HEALTHY REALISM: PARADOXICAL AESTHETICS, IDEOLOGY, AND NATION-BUILDING IN TAIWAN CINEMA 1964-1982

BY

MEI- HSUAN CHIANG

DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in East Asian Languages and Cultures
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2013

Urbana, Illinois

Doctoral Committee:

Associate Professor Gary G. Xu, Chair
Associate Professor Jose B. Capino
Associate Professor Robert Tierney
Professor Kai-Wing Chow
Abstract

This dissertation focuses on Healthy Realist Film Movement (*jiankang xieshi dianying*) and its influence on Taiwan cinema from 1964 to the rise of New Taiwan Cinema in 1982. Healthy Realism was first introduced to Taiwan film industry in 1964 by the Central Motion Picture Corporation (CMPC), a studio owned by the Chinese nationalist party, or the so-called Kuomintang (KMT). It claims lineage to postwar Italian Neorealist films, but purposely avoids realism’s dark and pessimistic themes. Current scholarship has often interpreted Healthy Realist Film as the KMT government’s propaganda tool; however, the historical approach tends to overlook the subversive voices and the melodramatic expressions exhibited in the actual film texts. Therefore, drawing on western melodrama study and feminist film theories, this project departs from previous scholarship to examine the melodramatic mode in Healthy Realist Film. It argues that the melodramatic mode was employed to reconstruct the postwar social order, and, at the same time, to provide an auto-critique of the cultural policies and social values proposed by the KMT government.

This dissertation is consisted of four core chapters, each investigating the transformation of Healthy Realism at different stages during the 1960s and the 1970s. Chapter 2 traces the KMT government’s obsession of healthiness to the New Life Movement in the 1930s Shanghai. Using Bai Jingrui’s *Lonely Seventeen* (1967) as an example, the chapter shows that the KMT government’s healthy discourse is ultimately a patriarchal construction. Moreover, as in other early Healthy Realist Films, the eroticized female body on screen often contradicts with the government proposed “healthy” feminine norm. Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 study Healthy Realism’s shift to Healthy Variety-Show (*jiankang zongyi*) in 1968. Chapter 3 first maps out the historical background for the changes in Taiwan’s national economic and film industry in the late
1960s and early 1970s. Similar to Bai Jingrui’s *The Bride and I* (1969) and *Goodbye Darling* (1970), many films during the time question the government’s economic policy that is optimistically forward-looking, and the KMT’s reconciliation of traditional virtues for the sake of development and national economic. Chapter 4 examines romance films inspired by Qiong Yao’s novels, a genre encouraged by the government in the Healthy Variety-Show movement. It argues that the female worker boom and the rise of New Feminism in the early 1970s constituted the changes in the genre, which began to offer a subversive reading of woman’s traditional role in family, as manifested in Song Cunshou’s *Life with Mother* (1973) and Li Xing’s *Mother and Daughter* (1971). Chapter 5 discusses the anti-Japanese films made after Japan broke its diplomatic relation with Taiwan in 1972, such as Liu Jia-chang’s *Victory* (1976). The chapter reveals that the nationalist rhetoric and the hostile narrative towards Japan actually serve as a disguise for the KMT government’s growing diasporic anxieties in the 1970s. This project ends with a coda examining the afterlives of the melodramatic mode after Taiwan New Cinema, which deemphasizes and represses the melodramatic aesthetic.
Acknowledgements

I cannot take full credit for this project, as it has been born of a collaborative effort. First and foremost, I am greatly indebted to the director of the committee Professor Gary G. Xu, who has been an inspiring and supportive advisor throughout my study in graduate school. His expertise in Chinese cinema and critical theories has been inspirational in my research. It was also him who encouraged me to take a major turn from my comfort zone in studying contemporary Chinese films to explore early Taiwan cinema. To him, I am forever grateful.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to my committee members, the most transformative and life-changing group of mentors I could have asked for. I own a tremendous gratitude to Professor Jose B. Capino, who opened a new window for me by introducing me to western melodrama study, which grounds this project. He offered many insightful comments on my dissertation, and devoted a great deal of time to help me develop my arguments. I have also benefited greatly from the wisdom and critical thinking skills offered by Professor Robert Tierney. His teachings challenged and shaped much of my thinking. I see in him a real scholar’s spirit, and he is always a great role model for me. I also want to express my gratitude to Professor Kai-Wing Chow, who shows me the importance to contextualize the texts. He always points out my blind spots and gives me constructive and valuable advice along the way.

I also owe heartfelt gratitude to Professor Wenchi Lin from the National Central University, Taiwan. He has won my genuine appreciation for his generous help and valuable advice on my dissertation. He kindly shared with me some of his film collections, and offered me extremely helpful tips in conducting archival research in Taiwan. I am also deeply grateful to the faculty in the East Asian Languages and Cultures Department. I want to thank Professor Jerome Packard for having unflagging faith in me despite my own insecurity, and for offering me the best advice
in academic life. Many thanks also go to Professor Zong-qi Cai and Professor Brian Ruppert, who have helped me in numerous ways during my job application.

I am also very grateful to my friends at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Yiju Huang, Yanjie Wang, I-In Chiang, Gong Jin, Eric Dalle, John Wheeler, E.K Tan, to name a few. They are the best dissertation group, thinking partners, and friends in life. I also want to acknowledge the support from my dearest friends in Taiwan, Yen-Nin Tseng and Liang-Tsun Huang, who shared with me my moments of happiness and frustration during the dissertation writing process.

Finally, I want to thank my entire family. My father has supported my project in his own way—by patiently watching each film included in this project and sharing his thoughts on the movies with me. Although my mother never quite understands what it is I do and why I do it, she always sees the best in me. There is also my brother, whose optimism sustains me in numerous ways. Without their love and unfailing support, this project would not have been possible. Therefore, I dedicate my dissertation to my family.
Table of Contents

1. Introduction:  
Rethinking Healthy Realism, Melodramatic Mode and Political Subversion…………………...1

2. Disciplining the Sick Body:  
Healthy Realism and KMT’s Political Insecurities…………………………………………..21

3. The Fetishization of Progress:  
Critical Reflection from Urban Movies in the 1970s Taiwan…………………………………67

4. Motherhood Redefined:  
Romance and Maternal Film in the 1970s Taiwan…………………………………………..110

5. Nostalgia in Disguise:  
KMT’s Imagination of Home in 1970s Anti-Japanese Films…………………………………154

6. Coda:  
Melodramatic Mode Beyond Healthy Realist Film…………………………………………..194

Appendix A: Per Capita Income and Television Owning Rate in Taiwan……………………..207

Appendix B: Movie-going Culture in Taiwan…………………………………………………..209

Glossary of Sinitic Terms, Names, and Titles…………………………………………………..211

Bibliography……………………………………………………………………………………216
1.

Introduction: Rethinking Healthy Realism, Melodramatic Mode and Political Subversion

My dissertation concerns Healthy Realist Film Movement (jiankang xieshi dianying) and its influence on Taiwan cinema from 1964 to 1982 when New Taiwan Cinema began. Although the movement led to the first golden age of Taiwan cinema, there has been an academic void in researching the field. Made during Taiwan’s martial law period (1949-1987), early Taiwan films are often discussed in the context of cold war politics or interpreted as the propaganda tools for the Chinese nationalist party (KMT). With all the attention placed on the state’s power over the film industry, the limited historical studies tend to overlook the resistance and anxieties manifested in the actual film texts. Furthermore, the ambiguous definition of Healthy Realist Films often leads scholars to overemphasize the realist tradition, neglecting the appropriation of melodramatic aesthetics in Taiwan cinema during the 1960s and the 1970s.

After Japan’s fifty years of colonial rule (1895-1945), Taiwan was handed back to the KMT-governed China in 1945. However, after its defeat in the civil war against the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the KMT government retreated to Taiwan in 1949 with the hope of claiming the mainland back. It declared martial law in the same year. In order to compete against the People’s Republic of China (PRC), founded by the CCP across the strait, the KMT government initiated a series of cultural reforms to claim the government’s political legitimacy and its role as the guardian of Chinese cultural tradition in the 1960s. The Healthy Realist Film Movement was one of the most important projects in this government’s cultural reform. It was

---

1 For the sake of clarity, I use the term “Taiwan cinema” in this project to refer to the national cinema of Taiwan instead of “Taiwanese cinema,” which is often used to refer to Taiwanese dialect film. Some scholars claim that Healthy Realism is a film genre; however, I prefer to see it as a film movement that covers different film genres. I will return to this debate in Chapter Two.
first introduced to the film industry in 1964 by the party-owned Central Motion Picture Corporation (CMPC), which was the largest film company in Taiwan during the time. The notion of healthiness in Healthy Realism is derived from the government’s New Life Movement, a cultural policy, in 1930s’ Shanghai. Healthy Realism’s realist style, according to CMPC’s manager during the time, Gong Hong, is an imitation of postwar Italian Neorealist films. The movement proposes to adapt realist approach to local stories but purposely avoid realism’s dark and pessimistic theme. However, can realist films be healthy and positive, completely ignoring themes essential to realism, namely, class oppression, poverty, and social injustice? A closer examination of Healthy Realist films shows that instead of fully adhering to neorealist filmmaking tradition, these films actually feature highly melodramatic expressions. Even the CMPC realized the contradictions between its pursuit of realist filmmaking and the quality of these films, so it eventually modified its approach, calling it Healthy Variety-Show (jiankang zongyi) in 1968.

My dissertation traces Healthy Realist Film Movement, its development, transformation, and legacies, and parallels it with the changing focus of the melodramatic mode from ethical imperative to the hysteric and the sensational. It is not the project’s goal to recount the linear history of early Taiwan cinema; rather, it aims to study how the changes in the melodramatic mode of expressions reflected the KMT government’s political needs and insecurities at different stages during the 1960s-1970s. The body of films that I discuss is not limited to the CMPC’s productions, as Healthy Realism became the most popular style even among the private studios. They are manifested in various film genres, such as family ethic films, comedies, romance and even war films, but the melodramatic aesthetic is what holds Healthy Realist Films together. In fact, shifting the attention away from realism allows me to engage in the more fruitful
discussions—the lineage of the KMT government’s healthy discourse from the 1930s’ Shanghai cinema to Healthy Realist Films, and issues of gender in the KMT’s nation building project in Taiwan. Most importantly, I wish to depart from traditional historical research that portrays the early Taiwan film industry as oppressed and manipulated by the state ideology. Instead, I argue that *although the melodramatic mode was employed to depict a reconstructed postwar social order, it also questioned and challenged the KMT government’s policies and ideology.*

*****

*Taiwan Cinema before the Healthy Turn*

The first exhibition of film in Taiwan was in 1896, one year after Taiwan was handed over to Japan, and one year after the Lumière brothers held their first private screening in Paris. However, during Japan’s colonial rule, the entire film industry was controlled by the Japanese, and it was not until 1922 when the first local Taiwanese actor appeared on screen—as a Chinese villain in Tanaka King’s *The Eyes of the Buddha* (1922). A few years later, Liu Xi-Yang’s *Whose Fault Is it?* (1925) marked the beginning of local Taiwanese people’s actual filmmaking, but, still, most of the films were shot with Japan’s collaboration and technological support.

According to Taiwan film scholar Chen Ru-shou, although there were a total of forty-eight movie theaters in Taiwan in 1941, and private companies also took all kinds of movies on tour around the island, seventy percent of the film audiences during the time were Japanese. Chen Ru-shou, *Taiwan xin dian ying di li shi wen hua jing yan* [Historical and Cultural Experience of Taiwan New Cinema]. Taipei: Wan xiang tu shu, 1993. p.29.

---

2 The exact year of cinema’s arrival in Taiwan is under great debate. Although most of the film scholars quote Lu Su-Shang’s and Lee Daw-Ming’s researches that show film was first introduced to Taiwan in the early 1900s, Ye Long-Yan’s recent investigations indicate that it was actually much earlier than the 1900s. He argues that a Japanese merchant brought with him some of Edison’s short films to Taipei in 1896. See Ye Long-Yan’s *The History of Taiwanese Movies during the Japanese Colonization* (Taipei: Yushanshe, 1998). p. 51-53.

Ru-shou speculates that the reasons why movie going was not a popular entertainment among local Taiwanese people is because most of them could not afford it and they also had other forms of entertainment, such as Taiwanese outdoor opera. In fact, film was often used in the transition between scenes in actual Taiwanese opera performance during the colonial period.

After the KMT government came to Taiwan in 1949, it took over the filmmaking equipment from the Japanese and established three state-owned film studios, Taiwan Province Film Production Studio, China Movie Studio, and Agricultural Education Film (which was later reorganized as the CMPC in 1954).\(^4\) Agricultural Education Film made the KMT government’s first movie in Taiwan in 1950, *Awakening from A Nightmare*, which is an anti-communist film, and it set the example for the government’s national policy films from the 1950s to the mid-1960s. While the state-owned companies focused on newsreels, educational films and national policy films during the time, commercial movies were made by other private companies, which focused on Taiwanese dialect films. In fact, the rise of Taiwanese dialect films coincided with the government’s regulations of Taiwanese outdoor opera in the 1950s.\(^5\) According to Lu Feii, in order to continue their business and to save on touring budgets, the Taiwanese opera troupes decided to film stage performance. As a result, *Xue Ping-Guei and Wang Bao-Chian* (1956), which was made by Gongyueshe, a Taiwanese opera troupe based in Taipei, quickly led to the blossoming of Taiwanese dialect films, and there were a total of 178 Taiwanese dialect films produced from 1956 to 1959, which was three times more than Mandarin-language films during

---

\(^4\) Subordinated by the Information Services Department, Taiwan Province Film Production Studio focused on the production of newsreels during the time. On the other hand, China Movie Studio was controlled by the Ministry of National Defense, and the majority of its productions were military newsreels and entertainment films for the army. Agricultural Education Film was originally a state-owned company, but it became party-owned after 1954.

\(^5\) In addition to the government’s regulations on outdoor Taiwanese opera, the recovery of Taiwanese economics during the time also played an important role in fostering Taiwanese dialect films. I will further explore the rise of Taiwan cinema in the 1950s in Chapter Three.
the same period. In addition to the adaption of stage performance, Taiwanese dialect films also explored other genres, such as comedies like *Brother Wang and Brother Liu Tour Taiwan* (1958), and dramas based on news stories, like Bai Ke’s famous 1957 movie, *Mad Woman for Eighteen Years*. The other genre that was also extremely popular throughout the 1950s and 1960s is drama focusing on bitter love stories, and some of the well-known movies of this kind include Liang Zhe-Fu’s *The Last Train from Kaohsiung* (1963) and its follow-up, *The Early Train from Taipei* (1964).

In 1963, Hong Kong director Li Han-Hsiang’s Plum Melody Costume Musical films (*huangmei* films), *Love Eterne*, found unprecedented success in Taiwan. The film screened for 162 days, beating box office record. Its success led to a fever for *huangmei* musical films. Seeing the popularity of Taiwanese dialect films and the success of *huangmei* musicals, the Mandarin-language film industry controlled by the KMT government also began to change direction in the mid-1960s. After Gong Hong took over the position as the CMPC’s general manager, the CMPC went through drastic reform: the filmmaking technology in Taiwan was finally upgraded to produce color movies; furthermore, scriptwriting and acting programs were created to improve the quality of films. Most importantly, steering away from traditional national policy films, Gong Hong introduced the Healthy Realist Film with Li Xing’s *Oyster Girl* (1964) in an attempt to attract the mainstream audience and promote governmental policies and

---


7 In fact, these Taiwanese dialect drama films also exhibit unequivocal melodramatic expressions, but it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to address the melodramatic mode in Taiwanese dialect films. I hope I can come back to explore the aesthetics in Taiwanese dialect films and its connections to the melodramatic mode in Mandarin cinema in a future project.

8 For discussions on the reception of *huangmei* films in the 1960s, see Lu, Feii. p. 102.
ideology at the same time. With the government’s support, Healthy Realist Film soon became popular, and the style was quickly absorbed by private film companies. As the film movement was adaptable to various genres and historical backgrounds, it eventually led to the first golden age of Mandarin-language film in Taiwan in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

*****

**Interrogating State Ideology, Interpreting Realism**

Healthy Realist Film and Taiwan early cinema did not attract much scholarly attention until very recently, and it was at most seen as a transitional period in Taiwan cinema that builds up to Taiwan New Cinema, which is more well-known in the west. The first collective effort in interpreting Healthy Realist Films in North American academia is in the year 2010 when the *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* published a special issue on early Taiwan cinema and, to paraphrase the guest editor Hong Guo-Juin’s words, it was an attempt to fill in a “historiography of absence.”

In the existing scholarship on Healthy Realist Film and early Taiwan cinema, nation and state ideology are often seen as the single most important factor that shaped the Taiwan film industry. Because of the intense and oppressive social atmosphere during the time, most of the scholars focus on early Taiwan cinema’s role as part of the ideological state apparatus and the film industry’s passive compliance with the KMT government’s anti-communist stance. Taiwan film scholar Liu Xiancheng’s *Taiwanese Cinema, Society and State* is one such study that maps

---

9 In most of the scholarly books on Taiwan cinema and Chinese cinema, for instance, Zhang Yingjin’s *Chinese National Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2004), and Chris Berry and Mary Ann Farquhar’s *China on Screen* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), the focus is often placed on New Taiwan Cinema, which brought Taiwan cinema to the spotlight of western film festivals in the late 1980s.

10 See *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 4:1 (2010). This issue is part of the journal’s series on early sinophone cinema, which includes films from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and mainland China.
out how the state interfered with the film industry during the martial law period through tax system, union organization, law, and various national policies. In a similar vein, Tang Weimin further associates the White Terror during the 1950s to the government’s cultural cleansing movements, and situates Healthy Realist Film within the web of strict state surveillance. Recognizing the influence from commercialism and market demand, Hong Guo-Juin’s thesis still echoes the above scholarship and suggests that the aesthetics embedded in Healthy Realism is in the service of the nationalist ideology, which he calls “an aesthetic of politics.” While these researches set a strong foundation and the historical framework for the study of early Taiwan cinema, they hardly question the degree to which government ideology was actually reflected in the actual film texts. As Liu Xiancheng suggests when reflecting on his own research, future scholars need to conduct close textual analysis in order to prove that early Taiwan cinema submitted completely to the KMT government’s cultural policies in consolidating a strong national image. Furthermore, the traditional methodology on state control of the film industry is inadequate in that it overlooks the fact that no ideology can pretend to totality; that is to say, there are always inconsistencies, resistance, and even subversions within the system. In other words, although these films appear to be reinforcing dominant social


12 White Terror is the KMT government’s suppression of political dissidents during the martial law period from 1949 to 1987. Most of the people labeled as communist spies during the time are local Taiwanese intellectuals and elites, and they were punished or executed simply because they threatened or had the potential of sabotaging the KMT government’s regime. The first half of the 1950s was the high peak of the execution and marked the most oppressive years in Taiwanese society. For more fruitful discussion on White Terror and the film industry in the 1960s Taiwan, see Tang Weimin’s “Recurring Right-wing Discursive Tactics, Policing Political Economy of Cinematic Production, Representing Narrative Aesthetics Syndromes: The Rise of Healthy Realistic Cinema in Taiwan” Diss. Fu Jen Catholic University, 2008.


14 Liu, Xiancheng, p. 177.
values, they still reveal contradictions regardless of the texts’ attempts to present a seamless narrative.

The limited scholarship on Healthy Realist Film was also shaped by the debate on the movement’s governing aesthetics, and the question of what is real about Healthy Realist Films. In his introduction to a special issue of the *Journal of Chinese Cinema*, Hong Guo-Juin maintains that the film industry’s shift to realist aesthetic in the 1960s was not by chance but “by deliberation.”¹⁵ The special issue in the *Journal of Chinese Cinema* also include Chen Ru-Shou’s article on the concept of realism in Chinese cinema, which shows how realism is considered the key to understanding Healthy Realist Films.¹⁶ There are still other scholars, including Zhang Yingjin and Chris Berry, who agree that Healthy Realism was not directly influenced by postwar Italian Realism as it claimed to be, but by the Soviet version of socialist realism, which projects an ideal and somewhat escapist worldview. They also note that ironically, this realist style resembles the CCP’s filmmaking in the 1950s and the 1960s despite of the ideological oppositions between the two. Because of the socialist realist style and the melodramatic expressions employed by Healthy Realist Film, Chris Berry describes Healthy Realism as *melodramatic realism* and argues that Chinese cinematic realism is a mixed mode that combines realist, romantic, and melodramatic aesthetics.¹⁷ Chris Berry’s argument therefore opens up little chinks to look at Healthy Realist Films outside of the realist tradition. In fact, a close examination of Taiwan cinema during the 1960s and 70s shows that most of the films embody the melodramatic aesthetics: strong emotionalism, exaggerated performance, and the

---


¹⁷ Berry, Chris and Mary Ann Farquhar. *China on Screen*. p. 76.
polarization of the good versus evil scheme. Therefore, I propose to explore other ways of studying Healthy Realist Films instead of trying to fit it into various realist categories. More specifically, I shift the attention to the investigation of how melodramatic devices were employed at such a historical juncture and what are the functions of melodramatic mode of expression.

*****

Melodramatic Mode: A New Approach

In his famous essay, “Tales of Sound and Fury,” Thomas Elsaesser reminds his readers that “everybody has some idea of what is meant by ‘melodramatic.’” Melodrama was first referred to as a specific form of theatrical performance that was popular in the 18th and 19th century Europe. The word melodrama is derived from French méloïdrame, which is consisted of Greek word, melo, meaning songs and French word, drame, which means drama. Therefore, music has always been an important element in melodrama to appeal to the heightened emotions of the audience. However, scholars like Peter Brooks and Thomas Elsaesser expand the definition of melodrama from a specific kind of theatrical performance to a mode of expression. Peter Brooks observes from his study of the 19th century literature “the structure of an aesthetic” that he calls “the melodramatic imagination.” Through the analysis of the fictions by Balzac and Henry James, Peter Brooks uses melodrama as a descriptive term and concludes that melodrama is both a dramatic genre and an aesthetic. Whereas Peter Brooks focuses on the melodramatic mode in

---


19 Brooks, Peter. The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995. p. xiii- xiv. In The Melodramatic Imagination, Brooks maintains that “melodrama (like romanticism and baroque, in fact) can also be located historically and culturally, that there is a form, calling itself melodrama” (xv, emphasis added). He also explains that his usage of the word melodrama refers to a specific mode, and “the structure of an aesthetic” (xv).
literature, Thomas Elsaesser’s discussion of melodrama is derived from his analysis of the 1950s Hollywood films, mainly, works by Vincente Minnelli and Douglas Sirk. Looking at melodrama as an aesthetic and a mode of expression, Peter Brooks’ and Thomas Elsaesser’s studies are two of the most influential approach to melodrama. According to this extended definition, the melodramatic mode is also found in other art forms, including television soap operas, and used in illustrating the experience in a non-western culture.

Still, as the origin of melodrama and the development of melodrama theory were deeply rooted in the western culture, it is worth considering if melodrama theory could be used in the discussion of Chinese cinema. There are two approaches to the study of Chinese melodrama in the existing scholarship: One is to look for an indigenous genre that shares the melodramatic sensibilities, like Chinese wenyi film; the other is to focus on the melodramatic mode, as discussed by Peter Brooks and Thomas Elsaesser, in Chinese cinema. Wenyi film, which literally means “literature- and- art” in Chinese, is often seen as the Chinese equivalent of melodrama films. Although to a certain extent, wenyi film and melodrama film share similar traits, critics like Emily Yue-yu Yeh call attention to the untranslatability between the two and the danger in settling for a one-to-one correspondence. She cautions that the “making alike” process by comparing wenyi films to melodrama implies “a ‘less than real’ and an inferior status” of Chinese films. Therefore, it is important to investigate the indigenous root of wenyi films and to recognize the cultural uniqueness of the genre. For instance, scholars like Stephen Teo and

---

20 In his influential essay, “Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama” (1972), Thomas Elsaesser also uses the term “melodramatic imagination” (68) to describe this specific aesthetic form and technique of expression.

21 Wenyi films’ focus on literature and words is the major target for scholars who consider wenyi a different genre from western melodrama, which is based on music and songs.

Tsai Kuorong trace the origin of *wenyi* films to crude stage play (*wenming xi*), a modern drama that was popular in the early 1900s Shanghai, and others like Emily Yue-yu Yeh argues that the word *wenyi* was borrowed from Japan in the 1920s, and it has the connotation of foreign or western adaptation. In the 1960s and 1970s, *wenyi* films became a major genre in Mandarin cinema in Taiwan, and, according to Tsai Kuorong, they were further developed toward two directions: family ethic films (*jiating lunli ju*) and romance films (*aiqing wenyi pian*).

With the cultural specificities of *wenyi* films in mind, in this project, I follow the approach of looking at melodrama as a mode of expression, which has become the dominant reading in the field. Scholars of Chinese film, including Nick Browne, Paul Pickowicz and Harry H. Kuoshu have all been looking at melodrama as a mode of expression instead of a specific genre in their research in Chinese cinema. They examine how the melodramatic mode was employed by various genres to tackle and to respond to Chinese politics since the 1930s. Looking at melodrama as a mode and an aesthetic also fosters the mutual exchange between early Taiwan cinema and western melodrama study without losing track of Taiwan cinema’s cultural and historical distinctiveness. For instance, while western melodrama focuses on bourgeois core families, early Taiwan cinema highly values Confucian ethics and family relationships.

---


24 Tsai, Kuorong. p. 295.

Therefore, the unique melodramatic mode in Taiwan early cinema also adds nuanced and specific cultural forms to enrich the study of western melodrama.

*****

The Melodramatic and the Subversive

The question central to my dissertation is why the melodramatic mode was encouraged by the KMT government through Healthy Realist Films (and disguised it as realism) during this specific historical juncture. The 1960s and 1970s was a time of change and crisis for the KMT government in Taiwan: although the postwar economy recovered and even led to rapid industrialization in the late 1960s, the government’s anti-Communist campaign faced unexpected predicaments as cold war ideology softened in the 1970s. In addition to the commercial value of the melodramatic, the everydayness in melodrama draws on the shared experience of people to mobilize the mass in Taiwan, and the heightening of affects functions as an outlet for the collective psyche that was torn by the nation’s diplomatic crises in the 1970s. Furthermore, it is crucial to look at what Peter Brooks calls the “moral occult” in melodrama, “the domain of operative spiritual values which is both indicated within and masked by the surface of reality.”

26 According to Peter Brooks, melodrama is more than excess and strong emotionalism; one of the crucial characteristics of the melodrama lies in its moral imperative. Along with Peter Brooks, many other critics observe that melodrama often arise from a time of crisis: the post-revolutionary world where traditional values and social morality have been challenged. For example, melodrama is often seen as a response to the moral confusion caused by the 1789 French Revolution as the newly emancipated bourgeoisie struggled against the

26 Brooks, Peter. p. 5
feudal aristocrats. It functions to restore the post-revolution social order and to clarify the new social value and state ideology.

More specifically, the clarification and recognition of virtues is done so through the confrontation of opposite forces, and the eventual victory of the good over evil. The post-Chinese Civil War Taiwan was also in need of a new social order and the KMT government was desperate to claim its moral authority. By situating Taiwan as the ultimate good that embodies all virtues, and by showing Taiwan’s cultural and moral superiority over its enemies, mainly, the communist China, the KMT government reinstated the social values and its political legitimacy as the true representative of China. In other words, the melodramatic mode was employed in films to promote nationalism, to create a new hero, and to build a national myth. However, was the melodramatic mode, particularly the good/evil scheme, always submissive to the state proposed ideology?

As manifested in Healthy Realist Film and its variants, the melodramatic mode also has the potential of challenging the government’s policies and ideology. For instance, as I discuss in Chapter Two and Chapter Four, the hysteric and the excess in early Healthy Realist films and romance films are actually antithetical to the government proposed gender norm. Most importantly, as illustrated in some of the Healthy Realist Films, the polarization of forces and the antagonistic narrative may only serve as a disguise for the KMT government’s internal anxieties. Drawing on Nietzsche’s investigation on morality in *Genealogy of Morals*, I argue that the slave morality is the key to the understanding KMT government’s psyche in the 1960s and 1970s Taiwan. According to Nietzsche, the slave morality is the morality of the weak, and it is a reaction to oppression; therefore, *ressentiment* always plays an important role in slave morality. As action is always a reaction in the slave morality, the weak is in need of an external stimulus, a
hostile external world, in order to act upon it and survive. To certain degree, the KMT government’s antagonism towards the imagined enemies is what preserved the KMT’s very being and wholeness during the time. The KMT government blames the external enemies for being the cause of its failure and serves as the disguise for the problematics internal to KMT’s system. That is to say, the melodramatic, namely, the good versus evil scheme, in fact reveals the KMT government’s vulnerability and fears. On the one hand, the melodramatic mode was employed to recuperate cultural and social values; on the other, it provided an auto-critique of the KMT government’s policies.

In addition to the study of melodramatic aesthetic, feminist film theories also serve as an important thread of my research in Taiwan cinema during the 1960s and 1970s. One of the focuses of this project is the cinematic representation of woman, as woman’s body is the locus of the Healthy Realist Film. Therefore, drawing on Laura Mulvey’s study of the masculine structure of the gaze in “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” I illustrate the contradictions between women’s eroticized images on screen, her “to-be-looked-at-ness,” and the feminine norm regulated by the government in most of the Healthy Realist Films. Mary Ann Doane’s investigation of woman’s process of seeing, which is invested with anxiety and fear, allows me to address the problematic dichotomy between the limited language and twisted vision woman has, and the rational male gaze that controls the power of reading and interpretation of the female


body in Taiwan cinema. In addition to the issue of gaze, I also examine the role of woman in the family and in nation building in relation to actual women’s movements in the 1960s and 1970s Taiwan. Building on Ann Kaplan’s study of mother discourse in western literature and film, the second half of this dissertation argues that the figure of mother was first employed to fulfill male fantasy of pre-Oedipus mother and to serve as a symbol of home the country is fighting for, but the mother figure was gradually transformed to challenge the government surveillance of feminine norm in the 1970s.

Drawing upon the above theories, I argue that melodramatic mode was dominant in Taiwan cinema during the 1960s and 1970s, functioning both to rearticulate the government proposed social values and to serve as a self-critique of the government’s policies. It is also my hope that this study of early Taiwan cinema and its melodramatic aesthetic can enrich the study of melodrama in North American academia by adding specific cultural forms used in understanding the melodramatic mode.

*****

Chapters

My dissertation is divided into four core chapters, each tracing the transformation of Healthy Realism during the 1960s and the 1970s into three successive, namely: the Healthy Variety-Show, healthy romanticism, and healthy nationalism. Through close textual analysis, I show how these films reflect and respond to various historical and political changes that had a great impact on the development of Taiwan film industry. Most importantly, by focusing on the

---

29 See Mary Ann Doane’s “The ‘Woman’s Film’: Possession and Address” in Home Is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman’s Film (Ed. Christine Gledhill. London: BFI, 1987.) and The Desire to Desire: the Woman’s Film of the 1940s. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987).
melodramatic mode in films, I recover the subversive voices and disguised anxieties manifested in films made during the 1960s to the 1970s.

My study begins with Chapter Two, a chapter that maps out the historical context for the rise of Healthy Realist Films in 1964. I trace the KMT government’s obsession with healthiness, cleanliness, and discipline as represented by the New Life Movement (1934-1949) proposed by the KMT leader Chiang Kai-Shek before China’s total war with Japan. The movement was propelled by an urge to modernize China and strengthen national health, in the belief that individual health and hygiene, along with spiritual and moral health, are the foundations of a powerful nation. The essence of the New Life Movement, that is, the discourse of healthiness and traditional virtues, was picked up by the postwar KMT government in Taiwan and became a guiding principle for early Taiwan cinema since the 1960s. Using Bai Jingrui’s Lonely Seventeen (1967) as an example, I examine what is considered normal and healthy by the KMT government’s cultural policy. There are two levels that I look at in Bai Jingrui’s film: What is considered a healthy film? And what is considered a healthy body? As Lonely Seventeen was subject to modification by the censorship authority, I investigate the changes required to transform a sick movie into a healthy one. In this case, it is the melodramatic mode, that is, the narrative of romance and the ethical imperative. Then, by studying the treatment of the protagonist’s hysteria in the film, I argue that woman’s body is placed at the battlefront of the government’s campaign for healthiness and discipline. In other words, the notion of healthiness is often played out on woman’s body, revealing that the KMT government’s healthy discourse is in fact a patriarchal construction. Ironically, as in other early Healthy Realist Films, the eroticized female body on screen apparently contradicts the government’s eagerness in disciplining woman’s body and behavior.
Chapter Three and Chapter Four are closely connected to trace Healthy Realism’s transformation to Healthy Variety-Show in 1968. Whereas Chapter Three presents the socioeconomic background that constituted the transformation through the examination of films with an urban theme in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Chapter Four looks at the core of Healthy Variety-show, that is, romance films, the most popular and the most melodramatic genre during the time. In Chapter Three, I look at the impact of national economic on Taiwan film industry and how early Taiwan cinema responded to the government’s fetishization of progress. Taiwan’s industrialization and economic boom in the late 1960s led to the rise of privately owned companies, which consequently fostered the wave of independent filmmaking movement in the early 1970s. In order to compete against the newly established companies and other media, such as television broadcasting, the CMPC had to change Healthy Realism into Healthy Variety-Show. Although the CMPC films still managed to advocate some of the governmental policies, the high moral tone gradually became unrecognizable while the sensational dominated the films. By juxtaposing Bai Jingrui’s *The Bride and I* (1969) and *Goodbye Darling* (1970), I examine how these films responded to the growing consumerism and the government’s economic policy that is optimistically forward-looking. *The Bride and I* was made when Bai Jingrui was a contracted director in CMPC; *Goodbye Darling*, on the other hand, was made after Bai Jingrui left for private companies. However, both films present a counter narrative to the KMT government’s promotion of economic development. They expose the KMT government’s reconciliation of traditional virtues for the sake of development and national economic, and question the rosy capitalist dream proposed by the government.

After Chapter Three has mapped out the historical background for the transformation to Healthy Variety-Show movement, Chapter Four turns to romance film that is highly encouraged
by the KMT government during the time. My investigation focuses on the rise of romance film starting with the adaption of Qiong Yao’s romantic novels into films in the mid-1960s to mid-1970s. More specifically, I examine the role of mother and the melodramatization of the domestic sphere, which reveals the displacement of historical, political, and economic issues onto the private shepherd. I argue that Li Xing’s *Silent Wife* (1965), one of the earliest adaptions of Qiong Yao’s romance, reflects the traditional mother paradigm that regulates women through a sense of shame and her part in fulfilling the male Oedipus fantasy. However, the female worker boom in the late 1960s and the New Woman movement in the early 1970s began an unstoppable trend to explore woman’s subjectivity and sexuality. Both Song Cunshou’s *Life with Mother* (1973) and Li Xing’s *Mother and Daughter* (1971) are examples of films that challenge the traditional mother paradigm proposed by the KMT government through the theme of problematic mother-child bonding. By analyzing these 1970s film texts, I argue that the representations of mother in these woman’s films actually offer a subversive and feminist reading of motherhood and of womanhood.

In Chapter Five, the focus is on the CMPC’s return to national policy filmmaking and the trend of anti-Japanese films in the 1970s. The KMT government experienced a series of diplomatic setbacks beginning in the early 1970s, including Taiwan’s loss of its membership in the United Nations in 1971, which was followed by the United States’ One-China policy in 1972. The tension in Taiwan’s international politics reached to a high peak when Japan betrayed the KMT government to establish diplomatic tie with the PRC in 1972. In response to this national crisis, the CMPC started a wave of anti-Japanese films. In this chapter, I first trace the history of postwar anti-Japanese films in Taiwan, starting from the Taiwanese dialect films in the 1950s to spy movies in the 1960s. Then, looking at the anti-Japanese war films in the 1970s,
I argue that on the surface, these films embody the KMT government’s resentment towards Japanese government’s political decision and serve as a form of cultural retaliation. However, the KMT government also projected its political frustration, both international and domestic, to Japan in these films. By analyzing Liu Jia-chang’s Victory (1976), which was set in colonial Taiwan, I observe the KMT government’s nostalgia and growing diasporic anxieties under the nationalistic rhetoric. In other words, the hostile narrative towards the Japanese also serves as a disguise for the KMT government’s declining political influence in the 1970s. Finally, I argue that Victory, which was made at a time when the KMT government’s campaign of “Re-conquering the mainland back” lost its influence and the nativist literature and cultural awareness began to surface, also shows a moral ambiguity towards the treatment of war and Japanese colonialism. I see the blurred boundary between the good and evil in Victory a transition to the historical narrative presented in Taiwan New Cinema after 1982.

My investigation of Healthy Realist Films ends with a coda examining the melodramatic mode after Taiwan New Cinema. After almost two decades of dominance, the KMT’s healthy ideology and the employment of melodramatic aesthetic came to a point when the sensational overpowered the ethical in the late 1970s. From 1979 to 1982, the Taiwan film industry was filled with a sudden frenzy for extremely sexual and violent B-movies, the social realist films (shehui xieshi dianying), which is also- called Taiwan Black Movies (taiwan hei dianying). Similar to Healthy Realist Film, Taiwan Black Movie does not follow any realist traditions; it is New Taiwan Cinema that really takes up the realist style a few years later. Different from their masters including Li Xing and Bai Jingrui, Taiwan New Cinema directors, such as Hou Hsiao-Hsien and Edward Yang, stop manipulating audience’s emotions through their works. So the question central to this chapter is what happened to the melodramatic mode in contemporary
Taiwan cinema? In other words, has the melodramatic aesthetic simply disappeared along with the healthy ideology or has it evolved into other forms? I argue that although the melodramatic mode has been repressed by New Taiwan Cinema after 1982, it is still very present in Taiwan cinema today, channeling its excess to the hysterized body and moment of emotional outburst.
2. Disciplining the Sick Body: Healthy Realism and KMT’s Political Insecurities

It was a distressing time for Chinese people. Fleeing to Taiwan from the mainland, everyone experiences grief and resentment. We have to open up a road from all the miseries. There has to be light and healthy thoughts. We have to construct a magnanimous road by transforming sorrows to productiveness.

-- Gong Hong

In 1949, the defeated nationalist (KMT) army followed their leader Chiang Kai-Shek to cross the Taiwan Strait. They were told that Taiwan is their temporary base for “retaking the mainland back” (fangong dalu) and they would return home once the communist party was defeated by the KMT government. Among the mainland émigrés, there were filmmakers and producers, who brought along with them their filmmaking equipment for fear that the communist party would take over their studios while they were away, and they also occupied Japanese studios once they had reached Taiwan in 1949. However, after their arrival in Taiwan, the KMT government was preoccupied with its anti-communist campaign and the suppression of local ethnic conflicts. Although the government still kept an eye on its film censorship and importing quotas, not much effort was devoted to the development of local film industry. It was

31 For more detailed discussion on postwar Taiwan film industry, see Chen, Ru-shou. p.29-30, Lu, Feii. p.41-43.
32 After WWII, Taiwan’s sovereignty was returned to the KMT China in 1945. However, the KMT government’s suppression on the once colonized Taiwanese people eventually triggered the 228 Incident in 1947 and led to the conflicts between local Taiwanese and the new immigrants from mainland China. The 228 Incident, also known as the 228 Massacre, is an anti-government rebellion beginning on the evening of February 27th, 1947. As a result of the post-war inflation and the KMT government’s poor management after Taiwan was handed back to China in 1945, Taiwanese people quickly built up great anger and discontent towards the new-coming mainlanders. On February 27th, the violent confiscation of a poor Taiwanese woman’s life-long saving and her non-taxed cigarette triggered the crowds’ uprising, but it was violently suppressed by the KMT government. The incident also marked the beginning of the White Terror, and had been seen as a taboo until the 1990s when KMT officials apologized and made February 28th a day to commemorate the victims.
not until 1945 that a party-owned enterprise was finally merged with the Agricultural Education Film Company, one of the three major state-owned companies, to establish the Central Motion Picture Corporation (CMPC) under the instruction of Chiang Kai-Shek. As the KMT party’s property, CMPC became one of the largest film companies in Taiwan, and its goal was to promote the government’s anti-communist campaign. As a result, the CMPC’s earlier productions are mostly national policy films or spy movies which directly attack communist’s atrociousness and corruption. However, most of the local moviegoers who had lived through Japanese colonialism still preferred Japanese films to the government’s Mandarin productions at that time. The ban on Japanese films in 1952 only brought these audiences back to outdoors Taiwanese opera and the low-budget Taiwanese dialect films. In the end, the CMPC also succumbed to the profitable commercial movies and participated in making Taiwanese dialect films in late 1950s and early 1960s. By the 1960s, the movie theaters were filled with Hollywood movies and dialect films.

Gong Hong, the new manager of the CMPC, introduced the Healthy Realist Film movement to the local film industry in 1964. In his memoir, Gong Hong recalled how he was inspired by postwar Italian neorealist movies, such as *Rome, Open City* (1945) and *Bicycle Thieves* (1948), and would like to adapt realist approach to local Taiwanese stories. He suggested that, like post-World War II Italy, the defeated KMT government in Taiwan should also make films about

---

33 For more information on CMPC’s reorganization, see the company’s website. “About Us.” Central Motion Picture Cooperation. 2009. Central Motion Picture Cooperation. 22 July 2013 <http://www.movie.com.tw/home/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=49&Itemid=34>

34 Due to the limited budget, most of the Taiwanese dialect films are not color movies and they are often shot with amateur actors. Furthermore, most of the films were made without a script or they were just based on news stories.

35 In addition to Hollywood films and dialect movies, *huangmei* musical also became a very popular genre since the mid-1960s. Its popularity during the time greatly impacted the Mandarin film industry.

ordinary people’s real life. However, unlike neorealist films, which often take on dark and pessimistic themes, such as poverty, injustice, and oppression, Healthy Realist Films emphasize prosperity, ethics and harmony in social relationships. He maintains that the goal of Healthy Realist Film is to “express virtues in human nature, such as compassion, sincere concerns, forgiveness, kindness, and self-sacrifice in order to improve society and lead the people to goodness, walking toward a bright future. In other words, it aims to provide modern society with the necessary food for thought.” A special column in *United Daily News (Lianhebao)*, a major Taiwanese newspaper, boldly announced that “Chinese film enters a new era” on the New Year’s Day in 1964 with detailed reports on CMPC’s change of its management and proposal for the new films, including *Oyster Girls* (1964) and *Beautiful Ducklings* (1965). The Healthy Realist Film movement quickly became popular among film critics and everyone was eager to see what Healthy Realist movies are like and how they would help Mandarin-language films “take off.”

With the government’s financial support, CMPC changed the local film industry drastically in the 1960s: it imported foreign technology, recruited directors and photographers who were educated abroad, and began training a new generation of screenwriters and actors. Many directors, photographers, and screenwriters, who became well-known in the later Taiwan New Cinema after the 1980s, including director Hou Hsiao-Hsien, cinematographer Lee Ping-Bing, and scriptwriter Xiao Ye, were greatly indebted to CMPC’s training during the time.

The term Healthy Realism (*jiankang xieshi*) was new in the 1960s, and it remains understood by film scholars today because of the ambiguities and contradictions it embodies.

---


39 “National films take off” (*guopian qifei*) was a popular slogan used to promote films by CMPC in 1964. It can be found everywhere in movie posters, newspapers and film magazines.
Three decades after the golden age of Healthy Realist Films, the Chinese Film History Association organized a symposium titled “The Meaning of 1960s Taiwanese Healthy Realist Film” in Taipei and invited prominent filmmakers, critics, and screenwriters during the 1960s and 1970s to have a dialogue with contemporary scholars. The meeting aimed to clarify the definition of Healthy Realist Films and trace the lineage of the movement. In her notes that summarize the discussion, Liao Gene-Fon provides a definition of Healthy Realism and calls it a “problem setting” for future study of the movement:

1. Healthy Realist Film is the guiding principle clearly stated by Gong Hong after he entered CMPC in 1963.

2. CMPC’s *Oyster Girls* is the first Healthy Realist Film whereas Ta Chung Motion Picture’s *Good Morning Taipei* (1980) is the last one.

3. During 1964 to 1980, the focus of Healthy Realist Films shifted from life in Taiwanese countryside to the depiction of the urban lifestyle. These movies are closely related to Taiwan’s social development and they attempt to use more relatable expressions to present the life during different time periods.

4. From 1964 to 1980, the films either aim to achieve the party’s goal of agricultural reform, city development, and Mandarin language policy, or to reduce the tensions in the practice of state’s policies. These films obviously or implicitly affirm positive human nature and social goodness in order to achieve the goal of social education.⁴⁰

---

⁴⁰ Liao, Gene- Fon. “Moving toward the Definition of Healthy Realist Films: A Note on Taiwanese Film History.” *Film Appreciation Journal* 72 (1994), p.47. Translation mine. The symposium was held in 1994 and the meeting notes were collected by Yu Chan-qu in *Film Appreciation Journal.*
Although the meeting’s concluding notes specify the time period and some traits of Healthy Realist films, they do not answer the question that troubles critics throughout the time: how can films be *realist* and *healthy* at the same time? In other words, the reality that these films represent is itself *sick*, so how could a reflection of this sickness be healthy?

The KMT government has always kept a distance away from realist film because of its politically subversive potential and its association with the progressive leftist ideology as in the 1930s left-wing cinema.\(^{41}\) So, why did the KMT government take a realist turn in the 1960s?

Chris Berry notes that Chinese cinematic realism is a political project and it is often merged with melodramatic aesthetics to become what he calls “melodramatic realism.”\(^ {42}\) He further points out that unlike cinematic realism in 1930s’ Shanghai, “realism” (*xieshi*) in the 1960s Healthy Realist films is “an aesthetic, not an ideological term” which means the opposite of abstractness (*xiyi*) in traditional Chinese paintings.\(^ {43}\) Berry’s interpretation actually echoes Gong Hong’s original conception of Healthy Realist films that directors should *truthfully* depict the beautiful scenery in the countryside and collaborate the natural beauty to the healthy theme. In a special program for “Forty Years of CMPC,” Gong explains that “healthy is cultivation/ education (*jiaohua*); realism is countryside (*nongcun*).”\(^ {44}\) Gong Hong’s colleagues, like the music director Luo Mingdao, also recalls that Gong’s first proposal was to shoot “realism of rural economic.”\(^ {45}\) Along the same line, film historian Huang Ren traces Healthy Realism to the agricultural policy films, a genre

---

\(^{41}\) For more detailed discussion on KMT government’s attempts to discourage progressive leftist filmmaking in the 1930s’ Shanghai, see Hu Jubin’s *Projecting a Nation: Chinese National Cinema before 1949* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong UP, 2003).

\(^{42}\) Berry, Chris and Mary Ann Farquhar. p. 76.

\(^{43}\) Ibid. p. 93.

\(^{44}\) Liao, Gene- Fon. p. 47.

\(^{45}\) Ibid. p. 18.
that is used to promote the KMT’s land reform in the 1950s. In other words, Healthy Realist films are pastoral when they first came out. Therefore, “realism” in this case is a misnomer because Healthy Realist films are nothing like realist films; instead, they are extremely melodramatic: strong emotionalism, exaggerated performance, and the polarization of good versus evil. Although most film scholars, including Gong Hong himself, believe that Healthy Realism is highly influenced by Italian neorealist films, the style and theme of Healthy Realist films greatly vary from the latter. Healthy Realist Films always present the stereotyped good versus evil scheme, and display spectacles full of tears. Almost exclusively, they end happily with the datuanyuan ending, when all the conflicts are resolved and hope restored.

Then, again, what does healthy mean in this case? If there is Healthy Realism, is there Sick/Diseased Realism? Compared to the controversy centering on the realist style, the obsession with healthiness in Healthy Realism seldom catches scholarly attention. The Chinese word healthy (jiankang) is a borrowed word from Japanese, which originally means a body that is robust and vigorous; furthermore, it is free from any disease, pain and weakness. However, moral meanings are attached to the word healthy, and it is used as a figure of speech to describe things “complete, normal and natural.” Based on this definition, Gong Hong simply notes that healthy is to educate and to influence the people, and most of the scholars agree that healthiness refers to spiritual, moral, political and social well-being in Healthy Realism.

This chapter moves away from Gong Hong’s oversimplified definition of healthiness and looks at the KMT government’s obsession with healthiness as part of the nation-building project, and how this obsession is projected in 1960s Healthy Realist films. I first trace the KMT

---

government’s healthy discourse to the 1930s’ New Life Movement in China and the role it played in KMT’s cultural policy. After mapping out the KMT government’s discourses on healthy body and healthy nation in the 1930s, I investigate the KMT’s continuous obsession with healthiness in the 1960s Taiwan film industry and how it is played out on woman’s body with the example of Bai Jingrui’s *Lonely Seventeen* (1967). By studying the film’s treatment of sick body, I argue that woman’s body is placed at the battlefront of the government’s campaign for healthiness and discipline. In other words, the notion of healthiness in the 1960s Taiwanese cinema is a patriarchal construction. Ironically, there is a clear contradiction of KMT’s healthy ideology as the cinematic images often betray the government proposed feminine norm in Healthy Realist Films.

****

*The Pursuit of Healthiness in 1930s KMT Filmmaking*

In order to understand the KMT government’s encouragement of healthy cultural representation in the 1960s Taiwan, it is necessary to trace the party’s healthy discourse back to 1930s’ Shanghai. Involved is a complex web of discourses: between individual bodies versus national health, Chinese tradition versus western modernity, and KMT rule versus communism. In the 1930s, the pursuit of healthiness was based on the need for national, or even racial, survival; however, this obsession with healthiness continued to be used as the weapon to fight against the communist enemy long after the government was relocated to Taiwan.

Threatened by Japan’s impending invasion and the communist’s revolts, the KMT government began a series of social reforms in the 1930s, hoping to modernize China and strengthen national security. Some of the more successful reforms include the Nationalist
Literature and Art Movement, Military Spiritual Education, Education of the Principles of the KMT, Honoring Confucius and Studying Classics and New Life Movement.\textsuperscript{47} Most of these movements promoted nationalism by advocating Confucian values and good morality, and among them, the New Life Movement (1934-49) proposed by Chiang Kai-Shek had the most influence on 1930s Chinese society. The goal of the New Life Movement is to get rid of the Chinese’s “old barbaric habits” in order to make China a civilized country and to catch up with other powerful nations in the west and Japan, the rising power in Asia.\textsuperscript{48} The principle of the movement is the four social bonds: propriety (li), rectitude (yi), honesty (lian), and a sense of shame (chi), which are closely related to the core Confucian values, such as the Eight Virtues (ba de) and the Six Arts (liu yi).\textsuperscript{49} According to Chiang Kai-Shek, the nation’s survival depends on the four social bonds and how they are carried out in people’s daily life. Therefore, the government’s guidelines for the New Life Movement cover almost every aspect of life, such as being punctual, respect the elderly, and keep the household clean, to train Chinese people in a militarist manner.

In all of Chiang Kai-Shek’s speeches for the New Life Movement, he places propriety and discipline (li) on top of the other social bonds and emphasizes the importance of health and hygiene. To him, discipline leads to healthy life, and the very foundation of a powerful nation lies in its national subject’s good health and personal hygiene:

\textsuperscript{47} For details of the KMT government’s social reforms in the 1930s, see Jubin Hu.

\textsuperscript{48} See Chiang Kai-Shek’s speech given at Nancang on February 29\textsuperscript{th}, 1934, which was later printed as an article, “xin shenhuo yundong zhi yaoyi [Foundation of New Life Movement]” by the Association of the New Life Movement.

\textsuperscript{49} The idea of the four social bonds originated from Guanzi, a collection of philosophical materials edited by Liu Xiang in 26 BCE. In “Central Principle of New Life Movement,” a talk Chiang gave in Nancang on March 5\textsuperscript{th} 1934, Chiang Kai-Shek stated the four social bonds as the principles of the movement. The Four Social Bonds are seen as the foundation of the Eight Virtues: loyalty (zhong), filial piety (xiao), kindness (ren), love (ai), trust (xin), justice (yi), harmony (he), and fairness (ping). They are also closely related to the Six Arts are rites (li), music (yue), archery (she), charioteering (yu), calligraphy (shu), and mathematics (shu).
With healthy and strong body, we will have healthy and strong mind. With healthy and strong mind, we can learn all the skills from other powerful nations. With skills from other powerful nations, we can effortlessly protect our country, add glory to our race, and make our country and race live in the world forever.\textsuperscript{50}

Chiang Kai-Shek sees Japan’s modernization a role model for China, and his idea of \textit{national body}, or the connection between health of the individual and health of the nation, in fact originated from Meiji Japan. In Chiang Kai-Shek’s observation of Japan, the nation’s success ostensibly comes from the government’s militarist training of the national subjects; for instance, ordinary Japanese people eat cold rice, and wash their faces with cold water so they don’t get sick easily and they can adjust to all kinds of environment quickly. Looking back at his fellow countrymen, Chiang Kai-Shek criticizes that Chinese people live a life that is “degraded, lazy, sentimental, and dirty barbaric”\textsuperscript{51} therefore losing all its power to fight in the battlefield. One of the antidotes Chiang Kai-Shek keeps referring to is his outraged encounter with a child who smokes at a very young age, and he blames Chinese people for not moving away from the opium-smoking habits and the infamous reputation as the “sick man of Asia.”

In a way, the bitter memories of China’s sick national body and the unequal treaties with the western forces in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} century still haunted China in the 1930s. This anxiety towards China’s backwardness and sick national body was further reinforced by foreign


\textsuperscript{51} Ibid. p. 42. Translation mine.
representation of China. The image of Chinese in Hollywood films, which dominated local
Chinese film market during the time, often appeared as weak and negative during the 1920s and
30s. As a result, the Chinese censorship was forced to regulate the negative portrayal of the
Chinese in the foreign films. For example, Asian American actress Anna May Wong’s exotic
performance in Paramount’s production *Shanghai Express* (1932) enraged Chinese people and
the films’ Orientalized representation of China consequently led to Paramount’s banishment
from China. However, the situation did not improve after the Paramount case, and foreign
studios, including MGM, continued portraying Chinese people as weak and sexually
promiscuous.

Therefore, the obsession with health and cleanness was propelled by more than the threat of
national and racial survival, but also the desire to be modern and civilized. In her research on the
imagination of hygienic modernity in modern China, Ruth Rogaski suggests that before western
and Japanese imperialism, there was no sense that individual healthiness and the practice of
hygiene could be used to signify civilization and differences in China. Looking at the impact of
imperialism on the discourse of health and disease, she argues, “weisheng [hygiene] was
intertwined with desire, a desire for a modernity—often marked as foreign—that existed just out
of reach.” The KMT government’s pursuit of healthiness and hygiene therefore reflects a desire
for a national subjectivity free of illness and plays an important role in the formation of modern
Chinese national consciousness.

---

52 For more examples on the negative depiction of China by foreign film studios, see Gao Yunxiang’s “Sex, Sports,
and China’s National Crisis, 1931-1945: The ‘Athletic Movie Star’ Li Lili (1915-2005).” (*Modern Chinese

Building on Chiang Kai-Shek’s proposal of national health, Chen Lifu, who later became the minister of education in 1938, recognized cinema’s role in promoting the KMT government’s nationalist movement and the healthy discourse. If Chiang Kai-Shek’s ideal of healthiness implies the learning and desiring of the west and Japan, Chen Lifu’s appeal, on the other hand, emphasizes Chinese culture and social values. He calls attention to the “spiritual terms” that are often ignored by young people, and argues that people cannot simply obey governmental rules without wholeheartedly supporting them.\(^{54}\) Therefore, in order to change the society inside out, the government should begin with cultural reform, and one of the starting points is cinema. Chen Lifu argues that movies cannot be mere entertainment, like Hollywood films; they also need to educate people and set standard for people’s morality.\(^{55}\) The Propaganda Committee of KMT’s Central Headquarters soon followed Chen Lifu’s advice and proposed that film companies should take the New Life Movement as the central theme in their film productions in 1934. Most of the films supporting the movement took healthiness as a guiding principle—both physical health proposed by Chiang Kai-Shek and spiritual education proposed by Chen Lifu.

However, the two major film companies in Shanghai, Mingxing and Lianhua, responded to New Life Movement very differently. In the 1930s, leftist activists began to penetrate into Zhang Shichuan and Zheng Zhengqui’s Mingxing Studio, and established the Chinese Film Culture Association in 1933. The radical left-wing filmmakers and critics argue that the four social bonds proposed by the KMT are extremely feudal, and they are incapable of rescuing China from Japan’s imperialism.\(^{56}\) Therefore, they refused to comply with KMT government’s film

---


\(^{55}\) Chen, Lifu. *zhongguo dianying shiye de xin luxian [New Route for Chinese Film Business]*. Nanjing: China Education Film Association, 1933.

\(^{56}\) Hu Jubin. p. 89.
movement and only made a small number of films related to the New Life Movement under the KMT’s political pressure. On the other hand, Lianhua Film Company’s Studio One, which was led by Luo Mingyou and Li Mingwei, was one of the few studios that actively participated in KMT’s film movement. As the company’s owner, screenwriter, and director, Luo also served as the consultant for the government-owned studio and the China Education Film Association. Because of his connection to the KMT government, he produced many films in line with the New Life Movement, including *New Year’s Eve* (1933), *The Kindred Feelings* (1934), *National Customs* (1935), *Four Sisters* (1935), and *Song of China* (1935), just to name a few, and all of them won great support from the central government.

Sun Yu’s *Queen of Sports* (1934) is a good example that echoes the discourses of healthiness and national survival proposed by Chiang Kai-Shek and Chen Lifu. *Queen of Sports* is based on the life of a female athlete, Lin Ying, who is once overwhelmed by her vanity and success as a sprinter. With her coach’s encouragement, she resumes to the tough training for the national sports competition, but decides to purposely lose the game to her scheming competitor after her fellow sprinter’s death, which makes her understand that sport is not all about winning. *Queen of Sports* not only manifests the New Life spirit with the emphasis on true sport spirit, it also serves as the government’s propaganda for personal hygiene and health.

---

57 Lianhua Film Company was established in 1930 when Luo Mingyou merged his North China Film Company with Li Mingwei’s Minxing Film Company and several other smaller companies. The company attempted to monopolize the Chinese film industry by purchasing many movie theaters in China and by borrowing western studio system. Lianhua Film Company also had a clear political agenda as most of the company’s shareholders are KMT officials. Although Lianhua Film Company also produced many left leaning films, these films differ from the leftist films made in Mingxin. Left leaning films by Lianhua promoted anti-imperialism and exposed the dark side of the society, but they did not aim for any radical social changes. In fact, some of Lianhua’s left leaning films did not completely conform to the left-wing ideas. See Hu, Jubin. p.97-98.

58 Along with *Queen of Sports*, there are many films with the theme of sports in the 1930s, and most of them center on the female leads, such as *Two-to-One* (1932) and *Aerobics* (1934). Later in the 1950s, the genre became popular again, starting with *Woman Basketball Player No. 5* (1957) and *Enter the Water Dragon* (1959).
In *Queen of Sports*, some of the scenes disrupt the film’s narrative consistency to advice on public health and personal hygiene, which shows a resonance to the German Culture Film (*Kulturfilm*) during 1918-1945. Culture Films are the short science documentaries shown alongside the usual cinema repertoire for the purpose of public information and education. Although they deal with various topics, such as art culture, and history, most of them focus on science, medicine, and hygiene.⁵⁹ Sun Yu’s *Queen of Sports* adds in sequences that are similar to Culture Films to its original story frame; for example, it includes actual footage of Chinese athletic sport competitions and a parade from the fifth National Sports Meet at Nanking. In addition to the documentaries on sport competitions, there is a long sequence showing the beginning of a day in the young women’ athletic school, which suspends the narrative flow to instruct on the importance of personal hygiene and ways to stay healthy. Following the intertitle, which says “new life,” all the young female students do gymnastics upon waking up, brushing their teeth and washing their faces in a rhythmic manner. The schoolgirls’ identical and uniform movements are concluded with the close-up of Lin Ying’s teeth and happy smile, which showcases the modern and healthy lifestyle that the government proposed (Figure 2.1). In addition to advocating personal hygiene, Lin Ying’s body reflects the new standard of beauty in the 1930s Shanghai, which is an athletic, natural, and modern attribute. Gao Yunxiang suggests that Lianhua Film Company was eager to counter the weak and oppressed feminine type that was popular in Chinese cinema in the 1930s with a New Woman figure who is robust and strong-

---

⁵⁹ The genre of German Culture Film was first introduced by UFA in 1918. They are educational films that are short to medium in length, but gradually developed into longer newsreel and war propaganda as the war progressed. They are products of Nazi film policy but did not acquire a negative connotation until after the World War II. During WWII, Japan also borrowed the tradition of Culture Film and develop it into a genre of its own. See Peter High’s *Imperial Screen: Japanese Film Culture in the Fifteen Year's War, 1931-1945* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 2003.) p.92-148.
Figure 2.1  Lin Ying brushing her teeth in *Queen of Sports*
willed, and Lin Ying is such a character that represents the athletic beauty. With smooth editing and quick transitions between shots, the film captures Lin Ying’s agile and vigorous movements as a sprinter. Additionally, the film highlights her ability of doing things outside of the traditional feminine norm. For example, she climbs up to the ship’s chimney just to have a better view of the city upon her arrival in Shanghai, not minding that her skirt is blown up by a gust of wind. In respond to her father’s reproaches, she says, “What’s so surprising about it? I climb up to the tree ten times a day back in the countryside.”

Lin Ying’s coach preaches to the class “First have healthy body, then have healthy mind! Have youthful rigor and then strive to have stability! Any nation’s progress is built on its people’s healthy body.” These words resonates with Chiang Kai- Shek’s New Life Movement Speech, which suggests that a healthy body is the foundation of a healthy nation. *Queen of Sports* also reveals that the KMT government’s discourse on healthiness is deeply rooted in the control of the body, more specifically, the young female body, as manifested in other non-left wing films in the 1930s Shanghai. In other words, the woman’s role in these films is to advocate the importance of personal hygiene and to showcase the vigorous female body. In the final section of this chapter, I will return to *Queen of Sports* and further discuss the interrelationship between women’s *cinematic image* and the government’s discourse of healthiness.

In respond to Japanese invasion and the memory of China’s defenseless past, the 1930s’ KMT government proposed to strengthen the national health from the individual level by emphasizing personal hygiene and discipline. As films like *Queen of Sports* show, a woman’s body is used in the nationalist campaign to bring awareness about personal health and to

---

60 Gao, Yunxiang. p. 103. The popularity of the athletic female body is also reflected in women’s magazines during the time, such as *Linglong* and *Liangyou*.
showcase the ideal of modern body. Although the government strongly supported the nationalist film movement, the reception of these films during the time was not successful compared to other left-wing movies. Furthermore, the Chinese film industry went through drastic changes after China’s total war with Japan and the New Life Movement was also suspended after KMT’s defeat in the Chinese civil war.\textsuperscript{61}

\*

1960s Healthy Realism and Bai Jingrui’s Sick Realism

It was after the KMT relocated to Taiwan that the government revisited some of the unresolved issues in the 1930s: how to maintain a healthy national body, how cinema carries social responsibilities in educating the mass and reinforcing national health, and how to present the healthy body and mind on screen. Similar to the 1930s films, women continued to play an important role in the campaign for healthiness in the 1960s Healthy Realist Films. For example, in the first few Healthy Realist Films, such as Li Xing and Li Jia’s \textit{Oyster Girls} (1964) and Li Xing’s \textit{Beautiful Ducklings} (1965), the female protagonists are portrayed as healthy young women closely related to nature. Different from traditional female figures who are pale and fragile, Ah-Lan in \textit{Oyster Girls} works with other female workers at the shore and the film constantly showcases her strong and handsome physique under the sun. Pulling their skirts and shorts high, the oyster girls are not embarrassed; instead, they are seen as proud of their vigorous body. Similarly, Xiao Yue in \textit{Beautiful Ducklings} lives with her father in a rural town and she is

\textsuperscript{61} From 1937-1945, Chinese film industry continued making films under Japanese imperialism, but it was divided into three centers: Manchuria, Shanghai and Chongqing. The Manchuria Cinema Association, or Manying, was completely controlled by the Japanese. Studios in Shanghai were also under great pressure from the Japanese so most of the productions were commercial films without too much nationalistic sentiment. Finally, KMT government collaborated with the CCP in Chongqing and their joined forces were devoted to the making of anti-Japanese films, with a focus on national unity.
presented as a typical girl from the countryside, who chases after the ducks and works in the field. In a way, the films advocate healthiness and virtues through women’s toiling body and their close connection to nature.

However, the obsession with healthiness in the 1960s Taiwan cinema was not so much for the purpose of national survival; instead, it claimed Taiwan’s superiority against the communist China. Different from the political situation in the 1930s when the KMT government failed to regulate the whole film industry and had to collaborate or compete with the left wing filmmakers, the government had better control over the film industry in Taiwan, as it was the only party in the country during the martial law period. Furthermore, whereas the KMT government had to deal with both communist revolt and Japanese invasion in the 1930s, the government was devoted to fighting against the communist enemy and winning the mainland back in postwar Taiwan. In 1953, the Chinese Literature and Art Association followed Chiang Kai-Shek’s guidance in “Three Principles of the People: Additional Remarks on Education and Leisure” to start the Cultural Cleansing Movement. The goal was to remove all the bad elements in arts and in Taiwanese society, including red/communism, yellow/pornography, and black/corruption. With the adoption of the Film Investigation Law in 1955, the government further tightened its film censorship, and it was particularly sensitive to the communist theme. In 1960s, the government initiated the Healthy Realist Film Movement and Cultural Renaissance, movements that aimed to counter the communist’s Cultural Revolution by preserving Confucian values and Chinese cultural traditions. These movements can also be seen as the extension of the

---

62 For details, see Li Tian-Yi’s *Taiwan dianying, shehui yu lishi* [*Taiwanese Cinema, Society and History*]. Taipei: Yatai, 1997. p. 80-85.
Cultural Cleansing Movement because they are both designed to remove the cultural impurity in order to highlight people’s good morality in Taiwan.

In his study of Healthy Realist Film, Tang Weimin emphasizes the importance of cleansing in KMT’s Healthy Realist Film movement from at least three different aspects. First of all, cleansing is for economic purposes. In Tang Weimin’s words, “healthy is a mere slogan, and its goal is to fight for resources.”\(^63\) In other words, healthy, in this case, is an empty sign used by film companies to win KMT’s financial support and commercial profits. Although some filmmakers followed the healthy ideology to gain financial resources, most of the people did it to avoid confrontation with the censors. The second aspect of cleansing is a political cleansing. The Cultural Cleaning Movement was reinforced by the White Terror to clear away some of the rebels in the industry; therefore, everyone in the film industry was under oppressive government surveillance and thus pressured to comply with the government’s cultural policy.\(^64\) Finally, the cleansing in Healthy Realist Film movement is a historical cleansing. Tang Weimin claims that the KMT was trying to clear away the memory of failure of the nationalist film movement in the 1930s. He notices the government’s attempt to correct the mistakes they made in the 1930s Shanghai film industry, which fostered the growth of a left-wing cinema. To conclude, he argues that “the cleansing effect is more important than the healthy experience” in the 1960s Healthy Realist films.\(^65\)

\(^63\) Tang, Weimin. p. 255. Translation mine.

\(^64\) After the KMT army arrived in Taiwan in 1949, the government persecuted and imprisoned more than 8000 people, both local Taiwanese and mainland émigrés, who were suspected to be communist spies or to carry out communist activities in Taiwan. The White Terror reached its high peak in the 1950s, and the last few imprisoned victims were not released until 1984.

\(^65\) Tang, Weimin. p.255.
Cleaning is in fact an inseparable part of making healthy. The KMT government believes that it is through cultural and social cleansing that the nation is built strong, and through Healthy Realist Film Movement that the film industry is made ideologically benign and therapeutic. I would like to expand Tang Weimin’s argument on the cleansing of the film industry in the 1960s Taiwan by adding that the notion of purifying, correcting, and curing is also manifested in films during the time. Using Bai Jingrui’s Lonely Seventeen as an example, I illustrate how the sick body (and mind) is controlled and cured by institutional power in order to reinforce the government-approved social norm, and how the individual body is integrated into the social body through the elimination of illness.

Different from most of the young students in Taiwan who pursued their degrees in the United States during the 1960s and 70s, twenty-nine year-old Bai Jingrui quit his job as a film critic for a newspaper to follow his passion for neorealist film in Italy. He worked as a journalist and studied painting and stage design in Rome before he was accepted by the famous Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia. At that time, he was the first Chinese student who enrolled there, and his experience in working with some of the most respected Italian directors prepared him to change the 1960s’ Taiwanese film industry. When Bai Jingrui came back from Italy, he brought back with him the latest filmmaking and editing techniques. The splicing machine he carried back from Italy completely changed the local film industry because before his return, the industry had been laboriously using glue to bond filmstrips together. Bai Jingrui was recruited by Gong Hong to join CMPC right after he came back from Italy, and, under his request, CMPC upgraded its equipment to meet the Euro-American standard. In addition to film equipment, he also introduced more innovative film editing techniques, such as split screen and parallel editing. At that time, Bai Jingrui was eager to put what he learned in Italy into practice so he made a
short experimental film, *A Morning in Taipei* (1964), which showcases the culture in Taiwan and illustrates the life of people in a documentary style. This groundbreaking attempt, however, was not well-received in CMPC, which was devoted to narrative films in the Healthy Realist Film movement at the time. After this setback, Bai Jingrui modified his neorealist style and helped Li Xing and Li Jia with the film, *Fire Bulls* (1966) before Gong Hong finally gave him the opportunity to direct a movie all by himself in 1967.66

*Lonely Seventeen* was Bai Jingrui’s first big shot in CMPC, and it turned out to be a great hit and the biggest winner in several Asian film festivals.67 Instead of depicting a healthy character, *Lonely Seventeen* investigates its protagonist’s illness and medical treatment. The story of *Lonely Seventeen* centers on Danmei (Tang Bao-Yun), a 17-year-old high school girl who comes from a wealthy family. The film begins with Danmei inviting her cousin, who is also her sister’s fiancé, Feng Ze (Ke Jun-Xiong), to come over to her place on a rainy night. However, Feng Ze secretly visits his mistress first and gets seriously wounded after a fight with the woman. When he tries to make a second stop at Danmei’s place, he loses control of his car and is killed in a car accident. After the death of Feng Ze, Danmei and the mistress start to behave strangely, and both of them are sent to the same mental health institute after their hysteric attack.

*Lonely Seventeen* reflects Bai Jingrui’s fascination with the social construction of mental illness. As film critic Jian Zhixin suggests in a Hong Kong based film magazine, *Cinemart*, “What does *Lonely Seventeen* bring back? A realist doctrine from Italy? No. It is

---

66 For more details on Bai Jingrui’s earlier career, see Gong, Hong, and Tianjie Gong. p. 133-139.

67 The film won five awards in the Golden Horse Film Awards in 1968, including the best director, the best editing, the best art director, the best cinematography, and the best sound effects. The male lead, Ke Jun-Xiong, also won one award in the Fourteenth Asian Film Festival.
‘psychoanalysis’ that Bai Jingrui clumsily introduced to China.” Originally, Bai Jingrui intended to direct a movie that illustrates Taiwanese young adults’ growing up experience and problematizes the educational system in Taiwan in a realist fashion. He once contended,

Teenagers in our time are under a lot of stress— from the lack of parental care and rigid training in schools as well. They have to resort to fantasy to seek paradise. Hence all sorts of twisted psychology and weird behaviors. I was going to directly tackle this serious phenomenon, but CMPC was afraid that the communists would use it to attack our government. As an artist, I should have insisted on my original intention, but as a CMPC director, I also need to understand my responsibility. So I changed the story quite a bit and turned it into a romantic film.69

In other words, he was interested in examining ways in which modern lifestyle has shaped people’s psyche. However, when the film was submitted to the censorship committee, the committee members were worried that the negative depiction of Taiwanese young adults would give the communist enemy a chance to criticize the degradation of Taiwanese youth and the Taiwanese educational system. Therefore, Bai Jingrui was forced to modify his film in order to pass the censor and satisfy KMT authorities.70 In order to tone down his social critique, Bai Jingrui decided to add in the romantic elements between Danmei and Feng Ze, and shifted the film’s attention to the treatment of Danmei’s hysterical attacks and the support given by her family.

---

69 qtd. in Yeh, Emily Yueh-yu and Darrell Davis. Taiwanese Film Directors: A Treasure Island. NY: Columba UP, 2005. p.36
and friends. As a result, the film’s style also shifts from dangerous realism to nonthreatening melodrama, or “emotional realism (ganqing xieshi),” as Gong Hong calls it. However, the modified plot only complicates Danmei’s mental illness by showing that she is suffering from hysteria and melancholia. As hysteria is often seen as a female malady, the modified plot actually shows how Danmei challenges the patriarchal order with her illness. Furthermore, far from constructing a positive image of Taiwan under the KMT rule and covering up the director’s discontent toward Taiwanese social issues, Danmei’s romance only reveals the KMT government’s oppressive power and its anxieties toward female sexuality. More specifically, I look at how a female subject is driven insane as a result of patriarchal oppression and how the masculine institutional power comes back to discipline the insane.

*****

Patriarchal Oppression and the Creation of the Hysteric Woman

In Lonely Seventeen, Danmei is first depicted and treated as a female hysteric: once the physician gives up on her treatment after her first breakdown, her family simply assume that Danmei’s illness is a result of her troubled mind. To fully understand the modern treatment of Danmei’s mental illness, it is necessary to trace the pathology of hysteria back to its European tradition. After examining the interrelationship between hysteria and female sexuality in western and local Taiwanese tradition, I will investigate the construction of Danmei’s illness, which was highly influenced by western psychoanalytic theories.

In fact, hysteria has long been seen as a woman’s illness, a female malady. It was once used as a diagnostic category before the 1980s that refers to the unmanageable state of mind and

---

71 Ibid. p. 137
emotional excesses. Before the seventeenth century, hysteria was thought to be particular to woman, and the tradition continued to the nineteenth century when it was generally used to describe woman’s sexual dysfunction. French clinicians J. M. Charcot and his student Pierre Janet are the pioneers of research on hysteria and their studies later inspire and influence Breuer and Freud’s works. In his *Studies in Hysteria*, Freud goes beyond the foundation set by Charcot and argues that symptoms of hysteria are result of trauma, and they manifest the unconscious’ attempt to protect the patient from psychic stress. However, in Freud’s case studies, he still holds a male-centered view on hysteria, as he often implies female patients, particularly young women, and female situations. At one point, he even links it to sexual abuse and the memory of sex life in the female patient’s early childhood.  

Are young women more inclined to experience hysteria as the extensive literature on hysteria has indicated? Feminist scholar Ann Kaplan maintains that the answer is no. She argues that Freud and his fellow male clinicians rarely ask if trauma impacts differently on men and women and how cultural, political, and social roles laid down for men and women produce different neuroses. Also questioning the male scholarship on hysteria, Elaine Showalter examines some of Freud’s case studies and comes back to argue that hysteria is a patriarchal construction that is used to fortify gender binarism and safeguard patriarchal culture. She takes issue with male prejudice in interpreting hysteria and suggests that young women diagnosed of hysteria are mostly scapegoat of misogyny. To illustrate her idea, Elaine Showalter gives an example of 19th century New Women who were labeled as hysterical. During the era, women of

---

72 For Freud’s discussion on hysteria, see Freud and Breuer’s *Studies in Hysteria* (tran. By Nicola Luckhurst. London: Penguin Books, 2004). Among all the case studies, the case of Dora highlights the role of sexual advances and memories of sexual life.

feminist movement, who campaigned for professional independence and sexual freedom, intimidated the patriarchal culture and were seen as aggressive monsters that transgressed the boundary of feminine social norms. Feeling challenged by their intelligence and sexual independence, male and clinical authorities labeled these “rebellious daughters” as psychological unstable and mentally disturbed. In her research, Elaine Showalter also finds her support in Breuer and Freud’s case studies, which show that most of the young women with hysterical symptoms were described as lively, gifted, and full of intellectual interests. Similarly, other radical women in the literature were seen as insane simply because they pursued sexual autonomy and stepped outside of traditional matrimony. In her insightful discussion, Elaine Showalter also calls attention to the association between mental pathology and suppressed rebellion, and she asks, “Was hysteria—the ‘daughter’s disease’—a mode of protest for women deprived of other social or intellectual outlets or expressive options?” In other words, she suggests that female hysteria, unlike the feminist activist movement, is a form of woman’s passive protest against the patriarchal norm, which does not have any substantial power to really subvert the patriarchy. Therefore, she concludes that the diagnosis of hysteria is often gender-biased, which has the potential of harming real activist movement.

Going back to hysteria in the 1960s Taiwan, it was once called yibing in Chinese, which literally means mind-illness. People with hysteria were the marginalized group who were often associated with negative images. Although some sanatoriums and clinics had been set up in

---


75 Ibid. p. 158.

76 Ibid. p.147.

Taiwan during Japanese colonialism, such as Jen- Chi Yuan, and the psychiatry department at the National Taiwan University Hospital, people suffering from hysteria were still thought of as the family shame and were hidden at home or sent to faraway private clinics. Hysteria is also gender biased in Taiwan, as early researchers in Taiwan believed that women are prone to suffer hysteria than most of the men do. For example, according to the record from the mental health department in Taiwan University Hospital, from 1961 to 1967, there were 304 women whereas there were only 150 men diagnosed as hysterical. From 1968 to 1974, the gap became even greater when there were 419 female hysterical patients and 139 male patients. Although the data is often used to support the argument that hysteria is a woman’s disease, it does not take other important factors into consideration, such as the fact that men with hysterical symptoms tend to be labeled with other mental disorder other than hysteria. Compared to female hysteria, male insanity is less common in cultural representations in Taiwan; instead, it is often associated with the experience of war or colonialism, and discussed as an allegory for national trauma in the grand historical narrative. One of the noted examples for male insanity before 1960s is Hu Taming, the protagonist in Taiwanese writer Wu Zhuoliu’s novel Orphan of Asia (1946), whose psychological turbulence at the end of the story is often interpreted as a response to Japan’s colonialism and China’s betrayal. On the other hand, female hysteria serves as a mysterious and fascinating subject often explored in the literature and film in Taiwan, and it is often seen as related to romantic love and family relationship.

Lonely Seventeen is not the first movie focusing on female insanity in Taiwan; in fact, Bai Ke’s Taiwanese dialect film, Mad Woman for Eighteen Years (1957), is one of the earliest

---

78 Jen Chi Yuan was a medical institute established during Japanese colonialism in 1922, and the Psychiatry Department at National Taiwan University Hospital was set up in 1938. Both are located in Taipei.

movies that explores the discrimination and treatment of female hysteria in the 1950s Taiwan. Like many other Taiwanese dialect films, *Mad Woman for Eighteen Years* is based on a true story in the news during the time. In this movie, Bai Ke presents the story in a sympathetic tone, and condemns the patriarchal structure for shaping the film’s vulnerable protagonist, Ah-Lian, into a mad monster. The life of Ah-Lian is told by a compassionate female reporter, who investigates the story behind the madwoman’s aggressiveness, and she finds out that the madwoman is raped by her foster father, sold as a prostitute, and bullied by her husband’s concubines. Eventually, she is driven insane and locked up as a madwoman in a wooden cage for eighteen years. The second part of the film involves many local superstitions surrounding female hysteria, such as fortune telling and a Taoist priest’ practice of magic. Most importantly, after she becomes insane, Ah-Lian is depicted as a fierce and frightening monster, whom men could do nothing to harm. She no longer follows the feminine norm that is required of her, and her hysteria serves as both a response to, and an attack on the oppressive patriarchal order. At the end of the film, Ah-Lian is rescued by some youngsters, and her case arouses great public attention and sympathy. During the time, the film highlighted women’s victimhood and suffering in the male-dominated world, and it later inspired other remakes, and some of them even show madness empowering woman to confront the patriarchal world.

---

80 Most of the 1950s dialect films are no longer extant, including Bai Ke’s film discussed here. Therefore, my analysis of the film is mainly based on the film synopsis, reviews and still images in magazines and newspapers during the time.

81 The film is based on the news article published in *Zhonghua Ribao* on May 4 1956.

82 In 1979, director Xu Tianrong remade the film into *The Mad Woman’s 18 Years*, and in this version, the female protagonist is forced to pretend that she is insane in order to save her own son. In other words, her faked insanity becomes a tool for revenge and rebellion. In 1988, the story was made into a television drama that showed in Chinese Television System.
A decade after *Mad Woman for Eighteen Years*, the depiction of female insanity in *Lonely Seventeen* moves away from the tradition of frightening madwoman in many ways: for one thing, it breaks away from the superstitions concerning female madness and tries to incorporate a western conception of hysteria; for the other, it no longer endows madwoman with the power to challenge the social norm. In *Lonely Seventeen*, hysteria is demystified and the film itself can be seen as a scientific and modern case study of Danmei’s hysteria: her symptoms, and the discovery of the cause of her hysteria.

*Lonely Seventeen* also tries to invoke western psychology and psychoanalysis into its depiction of Danmei’s illness. The knowledge of western psychology was first introduced to Taiwan during the Netherland’s occupation in the 17th century; however, it was Japan that brought European modern psychology and psychoanalysis to the island during its colonial rule from 1895 to 1945. Along with western modernism, psychoanalysis began to flourish in the postwar era, particularly from 1965-1975, when several major psychoanalytic texts were finally translated into Chinese. In 1966, Zhu Qian published his discussion of Freudian psychoanalysis in a book titled, *Abnormal Psychology*, followed by the translation of Freud’s *Introductory Lectures of Psychoanalysis* (1920). Other works by Freud, including *Dora* (1901), *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901) and *Totems and Taboos* (1913) were translated in 1968, and *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) in 1971. During the time, the discussion and research of psychoanalysis also spread to Taiwan’s literary and art circle. For example, *Modern Literature* (*xiandai wenxue*), a major Taiwanese literary journal in Taiwan, had a special issue on “Psychoanalysis and Arts” in 1972, and there were discussions on Freudian theories and surrealist art in magazines, such as *Writing Collection* (*bihui*) in 1960. Most importantly, modernist literary styles influenced by psychoanalysis, such as stream of consciousness, also
attracted many writers during the time, including Pai Hsien-yung, Li Ang, Wang Wenxing, Nieh Hualing, just to name a few. Although an anti-psychoanalysis trend appeared in the 1970s Taiwan, psychoanalysis was seen as a fresh and exciting discourse that generated vibrant discussion in elite circle and left a great impact on people’s understanding of mental disorders in the 1960s.83

*Lonely Seventeen* shows the influence of western psychoanalysis, and demonstrates an attempt to give a modern and scientific look to the interpretation and treatment of madness in the 1960s Taiwan. Apparently drawn from Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Bai Jingrui’s use of long dream and fantasy sequence shows signs of Danmei’s troubled mind from the very beginning of the film. In the movie, Danmei is depicted as a naïve girl who often loses contact with reality because she is always alone and lost in her own daydreams. As the mise-en-scene of Danmei’s room shows, her life is filled with books and the trophies she won, leaving her no room to socialize as her classmates do. When her classmates go to the movies and have fun at the parties, she could only study and watch TV at home. Inspired by a ballerina’s passionate dance on TV, Danmei falls into a fantasy and a daydream where she dresses up like a princess, sitting on a throne. When Feng Ze shows up to court her, she dances gracefully with him in an ice cave. Through the dream sequence, the film shows a glimpse of Danmei’s unconscious, that is, the desire for romance and freedom, which could not be fulfilled in her oppressed life.

83 Joyce C.H. Liu argues in “Oppression and the Return: Connection between Psychoanalytical Discourse and Taiwanese Modernism,” scholars in Taiwan began to label psychoanalysis as “sick, escapist, lost, pale, degraded, rootless, and bourgeois” in the 1970s. Freud’s discussion of libidinal impulse and drives were seen as unethical and negative, which had the potential of corrupting social values and leading to the destruction of rationality. For more fruitful discussions, see Liu, C. H. Joyce. “Oppression and the Return: Connection between Psychoanalytical Discourse and Taiwanese Modernism.” *Journal of Modern Chinese Literature in Chinese*. 4, 2 (2001): 31-61
Furthermore, the film also employs innovative ways to illustrate Danmei’s symptoms and her unstable psychology. In the movie, Danmei’s psychological condition is often presented through subjective camera, which leads the viewer to look at the world from Danmei’s point of view. In the scene before Danmei’s first hysteric attack, the camera shows Danmei running up the stairway after her father’s confrontation, then, the camera shifts to the close-up of Danmei’s painful facial expression. Following the close-up of her face, the camera cuts to a series of spinning images that appear earlier the film, including the view of chandelier and the dance with Feng Ze in her fantasy (Figure 2.2-2.7). As mentioned earlier, the dance with Feng Ze in Danmei’s fantasy symbolizes her repressed desire towards the impossible lover; on the other hand, the view of the chandelier, which also appears in the beginning of the film when Danmei stays home alone, implies Danmei’s anxiety and fear toward the space of home.

In “The ‘Woman’s Film’: Possession and Address,” Mary Ann Doane maintains that in some of the “woman’s films,” female spectator does not need to identify with the male characters and adopt a masculine position to look at the woman’s image on screen:

In other words, because the female gaze is not associated with the psychical mechanisms of voyeurism and fetishism, it is no longer necessary to invest the look with desire in quite the same way. A certain de-specularisation takes place in these films, a deflection of scopophiliac energy in other directions, away from the female body. The very process of seeing is now invested with fear, anxiety, horror, precisely because it is object-less, free-floating.84

84 Doane, Mary Ann. “‘The Woman’s Film’: Possession and Address.” p. 286. Emphasis mine. The definition of “woman’s films,” according to Mary Ann Doane, is “not a ‘pure’ genre—a fact which may partially determine the male critic’s derogatory dismissal of such films. It is crossed and informed by a number of other genres or types—
Through the use of subjective camera in *Lonely Seventeen*, audience can easily identify with the female protagonist Danmei. In these scenes, Danmei’s/ the spectator’s gaze moves away from female body and channels to a “free-floating” gaze filled with anxieties. The type of female gaze in woman’s film is often obsessed with the space of home, which is traditionally the woman’s space. However, through the camera eye, home becomes the dangerous and uncanny place. Mary Ann Doane observes from the 1940s woman’s films that windows, mirrors, and stairways are places where the film’s female protagonist often encounters the horror or discovers the terrifying truth. For example, the stairway is where female character is often displayed in classical representations of cinema, and according to Mary Ann Doane, it is “a signifier which possesses a certain semantic privilege in relation to the woman as object of the gaze, which articulates the connection between the familiar and the unfamiliar, or neurosis and psychosis.”

In *Lonely Seventeen*, Danmei is often displayed on the stairway, and it turns out to the place she falls, and the place she experiences her sexual anxieties, which I will further elaborate later in this chapter. Similar to the stairway, the spinning image of the chandelier and its heavy and oppressing presence above also creates a suffocating atmosphere at home.

In addition to illustrating women’s fear of seeing and the danger of female space, the subjective camera also implies woman’s view as twisted. The most interesting scene using subjective camera in *Lonely Seventeen* is when Danmei is visited by her father, her teacher, and her classmates after she is hospitalized. In this scene, Danmei cheerfully runs toward her friends, but once she notices that her teacher and her father are also present, she is petrified. She sees the twisted faces of her father and her teacher: her father’s face is stretched whereas his teacher’s face is magnified and turned (Figures 2.8- 2.11). The twisted faces are companioned by the

---

85 Ibid. p. 288.
dramatic sound effect in the background, which is often used in slapsticks, to emphasize the
distortion of Danmei’s psychological condition. Subjective camera like this is used extensively
in the film to depict Danmei’s mental image and heighten her irrational being. On the other hand,
male characters in the film are seldom subject to the emotional inspection by the camera. In other
words, a gender dichotomy between irrational woman and rational man is created through the
use of camera.

Lonely Seventeen depicts Danmei’s vision and psychology as twisted through subjective
camera, and it also shows her as silenced through her loss of speech after Feng Ze’s death. In
Mary Ann Doan’s words, “Within the encompassing masculine medical discourse, the woman’s
language is granted a limited validity—it is, precisely, a point of view, and often a distorted and
unbalanced one.” Danmei’s opinions and actions are deemed as irrational because her point of
view is twisted; furthermore, she loses the ability to communicate with others and expresses
herself. After Feng Ze’s death, she always wears a perplexed expression on her face and doesn’t
seem to be interested in anything anymore; most importantly, she begins to withdraw into her
thoughts and demonstrates symptoms of aphasia. When her teacher and her father question her
about her failing grades, she could not defend herself or respond to them by uttering any word.
Under such circumstances, Danmei’s hysteric body becomes the only way to show her desperate
communication to the patriarchal order. Furthermore, her hysteria and aphasia also serve to
counter the symbolic level of the father. For example, the twisted faces she sees before her
hysteric attack shows her refusal to comply with the rationality of the patriarchal order.

Whereas Danmei is silenced, other male characters in the film are endowed with the
privilege to interpret the woman’s body and speak for her. As the movie shows, Danmei’s father

---

86 Doane, Mary Ann. “‘The Woman’s Film’: Possession and Address.” p. 291.
and her teacher are the male authority figures: At home, Danmei’s father is always commanding whereas his wife cannot freely express her opinions. At school, which is a girl’s high school with only male instructors, the teachers have the exclusive right to define and monitor a girl’s behavior. In the scene when Danmei greets her visitors at the hospital, Danmei’s classmates suggest that Danmei looks happy and normal in the hospital; however, their teacher disagrees and explains that “being different from her usual condition is considered abnormal.” Then, the camera shows Danmei’s father, teacher, and doctor stand side by side, observing Danmei from afar and discussing what is the normal behavior for a young woman like Danmei. For them, the female body demands a reading, and it is their job to interpret her symptoms. In fact, the twisted image Danmei sees and her subsequent emotional breakdown also reveal her anxiety and agitation toward the oppressive male authority, who confines her within the socially acceptable feminine norm.

*****

Behind the Institutionalization of Madness

Lonely Seventeen also reflects the myth that the cause of illness is pure evil and a utopian belief that illness would completely disappear when a healthy society was built. Drawing on French- American microbiologist René Jules Dubos’ idea of “mirage of health,” a naïve belief that the development of medicine can eventually free people from illness, Karatani Kojin asserts, “what Dubos calls the ‘mirage of health,’ is nothing but a secular form of theology, which sees the cause of illness as evil and seeks to eliminate that evil. Though it has eliminated various sorts of ‘meaning’ which revolve around illness, scientific medicine is itself controlled by a ‘meaning’
whose nature is even more pernicious.”\footnote{Karatani, Kojin. “Sickness as Meaning.” \textit{Origins of Modern Japanese Literature}. Trans. Brett de Bary. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993. p. 108. In \textit{Mirage of Health: Utopias, Progress, and Biological Change}, Dubos argues that disease and the cause of illness, such as germs, are actually part of human health; therefore, obliterating bacterial competition is neither desirable nor necessary.} In other words, Karatani Kojin questions modern medical discourses, which appear to be objective and benevolent on the surface. In light of Dubos’ and Karatani Kojin’ argument, I investigate the diagnosis and cure of Danmei’s illness, which expose the intertwined relationships between patriarchal state power and institutionalization of madness.

Unlike the asylums and cages presented in earlier films like \textit{Madwoman for Eighteen Years}, the mental health institute is a modern and westernized space in \textit{Lonely Seventeen}. Under the appearance of a sanctuary, the hospital presented in the film is in fact a place of strict surveillance. Each patient has his or her own room, but the building is separated from the outside world with various doors and security gates; furthermore, when the patient tries to run away, like Feng Ze’s mistress once did, the medical staff would go chase them down. At the hospital, the doctor first treats Danmei with electrotherapy, which was considered a popular treatment for anxieties in the west in the 1960s-70s. Then, he arranges a non-traditional talking cure for Danmei and the mistress to talk through their traumatic experience. Although the mental health institute is a modern space, it still functions like a cage that aims to tame the sick in order to transform them into \textit{useful body} that can be \textit{easily governed}. The ultimate goal for the institute is to send them back to the patriarchal world where their bodies can be utilized and controlled by the government once again.

Although Danmei is diagnosed and treated scientifically in \textit{Lonely Seventeen}, the ultimate cure is \textit{the moral correction} that is in line with the value system proposed by the government. As in other Healthy Realist Films, illness is often understood as a social transgression against the
society’s expectation, so a cure can always be achieved through social engineering. In Lonely Seventeen, even electrotherapy fails to cure Danmei’s hysteria; it is the doctor’s final speech and moral lesson that finally wakes Danmei up from her delusional state. At the end of Danmei and the mistress’ confrontation, the doctor forces the two women to recognize Feng Ze’s true character, and to move on with their own lives. He concludes, “The death of Feng Ze can only be accounted to *his own irresponsible attitude towards relationships.*” In his speech, the doctor imposes his own moral judgment on Feng Ze, arguing that his romantic relationships deviate from the ethical norm; therefore he deserves the punishment of death. The guilty conscience is not the only cause for the mistress’ and Danmei’s illness as the doctor has suggested; it is important to note that the doctor’s didactic moral lesson is echoed by the ending song, which goes, “Put aside *our private desires.* The epoch calls for us.” As Zhu Qian observes in his *Abnormal Psychology*, sexual desire was considered unclean and therefore devalued by the society during the 1960s. The lyric resonates with the public belief observed by Zhu Qian, implying the danger of private sexual desires, and it also shows that the duties to be a good national subject should always come before the desire for a romantic relationship. The inappropriate sexual desire is like the bad germ, and only by eliminating it can the two victims recover their health and the society become healthy again. When regarded this way, the mistress’ obsessive love towards Feng Ze, which is illicit and harmful, becomes the cause of her illness, which also leads to Feng Ze’s death.

Although Danmei’s parents suspect that the pressure from school and Danmei’s self-condemnation for Feng Ze’s death could be the cause her illness, the doctor later finds out that Danmei’s infatuation and repressed desire for Feng Ze are the triggers of her illness. Although

---

the doctor thinks that Danmei’s secret desire towards Feng Ze is problematic, he never clearly explains why. It is the film itself that suggests Danmei’s seemingly innocent and platonic love for Feng Ze is in fact destructive because it arouses the tension between the two sisters, which poses a threat to the harmonious family relationship. The film implies a competition between Danmei and her sister, and their power dynamic is best illustrated through their repeated encounters at the stairway. Framed in a low-angle shot representing Danmei’s perspective, Danmei’s sister is always presented as an unbeatable foe, reminding Danmei of her inferiority. In fact, Danmei’s sister is situated in all kinds of superior situations: she is engaged to Feng Ze, and she is more favored by their parents. As one of the scenes shows, in order to be like her sister, who is popular among men, Danmei tries on her sister’s stylish dresses and high heels shoes when her sister goes out to dinner with their parents and Feng Ze. When Danmei finally poses in front of the mirror, she has put on the masquerade of femininity and becomes an extremely feminine figure just like her sister.89

Ultimately, what cures Danmei is her recognition of Feng Ze’s real character, which ends her mourning of the lost love. Earlier in the film, Danemei bestows all her admiration and love in a handcrafted charm amulet, which says “wishing you safe.” She has attempted to give it to Feng Ze several times but failed every time she tries. After the car accident, she continues to treasure the charm, and refuses to throw it away. She also makes a wreath and performs secret rituals to mourn for Feng Ze after everyone has forgotten about him. In her diary, she writes,

89 The idea that “femininity is masquerade” is mainly drawn from feminist scholar Joan Riviere’s essay, “Womanliness as a Masquerade” (1929). Joan Riviere asserts that femininity is a performance enacted for the male audience, which positions woman as the spectacle. Later feminist scholars like Mary Ann Doane further develops Riviere’s idea and calls attention to the gap and the distance between woman and the image of femininity, which can be used to illustrate the artificiality of gender. I will return to this scene and the image of femininity at the end of this chapter.
My sister betrayed you so quickly. She is too heartless. I feel wronged for you. Cousin, I won’t [betray you]. I am always faithful to you, always faithful to you. But the one who has been faithful to you actually hurt you… As long as you are safe, it doesn’t matter even if you marry my sister. As long as you feel happy, I will be happy, too.

As Freud states in his 1917 essay, “Mourning and Melancholia,” both mourning and melancholia are reactions to the loss of a loved person. However, the former differs from the latter in that after the work of mourning is completed, the ego becomes free again. Contrarily, in the latter case of melancholia which afflicts Danmei, the subject loses her love forever is trapped in the perpetual mourning process and cannot move on with her own life. After the doctor reveals Feng Ze’s unethical affair and suggests that Danmei’s desire is inappropriate, Danmei finally takes out the charm and throws it away. In other words, it is the shattering of Feng Ze’s delusional image that frees Danmei from mourning.

*Lonely Seventeen* can therefore be seen as an example that illustrates what Karatani Kojin describes as the pernicious “meaning” that controls scientific medicine and the institutionalization of illness. That is to say, the scientific treatment of Danmei’s illness becomes the disguise for the ethical imperatives in the film. It shows that the doctor at the psychiatric institute serves as both a psychological and a moral police. His job is to detect the unethical and to use ideas such as moral principle to normalize behaviors in order to help dissidents like Danmei to fit the socially approved moral norm once again. Along with Danmei’s schoolteacher and her father, the doctor’s task is to produce bodies that are both docile and capable. These male authority figures are what Foucault calls the “technicians of behavior: engineers of conduct,
orthopaedists of individuality." In his *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault sees the late eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century a transitional time for the formation of a new form of power to replace the traditional monarchic power. Under the name of humanistic concern, punishment no longer aimed to physically torture the criminal, but to obtain a cure for the criminal’s soul and to amend the social structure. For this higher moral aim, figures such as psychiatrists and educationalists gradually took over the role of executioner. They use ideas such as moral principle to normalize behaviors, and they decide what is acceptable and what should be corrected to fit into the norm. Therefore, Danmei is punished for her inappropriate sexual desires and her challenge of the family values in the end of the film—not through physical tortures; instead, she is disciplined by the doctor and his moral lecture. Danmei’s quick recovery from her hysteria and return to school life demonstrate the success of male authority in disciplining woman and reinforcing the social norm.

*****

*Under the Healthy Surface: Insecurities and Contradictions*

To recapitulate, the KMT’s filmmaking is always built on the combination of melodramatic mode and healthy ideology. Although the KMT government’s obsession with healthiness originated from the demand for national survival and was later used for anti-communism, the notion of healthiness is always articulated through woman’s body in films. As in many 1930s films inspired by KMT’s New Life Movement and in other Healthy Realist Film, woman’s role in the film is to support the government’s campaign of healthiness, such as personal hygiene,

---

public health, and good moral. Through the control of their body, these films also reveal the feminine norm approved by the KMT government. In other words, woman appears as the most important body of the KMT government’s healthy discourse.

It is important to think about why, compared to male body, female body is prone to be sick and is often situated in a vulnerable position to be disciplined in Healthy Realist Films. Mary Ann Doane highlights the similarity between disease and woman, “they are both socially devalued or undesirable, marginalized elements which constantly threaten to infiltrate and contaminate that which is more central, health or masculinity.”

In other words, woman, like disease, poses great danger to the very being of male authority; therefore giving the authority an urge to cure and to discipline the female body, particularly those uncontrollable or hysteric bodies. Furthermore, although the healthy narrative structure illustrates the male authority’s disciplining power, it also reveals the KMT government’s anxiety towards women and a fear that it would eventually lose control over woman’s sexuality and her body. This fear of losing control of woman’s sexuality and body is closely linked to the KMT government’s anti-communist campaign. As woman is seen as the symbolic bearers of national cultural tradition, her sexuality is often used as the marker of the other and us.

As illustrated in the 1950s anti-communist films, the communist enemy is usually imagined as sexually promiscuous female spy, who seduces and ruins proper Chinese and Taiwanese men. In other words, the female spy’s sexuality is used to represent the dangerous and corrupted communist enemy. In order to claim

---

91 Doane, Mary Ann. *The Desire to Desire: The Woman’s Film of the 1940s*. p.38.

92 The association between woman and nationalism, whether woman is used as a metaphor for the national territory, or as mother of the nation’s future generation, is a topic often explored by feminist scholars. See for example, the anthology edited by Mary Maynard and June Purvis, *New Frontiers In Women's Studies: Knowledge, Identity and Nationalism*. (London: Taylor & Francis, 1996.)

93 Some of the examples that focus on female spy’s sexuality include *Bad Dreams* (1950), *Poppy Flower* (1954), *Damnable City* (1958), just to name a few.
its cultural superiority over the communist party on the mainland and to avoid the contamination of communist’ dangerous sexuality, the KMT government strengthened the feminine social norm and the representation of woman in films.

Before the KMT government resumed the New Life Movement and began the Healthy Realist Film Movement in mid-1960s, most of the Taiwanese dialect films tend to hold an uncritical, if not more lenient, attitude towards woman’s image and behavior. Instead of disciplining and curing the sick woman, these films investigate the social construction of the illness and show understanding toward women’s desire and experience of social hardship. As mentioned earlier, before Lonely Seventeen, films dealing with female madness, like Bai Ke’s Madwoman for Eighteen Years, usually focus on woman’s suffering and victimhood, calling attention to the exploitation of woman under traditional patriarchal order. Other films centering on female illness, such as Li Jia’s Leper Woman (1957), also deploy a sympathetic narrative towards the sick woman. For example, instead of punishing the female protagonist’s attempt to transfer her leprosy to her lover, Leper Woman actually questions the woman’s parents’ selfishness and praises the woman’s love and compassion toward the man she loves.

On the other hand, during the time when the film industry was fueled by the government’s healthy ideology, films tend to emphasize the discipline of woman’s body, showing a tightened control of feminine norm. Unlike 1950s Taiwanese dialect films, illness is interpreted as a result of women’s social transgression and challenge to patriarchal family values in Healthy Realist Films. Bai Jingrui’s Lonely Seventeen is such an example that uses moral cure to regulate Danmei’s hysteria and behavior, which deviate from the socially approved norm. Similarly, Li Jia’s 1966 movie, Orchids and My Love, also recuperates the KMT government’s cultural and social value through the process of curing woman’s sick body. In the movie, the proud and
spoiled protagonist, Ruolan, is diagnosed as having polio in an early age, and she goes through various therapies for her paralyzed legs. It is through the male doctor’s and Ruolan’s father’s treatment and encouragement that Ruolan finally gives up her egotism and miraculously walks on her feet again. In addition to showcasing Taiwan’s modern medical development, *Orchids and My Love* also highlight submissiveness, the essence of ideal femininity proposed by the government.

The KMT government’s healthy ideology also manifests contradictions within the system itself. With no exception, Healthy Realist Films, including Bai Jingrui’s *Lonely Seventeen*, reflect the KMT government’s obsession with healthiness through the control of woman’s body, but at the same time, these films also eroticize woman’s image through the camera gaze at the same time. In fact, this contradiction of film’s attempt to eroticize woman’s image can also be found back in the KMT’s filmmaking in the 1930s. As I have discussed earlier, the athletic beauty was introduced and highly valued in the 1930s Shanghai. However, as manifested in Sun Yu’s *Queen of Sports*, woman’s robust body on screen also simultaneously invites the male gaze. Gao Yingxiang defends for *Queen of Sports*’ skin-revealing sensuality by arguing that Lin Ying’s athletic body is sexually innocent, and “The half-child-half-woman image resulting from her innocent, girlish behavior helped to soften a sexy overtone by making the athletic movie star appear gender neutral.”

It is true that Lin Ying is portrayed as an innocent character; however, her healthy and athletic body is presented through the sexualized male gaze. In the morning scene from *Queen of Sports* mentioned earlier, the female students’ body are depicted as healthy yet sensual at the same time. In addition to capturing the schoolgirls’ bare legs during their gymnastic exercises, the camera slowly pans through the steaming bathroom, revealing the

---

94 Gao, Yunxiang. p. 139
young female students’ soapy body parts. Furthermore, shot from low angle, the camera stays on schoolgirls’ naked legs and their swinging hips at the end of the scene.

As Laura Mulvey argues in her famous article, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” women’s appearance on screen, particularly the close-up of her body parts, such as face and legs, often works against the development of the storyline and implies what she calls the “to-be-looked-at-ness” in classical Hollywood films. She notes that the camera in classical Hollywood films often identifies with the male gaze, capturing woman’s figure as the erotic object for the male character in the film, who serves as the surrogate for male audiences. Woman’s image in Queen of Sports also reflects the storytelling and camera convention discussed by Laura Mulvey, and it shows how woman’s body is more than the tool for the government’s healthy campaign, but also a site of visual pleasure.

Similarly, in most of the 1960s Taiwan films, women are presented as strong and healthy, like Ah-Lan in Oyster Girls and Xiao Yue in Beautiful Ducklings. However, again, the female workers’ and Xiao Yue’s toiling bodies in both films also become the erotic spectacle for male gaze. Take Oyster Girls for example, in addition to the sensual scene of women’s fights in the water, the scene when Ah-Lan waits for her clothes to get dried after playing with her lover at the beach is particularly explicit in eroticizing her image. Covered with nothing but a towel, Ah-Lan’s naked shoulders and legs are under close scrutiny of the lingering camera, followed by the close-up of her glamorous face at night (Figure 2.12). In the case of Lonely Seventeen, Danmei’s body is penetrated by male medical gaze as I have discussed earlier in this chapter. Additionally, she is presented as an sensual spectacle for male visual pleasure, which is best illustrated in the

scene when she tries on her sister’s clothes. In this scene, she first poses in front of the mirror, imitating the seductive looks on the posters of Hollywood actresses. However, the camera soon takes the position of the mirror, showing Dannmei posing in front of the camera and the audience. (Figure 2.13) Looking directly into the camera, Danmei creates an illusion that she is teasing and posing for the film’s audience. When Danmei shows her bare shoulder to the camera, she is suddenly struck by the presence of male gaze—not from the camera/audience, but from the male stars’ look from the posters hanging on her wall. Quickly pulling her clothes up to cover up her shoulder, she makes an upset face to the posters, but continues posing in front of the camera/audience in a playful way. Not aware that she is also the spectacle for the male audience, Danmei does not deny the gaze from the spectator; instead, the camera stays on Danmei, openly inviting the audience to examine her body. Although Lonely Seventeen and other Healthy Realist films emphasize patriarchal surveillance in order to control and discipline women, they betray the government-advocated conservative feminine norm by presenting women as sexual spectacle and by eroticizing woman’s cinematic images.

As its name has suggested, the CMPC’s Healthy Realism is filled with contradictions from within. To begin with, the KMT government’s healthy discourse conflicts with realist filmmaking, which aims to reveal social darkness. After the healthy filmmaking policy and the films’ melodramatic mode of expression were carried out awkwardly for almost five years, Gong Hong was forced to modify Healthy Realism into Healthy Variety-Show in 1968, which I will discuss in the following chapter. Furthermore, as I have demonstrated, the KMT government’s healthy discourse is built on disciplined and healthy female body. However, instead of being consistent with the representation of healthy and virtuous women, the films eroticize woman’s body, inviting male gaze to freely desire woman’s image on screen. As illustrated in Lonely
Figure 2.12  Ah- Lan from *Oyster Girls*

Figure 2.13  Danmei posing in front of the camera in *Lonely Seventeen*
Seventeen, woman’s image is penetrated by male medical discourses and becomes the spectacle for men’s erotic contemplation. Therefore, the representations of woman in Healthy Realist Films expose that the healthy discourse is a mere patriarchal construction. Finally, the tension between the production of healthy female image and the male gaze also reveals the KMT government’s ambivalent attitude and anxiety toward female sexuality: whether the film should control woman’s sexuality in order to make her an ideal woman best representing the nation’s cultural tradition, or it should fulfill male erotic imagination. It is until later in the late 1960s that the film industry permitted the more cutting-edge representation of woman, which is the result of the KMT government’s compromises for the national economics purposes.
3. The Fetishization of Progress: Critical Reflection from Urban Movies in the 1970s Taiwan

After Healthy Realist Film was introduced to Taiwan in 1964, the healthy, optimistic, and melodramatic film style quickly became a guarantee of box-office success. The movement also successfully consolidated the CMPC’s status in the Taiwan film market. In 1967, CMPC’s major film director Li Xing began another new project, *The Road*, a family ethic film that consists of sentimental spectacles and a touching plot common to most Healthy Realist movies. It tells a story of a road construction worker, who brings up his son single-handedly, and puts all his hope on his child’s future. However, his son falls in love with a neighboring widow, causing the once-so-proud father’s disappointment and heartbreak. The film ends with a classic *datuanyuan*, a happy, homecoming ending, showing the widow recognizing her inappropriate behavior and lets the young man reunite with his father and finish his college degree. Li Xing and the CMPC put considerable time and money into this film: It took Li Xing fourteen months to shoot the movie, and it cost CMPC 1.3 million New Taiwan Dollars to purchase the back lot near CMPC’s Shilin studio and construct the film set from scratch. The investment earned the Best Picture Award and the Best Actor in the Leading Role in the Golden Horse Awards in 1968; however, it turned out to be a great box office failure. According to Gong Hong, after devoting so much work into the film, Li Xing was devastated to see the nearly empty theater at the film’s premiere and, to paraphrase Gong Hong’s words, Li Xing even wished he could drag the audiences into the theater himself. Following the first box office failure of Healthy Realist Film, Li Xing’s next work for CMPC, *Jade Goddess* (1969), once again disappointed the audience in Taiwan. Critics

and the public could not help but wonder: *Has Healthy Realism finally reached a dead end after five glorious years?* To answer this question, it is crucial to understand the interrelationship between Taiwan’s national economy and the film industry during the country’s first economic boom from late 1960s to the early 1970s.

In this chapter, I study the influence of the national economy on Taiwan film industry and the film industry’s response to socio-economic change in the late 1960s to the early 1970s. To begin, I examine the changes in Taiwan’s film industry after Taiwan’s economic growth in the late 1960s: the rise of small to medium scale private film companies in both Taiwan and Hong Kong, and film’s competition with other media, mainly, the television broadcasting. These changes forced the CMPC to give up its Healthy Realist Film and transform it into Healthy Variety-Show Movies (*jiankang zongyi*), which include popular genres, such as comedy and romance films. Before I turn to romance and woman’s films in Chapter Four, I focus on urban comedy and films with an urban theme in this chapter to trace their treatment of Taiwan’s industrialization and their different responses to Taiwan’s economic growth from 1968-1972. In other words, I ask the question, how did films by the CMPC and other independent production companies depict the government’s feverish pursuit of industrialization and wealth? Using Bai Jingrui’s *Bride and I* (1969) and *Goodbye Darling* (1971) as examples, I argue that there are contradictions between the KMT government’s fetishization of progress and the traditional virtue of austerity that the party struggled to uphold. Additionally, although both CMPC films and independent film productions showcase the nation’s recent economic success and bourgeois culture, independent filmmaking often take a more critical stance on the KMT government’s obsession with economic development in the late 1960s.
Blossoming Film Industry and Competitions

The development of Taiwan’s economy had been one of the top priorities for the KMT government ever since its arrival at Taiwan in 1949. Before the KMT government fled to Taiwan, Chiang Kai-Shek quickly ordered the Central Bank of China at Shanghai to prepare as much gold and silver as possible, and ship them to Taiwan along with numerous national treasures from the Forbidden City. However, these were not enough to solve the serious postwar inflation and stabilize Taiwan’s economy. The government first undertook the currency reform in 1949, side by side with a series of land reform programs: starting from “Rent Reduction to 37.5 Percent” in 1949, “Sale of Public Land” in 1951, to “Land to the Tiller” in 1953. The results of these reforms were successful, but the KMT government did not just stop here. It soon began a total of five “Four-Year Economic Development Plans” from 1953, which aimed to construct highly developed economy in Taiwan. With the postwar loans and financial supports from the United States, light industry, particularly the textile industry, gradually flourished in the late 1950s and the export processing industry also blossomed in the late 1960s. It was the KMT government’s authoritarian political system, state-imposed policies, and the

---

97 According to his memoir, Zhou Hongtao, who was once the Minister of Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, revealed that the KMT government brought around 3,755,000 teal of gold to Taiwan from the Central Bank of China in 1949. However, there is no official document indicating the exact amount of gold and silver brought to Taiwan during the time. See Zhou Hongtao’s memoir. Zhou, Hongtao, and Wang Shichun. Jianggong yu wo: jianzheng zhonghua minguo guanjian bianju [Chiang Kai-Shek and I: Witnessing ROC’s Critical Moments]. Taipei: tianxia yuanjian, 2003.

98 Starting from 1953, the KMT government began a total of five “Four-Year Economic Development Plans.” The goals of the first three “Four-Year Economic Development Plans” (1953-1964) included the land reforms, the expansion of oversea market, and the acceleration of local development. In 1965, the government started two more “Four-Year Economic Development Plans,” which focused on the construction of the export processing zones and the cut on taxes. In 1973, the “Ten Major Development Projects” was commenced, and it was after 1976 that the KMT government proposed the new “Six-Year National Development Program” (1976-1981) to develop the technology- and capital-intensive industries.
obsession with progress after 1949 that sets the foundation for Taiwan’s economic development in the following decades, which eventually made Taiwan one of the four Asian Tigers in the twenty-first century.

Although Taiwan’s economy gradually advanced in the 1950s, the development of Taiwan’s film industry greatly suffered as a result of lack of investment. In his study of the postwar Taiwan film industry, Lu Feii argues that although the land reforms destroyed the traditional landlord class and helped increase national revenue, the majority of the people in Taiwan still spent their income on basic household expenses instead of entertainment.\(^9\) As a result, these socioeconomic changes did not convince private investors to gamble on the film market, leaving the film industry to be dominated by the three state-owned film companies, China Movie Studio, Taiwan Province Film Production Studio, and the CMPC. Furthermore, although Taiwan received financial support from the United States after the WWII, the KMT government spent most of the US loans on infrastructure and military building instead of using them on the promotion of culture.\(^10\) As film critic Yu Yeying suggests, there was only a very small part of the US loans spent on the CMPC’s expansion on its Taichung Studio and the purchase of film equipment.\(^11\) After the US gradually withdrew its loans and a series of natural and man-made disasters hit Taiwan, including the fire that burned down the Taichung Studio and the serious flood in 1959, the CMPC’s financial problem only got worse. In fact, as Yu

---

\(^9\) According to Lu Feii, the basic household living expense took up more than 83% of the income per household in the early 1950s. See Lu Feii. p. 60.

\(^10\) From 1951 to 1965, Taiwan received around one million dollars’ loan from the United States annually, and a total of 14.8 million dollars during the fifteen years’ time. After the Korean War ended in 1953, the United States signed the “Sino-American Mutual Defense Treaty” with Taiwan in 1954 to prevent the communist power from expanding in the East Asia and it also expedited the grants and material supports to Taiwan.

Yeying reveals, the CMPC had been in debt ever since it was first established in 1954 and it finally reached a point where the collaboration with other studios and the personnel’s wage reduction could not save the company any money in 1960.\textsuperscript{102} When the CMPC’s Shilin Studio was finally built in 1960, the company’s Managing Director even proposed a passive guiding principle, which was to “reduce film production in order to reduce the company’s money loss.”\textsuperscript{103}

With Taiwan’s continuous industrialization and the government’s changing attitude towards film industry, the CMPC finally climbed up from rock bottom and started making profits after 1964. In 1965, Taiwan’s Minister of Economic Affairs announced that “1964 was the final year in the third stage of our Four-Year Economic Establishment Plan, and it was also the most distinguished year during the last ten years’ economic growth.”\textsuperscript{104} The per capita income in 1961 was 151 USD, but it quickly increased to 189 USD in 1964. With the government’s construction of export processing zones in 1966, the national revenue gained from exporting business also increased drastically. Consequently, the income per capita in Taiwan reached to 360 USD by 1970, which was twice the amount in 1961 (Appendix A). The industrialization brought more than wealth to the society of Taiwan; it also greatly impacted Taiwanese people’s lifestyle and the local film industry. The number of people going to the movie theater was 94 million in 1961, but it almost doubled to 180 million in 1970, which was the highest point during 1961 to 1978 (Appendix B). It shows that movie viewing gradually became a popular entertainment in the 1960s Taiwan, as disposable income increased when people have more spare money to spend.

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid. p. 62.
\textsuperscript{103} qtd. in Yu, Yeying. p. 62. Translation mine.
\textsuperscript{104} qtd. in Yu, Yeying, p. 132. Translation mine. The third stage of the Four-Year Economic Establishment Plan was from 1961 to 1964.
In addition to the larger socioeconomic changes, the KMT government’s interference in Taiwan film industry since the 1950s had finally achieved the desired effects in the mid-1960s. Since 1956, the government had been trying to boost local film industry by inviting foreign business to invest on Taiwan’s productions and to shoot movies in Taiwan; furthermore, it established the Golden Horse Awards to encourage the making of Chinese films in 1956. In 1964, it revised the regulations on foreign films and once again modified the foreign film quotas to protect the local film industry. It was under such an accommodating environment that the reorganized CMPC began to get on track. According to the data collected by Yu Yeying, only 25% of the CMPC’s revenue came from filmmaking in 1964, but it grew to 42% in 1965. In 1966, the CMPC finally transformed into a company that focused on filmmaking, as 52% of its total income came from the sales of movies. Even the CMPC’s Chair suggested, “Although CMPC still faces more difficulties than most of the private studios do, we have finally reach the preliminary goal of profiting from filmmaking rather than from our movie theaters.”

Compared to other private film companies, the CMPC still had more advantages because it had its own studio, development companies and even distribution channels. Therefore, the vertical integration of the CMPC made it the most powerful film company in Taiwan after the mid-1960s. Influential as it was, the CMPC continued building its empire after its reorganization in 1964. In 1967, the CMPC’s New World Theater (xinshijie xiyuan) was opened, followed by the extremely popular Chinese Movie and Culture Center (zhongying wenhuacheng) at Shilin district in Taipei, which is a theme park that allows the public to tour the studios and movie sets.

---

105 Yu, Yeying. p. 132.
106 qtd. in Yu, Yeying. p. 132. Translation mine.
107 In fact, Chinese Movie and Culture Center was based on the film set for Li Xing’s 1967 movie, *The Road*. Because the CMPC spent a lot of money to build the film set, the company decided not to tear it down after the film.
1975 and 1979, the CMPC opened another two movie theaters in Taipei, the Wonderful Theater (zhenshanmei juyuan) and Blossom Cinema (meihua xiyuan).\(^{108}\)

The socioeconomic changes and government support in the 1960s set the foundation for the CMPC’s empire, and the company’s well-rounded marketing strategy also constituted the CMPC’s success. Seeing the prosperity of the film market in Taiwan, many private investors were also drawn to the flourishing film industry and started their own business. As a result, the number of private, small- to-medium scale film companies increased drastically in the late 1960s, and there were a total of 48 companies in Taiwan in 1969 according to the Taiwan Filmmaking Association.\(^{109}\) Among these new film companies were opportunists that proposed a film title without actually making it. Lu Feii traced the problem to the fund raising system during the time as film companies’ income mostly came from the down payment for new films, and it didn’t matter whether the films made any profit when they were distributed and exhibited later on.\(^{110}\) As a result, most of these small companies only paid attention to the quantity instead of the quality of the films they made. Furthermore, there were not enough of studios or production companies during the time to accommodate the making of the movies proposed by these small companies.\(^{111}\) Adding on to the situation, as there were not enough film directors and actors, the headhunt only worsened the vicious competition among the small companies. Ridiculing the

---

\(^{108}\) The CMPC had been part of the KMT party’s assets until 2005, when it was sold to a private company, the Rongli Investment Cooperation. As a result, the CMPC’s enterprise, including its studio and movie theaters, was also privatized after the company’s transformation.

\(^{109}\) Yu, Yeying. p. 132.


\(^{111}\) According to Chen Feibao, there were around 19 studios in Taiwan: five from CMPC, two from China Movie Studio, two from Taiwan Province Film Production Studio, and the rest belonged to the private companies. Chen, Feibao, Taiwan dianying shihua [Historiette of Taiwan Cinema]. Beijing: China Film, 1988. p. 130.
chaotic situation in the Taiwan and Hong Kong film industry during the time, the Hong Kong based magazine, Cinemart, published a list of the films that each film company had intended to make during the year in its February 1970 issue. The result was that many titles proposed by the film companies overlapped with one another, turning the films into “twins or even triplets.”¹¹²

Still, among the newly established companies, there were many film companies organized by former CMPC or other major studios’ filmmakers, and they soon became the strong competitors to the CMPC in the 1970s. One of the best examples is Li Xing and Bai Jingrui’s Ta Chung Motion Picture Company. In August 1968, the CMPC’s production manager Hu Chengding and the head of planning Chen Rulin resigned from their positions to join their friend Cai Donghua to start Ta Chung. Two months later, they borrowed the prestigious CMPC director Bai Jingrui and famous actress Chen Chen for its first movie production, Accidental Trio (1969), which was produced by almost the same crew who made the CMPC’s comedy, The Bride and I (1969).¹¹³ After seeing the box office success of The Bride and I, CMPC manager Gong Hong urged Bai Jingrui to make a sequel of the film, but Bai Jingrui turned down the proposal and made Accidental Trio for Ta Chung Motion Picture instead. In addition to Bai Jingrui and Chen Chen, Hu Chengding and Chen Rulin also invited their former colleagues in CMPC to join their newly established company, including director Li Xing, scriptwriter Zhang Youngxiang, cinematographers Lai Chenying and Lin Zanting. These people soon became involved in most projects of Ta Chung Motion Picture. When Hu Chengding decided to close the company in

¹¹² “xianggang taiwan ge dianying gongsi pianming dengji yufang naoshuangbao: shei qiangpai geda 56 ban pigu [Hong Kong and Taiwan Film Companies Registered their Proposed Film Titles to Avoid Lookalikes: Anyone Who Steals Would be Spanked 56 Times].” Cinemart 2 (1970). p.15. The list published in the magazine is based on Hong Kong’s and Taiwan’s film associations’ request that demanded each company to register the title and submit certain amount of the down payment for registration.

¹¹³ The Bride and I won several awards in the 1969 Golden Horse Awards, including the Best Director and the Best Editing awards. It was the second best-selling movie in Taipei, and premiered for four days, breaking many box office records during the time. See Gong, Hong, and Tianjie Gong, p. 140-141.
1972 against all the board’s will, Li Xing and Bai Jingrui took over the company, each taking the role as the company’s president and general manager.\textsuperscript{114} That is to say, the company was run by the directors themselves, which became a popular trend beginning in the early 1970s.

The number of CMPC personnel who left the CMPC to start their own companies increased in the late 1960s, but the CMPC had lost its power in restricting its employees from leaving the company. When Li Han- Hsiang’s Grand Motion Pictures Company (\textit{Guolian}) proposed to make \textit{Four Moods} (1970) with the collaboration of four major directors during the time, including King Hu, Li Xing, Bai Jingrui, and Li Han- Hsiang himself, the CMPC manager Gong Hong could not stop his contracted directors from joining the project.\textsuperscript{115} In his memoir, Gong Hong maintains that

\begin{quote}
Although Li Xing and Bai Jingrui were restricted by the contract with me, and although I had an unpleasant history with Li Han- Hsiang when he borrowed the CMPC studio, I still followed my noble principle, not taking advantage when his company was in a perilous state and lending him Li Xing and Bai Jingrui. I even went to congratulate Grand Motion Pictures for the kickoff of their film.\textsuperscript{116}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{114} By 1970, Ta Chung Motion Picture Company had produced five movies and distributed two movies for other smaller companies. However, the company’s expenditure was too high, forcing Hu Chengding to end the business in 1972. After the reorganization of Ta Chung Motion Picture, the company was relocated to Hong Kong.

\textsuperscript{115} In 1963, director Li Han- Hsiang left Shaw Brothers Studios to start the Grand Motion Pictures Company with the support from Lu Yuntao, the owner of Motion Picture and General Investments Limited (MP&GI, or \textit{Dianmao}). In the mid- 1960s, Grand Motion Pictures was once the biggest opponent for the CMPC; however, after Lu Yuntao’s death in an air crash during his stay in Taiwan in 1964, Li Han- Hsiang lost the financial support from Lu Yuntao’s company. Therefore, Li Han- Hsiang put all his hope on \textit{Four Moods}, thinking it would raise enough of money for the company; however, sadly, the company was still forced to terminate its business in the early 1970s.

\textsuperscript{116} Gong, Hong, and Tianjie Gong, p. 148-149. Translation mine.
Although Gong Hong claims that he let Grand Motion Pictures Company borrow his contract directors out of personal sympathy, it is obvious that Gong Hong had lost his authority in the company. In fact, he also confessed in his memoir that the company’s administrative efficiency declined as a result of the lack of support from his new supervisor, and he could no longer carry out his management goals. Consequently, with the help of the key figures in CMPC, the small film companies brought great competition to the Mandarin film market in Taiwan that was once dominated by the party- owned CMPC.

In his interview with Lu Feii, Li Xing recalled Ta Chung Motion Picture’s success in the early 1970s. In addition to dominating movie theaters’ schedules during the Chinese New Year, which was the most popular time of the year, the company also made many high quality movies. Li Xing suggested that all the company’s film productions, from *Accidental Trio* to *Execution in Autumn* (1972), were distributed and marketed by the company itself; however, still some of the company’s films were registered under other distribution companies’ names. That is to say, Ta Chung Motion Picture Company was in fact more productive than most of the official records have indicated. The early 1970s Ta Chung Motion Picture Company to the CMPC was like Li Han- Hsiang’s Grand Motion Pictures Company to the CMPC in the second half of the 1960s, and it became extremely influential in both Taiwan and Hong Kong film industries.

The most important reason why the CMPC directors and personnel left the big studio to take the risk in the small private film companies during the time is because, for one thing, the private companies offered what the state- owned companies did not have to the filmmakers: freedom. When asked why he and his colleagues decided to leave the CMPC, Li Xing answered,

---

117 Ibid, p. 166.
118 Lu, Feii. p. 211. Also see Lu Feii’s footnote 393.
“We thought that he [Gong Hong] interfered too much… At that time, we grew strong wings, so we wanted to start our own company and make the kind of movies that we have always wanted to make.”^{119} It was during the time Li Xing was in Ta Chung Motion Picture that he made *Execution in Autumn*, a film he had proposed ten years ago but was never supported by the CMPC. Similarly, Bai Jingrui was discouraged from making realist films that he had always wanted to make when he was in CMPC, but he finally had the opportunity to try something different with *Goodbye Darling* after he joined Ta Chung Motion Picture Company.^{120} Both *Execution in Autumn* and *Goodbye Darling* were highly praised by the film critics as the highest artistic achievement for the directors. In addition to Ta Chung Motion Picture, there were other well-known small- to- medium scale companies in the late 1960s and early 1970s, such as Chang Cheh’s Chang’s Film Company (*Changgong Dianying Gongsı*) and Huang Zhuo-han’s First Films (*Diyi Yingye*).^{121}

Beginning in the early 1970s, the campaign for independent film production advocated by both Taiwan and Hong Kong film industries pushed the wave of small film companies to another high peak. Representing the Hong Kong film magazine *Cinemart*, film critic Liu Yafou stated in a 1973 article that instead of being forced to merge with big studios, independent companies had the power to lead the entire film industry. He claimed that government censorship and the risk of...

---


^{120} In the process of making *Lonely Seventeen*, Bai Jingrui faced great criticism on his “unhealthy” subjects within the CMPC and was forced to modify his film with the cohort from the company’s Blue Ocean Group that was in charge of the writing of the film script. Ever since then, he had been making comedies that were not conflicted with the state ideology. When working with Ta Chung Motion Picture Company and Wangsheng Film Company on *Goodbye Darling*, Bai Jingrui had more control over the story, and made it into a neorealist film. However, the film did not pass the censor and was forced to add in an extra scene at the end, which I will discuss in the later section in this chapter.

^{121} Chang Cheh left Shaw Brothers in 1973 to establish Chang’s Film Company in Taiwan. First Films was based in Hong Kong, but the company was the major film production company for Taiwan movies.
independent film productions should not be the excuse for producing low quality movies; instead, small film companies should take the opportunity to discover original topics. He concluded passionately that “we believe there are still lot of good future for the independent producers, all of the producers should get together and make money hand in hand.”

His article was followed by an “Independent Manifesto for Film Industry” written by Taiwanese director Yao Fengpan, who proposed the “ten commandments” for independent film productions, including the elimination of star system, the pursuit of creativity, the emphasis on film quality and artistic value, and the avoidance of vicious competitions. The magazine also interviewed several major film directors, including Li Xing and Bai Jingrui, asking them to share their positive feedback on independent film production. Directors Chang Cheh, who was the most significant figure in martial art films, also affirmed the value of independent film production in his discussion of the changes in Taiwan and Hong Kong film industries since the 1960s:

The status of a director has become more and more important whereas the role of a scriptwriter has become less and less influential. In fact, films cannot be separated from movie directors, therefore endowing directors with great authority. Like European ‘auteur theory,’ the director’s status is above everything. In order to free directors from all sorts of restrictions, those who invest their money into filmmaking cannot interfere. Most importantly, the film censorship should not set

---


any boundary. Whether this is viable is one thing, but it shows the importance of a
director and that filmmaking has left its old track.124

The independent filmmaking movement encouraged small companies to compete against big
studios and gave both Hong Kong and Taiwan film industries hope for a prosperous future for
independent film productions.

Surrounded by all the newly established independent studios and the ever so powerful Shaw
Brothers in Hong Kong, the CMPC also had to compete against the growing television
broadcasting business in Taiwan in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Taiwan’s industrialization in
the mid-1960s gradually made television affordable to most of the families, and it consequently
changed people’s entertainment style and their expectation of films in Taiwan. In 1964, only
1.22% of the people in Taiwan owned a television at home, but that figure reached 52% in 1971.

After the first broadcasting of color television signal by Taiwan Television Enterprise (taishī) in
1969, the percentage of people having a color television also increased from 3.42% in 1972 to
55.85% in 1979 (Appendix A). Furthermore, the “Living Room as Factory” movement proposed
by Taiwan Provincial Governor Xie Dongmin in 1972 also brought common people closer to the
television culture.125 The movement was part of the government’s economic plan in promoting
the OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) at home, and as people, mostly housewives and
children, spent more time in the living room, the time spent on television viewing also became
longer. The impact of “Living Room as Factory” and the prevalence of television on Taiwan film
industry are best reflected in the number of movie theaters in Taiwan. Originally, there were 645

125 Lin, Mucai. “Living Room as Factory.” Encyclopedia of Taiwan. 2010. Ministry of Culture, Taiwan. 22 July
movie theaters in 1972, but the number dropped to 554 in the following year and it continued decreasing year after year until 1976 (Appendix B).

A look at Taiwan’s newspapers also shows the changes and the power dynamic between films and television. Not only were there more and more advertisements for television set since the mid-1960s, the original film advertisement and entertainment sections in the newspaper were reduced and substituted with a daily television program in the 1970s. In the 1960s, there were only two television companies in Taiwan: Taiwan Television Enterprise was founded in 1962 and Chinese Television Company (zhongshi) in 1969. With the Chinese Television System (huashi), which was established in 1971, the three companies were the only television broadcasting stations in Taiwan during the martial law period, and they were more or less controlled by the government or the KMT party. These broadcasting companies offered more than news reporting, but also cartoons, short dramas, and variety shows; most importantly, both Taiwan Television Enterprise and Chinese Television Company showed two long television dramas every evening, which reduced people’s desire to spend money on movie tickets.

---

126 Take United Daily News for example, the full-paged advertisement sections and the news on Chinese and foreign movies on page eight were deleted; instead, page six of the newspaper includes a television program section after the 1970s.

127 Chinese Television Company is part of the KMT party’s asset, and it was not sold to a private company until 2000. Although Taiwan Television Enterprise is a private-owned company, it was indirectly controlled by the Taiwan Provincial Government, which held much of the company’s stocks. Similarly, the KMT party was one of the major investors for Chinese Television System during the martial law period.

128 One of the examples is the broadcasting of Bu Wancang’s Mandarin feature, Long Alley, in August 1970, which was extremely popular during the time. See Zhang Yingjin, p. 142. In addition to television broadcasting, the appearance of video recording in 1976 soon led to pirate videotapes, bringing another threat to Taiwan’s film industry. Unfortunately, the government did not involve in the regulation of video piracy until 1979. See Lu Feii, p. 243.
In order to compete against the rise of television in the late 1960s, most of the film companies began to cater to audience’s interests by developing popular genre films, such as martial art movies, romances, and comedies.\textsuperscript{129} Compared to the big studios in Hong Kong, companies in Taiwan were short of resources for martial art films, which often require more production cost; therefore, they turn to comedy and romance, which can be made with lower budget.\textsuperscript{130} Seeing other small film companies switching to popular genre films, the CMPC could no longer uphold its Healthy Realist Film Movement, which gradually lost its appeal in the late 1960s, as illustrated in the box office failure of Li Xing’s \textit{The Road}.

In 1968, film critics in Taiwan suggested that the CMPC make more national policy films, mainly, anti-communist films, every year, but Gong Hong held reservations about it, only responding to the criticism by emphasizing cinema’s social responsibilities. However, under the pressure from the public, Gong Hong changed the name of the movement from Healthy Realist Film to Healthy Variety-\textit{Show}, announcing that the CMPC would try to diversify the company’s products and to improve the films’ aesthetics during the following year. According to Gong Hong, Healthy Variety-\textit{Show} films still carry the mission of educating the people and are in line with KMT’s healthy ideology; however, they also incorporate elements of action, myth, comedy and romance to reach out to broader audience groups.\textsuperscript{131} In his memoir, Gong Hong justifies the

\textsuperscript{129} Romance, martial art films, and comedies were the most popular genres during the time. Along with ghost and spirit movies (\textit{shen’guai}) and musical films, these genres were the top five popular genres in 1970. See Lu, Feii. Table 12.

\textsuperscript{130} Lu, Feii. p.137, 139.

changes from “realist film” to other genre films, particularly romance, and how the CMPC
adjusted to the new film industry:

From then on, people changed their impression of the CMPC, and they understood that we were not a propagandist sector based on any political party. Like other Chinese film companies, such as Shaw Brothers Studio and Motion Pictures & General Investment (MP& GI), our company’s productions are based on the audience’s taste. We don’t use slogans or promote any dogmas for the government; our messages are invisible yet formative… We never try to impress people with shocking statement, or simply follow the trend. We don’t try to be popular, but we never fail to follow what the audience like. Therefore, we make romance based on Qiong Yao’s novels, and it is based on our strategic concerns in order to pursue the best performance in innovation.\(^\text{132}\)

Gong Hong’s defense is filled with contradictions: on the one hand, the CMPC’s productions try to hide the didactic messages and take up the form of popular entertainment; on the other hand, they cannot completely break away from the CMPC’s ultimate mission to serve as a propaganda tool for the KMT party. Nevertheless, CMPC’s Healthy Variety-Show managed to keep up with the trend in the late 1960s and the early 1970s Hong Kong and Taiwan film industry, and to maintain its audience’ interest with more popular topics.

Whereas most of the early Healthy Realist Films are family ethic movies that are used to recuperate the KMT government’s policies and proposed value system, Healthy Variety-Show

\(^{132}\) Gong, Hong, and Tianjie Gong. p. 132. Emphasis mine.
depoliticize the story and shift the attention to *entertainment*. In addition to some scattering musical films and movies based on mythical stories, most of the Healthy Variety-Show films can be further divided into two groups: romance, or *wenyi* film, and comedy. Romance based on Qiong Yao’s novels was the most popular genre in Taiwan during the time, and a genre approved by Gong Hong and the CMPC as early as 1965. While martial art movies tend to be too violent and have allegorical subtexts that alarmed the KMT government, Qiong Yao’s romance, which is often described as escapist, became a safe material for the CMPC. According to Gong Hong, most of Qiong Yao’s stories do not contradict with the healthy ideology that the government had been keen to follow. Furthermore, romantic love stories’ melodramatic features, including the polarization, the exaggerated performance, and the heightening of emotions and sensations are what attract most of the young audiences during the time, particularly female audiences.

The other genres often appropriated by the Healthy Variety-Show movement are urban comedy and light-hearted drama with an urban setting. As shown in these films, the city is the new cinematic attraction and a space where intriguing stories of modern life take place. After the CMPC exhausted themes in the countryside, including *Oyster Girl*, *Beautiful Ducklings*, *Gain Sons, Not Losing Daughters* (1966), *Call of the Mountains* (1967), and *The Road*, it switched to movies in the urban setting. The pictorial landscape in the countryside was no longer the attraction; instead, glamorous city life became what most of the audience could actually relate to.

---

133 *Wenyi* film is sometimes translated as melodrama. However, to settle on a one-to-one correspondence between *wenyi* and melodrama may leave out some of the cultural specificities embedded in both terms. I will discuss the differences between the two in the following chapter.

134 For more discussions on CMPC’s anxieties toward martial art film, see Zhang, Yingjin. p. 41.

135 Gong, Hong, and Tianjie Gong. p. 127.

136 Although some of CMPC’s early Healthy Realist Films, such as *Lonely Seventeen*, were also set in the city, the majority of the films were still set in the countryside.
As a result, the “Three Rooms Movies” (*san ting dianying*) became a popular formula for the late 1960s Mandarin movies, particularly romance and comedies. As its name has suggested, the “Three Rooms Movies” are usually set in three kinds of rooms (*ting*), namely, living room (*keting*), restaurant (*canting*), and coffee shop (*kafeiting*), and sometimes dance floor (*wuting*) would be included as one of the settings. There are many reasons behind the formula’s popularity. For one thing, it reduces the production cost and is easier to shoot in these indoor settings. It is also a way for Taiwan cinema to adjust to the production methods of television in order to conform to a now-popular aesthetic. Moreover, the “three rooms” are where most young adults frequent during the time; therefore making it easier to relate to for the films’ target audiences. Most importantly, set in these places, the Three Room Movie only presents the bourgeois lifestyle from the middle or upper classes, and, along the same line, the characters in Three Room Movies are exclusively wealthy people who do not need to work or toil whereas the presence of the poor is nowhere to be found in the movies. That is to say, by covering up poverty and erasing class differences, these movies cut all the possible associations to class issues and leftist ideology, which the KMT government has been avoiding. In addition to showcasing the alluring city life, these films also reflect the effect of industrialization and economic development on social value and people’s psychology.

So far, I have discussed Taiwan’s economic growth in the 1950s and 1960s, and how it impacted the film industry in the late 1960s and early 1970s’ Taiwan. In order to compete against the rising small film companies and television broadcasting, the CMPC had to maintain its audiences’ interest by switching from Healthy Realist Film to Healthy Variety-Show, and incorporating with popular genres, including romance and urban comedy. In the following section, I look at urban comedies and urban dramas made by both CMPC and small film
companies during the transitional time in Taiwan’s film industry from 1968 to the middle of 1970s, and examine how these films responded to the economic changes in the film industry and in Taiwanese society.

*****

**Economic Changes in Films**

Lu Feii once describes CMPC’s Healthy Realist Films as “not having the courage to face the embarrassment in reality” and “lacking a critical edge.” He quotes Zhang Xiao Hong, saying that these films “lack of the ability to criticize issues such as the rural-urban gap, social changes, and ethnic differences.” In fact, the tendency to avoid critical examination of the socioeconomic issue and to downplay the issue of class is rooted in the KMT’s filmmaking back in 1930s’ Shanghai. Contrary to most leftist movies that focus on class struggles, films affiliated with the KMT government often take an escapist stance, erasing any trace of class differences and resolving all the tensions by referring to traditional Chinese values. Luo Mingyou’s *National Customs* (1935) is one of such example that shifts the attention from class issues to the virtue of austerity. The story portrays vanity and consumerism as pure evil which quickly destroys the relationship between two sisters and the moral fabric of a small town. Whereas the younger sister indulges in consumer culture and the luxury in the glamorous city life, the older sister devotes herself in studying and never wastes a penny in the city. When the younger sister comes back to work as a teacher in the small town, she brings the squandering habit to her new school. Her students abandon their studies and shift their attention to their appearance: how to look stylish.

---

137 Lu, Feii. p. 104.
138 qtd. in Lu. p. 104.
and act like a city girl. The changes in school consequently influence all the townspeople and nobody cares about their own works and social responsibilities. It is the return of the older sister, who starts the New Life campaign that saves the fallen town. Her passionate speech on the importance of spiritual well-being touch the townspeople, including her own sister. In other words, National Customs disguises problems of capitalist modernity and the rural-urban gap with the moral messages on traditional virtue of lian (to economize) and the value of simple life, which is typical of KMT’s filmmaking in the 1930s.\textsuperscript{139}

Turning to Healthy Realist Film in the 1960s Taiwan, most of the films continue disguising class issues, while emphasizing the role of love and simple life in overcoming the evil of money. However, as Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar argue in their discussion of Li Xing’s Beautiful Duckling, some of the problems in capitalist modernity, such as the idea of private ownership and productivity begin to surface in Healthy Realist Films. They also observe that the protagonist Xiao Yue is bounded to her foster father not through blood relationship, but through “pooled capital,” and the film is a family melodrama “reshaping a Confucian tradition into a hybrid Confucian ethic and a spirit of capitalism as the foundation of the Republic of China in Taiwan.”\textsuperscript{140} In other words, different from KMT’s filmmaking in the 1930s that completely ignores problems of capitalist modernity, 1960s Healthy Realism starts to deal with socioeconomic problems. However, it is until the focus has been shifted to the urban life in late 1960s that these issues are magnified in both CMPC’s and other private companies’ film productions. In the following, I explore ways in which these films portray industrialization and

\textsuperscript{139} “Lian” is one of the four social bonds proposed by the KMT government during its New Life Movement in the 1930s and the Cultural Renaissance in the 1960s. “Lian” is a virtue related to monetary desires, which means honesty and the refusal to be corrupted. It also means the lack of monetary desires as in the Chinese saying, lian jing gua yu.

\textsuperscript{140} Berry, Chris and Mary Farquhar. p. 98.
economic growth in the 1960s Taiwan, and their negotiation between traditional Chinese values and the KMT government’s ever-so enthusiastic economic policies by looking at two of Bai Jingrui’s films during the period between late 1960s to early 1970s: The Bride and I, produced by CMPC, and Goodbye Darling by Ta Chung Motion Picture Company and Wansheng Film Company.

Bai Jingrui’s The Bride and I is the forerunner of the urban comedy genre, and it can also be seen as a prototype of the Three Rooms Movie. The film is told retrospectively from Dawei and Meiyun’s wedding day to trace how the couple meets. In a way, it is a typical “meet-the-parent” story, when Dawei tries to ask Meiyun’s parents for their daughter’s hand in marriage. However, as a young businessman working in the public relations industry, Dawei has a hard time getting approval from his future father-in-law, who is a traditional Chinese medicine doctor. Going through a series of misunderstandings and conflicts, Dawei finally proves himself by successfully organizing a fashion show that features local Taiwanese textile, and the film ends with the young couple happily exchanging their wedding vows. Like his earlier films, Bai Jingrui employs various filmmaking and editing techniques, such as the cartoon figure that opens and closes the curtains throughout the movie, giving the film a novel touch.

Through the character Dawei and his job in the media communication industry, The Bride and I demonstrates the government’s economic success and reiterates the national economic policies. First of all, the film shows that poverty is nowhere to be found in Taiwan as each character leads a wealthy or middle class life in the city. To showcase Taiwan’s industrialization and economic development, the film purposely stages Dawei and Meiyun walking side by side at the Port of Kaohsiung in one of the scenes. The Port of Kaohsiung has the first export-processing zone in Taiwan, which was established in 1966, and it was a modern construction that the
government took pride in. On top of that, through Dawei’s use of a fashion show to introduce the local textile and his ambition of expanding the local product to the international market, the film clearly reflects the government’s focus on the development of light industrialization during the time. In addition to exhibiting Taiwan’s economic success, the film also emphasizes the socioeconomic changes in Taiwan and how industrialization alters people’s way of life. For example, in the very beginning of the film, the narrator suggests that people no longer escort the bride with a donkey or a sedan chair; instead, the modern marriage involves money and adventure, such as having a ceremony with a motorcycle or a parachute. Similarly, when Dawei proposes to hold the wedding ceremony soon, he convinces Meiyun by saying that “It is the age of industrialization, so people value efficiency. Efficiency is to be fast, so we should get married as soon as possible.” That is to say, industrialization changes not just people’s values, but also their social traditions.

The Bride and I not only displays the success of the government’s industrial constructions and economic development; it also reflects the growing consumer culture. However, the film’s critique of capitalist desire, as I will illustrate later, is in fact used to discuss the competition faced by Taiwan film industry during the time. In Dawei and Meiyun’s flashbacks that recall the couple’s ex-lovers, some of the characters stand out: an extravagant woman, a stingy man, and an excessive shopper. When showing Dawei dining with the extravagant woman in a fancy restaurant, the camera employs extreme close-up of the price on the menu to show what Dawei sees. While Dawei is shocked by the woman’s appetite and her indulgence, Meiyun, on the other hand, is annoyed by her penny-pinching date. As a parallel to Dawei’s experience, the film shows Meiyun shopping with the miser at a shoe shop, but the man only sees the price tags on the shoes, which is also conducted through the close-up of the digits (Figure 3.1). As the film’s
subtle critique of consumerism, the two opposite people are brought together by Dawei’s fashion show, and the film’s extra diegetic narrator foresees the tragedy and comments sarcastically that “That's like putting the cat near the goldfish bowl.” In addition to these two characters, representing two types of personality in consumer culture, there is also the excessive shopper, who courts Meiyun by buying her snacks that are more than one can possibly consume when they go to a movie together. On their date, he is so busy buying foods that he couldn’t sit through the movie, and it does not matter to him what the movie is about because taking Meiyun to the movie is a way to please the girl, like the snacks that he buys for Meiyun. Through this scene, Bai Jingrui’s film reminds the audience that film is fundamentally a product, and this idea is reinforced by the interaction between the film’s extra-diegetic narrator and the Bai Jingrui look-alike cartoon figure, who is in charge of the theater’s curtain (Figure 3.2). When the cartoon character closes the curtain at the point of the movie when Dawei and Meiyun get into a fight, the narrator scolds the cartoon figure, “The audience are here to watch a comedy. If you close the curtain now, the audiences will return the tickets. Get back!” The scene is a self-derision of the Taiwan film industry during the time. It is as if the narrator is like the superego of the film director, reminding the director that he should know what the audiences want and how to please them in order to sell the movie. In other words, after the rise of genre films, a filmmaker should respond to the market demand in order to survive tight competition among the newly established companies, and this was particularly true with the CMPC in the late 1960s.

The consumer culture, as depicted in the Bride and I, is closely related with the rise of television broadcasting, which gradually took over the role of film in common people’s life. Working for public relations, Dawei’s job is to advertise and sell things. When he needs a
Figure 3.1  Close-up of the price tag in *The Bride and I*

Figure 3.2  The cartoon character in *The Bride and I*
clothing designer who could collaborate with him on the fashion show, he sets out to a television station to look for a famous designer. The designer, in addition to running her own shop, also works as a television host in introducing the latest fashion trends to the audience. Shot from the backstage, the scene shows the fascinating world behind the production of a television program and how television advertises all kinds of products. Instead of following Dawei and the designer as they talk their way out of the television studio, the camera fixes on the close-up of a television screen, which displays a commercial of beauty products (Figure 3.3). In other words, the *Bride and I* illustrates how television became the popular media in promoting consumer culture and how it influenced people’s life in the late 1960s Taiwan; furthermore, it reveals the film industry’s growing anxieties toward its great competitor. This insecurity towards the fate of Taiwan’s film industry is echoed by Meiyun’s date with the excessive shopper in the movie theater. What is often overlooked in the scene is that it is actually a foreign movie instead of a Mandarin film that Meiyun is so immersed in. Through all these details, *The Bride and I* captures CMPC’s anxieties in this historical juncture: the competitions among film companies, regional film industries, and medias.

*The Bride and I* shows more than critical reflections on Taiwan film industry in the 1960s; it also questions the KMT government’s progressive economic policies and promotion of industrialization and the fetishization of progress. This point is best illustrated when Dawei is first introduced to Meiyun’s parents as a man working in the field of public relations. Meiyun’s father responds to Dawei’s occupation with skepticism:

Father: “This [public relations] is a new industry, which is developed from the marketing strategy of those street peddlers who attract people’s attention by
Figure 3.3  Television commercial in The Bride and I
beating gongs and drums noisily.”

Meiyun: “Father, no, he is doing public relations.”

Father: “The name is different, but it’s all the same.”

Dawei: “We help people choose good products.”

Father: “Good products can sell well without any advertising, like the tranquilizing pills I make. Without any advertisement, the demand still exceeds the supply every day.”

Dawei: “Sir, if you let me advertise your pills, the market for your pills can be further expanded.”

Father: “There is no use to expand the market because there is not enough stock of the products.”

Dawei: “We can mass produce it with machines.”

Father: “This is not like fruit juice or soda. Mass production decreases the value of things.”

The conversation between Dawei and Meiyun’s father presents more than a generation gap, it is also a debate on the government’s optimistic view of Taiwan’s economic development. The younger generation like Dawei values efficiency and quantity, which echo the government proposed economic policy; however, the older generation, like Meiyun’s parents, questions the growing consumer culture and problems behind the government’s promotion of industrialization. Meiyun’s father questions the changing means of production in the age of mechanical reproduction and holds a reserved attitude towards the loss of authenticity, the value he attaches to handmade crafts. Countering the government’s progressive economic plan, the film provides a
different view of Taiwan’s socioeconomic changes in the late 1960s. Different from most of the CMPC films during the time, *The Bride and I* reflects and comments on the transformation of Taiwanese society, interrogating the government’s obsession with industrialization and progress. However, the film once again sides with the safe economic campaign proposed by the government as Dawei’s fashion show turns out to be a great success, which leads Meiyun’s father to acknowledge the value of industrialization at the end of the movie. It was in Bai Jingrui’s later productions for companies outside of CMPC that he returned to expressing suspicion towards the KMT government’s obsession with progress in the 1960s and the often-neglected side effects of modern industrialization.

Different from movies he made for the CMPC, Bai Jingrui’s films for other private-owned companies, mainly Ta Chung Motion Picture Company, often expose problems behind the KMT government’s proposal for Taiwan’s national economic and industrial constructions. One of the examples is the first movie Bai Jingrui made for Ta Chung Motion Picture Company, *Accidental Trio* (1969), a comedy that discusses the effect of modernization on people’s psyche: all kinds of anxieties and isolation in human relationship. *Accidental Trio* is divided into three storylines to look at three unhappy families living in the same building. The first family’s tension comes from the conflict between an over-protective father and a coming-of-age daughter. The reason why the father is over-protective is partially because he is always depressed and anxious after his 141

---

141 On Gong Hong’s request, Bai Jingrui also made another comedy, *Home Sweet Home*, for the CMPC in 1970. Like most of the CMPC films during the time, *Home Sweet Home* echoes the KMT government’s economic policies and praises the nation’s successful industrialization. Centering on three characters who just come back to Taiwan from the United States, the film is divided into three storylines, tracing the motifs of the three people’s return and their life in Taiwan. As a response to the students’ studying abroad trend in the late 1960s Taiwan, the film sends out the message to ask those who study abroad to come back and contribute what they have learned to the homeland in order to advance the nation’s development. Among the three characters, Daren, an engineer who comes back to divorce his wife but ends up staying and helping to build a water dam in southern Taiwan, best illustrates the government’s appeal for trained labor in the late 1960s.
business failure. As a result, he changes his religious beliefs constantly, hoping to find peace and consolation from them. On the other hand, Mr. Hong, the father from the third family, leads a tedious life as a salary man. He is depicted as a useless and timid father and husband, who tries to avoid family life by hiding and reading in the bathroom every day. In order to avoid spending time with his family, he always claims to work extra hour in the office, but the truth is he just spends the time drinking at a bar. His job does not give him any sense of achievement; instead, it becomes an excuse for him to isolate himself. On the one hand, Accidental Trio presents Taiwan as a modern and prosperous country through the busy street scenes, chic coffee shops, and trendy dance floor; on the other hand, it reveals the negative impact of industrialization and economic development on people’s psyche.

After making a series of urban comedies, Bai Jingrui finally turned to something more serious. Goodbye Darling, which he made for Ta Chung Motion Picture and Wan- Sheng Motion Picture Company in 1971 is often considered as a neorealist film were it not for the extra footage that Bai Jingrui added in order to pass the censorship. The film is based on Taiwanese writer Chen Yingzhen’s 1964 short story, “General Family,” which was first published in the famous literary magazine in Taiwan, Modern Literature (1960- 1973). The story follows lives of the two members in a musical troop: “Triangle- Face,” a mainland émigré who is much older than an unnamed Taiwanese woman, known only as “her.” From the conversation between the two, the story unravels the miserable past of the young woman, who is sold as a prostitute but runs away to join the musical troupe. In order to help her redeem herself, Triangle- Face gives the woman all his savings and leaves the musical troupe, but the poor woman still cannot escape her fate being sold as a prostitute. In the end, the two reunite but decide to commit suicide together to end
their sufferings, and they die together in their uniform for the musical troupe, which make their
dead bodies look like those of the generals.

The fact that Goodbye Darling is based on Chen Yingzhen’s novel is controversial, as Chen
Yingzhen was seen as a dissident by the KMT government during the time. In 1968, Chen
Yingzhen was arrested for his “left leaning tendency” as he and the other members in the
Democratic Taiwan Union studied leftist literatures together. As a punishment for his subversive
activities, Chen Yingzhen was imprisoned for many years until a special pardon in 1975. Bai
Jingrui’s adaptation of the story tones down the original version’s emphasis on the characters’
ethnic differences, and purposely adds in a new character, Ah-Lang. In the film version, Ah-
Lang is the music troupe owner’s relative, a hooligan figure that lives on women’s money. He
runs away with Gui-zhi, the “her” character in Chen Yingzhen’s story, and lives on the money
they steal from Old Monkey, the “Triangle Face” character in the short story version. The
original Chinese title for this movie, zaijian ah-lang (Goodbye Ah-Lang), not only foreshadows
the story of Ah-Lang’s eventual death; it also shifts the story’s focus to this new character, Ah-
Lang.

In Goodbye Darling, Bai Jingrui transforms Chen Yingzhen’s realist language into a
neorealist film. Like the story, Bai Jingrui looks at the lives of the ordinary people, and presents
the real city landscape. Whether it is the street, the harbor, or the traditional market place, Bai
Jingrui did not purposely cover up the disagreeable part of the city that the KMT government
considered embarrassing. Furthermore, unlike most of the CMPC films that purposely erase
traces of local Taiwanese culture, which the government considered backward and inappropriate,
Goodbye Darling truthfully depicts it, including the girl’s musical troupe and traditional outdoor
The musical troupes were common in Taiwanese society and they were often invited to perform for events, such as festival celebrations and funerals; additionally, they often served as a form of advertisement, as illustrated in *Goodbye Darling*. In a musical troupe’s parade across the town, the banners in the celebration show that the parade is advertising a tour of Taiwanese opera, “Yanming opera group’s visit to Tainan City. Fangping Theater will begin the show from today on.” The outdoor Taiwanese opera was once the most popular entertainment before the dominance of films, and in fact, it was still common in the countryside after the rise of Mandarin films in the second half of the 1960s. Unlike earlier Healthy Realist Films, such as Li Xing’s *Beautiful Ducklings*, that often depict Taiwanese opera as negative and degraded; *Goodbye Darling* leave out the moral judgment and only presents it as a part of common people’s life, and a public gathering in the countryside. In fact, Bai Jingrui’s film treats traditional musical troupe and outdoor opera group with sympathy, purposely showing the harsh condition of their works.

Similarly, although the protagonist Ah-Lang is presented as the country’s past and a nobody in the society, he is still endowed with some admirable characteristics; that is to say, being a hooligan in town, he is not at all a negative figure. Different from earlier Healthy Realist

---

142 According to Lu Feii, the KMT party collaborated with the Ministry of Education and another eleven government sectors to proposal a ban on outdoor Taiwanese opera because of its “potential drawbacks.” Although the ban was not passed in 1950, the government continued setting indirect restrictions for the showing of Taiwanese opera. For example, in 1952, the business of Taiwanese opera was greatly impacted by the campaign of “change the folk traditions, save money on religious practice.” See Lu, Feii. p. 60-61.

143 In Chen Yingzhen’s “General Family,” the troop mainly plays for funerals. The musical troops can still be seen in Taiwan nowadays, but mostly in the countryside.

144 In fact, many early Taiwanese dialect films are recordings of the outdoor Taiwanese operas. In Lu Feii’s study, he points out that the earliest Taiwanese dialect films were produced with the support, the actors, and the stories from the outdoor operas. See Lu Feii, p. 81.

145 For example, in *Beautiful Ducklings*, the two villains are associated with the Taiwanese opera performing group, and when they want to take the film’s protagonist, Xiaoyue, into their business, Xiaoyue’s foster father becomes extremely worried as the opera performers are often looked down by the society.
Films that center on an unrighteous protagonist, Ah- Lan is an anti-heroic character. He always shows up in a nonchalant manner, chewing gum, wearing a wooden sandal, and talking in Taiwanese dialect. As a grown-up man, he does not have any savings and can hardly pay rent for his small apartment. Instead of finding a proper job, he lives off women and continues gambling all his money away. In other CMPC films, a character like Ah- Lang would have become the antagonist, and being used as a counter-example to the KMT government’s policies; however, he is depicted as a charming hero who wins Gui- zhi’s heart in Bai Jingrui’s original version. Gui- zhi has always thought of Ah- Lang as a hooligan, but changes her mind after seeing him arguing with the bargirl that pays for his living expenses. When reproached by the jealous bargirl at the market, Ah- Lang takes off the clothes and shoes that the bargirl buys him and makes a scene in public, claiming that he refuses to be controlled by her simply because she pays for his luxuries. His unconstrained life and simple nature make him the Casanova and an idiosyncratic hero in the town.

However, before Goodbye Darling was released, the government disapproved the backward national image presented in the film and required Bai Jingrui to modify it. As a result, Bai Jingrui had to include new footage after the death of Ah- Lang in a car crash to show the modern image of Taiwan. In this extra scene, Bai Jingrui arranges the musical troupe to march through the more modernized area of Taipei, and instead of playing for the funerals or festive celebrations; the troupe promotes motorcycles made in Taiwan. Echoing the earlier scene of the parade advertising for the touring of a Taiwanese opera, the final parade’s banners say, “SYM domestic racing motorcycle” and “Creating masculine charm,” which are followed by beautiful

146 It is important to note that the censor was more disturbed by the backward representation of the nation instead of the steaming sex scene in Goodbye Darling.
show girls and motorcycle riders showcasing the products (Figure 3.4- 3.5). SYM Sanyang Industry is a famous Taiwanese bicycle manufacturer that was established in 1954, and by the time Goodbye Darling was made, the company had already collaborated with Honda Motor Company in Japan to become the first auto company in Taiwan. In fact, Goodbye Darling is a very obvious case of placement marketing that purposely advertises the SYM Sanyang Industry.

By adding the scene, the film not only shows the clean and modernized street scene in Taipei, it also promotes the local manufacturing industry. This new ending ostensibly redeems Goodbye Darling from the entire film’s realist approach and echoes the government’s plan for the nation’s industrialization. Most importantly, the film concludes with a moral message from the extra diegetic narrator:

Now three-wheeled carriages no longer exist in our time, and the unapproved constructions are demolished. Instead, the glittery roads and skyscrapers substituted them. What about people like Ah-Lang? His impulsive romance and ways of living are hard to adjust to this country with adequate legal system and the industrial society; therefore, he deserves his fate and ending. We could only feel sorry for him and say, Goodbye Ah-Lang.147

This narrative emphasizes Taiwan’s socioeconomic transformation and how Ah-Lang, a symbol of Taiwan’s past and backwardness, should no longer be tolerated in late 1960s and early 1970s Taiwan. Along the same line, his death is interpreted as the punishment for his life and an unavoidable cost for the evolution of the society. Most importantly, this added scene illustrates

---

147 Translation and emphasis mine.
Figure 3.4  The final parade in *Goodbye Darling*.

Figure 3.5  Final parade in *Goodbye Darling*. 
the KMT government’s fetishization of progress: devaluing Taiwan’s past and the embarrassing postwar reality, while eagerly rushing to the nation’s bright future.

In an interview, Bai Jingrui explained his original intention of shooting Goodbye Darling in a realist style and his response to government censorship. He stressed how he was inspired by Italian neorealism to make films about people in Taiwan’s wisdom and courage at a time when most of the people were still poor. Using Roberto Rossellini’s Rome Open City (1945) and Federico Fellini’s La Strada (1954) as examples, he argued against the KMT government’s film policy and the healthy ideology, and suggested that audiences from all over the world wouldn’t despise a country simply because it is presented as poor in the film. Bai Jingrui recalled and commented what happened when his film displeased the censorship.

Possibly propelled by Chinese people’s face-saving nature, the government prohibited the representation of “poverty” in film at the time. As a result, I had to shoot extra scenes of the skyscrapers on the Dunhua South Road for Goodbye Darling to pass censorship because these shots illustrate how “modernized” and “affluent” Taiwan was at that time! However, I found this mentality very questionable because poverty is not something shameful. It is more about how you look at the social reality. Poverty can also be made into a form of art. If the country’s people were wise enough, the audience would not care so much about the external reality presented in the film; instead, they would notice the internal emotions in the movie and the nation’s spiritual outlook reflected in the film.149

---


149Ibid. Translation mine.
Although Bai Jingrui followed the government’s requirement to add an extra scene at the end, he still kept the rest of the film the way it was in a realist style. Countering the ending scene that praises Taiwan’s economic development, the rest of the film actually questions the rapid modernization and the sudden economic prosperity in Taiwan since the 1960s.

Contrary to Ah-Lang, who leads a carefree life without any income or savings, Gui-zhi serves as a constant reminder of the importance of a stable life and a growing bank account. She has a specific and progressive plan in mind: to start a life with Ah-Lang from small business to bigger dreams. When Gui-zhi presses Ah-Lang to marry her, Ah-Lang complains that he could hardly feed himself, not to mention take care of a family. As a result, Gui-zhi encourages Ah-Lang to start his own business with the money she steals from Old Monkey in a big city like Kaohsiung. However, Ah-Lang continues fooling around and can hardly keep up with any works that Gui-zhi finds him, such as selling cold drinks and watermelons. Out of frustration, Ah-Lang once complains that “I don’t know how to sell beef noodles; I only know how to eat it.” He only knows how to consume but not how to produce, and he does not have any goal of making a profit.

However, with Gui-zhi’s due date approaching, Ah-Lang is forced to find a way to get money for the newborn, which consequently leads him to take part in the capitalist system. One day, he comes home with pocket full of money, announcing that he finally got a job as a truck driver to deliver pigs from Kaohsiung to Taipei every early morning. For the first time in his life, he realizes the joy of work, but the nature of his work worries Gui-zhi. Ah-Lang explains that the pig raisers often feed the pigs to increase the pig’s weight before they are delivered, so it is Ah-Lang’s job to drive the pigs to the dealer before the pigs digest the food and lose the weight they gained superficially. That is to say, the fast delivery plays an extremely important role in
maintaining the value of the pigs and in getting a better price in the final transaction. Therefore, Ah- Lang has to compete with other truck drivers on their way to Taipei because the earlier he arrives at Taipei, the sooner the pigs can be weighed. Not only is the pig raiser calculative, Ah- Lang also becomes aware of the gain and loss. He tells Gui- zhi, “Why should people pay you if you don’t risk your life? I get paid fifty Taiwan dollars for overtaking one truck. If I pass five cars in one evening that would be two hundred fifty dollars, plus the daily wage.” Talking enthusiastically about market competition and profit making, Ah- Lang finally recognizes the rules in the capitalist economic and ways to survive the capitalist society.

At the end of the film, Gui- zhi sees the danger of Ah- Lang’s new job and threatens to leave him if he continues working for the truck company, but Ah- Lang becomes so immersed in this get- rich- quick business and his growing desire, so he still embarks on his pig delivery trip regardless of Gui- zhi’s warning. While Ah- Lang and his partner drives on the dark and winding road, Gui- zhi is seen sitting in a train that bound for Taipei as she is determined to leave Ah- Lang. From her window, Gui- zhi spots Ah- Lang’s truck racing with the other pig- delivery truck, and she tries to catch his attention by screaming out loud. However, when Ah- Lang thinks he has just passed his opponent’s truck, he gets distracted when he asks for his fifty dollar’s reward and misses the train that Gui- zhi is in. When Ah- Lang finally notices the approaching train, in order to avoid running into it, he crashes his truck to a ditch and is killed when the truck explodes.

Although the narrator in the extra scene interprets Ah- Lang’s death as a punishment for his irresponsible way of life, it is important to note that Ah- Lang’s death is a direct result of his pursuit of money and the capitalist dream in the original ending. His death pierces through an idealized capitalist dream and a belief that the harder one works, the more profits he gains.
Furthermore, it reveals the exploitative nature of capitalism. Ah- Lang’s death reveals the risk involved in the accumulation of the capital, which is often left out in the nation’s economic discourses and the government’s promotion of the economic development. For a nobody like Ah-Lang, who does not have any land or assets to start with, his body and labor, the so-called human capital, are the only capital he has. Although Ah- Lang is injured once because of the vicious competition among the truck drivers, he has to take the fatal trip because the pig raiser and the truck company have to make the most of their labor in order to maximize their profits. In other words, Ah- Lang, who thinks he is making good money, is unaware that he has become the subject of exploitation in the capitalist competition until his death. Furthermore, if looking at Ah-Lang’s get-rich-quick business as an allegory of Taiwan’s industrial development, the film shows a deep sense of anxiety towards Taiwan’s sudden economic boom. When all is happening too fast, what would happen next?

In addition to revealing the anxiety and danger behind Taiwan’s rapid industrialization and sudden economic leap, *Goodbye Darling* also shows how the nation’s economic changes influenced the lives of those socially marginalized. In Bai Jingrui’s adaptation of Chen Yingzhen’s story, he keeps the part about Gui-zhi being sold as a product that is circulated among various proprietors. She is first sold by her parents in exchange of cash, but is once again sold to Old Monkey from the owner of the musical troop while the transaction is covered under the name of Old Monkey’s love and the music troop owner’s sympathy. Although she attempts to run away from the endless reselling, she eventually returns to the musical troop at the end of the film to repay the money she steals from Old Monkey through her labor. As the ending of *Goodbye Darling* suggests, the economic boom gave the already marginalized and oppressed
class hope for class and social mobility, but it did not necessarily change their fate as the capitalist dream that the KMT government has prescribed.

*****

The Fetishization of Progress

The Government Information Office of Taiwan announced that the country had successfully transformed from an agriculture-based society to a modernized and industrialized nation in 1972.\footnote{Yu, Yeying. p. 146} To the KMT government, it was a great achievement since its withdrawal to Taiwan in 1949. Taiwan’s transformation from an agricultural society to an industrialized society means that the KMT government’s effort in modernizing and constructing postwar Taiwan has finally paid off. The success only triggered the KMT government to plan for more economic and industrial construction plans, such as the famous “Ten Major Development Projects” that was commenced in 1973.

From the late 1960s to the early 1970s, Taiwan cinema reflected the great socioeconomic changes by shifting the focus from the rural to the urban setting. In the mid-1960s, CMPC’s Healthy Realist Films function to showcase the government’s construction in the countryside and the success of infrastructural development. Only a few years later, the entire film industry in Taiwan shifted its attention to urban settings, presenting Taiwan as an affluent and modern society. Claiming to cater the audience’s interest with genre films, CMPC still incorporate the government’s economic policies in its filmmaking, such as the plans of developing light industrialization and export processing industry. However, both CMPC and other private companies also question in their films the KMT government’s obsession for development: What
happen to people who were left behind the nation’s feverish pursuit of progress and capitalism? Were the changes necessarily leading to a brighter future? Taking the disguise of popular urban comedies and dramas, these films address the anxieties behind the nation’s rapid industrialization and a get-rich-quick dream.

With varying degree of success, these urban films reveal two underlying problems of the KMT government’s fetishization of progress: the denial and covering of the embarrassing past and postwar reality, and the contradiction between progress and traditional values. As Bai Jingrui’s Goodbye Darling shows, the government was obsessed with the nation’s modernized image, purposely bracketing the backward reality experienced by many people in Taiwan. If we compare Li Xing’s films made before and after the Healthy Realist Film Movement, Our Neighbors (1963) and Oyster Girls, the contrast between the two films’ depiction of Taiwan is clear. In Our Neighbors, it shows the mainland émigrés living in the ghetto, working at the bottom of the society; however, this poor and dirty image of Taiwan is nowhere to be found in Healthy Realist films like Oyster Girls, which depict the countryside as clean and picturesque. In fact, not all the émigrés following the KMT government to Taiwan are high officials or civil servants; there are many commoners who abandoned all their proprieties on the mainland and fled across the strait. Therefore, when they came to Taiwan, they have lost their life savings and live in shabby neighborhoods like the one presented in Our Neighbors. In other words, the prosperous images of Taiwan in Healthy Realist Films are mere disguises, or a form of the nation’s wish-fulfillment. Although the industrialization and economic growth gradually changed the city landscape of Taiwan in the late 1960s, the majority of the people still live in two or three story buildings as illustrated in Ah- Lang and Gui-Zhi’s apartment in Goodbye Darling instead of the new apartment complex and skyscrapers at the added scene in the film.
Most importantly, the sacrifice made by citizens for the government’s eager pursuit of economic development is often covered up to create a capitalist dream. With more flexibility, filmmakers outside of the CMPC tend to attack this illusion, as manifested in *Accidental Trio* and *Goodbye Darling*; in fact, Ah-Lang in *Goodbye Darling* is the best example of a commoner crashed by the shining capitalist dream. However, it is until later in Taiwan New Cinema movement after the 1980s that filmmakers come back to unravel what has been buried and left out by the nation’s obsession of progress.

The other issue manifested in most of the urban movies in the late 1960s to early 1970s is the contradiction between the KMT government’s forward-looking ideology and traditional values. In his discussion of Healthy Realist Films, Hong Guo-Juin maintains that there is a paradoxical relationship between stasis and change. He argues that the notion of stasis, such as “familial relationships, Confucian ethics, national culture,”¹⁵¹ are implanted in Healthy Realism; however, these cultural traditions that is often imagined as timeless are confronted with unavoidable changes. In Hong Guo-Juin’s words, “the *stasis* of realist aesthetics in the service of the Nationalist ideology of unchanging values and unified nationhood would eventually become incompatible with the inevitable *change* demanded by the rising pressure of nation-building by modernization. Healthy Realism is finally this dynamic paradoxical *stasis of change*.¹⁵² This is particularly true in the late 1960s and the early 1970s Taiwan when national economy went through great transformation. Unlike the KMT’s filmmaking in the 1930s Shanghai that is consistent with traditional values, such as the four social bonds embraced by the New Life Movement, Taiwan cinema could no longer avoid direct confrontation with the

---


¹⁵² Ibid. p. 77.
socioeconomic changes since the 1960s. In the late 1960s, Taiwan cinema was further torn between traditional Confucian ethics and the spirit of capitalism, and the questions appeared as to how traditional values, especially those related to savings and control of capitalist desires, were going to respond to a moral evil of the capitalist economy. As presented in Dawei and Meiyun’s father’s debate on tradition and progress in *The Bride and I*, Taiwan cinema during the time struggled to negotiate the forward-looking ideology and traditional values that the KMT government tried to uphold. However, for the national economic purposes, some of the cultural values were compelled to change eventually. For example, as I will discuss in the following chapter, in order to fulfill the demand of female labor in the export-processing zone and textile industry, the KMT government had to justify the changing feminine virtues.

Although most of the urban comedies and dramas in the late 1960s and early 1970s Taiwan reflect the transforming society and support the government’s economic policies, they also reveal doubts and anxieties toward the government’s obsession with progress within and outside of the KMT’s studio system. Still, their commercial value was great and helped maintain a vibrant film market in Taiwan during the time. In fact, the switch to Healthy Variety-Show and genre films was the major reason that helped stabilize the CMPC’s management in the 1970s. From 1970 to 1974, the party-owned CMPC still produced and distributed twenty-three movies, which made it the top production and distribution company in Taiwan during the time. 153 Although the CMPC was faced with all kinds of competitions, it still managed to keep up with the market trend throughout the 1970s whereas all the other small companies gradually declined in the second half of the 1970s. Instead of tightening its regulations for the new film companies in order to protect its party-owned CMPC, the KMT government survived the competition because

153 Lu Feii. Table 4 and 6.
the small film companies in Taiwan were either closed or merged by other more perceptive Hong Kong companies in the mid-1970s.\textsuperscript{154} After Gong Hong stepped down from his leadership in CMPC in 1972 when his health condition deteriorated, the CMPC was handed to Mei Changlin, who made a clear distinction between national policy films and commercial movies.\textsuperscript{155} In response to Taiwan’s diplomatic crisis in the early 1970s, Mei Changlin fulfilled the CMPC’s political mission by making anti-Japanese films, but, at the same time, he hired young directors to make commercial movies, mostly romance and comedies, in order to keep up with the company’s revenue. As a result, the urban movies, as in comedies and in romance, continued dominating the film market in the 1970s Taiwan.

\textsuperscript{154} In the second half of the 1970s, small companies in Taiwan were either closed or merged by Hong Kong companies. In fact, the film industry noticed the problems and difficulties of independent filmmaking in Taiwan as early as 1974. While he was enthusiastic about independent film production in 1973, Liu Yafou, one of the eager advocates of the movement, saw the regression of independent film productions as he discussed in his article “Prospects for Independents Are Still Bright” (\textit{Cinemart} 51 (1943): 20-21). He looked at the reasons behind the changing power dynamic between Hong Kong and Taiwan film industries, and one of the reasons is that the Hong Kong film industry was able to adapt to the Asian market more quickly. To begin with, there were fewer restrictions in filmmaking in Hong Kong, and that Hong Kong companies were more productive and more perceptive to the market demand. For example, once discovering the potential Japanese market, the Hong Kong companies deleted the politically sensitive elements and modified the anti-Japanese themes in films. As a result, the Hong Kong film companies began to thrive, and, seeing the victory of the Hong Kong companies, more and more small companies in Taiwan began to entrust companies in Hong Kong to produce movies for them.

\textsuperscript{155} Health issue is only one of the reasons why Gong Hong resigned from the CMPC. In his memoir, he revealed the other reasons that made him leave the CMPC. He claimed that he had a difficult time working with the new CMPC president Hu Jianzhong and could not gain any support from him in the company. Furthermore, he revealed that he was a victim of the White Terror, and was framed by other party members; therefore, he felt very disappointed about the Taiwan government during the time. Because of these frustrations, he decided to leave CMPC, where he stayed for nine years. See Gong, Hong, and Tianjie Gong. p. 166-171.
In the second half of the 1960s, one woman’s name dominated the film industry in Taiwan. Her name is Qiong Yao, who is a popular romance novelist and columnist based in Taiwan. At the age of twenty-five, she began her writing career with the publication of her long story, *Outside the Window*, in *Crown Magazine* in 1963. Seeing the popularity of her novels, the CMPC purchased the adaptation rights of her books and began to make them into films in the mid-1960s. Her first movie debut is *Four Lovers* (1965) directed by Li Xing, and the box office success of the movie quickly resulted in a Qiong Yao fever among young adults. Most importantly, the film adaptations of her romance novels inspired many other romance films in both Taiwan and Hong Kong film industries.

With the socioeconomic transformation and the change of audience structure, martial arts (*wuxia*) and romance films (*aiqing wenyi pian*) became the most popular film genres in the late 1960s Taiwan. Although both genres developed highly stylized narrative, they were treated differently by the KMT government during the time. Targeting male audience, the martial arts movie was extremely popular in Taiwan since 1967 when King Hu’s *Dragon Gate Inn* was released, and the number of martial art films made in 1968 reached to forty-five, the highest

---

156 Qiong Yao is her pen name; her real name is Chen Zhen.


158 For details on socioeconomic changes in the late 1960s Taiwanese society and film industry, see Chapter Three.
point from 1958 to 1982. During the time, Hong Kong was the dominant producer of the genre, but Taiwan still managed to produce some martial arts classics, such as King Hu’s *Dragon Gate Inn* and *A Touch of Zen* (1971). However, alarmed by the genre’s violent and murderous themes, the martial arts film was soon regulated by the KMT government beginning in 1968. In fact, it was the second time that the KMT censors took issue with the martial arts genre since its first attack on the “martial art- magic spirit films” in 1931.

Different from martial art movies, romance films were embraced, if not encouraged, by the CMPC and the official censors. Because the earliest Qiong Yao movies were made by CMPC directors and played by actors who were affiliated with the CMPC during the time, critics often see them as developing from the Healthy Realist Film Movement and, as Lin Wenchi calls it, as the “Healthy Realistic Romanticism.” Gong Hong also suggested that Qiong Yaio’s romance does not contradict the government’s healthy filmmaking direction when the CMPC switched from Healthy Realism to Healthy Variety-Show. Therefore, approved by the state authority, romance films quickly developed into a group of woman’s films, which include romance and maternal film. Targeting female audiences, these movies focus on more than romantic relationships, but also the melodramatization of the domestic sphere.

---

159 Lu, Feii. Table 12.

160 Starting from May 1968, the Ministry of Education began to show great concerns toward the popularity of martial art movies by reinstating the government’s “healthy ideology” and strengthening the censorship. See Zhang, Yingjin. p.141. In fact, the KMT government’s troubled relationship with martial art film began as early as the 1930s when it first attacked the “martial art- magic spirit films.” For discussions on KMT government’s censorship on martial art movies in 1931, see Zhang Zhen’s “The Anarchic Body Language of the Martial Arts Film” in *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen: Shanghai Cinema, 1896-1937* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005).


162 Gong, Hong, and Tianjie Gong. p. 127.
In this chapter, I investigate the impact of socioeconomic changes on the KMT government’s discourse of mother and woman’s films, particularly maternal film, in 1970s’ Taiwan. To begin, I trace mother’s cinematic image and her social function to the 1930s Shanghai, and examine how her role in film was used to articulate different political and ideological positions. Building on the master mother narrative passing down from KMT’s filmmaking in the 1930s, the representation of mother in classic Qiong Yao romance films, such as *Silent Wife* (1965), I maintain, only reinforced ideal womanhood and the male fantasy of pre-Oedipal mother during the 1960s. Then I turn to maternal films in the 1970s Taiwan, and examine the influence of the female worker boom and the unofficial feminist movement on the society’s mother discourse. By looking at Song Cunshou’s *Story of Mother* (1973) and Li Xing’s *Life with Mother* (1971), which show a different treatment of mother’s sexuality and mother-child bonding, I argue that a new mother discourse was born to challenge the limited traditional mother paradigm that the KMT government had long kept intact.

*****

*Women’s Film: wenyi Films, Melodrama, Romance, and Maternal Films*

Before I turn to the examination of maternal films and the mother discourse, I feel compelled to discuss the development of romance, or *aiqing wenyi pian*, in Chinese cinema and explain what *wenyi* film is. The literal translation of *aiqing wenyi pian* is “romance literature-and- art film.” Although *wenyi*, which means “literature- and- art,” is often translated as melodrama, as it embodies similar traits of western melodrama— polarization of good and evil, exaggerated performance, dramatization, and highly emotional themes— it is important to note some of the problems with the one- to- one correspondence between melodrama and *wenyi*. The
making-alike of melodrama and wenyi can imply the hierarchal relationship between the authentic and the dupe; furthermore, some of the characteristics of wenyi cannot be fully translated into a different language and a different culture. In her study of wenyi films, Emily Yue-yu Yeh points out the differences between wenyi films and western melodrama; for example, whereas wenyi films focus on words and literature, as its Chinese name has suggested, western melodrama usually heightens emotions through music. Furthermore, melodrama’s preoccupation with class tension and sexual desire is not completely translated into wenyi films.\(^{163}\) Productive as it is to compare Chinese wenyi films to western melodrama, it is also unwise to conflate the two and to view wenyi as the Chinese equivalent of melodrama. Therefore, I leave wenyi untranslated to serve as a reminder of the term’s indigenous root in Chinese culture and its cultural specificities.

Most of the Chinese film scholars find wenyi’s root in Chinese modern theatrical performance. Film scholar Stephen Teo traces wenyi to crude stage play (wenming xi), a type of drama that was popular in the early 1900s Shanghai, and argues that the play’s focus on romantic relationship and family ethics continued evolving to the modern day wenyi films.\(^{164}\) On the other hand, Emily Yue-yu Yeh argues that the word wenyi was borrowed from the Japanese word, bungei, in the 1920s, and it has the connotation of foreign or western adaptation.\(^{165}\) Echoing Emily Yue-yu Yeh’s argument that wenyi is closely related to literary adaption, film critic and scholar Tsai Kuorong maintains that wenyi’s focus on literature (wen) brings it to a contrast with martial arts film, which emphasizes actions and martial arts (wu). He also observes that Chinese

\(^{163}\) Yeh, Yueh- yu Emily. “Pitfalls of Cross- Cultural Analysis: Chinese wenyi Film and Melodrama.” p. 442.

\(^{164}\) Teo, Stephen. p. 206. Wenming xi is often seen as the prototype of modern stage play in China, and it had a great impact on early Chinese film industry in terms of the actor’s performance and storytelling methods.

wenyi films developed in two directions: family ethic film (jiating lunli ju) and romance (aiqing wenyipian). The former is more common in movies from the 1950s and the early Healthy Realist Film, such as Oyster Girls, Beautiful Ducklings, Orchids and My Love, The Road, just to name a few. Most of these films emphasize the father figure whereas the mother fades into the background or is simply absent. In other words, in most of the family ethic films, father plays an important role in connecting the family members together. However, according to Tsai Kuorong, family ethic film gradually declined in the late 1960s as a result of the changing social structure from traditional extended family to nuclear family. Furthermore, the changing audience structure also led to the decline of the genre as more and more young adults lost interest in family ethics film’s moral didacticism. On the contrary, romance began to dominate the market since the 1970s, particularly the romance adapted from Qiong Yao’s novels.

Most of the film critics agree that Qiong Yao’s romance movies are utopic and escapist; therefore, they do not seem to challenge the mainstream ideology. One of the escapist characteristics of Qiong Yao movies can be found in the portrayal of the female characters, who are women, as Chen Ru-shou summarizes, “with pretty faces and a kind heart. They don’t eat or drink, and they don’t need to sleep in the film. All they need to do is to be in love.” Additionally, according to Zhang Yingjin and Lu Feii, Qiong Yao’s romances function to mediate love, family and social order, and to support the patriarchal tradition and strengthen the national identity. Lu Feii observes that Qiong Yao’s romance often employs the theme of social differences as the story’s premise and illustrate how love transcends social and economic

---

166 Tsai, Kuorong. p. 295.
167 Ibid.
168 Chen Ru-shou. p. 126
Romance film creates an illusion that love transcends all kinds of differences, offering its audience an outlet when facing the difficulties in life. It makes audience believe that love can overcome the chasm of economic or class differences, and love can make each other tolerate the differences.\textsuperscript{170}

Not only is romance film harmless to mainstream ideology, it is also seen as safe to the dominant male culture. In “Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism’s Other,” Andreas Huyssen observes gender inscriptions in the mass culture debate. He maintains that mass culture is traditionally devalued and gendered as feminine while “high art,” the “real and authentic culture,” is presented in a masculine term and discussed in a privileged realm. Additionally, woman is positioned as reader of inferior literature and consumer of the mass culture.\textsuperscript{171} As a result, romance film, which is often seen as paradigmatic woman’s film, continued to be made side by side with the more \textit{serious} anti-Japanese films in CMPC after 1972. Led by the Qiong Yao fever, romance quickly became the dominant form of Chinese \textit{wenyi} films during the late 1960s to early 1970s. Because of its popularity and good reception by the KMT government, directors, including Li Xing, Wang Yin, Bai Jingrui, and Song Cunshou, were all devoted to the making of romance films during the time, and the popularity of the genre continued to the 1980s and 1990s when Qiong Yao’s works were turned into television melodramas.

\textsuperscript{170} Ibid. p. 133. Translation mine.

Like western melodrama, wenyi film, particularly romance, is often seen as exemplary woman’s films. To begin with, romance films’ target audience are female students and female workers in the factories, and these films aim to provide women with an outlet for fantasy or, in Lu Feii’s words, “to caress a sense of alienation that woman experiences” resulting from tedious work and modern family life. Romance films are successful commercial products that cater to female audiences’ interest by casting popular stars from Hong Kong and Taiwan during the time, the “Two Qin, Two Lin (er qin er lin)” formula. “Two Qin” refers to the two male actors who often star in romance films, Qin Han and Charlie Qin, “Two Lin” Brigitte Lin and Joan Lin, the two female stars who play in these films. Furthermore, these films center on women’s life and experience that female spectators can easily relate to. In most of the cases, the female protagonists are, first and foremost, devoted lovers, but they also take on other roles as daughter, sister, and mother. Whereas most of the film scholarships focus on romance protagonist’s struggles in love, her confrontation with the authoritative father figure, and her competition with her sister, not much attention has been paid to her role as a mother. It does not mean that mother serves a minor role in the genre; quite to the contrary, she is an important figure in romance film. She is sometimes the mother figure guarding traditional virtues and deciding her daughter’s marriages, but other times, she is the female protagonist herself, caught between her love and her duty as a mother.

Whereas maternal melodrama is often seen as a distinct sub-genre in 1930s and 1950s Hollywood melodrama films, most of the wenyi films with a prominent maternal theme are often


173 One of the exceptions is Lin Wenchi’s article that explores the role of working women. See Lin Wenchi’s “More than Escapist Romantic Fantasies: Revisiting Qiong Yai Films of the 1970s.”
loosely categorized under romance, overlooked by Taiwan film scholars. As Mary Ann Doane argues in her study of Hollywood maternal melodramas, melodrama is a privileged form in cinema to investigate motherhood, to quote her words, “Melodrama and the maternal: two discourses of the obvious which have a semiotic resonance. Both are inscribed as sign systems which are immediately readable, almost too explicit.” Most of the Hollywood maternal melodramas follow a popular narrative in relation to mother to address issues of motherhood since the 1920s. It began with *Way Down East* (1921), *Stella Dallas* (1925), and *Madame X* (1920, 1929), and flourished in the 1930s, with films such as *Blonde Venus* (1932), and the remakes of *Madame X* (1937) and *Stella Dallas* (1937).

The representation of mother in Chinese cinema also has a long and complex history; however, compared to other forms in cinema, wenyi film, particularly romance film, offers a more focused depiction of motherhood and child rearing experience to examine the construct of “mother” and of “woman.” Beginning with Li Xing’s *Silent Wife* (1965), more and more romance films with a maternal theme or wenyi films on the close bonding between mother and child appeared on screen, such as *Mother and Daughter* (1971), and *Life with Mother* (1973).

Before I turn to these maternal films in 1960s and 1970s, I first trace the KMT government’s discourse of motherhood to the cinematic representations of mother and mothering back to the

---

174 One of the rationales behind this categorization is because most of the maternal wenyi films also involve mother’s romantic relationships. Or, similar to western maternal melodramas, the role of mother is deeply involved in her child’s romantic relationships.

175 Mary Ann Doane. *The Desire to Desire: The Woman’s Film of the 1940s*. p. 71.

1930s Shanghai. By so doing, I also hope to show the changing representation of mother and the society’s dominant mother discourse.

*****

The Discourse of Motherhood in 1930s Shanghai: Pathos and Sufferings

In his famous article, “Who is Without Sin? The Maternal Melodrama in American Film, 1930-39,” Christian Viviani maintains that both European and Hollywood maternal melodramas cannot avoid the “mother’s fall.” He suggests that maternal melodramas often show

the story of a failure and a descent to anonymity or oblivion. Happy endings in this genre are as common as unhappy endings, but the former often have a false or tacked-on quality, do not really affect the basic pessimism of the maternal melos and may be used by talented film-makers as an unconscious prolongation of the characters’ desire. 177

Mary Ann Doane echoes Viviani’s argument and suggests that the thematic pattern of mother’s “descending to anonymity” functions to trigger pathos, which is a major affective mode in melodrama used to evoke the audience’s pity and intense emotional response. She draws on Jacques Goimard’s argument that “the pathetic is produced more easily through the misfortunes of women, children, animals, or fools,”178 and argues that pathos is reinforced by the suffering

177 Christian Viviani, p. 86. Emphasis added.
and powerlessness of the weak and the socially marginalized. The 1930s Chinese maternal films are all about pathos; however, the same suffering image of mother means differently in left-wing cinema and other films under the KMT’s guidance.

In progressive leftist movies, the representation of mother and her suffering is used to mobilize the discussion of class struggle as shown in movies like Wu Younggang’s *Goddess* (1934) and Cai Chusheng’s *New Woman* (1934). Most of the leftist movies depict a devastated mother, who lacks social power or engages in prostitution. They are what Stephen Teo calls “wenyi madonna,” the female character from the inferior class but possess certain kind of strength. These leftist films on motherhood often follow the formula of mother sacrificing for the better future of her child; however, as a woman from the lower or middle class, the poor mother usually is oppressed by both class and patriarchal social structure and ends up losing the child tragically. Wu Younggang’s *Goddess*, as its Chinese title *shenu* suggests, presents the mother figure as both a prostitute and as a loving goddess. In order to give her son proper education and to protect him from the villainous gambler, who views the mother and child as his properties, the mother is left with no other alternative but to carry on with her work as a prostitute. However, her sacrifice turns out to be futile when she accidentally kills the gambler and is sentenced to life imprisonment. When her son’s compassionate school principal comes to visit the mother in prison, she asks him to tell her son that she is dead because she does not want her son to be ashamed of having a mother like her. As the final intertitle followed by her son’s smiling face says, “The quiet prison life is the only peaceful time in her whole life. She

179 Teo, Stephen. p.208
180 The term literally means “goddess,” but it is sometimes used to refer to “prostitute.”
envisages her son’s bright future…” This ending illustrates mother’s “descent to anonymity” as Mary Ann Doane argues in her study of maternal melodrama:

The price to be paid for the child’s social success is the mother’s descent into anonymity, the negation of her identity (quite frequently this descent is justified by the narrative on the surface by making her an unwed and hence explicitly guilty, mother). She must be relegated to the status of silent, unseen and suffering support.181

The film shows that a mother sacrifices her life and her freedom for her son without any regrets, yet she could only support him in the dark, away from his life. Most importantly, Goddess addresses a mother’s predicament and her contradictory positions under the patriarchal order. In Confucian ethics, a mother is forced to focus on her child; however, a fallen mother, no matter how kind and virtuous she is, cannot be a proper mother to her child and she is punished with the unavoidable fate of lifetime separation from her child.

Cai Chusheng’s New Woman is another prototype of the story about a mother’s loss of her child due to her lack of social and economic agencies, and in films like New Woman, the class issues are highlighted through the representation of motherhood. In New Woman, the protagonist Wei Ming is a single mother, whose daughter suffers pneumonia and is in need of medical treatment. However, Wei Ming’s unemployment, which is a result of her suitor’s backstab, leaves her no money to pay for her daughter’s hospitalization. After Wei Ming is turned down by

181 Mary Ann Doane, “The ‘Woman’s Film’: Possession and Address.” p. 74. Viviani also observes the same thematic pattern, “The mother watches the social rise of her child from afar; she cannot risk jeopardizing his fortunes by contamination with her own bad repute. Chance draws them together again, and the partial or total rehabilitation of the mother is accomplished, often through a cathartic trial scene” (86).
the hospital, the camera follows the poor mother’s gaze to look at the medicine bottles on the shelf, and the empty beds in the hospital room. She could only look at objects of desire that seem always out of reach. Eventually, her daughter succumbs to illness and dies in front of her, leading the miserable mother to commit suicide. The melodramatic scene of a desperate mother being turned down by the hospital can also be found in other leftist films, such as Shi Hui’s *Mother* (1949). The refusal of medical care stages a moment of despair and the pathos; furthermore, it is often deployed to demonstrate the oppression of the poor. Many leftist films with the theme of motherhood present woman as victims of patriarchal oppression, and how women’s social mobility is often restricted compared to men’s. Additionally, they serve as critiques of social inequality, showing that class differences as the origin of all the tragedies. As the distraught mother in *New Woman* says after the death of her daughter, “We don’t have power to change the society,” the unfortunate mother in leftist films could only place her hope on her child. Similarly, in *Mother*, after the hospital gate closes behind the poor mother, the mother tells her son that “don’t let me down! Be a doctor for the poor,” and her words inspired her son to open a clinic for those who cannot afford hospital visits.

Whereas leftist films articulate social injustice through mother’s hardship and suffering, other films supporting the KMT government’s cultural policy, such as Luo Mingyou’s *Song of Kind Mother* (1937), are to advocate and reinforce traditional family relationships. These films preach filial piety through the story of mother’s perpetual suffering and devotion to her children. In return, the kind mother is respected and rewarded with life in comfort and happiness at the old age. In other words, in these non-leftist films, the mother’s “descending to anonymity” is a setup for her dramatic resurrection in the end. Different from the mother figure in leftist movies that are forced to prostitute their bodies, the one in KMT’s filmmaking remains chaste and virtuous
despite the social difficulties she faces. *Song of a Kind Mother* is one of the examples of how the representation of mother is used to advocate filial piety. The film tells a story about a pitiable mother, who humbly labors for her sons and their families, but all of them turn her away, leaving her living alone in a shelter for old and homeless people. Among her six children, the oldest son, a doctor, is the wealthiest yet the stingiest. The most intense moment of the mother’s suffering in the film is when the oldest son is asked to take care of other sick people at the shelter, but he pretends that he doesn’t see his mother there. Finally, the only dutiful son comes back in time to save his mother, whereas the oldest son is punished for his heartlessness. The film ends with a happy *datuanyuan*, when the suffering mother forgives her son’s deeds of impiety and is carried on a sedan chair, respected by all the villagers. In a way, the scene of the poor mother carried up by her sons and villagers shows the literal and visual *elevation* of mother from anonymity and from the bottom of “mother’s fall.” Through the mother’s suffering and the punishment of the defiant son, the story emphasizes motherly love and reinstates traditional family value, which is in line with the KMT proposed ideology in the 1930s China.

*****

*Mother Discourse in the 1960s Taiwan: Male Fantasy and the Silent Mother*

Representations of the mother in the 1960s Taiwan cinema followed the KMT’s filmmaking tradition in the 1930s, shaping the mother figure into a virtuous woman, whose sacrifice is rewarded with her children’s respect. In fact, after the KMT government started the Healthy Realist Film Movement and its Cultural Renaissance campaign in the 1960s, the control for the representation of mother is reinforced, for mother is the very embodiment of Chinese cultural traditions and ideal womanhood. According to feminist historian Lee Jen-der, the discourse of
ideal femininity proposed by the KMT government during the time is structured around the married woman (fu): “in traditional Chinese patriarchal society, the most important role for woman is fu, whose primary job is to be in charge of cooking and to bear children.”¹⁸² Lee Jen- der’s argument is derived from the traditional code of conduct for women, the “three obedience and four virtues” (san cong si de), which requires a woman to obey her father before marriage, her husband when married, and sons in widowhood, and to have the virtues of morality, proper speech, modest manner, and diligent work. In this code of conduct, two out of the three roles are designated for married women. The reason why the representation of married woman, particularly the mother figure is so important to the KMT government is because it also carries an anti-communist function. Women in Taiwan during the Past Twenty Years, a government publication in 1965, explains why the government holds celebration for Mother’s Day and the election of Model Mother every year, and suggests that

[These events show mothering] as the most important element in the government’s proposal for moral education. They also show the government’s hope that mother can carry the sacred responsibilities of educating their children. On the other hand, children should appreciate the greatness of maternal love and further motivate themselves to be loyal to the nation, and to be filial to the parents…. At the same time, it shows how mothers are respected by our society

today. It differs from inhuman communist that destroys families and abuses morality. It shows a drastic contrast.\textsuperscript{183}

In other words, mother plays an important role in promoting nationalism because she is the bearer and educator of the nation’s future patriotic citizens. Furthermore, the representation of the virtuous mother is deployed to articulate the KMT government’s humanist stance and moral superiority ostensibly in contrast to the communist enemy.

Based on one of Qiong Yao’s stories in her famous collection, \textit{Six Dreams}, Li Xing’s \textit{Silent Wife} is an example of the virtuous mother paradigm proposed by the KMT government in the 1960s. The story not only shows a woman’s loyalty to her husband; it also emphasizes mother’s role as a moral educator. The protagonist in \textit{Silent Wife}, Yiyi, is a deaf and mute woman marrying into a traditional family by arranged marriage. Although her husband, Jingyan, loves her deeply, his attitude changes after the birth of their daughter, Ruixue, who is also deaf. Fearing that their second child would also be deaf, Jingyan forces Yiyi to have an abortion; however, after Yiyi’s abortion, Jingyan abandons the family as he is tormented by guilt, leaving Yiyi to take care of the entire family and bring up Ruixue alone. Although Jingyan tries to connect with his family after he settles down in Shanghai, his possessive mistress hides the letters Yiyi has sent from home and consequently delays Jingyan’s return home. When Jingyan finally travels home, Yiyi, who has faithfully waiting for him for her entire life, has passed away.

As the schoolmaster once praises, “She [Yiyi] is a handicapped woman, but what she does makes us healthy men feel ashamed of ourselves.” Although Yiyi is deaf, she embodies all the

\textsuperscript{183} Er Shi Nian Lai De Taiwan Fu Nü [Women In Taiwan During the Past Twenty Years]. Taipei: Taiwan Province Woman’s Writing Association [Taiwan Sheng fu nü xie zuo xie hui], 1965. p. 361. Translation and emphasis mine.
virtues valued by Confucian teachings: She is a loyal wife, a filial daughter-in-law, a good mother, and “the angel in the house,” whose domesticity, piety, and submissiveness reflect ideal femininity, the “three obedience and four virtues.” Yiyi is a talented and down-to-earth woman, who spends most of her time doing embroidery in her room; on the contrary, Jingyan’s mistress is an extravagant woman, who is never satisfied with the plain clothes that Jingyan buys for her. Although Yiyi is thrifty in using her money, she is generous when it comes to public affairs. She donates all her embroidery works to the school for auction even when she is short on money. Furthermore, even though she is bullied by other family members, she never stops caring them, and it is particularly obvious after Jingyan’s sudden departure. Whereas her stingy sister-in-law refuses to pay for the old in-laws’ medical bills, Yiyi pawns her own jewelry for the entire family’s living expense. In other words, Yiyi is depicted as a kind and saintly woman, and her virtue is further reinforced by her silence.

Yiyi’s muteness causes her lifelong suffering, yet her silence is presented as a virtue in the film. Although Jingyan is disturbed by the fact that Yiyi is deaf and mute on their wedding night and wants to punish her by letting her “sit secluded like a clay-made goddess sculpture,” he quickly falls in love with this silent “clay-made goddess sculpture” once he sees her beauty. Astonished by her appearance, Jingyan agrees to sleep with her, and he continues sitting on the bed, looking obsessively at Yiyi putting on her makeup in front of the mirror the next morning. In a way, the film suggests that Yiyi’s appearance makes up for her muteness; and her very presence provides the visual pleasure for her husband. Like the meaning of his Chinese name, which literally means “silent-words,” Jingyan gradually learns to appreciate the merit of silence and to indulge in the pleasure of looking at his wife.184

184 In one of the scenes, people at the school for the hearing impaired claim that Jingyan is the best candidate for the school principal because, like his name, his life is filled with people who are deaf and mute.
Moreover, silence is seen as a virtue for woman because it implies her integrity and tolerance. Therefore, Yiyi’s physical deficiency is turned into an advantage in her marriage. The movie shows that men prefer women who are quiet and as Jingyan once writes in a couplet, “It would be meddling if flowers speak; stone is the most charming because it is quiet.” Different from her sister-in-laws, Yiyi never speaks ill of others, and she never complains. In her internal monologues, she always talks in an apologetic and pleading tone, and when her servant tries to speak up for her, she silences her. Her silence illustrates her good tolerance, her moral integrity, and her obedience. On the contrary, “wicked mouth” is seen a quality disdained by other male characters in the film, and women who talk too much are often labeled as malicious. Yiyi’s silence serves as a contrast to Jingyan’s mistress in Shanghai, who complains non-stop every time Jingyan visits. In one of the scenes, the mistress complains about Jingyan’s fear of commitment, and the camera shows the close-up of her mouth (Figure 4.1-4.2), whereas her words no longer match her mouth’s movement. Cutting to Jingyan’s painful expression, the camera shows how Jingyan only notices her mouth’s movement, whereas her voice is blurred and her words lose their meanings. The mistress is deemed as wicked because she talks too much, but ironically, her words are seen as hollow as the scene has demonstrated. Either born mute or silenced by men, almost all the female characters in Silent Wife lose their own voices, and it is men who speak for the voiceless women. It is best illustrated in the fact that the film is told from a male perspective, which begins with Jingyan recalling the virtues of his wife and narrating the life of his wife. On the other hand, Yiyi is silenced, not having a voice to express her pain and desire, and she does not have the ability to tell her own story, either.

Yiyi’s silence is seen as a virtue in the wifehood; however, it becomes a negative quality in mothering. Jingyan sees Yiyi’s muteness as a disease that passes down to their children;
Figure 4.1 Jingyan looking at his mistress in *Silent Wife*.

Figure 4.2 Close-up of Jingyan’s mistress’ mouth.
therefore, he stops the “misfortune” from continuing in the family line by forcing Yiyi to take an abortion when she is pregnant for the second time. Her deafness also becomes an obstacle in mothering; for example, she couldn’t hear Ruixue crying in the middle of the night, leaving some of her mothering responsibilities to her husband. Although Yiyi fails to fulfill certain maternal responsibilities because of her deafness and muteness, she holds a very strong bond with her daughter. Different from the usual mother-daughter relationship, Yiyi and Ruixue are also bonded through their muteness. In one of the scenes, Jingyan comes back from a meeting at the school for the hearing impaired and is hopeful that he could finally provide helps for his beloved daughter. However, he comes home to find Ruixue communicate with Yiyi with fluent sign language, something he has tried to learn with great difficulty. At the time, Yiyi is telling her daughter the importance of education, and their silent interaction is verbalized through subtitles in the movie. The scene is cut between the close up of Jingyan’s bewildered face and the mother-daughter’s quick sign language exchange; finally, Jingyan rushes into the room, shouting angrily at the innocent mother and daughter. The intimacy between the mother and daughter, and their shared knowledge mark Jingyan as an outsider in the family and in the parenting. As a result, the mother-daughter relationship poses a threat to Jingyan and it is finally resolved with the death of Yiyi at the end of the film.

Most of the maternal films deal largely with the Oedipus theme, and Silent Wife is no exception. According to Freud, the realization of mother’s castration is the crux in the development of a child’s sexual orientation. For the boy, he is propelled by the castration anxiety to shift his identification from his mother to his father; however, the girl undergoes a more complex process, which leads her to develop a penis envy and continue identifying with her mother. Later, Freud’s German student, Carl Jung, proposed the Electra complex, the parallel to
Freud’s Oedipus complex, which explains the formation of a girl’s sexuality. The Electra complex is a female child’s psychosexual competition with her mother for the possession of her father. It is through the identification with her mother that the girl resolves her Electra complex. Yiyi and Ruixue’s mother-daughter relationship in *Silent Wife* pushes the theme of family romance to an extreme and offers an alternative to the normal development of the Oedipus complex. To certain degree, Yiyi brings Ruixue up into a virtuous woman in order for her daughter to replace herself and to fulfill her duty as a devoted companion for Jingyan. On her deathbed, she tells Ruixue, “You are a good child, and the only consolation in my life… we are mute, so we could only accept the pain silently… Ruixue, you have to promise me that you will always stay by your father’s side and serve him. If he does not come back, you have to find a way to look for him.” After Jingyan’s return, Ruixue, like her mother, becomes the silent and faithful companion for Jingyan. As the ending shows, Ruixue clings to her father’s arm and look at him understandingly, while Jingyan draws her to his chest intimately. The two of them form a close bond that could never be possible with Yiyi’s presence. The mother-daughter relationship in *Silent Wife* therefore reaffirms the significant role of father, the phallus, and the symbolic as illustrated in Oedipus complex, and it portrays women as subordinate to the privileged male roles, whereas their submissiveness is to fulfill the male fantasy of ideal motherhood and womanhood.

Li Xing’s *Silent Wife* safely falls within the patriarchal structure and the KMT government’s official discourses of feminine norm. The sacrificing and suffering mother figure never transgresses the feminine code of conduct, the “three obedience, four virtues,” and,

---

selflessly, she devotes her life to her daughter and her husband. It is also important to note that the depiction of mother’s own sexual desire is erased in Silent Wife. However, the socioeconomic transformation in the late 1960s Taiwan gradually changed the representation of mother and the society’s expectation of mothering. A few years after Silent Wife was made, Taiwan cinema shifted to a more nuanced portrayal of mother, tackling on mother’s experience of ambivalence and contradictory demands in the 1970.

*****

Beyond Male Oedipal Drama

Tracing the changes in Hollywood movies from 1910-1940, Ann Kaplan distinguishes earlier maternal melodramas, which are mostly “male Oedipal dramas,” from a group of films in the late 1920s and 30s that she calls “woman’s film.” She argues that earlier Hollywood maternal melodramas are essentially male Oedipus dramas because the story is often told from the male child’s perspective and the representation of mother in these films are projection of male Oedipus fantasy. Whereas the male viewer identifies with the child, who adores the beautiful and kind mother, the female spectator internalizes the patriarchal structure and identifies with the ideal mother figure. On the other hand, “woman’s film” features strong and heroic mother figures and specifically addresses female spectators. With the strong mother

---

186 For the sake of clarity, I put a bracket to Ann Kaplan’s conception of “woman’s films,” which differs from a loosely defined film category that includes romance, maternal melodramas and “woman’s films.” In her essay, Kaplan also refers to this specific group of movies as “woman’s maternal film.” Some of the examples of male Oedipal drama given by Ann Kaplan include D. W. Griffith’s Mothering Heart (1913), True Heart Susie (1919), and Way Down East (1920). On the other hand, examples for “woman’s film” include Lois Weber’s The Blot (1921), Harold Brennan’s Dancing Mothers (1926), John Stahl’s Imitation of Life (1934), and King Vidor’s Stella Dallas (1937).

figure, these “woman’s films” show women transgressing the traditional roles required of them and resisting the dominant ideology. Kaplan maintains that

It is significant that in general the woman’s film, by virtue of being a resisting form, shows more sensitivity to social concerns than does the maternal melodrama, which situates itself more firmly in the terrain of unconscious Oedipal needs, fears, and desires. The woman’s film on the other hand puts more stress on the cognitive/conscious level, often foregrounding sociological issues and dealing more frequently with social institutions.\(^{188}\)

This distinction between maternal melodrama and “woman’s film” also sheds light on the transformation of the mother figure in the 1970s Taiwan cinema. In the 1970s, more and more maternal films in Taiwan began to challenge traditional family structure and the patriarchal representation of women, focalizing on issues of the mother’s sexuality and the problematic mother-child bonding. The changes did not take place overnight, but through a slow evolution in the 1970s, and this more complex image of mother also reflects the social values of the time.

Different from the 1960s Taiwan cinema, 1970s maternal films often openly address the mother’s sexuality. As discussed in Chapter Three, the CMPC could no longer follow its Healthy Realist Movement but was forced to switch to the less didactic Healthy Variety-Show in order to compete with the rise of small-scale film companies and television broadcasting in 1968. In addition to the domestic competition, the popularity of Hong Kong movies, which took on extremely violent and sexual themes in the 1970s, also influenced Taiwan cinema during the

\(^{188}\) Ibid. p. 126. Emphasis added.
time. As a result, the emphasis placed on female sexuality, including mother’s sexuality, became a trend in Mandarin-language cinema. In response to the vicious competition and growing sensationalism in films, the KMT government organized the Film Discipline Group under the Government Information Office to propose a cleansing movement in 1973. During the same year, it declared a new law to censor films with violent, fighting, or sexual themes, and tightened controls of the film scripts. Furthermore, there were strict regulations on actors’ hair length and the actresses’ nudity on screen, which were thought of as correcting the film industry’s bad morality. All kinds of controls were taken to prevent the degradation of Taiwan film industry; however, as Lu Feii argues, “Taiwan film industry had gradually developed a stable commercial characteristic and autonomy since its growth in the 1960s, so the government could not interfere politically as thoroughly and powerfully as in the 1950.” As a result, the government could not stop the drastic changes in the depiction of woman’s sexuality on screen and sensational themes that were once impossible before the 1970s. In addition to the growing flexibility in the film industry, the socioeconomic changes in Taiwan also led to a new motherhood narrative and the new representation of mother in the 1970s. I argue that among all the other social factors, the late 1960s female worker boom, which triggered unofficial feminist movements, played an important role in shaping the public’s attitude towards motherhood and feminine norm.

Beginning in the mid-1960s, Taiwan gradually transformed from an agricultural society to the industrial phase, and the government also changed its national economic policy by promoting light industries such as textile and electronic industries. As a result, factories and export processing zones were set up in major cities, and the demands for human labor rose to a high

---

190 Ibid. p. 185. Translation mine.
peak in the history. According to Huang Fu-san’s *Women Workers and the Industrialization in Post-War Taiwan*, one of the earliest and the most extensive studies of the female worker boom in Taiwan, among the 1,720,000 newly hired labors during 1964 to 1973, men take up 39% whereas women 61%. Huang Fu-san observes from his survey that most of the female workers were from the countryside, who voluntarily worked in the factory to bring more income to their families. Concluding from his research, Huang Fu-san suggests that the female worker boom changed many aspects of women’s life and “set up the foundation for gender equality.”

Although in this female worker boom, women were still treated with inequality, such as the differences in men’s and women’s wages, and their promotion systems, it did broaden women’s social experience and endow women with more power in traditional family structure.

According to Huang Fu-san’s survey, 41.06% of female workers put “to be independent” on top of the list of reasons why they leave the family to work in a factory or an export processing zone. Jobs at the factories provided poor women or women from the countryside a chance to have a more “dignified” life, and they were no longer limited to unpaid domestic works or jobs such as prostitution. Huang also observes that “the number of maids has decreased drastically since the industrialization. Most of them switched to more dignified jobs as female workers, and prostitution was no longer the only solution for poor women, which greatly improved the society’s class structure.” In other words, most of the women in Taiwan were able to make their own money for the first time. Most importantly, sending money home and

---

192 Ibid. p. 90
193 Ibid. p. 122. Also see Huang, Fu-san. Table Q11-A.
194 Ibid. p. 90. Translation mine. Huang argues that the economic depression in 1974 and 1975 raised the unemployment rate. As a result, many female workers were forced into prostitution once again.
being the provider in the family, female workers began to hold more power in the family. For example, according to Huang Fu-san, female workers have greater autonomy over their own marriage and “they also have a say in the arrangement of family affairs and their siblings’ education, etc.”¹⁹⁵ Their autonomy and power in the family is best illustrated through their freedom in deciding whom and when to marry in marriages. In Huang Fu-san’s survey, 64.35% of the female workers in the export-processing zone and 60.09% of the ones in a factory in northern Taipei claimed that most of their friends and predecessors married for love instead of their parents’ arranged marriages. In other words, women’s passive and submissive role in the family began to change as they were endorsed with more power at home.¹⁹⁶

As manifested in Huang Fu-san’s research, the female worker boom brought a sea change to the life of women in Taiwan, and it also influenced the 1970s feminist movements. Before the 1970s, feminist movements in Taiwan were all organized by the more conservative official groups to promote traditional feminine virtues and family values. However, with female workers joining the workforce, traditional family structure was changed and the division between public/male and domestic/female also became blurry. The inequality and exploitation at workplaces became the new issue and concerned for feminists outside of the official women’s organizations. The most notable unofficial feminist movement during the time is the New Feminism (*xin nuxin zhuyì*) led by Lu Hsiu-lien.¹⁹⁷ Drawing on the Second Wave Feminism, Lu Hsiu-lien proposed

---
¹⁹⁵ Ibid. p. 88. Translation mine.
¹⁹⁶ In the 1970s, the Original Equipment Manufacturing (OEM) became a popular part time job for housewives. Since most of the female workers quit their jobs after getting married, working from home became a trend for housewives to earn extra incomes to support their family. In other words, women remain active contributors in the family even after they are married.
¹⁹⁷ In addition to being a feminist activist, Lu Hsiu-lien is also an advocate for Taiwan’s independence. She is a member of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), and was elected the Vice President of the Republic of China from 2000 to 2008.
that people should “be human first, then man and woman”\textsuperscript{198} in 1971. It was later developed to challenge the discourses offered by official woman’s organizations, which often imply a gender hierarchy.\textsuperscript{199} Lu Hsiu- lien argues that although more and more women in Taiwan began to join the workforce and had seemingly more autonomy over their life, they were still treated unequally from their male counterpart. For example, women received lower wages doing the same job with men, and there was a gender division of labor, which excluded women from taking on more specialized professions, such as lawyers and engineers. Most importantly, Lu Hsiu- lien observes that most of the women quit their jobs after getting married for fear that they could not balance their job and domestic life. Therefore, Lu Hsiu- lien proposes that housewives should walk out of the domestic realm:

married women walking out of the kitchen does not mean that they would necessarily abandon the family order and domestic life; therefore, how to make married women balance work and family life—how to liberate working women from domestic burden—becomes the most urgent question in contemporary women’s issues.\textsuperscript{200}

It encourages women to explore the world outside of the domestic shepherd and not to be restricted by family life. In other words, one of the major issues for feminist in Taiwan during


\textsuperscript{199} However, Lu Hsiu- lien’s New Feminism still fell within traditional gender binarism and essentialist discourse by emphasizing the differences between masculinity and femininity (178). Furthermore, Lu Hsiu- lien holds a more reserved attitude towards woman’s sexual desire, claiming that sexual desire still has to be mediated by love and social morality.

\textsuperscript{200} Lu Hsiu- lien, p. 113. Translation mine
the time is the configuration of woman’s new role in the family and her responsibilities as a mother and a wife.

As the result of various social transformations in Taiwan film industry and woman’s participation in the workforce, the representation of mother also went through drastic changes in the 1970s. By late 1960s, the film market in Taiwan became less interested in the didactic messages embedded in traditional maternal films as the story of virtuous mother had been exhausted; instead, most of the filmmakers began to explore the more sensational themes, such as mother’s sexuality and her desire. The change of mother’s cinematic image was also related to the society’s expectation of mother, who was now encouraged to step outside of the domestic realm and was endowed with more power because of her economic independence. Therefore, Taiwan cinema during the time serves as the epitome of this social change, and reflects the changing role of mother and her social responsibilities in the 1970s. The 1970s also marks the rise of a new type of maternal film, which resonates with Ann Kaplan’s idea of “woman’s film” that shows mother resisting the dominant ideology. More and more movies began to deal with mother’s own sexual desire and psychology, and in these films, mother is no longer the “angel in the house,” but the monstrous woman whose sexuality threatens men. In the following, I use Song Cunshou’s Story of Mother and Li Xing’s Life with Mother to show the changes in the representation of mother during the time. Different from earlier maternal films, such as Li Xing’s Silent Wife, which reinforce traditional women’s virtues, these two films show mother challenging and destroying the patriarchal family structure. Story of Mother emphasizes that a mother is also a woman and a human being; therefore, she can never live up to the ideal mother image in the male Oedipus fantasy. On the other hand, Life with Mother stresses the mother-
daughter bond and boldly challenges the role of the father in the phallocentric Freudian Oedipus formula.

The representation of mother in Chinese cinema always shows a split between romantic sentiment (*qing*) and physical desire (*yu*).\(^{201}\) Along the same line, a mother’s sexuality is non-present, and her affection is only directed toward her husband and children. In her study of Hollywood maternal melodrama, Ann Kaplan also observes that most of the Hollywood maternal melodramas present mother from children’s perspective, which echoes Freudian psychoanalysis that focuses mostly on children’s sexuality, leaving out mother’s sexual desires and psychology.\(^{202}\) Drawing on Melanie Klein’s argument of object-relations theory, Ann Kaplan further explains the limitation of children’s perspective, which divides mother into the good versus bad mother. Melanie Klein argues that from birth to four or six months of age, children undergo the paranoid-schizoid position, the stark separation of the object into wholly good/bad objects, and they struggle to depolarize and integrate the love and hate drives during the childhood.\(^{203}\) Building on Melanie Klein’s argument, Ann Kaplan suggests, the representation of mother from children’s perspective is often limited to a simple binary opposition of good versus bad mother in films, and mother’s own sexuality and desire become the criteria for this divide. In other words, a good mother is associated with home and comfort, and her own sexual desire is erased. If she defies the culturally accepted feminine norm, mainly the control of her sexuality, she is labeled as a shameless outlaw and a bad mother. As illustrated in the 1960s maternal films

\(^{201}\) For discussions on the split of *qing* and *yu* in Chinese literary traditions, see Gary G. Xu’s “Ethics of Form: Qing and Narrative Excess in *Guwangyan*” in *Dynastic Crisis and Cultural Innovation from the Late Ming to the Late Qing and Beyond* (Ed. David Wang and Shang Wei. Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press, 2005).


like *Silent Wife*, mother is one-dimensional: she is seen as loving and affectionate, but her sexual desire is simply non-present. However, the 1970s maternal films begin to portray the conflicts between motherhood and mother’s sexuality, and the films often follow the formula of children denying, negotiating and understanding the intertwined maternal love and mother’s sexual desire. One of the best examples for this new mother narrative is Song Chunshou’s 1973 movie, *Story of Mother*.

Song Chunshou is famous for his adaptation of Qiong Yao’s romance novels, such as *Spacious Courtyard* (1971) and *Outside the Window* (1973); however, his *Story of Mother* breaks away from conventional romance narrative. Based on Li Hua’s novel *Mother and Son*, Song Chunshou’s *Story of Mother* traces Qingmao’s lack of trust for women back to his childhood experience of discovering his mother, Wenying, having an affair with another man. Exasperated by his wife’s unruly behavior, Qingmao’s father passes away, leaving Qingmao to his old friend Mr. Wu, and Qingmao’s younger brother and sister to the irresponsible mother, who remarries to different men. Whereas Qingmao is brought up nicely by the wealthy and kind Wu family, his younger sister dies of high fever as a result of her mother’s negligence and his younger brother grows up as a hooligan. When Wenying tries to beg for his son’s forgiveness after ten year’s absence, the mother and son’s reunion is delayed by a series of misunderstanding and when Qingmao finally decides to forgive his mother, she is killed in a car accident.

To certain degree, *Story of Mother* still follows the good versus bad mother paradigm to depict mother’s sexuality; however, what becomes new and immensely interesting is no longer the virtue of the good mother; instead, it is the treatment of the bad mother’s sexual desires. As Qingmao’s girlfriend, Meizhong, once tells Qingmao, not all the women are the same, and “there are women like your mother, but there are also women like Mrs. Wu in the world.” Meizhong
divides women into two distinct groups: the good mother and the bad mother. Mrs. Wu is the quintessential good mother, who embraces Qingmao and treats him equally with her other two children. When Qingmao discovers his mother’s ugly affair, he writes to Mrs. Wu for help, and Mrs. Wu, who is like a guardian angel, comes to rescue Qingmao and his siblings. Mrs. Wu tries to stop Wenying by reminding her of traditional woman’s virtues, saying that “Women should recognize their fates after getting married and having children.” However, Mrs. Wu and Wenying have different notions of mother’s duties: Whereas Mrs. Wu provides her children with family warmth and motherly love, Wenying only recognizes her job as a birthmother. Moreover, Wenying often places pleasure-seeking before her children’s well-being, neglecting children’s psychological, or even physical needs. When she takes a trip with her lover, she leaves her children at home without a reliable babysitter and enough of foods, and her negligence eventually causes her daughter to die in front of her starving son.

In addition to the drastic contrast between the two mothers, Wenying’s image as a bad mother is further reinforced by her transgressing sexual desire and her eroticized image. The film begins with Qingmao following Wenying’s rickshaw to her lover’s place, and when Qingmao climbs up to the wall, he witnesses his mother making love to her lover. The shocking scene that Qingmao sees appears again later in the film and it leaves a traumatic impact on Qingmao’s psyche. As Qingmao’s father exclaims before he falls down, “Qingmao will always remember what kind of mother you are.” Wenying refuted, “What does a child know?” which is quickly followed by Qingmao’s affirmative answer, “I will remember it.” The impact of witnessing his mother’s sexual betrayal gradually unfolds in Qingmao’s adulthood; for example, he is easily irritated when he sees Meizhong talking to other men, and his classmates all think of him as having a bad temper and an unpredictable mood. Most importantly, he has trust issues with
women and always feels anxious about women’s sexuality, as he once says to Meizhong “I hate all the women from the bottom of my heart. I don’t trust any of them.”

Although Qingmao despises his mother and sympathizes with his weak father, he holds a strong desire towards his mother, and as the movie shows, this desire is situated in a complex web of gaze and the circulation of it. In the movie, Qingmao identifies with his father and sees himself as the surrogate for his sick father; therefore, it is his responsibility to look after his mother’s behaviors while his father is bedridden. The circulation of gaze and desire is best illustrated in the scene when Wenying first meets her lover on a train. The camera first shows the man observing Wenying’s body when she mounts the luggage to the bracket on the train, but the smile of the man is interrupted by Qingmao’s upset look from behind her mother’s body. Noticing that the man is looking at his mother, Qingmao asks his mother not to sit next to the man, but Wenying insists on taking the seat and flirting with the man. With the close up of Qingmao’s anxious face, we see Qingmao’s eyes rolling to follow the exchange of looks between Wenying and the man as he senses his mother’s betrayal. As a child, Qingmao could do nothing to revenge the man, and like his helpless father, he could only internalize his aversion and anger towards the man.

It is even more obvious in a later scene when Qingmao’s father looks at his wife dressing up from his sickbed. Once Wenying catches her husband’s gaze from the reflection in the mirror, she grumbles about the silent gaze from her husband, “You should go see a doctor if you are sick. Why are you looking at me all the time? It won’t cure you by looking at me.” The camera quickly shifts to Qingmao, who hides behind the door, secretly looking at his mother, and his gaze is merged with his father’s suspicious and jealous gaze (Figure 4.3-4.5). When Wenying leaves home to meet her lover after she is all dressed up, Qingmao’s father comes out from the
Figure 4.3  The mirror scene in *Story of Mother*

Figure 4.4  Qingmao’s father.

Figure 4.5  Qingmao.
bedroom to catch a last glimpse of Wenying closing the gate behind her, and the sensitive Qingmao soon notices his father’s vulnerable look and looks in his mother’s direction. His father’s gaze cannot look beyond the gate as his body is confined to the house, but Qingmao, the surrogate for his father, follows Wenying to her lover’s place and look at the couple’s lovemaking for his father. When approached by Wenying, who wants to know if Qingmao has informed his father of her betrayal, Qingmao answers, “I didn’t tell him and I will never will. Now father is sick, why should I make him angry? As long as I know it, it is enough.” As Wenying’s affair progresses, Qingmao also becomes more than a surrogate for his father; he actually possesses more knowledge than his father does and controls what his father knows.

*Story of Mother* illustrates more than a male Oedipus fantasy; in fact, it also shows mother’s intense fixation on her son. Not only is Qingmao protective of his mother and obsessive with his mother’s relationship with her lover, Qingmao desires love and a pre-Oedipus wholeness with his mother. When Wenying tries to coax Qingmao into collaborating with her and keeping the secret for her, she tells him “mother loves you the most, too. You forgot how I held you to sleep even after you have a brother and a sister. You also told me that I am the most beautiful person in the world… mother still loves you the most, even now.” Wenying’s sweet talk and Qingmao’s childhood memories catch Qingmao off guard and he can no longer hold his tears back. On the other hand, Wenying is aware that she cannot lose her son, and that is why she never stops coming back for her son after Qingmao moves to live with the Wu family. Wenying’s domineering love for Qingmao is best illustrated in her relationship with her son’s girlfriend. When Wenying first learns about Meizhong, she demonstrates extreme jealousy. Claiming that she needs to investigate her son’s girlfriend, she secretly observes Meizhong and Qingmao from afar, and then invites Meizhong to a coffee shop, confronting the girl by telling her, “If I can’t
get him [Qingmao], I don’t want others to get him, either.” Under Wenying’s jealousy towards Meizhong, there is a strong possessiveness that initiates the competition between two women. Compared to Mrs. Wu’s embracing attitude towards Meizhong, Wenying’s strong jealousy becomes unseemly of a mother.

Although *Story of Mother* reinstates the phallocentric Oedipus fantasy, there is a subversive voice and a justification for the *bad* mother within the film. Speaking from another mother’s point of view, Mrs. Wu repeatedly defends for Wenying, telling Qingmao that “Human beings are not saints; therefore everyone makes mistakes.” Wenying also speaks up for herself in the movie, accusing the society’s patriarchal mother paradigm that over-emphasizes traditional feminine virtues. When confronted by her husband, Wenying claims, “I am a mother, but I am also a woman.” Different from the mother figure in earlier maternal films, who is silenced and whose sexual desire is omitted to meet the ideal maternal image, *Story of Mother* demystifies mother and restores her to the secular realm. The bad mother figure is also re-interpreted as a misunderstood mother in *Story of Mother*. In the second half of the movie, Wenying is transformed into a victim, whose repentance is rejected and mistaken. When she hires a cook to prepare a feast for her son, Qingmao, who does not believe that her mother would actually change for good, mistakes the cook for his mother’s new lover and storms away after making a false accusation, leaving his mother heartbroken.

Most importantly, whereas traditional Confucian values are employed by earlier maternal films to promote and monitor mother’s virtues, a child’s filial piety actually surpasses mother’s loyalty and chastity in *Story of Mother*. Instead of blaming Wenying for her betrayal and her sexual transgression, Mr. Wu tells Qingmao to reconcile with his mother, “not that you can forgive her, but to beg for her forgiveness.” In other words, Mr. and Mrs. Wu think Qingmao is
unfilial for ignoring his mother and turning down her humble request to reunite with her son. Wenying’s death at the end of the film, which is a result of her eagerness to catch a train that Qingmao is on, not only reveals her way of showing maternal love towards Qingmao, but also shows Qingmao losing his last opportunity to redeem himself by apologizing to his mother, which he has been trying to do after Mr. Wu’s enlightening speech. By emphasizing that mother is also a woman, Song Cunshou’s *Story of Mother* defends the traditionally defined *bad mother* and invokes a notion of multifaceted motherhood.

*****

*Like Mother Like Daughter: No More Oedipus Father*

Like Song Cunshou’s *Story of Mother*, Li Xing’s *Life with Mother* also centers on the question of whether a *bad woman* can be a good mother, and it is done so by focusing on an unconventional mother who has a troubled relationship with her child. In *Life with Mother*, Hui-hua is a bar owner and a single mother, who works hard to give her daughter, Tingting, a carefree life. In order to give Tingting a perfect family, Hui-hua has an affair with a married man, Rong-xuan, thinking that Tingting’s undisciplined manner is a result of her lack of fatherly love. Centered on the strong mother and daughter bond, *Life with Mother* shows a very different treatment of the father figure by labeling his role as an intruder in the mother-daughter relationship and negating his role in the Freudian family romance.

In *Life with Mother*, Hui-hua is depicted as a scandalous mother figure, and a bad role model for her daughter. She is seen as a cold-hearted hostess bar owner, who fires her old-time

---

204 Interestingly, the mother figure in *Life with Mother*, Hui-hua, is played by actress Li Xiang, who also plays Wenying, the mother figure in Song Chunshou’s *Story of Mother*.  

144
partner, an aging bargirl, without any sympathy. Like her daughter, she is not a well-mannered woman, and her behavior is often seen as inappropriate for a mother. When she is called to school when her wild daughter is expelled for causing too many troubles to her class, the schoolteacher takes the chance to preach good morality and manners. He tells Hui-hua, “The problem is that your child is very abnormal. The abnormal child is the so-called problem student… It is not just the responsibilities from school, first of all, you have to reflect upon the education from home…” As he continues murmuring the moralizing discourses, Hui-hua becomes impatient and sneaks out his office with her daughter behind the schoolteacher’s back. When the teacher finally notices the mother and the daughter’s absence, he is bewildered and extremely surprised by Hui-hua’s inappropriate behaviors.

Hui-hua is fully aware of her incompetence in being Tingting’s role model, but she does everything she can to make her daughter into a “noble lady” (gaoshang de shunu). Because Hui-hua couldn’t become the noble lady herself, she projects her dream onto Tingting’s life, hoping her daughter would fulfill the wish for her one day. She keeps reminding Tingting what a noble lady is like, and tells her that a noble lady always shows “kindness, sincerity, modesty, and virtuosity.” Most importantly, Hui-hua’s idea of a noble lady involves class connotation, as she tells Tingting that a noble lady has to be “knowledgeable and graceful” and to “always live in the upper class society, praised and admired by everyone.” Building on this understanding, Hui-hua tries to provide her daughter with all the material needs to be a noble lady: stylish

---

205 In earlier Healthy Realist films, didactic messages from the male authority is often treated seriously because it serves as the film’s moral message. A similar scene of a male schoolteacher giving a moral lesson can also be found in films like Bai Jingrui’s Lonely Seventeen. However, by showing Hui-hua sneaking out of the office behind the schoolteacher’s back, this scene in Life with Mother adds an ironic tone to the earlier Healthy Realist tradition.

206 In Chinese, it is “shanliang, chengken, duanzhuang, xianhui.”
clothes, beautiful bags, cosmetics, and books that Tingting never reads. Hui-hua also supervises Tingting’s piano practice, and she persuades Tingting to recognize the importance of it by saying, “all the noble ladies should know how to play piano.” In other words, Hui-hua only pays attention to the materialistic aspect of a noble lady, not aware that money could only buy *the image* of a noble lady. When Tingting plays piano for her mother, the camera traces Tingting’s body down to her dangling feet, tapping impatiently where her mother cannot see.

Troubled by her daughter’s rebellions, Hui-hua concludes that the absence of a father in Tingting’s life must be the reason why Tingting cannot become a noble lady; therefore, it is her job to find Tingting a perfect father. To do so, she approaches Rong-xuan, whom she met back in Mainland China, and coaxes him into abandoning his family to marry her. For Hui-hua, Rong-xuan is a proper father figure partly because of his social status, but ironically, Rong-xuan becomes who he is by marrying into a wealthy family and taking over their family estate. Once Rong-xuan’s wife discovers her husband’s affair, she collaborates with her son to take revenge on Hui-hua by exposing Hui-hua’s affair to everyone including Tingting. In the end, it is Hui-hua, who proposes to end her affair with Rong-xuan, thinking it is “for the sake of the next generation’s happiness.” Far from fulfilling the role as the ideal father for Tingting, Rong-xuan turns out to be the intruder to Hui-hua and Tingting’s bonding because his affair destroys Tingting’s trust for her mother, and Tingting also sees the man as stealing her mother away from her. When she catches Rong-xuan kissing her mother, Tingting is furious and talks to the couple in a sarcastic manner, which angers her mother and leads her mother to slap her face for the first time in her life.

---

207 Although Hui-hua claims that Tingting never reads the novels and magazines that she buys for her, Tingting has the habit of quoting from books throughout the film.
In Hui-hua’s understanding, the role of a father is to complete the traditional family structure and to serve as the perfect role model for his daughter; however, this ideal father is impossible in reality so he has to be dead in order to remain a lack and an empty signifier. In fact, Tingting’s birth father is not a captain who died during his service at sea, as Hui-hua has been telling her daughter; he is a shameless drug dealer who is imprisoned for years. In order to make Tingting believes her story, Hui-hua even finds a fake gravesite for this imaginary father, and asks Tingting to repent in front of her father’s tomb every time she disobeys her father’s last will—the hope that Tingting would become a noble lady someday. Hui-hua also gives Tingting the impression that her father’s job as a seaman is honorable and brave; therefore, she is infuriated when a group of real seamen become drunk at her bar, destroying the image that she has been building for Tingting’s father. The sudden appearance of Tingting’s birth father and his demand to meet his daughter threaten Hui-hua and the illusion she has created; therefore, Hui-hua flees with her daughter to the countryside. However, upon their return, the man finds them and accidentally reveals the truth about his identity. Realizing that her mother has been lying, Tingting decides to leave with her birth father and takes her birth father to visit the fake gravesite that her mother built. However, upon seeing the fake gravesite for the ideal “imaginary father,” Tingting’s birth father understands why Hui-hua put on such a show, and agrees that the best solution is to leave the role of the father as a void and an ideal. Therefore, he changes his mind and complies with Hui-hua’s lie, telling Tingting that he is not her birth father, but her parents’ old friend.

In Life with Mother, the father figure is either an intruder to the mother-daughter bond, like Rongxuan and Tingting’s birth father, or an ideal father that is only in the realm of the imaginary. Therefore, as the film suggests, there is no need to have a father for the sake of
completing the family structure as Hui-hua has believed because the bond between her and Tingting is a complete entity itself. The only thing lacking in Tingting’s life and the thing she desires the most is her mother’s attention and love, which Hui-hua does not realize until the end of the film. When asked by her mother’s former employee whether she wants to have a good cry in her mother’s embrace, Tingting answers, “I have thought about doing it several times, but I didn’t do it in the end… I couldn’t cry out, but there is one time that I finally cried. I dreamed of myself embraced by my mother, telling her honestly all my suffering, my troubles, and my mistakes. I was talking and crying at the same time. I cried so hard but I felt so good.” With a longing expression on her face, Tingting contends, “However, it is only a dream; it is impossible in the reality.” As Tingting’s dream shows, her ultimate desire is to return to the state of pre-Oedipal wholeness shared between her mother and herself.

The mother and daughter reunite their bond in the end when Hui-hua finally realizes that all Tingting needs is her affection, not a father nor other materialistic fulfillment. When Hui-hua sits alone in her bar after Tingting leaves with her birth father, the sound of whistle becomes louder and louder in the background. The sound comes from a blind bagger, who takes her daughter by her side, and the mother and daughter have walked pass by Hui-hua’s bar several times earlier in the film. Hui-hua never pays attention to them before, and, in fact, she almost hits them with her reckless driving one time. However, the presence of the poor mother and daughter is made conspicuous through the approaching whistle sound in the background when Hui-hua drinks alone in the bar. In a way, they serve as a reminder that a happy mother and daughter relationship is not built on the materialistic fulfillment and a poor mother can still make her daughter happy. In the scene, the camera tries to locate the origin of the sound and cuts to outside of the bar, showing Tingting observing the poor mother and daughter slowly passing by.
As if struck by the blind mother-daughter bonding, she decides to walk into the bar and conciliate with her mother. Tingting exchanges a smile with her depressed mother to quickly cheer her up, and the two soon reach a tacit agreement to leave behind the repugnant family drama and go home.

In the end of the film, Hui-hua finally recognizes the problem in her mothering, which lies in her misunderstanding of what her daughter wants. Tingting does not want a father to be her role model; along the same line, she does not want to be a noble lady, which is ultimately defined by the patriarchal order. As the ending shows, Tingting shares a cigarette with her mother in the car while her mother runs through a red light. Consequently, their car is stopped by the police, but the two of them laugh happily when they receive the ticket from the police officer. Instead of pretending to be a noble lady, Tingting is happier being a “problem student,” or a “bad woman” like her mother who transgresses the socially approved norm.

Unlike the 1960s maternal films, Li Xing’s *Life with Mother* shows a different treatment of the socially defined “bad mother” figure, and a mothering narrative that challenges the male-centered Oedipus fantasy. Similar to Song Cunshou’s *Story with Mother*, the film portrays an uncaring mother who is the opposite of the “angel in the house,” and highlights the struggle between mother’s sexuality and her traditional maternal role. The tension caused by the splitting of good and bad mother is resolved with the child’s understanding of the multifaceted motherhood or approval of mother as a woman. In fact, *Life with Mother* goes beyond the reconciliation between the mother and her child; the strong mother and daughter bond further challenges the patriarchal family structure and Freudian Oedipus formula where father serves as the locus of desire and identification. As manifested in *Life with Mother*, there is no need for a

---

208 Although it is Hui-hua’s dream to turn Tingting into a noble lady, she uses Tingting’s “imaginary father,” the dead captain at sea, as an excuse to persuade her, claiming it is her father’s last will.
father. Additionally, although Tingting identifies with her mother and desires her love, different from Ruixue in Li Xing’s *Silent Wife*, her strong bonding with her mother is not to replace her mother and to be with her father. Therefore, *Life with Mother* can be seen as a subversive text in line with feminist reading of Freud’s phallocentric Oedipus complex.

****

*Motherhood and Womanhood in the 1970s Taiwan Cinema*

As Meizhong once tells Qingmao in *Story of Mother*, “everyone has a mother, so why can’t we talk about her?” Mothers are everywhere in Chinese cinema, but the representations of mother and the popular narratives of motherhood change throughout the time, reflecting woman’s role in the family and the society. In the 1930s, she is seen as the embodiment of pathos, whereas her suffering is used to articulate the class struggle in leftist films and to reinstate filial piety in movies that are in line with the KMT government’s ideology. Carrying on the KMT government’s campaign for Chinese cultural tradition, movies in the 1960s Taiwan, particularly maternal films, portray mother as the pre-Oedipus mother, and her virtues illustrate the womanhood and femininity par excellence. The best example is Li Xing’s *Silent Wife*, which depicts ideal woman as a silent mother, and the mother and daughter relationship is to support male ego and the patriarchal structure. However, the mother-figure on screen begins to resist the stereotype of “good wife wise mother” in the 1970s by shifting the attention to mother’s own sexuality and her life outside of the domestic realm.\(^\text{209}\)

\(^{209}\) The image of “Good Wife Wise Mother” is based on Confucian teaching on family relationships. In Japan, the “Good Wife Wise Mother” (*ryosai kenbo*) is the ideology that was first introduced in 1875 to promote woman’s submissive role in the domestic realm and the responsibilities in childrearing.
As mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, woman’s films, including romance and maternal films, are often described as escapist and devalued as mere commercial movies. Compared to realist films or national policy films, these wenyi films, with their melodramatic expressions and focus on the excessively emotional themes, are seen as harmless to the mainstream ideology. While it is true that most of the early romance and maternal films adapted from Qiong Yao’s novels hold a more conservative view of feminine norm that echo the government proposed values, the genres become extremely subversive after the 1970s. As I have discussed so far, the government could no longer uphold its Healthy Realist Film movement, and the film regulations also lost its influence on the market that demanded sensationalism. As a result, even maternal films turn to the exploration of the sensational, that is, the strong mother figure and her transgressing sexual desire.

This new mother narrative in the 1970s maternal films also reflects the society’s changing mother discourse and serves as the epitome of the social transformations. With real women leaving the domestic realm to work for Taiwan’s economic miracle in the factories and export processing zones, women’s role in the family also becomes different. In other words, she could no longer fit into the traditional maternal image, who is always caring, virtuous and saintly. As illustrated in the 1970s maternal movies, a mother who cannot fit into the traditional mother paradigm does not necessarily mean that she is a bad mother. In fact, the government also had to justify the changing feminine norm and allowed women to step out of the domestic realm because the nation’s economic development heavily depended on female workers. Furthermore, the rise of New Feminism, which proposed new agenda for the division of housework and working woman’s balance between family and work life, also added drastic changes to the depiction of women and mother in the 1970s maternal films. Li Xing’s Life with Mother is a
good example that challenges the male Oedipus fantasy by emphasizing the mother-daughter bond. Furthermore, it questions the role of the father, both actual father and the Symbolic father, as the daughter identifies with her mother and together they transgress the patriarchal norm and social rules.

Although issues of mothering and mother’s cinematic representation continue to be explored in Taiwan New Cinema after the 1980s, there are not many movies like the maternal films in the 1970s Taiwan that present a mother discourse that is complicated and subversive. Also made during the 1970s, anti-Japanese films only employ mother’s minor role to articulate the nationalistic discourses. She becomes the symbol of Chinese culture tradition that the KMT government has been protecting and fighting for, but she is no longer a submissive wife and a kind mother who exists only in the domestic realm as in earlier Healthy Realist Film. Her role is to reproduce and raise the nation’s future soldiers, and to be the assistant for men fighting on the battlefield. In other words, the motherhood narrative is elevated from love of the family to loyalty to the nation.210 After 1982, maternal themes continue into Taiwan New Cinema although it is seldom presented in the melodramatic mode. In his study of Taiwan New Cinema, Chen Ru-shou shows his discontent towards the lack of feminist awareness in the making of Taiwan New Cinema. He uses Hou Hsia-Hsien’s City of Sadness (1989) as an example to argue that woman is seen as “the other” as she is always placed at a marginal space on screen and in the background in most of the New Taiwan Cinema. In Chen Ru-shou’s words, “woman is not the focus of the camera, nor the focus of the history.”211 Therefore, the maternal films in the 1970s

---

210 I will further discuss the gender roles in the 1970s Taiwanese anti-Japanese films in the following chapter.
211 Chen, Ru-shou. p. 137. My translation. Although Chen Rushou observes woman’s marginality in Taiwan New Cinema, he also points out some of the exceptions that give a nuance representation of woman. He argues that although the mother figures in Chang Yi’s Kuei-Mei, A Woman (1985) and Jade Love (1984) are still bounded to traditional family structure and feminine virtues, the films show the director’s attempt in exposing woman’s suffering under the patriarchy.
Taiwan are more than the epitome of women’s changing role in the society; they also present a unique and subversive discourse of motherhood that challenges the limited patriarchal mother paradigm proposed by the KMT government since the 1930s.

For almost two decades, Taiwan had received the military protection from the United States since the end of the Korean War (1950-1953). In order to prevent communist power from spreading to other parts of the Asia, the US government signed the “Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States of America and the Republic of China” with the KMT government in 1954. The treaty assured military protection from the US side in times of crisis across the Taiwan Strait which secured Taiwan from the invasion by the People’s Republic of China (PRC).\footnote{212} With the reassurance from the United States, the KMT government was confident that it would eventually re-conquer communist China and restore its regime on the mainland. However, the restful time came to an end in late 1960s, when issues of KMT government’ political legitimacy began to jeopardize Taiwan’s relationships with the international community.

After the oil reserve was found near the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands in 1968, Japan began to negotiate with the US government over Japan’s postwar territorial right to Okinawa and other Pacific islands in 1969. The dispute over the sovereignty of the Diaoyu Islands quickly triggered Chinese nationalism and led to the first wave of Baodiao Movement in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Mainland China.\footnote{213} Joined by oversea Chinese communities, many students from Taiwan also started protests in the United States to stop the US government from giving the island to Japan in 1971. During the time, left wing students from Taiwan were also involved in the overseas

\footnote{212} At the same time, the treaty also stopped the KMT government from initiating any military actions against the mainland China.\footnote{213} The Diaoyu Islands are group of uninhibited islands located on the East China Sea. They are east of Mainland China, northeast of Taiwan, and west of Okinawa. “Baodiao” is the abbreviation for “baohu diaoyutai,” which literally means, “protecting the Diaoyu Islands.” The sovereignty of the Diaoyu Islands is still under heated debates among various Chinese communities and Japan in the present day.
Baodiao Movement, and, for the first time, these students publicly claimed that the PRC should be the representative of China in the Baodiao Movement and in the United Nations.\textsuperscript{214} Debates on the legitimate representative of China finally came to surface at the United Nations in October the same year. On October 25\textsuperscript{th} 1971, the United Nations recognized the PRC as the legitimate China, and the upsetting decision led Taiwan to walk out from the United Nations.\textsuperscript{215} Losing its seat in the United Nation, the KMT could only rely on supports from the United States. However, the KMT government’s friendship with the US further deteriorated the following year when President Nixon visited the PRC in February 1972 and signed the influential Shanghai Communiqué, which promised to reduce military protection for the KMT government in Taiwan and marked the beginning of the US government’s “One China” stance.\textsuperscript{216}

Suddenly losing its place in the United Nations and its most powerful ally, Taiwan became completely vulnerable when Japan made it worse by quickly announcing its political decision to break its diplomatic connection with Taiwan a few months later in 1972. Seeing the United Nations and other countries, including Canada, recognizing the PRC as the representative of China, the Japanese government also became aware of the need to normalize Japan and the PRC’s relationship. At the invitation of Chinese Premier Chou En-lai, Japan’s Prime Minister

\textsuperscript{214} As a result, the KMT government openly condemned left-wing students’ involvement in the oversea Baodiao Movement, and tightened its surveillance on students’ movements in Taiwan during the time. For more information on Taiwan’s students movements in the 1970s, see Hsiau A-Chin’s “Generational Identity and Historical Narrative: The Emergence of the ‘Back-to-Reality’ Generation in 1970s Taiwan.” *Taiwanese Sociology* 9 (2005): 1-58.

\textsuperscript{215} In fact, in 1970, the UN had already had a meeting on the issue of the legitimate representative of China, However, it was not until the meeting in 1971 that the UN voted and agreed that the People’s Republic of China is the representative of China in UN in its 1967\textsuperscript{th} plenary meeting on October 25\textsuperscript{th}, 1971. Refused to be presented as “Taiwan- China” or the “little China,” Chiang Kai-Shek ordered Taiwan’s representative in the UN to leave the General Assembly before Taiwan could be expelled for adhering to the stance that the ROC Taiwan represent the whole China.

\textsuperscript{216} Signed on 28\textsuperscript{th} February 1972, Shanghai Communiqué only expresses wishes from the United States and from the PRC to expand the economic and cultural exchanges between the two countries. It was until 1979 that the two countries officially established their diplomatic relations.
Kakuei Tanaka and the Minister for Foreign Affairs Masayoshi Ohira embarked their historic trip to Mainland China in September 1972. During his short stay in Beijing, Kakuei Tanaka first went to see Chairman Mao Tse-tung and attended an important meeting with Chou En-lai to discuss issues regarding the two countries’ postwar relationships. On September 29th, 1972, Kakuei Tanaka signed the Joint Communiqué between Japan and the PRC, which ended PRC’s claims for WWII war reparations from Japan, and marked the beginning of the diplomatic relationship between the PRC and Japan. Most importantly, as stated in the article three of the communiqué, Japan recognized the PRC as the sole legal government of China, and agreed that the KMT-ruled Taiwan is only part of the PRC’s territory.

The shocking news quickly traveled to Taiwan, and on September 30th 1972, all the major newspapers in Taiwan condemned Japan’s newly established friendship with the PRC and reported the KMT government’s reassurance on its anti-communist stance. Moreover, the administrative report from the Premier Chiang Ching-Kuo was also printed in United Daily News to criticize Japan’s political betrayal. The news emphasized the KMT government’s legitimacy and recounted Taiwan’s benevolence towards postwar Japan: how people in Taiwan had endured Japan’s atrocities during the WWII, and had forgiven Japan for its unscrupulous deeds. Furthermore, it was the KMT government that saved Japan from greater punishment in the postwar trial at the Cairo Conference. Instead of showing its gratitude by supporting the KMT regime at the time of crisis, Japan directed its loyalty to the PRC across the strait; therefore, the KMT government viewed Japan as a traitor, ungrateful about KMT’s kindness.

Raking up the past, the KMT government also blamed Japan for causing the growth of

---

217 “xingzhengyuan jiang yuanzhang shizheng baogao yuanwen [Premier Chiang Ching-Kuo’s Administrative Report].” United Daily News [lianhe bao], 30 September 1972: 3. Translation mine. The exact phrases used in the newspaper are “beixin wangyi” and “wang’ en fuyi,” which literally means “being unfaithful and forget about loyalty,” and “ungrateful.”
communism in East Asia: The first time was during Japan’s invasion in the 1930s and the second when it recognized the PRC as the legitimate China in the 1970s. Although the news was filled with angry accusations towards Japan, it could no longer cover the KMT government’s frustration and vulnerability since the early 1970s.

The title of Taiwanese writer Wu Cho- Liu’s famous colonial novel, The Orphan of the Asia (1945), therefore became a popular expression to describe Taiwan’s secluded and vulnerable situation in the early 1970s. As Leo Ching asserts, “the notion of an orphan, of being abandoned, of not belonging, has become a powerful metaphor in thinking about and defining the modern history of Taiwan.” Wu Cho- Liu’s novel focuses on people in Taiwan’s collective psyche during Japan’s colonial rule. As the colonized subjects, they could never fully become Japanese and were constantly reminded of their racial inferiority; at the same time, they had to cope with a sense of betrayal and abandonment after Taiwan was handed to Japan after the first Sino-Japanese War. Turned down by both Japan and China, Taiwanese, like orphans, no longer feel a sense of belonging. Although the orphan analogy in the 1970s Taiwan was also used to express the feeling of loss and abandonment, this time, people in Taiwan felt they were betrayed and rejected by both Japan and the larger global community. Whereas the KMT government had firmly believed that their allies would stand by Taiwan against the communist China, the allies’ sudden betrayal was more than shocking; it was utterly traumatic.

This chapter examines Taiwan film industry’s response to the nation’s diplomatic setbacks in the early 1970s and its role in promoting nationalism. I first explore the history and the

---

218 The newspaper article suggests that Japanese invasion distracted KMT government’s attention therefore giving time and resources to foster the development of the communist party in the 1930s. “Riben zhengfu beixin wangyi, woguo yiran yu ri duanjiao [Unfaithful Japan Government, We Broke Diplomatic Relations with It without Hesitations].” United Daily News, 30 September 1972: 1.

tradition of the antagonistic narrative in Taiwan’s anti-Japanese films; more specifically, how
the good versus evil scheme is employed, and how the enemy is portrayed. I maintain that
although the resentment towards Japan’s diplomatic betrayal did fuel the trend of anti-Japanese
films in the 1970s Taiwan, it is important to investigate the real enemy behind the antagonistic
narrative—the anxieties that threatened the KMT government’s very being. With the example of
Liu Jia-chang’s movie, *Victory* (1976), I illustrate how the melodramatic mode, along with
sentimentalism, reinforced the nationalist rhetoric in the 1970s anti-Japanese war films. Building
on the examination of *Victory*, I also argue, the anti-Japanese theme in 1970s Taiwanese films
only serve as a cover for the KMT’s nostalgia towards home and China during the Republican
Period.

*****

*History of Taiwan’s Anti-Japanese Films: Spy Movies and War Films*

Anti-Japanese films have been made across time and geographical spaces, such as in the
1930s’ Shanghai and in the 1950s-60s’ Hong Kong, and they were executed in various genres,
including Kung Fu and romance. Because of the KMT government’s *seemingly* pleasant
friendship with Japan ever since Japan’s surrender in WWII, Taiwan film industry had been
avoiding direct attack on postwar Japan. After the breakout of Korean War in the 1950s, cold
war ideology dominated the US politics, and it forced Japan and the KMT Taiwan to leave their
hostile past behind to join the US government’s anti-communist campaign. Heavily relying on
support from the United States during the time, Japan was pressed to join the anti-communist
ally and collaborate with the KMT Taiwan. Meanwhile, the KMT government was eager to fight
the Chinese communist and reconquer the mainland, but could not do much without the help
from its neighboring countries, including Japan. Therefore, as Xu Rui-mei argues in her study of postwar Taiwan cinema from 1950s-1960s, KMT government marked a clear distinction between the friendly postwar Japan and the malicious imperialist Japan in its political campaign.

In order to maintain a friendly relationship with Japan, the KMT government actually oppressed local anti-Japanese sentiments by toning down any postcolonial discourses. One of the examples of the KMT government’s effort in pacifying anti-Japanese sentiment, Xu Rui-mei shows, is about Taiwan’s National Restoration Day (guangfu jie). Instead of celebrating Taiwan’s decolonization and return to the KMT China, as the holiday was originally designated for, the celebration shifted to the anticipation of restoring the mainland from the communist rule from the 1950s on. Additionally, instead of encouraging anti-Japanese films, the official censor actually regulated the over-sensational anti-Japanese themes in the movies. As a result of this forced diplomatic friendship and the KMT government’s caution of anti-Japanese discourses, Taiwan film industry had been avoiding the anti-Japanese genre. Even when films touched upon issues of Japan’s imperialist and colonialist past, they often tactfully shifted the attention to the wrongs done by the communist party during the war. More specifically, instead of targeting Japan, most of these films often found faults with running dogs and traitors, who were mostly affiliated with the communist party.

As a result of KMT’s regulations, there were only sporadic anti-Japanese films in Taiwan before 1960s, and they were almost exclusively Taiwanese dialect films made by private studios. Most of them drew inspiration from Taiwan’s colonial past; for example, Blood Shed on the

---


221 Ibid. p.198. Also see Li, Tianyi. p. 160-161.

222 Ibid.
Mountain (1957) centers on the famous Musha Incident in 1930, and Bloody Battle at Tapani is based on the Tapani Incident in 1915. Inspired by western secret agents movies like Dr. No (1962), a spy film genre began to dominate Taiwan film industry since the mid-1960s. Also produced by private film companies, these films were mostly shot in Taiwanese dialect and made with low budgets. Nevertheless, they were extremely popular during the time, and many of them had three to four sequels, such as Number One in the World (1964) and Three Beautiful Blind Female Spies (1966). These spy movies often center on a female spy from the KMT’s side, whose identity is unknown to the others until the last minute, and how she uses her sexuality to obtain important war information. Although these films are set in colonial Taiwan or Japanese invaded China during the WWII, the real focus is the process of discovering the female spy’s true identity. In fact, the highlights of these films are usually scenes of underground spy activities, such as tortures, gunfights, and car chases. Furthermore, the use of high technology also becomes an attraction in these films; for example, the “invisible potion” in Queen of Female Special Agent (1964), and the chemical weapons in Agent White Peony (1966). In late 1960s, Hong Kong director Li Han-Hsiang, who is famous for his earlier huangmei musical films also joined the spy film trend. Different from most of the Taiwanese dialect spy movies, his Storm over the Yang-Tse River (1969) combines elements of nuxia, the female knight-errant, and this

223 Blood Shed on the Mountain is often considered the earliest anti-Japanese film in postwar Taiwan, and its story on the Seediq indigenous group’s attack on Japanese at Musha (Wushe) village has been remade several times in Taiwan film industry.

224 Dr. No is a British spy movie and the first James Bond film. Based on the 1958 novel by Ian Fleming, which bears the same title, Dr. No was directed by Terence Young in 1962. There were more than 30 spy films made in Taiwan during the late 1960s, but most of them are no longer extant.

225 These are just two popular film series during the time: Number One in the World (1964) has four sequels, and Three Beautiful Blind Female Spies (1966) has three.
refreshing method quickly led other film directors to appropriate martial art elements into their spy films.226

As discussed in the previous two chapters, CMPC’s Healthy Realism took a turn to Healthy Variety-Show in 1968 and the company’s management also went through drastic changes after Gong Hong stepped down from his position. In August 1972, Gu Zhenfu took over Gong Hong’s position in CMPC and Mei Changlin became the new managing director in the company. Unlike his predecessor, Mei Changlin was devoted to the shooting of newsreels in his early career. He used to be the director of China Film Production Company, which is under the supervision of the Ministry of National Defense, so he had rich experience working with military movies and documentary films. Under Mei Changlin’s leadership, the CMPC tried to maintain the company’s business profits by continuously making commercial movies, most of which are adaptation of Qiong Yao’s romance novels. At the same time, the CMPC borrowed Mei Changlin’s expertise in making military films to start a new era of anti-Japanese films, which were also very popular during the time. In Mei Changlin’s own words,

When making movies or TV programs, we cannot just seek for profits. Instead, we should ask ourselves whether it is profitable for the nation and its people… From now on, we should bring out the educational function of television, film, and mess media, and produce works that propagate humanism, advocate national policies, reflect public sentiments, and introduce Chinese culture in order to lead the society to an open, peaceful, and healthy way.227

226 The trend of combining wuxia elements into spy movie can be seen as a result of the popularity of wuxia genre during the time. See Chapter Four for details on reception of wuxia films in the 1960s.

As Mei Changlin has argued here, the CMPC cannot just make Healthy Variety-Show movies that aim for commercial success; it also needs to stay on the healthy path and to fulfill the company’s political mission by making national policy films. Different from Healthy Realist Films during Gong Hong’s regime, the CMPC’s productions in the 1970s abandoned the disguise of realist aesthetics and more openly addressed their role as national policy films. Therefore, under Mei Changlin’s leadership, the CMPC joined the angry people in Taiwan in condemning Japan’s diplomatic relations with the PRC in the 1970s.

As a result of Japan and Taiwan’s postwar friendship, spy movies in the 1960s only employ the history of the WWII or Japanese colonialism as the film’s background, and purposely de-emphasize the anti-Japanese message. However, anti-Japanese films made after 1972 are often seen as a patriotic response and retaliation against Japan’s diplomatic betrayal. Initiated by the CMPC this time, Taiwan film industry finally confronted Japan and openly displayed Japan’s past atrocities in films without any constraints. In fact, there had never been a time when the Taiwan film industry was so devoted to the making of anti-Japanese films. Compared to other private companies, the CMPC was more enthusiastic about the genre and produced at least one of such movie every year, starting from *Everlasting Glory* (1974), *Eight Hundred Heroes* (1975), *Land of the Undaunted* (1975), *Victory*, and *Heroes of the Eastern Sky* (1977), just to name a few. Most of these films are historical movies about Chinese eight years of anti-Japanese war and Japan’s invasion of Mainland China; others are war films set in colonial Taiwan. Despite the differences in time and geographical setting, these 1970s Chinese films depict wars in an epic style, and infuse it with people’s wartime experience through family melodramas and romance.
Although the 1960s spy movies and the 1970s anti-Japanese war films are presented with different forms and focuses, the 1970s anti-Japanese movies still followed some of the earlier conventions of anti-Japanese filmmaking. Similar to the earlier spy films, the 1970s war films are all fictional stories unfaithful to the history and employ the melodramatic mode of expressions to create extreme ties of good and evil. To begin with, all the Japanese characters do not speak Japanese language in these anti-Japanese films. In the 1960s spy movies, Japanese characters speak Taiwanese dialect or Mandarin Chinese depending on the overall language used in the film. However, as a result of the KMT’s language policy, all the characters, including local Taiwanese people and Japanese, speak standard Mandarin in the 1970s anti-Japanese war films.  

Similarly, signs of Japan’s actual imperial or colonial policies are vague, if not omitted, in Taiwan’s anti-Japanese films. For example, the Kōminka movement, which plays a significant role in Japanese colonialism, cannot be found in most of the films set in colonial Taiwan. Furthermore, the depiction of Japanese is filled with biases and stereotypes, that is, the characterization of Japanese is often one-dimensional without any interiority, showing most of the Japanese as cruel and inhuman. Most importantly, whether it is Japanese soldiers or the Chinese traitors, the enemy and the KMT government are always in stark contrast, leaving no gray area in between: the enemy as ultimately evil whereas KMT Chinese as upright and nationalistic.

---

228 In order to eradicate the use of local dialects and Japanese language, the KMT government started the “Mandarin Speaking Movement” after it took over Taiwan from Japan. Starting from 1966, the government reinforced the policy by banning students from using dialects at school and shortening the daily broadcasting of dialect programs on TV. In fact, this language policy is one of the reasons behind the decline of Taiwanese dialect films in the late 1960s.

229 For example, in Liu Jiachang’s Victory, Japanese education is missing at school; instead, teachers still preach Chinese nationalism, emphasizing students’ Chinese identity.
In Taiwan’s anti-Japanese films, the depiction of sexuality plays an important role in marking and reinforcing the differences between “the other” versus “us.” In other words, Japanese men are usually depicted as sexually immoral, and they serve as the threat to Chinese and Taiwanese women. For example, the 1960s spy movies often show Japanese men as sexually degraded, who enjoy prostitution and erotic dances, as in *Female Spy Number Seven* (1964) and *Secret Agent White Peony*. Therefore, the KMT’s female spies often use Japanese men’s sexual indulgence against them. In most of the movies, they use their body and their beauty to gain access to Japanese men in order to accomplish their missions. Later, the tropes of forced marriages and rapes become more common in the 1970s anti-Japanese films, particularly movies made in the late 1970s, such as *Gone with Honor* (1979) and *White Jasmine* (1980). Unlike the KMT’s female secret agents in the 1960s spy movies, the Chinese women are depicted as defenseless victims in the 1970s anti-Japanese films. However, these films also show that the raped women eventually transform their grief into nationalistic fever, joining the KMT army to fight side by side with men.

In addition to Japanese men’s sexual indulgence, Japanese women are often depicted as promiscuous in the 1960s spy movies, but as an easy prey in the 1970s war films. Most of the Japanese women in the spy movies are modeled after Yoshiko Kawashima, a real life Manchu princess who later served as a secret agent for the Japanese army during the World War II. In *Female Spy Number Seven*, the villain Yoshiko Kawashima is portrayed as seductive and heartless. In addition to seducing the male protagonist, she also has an unruly affair with the other Japanese official. In *Secret Agent White Peony*, the Japanese female spy is Yoshiko Kawashima’s sister, who designs a gas chamber to torture her captives. Before her identity is discovered, she is disguised as an erotic singer at a club, and she also boldly competes with the
other Japanese woman for the love of the male protagonist’s. In the 1970s anti-Japanese films, the dangerous Japanese woman disappears and what replaces her is a less-attractive and weak female figure, who is in love with a Chinese man but cannot win his heart. For example, in Xu Jinliang’s Gone with Honor, the male protagonist eventually leaves his Japanese girlfriend, Shinji, and in Jiachang Liu’s Victory, the male protagonist Ju-young uses the affection from the Japanese general’s daughter as a tool to go through the strict surveillance in a Japanese controlling base.

The stereotypes, particularly sexual stereotypes, in Taiwan’s anti-Japanese films are used to emphasize the differences between the KMT government and the Japanese enemy, or “the-other-versus-us-construction.” Although the 1960s spy film is built on the polarized good versus evil structure, the good KMT government/Taiwan versus the evil Japan, it shows that the real threats do not necessarily originate from the Japanese, but from the traitors and the spies that betray the KMT government. In other words, the greatest enemies in the spy film are those from within the KMT system, and the genre creates a strong anxiety towards the “people among us.”

Turning to the 1970s, anti-Japanese war film also draws inspiration from the memories of war and colonialism, and constructs the opposition between Japan and the KMT government. However, is Japan the KMT government’s real target in the 1970s anti-Japanese films? Moreover, did the KMT government consider Japan the real enemy that ruined its anti-communist campaign in the 1970s? To better assess the antagonistic narratives in Taiwan cinema during the 1970s, I find it necessary to look at Nietzsche’s argument on morality in On the Genealogy of Morals.

---

230 The Japanese woman that the secret agent competes with turns out to be a Chinese spy at the end of the film.
In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche traces the origin of morality and argues that morality is *created* whereas the interpretation of morality is based on the society’s value system. In order to explain his argument, he introduces the master morality and its opposite, the slave morality. The master morality is the morality of the noble and the strong-willed, who define themselves and their actions as *good* and those different from them as undesirable and *bad*. Contrary to the master morality, the slave morality is the morality of the weak, who resent their masters, thinking it is the masters who oppress them. Therefore, they call themselves the *good* and claim their master as the *evil*. In other words, whereas the master morality is based on *the effect of the action*, that is, “good versus bad,” the slave morality is based on *the intention of the action*, “good versus evil.” As Nietzsche argues, *ressentiment* plays an important role in slave morality because “in order to exist, slave morality always first needs a hostile external world; it needs, physiologically speaking, external stimuli in order to act at all—its action is fundamentally reaction.”

Therefore, in slave morality, the weak creates an imaginary enemy and blames this external enemy for being the cause of his failure. In other words, the weak believes that it is the external *evil* that inflicts the pain and a sense of inferiority in the good, or the weak, itself.

The post-Civil War KMT government had always believed that it was the very embodiment of goodness and a victim of the *evil* communist, who stole the Mainland China from the KMT’s hand. The KMT government’s sense of *ressentiment* grew even stronger after the global communities betrayed it and sided with the communist China in the 1970s. Instead of doing the KMT any justice, the United Nations’ decision along with the United States’ and Japan’s diplomatic betrayals only strengthened the KMT government’s belief that it was victimized and wronged. Insecure and hurt after all its allies’ rejection, the KMT government blamed Japan and

---

231 Nietzsche, Friedrich. p. 37.
other countries sided with the PRC for helping the communist power expanded and preventing the KMT government from recovering its homeland. Thinking that it was only responding to the unforgivable injuries done to it by the others, the KMT government and the Taiwan film industry made anti-Japanese films that actually manifest the government’s fear of displacement and growing diasporic anxieties. More specifically, as most of the 1970s anti-Japanese movies show, the KMT government was only projecting its fear and insecurity on these imagined external enemies, not aware that the real obstacle in reclaiming the homeland back may not be those external enemies, particularly, Japan, who was the scapegoat in this case. Nonetheless, the KMT government needed the antagonistic narrative in order to maintain the wholeness of its ego in the 1970s Taiwan and to reassure its political legitimacy to the people in Taiwan, whose faith in the KMT government began to decline. With this argument in mind, I use Liu Jia-Chang’s influential anti-Japanese film, Victory, as an example to examine the nationalist discourses that the KMT government tried to construct. By investigating the film’s sub-theme of nostalgia and homesickness, I illustrate how Japan was actually an imagined enemy used to take the blame for the KMT’s internal problems.

*****

Reconstruction of Nationalism in Liu Jia-Chang’s Victory

Among all the anti-Japanese films set in colonial Taiwan, Liu Jia-Chang’s Victory was one of the bestselling movies in both Taiwan and Hong Kong during the 1970s.\textsuperscript{232} It was also the winner of several Golden Horse Awards in 1976, including Best Picture, Best Screen Write, Best

\textsuperscript{232} It was played in movie theaters at Taipei for twenty-one days from January thirty first to February twentieth in 1976. See Liang, Liang, ed. Zhonghua minguo dianying yingpian shangying zongmu [Total Number of Films Shown in ROC]. Taipei: Taipei Film Library, 1984. p.421.
Music in Non-Musical Genre, Best Photography, and Best Recording. Its influence on Taiwan in the 1970s is best illustrated by the fact that it was played once and over again on television the following years whenever there were celebrations for Taiwan’s national holidays. The story of Victory centers on the two brothers in the Lin family and their patriotic deeds during Japanese colonialism. The film begins with the execution of Mr. Lin, who tries to protect the family cemetery from being torn down by the Japanese army. His tragic death plants the anti-Japanese seeds in the family and the villagers’ minds: Ju-Guang, the older brother, decides to leave his wife and son behind and join the KMT troop in China, whereas his brother, Ju-Young, a seemingly hooligan figure, stays in Taiwan to revenge for his father’s death by bombing the controlling office of the Japanese water dam. Every villager in the movie also shows his loyalty to the nation by helping the KMT troop on Mainland, and their contribution pay off with the KMT’s final victory in the World War II.

Similar to other 1970s anti-Japanese films, Victory is a combination of romance, family, and war set in the Second World War. In addition to the use of stereotypes and the construction of “the other versus us” mentioned earlier, Victory emphasizes the gender division at war and the idea of sacrifice to mobilize nationalistic discourse. In the following, I look at how gender binarism is fortified through the depiction of war, leaving woman to the subordinate position in Taiwan’s/ KMT’s nationalism. On the other hand, man proves his masculinity through his devotion and sacrifice in the war, and the image of the sacrificing father becomes exemplary of the ideal man. Building on the investigation, I argue that this sacrificing father image plays an important role in promoting nationalism and fostering the imagination of the fatherland in the 1970s Taiwanese anti-Japanese films.
Although Liu Jia-chang highlights women’s role at war in *Victory*, he still follows the traditional gender binarism, viewing women as mere assistance to male nationalism. In other words, whereas men fight on the battlefield, women often adhere the roles of loyal wife and caring nurse. In *Victory*, both Ju- Guang’s wife, Wenying, and her mother-in-law are tied to the domestic realm and it is their responsibility to keep the family functioning while their husbands fights the Japanese. They serve as the hope and the symbol of home for the soldiers on the battlefield; therefore, their chastity is always under strict scrutiny by people back home. In the film, when Wenying tries to save her students from being drafted by the Japanese empire, she is misunderstood as having an affair with the Japanese general, Ikeda, who collaborates with Wenying on scheming the students’ exemption from war. The villagers’ contempt and criticism drive Wenying’s mother-in-law to commit suicide because she could not stand the shame that Wenying has brought to the family. Her suicide quickly leads to Wenying’s dramatic suicide because only by so doing could she prove her chastity to the villagers and her students.

Different from Wenying and her virtuous mother-in-law, there are also women like Mingzhu, a young woman Ju- Guang meets at Mainland China, who fight along with men at the frontline. Mingzhu is a nurse working at the battlefront, whose courage and frankness impress Ju- Guang. When she first encounters Ju- Guang at a medical station, she bluntly demands Ju- Guang to follow her instruction instead of obeying his order. She once again amazes Ju- Guang when she volunteers to work at the frontline, claiming that the anti-Japanese war cannot exclude women and women’s equal responsibility in guarding the homeland. Furthermore, unlike most of the other women, she is depicted as an independent woman, who is not bonded to her family. After her home is destroyed during Japanese bombing, she does not linger and mourn; instead,
she is eager to return to the battlefield. In other words, she is portrayed as a fearless heroine, dedicated her love to the nation— at least before she falls in love with Ju- Guang.

In “An Undesired Revolution,” David Der- wei Wang observes the popularity of the “revolution plus love” formula in May Fourth Chinese literature and the author’s personal life. He quotes Chinese writer Jiang Guangci, who is an advocator of this formula, “the more intense the revolution appears, the more immense the romantic heart becomes.” Not exactly a revolution per se, the anti-Japanese war depicted in the 1970s Taiwan films also deploy the similar formula, showing the conflicts, struggles, and blending of national interest and romantic love. In his 1935 essay, “On the Formula of Revolution and Love,” Mao Dun criticizes Jiang Guangci’s revolution plus love formula, arguing that it has the tendency of twisting the reality of revolution. He sarcastically draws from the literary phenomenon three sets of “revolution plus love” formula: The first formula presents the conflict between love and revolution, whereas the character gives up his or her love for the sake of revolution. The second formula illustrates how revolution brings out the true romantic feelings between two revolutionaries, and the last formula shows revolution itself as love; in other words, revolution is not the antagonistic factor in one’s pursuit of love. Like the literary phenomenon during Jiang Guangci and Mao Dun’s time, the clichéd formulas of romantic love and nationalism serve as a predominant theme in the Victory: Ju- Guang and Wenying struggle between their love and the war, and finally assimilate their personal desire to the love of the nation. On the other hand, the war triggers the love between Ju-


234 qtd. in Wang, David Der- Wei. p. 99.

Guang and Mingzhu on the battlefield, leading them to blend their private love with the patriotic passion.

Far from empowering women and liberating them from the domestic realm, the war still links women to their traditional role as manifested in the 1970s anti-Japanese films. For example, although Mingzhu first appears as an independent and courageous woman, working with men on the battlefield, she eventually falls back to the domestic realm after she falls in love with Ju-Guang. She tells Ju-Guang, “I want to bear a dozen of sons for him [Ju-Guang], and build each of his son as courageous and mighty as his father is.” In other words, as a woman, she cannot avoid her role as a mother and has to contribute to the nation by producing the future soldiers. Maybe by accident, the exact same line Mingzhu delivers to Ju-Guang also appears in Xiao Hui’s dialogue with Gu-Young when he is imprisoned after bombing the Japan’s controlling office. Finally realizing Ju-Young’s secret plans of taking revenge for his father and protect the villagers, Ju-Young’s childhood sweetheart Xiao Hui also shows her wish to bear Ju-Young’s sons. After the death of Ju-Young, Xiao Hui takes over the responsibility of raising Ju-Guang and Wenying’s son against her father’s will. Xiao Hui’s father thinks that she is a single woman and still has a bright future ahead of her, so she shouldn’t be trapped in her maternal responsibilities. However, Xiao Hui insists on raising the child until Ju-Guang returns from war even though she is merely the child’s “auntie.” One of the most heart-rending moments in the film is when Ju-Guang’s son chases after Xiao Hui’s car as she embarks her trip to a neighboring city after Ju-Guang’s return from the mainland. Running breathlessly, the child finally calls out, “mother,” acknowledging Xiao Hui as his mother and her work in raising him single-handedly.
Whereas the depiction of woman bonds to traditional feminine social norm and motherhood, the construction of man requires hyper-masculinity. As illustrated in the film, masculinity consists of pride, dedication to the nation, and sacrifice. In Victory, all the men are either soldiers who go through tough training and fight on the battlefield, or brave commoners who confront Japanese’ brutalities. The only exception is Ju-Young, who is excluded from the male circle and always seeks for the company of women. Unlike the other men in the village, he lowers himself before the Japanese and holds a nonchalant attitude towards the war in the beginning of the movie. Even worse, he refuses to help other KMT’s secret agents achieving their mission in attacking the Japanese power plant for fear it would cause him any danger. He is the family shame and the laughing stock in the village, and his cowardice becomes the obstacle in his pursuit of Xiao Hui. It is after his sacrifice that Xiao Hui once again sees him as a man, and she praises him by belittling herself, “I feel that I can’t match you. You are so tough, so masculine. I can’t wait to marry you.” In other words, the single most important criteria to be a real man is to prove one’s masculinity by sacrificing for the nation. Furthermore, the ideal man in the 1970s Taiwan cinema is often a father or a fatherly figure. As mentioned earlier, women want to bear sons for the masculine heroes, and a man’s responsible attitude towards his family is an important criterion in determining his manliness.

In his study of Taiwan cinema during the 1960s-70s, Wolfram Eberhard argues that the father figure in early Chinese cinema is respected but not loved, and building on Wolfram Eberhard’s argument, later film scholars, like Chen Ru-shou, conclude that the prototype of this respected father figure is the KMT leader Chiang Kai-Shek.²³⁶ It is true that there are father

figures like Danmei’s father in *Lonely Seventeen*, who is part of the patriarchal and nationalist surveillance system, reinforcing the social values. However, most of the other films, like Li Xing’s Healthy Realist Films, *The Road* and *Beautiful Ducklings*, portray a sacrificing father instead of an invincible hero. The sacrificing fathers give up their own wealth, their health, and even their life for their children. In *The Road*, the kind father is a hard-working road construction worker, whose only hope is to send his son to study abroad. However, in order to stop his son from continuing a scandalous relationship with a neighboring widow, he is beaten up by a group of hooligans who are friends of the widow’s husband. Similarly, though not a blood relationship, Xiaoyue’s foster father in *Beautiful Ducklings* is bullied by her biological brother in order to protect her from knowing the truth about the death of her biological father, and he gives away his savings to Xiaoyue’s greedy brother after she decides to live with her real family members. In both films, the sacrificing fathers play an important role in fostering a strong affective mode that Rey Chow calls *wenqing zhuyi*, which can be literally translated into “warm sentiment-ism.” Rey Chow argues that *wenqing* implies endurance and compromise, and its forbearing tone, despite its intensity, is different from the “affective outpour.” The very core of *wenqing* is the idealized family in Confucian ethics, and because one is seen as enslaved to all kinds of human relationships in Chinese culture, *wenqing* becomes, according to Rey Chow, “what keeps and preserves, what holds things together.” For this reason, the father figure in Li Xing’s classic family ethic films can only bear the pain and sadness instead of engaging in direct confrontation with the oppressive forces.

---


238 Ibid.
The sacrificing father figure in the 1970s anti-Japanese film takes on a more romantic narrative and he also serves as the trigger for a nationalistic fever. In his review of Li Xing’s famous anti-Japanese film, *Land of the Undaunted*, film critic Chen Fang suggests that the 1970s anti-Japanese films’ depiction of common people’s experience is the most touching and intriguing element. He maintains,

Foreign made films on how Germans ravaged the Jews always sharply depict the resistance under the oppression, whether they are based on real stories or fictional ones. The audience can directly feel the terrifying torments on screen. Moreover, the films also have the most incisive depiction of Nazi’s disgusting looks… After all, Chinese is a modest race that is good at returning evil with kindness. When making anti-Japanese films, most of them only depict the short confrontation between the two armies, how courageous the Chinese guerrillas are at war, or the final victory recovering the lost land, etc…. Chinese commoners always find the anti-Japanese slogans meaningless, what we want to see is the keenly-felt pain. Maybe it is because *Land of the Undaunted* captures common people’s true feelings that it wins our tears.

The contrast Chen Fang makes between the depictions of German’s and Japan’s oppression on screen echoes to Rey Chow’s argument on *wenqing*, the repressive affective mode common in

---

239 Ibid. In her conclusion, Rey Chow argues that sentimentalism is “all about adaptation and resilience”(200). She gives an example to show the difference between romantic rebellion and sentimentalism: “if the romantic rebellion is a matter of announcing ‘I have to be/ assert myself, whatever it costs and whomever it may sacrifice’; sentimentalism is much more a matter of gesturing, with sadness as much as with humor: ‘I assimilate; I eat bitterness; I efface myself if I have to’” (200).

Chinese culture. As Laura Mulvey argues, certain narrative patterns and symbols in the films are culturally specific, and, in her words, “the images and stories of popular cinema can function like collective mnemonic symbols, and allow ‘ordinary people,’ us, to stop and wonder or weep, desire or shudder, momentarily touching ‘unspeakable’ but shared psychic structure.” Therefore, the sacrificing father figure serves as the “mnemonic symbol” in Chinese cinema, leading to audience’s collective affective responses, the “keenly-felt pain.” Furthermore, it is exactly this “keenly-felt pain” and strong emotionalism, not propagandist slogan or direct smear of the Japanese, that generates the nationalist sentiment. That is to say, the sacrificing father figure, as presented in Victory, serves as a powerful tool for the KMT government to hail the national subjects and to re-inscribe the ideology that the government has proposed.

Different from the 1960s family ethic films, the sacrificing father in the 1970s anti-Japanese films is not afraid of confronting and challenging the oppressive power. In addition to the Lin brothers, whom women considered heroes and ideal fathers, the butcher and the vegetable vendors in the village also prove their masculinity by being the martyrs for their family and the nation. After they are caught by the Japanese for helping the KMT’s secret agents, their children are terrified seeing their fathers taken away by Japanese soldiers. The butcher calms his son and tells him to sing instead of crying. Shot from the child’s perspective, the butcher is shaped into a dignified father, marching heroically toward his execution. Whereas the father figure in the 1960s Taiwan cinema reaffirms the value of filial piety through his sacrifice for the children, the one in the 1970s anti-Japanese films extends family ethics to the expression of loyalty to the nation.

---

The image of the sacrificing father is not restricted to biological family members; it can also be extended to relationships between people and community without any blood relations. When the martial film (junjiao pian), a genre focusing on soldiers’ experiences during the military training, developed and gradually replaced anti-Japanese war films in the late 1970s, the sacrificing father is also changed into a male teacher, a mentor, or a military leader. *Teacher of Great Soldier* (1978) is the best example illustrating this transformation of the sacrificing father figure. In the film, the general, Jiang Zhisheng, is a strict yet caring mentor to the soldiers, and his role as a captain is sometimes blurred with that of a father’s. Because Jiang Zhisheng does not have any children of his own, he always treat his students like their own sons and grandsons, making the whole military base like a big family. He and his wife devote their entire life working at a military base and educate generations of soldiers.

I have discussed in length the various techniques employed to promote nationalism in the 1970s anti-Japanese war films. Through the antagonistic narrative, or the “other” versus “us” construction, the films emphasize the moral superiority of the KMT government against the enemy. Furthermore, as illustrated in *Victory* and other anti-Japanese films, both men and women share the responsibility in nation building, but their roles greatly differ: Women are seen as the subordinate of male nationalism and are still bonded to the domestic realm and their responsibility in reproducing the future soldiers. On the other hand, men are seen as guardians of the nation, whose sacrifice triggers sentimentalism and a nationalistic fever. All these elements are used to construct nationalism in the 1970s anti-Japanese films, but the question is, is the nationalism presented in films a mere response to the hostile external reality and Japan’s diplomatic decision in 1972? I argue that this nationalistic narrative also functions to encourage
citizens’ support for the government and to enhance the faith of the people, particularly the faith of the mainland émigrés, who followed Chiang Kai-Shek to Taiwan in 1949.

*****

Victory at the Time of Crisis

Similar to other anti-Japanese films in the 1970s, *Victory* emphasizes and exaggerates the bond between the KMT China and Taiwan. More precisely, as the symbol of plum blossom throughout the film implies, it is the *nationalist China* during the Republican Period (1912-1949), when the KMT government still controlled the whole mainland that is tied to Taiwan, not the communist China or China before the Republican period.

The Chinese title of Liu Jiachang’s *Victory*, *meihua*, refers to plum blossom, and the image of plum blossom also appears throughout the film, such as in the panning shots that connect each scene. In *Victory*, flowers are also used to symbolize different nations and their cultural aesthetics. For example, when it comes to Japanese woman, the camera often places cherry blossoms, Japanese national flower, in the background. On the contrary, plum blossom is always associated with Taiwan, the KMT government, and the Republican China. Even the theme song for the movie bears the same title, “Plum Blossoms.” The song was written by the film director himself, and was later adapted for KMT’s *The Plum Blossom March* in the 1970s.\(^\text{242}\) The lyric of the song was also printed in the booklet that was used to advertise the film; as a result, this song became a great hit soon after the film was released. Because the song was popular and catchy, it continued to be taught to schoolchildren in their music classes in Taiwan. The song reiterates the

\(^{242}\) The song was extremely popular and played at all kinds of occasions until 1978, when “Descendants of Dragon,” a song written by Hou Dejian, came out after the US government ended its diplomatic relations with Taiwan.
characteristics of plum blossom that “the colder it gets, the more it blooms” and “where there is soil, there it is. It does not fear the freezing snow, wind, or rain.”\textsuperscript{243} In other words, it emphasizes the toughness of the flower, and further associates this characteristic to “the lofty and great China.”

In the film, whenever the song is played, it generates the patriotic and passionate sentiment. As Emily Yue-\textsuperscript{243}yu Yeh observes, different from most of the films’ use of theme songs in the background or in the non-\textsuperscript{243}diegetic form, “Plum Blossoms” appears in the film’s diegetic world and the song singing is privileged over other background sounds to highlight the song’s narrative dominance.\textsuperscript{244} For instance, at the mourning ceremony for Wen- Ying, Wen- Ying’s son begins singing the song, and it eventually leads to the chorus of the villagers. Similarly, when the butcher is on his way to be sent to the Japanese military court for helping the nationalist anti-Japanese movement, he asks his son to sing instead of crying. With the young boy beginning the first note, all the people on the street sing along, ending the scene with an impassioned parade.

According to Thomas Elsaesser, along with film form, mise-en-scene, and camera, music plays an important role in melodrama in articulating what the characters are unable to express themselves directly.\textsuperscript{245} The song “Plum Blossoms,” in this film therefore functions to externalize and convey the characters’ feelings, and this explicit emotional message also helps to reinforce the film’s nationalist narrative. More importantly, the song creates a sense of belonging among people as Emily Yue-\textsuperscript{243}yu Yeh maintains,

\textsuperscript{243} The lyric of the song goes: “Plum blossoms, plum blossoms all over the land, the colder it gets, the more it blooms. / The persevering plum blossom symbolizes us, the lofty and great China./ Look at how the plum blossom has bloomed everywhere, where there is soil, there it is. / It does not fear the freezing snow, wind, or rain, it is our National Flower.”


\textsuperscript{245} Elsaesser, Thomas. p. 50.
The film emphasizes the use of music to make it a discourse of its own, producing a sensational text that achieves the goal of propaganda, which is rare in Taiwan cinema. It uses ‘Plum Blossom,’ which bears the same title with the film, to start an *ethnic calling that transcends time and space*. It enables the viewer to experience another kind of cognitive activity outside of the visual and audio narrative, and to experience affective identification triggered by the song outside of the world of music.246

In other words, the lyrics address and hail Chinese characters in the movie and the audience in the 1970s to identify with what the plum blossom symbolizes, “the lofty great China.” Although the song was used to convey the determination to survive colonialism in *Victory*, it also functions as a catharsis for the viewer to release the emotional tension caused by Taiwan’s political situations in the 1970s.

In *Victory*, Wenying once asked her students, “Which people are we? Which flower best represents our ethnic spirit? — Plum blossom. That is why we chose plum blossoms as our national flower.” As the film suggests, plum blossom is the Republic of China’s national flower; however, the usage of plum blossom in this film reveals a major historical error: plum blossom was not the Republic of China’s national flower during Japanese colonialism from 1895-1945, which is the historical setting for *Victory*. The *intention* of making plum blossom the national flower was first stated in official documents during one of the central standing committee meetings in 1929 when the KMT propaganda sector proposed to use the image of plum blossom

246 Yeh, Emily Yue-yu. “*Victory*: Popular Music and Patriotic Imaginary.” p. 69. Translation and emphasis mine.
to represent the nation. The government officials initially planned to choose the national flower from one of the *four gentlemen* in Chinese culture: plum blossom, orchid, bamboo, and chrysanthemum. Among the four, plum blossom and chrysanthemum were the most popular ones with their own supporters from different sides of the party members. However, the group supporting plum blossom came up with convincing interpretation of the image of plum blossom, arguing that it bears the KMT government’s spirit: the three stamen symbolizing the Three Principles of the People, and the five flower petals the Five-power Constitution. Although the proposal was well-received in the first meeting, during the second meeting the same year, the proposal, which was under heated debate this time, was held back. The decision was further postponed by the Chinese civil war between the KMT and the Chinese Communist Party, and it was not brought up again until KMT settled in Taiwan in 1949. Finally, after several decades of time, plum blossom was chosen to be the national flower of the ROC by the Executive Yuan on July 21st 1964. In other words, plum blossom had not yet become the ROC’s national flower during Japanese colonialism so the symbol of the national flower is simply misused in the film, which is set in Japanese colonialism.

Is the displacement of the national flower a result of the director’s inadequate knowledge of modern Chinese history? I argue that the symbol of plum blossom in this movie is probably not so much misused as it is anachronistic a kind of strategic essentialism. It is *purposely* used to emphasize and exaggerate the bond between Taiwan and the KMT government during Japanese colonialism. On the one hand, its toughness serves as a role model for people in Taiwan during the national crisis in the 1970s. On the other hand, it is inscribed with the KMT government’s

---

founding spirit and national pride as the image of plum blossom has been associated with the KMT government since the Republican Period. As Lu Feii argues, in response to mainlanders’ declining faith in KMT in the 1970s, the party “retrieve[s] the memory of ‘victories’ so as to fortify a defense mechanism vis-à-vis the present-day political setbacks.” In fact, plum blossom has long been associated with the KMT government’s revolutionary spirit and glory.

For example, Bu Wan-Cang’s 1931 movie, A Spray of Plum Blossom, also integrates the representation of plum blossom to a story of the KMT government’s success in disciplining the communist rebels in the early Republican Period. A Spray of Plum Blossom centers a patriotic young man, Hu Lunting, who leaves Shanghai to work for the Military Academy at Guangzhou, a city in southern China. At Guangzhou, Hu Lunting falls in love with the governor’s daughter, Luohua, whose favorite flower is plum blossom and who decorates her room with furniture of the plum blossom shape (Figure 5.1). The two of them express their love for each other through the drawing of plum blossoms and the writing of poetry about the flower on a rock; however, Lunting is framed by the other suitor of Luohua’s and is banished by the governor. After he flees from the city, Hu Lunting joins a group of bandits called “A Spray of Plum Blossom” (yi jianmei) and trains the unruly bandits into a disciplined army, which saves Luohua from the hands of the evil schemer and joins the KMT government in the end.

Bu Wan-Cang’s film can be seen as an allegory of China’s political situation in the late 1920s when the communist began to gain its influence within the KMT ruled Republican China. In 1927, the communist party decided to establish its own military forces, and the split between the two parties eventually led to Chiang Kai-Shek’s decision to eliminate communist power during the following years. In A Spray of Plum Blossom, there is a strong message that the

---

248 Lu, Feii. p. 182-183. Also see Zhang, Yingjin. p.143.
Figure 5.1  Luohua’s room in *A Spray of Plum Blossom*. 
country should not be divided and it is best illustrated in the film’s ending when the bandits, which possibly allude to the communists, succumb and serve in the KMT’s National Revolutionary Army based in Guangzhou. Bu Wancang’s film is only one of the examples that associate the image of plum blossoms with the KMT’s success. Furthermore, the symbol of plum blossom, as Bu’s film shows, even implies the hope of taking over the communist power.

Similar to the character of Ju-Guang in Liu Jiacang’s Victory, who was once a glorious KMT soldier, but lost one of his legs after the war, the KMT government in Taiwan also went through symbolic castration in the 1970s when its authority and power began to wane. At a time when people in Taiwan became aware the increasingly inhibited and vulnerable KMT party state in the 1970s, Victory reinstates the KMT’s founding spirit and earlier success by displacing the trope of the plum blossom onto the colonial period. By reclaiming the memory of the government’s past glory through the symbol of plum blossom, Victory explicates the KMT’s right to rule and its legitimate regime in the 1970s Taiwan.

*****

Nostalgia towards the Lost Homeland

As manifested in most of the 1970s anti-Japanese films, the constant reference to the KMT China is also accompanied by a sense of nostalgia towards the homeland. Ever since the KMT government’s withdrawal to Taiwan in 1949, its regime had been built on the myth of Chineseness and of home. Drawing on Peter Brooks’ study of melodrama, Linda Williams asserts, “Melodrama is fueled by nostalgia for a lost home.” She argues that a good home

---

plays a key role in constructing virtues and good morality, and it is through the pursuit and longing of this “space of innocence” that the virtue is recognized. It was exactly the longing and anticipation for the homecoming that sustained the KMT’s regime in Taiwan during the 1950s and 1960s; however, along with the KMT government’s diplomatic setbacks in the 1970s, the hope of return began to crumble. In the following, I look at the nostalgia and the desire for home in Victory and other 1970s anti-Japanese films, and investigate the relations between the KMT government’s growing diasporic anxiety and the cinematic representation of homecoming.

As mentioned earlier, the sacrificing father figure in 1970s anti-Japanese film is a fighter and a guardian of the nation; in fact, he also serves as the key to the fatherland. In Victory, Mr. Lin is a respected man from the gentry class who has great influence over the local community. In order to protect his own family and the townspeople, he volunteers to protest against the Japanese army despite his old age. As shown in the beginning of the movie, Mr. Lin leads other senior villagers to confront the Japanese army, persuading the army to give up their plan of demolishing the villager’s gravesite. However, after the failure of the negotiation, Mr. Lin and other seniors are brutally beheaded by the Japanese. The horrifying scene of decapitation portrays Japanese as inhuman and barbaric, and it generates the community’s anti-Japanese sentiment and unites the villagers to fight against them. Later in the film, the death of Mr. Lin also changes Ju-Young from a troublemaker in the family to a mature grownup, and it brings him to swear tearfully in front of his father’s tomb that he will revenge for his father’s death after his father’s heroic sacrifice.

The decapitation of father in the beginning of Victory also reenacts the trauma for the KMT government—not just about the loss of father but also the fatherland. In the movie, Mr. Lin serves as the channel to the homeland as he is the guardian of Chinese culture and lineage. In the
beginning of the film, the conflict between Taiwanese and Japanese people is over the dispute of relocating the villager’s ancestral tombs. As the majority of the populations in Taiwan are immigrants and their descendants from Southern China, who settled on the island during the Ming and Qing Dynasty, the ancestral grave becomes the record showing their origin and connection to the homeland. In other words, ancestral grave is a symbol of bloodline and lineage in Chinese culture; therefore, moving the grave, according to Mr. Lin, is “to deceive the clan and annihilate the ancestor” (qizong miezu). In a way, the refusal to move the ancestral grave and to demolish it is also a refusal to be disconnected with the nation’s past and cultural affiliation with the mainland. By destroying the villager’s family grave and beheading the head of the village, the Japanese troops cut the link between Taiwan and its historical past with the fatherland.

However, the villagers in the film are eager to reconnect with their fatherland. In the film, right after Chiang Kai-Shek announces the beginning of the anti-Japanese war, Ju-Guang and other young villagers take a boat to cross the Taiwan Strait and join the KMT army on the mainland. The idea of serving for the homeland, along with the resentment towards the Japanese, is what motivated Taiwanese youth to fight side by side with the KMT army on the mainland. As illustrated by Ju-Guang’s inspiring speech, “the training is hard, but this is a good opportunity for us youngsters from Taiwan to be loyal to our country;” the soldiers from Taiwan think of their service in the KMT China as a contribution to their country and view the anti-Japanese movement in Taiwan as part of China’s war against the Japanese empire.

Similar to Victory, most of the 1970s anti-Japanese films emphasize a Chinese origin and the idea of homeland. In fact, the pursuit of Chineseness, either Chinese cultural tradition or the land of China, almost becomes a formula in anti-Japanese films made in the 1970s Taiwan. Xu Jinliang’s Gone with Honor is one such example and it mirrors Victory in terms of the sub-plot
of Chinese root seeking. The film centers on Lin Zemin, an earlier Chinese immigrant, and his family in Taiwan. Their family’s ancestral tablet is burned down by Japanese soldiers, and one of Lin’s sons is killed by the Japanese. Still, Lin Zemin is optimistic about the future, as he bluntly lies to his grandson Young Yuan that Sun Yat-Sen once saved China so he would come back to save Taiwan one day. In the movie, Young Yuan, whose name literally means “forever-origin,” eventually goes back to northern China, finding people from his tribe and relatives from the same family line.\textsuperscript{250} Similar to \textit{Victory}, \textit{Gone with Honor} shows that people in Taiwan share the same roots with the Chinese, and the strong bond can never be undone by Japanese colonialism.

The emphasis on the Chinese root and the inseparable relationship between China and Taiwan in the 1970s anti-Japanese films can also be read as part of the KMT government’s project to tone down the conflicts between local Taiwanese people and the more recent mainland émigrés who followed Chiang Kai-Shek to Taiwan after 1949.\textsuperscript{251} The drastic social changes after the KMT government’s takeover of Taiwan in 1945 soon triggered local Taiwanese people’s antagonism towards the KMT government and the mainlanders who came to Taiwan with Chiang Kai-Shek’s army, and it finally reached to a breaking point in 1947 when the 228 Incident broke out. Instead of solving the tension between the two groups of people, the KMT government had been oppressing local Taiwanese people by force. After more than one decade’s oppressive rule, the KMT government finally decided to solve the internal ethnic conflicts by turning local Taiwanese into submissive national subjects, and it was done so by emphasizing

\textsuperscript{250} The theme of root-seeking and the preoccupation with origin became more prominent in the late 1970s Taiwan cinema, which I will discuss later in this chapter. The other good example of films dealing with people in Taiwan’s origin is Chen Yaochi’s 1980 movie, \textit{The Pioneers}.

\textsuperscript{251} The “local Taiwanese people” I refer to here are the so-called benshengren, a term used to describe earlier mainland immigrants, who came to Taiwan before 1948. Most of them came to Taiwan in the Ming Dynasty and lived through Japanese colonial rule. The opposite of benshengren is waishengren, who is also known as the mainlanders. They are KMT’s officials, military dependents, and commoners who came to Taiwan after the Chinese Civil War.
Chineseness: the shared root, shared culture, and shared history among earlier immigrants and those who arrived after the Chinese civil war. The notion of shared Chinese identity was integrated into the education for the generation of children who were born after the war, and it was reinforced by the Cultural Renaissance Movement proposed by Chiang Kai-Shek in late 1960s. Building on this nationalist discourse, the 1970s anti-Japanese films draw on topics familiar to both local Taiwanese and the mainlanders, which is the memory of the Japanese empire and its military invasion during the WWII, and, most importantly, recount the long history of the kinship between local Taiwanese and the mainlanders. The story of Ju-Guang and other KMT army on the Mainland helping the anti-Japanese revolts in Taiwan does not have any historical bases because local Taiwanese people’s anti-Japanese protests had already diminished in late 1920s and most of the Taiwanese men were sent to fight for the Japanese empire, not against it during the WWII. Therefore, the bond between Taiwan and the KMT China during the WWII is used to exaggerate and underline the role the KMT government played in liberating Taiwan from Japanese rule.

On the one hand, the 1970s anti-Japanese films resume to Chinese culture in general or abstract Chineseness, emphasizing the culture, history, and identity local Taiwanese people share with people in the nationalist China. On the other, the fascination with fatherland, home, and origin also speak to the mainlanders, who began to realize the impossibility of home. Ever since the KMT government withdrew to Taiwan in 1949, it had held the belief that it would use Taiwan as a base to return to the mainland someday, so it came up with the slogan, “Reconquering the Mainland” (fan’gong dalu). Although the United States and other western

---

252 The regulation on Taiwanese dialects in the Mandarin Chinese language policy can also be seen as part of this attempt to promote the Chineseness and shared root.

countries assumed that the KMT was incompetent of reconquering the mainland by force, they did not discourage the KMT from believing that it would someday fulfill this dream for fear that their discouragement would result in the expansion of the communist power in East Asia.\footnote{For more discussions on the United States’ treatment of postwar Taiwan Strait crises, see Chang Su-ya’s “The Taiwan Strait Crises and U. S Attitude toward ‘Reconquering the Mainland’ in the 1950s” (\textit{Bulletin of the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica} 36 (2001): 231-290).}

However, after the two Taiwan Strait crises in the 1950s, when the KMT government actually had military confrontations with the communist China, the United States changed its stance and asked the KMT government to modify its plan of military attack to a \textit{spiritual and cultural attack}.\footnote{The First Taiwan Strait Crisis was from 1954-1955, when the People’s Liberation Army from Mainland China began to attack Quemoy (Kinmen) and Matsu islands, which belong to the Republic of China. The second time that the People’s Liberation Army attacked Quemoy in 1958, the US government provided finally provided the military support for the KMT government and saved Taiwan from another crisis.}

Having missed all the opportunities to claim the mainland back, Chiang Kai-Shek had no choice but changed the slogan of “Reconquering the Mainland” to the less offensive “Recovering the Mainland” in the 1960s. Losing all its allies in the anti-communist campaign in the 1970s, the KMT government could only modify the slogan once again into “Anti-communist to Recover Our Home.”\footnote{The original Chinese slogan for “Recovering the Mainland” is “guangfu dalu,” whereas “Anti-communist to Recover Our Home” is “fangong fuguo.” In the 1980s, the slogan was once again changed into a less offensive one, “Unifying China with the Three Principles of the People” (\textit{sanmin zhuyi tongyi zhonghuo}).}

Although the defeat in the Chinese civil war and the loss of the mainland was an extremely traumatic experience to the KMT government, Taiwan film industry could not respond to the trauma adequately and the intensity of trauma made it impossible to be integrated into the KMT’s selfhood since 1948. It was the awareness of an impossible home in the 1970s that finally brought the KMT government’s diasporic anxiety to the surface. The series of diplomatic setbacks, including Taiwan’s loss of membership in the United Nations, and the termination of Japan and Taiwan’s diplomatic relation, were followed by other appalling events, such as the
death of Chiang Kai-Shek, who symbolizes the hope of claiming China back, in 1975 and the end of Taiwan-US diplomatic relation in 1979. As a result, people in Taiwan, particularly the mainland émigrés, began to see the campaign of reconquering the Mainland a mere illusion. For the émigré who followed the KMT’s army to Taiwan, home has forever lost to the communist; therefore, along with the reconstructed national past, it began to be figured as an imagined home that only exists in the cinematic images. To paraphrase Chinese film critic Gary Xu’s words, nostalgia is always already imagination, “but such imagination is made possible only by the dialectics between the absence of a physical local and the construction of the locals across different times.” In other words, nostalgia involves the active reconstruction and imagination of the locales, of home. That way, the imagined home could continue to serve as the center of virtue, and “the space of innocence” as Linda Williams has termed it. Anti-Japanese war films, like Victory, therefore became the outlet for the émigré’s nostalgia for the lost home. This sense of nostalgia was particularly dominant in later anti-Japanese films like Victory and Gone with Honor, as the KMT government’s diasporic anxieties and the awareness of the impossible home grew.

However, even films manifesting the nostalgia towards the KTM China were forced to change in the late 1970s. The younger generations, who grew up in Taiwan and had no experience of China except from the stories they heard from their parents and school, began to think that there is no need to claim the whole mainland back. In his Return to Reality: Political and Cultural Change in 1970s Taiwan and the Postwar Generation, Hsiau A-Chin argues that the 1960s Taiwan’s intellectuals lived in an oppressive social atmosphere and could not actively

---

participated in Taiwanese politics; however, the impact of Taiwan’s political setbacks in the 1970s brought the younger generation to an “awakening process.”\textsuperscript{258} Hsiau A-Chin defines the “Return to Reality” generation as “those young adults who criticize and abandon the last generation’s diasporic mentality, particularly those aggressively challenge the political system and re-construct the culture.”\textsuperscript{259} Different from their predecessors, who believed they could reclaim the mainland one day or those who indulged in their nostalgia towards home, this new generation questioned where the real home is and the nationalist narrative that had been constructed by the KMT government since its retreat to Taiwan in 1949. Instead, they see Taiwan as their root and their homeland.

******

\textit{Conclusion}

As I have demonstrated so far, Liu Jia-cang’s \textit{Victory} is more than an anti-Japanese film; in fact, the themes of root seeking and nostalgia towards the KMT’s glorious days surpass the antagonistic narrative. Although the film targeted Japan as the KMT government believed that Japan’s political betrayal in 1972 indirectly sabotaged the KMT’s plan of reconquering the mainland and returning home, it was actually responding to the fear and the trauma of losing the KMT’s homeland forever. In other words, instead of responding to Japan, the anti-Japanese films actually speak to the KMT government’s declining authority in Taiwan and its trembling campaign for reconquering the mainland. Regardless of KMT government’s efforts in claiming its political legitimacy in Taiwan and self-hypnotizing the hope of claiming the mainland back


\textsuperscript{259} Ibid. Translation mine.
through anti-Japanese films like *Victory*, it could not stop the wave of Taiwanese nativist literature and other nativist cultural movements beginning from the late 1970s.

Liu Jiacang’s *Victory* also plays an important role in the trend of the 1970s anti-Japanese films. It shows the transition of Taiwan film industry’s treatment of Japanese and foreshadows a new wave of nativist films and cultural movement. In addition to challenging the diasporic narrative presented by the KMT government, the intellectuals in the 1970s Taiwan also began to review the WWII history, particular the anti-Japanese narrative constructed by the government. As a result, the colonial narrative is no longer black-and-white—it also becomes more self-reflexive. Coming out in the second-half of anti-Japanese films trend, *Victory* manifests some of the transformations in the depiction of the Japanese. For example, unlike most of the Japanese in earlier anti-Japanese films, Commander Ikeda in *Victory* shows a more understanding and sympathetic attitude towards the colonized people. He studies at China for four years and becomes friends with people in Taiwan, like Ju-Guang, and he secretly protects Wenying’s students from being sent to fight in Southeast Asia. Before Japan’s final surrender, Ikeda suggested that all the Japanese are tired of the war, blaming the bad decision that the Japanese government had made, “From the very beginning, I knew it is a war that we will never win. Our leaders’ wrong choice led us to the road of defeat.” In the late 1970s, the depiction of Japanese and their relationship to Taiwanese or Chinese people became even more complex as illustrated in the depiction of the Japanese doctor, Kobayashi, in *White Jasmine*. Kobayashi once tells Miss Kao, the Chinese teacher who is raped by Japanese that curing Japanese soldiers and sending them back to the battlefield to kill more people “is a way of ruining myself.” Kobayashi is caught between his loyalty to his country and the shame of Japanese atrocities at war, so the only way for him to anesthetize himself is to be intoxicated in alcohol and indulged in self-abasement. At
the end of the film, he sacrifices himself to save Miss Kao’s students from being raped by Japanese soldiers. Holding a mixed feeling towards Japanese, Miss Kao tells Kobayashi that “Although you are Japanese, I respect you.”

In 1977, Ming Ji moves from CMPC’s studio manager to the position as the company’s managing director. Upon his inauguration, he declares

CMPC’s filmmaking mostly collaborates with the national policy. However, this policy has different stages… After I take over the position as the manager, I look for innovation and changes all the time. Although the anti-Japanese theme can still be made into films, I don’t want to do it. Instead, I want to start the new propaganda mission.”

During the following years, the CMPC no longer supported the production of anti-Japanese films and the cold war politics, and Ming Ji also followed his own words, changing the company’s management by shifting the focus to realist films and film adaptations of nativist literature. Beginning in 1982, younger generation of directors including Edward Yang, Ko I-Chen, Zhang Yi, Hou Hsia-Hsien, Wang Tong, and Wu Nien-jen, just to name a few, gradually moved away from traditional anti-Japanese narrative. These Taiwan New Cinema directors revisited the colonial history and provided an alternative to the postwar history presented by the KMT government. As Chen Kuan Hsing argues, before Taiwan New Cinema, “‘colonialism’ does not seem to exist in the structure of historical memory for waishengren [mainlanders], just

---

as ‘cold war’ does not occupy a central place in that of benshengren [local Taiwanese].”²⁶¹ In other words, the Taiwan New Cinema tries to present a complex view of Taiwan’s colonial history. Building on the depiction of Japanese in the late 1970s anti-Japanese films, works such as Wang Tong’s Strawman (1987), Hill of No Return (1992), and Wu Nien-jen’s A Borrowed Life (1994), look at Japanese colonialism through the lens of different groups of local Taiwanese people. With the rise of New Taiwan Cinema, Taiwan film industry started to depolarize and de-melodramatize the Taiwan-Japan relations and colonial history. By so doing, it also began the search for multiple roots for the people of Taiwan.

6. Coda: Melodramatic Mode beyond Healthy Realist Film

That we can go on entertaining ourselves day after day with the chase, the shoot-out, the open-heart operation is evidence of our need for fully externalized, personalized, and enacted conflict, and for its clarifying resolution.

-- Peter Brooks

As a film movement, Healthy Realism embraced various genres, such as family ethic films, urban comedies, romance and anti-Japanese films during its transformation into Healthy Variety-show and healthy national policy films from 1964 to 1982. Nevertheless, these films were threaded together by their healthy ideology and melodramatic mode. While realism had been avoided by the KMT government for fear of its subversive potential, melodramatic expression, which recognizes virtue through confrontations between opposite forces and sentimental spectacles full of tears, was supported by the KMT government to affirm traditional values, to create a national myth, and to articulate its political campaign targeting other political rivals. However, ironically, the melodramatic mode can be as subversive as realism, questioning the government proposed ethics and policies as I have demonstrated in the previous chapters.

The film industry and the society of Taiwan were changed completely by a series of historical events in the 1980s. Following the KMT government’s diplomatic setbacks in the 1970s, the Democratic Progressive Party (DDP) was established illegally in 1986 and the thirty-eight years’ martial law was lifted in 1987. What follows were the presidency of Lee Teng-hui, the first native Taiwanese to become the president of ROC, and his democratic reforms starting from 1988. As a result, the KMT government gradually lost its comprehensive control over the society of Taiwan and its invincible status began to collapse. The 1980s was also the age of

---

262 Brooks, Peter. p. 204-205.
change and transformation for the film industry in Taiwan. The older generation film directors, like Li Xing and Bai Jingrui, handed control to their disciples in CMPC, including Hou Hsiao-Hsien and Edward Yang, who were to become the prominent figures in Taiwan New Cinema. Most importantly, the change of power in the film industry also paralleled the change of aesthetic mode from melodrama to realism. However, does it mean that the melodramatic mode simply disappeared without a trace after the 1980s? In this coda, I investigate what becomes of the melodramatic mode in Taiwan New Cinema, the era of realist filmmaking. Before I turn to Taiwan New Cinema, there is one more film genre I wish to discuss first, which is the extremely sensational social realist films (shehui xieshi pian) that became popular in the late 1970s.

*****

Final Explosion: Excess and Taiwan Black Movies

After almost two decades of Healthy Realist Films, audiences in Taiwan began to grow tired of the popular genres in the 1970s, such as romantic films adapted from Qiong Yao’s novels. Following the standard formula, the film industry could no longer come up with original stories that hold the audiences’ interest. On the other hand, the government proposed anti-Japanese war films gradually transformed into martial films (junjiao pian), such as Off to Success (1978) and A Teacher of Great Soldiers (1978) in the late 1970s. Some of these films are comedies centering on soldiers’ lives in the army; others are dramas based on John Ford’s 1955 classic, The Long Gray Line, which focuses on the relationship between army officers and young cadets in the military academy. However, like other genre films, the martial films did not make any significant progress or changes, consequently leading to its decline in a few years’ time.
Furthermore, problems within local Taiwan film industry were as severe as the external threats during the time. As mentioned in Chapter Three, the trend of independent filmmaking movement came to a changing point in mid-1970s when companies in Taiwan began to lose their competitiveness to their Hong Kong counterpart. As a result, many independent film companies in Taiwan were either out of business or merged by the better-managed Hong Kong companies. By the end of 1970s, the survived film companies in Taiwan were once again intimidated by the then full-fledged independent film companies in Hong Kong that produced many top-grossing films, such as *Snake in the Eagle’s Shadow* (1978) and *The Drunken Master* (1978), which star Jackie Chan and lead to a Jackie Chan craze in East Asia.263 In addition to the threat from Hong Kong, the late 1970s was also one of the bleakest moments in Taiwan film industry, as the issue of corruption and gangsters’ involvement in the film business began to surface. Film celebrities’ scandals, such as drug problems and prostitution, and movie companies’ usurious loans and connections to local gangsters, led to the deterioration of the film culture in Taiwan during the time.264 When the entire film industry was in a dismal state and was desperate to find something new, the appearance of social realist films in 1978 served as the last fight of the melodramatic mode before the turn to Taiwan Cinema and realist filmmaking in 1982.

263 See Chen, Ru-shou. p. 37. According to Chen Ru-shou, there were around 60 Hong Kong film directors who came to make their first movie in Taiwan from 1975 to 1979. Their western training and original filmmaking style soon changed Hong Kong cinema and made Hong Kong “the Hollywood of the East.” Hong Kong cinema became very popular in Taiwan as manifested in its box office success; furthermore, many Hong Kong movies took away prizes from Taiwan’s Golden Horse Awards during the time.

Social realist film is also known as “Taiwan Black Movie” (taiwan hei dianying), as most of them are cult films and B- movies dealing with the dark side of the society. Although it is called social realist film, the genre is far from any realist tradition. Taiwan Black Movie might be a better translation in this case as it implies the influence of film noir and the theme of crime. Similar to classic postwar film noir movie, Taiwan Black Movie deals with issues of moral corruption, evil, guilt, desperation and paranoia, focusing on the brutal, unhealthy, dark, and pessimistic side of the human experience. However, Taiwan Black Movie still differs from film noir in that the former does not have complicate depiction of the characters and storyline, nor does it have the visual expression unique to film noir movies, such as the lighting and the depth of field camera work. Instead of showing any social critique or moral messages, Taiwan Black Movie directly addresses its audiences’ senses through excess and spectacle. Beginning from Tsai Yang- Ming’s, The First Error Step (1978), the themes of crime, revenge, and underground gangster factions dominated the films during the following years. In addition to excessive violence, sexual display and the exploitation of female body is also the prominent features of Taiwan Black Movie. In these films, women are no longer passive victims, but aggressive avengers who threaten the male characters, as in On the Society File of Shanghai (1981), The Lady Avenger (1981), Queen Bee (1981), and Girl with a Gun (1982). However, their bodies are sexualized and their pornographic images on screen become exclusively for the male visual pleasure. Though very short- lived in time, the number of Taiwan Black Movies quickly rose from only one title in 1978 to 42 titles in 1981.

---

265 The name Taiwan Black Movies is derived from Hou Chi- Jan’s 2005 documentary film about social realist films, which bears the same title.

266 Lu, Feii, table 12. According to Lu Feii, seeing the profit of Taiwan Black Movie, money from small companies soon flew back to the Taiwan film industry, like the phenomenon responding to the rise of Healthy Realist Films in the late 1960s.
Traces of moral occult, the hidden power of moral and virtues, can hardly be found in
Taiwan Black Movies; instead, it is physical and emotional sensations that count. As Peter
Brooks emphasizes in *The Melodramatic Imagination*, the moral occult or the ethical imperative
is at the center of melodrama to clarify the new social order in the post-sacred era. However,
there is also another aspect of melodrama, which is excess and sensations. Using French
playwright Pixerécourt’s works as examples to illustrate melodrama par excellence, Peter Brooks
notices that signs of decadence in melodrama appeared in the late 1830s, when the moral occult
was no longer the ruling aspect of melodrama. Instead, what became the source of interest is the
excess: suspense and sensation. In his interpretation of Peter Brooks’ argument, Tom Gunning
maintains, “Brooks’ notion of the decadence of melodrama indicates that excess can become
separated from its significant motive and be pursued as an end in itself, aimed towards affects
(excitement, suspense) rather than cognitive and moral significance.” Looking back at his
*Melodramatic Imagination* almost twenty years after its publication, Peter Brooks decides to
modify his statement on this ruling aspect of melodrama in the book’s new preface, and agrees
that “heightening and sensation for their own sake, a draumaturgy of hyperbole, excess,
excitement, and ‘acing out’—in the psychoanalytic sense—may be the essence of melodrama
without any reference to ethical imperatives.” Building on the idea that melodrama can do
away with the moral imperative, Tom Gunning argues that the sensation and overwhelming
experience often serve as the “final dissolution” for melodrama, as in André de Lorde’s plays


268 Brooks, Peter. p. viii

269 Gunning, Tom. p. 59. De Lorde (1969-1942) is the main author of the Grand Guignol plays from 1901-1926, the focalization of Tom Gunning’s investigation in his article.
Similarly, Taiwan Black Movie shows the decay of the moral occult and the concentrated exposure of strong emotionalism and sensationalism. The genre not only marks the end of Healthy Realism; it also signifies the last struggle of the melodramatic mode that had continued for decades in Taiwan cinema. Like a firework, the genre dominated the screen with excess, but quickly disappeared when Taiwan New Cinema came into the scene of Taiwan cinema.

*****

Taiwan New Cinema: Emotional Detachment and the Realist Mode

In 1982, *In Our Time*, a movie made by four young film directors, Tao Te-Chen, Edward Yang, Ko I-Chen, and Zhang Yi, foreshadowed the birth of Taiwan New Cinema; however, it was Hou Hsiao-Hsien, Wan Ren, and Zen Zhuangxiang’s *The Sandwich Man* (1983), which came out the following year that fostered the new film movement. Like *In Our Time*, *The Sandwich Man* consists of discrete short films by three individual directors, and all the three stories are based on works by the Taiwanese nativist writer, Huang Chun-ming. The reason why *In Our Time* plays such an important role in the transition of Taiwan film industry is because King Hu, Li Xing, and Bai Jingrui’s collaborative work, *The Wheel of Life* (1983), was also released during the same year. At the time, the three directors for *The Wheel of Life* were the most well-known Chinese film directors, but it caught the public by surprise that the box office and reviews

---

270 The film is consisted of Hou Hsiao- Hsien’s *The Sandwich Man*, Zen Zhuangxiang’s *Vicki’s Hat*, and Wan Ren’s *The Taste of Apple*. The film received critical feedbacks even before it was released. It was attacked for using too much Taiwanese dialect, and the sarcastic ending in Wan Ren’s *The Taste of Apple* also led to the famous “Apple paring incident.” *The Taste of Apple* tells a story of a Taiwanese worker hit by an American soldier’s car. Not only did the worker receive pension from the US government, but he was also sent to a modern US military hospital for treatment. All his relatives are jealous of the luxury and privileges he enjoys after the car accident, and the ending of the film shows the worker sharing with his family the apples given by the US military, an extravagant good that most of the Taiwanese could not afford at the time. Because of the critique from the conservative film critics, CMPC decided to delete the sensitive scenes in the film without the director’s consent. At the time, the incident was reported by Yang Shi-qi, a journalist from United Daily News, and the report also exposed the long-standing problems of film censorship in Taiwan.
all favored *The Sandwich Man*. This unexpected outcome marked the beginning of a new era in Taiwan film industry, when Healthy Realist Film officially walked into the history with its most representative directors. In January 1987, “Taiwan Film Manifesto 1987,” which was drafted and signed by Edward Yang and several Taiwan New Cinema filmmakers, was published in the *China Times*, one of the major newspapers in Taiwan. The manifesto states the filmmakers’ concerns toward the survival of “Another Film,” which had just began to grow since 1982. These filmmakers criticize the film policy, media, and the critical public for not providing enough support to “Another Film,” which eventually leads to the regression of the film movement after 1985. The appearance of this film manifesto did not announce the death of Taiwan New Cinema; on the contrary, as the manifesto had anticipated, “Another Film” flourished outside of the commercial filmmaking and continued into the 1990s.

In contrast to the melodramatic mode in the 1960s and 1970s, Taiwan New Cinema is known for its realist style. It often draws on stories that are closer to the social reality; for example, the use of Taiwanese dialects is common in these films, and non-professional actors are used in many movies. Different from early Taiwan Cinema, which has been criticized for twisting the history for the propaganda purposes and for being escapist, Taiwan New Cinema engages in common people’s experience and presents the grey area of Taiwan’s past.

---

271 During the time, filmmakers like Edward Yang often referred to Taiwan New Cinema by the name, “Another Film” (*ling yizhong dianying*).

272 Many established Taiwan New Cinema films were made after the manifesto was published in 1987, such as Hou Hsiao- Hsien’s *A City of Sadness* (1989), Edward Yang’s *A Brighter Summer Day* (1991), and Tsai Ming-liang’s *Vive L’Amour* (1994).

273 As I have discussed at the end of Chapter Five, Taiwan New Cinema does not just look at the history from the mainlanders’ perspective. Most of the films in Taiwan New Cinema try to rewrite Taiwan’s history and explore the nation’s historical trauma from a personal perspective. There are many autographic style movies in Taiwan New Cinema, such as Hou Hsiao- Hsien’s *A Time to Live, A Time to Die* (1988). Others usually trace the grand history from personal memories; that is, the collective history is unraveled through the protagonist’s life, as in Wu Nien-Jen’s *A Borrowed Life* and Wan Ren’s *Super Citizen Ko* (1995).
the tabooed historical events that were once oppressed by the KMT censorship were re-discovered, such as the 228 Incident in 1947 and the White Terror in the late 1940s to early 1950s. For example, Wang Tong’s *Hills of No Return* (1992) revisited colonial history through the lens of a coal miner’s family, and Hou Hsiao- Hsien’s *City of Sadness* (1989) traced the government suppression during the White Terror in the 1950s. In other words, the repressed history in the 1960s and 1970s Taiwan cinema began to surface in Taiwan New Cinema, and, by revisiting the nation’s past, Taiwan New Cinema is also engaged in search of Taiwanese identity.

Additionally, Taiwan New Cinema moves away from commercial films and mainstream Hollywood movies. Instead, many directors are devoted to the postmodern experience through experimental filmmaking style; for example, non-linear narrative, semi-documentary, and multiple/open endings that require active engagement from the audience. For Taiwan New Cinema directors, film is not an entertainment, but a form of art. Lu Feii observes that Taiwan New Cinema directors keep a distance from their audience and stop manipulating audiences’ emotions through their works. He maintains, “They [Taiwan New Cinema directors] believe the audiences are the active interpreters of films instead of traditional passive recipients. Therefore, they abandon the over-simplified, clear, and sensational storytelling technique, and pursue the more ambiguous meanings and experiences closer to the grey area in life.”

Pushing Lu Feii’s argument a little bit further, Wu Meiling argues that, by purposely avoiding the melodramatic scenes and heightened emotions, Taiwan New Cinema focuses on the characters’ meaningless daily life in order to “arouse antipathy from the spectators” and to make the audience conscious

---

of their own antipathy during the film viewing. In other words, New Taiwan Cinema is averse to melodramatic expression: The distinction between good and evil becomes blurred, the representations are no longer exaggerated, and emotions are drained. Has melodramatic mode lost all its power after it exhausted itself in Taiwan Black Movie? Has it disappeared in Taiwan film industry that honors realist style since the beginning of Taiwan New Cinema in 1982? In other words, is melodrama, as a mode of expression, dead since the turn to Taiwan New Cinema?

****

Melodramatic Mode in the Age of Realist Filmmaking

In his discussion on the decadence of melodrama, Peter Brooks contends that even if “it declines in ambition, melodrama never dies out. It rather transforms itself, for it is a remarkably adaptable form: its premises, of structure, rhetoric, vision, can be exploited for a range of subjects in many different media. It is still very much with us today.” Peter Brooks’ argument also speaks to the melodramatic mode in the post-Healthy Realist Films since the 1980s. Instead of disappearing completely, the melodramatic mode transformed and sublimated into different expressions in Taiwan cinema. While Taiwan New Cinema and its realist mode dominated Taiwan film industry, the melodramatic gradually flourished in another field, that is, television dramas. For example, Qiong Yao’s romance films, which embody all the melodramatic features, found its way to television adaptions. Starting in 1986, Many Enchanting Nights (1986),

---

276 Brooks, Peter. p. 89.
Romance in the Rain (1986), and Spacious Courtyard (1987) appeared on television, each with thirty to forty episodes. In addition to Qiong Yao’s romance, most of the popular soap operas that follow the evening news often favor the melodramatic. In other words, the melodramatic mode of expression never ceases to be appealing to the culture and people in Taiwan even today.

The melodramatic aesthetic also did not disappear completely in films after 1982; instead, it was sublimated into a different mode of expression. More specifically, it often erupts through the realist surface, manifesting itself in the sudden outburst of intense emotions and the hysteric body. In his new preface to Melodramatic Imagination, Peter Brooks argues that “the hystericized body offers a key emblem of that convergence [of melodrama and psychoanalysis], because it is a body preeminently invested with meaning—a body that has become the place for the inscription of highly emotional messages that cannot be written elsewhere, and cannot be articulated verbally.” In other words, body is loaded with affective meanings and becomes the place for representations. The hystericized body therefore signifies excess, the sensational, and the melodramatic. Using D. W. Griffith’s movie, Orphans of the Storm (1921) as an example, Peter Brooks illustrates how excessive affective meanings are inscribed upon the body. One of the melodramatic moments in the film is when the protagonist Henriette recognizes her close-adopted sister Louise’s singing voice after they are separated by the evil Mother Frochard. Peter Brooks describes Henriette’s intense facial expressions and unnatural body gesture upon hearing Louise’s voice from her apartment as if she is going to throw herself into the street. Her desperation and yearning for her sister has transformed her body into the impossible and hystericized postures. Peter Brooks’ remark on hystericized body and its connection to

\[^{277}\]Ibid. p. xi
\[^{278}\]Ibid.
melodramatic aesthetics also shades light on the melodramatic mode in Taiwan cinema after realism became the dominant mode. In the following, I use Tsai Ming-Liang’s 1994 masterpiece, *Vive L'Amour*, to demonstrate the sublimation of the melodramatic expressions within New Taiwan Cinema.

Tsai Ming-Liang’s *Vive L'Amour* centers on lives of three people who come to stay under the same roof by accident. The film begins with Hsiao-Kang, a salesman, discovering a key that grants him access to a luxurious apartment for sale. He secretly moves into the apartment and uses it as a playground and a place to attempt suicide. Meanwhile, the real estate agent May Lin encounters a total stranger, Ah-Jung, and has a one night stand with him in the apartment she is trying to sell, which is the exact apartment Hsiao-Kang has illegally occupied. After their night together, Ah-Jung steals the key to the apartment from May Lin, and moves into the apartment, too. At first, the two men are aware of the other’s presence in the apartment but never directly confront each other; it is when May Lin suddenly drops in the apartment one day that the two illegal occupants are forced to evacuate the apartment together, which leads to their homoerotic bonding.

Similar to other films from New Taiwan Cinema and beyond, *Vive L'Amour* does not have any highly emotional themes, and it does not try to manipulate the audience’s emotions, either. The film is often seen as embodying Tsai Ming-Liang’s signature film aesthetics: slow and lingering camera movement, minimal dialogues, and no background music. The focus on people’s daily routines, such as eating, sleeping, showering aims to capture modern people’s isolation and loneliness in the city life. Additionally, without explicit depiction of the characters’ personal past, psychology, and motifs, *Vive L'Amour* distances the audience away from the film’s characters and refuses to solicit any emotional response from the viewer. To some viewers who
are used to the more straightforward storytelling technique and sensational narrative, the film may even seem uneventful and disengaging throughout. However, the final scene of Vive L'Amour breaks away from the calm and stony tone in the rest of the film and turns to an outburst of emotions, of melodramatic mode.

At the end of the film, May Lin leaves Ah-Jung sleeping in the apartment and wonders into the park alone in the morning. The camera follows her striding in the park while the sound of her high heels echoes in the background. As usual, May Lin’s expressionless face does not give any clue to the audience as to what she thinks and how she feels. After following the woman for a long period of time, the camera finally pans away to capture the newly constructed park at the heart of Taipei and all the morning joggers exercising in the park. Cutting back to May Lin, the camera shows her sitting on a bench in the park and beginning to sob all of a sudden. The sob soon turns into a cry as May Lin loses control of her emotions; her face is covered by her hair and she is nearly out of breath. When the audience thinks she finally stops when she wipes her tears and lights a cigarette after more than four minutes’ cry on screen, she falls into yet another hysterical cry until the movie’s credits appear. The scene catches the audience by surprise with the sudden outburst of intense feelings and the lengthy hysterical cry. May Lin’s uncontrollable body, as Peter Brooks has argued, articulate what could not be addressed elsewhere: the loneliness and profound sadness that has been repressed and covered throughout the film. Interesting, May Lin’s heartbreaking cry is juxtaposed with an old man in the park, reading his morning paper in a calmly manner, as if he is the least bothered by the woman crying close to him. This highlighted

---

279 Chen, Ru-shou. p. 51. Chen Ru-shou maintains that these characteristics of Tsai Ming-liang’s films are what drive most of the audience away from New Taiwan Cinema.
emotion that is inconsistent from the unfeeling tone in the rest of the film serves as the best example of the sublimation of the melodramatic expressions in the post-Healthy Realist Films.

For decades, melodramatic mode dominated Mandarin cinema in Taiwan, and reached its golden age in the 1960s and the 1970s. It began with Healthy Realist Films, when the melodramatic mode was employed by the KMT government to reconstruct the post-crisis moral order through the battle between the good and the vice. However, the sensations and heightened emotions gradually grew independent of the moral occult, and became the melodramatic in itself, as manifested in Taiwan Black Movies in the end of the 1970s. Although the melodramatic expressions have been repressed in films made after New Taiwan Cinema, they still find their way to work through realism by channeling the excess and emotionalism to the hystericized body, and to the moments of emotional outburst. That being said, the melodramatic is still very present in Taiwan cinema today, fulfilling our primal desire for the sensational and the heroic confrontations.
Appendix A: Per Capita Income and Television Owning Rate in Taiwan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Per Capita Income (NT)</th>
<th>Per Capita Income (USD)</th>
<th>TV Owning Rate (%)</th>
<th>Color TV Owning Rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>1407</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>1407</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>1407</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>1407</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>1407</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>1407</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>3296</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>3296</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>3296</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>3296</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>3296</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>5666</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>6056</td>
<td>151</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>6657</td>
<td>166</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>7563</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>8110</td>
<td>203</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>8848</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>9957</td>
<td>249</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>11316</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>17.45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>12804</td>
<td>320</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>14417</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>32.24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>16407</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>52.26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>19278</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>60.34</td>
<td>3.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>24564</td>
<td>642</td>
<td>65.3</td>
<td>5.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>32408</td>
<td>853</td>
<td>71.29</td>
<td>10.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>33811</td>
<td>890</td>
<td>72.92</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>39559</td>
<td>1041</td>
<td>70.65</td>
<td>21.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>45330</td>
<td>1193</td>
<td>63.47</td>
<td>32.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>53303</td>
<td>1443</td>
<td>53.57</td>
<td>44.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>63275</td>
<td>1758</td>
<td>44.21</td>
<td>55.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>77575</td>
<td>2155</td>
<td>34.09</td>
<td>67.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>89868</td>
<td>2443</td>
<td>76.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>94647</td>
<td>2419</td>
<td>82.93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>103093</td>
<td>2573</td>
<td>88.53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84</td>
<td>114511</td>
<td>2890</td>
<td>92.76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td>119272</td>
<td>2992</td>
<td>95.93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
<td>137992</td>
<td>3646</td>
<td>99.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>153773</td>
<td>4825</td>
<td>101.64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>165884</td>
<td>5798</td>
<td>105.81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89</td>
<td>181936</td>
<td>6889</td>
<td>109.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>195905</td>
<td>7258</td>
<td>111.48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sources:

1. Per Capita Income:

2. Television Owning Rate:
## Appendix B: Movie-going Culture in Taiwan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Total Theaters</th>
<th>Movie-going Population (million)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>9390381</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>11149139</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>11511728</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>11883523</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>12256682</td>
<td>617</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>12628348</td>
<td>638</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>12992763</td>
<td>693</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>13296571</td>
<td>730</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>13650370</td>
<td>759</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>14334862</td>
<td>799</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>14675964</td>
<td>826</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>14994823</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>15289048</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>15564830</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>15852224</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>16149702</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>16508190</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>16813127</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>17135714</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>17479314</td>
<td>594</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>17805067</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>18135508</td>
<td>602</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>18457923</td>
<td>704</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>18732938</td>
<td>736</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84</td>
<td>19012512</td>
<td>717</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td>19258053</td>
<td>602</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
<td>19454610</td>
<td>577</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>19672612</td>
<td>568</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>19903812</td>
<td>534</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89</td>
<td>20107440</td>
<td>456</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>20352996</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sources:

1. Total Population:
Taiwan, ROC. Executive Yuan, Directorate- General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics. 

2. Total Theaters:
Taiwan, ROC. Executive Yuan, Directorate- General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics. 

3. Total Movie- going Population:
## Glossary of Sinitic Terms, Names, and Titles

### Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sinitic Term</th>
<th>Simplified</th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aiqing wenyi pian</td>
<td>愛情文藝片</td>
<td>愛情文藝片</td>
<td>aiqing wenyi pian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bade</td>
<td>八德</td>
<td>八德</td>
<td>bade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>benshengren</td>
<td>本省人</td>
<td>本省人</td>
<td>benshengren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>datuanyuan</td>
<td>大團圓</td>
<td>大團圓</td>
<td>datuanyuan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>er qin er lin</td>
<td>二秦二林</td>
<td>二秦二林</td>
<td>er qin er lin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fangong dalu</td>
<td>反攻大陸</td>
<td>反攻大陸</td>
<td>fangong dalu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fu</td>
<td>婦</td>
<td>婦</td>
<td>fu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ganqing xieshi</td>
<td>感情寫實</td>
<td>感情寫實</td>
<td>ganqing xieshi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gaoshang de shunu</td>
<td>高貴的淑女</td>
<td>高貴的淑女</td>
<td>gaoshang de shunu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>huangmei</td>
<td>黃梅</td>
<td>黃梅</td>
<td>huangmei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jiankang xieshi dianying</td>
<td>健康寫實電影</td>
<td>健康寫實電影</td>
<td>jiankang xieshi dianying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jiankang zongyi</td>
<td>健康綜藝</td>
<td>健康綜藝</td>
<td>jiankang zongyi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jiaohua</td>
<td>教化</td>
<td>教化</td>
<td>jiaohua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jiating lunli ju</td>
<td>家庭倫理劇</td>
<td>家庭倫理劇</td>
<td>jiating lunli ju</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>junjiao pian</td>
<td>軍教片</td>
<td>軍教片</td>
<td>junjiao pian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li, yi, lian, chi</td>
<td>禮, 義, 廉, 耻</td>
<td>禮, 義, 廉, 耻</td>
<td>Li, yi, lian, chi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liuyi</td>
<td>六藝</td>
<td>六藝</td>
<td>liuyi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nongcun</td>
<td>農村</td>
<td>農村</td>
<td>nongcun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nuxia</td>
<td>女俠</td>
<td>女俠</td>
<td>nuxia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qing</td>
<td>情</td>
<td>情</td>
<td>qing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qizong miezu</td>
<td>殺宗滅祖</td>
<td>殺宗滅祖</td>
<td>qizong miezu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>san cong si de</td>
<td>三從四德</td>
<td>三從四德</td>
<td>san cong si de</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>san ting dianying</td>
<td>三廈電影</td>
<td>三廈電影</td>
<td>san ting dianying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shehui xieshi dianying</td>
<td>社會寫實電影</td>
<td>社會寫實電影</td>
<td>shehui xieshi dianying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>taiwan hei dianying</td>
<td>臺灣黑電影</td>
<td>臺灣黑電影</td>
<td>taiwan hei dianying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>waishengren</td>
<td>外省人</td>
<td>外省人</td>
<td>waishengren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weisheng</td>
<td>衛生</td>
<td>衛生</td>
<td>weisheng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wenming xi</td>
<td>文明戲</td>
<td>文明戲</td>
<td>wenming xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wenqin zhuyi</td>
<td>溫情主義</td>
<td>溫情主義</td>
<td>wenqin zhuyi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wenyi</td>
<td>文藝</td>
<td>文藝</td>
<td>wenyi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wuxia</td>
<td>武俠</td>
<td>武俠</td>
<td>wuxia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xieyi</td>
<td>寫意</td>
<td>寫意</td>
<td>xieyi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xin nuxin zhuyi</td>
<td>新女性主義</td>
<td>新女性主義</td>
<td>xin nuxin zhuyi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yibing</td>
<td>憾病</td>
<td>憾病</td>
<td>yibing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yu</td>
<td>慾</td>
<td>慾</td>
<td>yu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Names

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Simplified</th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bai Jingrui</td>
<td>白景瑞</td>
<td>白景瑞</td>
<td>Bai Jingrui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bai Ke</td>
<td>白克</td>
<td>白克</td>
<td>Bai Ke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brigitte Lin</td>
<td>林青霞</td>
<td>林青霞</td>
<td>Brigitte Lin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bu Wan- Cang</td>
<td>卜萬蒼</td>
<td>卜萬蒼</td>
<td>Bu Wan- Cang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cai Chusheng</td>
<td>蔡楚生</td>
<td>蔡楚生</td>
<td>Cai Chusheng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cai Donghua</td>
<td>蔡東華</td>
<td>蔡東華</td>
<td>Cai Donghua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li Xing</td>
<td>李行</td>
<td>李行</td>
<td>Li Xing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liang Zhe- Fu</td>
<td>梁哲夫</td>
<td>梁哲夫</td>
<td>Liang Zhe- Fu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lin Zanting</td>
<td>林贊庭</td>
<td>林贊庭</td>
<td>Lin Zanting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liu Xi- Yang</td>
<td>劉喜陽</td>
<td>劉喜陽</td>
<td>Liu Xi- Yang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lu Hsiu- lien</td>
<td>呂秀蓮</td>
<td>呂秀蓮</td>
<td>Lu Hsiu- lien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luo Mingyou</td>
<td>羅明佑</td>
<td>羅明佑</td>
<td>Luo Mingyou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Names</td>
<td>Titles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chang Cheh</td>
<td>A Borrowed Life (1994)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie Qin</td>
<td>A Morning in Taipei (1964)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chen Chen</td>
<td>A Spray of Plum Blossom (1931)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chen Lifu</td>
<td>A Touch of Zen (1971)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chen Rulin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chen Yingzhen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiang Ching-Kuo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chou En-lai</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward Yang</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gong Hong</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gu Zhenfu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hou Hsiao-Hsien</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hu Chengding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huang Chun-ming</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joan Lin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ke Jun-Xiong</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King Hu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ko I-Chen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lai Chenying</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee Teng-hui</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li Ang</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li Han-Hsiang</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li Jia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li Mingwei</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mei Changlin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ming Ji</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nieh Hualing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pai Hsien-yung</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qin Han</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qiong Yao</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shi Hui</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Song Cunshou</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun Yu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tang Bao-Yun</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tao Te-Chen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsai Ming-Liang</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsai Yang-Ming</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wan Ren</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wang Tong</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wang Wenxing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wu Nien-jen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wu Younggang</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wu Zhuoliu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zen Zhuangxiang</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhang Shichuan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhang Yi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhang Youngxiang</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zheng Zhengqui</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

多桑
台北之晨
一剪梅
俠女
Accidental Trio (1969) 今天不回家
Agent White Peony (1966) 豔碟白牡丹
Awakening from A Nightmare (1950) 噩夢初醒
Beautiful Ducklings (1965) 養鴨人家
Blood Shed on the Mountain (1957) 青山碧血
Brother Wang and Brother Liu Tour Taiwan (1958) 王哥柳哥遊台灣
Call of the Mountains (1967) 梨山春曉
City of Sadness (1989) 悲情城市
Dragon Gate Inn (1967) 龍門客棧
Eight Hundred Heroes (1975) 八百壯士
Everlasting Glory (1974) 英烈千秋
Execution in Autumn (1972) 秋決
Female Spy Number Seven (1964) 第七號女間諜
Fire Bulls (1966) 還我河山
Four Lovers (1965) 婉君表妹
Four Moods (1970) 喜怒哀樂
Four Sisters (1935) 四姐妹
Gain Sons, Not Losing Daughters (1966) 小鎮春回
Girl with a Gun (1982) 霹靂大妞
Goddess (1934) 神女
Gone with Honor (1979) 香火
Good Morning Taipei (1980) 早安台北
Goodbye Darling (1970) 再見阿郎
Heroes of the Eastern Sky (1977) 瞿橋英烈傳
Hill of No Return (1992) 無言的山丘
In Our Time (1982) 光陰的故事
Jade Goddess (1969) 玉觀音
Land of the Undaunted (1975) 吾土吾民
Leper Woman (1957) 麻瘋女
Life with Mother (1973) 母親三十歲
Lonely Seventeen (1967)
Love Eterne (1963)
Mad Woman for Eighteen Years (1957)
Mother (1949)
Mother and Daughter (1971)
National Customs (1935)
New Woman (1934)
New Year’s Eve (1933)
Number One in the World (1964)
Off to Success (1978)
On the Society File of Shanghai (1981)
Orphan of Asia (1946)
Orchids and My Love (1966)
Our Neighbors (1963)
Outside the Window (1973)
Oyster Girl (1964)
Queen Bee (1981)
Queen of Female Special Agent (1964)
Queen of Sports (1934)
Silent Wife (1965)
Snake in the Eagle’s Shadow (1978)
Song of China (1935)
Song of Kind Mother (1937)
Spacious Courtyard (1971)
Storm over the Yang-Tse River (1969)
Strawman (1987)
Teacher of Great Soldier (1978)
The Bride and I (1969)
The Drunken Master (1978)
The Early Train from Taipei (1964)

寂寞的十七歲
梁祝
瘋女十八年
母親
母與女
國風
新女性
除夕
天字第一號
成功嶺上
上海社會檔案
亞細亞的孤兒
我女若蘭
街頭巷尾
窗外
蚵女
女王蜂
特務女間諜王
體育皇后
啞女情深
蛇形刁手
天倫
慈母曲
庭院深深
揚子江風雲
稻草人
黄埔軍魂
新娘與我
醉拳
台北發的早車
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Title</th>
<th>Chinese Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The First Error Step (1978)</td>
<td>錯誤的第一步</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Kindred Feelings (1934)</td>
<td>骨肉之恩</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lady Avenger (1981)</td>
<td>瘋狂女煞星</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Last Train from Kaohsiung (1963)</td>
<td>高雄發的尾班車</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Road (1967)</td>
<td>路</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sandwich Man (1983)</td>
<td>兒子的大玩偶</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Wheel of Life (1983)</td>
<td>大輪迴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Beautiful Blind Female Spies (1966)</td>
<td>豔諜三盲女</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victory (1976)</td>
<td>梅花</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vive L'Amour (1994)</td>
<td>愛情萬歲</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Jasmine (1980)</td>
<td>茉莉花</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whose Fault Is it? (1925)</td>
<td>誰之過</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xue Ping- Guei and Wang Bao- Chian (1956)</td>
<td>薛平貴與王寶釧</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bibliography


---. *zhongguo dianying shiye de xin luxian [New Route for Chinese Film Business]*. Nanjing: China Education Film Association, 1933.


Chiang, Kai-Shek. *jiang weiyuanzhang xinshenghuo yundong jiangyanji [Collected Speeches of Chiang Kai-Shek]*. N.p.: Xinshenghuo yundong cujinzhonghui, 1937


Er Shi Nian Lai De Taiwan Fu Nü [Women in Taiwan during the Past Twenty Years]. Taipei: Taiwan Province Woman’s Writing Association [Taiwan Sheng fu nü xie zuo xie hui], 1965.


Gong, Hong, and Tianjie Gong. Ying Chen Hui Yi Lu [Film Recollections]. Taipei: Huang guan wen hua, 2005.


Jian, Zhixin. “*Bai Jingrui chutou [Bai Jingrui Has Finally Gone through All the Ordeal]*.” *Cinemart* 2 (1970).


Liao, Gene-Fon. “Moving toward the Definition of Healthy Realist Films: A Note on Taiwanese Film History.” Film Appreciation Journal 72 (1994).


“xianggang taiwan ge dianying gongsi pianming dengji yufang naoshuangbao: shei qiangpai 
geda 56 ban pigu [Hong Kong and Taiwan Film Companies Registered their Proposed Film 
Titles to Avoid Lookalikes: Anyone Who Steals Would be Spanked 56 Times].” Cinemat 2 

“xingzhengyuan jiang yuanzhang shizheng baogao yuanwen [Premier Chiang Ching- Kuo’s 

Xu, Gary G. “Ethics of Form: Qing and Narrative Excess in Guwangyan” Dynastic Crisis and 
Cultural Innovation from the Late Ming to the Late Qing and Beyond. Ed. David Wang and 

2007.

Xu, Rui- mei. Zhizuo “youda”: Zhanhou Taiwan Dianying Zhong De Riben (1950s-1960s) 
[Creating “Friendship”: Japan in Postwar Taiwan Cinema (1950s- 1960s)]. Taipei: Dao xiang 
chu ban she, 2012.


---. “dianyingjie de dulixuanyan [Independent Manifesto for Film Industry].” Cinemat. 39 
(1973).

Ye, Long- Yan. The History of Taiwanese Movies during the Japanese Colonization. Taipei: 

Yeh, Yueh-yu, Emily and Darrell Davis. Taiwanese Film Directors: A Treasure Islan 

Yeh, Yueh- yu Emily. “Victory: Popular Music and Patriotic Imaginary.” Chung Wai Literary 

---. “Pitfalls of Cross- Cultural Analysis: Chinese wenyi Film and Melodrama.” Asian Journal of 

Yu, Yeying. Cuican guangying suiyue: Zhongyang dianying gongsi jishi [Glourious Years: 


Zhang, Zhen. “The Anarchic Body Language of the Martial Arts Film.” An Amorous History of 
the Silver Screen: Shanghai Cinema, 1896-1937. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 
2005.