, CtiTv Taiwan 中天电视, http://blog.ctitv.com.tw/manchukuo/Default.aspx (Accessed on June 04 2013).

[83] Ibid, 113.

[84] Su Yun and Hu Xu, *Remembering Dongying*. 244, 233.

reserved his support to the CCP. Hence, no direct technical aid or personnel exchange was activated. Yet it did not prevent NFS from taking advantage of available Soviet resources. In Spring 1948 it reached out to Harbin to first solicit a copy from the Soviet Union Film Export Company to be dubbed in Chinese, and to import other original films distributed by its affiliated organization, Northeast Film Distribution and Exhibition Company; NFS's liaisons went to and fro between Xingshan and Lvda 旅大, the only port controlled by Soviet Union in Manchuria as an agreement between the Soviet Union and the KMT, to purchase badly needed film equipment. It was through the effort of NFS that the bridge between Chinese and Soviet cinema had been built up. No wonder under such a circumstance of multilateral exchange, the song *The Internationale* was often echoed at NFS in Chinese, Japanese, Russian, and Korean.[85]

The comradely relation with the Soviet Union resulted in the first dubbed film of the new China, named *Putong Yibing* (普通一兵, literally An Ordinary Soldier, 1949), translated from *Ryadovoy Aleksandr Matrosov* (*Private Aleksandr Matrosov*, 1947). In fact, the dubbed film constituted only one of the six film forms of NFS during 1946 to 1949: cartoon, puppetoon, dubbed film, educational film, short and documentary. NFS's first feature film, *Bridge* (桥), did not get released to the public until May 1949. Historically lauded as the first "worker, peasant, soldier" feature film that glorified the proletariat, *Bridge* has been re-evaluated as formulistic, lacking genuine contradiction, and above all explicitly propagandist.[86] The political pressure,

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[85] Wu Zhuqing and Zhang Dai, *The Monument of Chinese Cinema*. 332; Su Yun and Hu Xu, *Remembering Dongying*. 184.

[86] Wu Di 吴迪, "The Credits and Drawbacks of Bridge: the First One of the New China 新中国电影第一部:桥的功过," http://www.gmw.cn/02blqs/2005-05/07/content_268961.htm (Accessed June 19, 2013); Cui Ying 崔颖, "The Birth of the First Film of the New China and the Prevalence of 'Worker, Peasant, Soldier' Movies," 新中国第

from the high expectation of the Party to various censors and to the desire to interpret Mao's doctrines, foreshadowed its distortion. An astonishingly inexperienced crew worsened the situation.[87] In a similar fashion, all the six film forms proceeded by trial and error through which a cohort of green hands grew into experts. However, the films differed from the works after 1949 in that they, as a collective, first had not so many imposed, rigid political commands from above as self-regulation. In addition, these film forms were created and promoted in an expedient, experimental way, unlike the planned products within the socialist polity since 1949.

The diverse film forms were made possible by a heterogonous, international talent pool. With the experience of dubbing and recording *Ryadovoy Aleksandr Matrosov*, NFS formed a special team to dub Soviet films. It recruited Russians and drafted Japanese, English and Korean translators for more projects.[88] More phenomenally, the birth of the first cartoon, *Go after an Easy Prey* (瓮中捉鳖, 1948), and first puppetoon, *The Emperor's Dream* (皇帝梦, 1947), were indebted to the Japanese animator Tadahito Mochinaga's leading work. According to his memoire, he beheld a picture of George Marshall, which provoked him to make a puppetoon on General Marshall and Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi, who, in this work, colluded in empire building and exploitation. Despite its apparent political message, *The Emperor's Dream* was an interesting work replete with foreign elements. Mochinaga, a Japanese technician who had watched Czech and French puppetoons since childhood, utilized a hand-cranked French Parvo camera and to

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一部电影的诞生和"工农兵电影"的兴盛, *Literary Field* 文学界, no.5 (2012): 223-224.

[87] *Bridge* was the maiden voyage for its director, screenwriter, and more than half of its crew. Yu Min 于敏, *Being Student for a Whole Life, the Autobiography of Yu Min* 一生是学生:于敏自传, Beijing: China Film Press 北京: 中国电影出版社, 2005. 90; Shang He 尚禾, "He Has Left his Marks in Cinema: Liu Xueyao" 他在影坛留下长长的足迹-刘学尧, *Cultural and Historical Materials of Chang Chun* 长春市文史资料, no. 2 (1987): 161.

[88] Su Yun and Hu Xu, *Remembering Dongying*. 179.

capture in each frame the motion and facial expression of wooden puppets, a method inspired from Hollywood puppetoons, probably George Pal's works in particular.[89] Also, a French puppet, left by another Japanese animator, provided the best model for experiments. Akin to *The Emperor's Dream*, the first cartoon, *Go after an Easy Prey* was directed and filmed by Mochinaga (using his Chinese name Fang Ming); his wife, a Japanese, too, colored the film celluloid, and at least two other key technicians were Japanese. This same international phenomenon prevailed in all six forms.

Although the six forms were made against an understaffed and resource-deprived backdrop, they demonstrated notable, sometimes innovative, characteristics. This volatile situation, nonetheless, did leave leeway for creation and ingenuity, which became almost impossible after 1949 when the regime tightened its grip. *The Emperor's Dream* was designed as a multi-chapter Peking Opera accompanied by traditional folk music. This formal experiment appealed to large numbers of the rural population. In addition, the integration of short animations became routine in the documentary series *Democratic Northeast* (民主东北), often at the beginning of each episode to instantly captivate audiences. NFS dispatched dozens of filming units to, for instance, various battlefronts, the An'shan Steel Plant, field hospitals, military farms, and Northeastern martyrdom sites to achieve an illuminating and realistic effect in *Democratic Northeast*.[90] To better reach more nations, the Eighth Episode was an international edition for export. Other

[89] Hu, *The Japanese in Northeast Film Corporation*, 115. Mochinaga recalled that an American film *Gorilla King* (猩猩王, literal translation) used a technique to manipulate puppets that provoked him to employ similar methods in his own work. Although *Gorilla King* was not in George Pal's oeuvre, the same method and his own memoire already revealed the influence from Hollywood puppetoons.

[90] The overall number of the *Democratic Northeast* series was seventeen; but it included educational films, puppetoons, and shorts, as well as episodes for other purposes. Only thirteen of them were on the theme of the *Democratic Northeast*. See Cheng, *The History of the Development of Chinese Cinema.* Vol. 2. 499-503.

episodes were inserted into an explicatory voiceover in Russian, Korean, and English. The forty-minute short, *Leave Him to Fight Jiang* (留下他打老蒋, 1948), adopted the form of flashback and deftly cut between "now and then" in the film, using fade-in and fade-out for connection. The production team composed several pieces of militant, allegretto march music to accentuate the high spirit of The People's Liberation Army (PLA hereafter), a model that predominated later movies for decades to come. The first dubbed film *Putong Yibing* tired out a new method, namely, lip-synching to give the Chinese translations both accuracy and the "look" of the original. This conceit ensured the success of succeeding dubbed films made by NFS.

All creating path-breaking works with distinct characteristics, the six film forms nevertheless had been subject to socio-political situations. They had clear objectives: to be of topical interest and of Manchurian flavor. The studio head Yuan Muzhi, a seasoned Communist actor-cum-director once having worked in Shanghai, Yan'an, and the Soviet Union, put forward in early 1947 a movement for "normalization, scientification, unification" (三化运动) and for "seven pictures production" (art film, documentary, educational film, animated film, dubbed film, slides, and news photography; 七片生产).[91] Using the movement to self-regulate and self-supervise, NFS drew up a variety of institutional codes, administrative rules, blueprints, and a master plan. It represented the CCP's discipline in the film industry in Manchuria. The administration, however, started from within and with wide participation, rather than from high-level imposition. In the directive issued by the Central Propaganda Department in October 1948, the first instruction NFS had received since 1946, it emphasized that too strict film

[91] Hu, *The Cradle of New China's Movies*. 59.

censorship would only “suffocate” the industry, and the subjects of film scripts should be diverse and germane to new situations.[92] It actually allowed liberty for NFS. All the six major film forms of NFS closely engaged with current events, not merely serving as the mouthpiece of the Party. The first science and educational film, *Preventing Plague* (预防鼠疫, 1948), introduced several plain methods to prevent the endemic plague, a timely project to assist local Manchurians. Both *Go after an Easy Prey* and *The Emperor's Dream* reported “the dirty transaction” behind the White House’s China Aid Act in 1948 and claimed the U.S. and KMT as hypocrites. They aimed to draw upon recent domestic and foreign affairs to alert and educate audiences. Similarly, all the *Democratic Northeast* series were either newsreels about local warfare or depictions of vast swaths of rich Manchuria with distinct geography, ethnicity, and new transformation under the leadership of the Communists. At the same time, it betrayed another shared feature of the six film forms of NFS: being of Manchurian flavor. The short *Leave Him to Fight Jiang* highlighted a series of scenes taking place in the snow-blanketed stockyard, a typical northern trope that reappeared in later NFS’s works. *The Emperor's Dream* integrated the well-received Peking Opera episode “Beggar Picks up Gold” (花子拾金) in the second act. These local forms and contents spoke to and infectiously resonated with Manchurians.

It is intuitive to conjecture that all six major film forms were “naturally” made so: diverse and authentic. I take issue with this speculation by unpacking the diversity and exploring international elements at play, novel characteristics, topical interests and local flavor in these differing film categories. These lively, up-to-date, varied film forms accomplished its historic

[92] *Selected Documents of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee*. Vol. 17, 421-423.

mission to both be in accord with the party line and also entertain local people and enhance morale. For example, the familiar Northeast dialect in these different films, weather in dialogue, dubbing, or in voiceover, joyously amused Manchurians in both modern theaters and open fields.[93]

A diversified form and authentic representation did not necessarily guarantee a full house in reception. The question, raised in the introduction of this section, of how an ideological cinema managed to reach and shape audiences still loomed large. In retrospect, NFS's effective promotion hinged upon two factors: first, a well-administrated distribution and exhibition channel; second, its aspiration to build up an inclusive cultural enterprise in which cinema and other arts benefited each other. The pressing issue in the face of the CCP, which had taken over this giant area recently, was to make its voice heard and image seen by not only city dwellers, but a majority of country folks who had been living in their enclaves for years and might not even have known what Communism was. The nature of the recipients starkly differed from Shanghai and Hong Kong urban film cultures. Back in 1937, Man'ei already established a routine to dispatch projection units equipped with electric generators and projectors for fixed-term, special and on-demand screenings in the countryside.[94] Shortly after the CCP retreated to the north of Sungari River, it began to deliberate over the propaganda imperative to win over the support of rural folks, a matter of life and death. It fortunately befitted Mao's strategy of "rural encircling urban" (农村包围城市), and it reversely urged that NFS make plain movies with diverse

[93] Hu, *The Cradle of New China's Movies*. 55.

[94] In 1938, one year after its establishment, Man'ei already had two distribution teams. See E Mei, "Commerce and Culture: The Manchukuo Film Industry," 48; for a detailed discussion of Man'ei's later progress in projection teams, see Masako, *The Study of Man'ei Films*, 59.

forms.[95]

To disseminate the films to a wide range of audiences, NFS secured its distribution and exhibition on three levels: countryside, city and beyond Manchuria. After NFS completed its first *Democratic Northeast* (series 1 & 2; on the PLA's eradication of bandits) in May 1947, the primary task was to sow this seed in the vast countryside to convince local fellows. It set up two projection units and supplied 16mm film copies. With a steady increase of the output of the series, by September 1948 the number of mobile teams grew to seventeen, covering all the "liberated regions" in Manchuria. The statistics showed that NFS had customized twenty-three 16mm film copies for series 1-6 of *Democratic Northeast* to be distributed in rural areas; in the single year of 1948, 385 districts in Manchuria had screened *Democratic Northeast* 1,093 times, with the audience amounting to 2,374,741. Between May 1947 and May 1949, the projection units of NFS had 2,893 total screenings and the audiences reached to 4,013,510 (roughly four screenings per day and over 5000 viewers per screening).[96] The prodigious record of *Democratic Northeast* series, mostly on the victory of the PLA or its infrastructure construction, demonstrated the CCP's persistence and resolution in legitimizing itself, and it in turn facilitated the Party's conscription and requisition of grain. Moreover, the mobile teams had a political obligation to show *Democratic Northeast* on the battlefronts for the PLA to keep up morale. On a much smaller albeit concentrated scale, NFS released its works in Northeast cities. Since the CCP took control of merely a couple of cities (e.g. Harbin and Qiqihar 齐齐哈尔) in 1946 and

[95] Su Yun and Hu Xu, *Remembering Dongying*, 118-119.
[96] Hu, *The Cradle of New China's Movies*. 54.

the prospect of seizing the whole Manchuria did not turn bright until the end of 1948, these diverse film forms were first circulated within a very limited number of cities and expanded later. Again, from May 1947 to May 1949 local movie houses showed various NFS films 9,189 times and the audiences reached 3,632,944 (roughly twelve screenings per day and 5000 viewers per screening).[97] As the capture of the whole of China was imminent in 1949, the agenda of NFS re-geared towards the urban. It established the Northeast Film Distribution and Exhibition Company at Shenyang in March 1949, reached out to all the major cities in Manchuria, and transformed theaters into state-owned ones. It set up distribution stations (发行站) to secure the screening of NFS's works in small cities and rural areas. Its aim was to eliminate the influences of commercial Hollywood films and old Man'ei movies, and win over Manchurian's support, the task of which proved very hard, at least seen from the experience in Qiqihar.[98] The third level of NFS's distribution work focused on the nationwide and international propaganda. As per request, NFS founded the training school to foster more professionals for the cultural industry. In May 1948 when its first session was completed, NFS obtained sufficient projection experts and thus expanded its mobile teams from five to fifteen and then reorganized into thirteen, eight of which were dispatched to "newly liberated" areas for screenings, and the other five migrated with armies.[99] Internationally, the *Democratic Northeast* series traveled to Teatro Apollo (平安戏院) at Macau in 1949, Sinuiju and Pyongyang in Korea, Prague in Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet

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97 Hu, *The Cradle of New China's Movies*. 54.
98 See *Selected Revolutionist Cultural and Historical Materials of Northeast.* 278-297.
99 Hu, *The Cradle of New China's Movies*. 112.

Union, too.[100]

The establishment of a sound distribution and exhibition nexus assured an effective communication channel; and an inclusive, dynamic cultural enterprise made those ideological film works less monolithic and moralistic. The studio heads, predominantly Communists, realized at the onset that the situation and conditions of NFS were too tough and crude for serious feature films with outspoken political agendas, and that dissimilar film forms serving "peasant, worker, soldier" ought to be plain and animated. Hence they recruited and called up from other fields Party artists such as dramatists, literary critics, painters, spoken drama actors, dancers, and composers, who, having accustomed themselves to Yan'an revolutionist culture, had more direct experience in dealing with the masses and more ideological consciousness. Their joining NFS ensured the CCP's leadership for one thing and diversified the productions for another. For example, in the early stage of NFS when its works were scarce and coarse, it often arranged revue performances, reformed Yangge dance (秧歌 a form of Chinese folk dance popular at Yan'an), and photography showcases at the showings, which turned the screening into a real cultural feast for the locals.[101] The film studio actually became one of the cultural fortresses for the Party in Manchuria. In terms of the attractiveness, NFS also realized the importance of a music ensemble that would amplify the propaganda effect and easily amaze illiterate, rustic country folks. NFS built up its musical branch in August 1947, and it played a crucial role in contributing lively music to accompany sometimes imperfect films, often with

[100] Hu, *The Cradle of New China's Movies*. 56-57.
[101] Su Yun and Hu Xu, *Remembering Dongying*, 114, 184.

poorly recorded dialogues. Although this music ensemble was organized as a western symphony orchestra, it was dedicated to creating musical pieces with national and local characters to better cater to Manchurians and the Chinese public.[102] This commission was never an easy job and the attempt lasts even until today. Yet the insertion of energetic background music and theme songs enchanted a large group of audiences, country folks, and townsmen alike.

The Northeast Film Studio moved back in March 1949 to Changchun, the industrial and cultural hub in Manchuria, and took over the assets of Changchun Studio. It quickly plunged itself into the process of a political, top-down institutionalization that was in agreement with the Party Central Committee. From then on the studio grew as a trademark of the revolutionist cinema, although the snowy mise-en-scène, Northeast dialect, stars of Manchukuo origin, and the behind-the-scene Japanese technicians (often disguised in Chinese names) constantly reminded audiences that this was also indeed Manchuria cinema.

[102] Su Yun and Hu Xu, *Remembering Dongying*. 236-242.

Chapter Four: An Ethnographic, Modern and Free Land: A Taiwan Centered Cinema

Introduction:

An output of three movies for a nation or region in three consecutive years was, by any means, hardly an achievement, even if this occurred in the late 1940s. Around the same time Shanghai contributed 74 movies in 1948, Hong Kong more than 179 films in 1949, and the Communist Northeast Film Studio had produced more than a dozen films in 1950 in the aftermath of the civil war chaos.[1] Yet the significance of this collective effort in making three movies in Taiwan--*Hualian Harbor* (花莲港, 1948), *The Legend of Ali Mountain* (阿里山风云, 1949) and *Awakening from a Nightmare* (噩梦初醒, 1950)--went beyond establishing a solid production bedrock for modern Taiwan cinema, which had upgraded the island from being simply a colonial exhibition venue. It also legitimized a Taiwan-centered cinema in terms of the institutional restructure, generic sophistication, ideological orientation and trans-regional encounter. Yet as Guo-Juin Hong aptly argues, "an impressive number of Taiwan filmmakers' accomplishments in the last two decades have contributed to an ironic erasure of a historically specific Taiwan in the global circulation of cinema," and post-war Taiwan cinema has not received sufficient attention due to both archival constraints and scholarly neglect.[2]

However, if we contextualize the production of these three extant early Taiwan movies, among other lost ones, within the reviving filmmaking environment after 1945, this seemingly minor output fulfilled Taiwan's half-century pursuit of organically making *national* cinema

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[1] For the output data, see, respectively, *Encyclopedia of Chinese Films* (abbreviated as *ECF*). Vol. 2 (1931-1949.9) and vol. 3 (1949.10-1976); Winnie Fu ed. *Hong Kong Filmography.* Vol. 2 (1942-1949) and vol. 3 (1950-1952).

[2] See Guo-Juin Hong, *Taiwan Cinema: A Contested Nation on Screen*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, 5.

(regardless of what the nation is: PRC or ROC) and also consolidated an indigenous film industry that charted its distinct path in the postwar *trans-regional* cinescape, which comprised Taiwan, Shanghai, and Hong Kong cinema. In this chapter I trace the trajectory of postwar Taiwan cinema from an exhibition venue and exotic shooting location to a relatively self-sufficient production base, the establishment of which provided the superstructure for popular dialect films in the 1950s, the generic convention for healthy realistic melodramas in the 1960s, and the talent pool for the whole film industry for decades to come.

Resonating with Paul Cohen's "China-centered" approach, I apply a Taiwan centered discourse to canvass the formation of Taiwan cinema as represented in three key movies. As Cohen argues in his latest preface, this "X-centered" approach aims to rectify previous conceptual frameworks (e.g. the *impact-response*, *tradition-modernity*, and *imperialism*). Using the impact of the field of anthropology on Chinese popular culture and folk rituals as an example, he maintains that this methodology "is concerned with the excavation of 'original' meanings before such meanings suffer from the inevitable distortion of being 'represented' by a nonparticipant 'other.'" [3] Similarly here nailing down Taiwan cinema as the focal point is meant to tell a *local* story that was once silenced by, for instance, the Japanese colonizers, the KMT nationalists, and people who derisively labeled old Taiwan films as old-fashioned and worthless. While for Cohen this centered approach does not exclude a comparative and transnational

[3] After examining three dominant Western patterns in Chinese studies, i.e. impact-response model, tradition vs. modernity binary and imperialism model, Cohen proposed a China-centered approach to eschew the obsession with colonial history and a shift to China's internal dynamics on its own terms and from its own vantage points. See Paul A. Cohen, *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010, xxix-xxxix.

practice, I would underscore that a Taiwan centered discourse is exceedingly timely and essential since the three film texts above and the vibrant exhibitionist film culture in Taiwan are unique and outstanding in the history of Chinese cinema. Yet this "centered-ness," bestowed nowadays to credit its due contribution, does not obscure the historical "in betweenness" of the postwar Taiwan cinema--the fluid identity of some films (being both a Shanghainese and Taiwanese movie), the oscillation between (post)colonialism and nationalism, and the simultaneous showcasing of modern and indigenous culture. Unfortunately, despite a couple of publications discussing the postwar era and 1950s, Euro-American scholarship largely dismisses this key phase in film history and examines "newer, modern" Taiwan since the 1980s with more enthusiasm.[4] Hence, based on archival research of rare movie prints and assisted by contemporary film history books published in Chinese, this chapter dispels the unfounded primitivism towards early Taiwan cinema and argues for its industry, aesthetic, national and trans-regional agency and significance.

In order to historicize Taiwan's unusual transformation into a production location, I first discuss the condition of "film industry without film" by mapping out Taiwan as a screening locale for colonial Japanese (pre-1945) and then as a postwar shooting location for Shanghainese who had been severed from this "treasure island" for many years.[5] The main body of my papers grapples with three movies from both textual and contextual levels to articulate how ethnography,

[4] For related discussions on Taiwan cinema, see Darrell William Davis and Ru-shou Robert Chen, eds. *Cinema Taiwan: Politics, Popularity and State of the Arts*. London: Routledge, 2007; June Yip, *Envisioning Taiwan: Fiction, Cinema, and the Nation in the Cultural Imaginary*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004; Daw-Ming Lee, *Historical Dictionary of Taiwan Cinema*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2013; Yueh-yu Yeh and Darrell Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors: A Treasure Island*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.

[5] Hong, *Taiwan Cinema*, 7.

modernity, and nationalism were intertwined and contested in both representation and reality. Departing from Homi Bhabha's "mimicry desire" of the colonized Other, I read *Hualian Harbor* as a Shanghai/Taiwan film that acquired a fluid nature and a cross-regional metamorphosis that denied any rigid definition or categorization.[6] As a film invested by a Shanghai company and staffed with people from Shanghai, the fascinating part derived from its innate Taiwaneseness and de-Japanization. The Taiwanese director He Feiguang (何非光), its diegetic setting in Hualian (花莲) and the location shooting in Taizhong (台中), the plotline for decolonization and hygienic modernity, the ethnic music, attire, and ritual, and the exhibition campaign to package Taiwan all designated it as a "Taiwan film." The ethnographic flair remained strong in *The Legend of Ali Mountain* that colorfully painted Taiwan's exotic landscape, aboriginal culture, ethnic miscegenation, and modern reform. Thus, my second part demystifies this alleged "first" postwar Taiwan film to investigate the uncanny procedure by which Shanghai cinema's aspiration to and appropriation of distinct local elements ended up narrating a cinematic legend of Taiwan. Similar to *Hualian*, one of the most prestigious Shanghai studios, Guotai, initiated this project in 1948 and dispatched a production unit to Ali Mountain for "an authentic Taiwan." The Communist approach to Shanghai forced its boss to telegraph the return note to the unit, but the sojourning filmmakers, despite the longing for the mainland, dedicated themselves to a new legend of accommodating the ethnographic exoticism and meanwhile fostering a localized cinema. In the last section, I turn to a generic, stylistic, and ideological approach to problematize *Awakening from a Nightmare*, often (mis)described as a heavy-handed propaganda movie made

[6] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge, 2004, 122.

by the KMT state-owned studios. Instead, I argue that it actually advanced the "humiliated and insulted" woman's film of Shanghai, applied expressionist techniques to enliven the story, and envisioned a "free land" image of Taiwan. On the level of promotion, it offered a perfect thematic and aesthetic pattern for ensuing Taiwan films in the early 1950s, not only to edify the Taiwanese people, but to disseminate a democratic, promising, and orthodox image of "free China" to Chinese diasporic communities and the international arena.

Taiwan as an Exhibition Venue and Shooting Location

"Film history without film" and "national cinema without nation" might be the proper attributions for Taiwan cinema under the Japanese reign from 1895 to 1945, a period that roughly overlapped with the introduction and spread of the motion picture.[7] Recent publications in Chinese, facilitated by primary sources, concurred that the Japanese keenly supported the exhibition enterprise to secure the screening of educational, pro-colonial films on the one hand and to squeeze maximal profit from taxation on the other.[8] The policy to privilege exhibition and discourage production had twofold goals: first to accord with the colonial governmentality in the Foucauldian sense, and to exploit the market by importing films from Japan, Manchuria, and occupied Shanghai.[9] Taiwan, akin to another Japanese colony, Korea, was forcefully positioned by a colonial regulation and hierarchy. As Michael Baskett observes, "Taiwan never became a

[7] For the discussion of these two attributes and how and when film was imported into Taiwan, see Hong, *Taiwan Cinema*, introduction and chapter one. For a more in-depth and comprehensive study of early Taiwan cinema, see Ye Longyan 叶龙彦, *The History of Taiwanese Movies during the Japanese Colonization* 日治时期台湾电影史, Taipei: Yushan Publishing House 台北: 玉山社, 1998; and Li Daoming's 李道明 "How Cinema Came to Taiwan" 电影是如何来到台湾的, *Film Appreciation Journal* 电影欣赏杂志, no. 65 (1993): 73-77, 98, 100.
[8] See Huang et al., *The Chronicle of Taiwan Cinema, 1898-2000*. Vol.1, 46-48, 65.
[9] Michel Foucault, "Governmentality," in Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller eds., *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991, 87–104.

hub of colonial film production in the way that Manchuria did, perhaps due to its comparatively claustrophobic scenery--Taiwan's narrow island vistas failed to capture the Japanese imagination the way China's vast plains and romantic frontiers had. A Japanese film critic in 1942 wrote that the problem with Taiwan was that it was geographically and culturally too close to the Japanese homeland to be interesting."[10] So this point, with which I agree, explained the paucity of film production in Taiwan and the prosperity of movie theaters in cities and migrant screening units across countries. Paradoxically, this asymmetry bespoke the significance of the pioneering work by the Taiwan Cinema Research Association (台湾映画研究会) in the 1920s, "trans-lingual practices" of vernacular *bensi*, and how local Taiwanese registered the heterogeneous screening cultures.[11] Till the 1940s, before the Japanese surrender, according to one survey, there were approximately 50 movie houses cross the Taiwan island, and other 80 or so multifunctional theaters that could play movies and accommodate drama performances, making the total number of movie theaters 130.[12] No wonder one contemporary commentator chanted "in less than half the century, the cinemas in Taiwan increased tremendously. The facilities of big movie houses were on a par with those in Tokyo. It manifested the modernization of Taiwan."[13]

The restoration of Taiwan in 1945 by the KMT from mainland China was not so much a national glory or reconstruction as another manifestation of (internal) colonizing practices or regional imperialism.[14] In August 1945, "The Interim Provisions of Administrating Newspaper,

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[10] Baskett, *Attractive Empire*. 14.
[11] For an in-depth discussion of these three aspects, see Chiu's "The Question of Translation in Taiwanese Colonial Cinematic Space," 77-97.
[12] Huang et al., *The Chronicle of Taiwan Cinema, 1898-2000*. Vol.1, 47.
[13] Ibid, 48.
[14] The way in which Taiwan has been becoming one of the regional imperialist entities is carefully scrutinized by

News Agency, Magazine, Cinema and Broadcast in Taking-over Regions" (管理收复区报纸通讯社杂志电影广播事业暂行办法), issued by the Central Government of the KMT, was also applied in Taiwan. Hence the Propaganda Committee of Taiwan Provincial Administrative Executive Office (台湾省行政长官公署宣传委员会) proceeded to confiscate Japanese production divisions at Taiwan as well as a great number of movie houses managed and owned by the Japanese.[15] In 1946, over twenty movie theaters were repossessed by Taiwan Film Enterprise Ltd. (台湾电影事业股份有限公司), a state-owned company. It took up more than 20% of the entire local film share.

Postwar Taiwan grew as the paradise of all sorts of movies. Against a bleak economic backdrop between late 1945 and early 1950, the film exhibition business, together with dancing halls and clubs, was thriving at a rate of knots.[16] The local market, freed from the tight Japanese censorship, indiscriminately put on a wide range of movies such as Shanghai classics in the late 1930s, Japanese melodramas in their original language, Hollywood latest releases, and as many as 26 Soviet works with spectacular special effects, war scenes, and Technicolor.[17] Akin to the Great East Asia Exposition (大东亚博览会) held in Manchuria in August 1938 through which the Japanese displayed "industrial progress and novelty" as a way to legitimize its leadership

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Kuang-hsing Chen in his article "The Imperialist Eye: The Cultural Imaginary of a Sub-Empire and a Nation-State," *positions*: *east asia cultures critique* 8, no.1 (2000), 9-76.

[15] Lu Feiyi 卢非易, *Taiwan Cinema: Politics, Economics and Aesthetics* 1949-1994 台湾电影: 政治，经济，美学. Taipei: Yuan-liou Publishing Co. 台北: 远流出版公司, 1998, 41-42.

[16] Huang et al., *The Chronicle of Taiwan Cinema, 1898-2000*. Vol.1, 47.

[17] See "The Starry Taiwan" 星光灿烂在台湾, in *Film*, no.4 (1946): 4; Huang Ren and Wang Wei 黄仁 王唯, *A History of Taiwan Cinema, One Hundred Years* 台湾电影百年史话. Taipei: Chinese Film Critics Society 台北:中华影评人协会, 2004, 90-91.

among Asian countries,[18] the Taiwan Provincial Government celebrated the Exposition of Taiwan Province (台湾省博览会) in October 1948 to glorify the "status quo of the island (economics, politics, agriculture, industry, and culture)"under the KMT.[19] Within this six-week grand fair there was the Exhibition of Renowned National Films (国产名片展览) in which ten films, nine from Shanghai and one from Hong Kong, toured across the entire island and made an instant sensation everywhere.[20] As the only road show of national films during the postwar era, the scale and scope of this cultural activity sufficiently proved Taiwan as the paradise of film exhibition. On the official brochure of the Exposition several advertisements flaunted the sound infrastructure of the exhibition industry in Taiwan and suggested that these famous movies would definitely make a profit, enhance the image of the KMT government, and improve national identification.[21] Even when the cosmopolitan, self-confident Shanghainese traveled to Taiwan, they had to be complimentary about the highly concentrated, modern, and well-equipped theaters across a small island: over twelve first-run movie houses in Taipei (台北, the provincial capital), six in Tainan (台南), four in Taizhong, three in Gaoxiong (高雄), Jilong (基隆) and Jiayi (嘉义), two in Xinzhu (新竹), and one in Pingdong (屏东) (see fig. 19).[22] In realizing the lucrative local market with more than adequate modern exhibition venues as well as ardent audiences who were

[18] The film *All Are Delighted* (皆大欢喜, 1942), made by Man'ei, explicitly set an adventure of one of its protagonists at the Exposition as an opportunity to introduce it to viewers via the camera.

[19] For a detailed description in print, see *The Official Brochure of the Exposition of Taiwan Province* 台湾省博览会会刊, no. 1 and no. 2, 1948; for an online footage of it, see "The Exposition of Taiwan Province" 台湾省博览会, http://catalog.digitalarchives.tw/item/00/31/98/98.html (Accessed April. 23, 2012).

[20] These 10 films are *The Net* (天罗地网, 1948), *Night Inn* (1947), *Agent No.5* (1948), *Green Grass by the River* (青青河边草,1947), *The Dawning* (1948), *Waste not Your Youth* (莫负青春, 1947), *Myriads of Lights* (万家灯火, 1948), *The Broken Dream* (红楼残梦, 1948), *An Actress in Tianqiao* (1947), *Catch the Dream* (春归何处, 1948).

[21] *The Official Brochure of the Exposition of Taiwan Province*, no. 1 (1948): 3.

[22] Zhou, "The Overview of Taiwan Movie Theaters," *Qingqing Film* 青青电影, no. 34 (1948):9.

acquainted themselves with film culture for long time under Japanese reign, almost all the eight major/major-minor Hollywood companies, along with a couple of Chinese film distribution firms, established their branches in Taiwan.

Although the massive amount of bequeathed movie theaters, ranked number three in China after Shanghai and Jiangsu, allowed Taiwanese more chances to watch films, the half-century separation from the Mainland put local people, especially aboriginal and subaltern populations, in an alien, defamilialized situation when encountering large amounts of imported Mandarin films.[23] Since the provincial government placed more emphasis on censoring the stockpiles, filming documentaries on major celebrations, and, above all, maintaining the status quo, there was little sign of setting up an indigenous film industry on the administrative level. Like the Japanese colonizers, the KMT made every effort to tax the flourishing exhibition chain to optimize a short-term profit while keeping an eye on the enlightening function of the cinema.[24] Against this backdrop, Shanghai filmmakers, with savvy minds and exploring spirit, landed in this mythic island seeing it as an exotic shooting location.

Having been hindered by the takeover chaos and eradication of *Funi*/traitor film crew, Shanghai cinema eventually resumed production in late 1946 and engaged in severe competition. Taiwan became naturally the target due to its ethnographic distinctiveness (both its tropical scenery and tribal culture) and historical specificity (both its imaginary enchantment and colonial taste) for the mainlanders. For those travelers mostly from Shanghai, this island was a perfect

[23] See *The Chronicle of Taiwan Cinema, 1898-2000*. Vol.1, 155; Lu, *Taiwan Cinema: Politics, Economics and Aesthetics 1949-1994*. Chapter one.
[24] See *The Chronicle of Taiwan Cinema, 1898-2000*. Vol.1, 141, 160, 167.

carnival place for (movie) entertainment, prostitution, and buzz.[25] A great number of Shanghai film stars and directors, taxi dancers, Peking Opera actresses, and speculative distributors ventured to Taiwan and made their fortune.[26] Among the various production teams sent to Taiwan, those from Guotai studio might not have been the first, but they were the most influential trendsetter.[27] In September 1947, a Guotai unit, including stars Gu Sisters (顾兰君, 顾梅君), Yan Hua (严化), and the director Fang Peilin, flew over to Taipei to location shoot *The Girl's Mask* (假面女郎, 1947) and preview *Why She Born Unlucky* (卿何薄命, 1947). It was such a sensation that local audiences crowded the Great World Theater (大世界影院) and even smashed the windows to see the glittering stars from Shanghai. Gu Lanjun, upon the request of crazy film buffs, sang the theme song "Unfortunate Love" (不幸的爱) to entertain them. The two-way fascination in which Guotai seized on Taiwan as an exotic, feminine place and Taiwan aborigines appropriated Shanghai stardom and popular culture to fulfill their own cinephile desire proved the mutual interaction between these two key locales. In addition to Shanghai, Hong Kong studios such as Greater China also took geographic and emotional advantage to

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[25] In postwar Shanghai film tabloids and pictorials, the reportage of Taiwan more often than not portrayed Taiwan as an extra-territorial spot where one could basically indulge oneself excessively. For example, see "The Messy Situation of Taiwan Province after the Restoration" 光复后台湾省之混乱现象, *Merry Voice* 快活林, no.7 (1946): 5.

[26] See, for instances, "The Opera Actress Li Qionghua Came to Taiwan" 内地坤伶李蕾华到台湾, *Shanghai Tan* 上海滩, no.10 (1946): 4; "The Dance Hostess Wu Min Went to Taiwan" 邬敏舞女去台湾, *Tai Mountain* 泰山, July 30, (1948): 3; "Zhou Manhua is Going to move to Taiwan"周曼华将赴台湾, *Qingqing Film* 青青电影, no. 11 (1949):3; "Ouyang Yuqian Found Good Story at Taiwan" 欧阳予倩台湾得题材, *Southeast Wind* 东南风, no. 36 (1947): 11; "Lu Xiaoluo Abandoned Pen to be an Active Film Distributor in Taiwan" 摆脱笔杆做片商 陆小洛台湾活跃, *Qingqing Film* 青青电影, no. 39 (1948): 18.

[27] Cross-referenced by both Shanghai and Taiwan reports, we could infer that Central Educational Film Studio filmed a documentary on Taiwan local industry in 1947; Shi Dongshan 史东山 from Kunlun, Huang Zuolin 黄佐临 from Wenhua, respectively, landed in Taiwan to find proper location spots but both failed. See "Central Educational Film Studio Went to Taiwan for Documentary" 中教到台湾拍纪录片 in *Film And Radio* 电影与播音, vol. 6, no.7-8, (1947): 24; *The Chronicle of Taiwan Cinema, 1898-2000*. Vol.1, 148; and "Zuolin Fly to Taiwan"佐临飞台湾 in *Film* 电影, no.5 (1946): 7.

location shoot its *An All Consuming Love* (长相思, 1947) at Taiwan. Yet this time its goal was to use the local scenery to imitate the Suzhou creek of Shanghai instead of utilizing the genuine, tropical views of Taiwan.[28] Ironically enough, Taiwan became an invisible substitution for Shanghai, or precisely China, through the mediation of Hong Kong. Yet this case nevertheless reminds us of the intertwined connections between these key locales.

A Shanghai/Taiwan film: *Hualian Harbor*

Perhaps stimulated by Guotai's producing and promotional strategies, Northwest Film Studio (西北电影公司), a company founded in Xinjiang but organized and operated in Shanghai, decided to follow suit in May 1948 to film *Hualian Harbor*. It surpassed *The Girl's Mask*, *An All Consuming Love* and other feature movies partially shot in Taiwan in terms of both participatory degree and diegetic engagement. Off-screen facts and data suggested its uniqueness. It was shot entirely in Taiwan and each and every image was set in the island. As a result, a large production team of seventeen people was dispatched from Shanghai to Taiwan, and its members consisted of not only the filmmakers and producer, but a group of technicians. In order to best convey the storyline and Taiwan's distinct flair, the team lived within the aboriginal tribe, hired two mountain tribe consultants, and strived to learn its customs and culture. Northwest Film Studio invested enormously and planned to reap 100,000 U.S. dollars from it.[29] To make this film more Taiwanese, we cannot ignore that its director He Feiguang was born in Taiwan in 1913 and was

[28] See *The Chronicle of Taiwan Cinema, 1898-2000*. Vol.1, 160.

[29] See "*Hualian Harber*: A Dream for 100,000 U.S. Dollars" 花莲港 十万美金好梦 in *Pictorial of Artistic Sea* 艺海画报, new no.5 (1948): 14.

enchanted with cinema, probably thanks to the favorable exhibition environment in the colonial time. Although his film career started in Shanghai in the 1930s and peaked during the anti-Japanese war when serving for China Motion Pictures Studio, He's connection in Taiwan, especially his family network at Taizhong, decisively made doable the idea of shooting a "Taiwan story" in Taiwan.

On the level of diegesis, *Hualian* was a signpost of Taiwan. Set in the postwar period, it unfolded the plot between a Han family, whose father practiced medicine for tribal people for a lifetime and son Lin Zhiqing (林志清), who aspired to used his medical knowledge learned from Shanghai to improve aboriginal hygiene, and a mountain tribe family, whose father, Haka (哈卡), was the head of the tribe and whose adopted daughter Mingna (明娜) fell in love with Zhiqing but was envied by her brother Namo (那摩), who had just come back as a defeated Japanese veteran. Despite its plot complexity and confrontation, *Hualian* delivered an ethnographic distinctiveness in a very straightforward, clear way. Visually, it first set Mingna, in recognizable mountain tribal attire, in a fruit-harvest scene in which film durians, pineapples, and bananas were featured; this vividly painted a tropical landscape for viewers (see fig. 21). The next scene featured a comparison of the Lin family using chopsticks and Haka justifying his use of his hand for eating as an inherited custom. In the middle of the film, it engineered a dancing and boozing sequence enacted by tribal people without strong narrative connection, thereby achieving a sense of exhibitionist effect, similar to a "cinema of attraction" of early motion pictures (see fig. 22).[30]

[30] For this concept, see Tom Gunning's "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," *Wide Angle* 8, no. 3-4 (l986): 63-70.

Similar displays of Taiwaneseness and verisimilitude were pervasive. In addition to the visual, the audio element was also specially designed to sound authentic and entertaining. According to a local report, Prof. Jin lvsheng (金律声), a renowned musician who dedicated himself to film music training and composition for decades, came along with the team and visited among tribes to collect folk songs to enliven the movie.[31] The opening credit "Music by Jin Lvsheng" proved this connection. One recurring piece of background music was actually drawn from the super-popular song "The Evening of Southern Capital" (南都夜曲), the melody of which was later adapted into "Taiwan Canzonet" in Ge Lan's (葛兰) well-received movie *Air Hostess* (空中小姐) in 1959. It is notable that the timing of this background music was carefully selected to match the fruit-harvest scene discussed above so as to create a typical Taiwan flavor. The acoustic uniqueness was also amplified by the colloquial conversations spoken in the aboriginal dialect. The leading female star Shen Min (沈敏) spent weeks imitating the vernacular language and ethnic dancing style.[32]

Since the film was set in the postwar period after Japan surrendered, there had been an outcry for the decolonization and modernization of Taiwan. Unlike *Sayon's Bell* (サヨンの钟, 1943), made by the Japanese, that eulogized the myth of Japanese reign and the sacrifice of an Atayal girl for the colonial cause, *Hualian*, at least from its surface, did not envision a national or imperial outlook at the expense of aboriginal welfare and ethnic integrity. Instead, *Hualian* explicitly blamed the unjust Japanese war for the deterioration and gender discrimination of an

[31] See *The Chronicle of Taiwan Cinema, 1898-2000*. Vol.1, 159.
[32] See "Shen Min Speaks Mountain Dialect for *Hualian Harbor*" 沈敏为花莲港说高山话 in *Film Weekly* 每周电影, no.5 (1948): 9; and "Shen Min Performs an Ethnic Dance" 沈敏跳土风舞 in *Movie Fan Magazine* 影迷俱乐部, no.4 (1948): 8.

otherwise kind Namo and imputed the tribe's under-education, savagery, and racial hatred of Han people to the colonial tyranny. While the return to the Republic of China was mentioned through the veterans' dialogue, most of the emotional attachment and character identification was leaned towards ethnic people themselves, not the newcomers or Han people. Yet not unlike the Japanese colonial project, *Hualian* reiterated two modern, albeit ideologically charged, undertakings from *Sayon's Bell*: health care and vernacular education. After a thorough sanitary inspection of indigenous pupils, Zhiqing persuaded Haka to invest in the medical devices and medication. Like a colonial census, he provided detailed, convincing data: "out of 120 students, 25% suffered anemia, 52.5% malaria, 80.7% parasite…" His ambition to modernize the life of the primitive people was not only embodied in his plan to open up a clinic, but embraced in a blueprint to establish an evening school to promulgate Mandarin among aborigines. He thought these two undertakings urgent and critical in current Taiwan. In the film, the hygienic modernity and vernacular enlightenment, although initiated and even imposed by a "civilized, knowledgeable" Shanghainese, gradually gained a consensus among both plain and mountain people under a decolonized, acculturated environment.[33]

It was more than obvious that *Hualian* addressed a story "all about Taiwan:" its marvelous landscape, ethnic culture and rituals, ongoing modernization, and above all the tragic romance of Mingna. The arrangement of Zhiqing, however, uncovered the inseparable connection between Taiwan and Shanghai/mainland. As Homi Bhabha argued, there was always a "mimicry desire"

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[33] For the discussion of "hygienic modernity," see Ruth Rogaski's *Hygienic Modernity: Meanings of Health and Disease in Treaty-Port China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004, 1-21.

within the colonial dynamics that precluded any means of one-way interpretation. "Mimicry is, thus, the sign of a double articulation."[34] *Hualian* was a Shanghai film simply because it was invested in and produced by a group of people from Shanghai who desired any essential Taiwanese-ness. It was meanwhile a Taiwanese movie. For Taiwan identity and its condition were centered and given some degree of autonomy, which utterly differed from what the Japanese had done before. In retrospect, observers assumed that the purpose of making such a Taiwanese film was to appease the counter-government and anti-Han sentiment and practice among aborigines in the aftermath of the 2/28 incident.[35] Yet the veneer of Shanghai's contribution, decolonization from Japan, and designed modern path for aborigines could not obscure the spectators' identification with and appreciation of Taiwan. Hence *Hualian Harbor* acquired a fluid nature and a cross-regional metamorphosis that denied any rigid definition or categorization.

Trans-regional Coordination and Local Legend: *The Legend of Ali Mountain*

In many aspects, the pattern and theme of *Hualian Harbor* anticipated its successor, *The Legend of Ali Mountain*. The unstable social and production milieu of Taiwan after 1947 dissuaded other Shanghai projects such as Kunlun's *Spring Couldn't be Locked* 1948, and the escalating civil war in mainland China further forestalled any plan for location shooting. Guotai's *The Legend*, therefore, stood out as an exception in 1949. Thus, in what follows I first try to

[34] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 122.
[35] See Huang Ren 黄仁, *The Forever Superstars Home and Abroad* 中外电影永远的巨星. Taipei: Showwe 台北: 秀威信息, 2010, 63.

locate the reason why Guotai dispatched a film team to Taiwan at an extremely turbulent time in order to conjure up trans-regional interaction. Then I interpret the extant footage to delineate a localized Taiwan flair reified in the intertwined theme of ethnography, enlightenment, and exoticness. Finally I argue that what constituted it as a legend was its historicity, which diegetically focused on a heroic historical figure, Wu Feng (吴凤), whose fateful self-sacrifice in mediating the racial/ethnic hostility was repeatedly appropriated, first for the mission of Japanese colonization in the 1930s, and later by a pro-KMT Hong Kong director Bu Wancang in the early 1960s.

As mentioned in the first part, Guotai pioneered location shooting in Taiwan, and its movies received popularity among Taiwanese. Guotai, a Shanghai-based film company since the 1920s, was founded by Liu Zhonghao and Liu Zhongliang, two motion picture mogul brothers. When the Liu brothers restarted their film business in 1946, they quickly set up a conglomerate to achieve vertical integration in terms of the independent shooting studios, reliable distributing channels and three directly invested theaters.[36] In business, they took efforts to secure revenue by cranking out pink genre movies and applying the tactic of being exotic and erotic, and thus Taiwan's ethnographic distinctiveness perfectly matched its principle.[37] Politically, it strategically oscillated between the left and right and hired conservative producers-cum-directors Xu Xinfu and Zhou Boxun, who maintained close relations with the KMT government and oversaw all the production units. Pressured by the takeover of the CCP, the Liu brothers, due to

[36] See one of the comprehensive reports on Guotai entitled "Guotai in the Past Few Years," 9.

[37] The pink movies, named after Guotai's box-office hit *The Pink Bomber* 1948, conveyed to audiences a soft-porn-like style, erotic scenes, and sensational plots, all displayed via revealing female stars.

their close relation with Jiang Jinguo (蒋经国) who once ruled Shanghai, sent a location team in December 1948 off to Taiwan, headed by pro-KMT Xu Xinfu. Provided that Guotai had begun to employ a migration plan and established a branch at Taiwan in later 1948, the decision to dispatch such a strong filming unit at a turbulent time, along with a number of advanced facilities, seemed not so much an adventurous speculation as a well-planned support of the KMT.[38] Although Guotai telegraphed a return decree to them in April 1949, Shanghai seemed too remote and chaotic to retrieve when Xu persuaded the team to stay in Taiwan.

Moreover, the making of *The Legend* not only witnessed the connection of Shanghai and Taiwan, but the influx of personnel from China Motion Pictures Studio (CMPS) and Art Troupes of Armored Divisions (装甲兵战车团艺术团), commanded by Jiang Jinguo, added another layer of trans-regional significance to this film. Facing the unavoidable retreat, CMPS, affiliated with the military and headquartered in Nanjing, also evacuated to Taiwan in early 1949, and thus some technicians and actors accepted Xu's offer to join the production team. Similarly, Chiang, thanks to his privilege, recruited into his armored forces a number of active performers from all over China who would otherwise be unemployed, and shipped them to Taiwan. Actors like Zhou Lanping (周蓝萍) and Li Ying (李影) partook in *The Legend*, the only film production available then.[39] Therefore what made this first Taiwan movie possible was a multi-lateral, trans-regional and cross-studio coordination.

The unusual coordination, however, did not overshadow the accentuation of Taiwan features.

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[38] See "Guotai Rents Studio at Taiwan to Shoot Movies" 9; "Film Companies Moved to Taiwan," 7.
[39] See *The Chronicle of Taiwan Cinema, 1898-2000*. Vol.1, 166.

Unfortunately, we only have less than thirty minutes of existing footage of *The Legend*. By scrutinizing the extant sequences, it is self-evident that this film, much influenced by *Hualian*, readdressed a story set in Taiwan and catered to Taiwanese. There was a typical episode resembling *Hualian*'s fruit-harvest scene, where the female protagonist Wana was washing clothes by a brook to convey ecological beauty. Then Wana shouted to someone off-screen for dropping her skirt, and in the next scene the leading male role, Aoge, captured from a low-angle shot to underscore his muscular, robust body, immediately undressed himself and jumped from an astonishing height to fetch the dripping cloth. Afterwards we see the couple sit side by side to enjoy the waterfalls, play hide-and-seek in the coconut forest, and play archery, all vividly foregrounding an ethnographic, exotic Taiwan (see fig. 23). Despite no sound accompanying this episode, it is not untenable to presume that the theme song, *High Mountain* (高山青), labeled as the "postcard" of Taiwan nowadays, ought to be played here, since the visual ideally matched the lines "the girls of Ali Mountain are as beautiful as the water, and the boys as strong as the hill."

The upbeat, sweet gathering seemed short-lived, for the rest of the movie portrayed a tragic, dedicated hero, Wu Feng, who spent his lifetime practicing his enlightenment to the "savage" aborigines. In the movie, he justified the cause to the Qing county magistrate that the job of the "barbarian administrator" was to "be earnest to innately gentle and simple barbarians, try best to rehabilitate and enlighten them, and improve the living standards." Even if there was more controversy than consensus about this historical figure, it did not deter various forces from taking advantage of Wu Feng and mystifying him as a legend in mediating racial/ethnic hostility. In order to assimilate "savage" aborigines into imperial management and stop the habit of *Chucao*

出草, or headhunting, the Japanese colonial government made the film *Righteous Wu Feng* (义人吴凤) in 1932 to start to mystify and glorify the self-sacrifice of Wu Feng. This effort was relayed three decades later by the KMT owned Taiwan Film Studio (台湾电影制片厂), for almost the same ideology, which solicited acclaimed Hong Kong director Bu Wancang to shoot *Wu Feng* (吴凤, 1962) as a national enlightening project. In between these two explicitly educating films, the meaningfulness of *The Legend of Ali Mountain*, I would argue, resided in its twofold contributions: the prescribed historicity and legendary imaginary.[40] Not unlike the other two films on *Wu Feng*, the narration of *The Legend* appropriated the historical figure for its own purpose, regardless of the authentic delineation of a mountain tribe and its life. Although it was not a historiographical film, it represented the ethnographic and romantic imaging of Shanghainese, and by extension Chinese, of an exotic, legendary Taiwan. Many successive movies continued this paradigm.

A Free-land Rhetoric: *Awakening from a Nightmare*

The Legend's sojourning filmmakers from a variety of backgrounds and native places, despite their longing for the mainland, devoted themselves to accommodating the ethnographic exoticism of Taiwan as they simultaneously fostered a local cinema. The year 1949 changed their fate, as well as China's. When the KMT had to retreat to Taiwan in 1949, the paramount task they were tackling was to take every means, including cinema, to secure a foothold and maintain their fragile legitimacy. Thus, my last part elucidates the shift from an ethnographic filmmaking

[40] Benedict Anderson conceptualized a capitalistic community where the printing culture bound together otherwise scattered people in an imagined way. See his *The Imagined Communities*.

to an ideological mode that conceptualized Taiwan as a free land. After dealing with *Awakening'*s production background, I problematize its often (mis)described propaganda message, and argue that its politicization was achieved by its aesthetics: the application of women's genre and expressionist techniques. Finally I discuss the prototypical significance of *Awakening* in anticipating a series of state-made anti-Communist films for local fellows and also in promoting Taiwan as a free and legitimate land for Chinese diasporic communities and an international arena.

In late 1949 when the KMT slowly gained a firm foothold in this alien island, its discontent with the hectic, speculating conditions of exhibition and its ambition to produce orthodox, "politically correct" films emerged. For those state-owned studios that went through various hardships to migrate to Taiwan, resuming the filmmaking became a task of politics and survival, even if they faced a wasteland with limited resources, insufficient experts, and fierce competition from Hollywood.[41] What topped the central government's agenda, however, was strengthening the cultural reign in Taiwan by censoring any "communist bandit'" works from mainland China and immediately making a propaganda film to legitimize Nationalist Taiwan and demonize Communist China.[42] These two forces converged and coordinated to disavow the previous ethnographic trend and to instead endorse an ideological cinema.

Therefore, the newly migrated Agricultural Education Film Studio (abbr. AEFS hereafter), equipped with many relatively advanced facilities and an established studio at Taiwan thanks to

[41] See *The Chronicle of Taiwan Cinema, 1898-2000*. Vol.1, 165-167.
[42] See Ibid.

its resourceful director Chen Guofu (陈果夫), cooperated with CMPS, which had retained a nearly complete talent pool owing to its military nature. They began to shoot *Awakening* in November 1949 as a mouthpiece for Party policy. The screenwriter Zheng Yuping (郑禹平), upon receiving a mandate to be “Anti-communist and anti-Soviet,” adapted a popular novel titled *Female Bandit Cadre* (女匪干) by Chen Tiewu (陈铁吾). The novel was initially published as a serial in *Taiwan Shin Sheng Daily* (台湾新生报) and gained such a warm reception that both comics and cinema adopted its theme and plot.[43]

The cross-fertilization feature of this story made *Awakening* seen a likely success, but the reports at that time did not, as expected, celebrate its performance in the market, probably because the overwhelming Hollywood influence submerged this too explicit propaganda film. Yet despite the overwrought political message and exaggerated plotline, *Awakening*, in retrospect, did contain certainly a generic, stylistic, and thematic profoundness that turned into a model for ensuing state-made films and merited a reappraisal. The first feature worthy of discussion lies in its genre, or precisely, genre and gender. *Awakening* told a story from the point of view of Luo Yifen (罗挹芬) in flashback, a former female Communist cadre who shared with a group of refugees her miserable, inhuman life under communist reign that purged people and plagued her hometown, which shattered her and other passionate youths’ dream about Communism. As a “humiliated, insulted” woman, she made an impressive debut on a stormy night: in a shabby cell Ms. Luo roared in desperation, and in the next scene she, amidst debris and overshadowed by a

[43] See Zhang Shiying 张世瑛 “A Study of Taiwan's Political Cartoons in the 1950s” 1950 年代台湾政治漫画初探, *Taiwan Historica* 台湾文献, vol. 62, no. 2 (2011): 351-402.

wooden cross, beseeched forgiveness and confessed to God the brutality of Communist demons, accompanied by thunder and lightning (see fig. 24). This opening scene, filmed in an artistic way, was reminiscent of a Chinese horror genre, especially *Song at Midnight* (1937), with a similar beginning set on a rainy night, with the characters, placed in the same dense mise-en-scène, practicing singing. The rest of *Awakening* nevertheless was a women's film by and large. The movie, narrated by a woman, seen through her eyes, and often soliciting identification with this insulted woman, resembled the 1930's women's films such as Ruan Lingyu's *Goddess* (1934) and Hu Die's *Twin Sisters* (姐妹花, 1933). In terms of women's suffering and humiliation, it was, ironically enough, probably influenced by postwar left-wing works such as Hong Shen's (洪深) *Frailty, Thy Name is Woman* 1948 and Chen Liting's (陈鲤庭) *Three Girls* 1949. They all visualized the victimization of the female, their bodily injury and mental trauma, as well as the imposed social oppression.

The discussed opening of *Awakening* actually deployed sophisticated video and audio as well as the idiosyncratic mise-en-scène to refine the atmosphere and convey the ideology. The chiaroscuro effect of Ms. Luo's face, the zigzagged interior of the cell, and the thundering sound all created an astounding impression on spectators. Additionally, Luo's exaggerated performance (the shouting and brandished fists) and heightened emotions intensified the impact. To some extent, the visual and symbolic techniques applied in *Awakening* paralleled the coeval noir films of Hollywood and drew heavily from German Expressionism. According to John Barlow, films influenced by German Expressionism have five attributes: a fantastic set; supporting characters reduced to serve a main character; exaggerated acting with emotional intensity; contrast between

light and shadow; and excessive response to everyday situations.[44] Beyond these attributes, Paul Coates' suggestion that "expressionism's legacy is in fact the use of stylization to indicate the state of the mind viewing the world" also reveals the symbolic, psychological essence underneath the surface effects.[45] In this light, *Awakening* contained almost all the underlying principles of German Expressionist techniques, and more importantly, this stylization signified the distorted psyche of Luo and Communist China's absurdity and insanity. In *Awakening*, the pastoral innocence of Luo's homeland and her harmonious Christian family life contrasted sharply with the CCP's dim meeting room, poker-faced communist commissioner, (often shot in silhouette), and the deformed, cartoonish portraits of communist leaders. In spite of its heavy-handed political message, this stylistic expressionism and sophisticated symbolism stood as the model for successive movies.

Before 1955 when the first surge of Taiwanese dialect films held sway, the domestic production was dominated by state-owned studios, most of whose movies emulated the prototype of *Awakening* and envisioned Taiwan as a desirable free land. For example, *Fragrant Grass of Army* (军中芳草, 1952), made by AEFS, featured women soldiers' training and their unyielding loyalty to the KMT. Afterwards, AEFS made two consecutive movies, *Beauty in War Flames* (烽火丽人, 1953) and *Poppy Flowers* (罂粟花, 1954), both centering on the insulted woman and femme fatale character respectively and fleshing out their victimized lives caused by "evil communism." All three movies, among other contemporary works, highlighted the more than

[44] John Barlow, *German Expressionist Film*, Boston: Twayne, 1982. 25.
[45] Paul Coates, *The Gorgon's Gaze: German Cinema, Expressionism, and the Image of Horror*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 156.

clear message that Taiwan was the ultimate destination and the free, democratic land for every Chinese. This thematic and ideological emphasis originated from *Awakening* in which Ms. Luo, after having witnessed the Communist atrocities and brutal "account-settling" movement, made every attempt to escape to the KMT's free zone and thus disclose to the whole world the deceptive, oppressive nature of the Communists. This design was conceived by the studios in accordance with the Party's rule and educational task, and, more significantly, it aimed to extend this democratic, promising, and orthodox image to Chinese diasporic communities and the international arena. Hong Kong was its priority target since after 1949 both left and right wing studios painstakingly tried to use this neutral place as a venue to disseminate individual politics and win over independent filmmakers' hearts. Southeast Asia and Japan, in addition, were considered as contesting venues for Taiwan cinema to gain acknowledgement by exporting politically correct movies. That is why Taiwan spared no effort to attend the Southeast Asia Film Exhibition (东南亚电影节), inaugurated in 1954, and to arrange *Fragrant Grass of Army* as the first commercial screening in Japan in 1954.

It is dismaying that the afterlives of these three significant movies were quite dire, and far from the melodramatic plots depicted in their diegesis. *Hualian* was banned in Taiwan in 1951 because its director ,He Feiguang, "turned traitor" and stayed in mainland China. The complete copy of *The Legend* was destroyed in a series of accidental fires, andt the original theme song, *High Mountain,* vanished, too. *Awakening* was saved from the turbulence, but it could not hide from its fate of being labeled as sheer propaganda and a shallow third-rater. In the end, they all accumulated dust or have been buried without any deserved attention. Having examined these

three key movies cinematically and extra-cinematically, this study aimed to do justice to the complex picture of the burgeoning film enterprise of Taiwan. I argue that films shot at Taiwan for its scenery, exoticness, and ethnographic distinctiveness, and movies produced by Taiwan studios for the ideological whitewash and depiction of an imagined free-land, taken as a whole, validated postwar Taiwan's critical engagement with various contingent discourses and realities.

CONCLUSION

For me, this coda is a vista of many implications and future research more than a simple conclusion. In the previous four chapters, I have delineated the revival process by which postwar Shanghai, Hong Kong, Manchuria, and Taiwan cinema painstakingly recovered from the ashes of the Anti-Japanese War and gradually carved out unique yet interconnected film paths from which the patterns and characteristics of contemporary Chinese cinemas formalized. I also argue that the reason why each cinema could meet various economic, political, and industrial adversities and thus engender a vibrant, heterogeneous film culture was due to the specific liminality they enjoyed in this transitional, highly precarious and fluid postwar era in between a World War and the Communist age.

As I have stressed in my introduction, although the concept of liminality is able to account for and engage with the overall prosperity and dynamics of postwar Chinese cinemas, it, akin to any other hermeneutic theory, needs deliberate contextualization and should allow for exceptions. This situation reminds us of the challenge of weaving a holistic, all-encompassing paradigm to address such a diverse, dispersive, and malleable subject as Chinese cinemas. To address its complexity and heterogeneity, the paradigm of *Chinese-language cinema* (华语电影) becomes an accepted framework to illustrate the lingua franca among Chinese cinemas and the nature of border-crossing within different film industries.[1] While this paradigm might stay informative in the contemporary period, I adopt a revisionist approach to discern the tension and legitimacy

[1] Shu-mei Shih's *Visuality and Identity* challenges the legitimacy of Chinese-language movies by proposing another concept, "Sinophone (world)" which designates the overseas Chinese regions of diaspora outside of Greater China. See Shu-mei Shih's *Visuality and Identity: Sinophone Articulations across the Pacific*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.

within this constructed theory. While the language issue remains active in the postwar period (indicative in the demarcation of Mandarin and Cantonese cinemas), I refrain from (mis)treating language as a blanket term, or an "empty signifier," as Pang Laikwan has argued.[2] For the singularity of language per se cannot do full justice in differentiating and articulating the distinct, multifaceted, and polysemic film cultures in China, itself a gigantic entity with centuries long history. Echoing Pang's "place-based" politics, I would rather register Chinese cinemas mainly from a geopolitical perspective that, for instance, examines *local* aesthetics such as northern landscapes and customs in Manchurian films, *cross-regional* interactions such as the shift of the commercial forces from Shanghai to Hong Kong, and the *international* industry nexus between Hollywood, Shanghai and Hong Kong. In other words, I suggest a *locale-specific yet globally-connected* approach to unravel the larger-than-life Chinese cinemas. It is especially feasible from the late 1930s onwards since the films of China have steadily presented noticeable individual features and have inevitably drifted into a trans-regional and international encounter.

Therefore, "a tale of X cities (regions)," can substantially enrich our understanding of the cinescape. In a similar vein, the inquiry of the postwar cinema is far from complete if it is disconnected from the cinema of preceding and following eras. I have to admit that there are a number of compelling themes, tropes, and case studies that go beyond the scope of my dissertation and yet deserve due scholarly attention. To name but a few, in 1949 the CCP launched another large-scale takeover movement in Shanghai and it eradicated the "detrimental

[2] Pang uses this phrase to criticize its overshadowing of other possible approaches to Chinese cinema. See Pang Laikwan, "The Institutionalization of 'Chinese' Cinema as an Academic Discipline," *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 1, no. 1 (2007): 55–61.

influence of capitalism" before transforming all private studios into state-owned ones in 1952, a dramatic and far-reaching procedure that has hitherto invited no study. Scholars nowadays have recognized the importance of postwar international investments (especially from Southeast Asia and North America) in improving the filmmaking in Hong Kong, but no one can elaborate the exhibition pattern (which and how many films; any alternation of the plot; language dubbed or not; and the promotion) of the local cinema in Southeast Asia, Macau, Taiwan, Canton, and the United States. It would be an illuminating project to study the spectatorship and identity issues of Manchurians (and by extension Chinese nationals) when they were persuaded into watching Man'ei's and the Northeast Film Studio's highly ideological works in either modern movie houses or northern open fields. Likewise a comparative study of espionage films made in postwar Shanghai, and in both Communist China and Nationalist Taiwan in the 1950s would insightfully (de-)construct the political message of this genre and problematize the designation and representation of the femme fatale (since most spies are dangerously attractive females).

To adequately study these issues, we must take the period and the films very seriously. Unfortunately, almost half of the movies I have discussed in the dissertation as well as the voluminous popular film magazines are still "cozily" sleeping in archives or are even secretly hidden to eschew any "controversy." Theory can always be conceived and choreographed, while the precious primary resources will vanish if no preservation takes place. This thought has propelled me to delve into a series of archival research at the Shanghai Municipal Library, Beijing Film Archive, Changchun Municipal Library, Hong Kong Film Archive, and Chinese Taipei Film Archive since 2010. As an academic, my role is primarily to produce a project that is

sound in its scholarship and hopefully expresses ideas that are inspiring to others who can then unpack, critique, and use as they choose. Yet as a cinephile, it is my high responsibility to preserve, circulate, and share these rare materials as well as my findings with anyone who desires them. In the course of writing this dissertation, some of my friends (a majority of them Chinese) responded with raillery: “Frankly, who gives a damn” (说实话，谁在乎啊); and when I have to say a few words about my project, many Americans just casually comment “Umm, very interesting.” Thus, I hope my current project, as well as any future ones, has the potential to inform--and transform--our perception and appreciation of Chinese cinemas. In addition to being a scholar and cinephile, I wish to take on the role of cultural transmitter or mediator to better take the seemingly “old-fashioned” films and “obsolete” culture out of the lockers and make them known to the public. Then, perhaps, we will be delighted to enjoy the martial arts routines in films made in the late 1940s and “surprisingly discover” the similarity between the northern flavors in Manchurian cinema and the beauty of the western plateau in the works of “the fifth generation.

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CHINA'S LI LI-HUA stars in Hong Kong movies for $5,100 a film, rejected Red overtures, declaring, "I'm a Catholic. Communism is no good for the soul."

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台灣通訊

台灣電影院概況

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Filmography

A Baby for Everybody (连生贵子), dir. Huang Jinyin 黄金印(黄鹤声), Hong Kong: Grandview Film Company Limited 大观声片有限公司, 1949.

A Bitter Life of an Actress (甦凤记), dir. Tang Xiaodan 汤晓丹, Peking: CFS Three 中电三厂, 1947.

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The Broken Dream (红楼残梦), dir. He Zhaozhang 何兆璋, Shanghai: Datong Studio 大同影业, 1948.

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The Iron-bird (铁鸟), dir. Yuan Congmei 袁丛美, Shanghai: Lianhua 联华影业, 1934.

The Judge Goes to Pieces (审死官), dir. Yang Gongliang 杨工良, Hong Kong: Lianyi Film Company 联艺影业, 1948.

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The Razor's Edge (千钧一发), dir. Yang Gongliang 杨工良, Hong Kong: Lianyi Film Company 联艺影业, 1949.

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The Spoiled Princess (刁蛮宫主), dir. Yang Gongliang 杨工良, Hong Kong: Qinghua Film Company 青华影业, 1948.

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